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Oral history interview with Ralph F. Colin, 1969 August 15

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Transcript

Interview

PC: Paul Cummings
RC: Ralph F. Colin

PC: August 15. Paul Cummings talking to Ralph Colin. I think we could start this and just really kind of stick to things having to do with administration and development of the Art Dealers Association from about 1965 after the Harlan Phillips interview. And we could talk about how it's developed. It's gone out of New York now, I understand there are members elsewhere. If any of the basic tenets have changed, their relationship with Internal Revenue has changed, and how their association with museums and other institutions how that has gone on and then we can go into the Museum of Modern Art and various other things like that.

RC: The basic tenets still are very much the same. We still have procedure for application for membership. All membership is by invitation and we have deliberately set a very high standard for membership, not in any sense based on social requirements, it's in no sense a club, we try only to take members who will be congenial to each other. But we do insist upon what we think are high standards of dealership. The result is that we get more and more inquiries from dealers throughout the country who have heard about us and seem to think well of us and want to join. We're constantly turning people down because we are not sufficiently assured of their responsibility and we feel that our status now is such that we must be even more careful than in the beginning because just to take an example, for many, many years we were subjected to all kinds of pressure from collectors and from influential people to who would like to have a gallery, for instance, and we had a definite feeling that we shouldn't. And our judgement was vindicated by the fact that in a court opinion last spring involving a case in which Hammer had given outlandish appraisals for junk works brought in by a Philadelphia collector, the court described him in rejecting his appraisals as a man of flexible scruples. Well, we were delighted that the man wasn't one of our members. We have grown nationally. We have about sixty-odd members in New York, we have five or six in Chicago, five or six in Los Angeles, one in Detroit, one in Buffalo, two in Boston, one in Philadelphia, one in Dallas, one in Cincinnati, one in Milwaukee, as I remember. All of these members are not big, important houses like Knoedler and Rosenberg. It isn't size or the wealth of the firm that determines whether they're acceptable to us. It's rather the job that they're doing . We have three standards for election of members. The first two are very definite and easy to apply. The third one tends to sound stuffy but it gives us the range within which to exercise our discretion. The first is the dealer has to be in existence for at least five years. The second is that he has to have a good reputation in the community, which means with collectors, with museums and with artists. The third, and this gives us our discretion, as I say, is that he has to be a real art dealer. Not just a picture dealer, and he must thereby be contributing to the cultural life of the community. We point out to many people who inquire about membership, we're not looking down our noses at somebody who sells decorative pictures, it's a perfectly honorable business. But it's not the art business. And what we are interested in is art dealers and we apply a fairly high standard in that selection. Now since 1965 I would say our reputation and stature with the government has grown to a point that I at my most optimistic in the beginning in 1962 didn't think we'd reach for many, many, many years if ever. We are not at all the official appraisers of the government. They don't in any sense say that whatever our appraisal is they'll accept it. But they have learned simply by experience that while we don't claim to be infallible we are fairly honest. We can make mistakes, but they are human mistakes, and that we have set out to be the only completely disinterested appraisal system that exists. The fact in a sense that in every other appraisal arrangement I know of the person wanting the appraisal goes to the appraiser so each knows who the other is, the appraiser knows he's being paid by the client and the human tendency is to do the best he can for him. In our case the client applies to the Association. He doesn't know who the panel is. The panel, unless it recognizes the picture, doesn't know who owns the picture. And the panel doesn't know who the other members of the panel are, unless there's a disagreement among them and they have to be called together. We try to give three appraisals. We don't always succeed because certain of the younger artists there's only one or two dealers familiar with their market. Generally speaking we have three appraisers here and abroad. We use both members and non-members.

PC: Oh, really. I didn't know that.

RC: Oh, yes. And we try to cover the international market. So that if we have, let's say, a Henry Moore to appraise we might use two American dealers and an English dealer or a Swiss dealer or what not. And we get, as I say, completely independent appraisals. And the government realizes that. And further we've been sustained in both our honesty and efficiency since the advisory council to the Commissioner of Internal Revenue was appointed. About two years ago Sherman Lee, the member in Cleveland who took the lead in getting in touch with the commissioner to protest against harassment of honest taxpayers whose appraisals and deductions on their income taxes were being questioned by the local revenue agents, who really knew nothing about art, but when they saw a picture 30 by 21 assessed at $600,000 they said it outrageous and particularly if they saw a photograph of the picture they said it was even more outrageous. And this happened out in Cleveland. Sherman

Lee came to us and between some museum directors and our association we persuaded the commissioner of Internal Revenue to set up an advisory council consisting of representatives of the museum world, of the academic world and of dealers. And there is a committee of about nine or ten equally divided among those three categories which meets at the call of the commissioner of Internal Revenue about three times a year in Washington. It spends two or three days there and reviews all contested cases which are referred to the Commissioner to Washington by various local revenue agents in districts throughout the United States. And one of our members, Gene Thaw, has been from the beginning a member of that advisory council committee. And the government has seen how few of our appraisals are reviewed by this completely disinterested board of experts. And as a result I think we stand very well with the government. Aside from our own appraisal activities the IRS people come up frequently to see me, sit at this desk, ask for advice on how to handle certain art appraisal problems. They've learned that we know what we're doing and that we're trying to be honest and fair and I think they've got a great deal of faith in us. We're very happy that they have and realizing the high good reputation that we have and the degree to which we're relied on, we're even more careful in selecting additional members because we now feel a sense of responsibility that perhaps we didn't have in the beginning.

PC: Right, and there's a certain limit to potential members anyway.

RC: That's right. We're not in any sense trying to be a trade association in which everyone is represented. We're not primarily organized for instance, to, we're not in any sense organized to do legislative work. We're not trying to get anything done for dealers. If there are inequities we try to voice opposition to them, but we're not trying to sell anything. We're trying to improve the image, if you will, of the dealer in the mind of the public. The public image of the art dealer or an artist manager of an agent for an actor flesh peddlers and that they're living on the fact of genius. And we're trying to point out that I'm personally honestly convinced of what I wore in the preface to my catalogue in 1960 before there was an Art Dealers Association. That the role of the art dealer in the art world is the most important one. Certainly the art dealers find the new artists long before the museum people do.

PC: There's a lot of competition there now though.

RC: There's a lot of competition there. I have learned more than I can ever tell from art dealers. Valentine Dudensing was the first one I knee, Curt Valentine, Piere Matisse, Roland Belleye, people like that taught me an endless amount. Good dealers are very important factor in the art market.

PC: There are not very many private dealers that are members are there?

RC: Well, Sam Salz is a member until he became less active. Gene Thaw has no gallery anymore, he's a private dealer, he's a very active member, vice-president. By and large, the private dealers we have are only most acceptable. I mean there are an awful lot of so-called private dealers who are little more than runners, dealer's dealers. Bring pictures to other dealers. But we have no objection in principle to the private dealer as long as he is an honest to God serious dealer and not just a middleman and a runner. Mrs. Schaeffer we just elected. A master dealer who operates out of her home. She's the widow of a dealer. So that I say, we have no objection in principle as long as we're convinced that they are completely dealers, responsible dealers, dedicated to their jobs and do anything that we thing is a contribution to the cultural life of the community. That as I said before, is our touchstone that gives us a lot of leeway to judge them. I think that one thing that our Art Dealers Association has accomplished has been a substantial improvement in the relations between the art museums and the dealers. I think with very minor exceptions that Curt Valentin was perhaps the outstanding one. The museum people of the past thought of the dealers as pretty much money grabbers. And while they realized they had to deal with them, they weren't particularly sympathetic to them. An exception to that was again Sherman Lee who at the 50th anniversary ceremonies at the Cleveland Museum a year or two ago completely without any stimulation from us in the middle of his main address there said that he's always amused when at meetings with his colleagues at various museums someone tells how he found this picture or found that sculpture. And Mr. Sherman said it never seems to occur to them that they found them at a dealer's and it was the dealer who found them and that dealer is really the important link in the discovery and finding of art. I think that the Art Dealers Association by establishing standards, by indicating that it wanted to clean up its own house, and set standards of excellence impressed the museum people and they feel a certain kinship now with the best dealers who are members of our Association. A kinship that perhaps they didn't feel before. We now have joint meetings. that is we have joint meetings of a committee of the Association of American Art Museum Directors, that's not the American Association of Museums. They have a committee which is a liaison with our association and we meet every so often to discuss common problems.

PC: What kinds of problems or purposes would you discuss?

RC: Well, this tax law might be one of them for instance. In the past there have been things arising from appraisals and harassment of members. I'm sure you realize that while in most European countries the museums are government institutions and governmentally-subsidized that the contrary is true here, that

museums are completely privately operated and privately financed. The only thing that is akin to a government subsidy in this country is the provision for the reduction in income taxes of gifts made to the museums. This is in effect a subsidy, but it's an indirect subsidy that doesn't require the government to lay out any money. It requires the granting of tax benefits to taxpayers. So that when either the local revenue agents harass a donor so that they are less likely to make gifts to the museums, if they are harassed too much they say oh, to hell with it, why should I bother. I don't have to go through this. Or as under the new tax law where there is a special burden put on the gift of tangibles including works of art as distinguished from securities we immediately have a common problem. We've had other common problems such as problems with custom s official, the troubles of getting things in, security at the airports, things stolen from the airports, things coming in for museum exhibits as well as purchased by dealers. There are all kinds of common problems that areas in which we can help each other. And we do need one of the things I think is, I don't know, it might have come anyhow, but certainly something that we're pressing for is the action taken at the annual meeting of the American Museum Associations last may. The appointment of a committee looking toward the accreditation of museums. We've taken the position all along that part of the job of passing upon authenticity and honest in value in connection with gifts is the museum's part, not only the dealer's and the government's part. But some museums have been taking anything that's given to them and any kind of value that's placed on it and we've been saying that that the museum should exercise greater care and help both the government and the dealers in setting standards.

PC: Well, theoretically that's part of the museum's job.

RC: It should be part of their job. But many of the less important museums haven't been doing it. And as I say, we have urged accreditation of museums. Anybody, any museum that starts anywhere all it has to have is a building and pay its dues and it's a member of the American Museums Association. I have ready to fly right now a letter to the Mayor of Miami Beach and the City Manager blasting the Bass Museum down there. It's taken to years to get this letter ready. It's a 16 page letter as a result of a dare form them that we specifically named the fakes that we've said exists down there. And I now have an analysis which we have made by experts, some of our member, some non-members, academic people whose expenses we paid to send down there and the resulting analysis is that something like over a hundred of their leading pictures. That is 62 percent of their old masters are fakes and 80 percent of the moderns. And we name them picture by picture.

PC: 80 percent of the moderns?

RC: 80 percent of the moderns.

PC: That's fantastic.

RC: You won't believe this but they have a Picasso that's in Zervos. When I saw the photograph I said, this is a fake Picasso. And the man said, well it's in Zervos. I said, I don't give a damn if its in Zervos it's still a fake. And I've got Picasso's notation to that effect on the photograph. But it just shows how good an eye Mr. Bass has. I would say that there are no more than three fakes in all twenty-two volumes of Zervos. And he bought one. He's consistent.

PC: Out of 20,000 Picassos.

RC: Yes, out of 20,000 he picked one of the two or three Zervous that are wrong.

PC; It's incredible.

RC: But you see this is one of the things that our Association has been able to do. No individual dealer could take the time or take the risk of calling the Stoochnoff Collection of Miro's fakes, the Chrysler Collection fakes, the Bass Collection fakes. We can do it, and we do it very gingerly, very carefully because we realize the power we have and we exercise it cautiously. But we can do it because it isn't one man's opinion. It's the opinion of eight or ten men. And when we take a position anybody who thinks he can sue us for libel starts with the realization that we have a tremendous body of authority with us or we wouldn't take the position. I and Pierre Matisse and the Association are each being sued for a million dollars by Mr. Stoochnoff. It hasn't caused any of us gray hairs. But four of us looked at that show and we all decided that they're practically entirely fakes, all but the graphics. And we said so and closed the show down. If there had been no association and Pierre Matisse who is Miro's dealer had seen the show, he probably would have been terribly offended and mildly upset and that would have been the end of it. But we haven't been afraid to police the market. We express opinions when we have them As I say, we're careful; we're not reckless because we realize that ....

PC: Well, you have to maintain what you're building up.

RC: We have to maintain what we're building up but we also don't want to be reckless and destroy reputations simply because we have stronger power than some individuals. But we don't hesitate to call the shots as we see them. I think that, well, the Meadows case is a situation in which Mr. Meadows asked us to come in and look at

the picture, but immediately regretted that he had done so when we told him that 49 our of 59 were wrong. He tried to get us then not to issue the report. We said, you asked for it and we're going to do it. You can't stop us now.

PC: It always amazes me that people who are so successful in some activity will start buying pictures and really end up in such a dreadful way.

RC: This is part of my fifty-cent lecture when I'm talking to modern art groups at various museums in Chicago and St. Louis and, more recently, Minneapolis. And I make this point, that if somebody had to come to Mr. Meadows with a crisp $100,000 bill and said I'll sell it to you for $50,00 he wouldn't have touched. Or if somebody had bought him an oil well in some field that he had surveyed and he thought it was worth $100,000,000 but I'll sell it to you for $35,000,000 he wouldn't have touched it. But if somebody brings him a) if it's right it would be worth $100,000 and keeps him waiting in a hotel there for two or three weeks chiseling him down, chiseling him down until he buys it for $50,000 he thinks he's gotten a great bargain. Why he believes that someone loves Mr. Meadows so much that he'll sell him a $100,000 picture for $50,000 I don't know. It's like the inexplicable attitude of the visitor to your home that we were talking about before who won't criticize your food or your wife's dress because he doesn't hesitate to express an opinion about art, tell you you have awful pictures. Mr. Meadows, as I say, simply feels that he's so powerful, has a arrogance of wealth. that he can just by the weight of his importance and influence wear down the person offering art and buy it cheaper. Well, you and I know that there's no problem in selling art these days. There's a problem in finding it. The main dealers in this city can pick up a telephone and sell an important picture to ten people over the telephone. Their problem is to get the picture, not to sell it. And Mr. Meadows apparently doesn't realize that.

PC: Well, let's see, the officers of the Art Dealers Association change what?

RC: We have a new board of new officers every two years. And we've had deliberately a terrific turnover. We have about 80 members and over 30 of them have already been members of the board in the first six or seven years.

PC: That gives them a good feeling of really getting involved.

RC: A good feeling of participation. Our setup is that we have ten members of the board, eight from New York and two from out of town. The two from out of town don't attend all meetings but we want the representation. We usually have one from the west coast and one some somewhere in the middle west or the east coast. And then in addition we have a rule that every ex-president becomes an ex-officio member of the board. So at the present time we have Alexander Rosenberg, Pierre Matisse, and Claus Perls who are ex-presidents who remain members of the board. Milch is the present president. Milch and seven other New York members, Frank Persl from Los Angeles and Mrs., what's her name, from Philadelphia. My memory for names is getting perfectly horrible. I never had a good memory and it's getting worse as I grow older. Macklin.

PC: Oh, Macklin yes.

RC: Mrs. Hope Macklin from Philadelphia. Actually we used to elect a new board every year and new officers but it takes about three or four months to get new stationary ready and putting the new names on every year was a nuisance so we decided that we'd only change them every two years. It seems to be a silly reason. But I think it works anyhow. It takes the new members a few meetings to get used to the board. This is a very hard working board. We met at least once a month in the last few years after dinner. We meet at 8:00. The meetings usually last until midnight or beyond. And they're fascinating meetings. Under our appraisal rules if a panel, now let me go back, ordinarily I would say that in 90 percent to 95 percent of the cases the three independent appraisals are so close that an averaging of them is quite meaningful. The IRS realizes that we can't tell them that a $30,000 picture is $30,000 and not $28,00 or $32,000. They know that all we can do is tell them that its a thirty thousand dollar picture, not a twenty thousand or sixty thousand dollar picture. So that average is a satisfactory piece of machinery. We have a rule, however, that if the three appraisals are too diverse to make an average meaningful, I mean if I got a ten, twenty, and thirty thousand dollar appraisal, to say it's worth twenty thousand dollars just doesn't make any sense. So when we get that kind of situation, or when we have a situation where we can get only one appraiser, a new artist who is being presented by only one gallery, nobody else knows what it's worth, then in those cases we issue no appraisal until it's passed on by the entire board. So the first order of business at every monthly board meeting is passing upon any appraisals which require board action. In those cases I report the appraisals we've received. I have photographs of the work, description of the work, size and so forth, and while each individual member of the board may not be an expert in that particular artist, he may have a pretty general knowledge of the art market. And they also have their own opinions as to the respective judgement and knowledge of the three appraisers who have made the appraisals and they make .....

PC: They would be the only people who would know the appraisers?

RC: Unless, what happens is that if I get diverse appraisals then for the first time I try to knock the heads of the

three people together. I send out a memo to all three saying, you three are members of a panel appointed to appraise a Matisse entitled so and so. The results of your appraisals are so forth, A, B, C, and I appoint Mr. A. Chairman of this panel. Will you pleas communicate with the other two, see why there is such a difference of opinion and see if they can be reconciled. Well, very frequently what will happen is, we had a Clyfford Still on which we had thirty thousand dollar difference. One of the members simply hadn't been up to date on recent sales. There had been sales on the west coast that one of the members was familiar with. And there was an adjustment, as soon as the information was made available there was an agreement. But sometimes the three dealers will say, I just don't agree. This picture is worth only twenty thousand dollars. You say it's worth thirty thousand dollars. I just don't agree. And then it will go to the board before we issue it. And also as I say, if there's a young artist who is handled by one dealer who has no widely-established market yet, we get that dealer's appraisal, reminding him by a special sticker that we have on our request for appraisal, that he's the only one who knows the market and therefore he must be prepared by his books to defend his appraisal if it's questioned. In that case, even though the response to that warning he's given us an appraisal, we will issue it to the board to take a look at it.

PC: So there are lots of checks and balances.

RC: There are lots of checks and balances with very serious, very hardworking, and the interesting thing is that dealers who have never said a word to each other come in contact this way. Klaus Perls tells the story of how in the old days in Berlin when his father's gallery and the Tannhauser Gallery were the two great galleries in Berlin, Mr. Perls and Mr. Tannhauser were perfectly friendly but if they were going down the street in opposite directions and were approaching each other one of them would cross the street. He wouldn't want to stop and talk for fear he'd divulge some piece of information. And now we have members meetings two or three times a year. We have 60 or 70 members present discussing all kinds of trade problems, customs problems, things like that perfectly openly. Some of the members don't like each other, and never have but they join together for a common purpose discussing things openly and honestly. And it's a very interesting development. Any number of art dealers have said to me that if you'd told me this was going to happen I've have thought you were crazy.

PC: Yes.

RC: As you'll see in there, I tried to organize this for years before I was successful and got nowhere at all because the art dealer is traditionally a loner. He plays it close to his chest. And the fact that this has occurred is just nothing short of a miracle.

PC: Yes, but as you said before, it's done a great deal in making it a much more professional business.

RC: Oh, there's not question about it. That's been our aim.

PC: I knew in doing research projects I've noticed the difference in how galleries present themselves. They're more scholarly now, in a lot of cases they have all kinds of material available.

RC: Well, gallery shows today in many galleries are of museum quality.

PC: Oh, yes.

RC: Shows at Perls and Rosenber, Marlborough, Janis, Wise, Knoedler have put on are of museum quality. And I think that they do make a real contribution. And what the public and most of the legislators don't understand or refuse to become aware of is that this is the greatest free show on earth. There's nobody else in the field of the arts that throws its resources open to the public without charge the way the art dealer does. The theater doesn't. Concerts don't. Even a lot of museums make charges for admission. The art dealer puts on a show and unless it's a charity benefit it's open to the public.

PC: Right. And lots of them now do very good catalogs.

RC: Oh, wonderful catalogues. Marvelous catalogs. Fully illustrated. I just got a catalog the other day from Klaus Perls of a Soutine show he's going to do later this fall for which we've loaned four pictures. It's a fully-illustrated catalog of about thirty top Soutines. A beautiful show.

PC: Yes, its fascinating. Well, are there any other things about the Art Dealers Association that you think we could talk about? Because you know, you know the inside and it's hard for me to develop questions about that.

RC: Well, we have committees at the present time working on, oh, before that I should tell you that we are a clearinghouse for lost and stolen pictures, not only galleries and collectors from whom works are stolen, but also law enforcement bodies, FBI, Interpol, inform us of things that are stolen. We circulate the information to the mailing list that we've developed. We've been reasonably successful. A number of things that were stolen and were offered to galleries as a result of our descriptions were seized, and the FBI called and the thing's recovered.

We even get that kind of thing, as I say, from Interpol. We circularized, for instance, the description of the Penrose pictures that were stolen. One has since been recovered. When I was in London in June I went to see the special unit of Scotland Yard assigned to art frauds. They have a special unit of three men with whom I'd been corresponding, but had never met. And they were most favorable in their comments about the work we're doing. We have working committees now on problems with customs and the difficulties of getting things through. We have a committee that's working with the insurance companies and museums and the customs brokers on the thefts at the airports and also at the docks trying to get better policing there, trying to get the airlines and the shipping lines to set off special areas at the docks with higher security which, which things which are designated as art objects can easily be placed rather than just lying out in the sun and subject to theft. There's another committee that's active that I'm trying to think of but can't remember. But we meet problems as they arise. Now on the is new tax bill I immediately communicated with Sherman Lee and told him that what I honestly believe is that this is a battle the museums must fight. If the dealers take the lead in pointing out the discrimination against art objects as gifts they will be accused of having special interest and trying to sell pictures and trying to protect moneymaking opportunities. Whereas if the museums take the lead they have a real gripe. I would say that outside of the Cleveland Museum, which has about a two million dollar a year acquisition fund from the Hann bequest there is not a museum in the United States that could continue anything like its acquisition program with this new law. Ninety percent of all acquisitions come as a result of tax benefits to the donors. And it simply would mean that the museums could not keep up to date and they couldn't draw out their money. And this is a very serious thing. As I say, it's a battle that has to be fought by the museums. We're standing by, we'll help in any way we can, with drafting statements or working on statistics and what not, but it's got to be the museum's party I'm convinced.

PC: Do the dealers have more difficulty than a private individual when they give a work of art to an institution?

RC: No, no. Since you raise that, one of the inequities that's claimed by the new tax law, and with which I must say I have a certain amount of sympathy, is the ability of the artist to give away his own work and to get a deduction. For a long time there's been a feeling that an artist shouldn't be able, in effect, to print his own money. Because that's what it comes down to. If an artist has a high income this year and he wants to get a twenty thousand dollar deduction, he paints a picture that's worth twenty thousand dollars and gives it away, he's printing his own money. And under the existing law, he has been able to do that. The only question being whether for his purpose the value of the picture is the market value or the market value less a third of forty percent or whatever his arrangement with his dealer is. If he sold it to his dealer he'd only get the net price of it. That's a question that's been raised in evaluation circles. But his right to give away one of his own works and get a deduction for it has never been questioned. Now this I think will be questioned and, as I say, I have a certain amount of sympathy for those questioning it. What we do when an artist makes a gift we don't attempt to get into any of the tax calculations. We say what the picture is worth at the market. Now whether he's entitled to take only 66% of that, or 60%, or 100% is his problem. We appraise the market value of the picture. But when a dealer gives we have no problem. It's just like any other gift by an owner. We have a special rule that when a museum we charge him no fee. We make the appraisal and charge no fee for it. On that question of fees I might give you a note simply to say that we have a schedule of fees for making appraisals. The money goes into the treasury of the association. The dealers who make the appraisals get nothing for it. That's just their contributions. That's completely pro bono publico. The money goes into the association to run the association. My firm here and I get a fee, a monthly fee which we've calculated over the years runs to about one-sixth of our time charges to other clients. My partners let me do this also as a pro bono publico. We supply the office, secretaries, and telephones for a fault fee per month and operate from here. I and my partners give letters to two secretaries and conduct the whole thing, as I say, based on our time charges to clients. We get about one-sixth of what we should. But the dealers contribute their services completely. When they join the association they agree that they will not do any appraising for income tax purposes independently. They will insist that anyone who applies to them goes through the association. Now they can appraise for other purposes that we don't. They can appraise for insurance purposes of, for their clients, for estate taxes. For various other things. But not for income taxes. That they must refuse to do. And it means giving up a certain amount of income for them.

PC: Well, but it also relieves a situation.

RC: Oh, it's done a lot. This is one of the grounds on which artists are able to finally sell, that it gets them away from the situation in which the client says to them, my god, if that's all you're going to give me I won't buy another picture from you, that kind of thing. This way they simply say, "Look we can't do it. We're committed by the association not to make these appraisals and if you want to go through the association, fine; or go somewhere else." And it gives them a complete out. But our clients with very, very, very few exceptions have been delighted with the service. We get the most complimentary letters. And the proof of the pudding is really indicated by this chart of the expansion of activities over the seven years that we've been in existence. As you will see from this chart.

PC: Oh, my.

RC: We started in 1962 and appraised, did work for 23 clients, 64 works, with total appraised value of $748,000. In 1968 we had 121 clients, 507 works, $6,500,000. Now the 1964 year was a freak because that was the last year, up to June of that year you were still permitted to give away work subject to a life interest and deduct the value of the residual interest even though you kept the work. So a lot of people rushed to get in under the wire before that June change in the law and you'll see there's a terrific bulge in that year.

PC: Right. What happened in 1966? That's very low.

RC: Well, 1966 just slowed up, that's all. It's interesting, you see, the value decreased a whole lot more than the number of people and the number of works. It simply was a year in which people gave less valuable works apparently. And I think all three years of 1965, 1966, and 1967 were a bit of a letdown after 1964 in which people sort of cleaned house and did as much as they could in those years. Because you see, you get a carryover if you give away more in a year than 30% of your income, which you can deduct, you can carry it forward for five years. So that they could give away as much as they wanted to give away there and spread the benefit over a period of years.

PC: So they could bring that up to ....

RC: So you see what happened is they spread it up to here and then suddenly spread is beginning to run out.

PC: Well, that's, $6,500,000 is fantastic.

RC: Yes, I think that the service has proved itself with the collector, with the museum, and with the government.

PC: Are there other people that do appraising for income tax purposes?

RC: Well, there are private people, private so-called appraisers whom as a group we have a low opinion of because we know some of them. Well, you take Carroll Hogan, let's name names, take Carroll Hogan who did the appraisal for Meadows and appraised the collection at whatever it was, a million and a half? A million seven? He made no effort at all apparently, he made no effort or he hasn't the knowledge to determine whether these works were authentic and simply appraised them as if they were authentic. One is a Dufy of this size and this quality worth without saying is it a Dufy? And, well, we don't go in for that kind of appraisal. If we get a work that's sent to us as a Matisse and we don't think it's a Matisse, we'll say to the man we prefer not to appraise this, and just send it back to him. He calls up and says "Why" and I might say to him ,"We don't think it's right, but I don't write it."

PC: That's fascinating.

RC: And the other thing about the other appraisers, and this is a terribly important point, I'm glad I thought of it. You see the other appraisers will appraise anything. Literally anything from apiece of Mayan pottery to an Egyptian statuette, to a Turkish rug, to 18th century English furniture.

PC: Give them an object and they'll give you a price.

RC: And they'll give you a price. Now we don't believe that this is expertise. We don't believe that anyone in the world has that expertise. We might get ten works from one client to appraise in December of the year. And there might be thirty people involved in appraising them because we send a Picasso to people who know Picasso, we send a Miro to people who know Miro, we send a Max Ernst to people who know Max Ernst. And there may be three different people in each case. And if I were to send a Renoir for appraisal to Klaus Perls he'd send it back to me and say I can't give you the value of a Renoir. Now he goes to every sale, he knows what Renoirs are worth, but he wouldn't undertake to appraise a Renoir because it involves also determining that it's authentic. And he doesn't set himself up as an expert on Renoir. He will appraise for me Utrillos and Chagalls and Soutines and Valtats and various other things but he won't appraise a Renoir or an Impressionist. So that we maintain, we have probably the most complete card system in the world here of who knows what. We keep every catalogue that's issued all over the world comes here, every announcement of a show. Every one of those shows is entered on a card under the artist so that we know who's given exhibitions, who's selling the work of every artist. And when we get a work of that artist to appraise we select people off the card showing the people who's dealt in that artist.

PC: Well, that's some clerical job, isn't it?

RC: It's a terrible job. It's a terrific job. But that's what we call an expert. As I say the other so-called appraisers will appraise anything and we just don't believe that anybody is that smart.

PC: Who can know all those figures and all those objects?

RC: What they do is perfectly obvious. They go the the Collector's Annuary and they look up what a thing has

been sold for, this is not postage stamps. I man one Braque isn't another Braque. Every Braque is different in quality. Even in the Annuary there's no picture of it. You don't know what it was like. You just know that it was a 1924 Braque 18 by 24 inches. Well, Braques aren't Braques.

PC: Right. That's the difference even, you know, with modern pictures with younger artists. You know people don't really know as much as ....

RC: Well, I testified down in this Philadelphia case in which Hammer got this tongue lashing. The judge happened to be the best of all the judges on the Tax Board of the United States, Arnold Rowe. And I pointed out that this idea that a dealer can be told that there's a picture by such and such an artist 18 by 20 and he can tell you what it's worth is just nonsense. I said I have seen two paintings by Matisse both done in 1028, both exactly the same size on canvas; and one is worth ten times what the other one is worth. That's quality.

PC: Yes, quality and connoisseurship. The thing is very hard for the public to understand.

RC: The public doesn't understand how I could walk into that Chrysler exhibition on Cape Cod and as I always do going to any show, stand at the door and look around before looking at individual pictures to get a feel of the whole thing and from forty feet away turn to my wife and say, "Those five Seurts are fake and those three Juan Gris's are fake. How do I know?" I don't know how I know, I just know from looking at them, I've seen enough of them so that, It's like the bank teller who goes through 10,000 checks a day and pulls out the counterfeit signature. He's just used to what the signature looks like.

PC: Right, it's just amazing that indefinable skill that one develops.

RC: Yes, it's eyes. I've been in a recording studio, a concert by Columbia. I've seen Goddard Lieberson doing a recording of an original cast Broadway show and he'd stop in the middle of it and shout to the control room, "Stop," and he'll say, "The second oboe is playing B-flat instead of B." Well, my ear isn't that good but his ear is.

PC: You got involved with the American Federation of Arts in 1946. I have here ....

RC: I was on that board for a long time. I think I was invited to go on that by Roy Neuberger, as I remember. I worked hard on it but I never was terribly enthusiastic about it. In those days it was an awful struggle. They were way underfinanced, they were always in debt. There was not enough that could be done within the limits of the financial pot. As I say, while I worked on it I never felt that I accomplished too much there. And I finally resigned because I didn't feel that I was really contributing enough. And anyhow the American Federation of Arts had a concentration of American art which it isn't that I wasn't sympathetic to it, it was simply that we happened to start off on European art. We couldn't buy anything. In fact we couldn't buy everything we wanted in that field. We certainly couldn't buy everything we wanted in all fields. And I did begin to feel somewhat disillusioned about the quality of American art, the emphasis on novelty as distinguished from quality. I still have considerable disillusionment about that. A lot of people say that I have the same approach that other people had when we were buying European art in the 30's and I objected when I said it was no good. I don't think that's the same approach. I may be wrong but I think that my eyes are sufficiently trained and I think I have a feeling for quality. I know this, I know nothing about Chinese art for instance, but if you were to line up ten Chinese objects in front of me and tell me to pick the two best ones I'd probably pick two of the four best ones simply because I think that if you're trained for quality you can apply your judgement of quality better in any field. If you line up ten Hepplewhite chairs for me I think I could pick two of the four best ones, that kind of thing. And I just don't have faith in quality in most of the current American stuff. I think it has certain amount of interest and novelty but I don't think that it has real quality. When you talk to people about it this kind of art they say, "Oh, it has wonderful color, it has wonderful division of space. Well, hell, Rembrandt had color and space but that wasn't the end. That was the beginning. That's where he began. Every artist worth his salt knows how to handle space and color but he doesn't make that the be all and end all. That's just the means to an end. And I think that too much of current art is emphasizing things that aren't of the greatest significance. At least I can't accept it. So I, in due course, decided to retire from the American Federation.

PC: But you somewhere along the line became involved with the Museum of Modern Art.

RC: That's right.

PC: Had you been a member there or been involved with the people there?

RC: Well, we loaned them all kinds of things, all kinds of exhibitions. What happened, strangely enough was there came a time when I was approached to become a member of the Board of the Guggenheim.

PC: Oh, really.

RC: And I had some reservations about it, and I went out to lunch one day with Rene d'Harnoncourt and asked

his advice. He had become a good friend of all the curators over there had. He'd been to our house for dinner and that sort of thing. And Rene said, "Now don't do it." A couple of weeks later I was invited to Bill Burden's home to meet Stephen Clark who was then chairman of the board. Bill was president. And apparently Rene decided that if I was in the market they were going to make a pitch before I went elsewhere. So that's how I finally got then. I'd been going to dinner with associate members and that sort of thing.

PC: But were you active? I mean, I don't really know what the function of a trustee of a museum is.

RC: Well, I can tell you that very briefly. Museum boards are not different from boards of any other kind of institution that you can think of, whether it be a hospital or a corporation or a charity. Boards usually are made up of 15 to 30 people and are run completely by two to five people. this is true with the Philharmonic, it's true of the hospital of which I was president. It's true of the Museum of Modern Art, and all those boards. The ideal board of a public philanthropic institution should consist of three kinds of people. Wealthy people who can give substantially to the deficit, eminent people who can add to the luster and reputation of the institution. And people who have knowledge and interest and who want to work and who can run the institution.

PC: And who have the time.

RC: And the time and the inclination and the knowledge. The Museum of Modern Art Board is no different in that respect, as I say, than the Board of every institution I've ever been affiliated with. Hospitals, Philharmonic, all kinds of other things. I went on the board. The thing I told Mr. Clark and Bill Burden at that first luncheon meeting was that if they expected me, if they were asking me to join for the purpose of contributing as Mr. Whitney and Mr. Rockefeller and Mr. Clark and Mr. Burden did they should leave me out. I said that if they wanted some people who had a great interest and some knowledge and were prepared to work I was interested. The result was that over the years I've been on a member and an officer, in many cases, of the most important committees. I was vice-chairman of acquisitions committee for ten or twelve years under Jim Soby when he was chairman. I've been vice-chairman of the finance committee and chairman of the publications committee, a member of the executive committee and the vice-president. I'm vice-chairman of the finance committee as well as of the investment committee. I'm on the program committee in my capacity as chairman of the publications committee I'm chairman of each liaison program committee. And I would say that of a board of thirty-odd people at the museum, probably five do all the work for practical purposes. The rest of them attend board meetings. Vote aye or no as recommended by the chair but don't actively get into the guts of the operation. It's been my pleasure and fun to do it. I mean I enjoy the Museum and I enjoy doing the work.

PC: How much of the actual control are you involved with?

RC: Well, this depends on your philosophy. At the new County Museum of Los Angeles the laymen there try to run the museum. Which I think is a great mistake. I think the trustees and the lay members of divisional committees should be responsible for policy but not for administration. I think that the board, let me give you an example from a different field and then you can come back to the museum. If you had a hospital run by a board of doctors I'll guarantee it would be chaos. The doctors have too intense and direct personal interest in the hospital to enable them to set policy and run it.

PC: Well, they don't see a board.

RC: They don't see the board thing. They are mainly concerned, if they're surgeons, if there are enough beds for their patients, if they're orthopedic surgeons if there are enough orthopaedic beds, if they're internists if there are enough ....

PC: Very specific.

RC: They're all interested in their own welfare. When I was president of a hospital for two years I spent a full half-day of every day on the hospital. You can't run a hospital unless you do it, and I would say that 80% of my time was treating with doctors and their problems. There are exceptions, but doctors generally have an idea that the hospital is run for the doctors. It's a great problem to convince them that the hospital is run for the patients. Similarly in a museum not quite to the same extent but each division of a museum fights for its rights and wants more time for shows, more feet of wall space, more budget, more staff. So that lay board and the lay committee are necessary to set policy. But laymen should not try to decide what pictures to buy and what shows to have except in matters of consultation and review. The professional should be given the opportunity of running the show and if it's badly run he should be discharged. But the layman shouldn't substitute his judgement for the professionals'. For instance, as chairman of the publications committee I have nothing to do with selecting the books to be published or what printer is going to do the publishing or who's going to illustrate them, whether they should be in a folio form, large or small. These are operating problems. What I try to do is set up a committee to be useful, an advisory committee of publishers and people not on the board who might be useful

to the director of publications if he needs advice to try to review with him with the idea that it should be a balanced list. That it's one that we can afford to publish within our budget, that includes books that are available to our associate members who are entitled to certain books as part of their membership. That kind of thing. But not to tell them whether A or B should be employed to write the book, or who should illustrate it. Or whether it should be printed abroad or in the United States. So that there are plenty of overriding policy matters largely having to do with finance and budget that a lay board is responsible for. The very selection of a director and chief curator is something the board has to .... But as soon as the board tries to insert itself in the day to day operations and exercise the artistic judgement and to try to decide what shows should be run, what pictures should be borrowed, what pictures should be bought. Now the acquisitions committee is there to advise really the curator. I always took the position when Alfred Barr was the curator of the collection that the acquisitions committee was a useful thing for Alfred to bounce his ideas off. But I always took the position that if Alfred wanted to buy something, after we all voiced our opinions, and I was usually the worst of all the bad boys in saying no, that Alfred should have the right to buy it. He had this committee so he could get the views of people but he was the boss. He had to take the responsibility. And I think that that's the way it should be. On other committees of course there's more direct lay activity. On an investment committee it's practically all trustees. The Director of the museum is there but finances and investments are lay problems. But there are only a few trustees on any board who really become active and get into the works at the museum. The rest of them like to be known as directors, they come to the meetings, they follow along and vote, as I say yea or nay as the president recommends. They drink their tea and go home. At the Museum of Modern Art, Mrs. Parkinson, Mrs. Rockefeller, Wilbur Rice are examples of people who really have been active in the museum and know what's going on and are helpful to the curators. But most of the directors just don't participate that actively.

PC: Well, it depends on their other activities.

RC: It depends on their other activities. And there are a lot of people who like to be associated with a museum, or to be a trustee, or to come to meetings, like to hear what's going on, but don't become deeply involved. And this is always true. As I say, it's true even in business corporations to a great extent.

PC: Is there much that a trustee can do about initiating certain things? Or is that really left to the curatorial .

RC: Well, I think that a trustee can be as active and as useful as he wants to be. My only inhibition against activity is that it be channeled in the proper way. In other words, I think that if a lay trustee has what he thinks is an excellent idea for the operation of the museum, an exhibition, or the buying of a picture, or what not, it should be brought to the attention of the director and carried out by the professionals. There's no reason why a trustee shouldn't initiate an idea, why he shouldn't be as useful to the institution as he can be as long as he then doesn't try to substitute his judgement for the professional's. If he suggests an idea and it isn't adopted and he then blows off the handle because he's a trustee and, by God, he suggested this and nothing was done about it? That's where the trouble begins. And that's where the trouble began in Los Angeles with all those nouveau collectors out there who felt that art had started when they bought their first picture in 1952 and who tried to tell Ricky Brown how to run the museum. This is where the trouble comes in. But I have no hesitation if I get an idea of calling any one of a number of people on the phone over there and saying gee, I saw a picture at such and such place, I think we'd better look at it, or wouldn't it be a good idea to do this kind of show, or wouldn't it be a good idea to hire so and so to write this kind of book. That's fine as long as you don't then say why the hell wasn't my idea adopted. That's where the trouble begins. So that all kinds of ideas are useful but the pros should be the ones to decide whether to implement them. And then as I say, as is true in every other kind of organization, if you find that your pros are doing a lousy job you bounce your pro. But you don't try to substitute your judgement for that of the pro except in the final analysis whether you want to keep him or you don't want to keep him. But as I think to try to interfere with the daily operation of the museum is a great, great mistake. There's plenty of room for a trustee to be useful in making suggestions, participating in the financial side or even ..... I've never had any trouble with curators. And even active museums things I've been flattered that museum curators would come and ask my opinion. They don't always take it. That's something else. But I think a lot of them have had enough confidence in my knowledge and judgement and experience to want to know what I think. They don't always agree with me, but they want to know what I think. And any trustees can be a useful sounding board in that respect.

PC: What about the International Council? What do they do besides the shows?

RC: Nothing. The International Council was organized on the theory that the international aspect should really not be an activity of one museum but it should be, to the extent that it is possible. A cooperative enterprise on a national scale. So that we decided we would invite people to be members of the International Council who lived throughout the United States and even in other countries. We realized that in doing so we were going to step on the toes of some other local museums and have them feel that we were trying to woo their patrons away from them. Over a period of years they learned that wasn't so, that we were limiting our appeals to our international group members simply for the international program. What it has done is it has financed the sending of exhibitions from this country all over the world, to Europe, Asia and South America. And for that purpose has

raised its own funds. In addition to its own membership fees has gotten special grants from foundations and from individuals who might have been interested in sending a show to Latin America or Japan or what not. And has doen a fantastic job. I just was in Russia in June. I had lunch at the Embassy. The Beams were expection, one of the activities of the International Council is so-called Art in Embassy program, getting collections that we sent to Embassies abroad to hang in the Embassy.

PC: American pictures. Right. The Woodward Foundation.

RC: A lot of people have contributed especially to that, people who are interested in it. And the Beams were waiting for a Museum of Modern Art in Embassy Collection to be shown in Russia to be hung in their home. It's a very good, very active program, I think very much worthwhile. It's akin to a traveling exhibition program that museum always had. But it never had the funds to engage in an international program until the International Council was organized.

PC: Well, I think it's had a great influence on the acceptance of American art abroad.

RC: Oh, tremendous. If it weren't for those shows I think that people like Pollock and Rothko and Kline would not be shown abroad nearly to the extent they have. The shows of the New York School ten years ago really brought American art to the attention of Europe for the first time. It's been a very successful, a very worthwhile program. The problem there, as it is with all borrowing these days, is there's such a demand for things to borrow and when you send things abroad it seems a shame to show them only in one place so you try to show them in London and Stockholm and Bonn and Milan and so forth. That means borrowing pictures for two or three years and it's becoming increasingly difficult for anyone to get pictures for that length of time.

PC: Well, and it's even more costly. The values have gone up.

RC: Values have gone up. Insurance problems becomes much more expensive. The whole economics of the borrowed show is getting out of hand at this time. For instance, I don't think there is anybody who could afford in these days to do a first class Van Gogh show.

PC: It's true about traveling exhibitions. It's just incredibly the .... Well, are you involved with any other museums or art-oriented or culture-oriented groups now?

RC: Well, Harvard; visiting committee at Harvard. And the Art Dealers Association.

PC: What activity do you have at the Harvard?

RC: Oh, not a great deal. You know the theory of visiting committees to departments of universities is that the committee meets with the faculty of that department, reviews the curriculum, makes suggestions. Actually its real activity is to help finances. The visiting committee at Harvard meets for two days up in Boston at Cambridge in the fall and for a day in New York in the spring. And there are reports by the faculty of the activities, the courses, new professors, that kind of thing. There's usually a meeting with a group of students who express their views these days very vigorously on what's wrong with the University and what's wrong with the particular faculty that one is a visitor to. There's sometimes a meeting with university officials, the deans or the president, and departmental problems are discussed. They're mainly however means of developing goodwill and financial aid for the individual departments. And to that extent they work pretty well. They interest people in making gifts to the founders, people giving money. They interest people in making loans for exhibitions. And I think that some good even along the lines of the theory of the visiting committee develops in the meetings. I think faculties get awfully close to their own activities and questions are raised by visitors as to why there aren't more courses in Near East art or American art. The great discussion at the Fogg last year was the tremendous hold in the scheme in pre-Columbian and so called primitive art generally. There was considerable discussion during a number of the meetings in the session. Alfred Barr who is now the chairman of that visiting committee, incidentally visiting committees are so se up that a member of the, not of the corporation but of the, what do they call it at Harvard? It's a board of trustees. There's a member of the board of trustees who is chairman of each visiting committee. Alfred Barr is on the Harvard Board and he's chairman of the visiting committee for two years. And he's been a great believer in treating the so-called primitive art as art and not the way it was until very recently in the Peabody Museum simply as an anthropological object. And he's been working a great deal toward trying to plug the hole in the curriculum an din the exhibition program and here primitive art given a place. This kind of think is discussed and I think it's a useful thing. It certainly has proven useful both at Harvard and Smith where I'm familiar with it. At Smith where my wife in developing an interest in the museum, getting gifts, people. For instance as a lawyer somebody comes to me and says I've got a picture or I'd like to give some money to a college or to a museum,. Have any suggestions? And I've been able to have pictures with which the Museum of Modern Art is amply supplied given to Harvard or Smith where they'll be useful. And it develops that kind of interest on a national scale. The visiting committees are made up from all over the country and it results

in there being a sort of ambassador from the department to various parts of the country. It stimulates interest in it. It's a good system.

PC: It's interesting the board never really eventually is involved in the finances at some point, isn't it?

RC: He's got to be because I still think that that's the primary duty of the board, to provide the wherewithal with which the pros can operate. I mean after all, Bill Lieberman doesn't need my advice on what prints and drawings to buy. He does need from me some means of getting the money to buy them. And in the last analysis that's what the board has to be primarily responsible for. Now in order to be useful in that, in order to be educated sufficiently to make the pitch for money, it helps for the board to be actively interested and actively engaged in the operation of the museum and know something about it so we can talk intelligently about what the needs are, what the orders of priority are, and that sort of thing. But there's not getting away from it that the primary duty, the primary responsibility of the board is to raise the money and to set certain over-all broad policies. I mean, for instance, the board has to determine is the Museum of Modern Art going to go back to Renoir and Monet and is it going to look for Manets or isn't it. Maybe that's a basic problem. What is our scope going to be. Some years ago when the deal was made with the Met that's a problem for the trustees, should we make a deal with the Met under which as the pictures get older they're put in the Met and we continue to be modern museum within the last hundred years of each date. Those are things for the Board of trustees and properly so. But day to day operations the board I think should stay out of. It should leave that to the pros.

PC: Is it very difficult for the trustee to raise money for institutions as famous as the Museum of Modern Art?

RC: There's greater competition in money-raising for philanthropy today than there is in business in my opinion.

PC: Really?

RC: Yes, because as you see, everything for which anybody is raising money is worthwhile. I very rarely have anyone ask me for money where I can say, this is just lousy, I won't give to that. That isn't the problem. You can't give to everything. You can only give to a certain number of things. And the pitch for money gets bigger and bigger and from more and more sources. I'm president of the CBS Foundation which handles all contributions, all charitable giving for the CBS. And we have a sizeable amount of money to spend every year. But compared with the requests we have it's just a fraction of the money I could spend if I had the money, and for desirable causes. So that what you're up against with money-raising is trying to not point out that you've got a worthy cause but that you're more worthy than something else. You know all men are created equal and some are created more equal than others. And this is the problem. If you go to the Ford Foundation for a grant, well, everybody goes to the Ford Foundation for a grant. And even the Ford Foundation with its what looks like limitless funds is limited and can't give to everything. So that you have to develop a sales talk, you have to develop, you have to pitch your pitch at what you think the donor is interested in. There are some donors that are interested in seed money for new projects. They don't want to give year after year. They'll give you a certain amount of money to get something started. Well, if you know you're going to that kind of a fellow you have to find something in your program that needs seed money. And you get seed money from him. You go to somebody else who doesn't want to give seed money but will give you $5,000 a year for ten years as an operating fund. You've got to find something that appeals to him. But the competition is tremendous. There's much more money being sought than exists. And this is a country which where the philanthropic giving is just so many more times than it is in all the rest of the world put together.

PC: Yes, it's fantastic.

RC: Well, you take one aspect of it, I guess the Jewish population of this country is, I don't know, seven or eight million people. Well, I imagine that the philanthropic giving of those eight million Jews is probably bigger than the total giving of any country in the world.

PC: It's fantastic.

RC: Because, and this has nothing to do necessarily with the greater character of the Jews, it's simply that traditionally they've had to take care of themselves. They had to take care of each other. And a tradition of philanthropy has developed. When you think that every year in the city of New York $22,000,000 is raised through the Federation of Jewish Charities, year after year $22,000,000 the whole New York Fund raises $3,000,000. The Greater New York Fund.

PC: Really, I didn't know the difference. It's incredible.

RC: It's something like that.

PC: That's fantastic.

RC: And this is due to the fact that when you get the non- Jewish institutions, the New York Hospital, University Hospital, Cornell, all those, they're all much older and they're well funded. Presbyterian Hospital as I remember, has a, when I last knew it, it's probably more with the market up, had a fund of about $180,000,000. So that the income on 180 million dollars, let's say, at even four percent ins seven million a year. Well, I think the total funds of all the 140 federated Jewish philanthropies is about four million. They never had time to accumulate any money. They had to spend it year after year. So they just go out and raise twenty-two million a year. It's just unbelievable that they can do it.

PC: Yes, it's amazing.

RC: But the tradition has been built up continuously year after year.

PC: I didn't know the money was that staggering. Can you talk about your collection for a bit here? How are we doing on time for you?

RC: Go ahead. Somebody may come in and break in and tell me I've got a four o'clock date that somebody else is taking care of it.

PC: Well, let's see, I read your catalog from the show you had at Knoedler's in 1960. Do you still acquire things in that same area?

RC: Yes, we still acquire things. Do you still acquire less and less because our collection was built out of income and not our of capital. And the pictures of the quality that we want begin to be worth $50,000, $80,000, $300,000, we can't buy pictures any more. So that what we've bough on a limited scale are such of the newer works as we think have merit, such as Dubuffet. We have about fourteen Dubuffets which we keep acquiring. And even those individually are much more expensive than we think we used to buy. But we buy more and more antiquities which are still dirt cheap. Henry Moore made an edition of some maquettes for Reclining Figure and they're about maybe ten inches long and four inches wide and five inches high. There's an edition of ten, they come out, say for $3,500 a piece, or maybe $5,000 now or $8,000. I don't know what they get now. I don't keep up with it anymore. Well, I did buy for my wife for her birthday recently a vase about nine inches high from Arafield, which is a dig northwest of Amlas, just beginning now. This is a fantastically beautiful object on tripod legs, ceramic, unique five thousand years old, 3000 B.C. Four hundred dollars. Well, it isn't as stylish as the Henry Moore. There aren't as many collectors would want it. But as a work of art to begin with I think it is incomparably superior and as rare unique object it's just beyond worlds superior. So that we've bough more and more of that kind of thing. We've bought more and more antique jewelry whcih we started to buy a long time ago, but that's getting to be so expensive that we're almost priced out of the market. But when you get collecting in your blood, you know, it's awful hard to stop. You buy what you can, God knows we don't need pictures. We can only hang about 40 percent of what we own. When my son got married, thank God, our children are as interested as we are, this doesn't always happen. The first thing my son said to me when he got married was, "I hope you're going to lend me some pictures." So he has 33 pictures in his apartment on 70th Street. My daughter lives in London and has a lot of stuff in her place. But we can buy much less than we used to and at a much slower rate. Some years we could buy four or five pictures a year. Well, we can't do that any more. So we buy a picture or we buy some objects.

PC: You never really collected very many Americans, have you?

RC: We never got into it. We started the other way, as I said before. We have a few Americans, Morris Graves, Alex Liberman, but not many of the, we have none of the abstract expressionists. One of the problems I find is that in the first place, I never was convinced of their quality comparable to other things. But even beyond that when I think that in order to buy a Franz Kline, an important one, I'd have to take down from the wall a Matisse, a Rouault and a Vuillard to make the space for it, I'm not convinced that i'll get as much pleasure out of it. We never bought for investment. You see, this is the prime thing that I keep advising., telling people, forget about investment. If you're going to buy for investment, you're not going to succeed because the dealers are smarter than you are. Only buy for pleasure. If the pictures go up that's a plus. I still carry all of our pictures on my balance sheet at cost. We sold three pictures for various reasons. They belonged jointly to our children, two children, and I didn't want them ever to get into a row about either of them to buy the other out. So we sold them. We got for the three, net after taxes, more than the whole collection was paid at cost.

PC: That's fantastic.

RC: So, everything we have, about 180 pictures,60 sculptures and what not, on a bookkeeping basis cost us zero. And that's what I consider them, I don't consider them monetary assets at all.

PC: You have a great library I understand.

RC: Yes, I have a very good art library. I wrote the catalog without leaving my own library. I constantly tell

people who want to know how do you go about becoming knowledgeable about art, well, when my partner judge Rosenman decided ten or twelve years ago that he wanted to buy some pictures he asked if I would take him around. I said to him and his wife, We'll take you around, Georgia and I will take you around on the following conditions. First you go out with us on three successive Saturdays for the whole afternoon, secondly that you go to the places we tell you and you sit down and look at the pictures we show you and you don't say a word. I'm not interested in whether you like them or don't like them. I want you to look at them. I said the hardest thing for anyone to learn is to look at a picture. You go in to a museum you go up to the Met and you sit down and you'll see a thousand people go through the room and not one of them will look at the pictures. They'll patronize, they'll pass them, they'll say, oh, there's that Renoir. But nobody sits down and looks at the picture. I said the first thing you've got to do is learn to sit down and look at the picture because you can't have an opinion about it until you've looked at it. And whether you like it or not is not important. Look at it. And I made him to into a gallery a sit down. I put a picture in front of him and made him look at it for fifteen minutes and not say a world. I went abroad, oh, ten years a go, or eight years ago with Sturgis Ingersoll who was then president of the Philadelphia Museum. He had never been to Vienna and he wanted to go to Vienna. His wife was busy. He called me and asked whether I'd go with him. I got leave from my wife and we two old bucks went to Vienna. And we sat for two whole mornings, four hours each, we sat there eight hours looking at the thirteen Breughels in one room in Vienna. And all the two mornings we were there wasn't another should came through and sat down and looked at the pictures. There were streams of people walking through, but nobody looked at them. So this is the way I tackled Sam Rosenman. I made him just sit down and learn to look at a picture. Again I tell people I think there's no substitute for looking. Read books sure, you can learn a lot reading a lot. But in the last analysis what you've got to do is look and you've got to learn to look. It's just like hitting a golf ball, you know. This thing you're going out to play golf and you assume you're going to hit the ball and you assume the thing you do is look at the ball. You have to learn to look at the ball. Everybody lifts his head and I tell him you've got to consciously learn to look at pictures. And the more you look the more you'll see. But if you don't look you won't see anything.

PC: That's true. Do you find that being involved with the institutions and getting to know the curators and the other professionals has been an asset for you in developing your own collection?

RC: A tremendous asset but in a different way than most people use the curators. I know an awful lot of people connected with museums who won't buy a picture until they have one of the curators look at it. We've never had any advice in buying anything we ever bought. We've had each other's advice. We didn't buy anything unless both my wife and I wanted it. But I've found that knowing curators and talking with them and spending evenings with them and all that is very instructive. Just as I find being with any intelligent person whether it be a person interested in politics or in science or what not instructive. I hope to be a student until the day I die. I learn something new every day. And I think people who go to college and think they have finished with their education and don't crack a book again after that are infants.

PC: They've missed the boat.

RC: They've missed the boat completely. Sure I get a great deal out of talking to curators, talking with dealers, talking with other collectors. I learn something from everybody. And the more expert they are, the more professional, the more knowledge they have, the more I can learn from them. But we've never substituted anybody else's judgement for our own. This has been the fun of buying on our own. If we're proven wrong, we're going to be proven wrong, but we've had a pretty good batting average. And a lot of it is due to the fact that when we were buying there was a much greater choice than there is now.

PC: Well, there were fewer collectors.

RC: We were able to look at a great range of things and say we think this is the best one and to buy that one. I mean we, I don't think there's another private collection in the world, and I don't think there's any public collection outside the Museum of Modern Art that has six Gris's of the quality of those. We have about fourteen Vuillards. I think outside possibly Paul Mellon, I don't think there's anybody else who has fourteen Vuillards of our quality.

PC: It's very interesting because there are not very many American collectors who will own more than two or three by somebody.

RC: Well, this is one of the things you will see that Sim Soby says in his introduction to our catalog. We have sixteen Soutines. He points out not only that we collect on a quality basis, but when we became interested in something we apparently had an insatiable appetite for it and kept buying. We were on the point frequently of buying a Chagall. But when we came right up to the point of it we just said we aren't sufficiently convinced. We're not a public institution. We have no obligation on us to have a Chagall so we never bought a Chagall. And we still feel that, attractive as some Chagalls are, they're not frightfully important in the terms that, we can be wrong. There was no duty on us to buy a Chagall. We have two Urtillos. Well, I don't think much of Utrillo by and large as a painter, but the two Utrillos we have I think are absolutely first rate pictures by any standards. They're

unique pictures. And this is the way we have always bought. We don't care if we have thirteen Soutines, if we saw one we liked we bought that one. On the other hand, as I say we missed the boat on Klee to a great extent because by the time we .... Although we have I think one of the greatest of all Klees, that's when I finally got around to be willing to go with my wife. We finally saw this Klee and I said now this is the Klee we'll buy. It's in color in all the books, it's one of the great ones, very much more painted. You see I like painterly things. I like things with guts in the painting. And that's why we like Soutine and Vuillard, for painterly qualities.

PC: It's interesting though that you didn't like some of the abstract expressionist who were so painty.

RC: Well, you see, I think that this is a better picture that anything Pollock has ever painted. Probably nobody with agree with me.

PC: It's a Riopelle.

RC: It's Riopelle. To me it has everything that Pollock has plus an organization and intent and motivation and arrangement that Pollock for me lacks. I think that Pollock is frightfully important as an innovator. But no picture of Pollock's that I've every seen do I think is as good a picture as that one. I'm obviously wrong by professional standards. But I'm not responsible to anybody but myself. So we bought Riopelle from the first exhibition that he ever had, two of them, this one and one that's in my son's apartment. As a painting I think its better than any Pollock that exists.

PC: This is what? 1953?

RC: No it's 1952.

PC: I haven't seen anything by him recently.

RC: Well, he has a show every year. The units have tended to get bigger, the squares of painting are about that big now. There's a beautiful one I bought for the CBS collection over on the 35th floor at CBS, a later one, oh, it must be around 1945.

PC: There are lots of corporations buying art these days, aren't there?

RC: A lot of them. When the new building was built they wanted some good things for the executive floor. And a committee was appointed by Paley, the Chairman, Stanton the president, and Jim Soby, who got in with me. And I went around and found most of the pictures and submitted them to the committee. And they were bought.

PC: How is Mr. Soby these days?

RC: Oh, he was better the last time I saw him. He's had a series of illnesses that have really laid him low. But when I saw him just before I went to Europe he was in pretty good shape.

PC: I just wonder if there are any other things that we could talk about here about your art activities. Are there any other institutions that you've been involved with that have to do with the arts that we haven't touched on?

RC: Well, only Smith College through my wife. She's still on the visiting committee. She was the second chairman. Bonnie Racefield was the first chairman. She was the second chairman. And I've always had sort of a soft spot for Smith. I've spoken to the modern art groups in Chicago, St. Louis, and Minneapolis at their invitation about the market and fakes and that sort of thing. But I don't think there are any other institutions that I have had any connection with.

PC: You're still on the board and things at the Modern are you not?

RC: Yes, right at this minute, I don't know how long it will be.

PC: The Museum has grown so much.

RC: Yes, it really has.

PC: I doesn't seem to stop ever. Are there any foundations that you're involved with that have art programs that you have a special interest in?

RC: No, the foundations I'm connected with are general philanthropic foundations usually set up by clients of mine. They're family foundations that are really conduits for the family's personal giving and I'm on because they feel I'm in touch with lots of different kinds of philanthropic activities, hospitals, museums, musical, theatrical, and I can steer them in those fields. But there are no foundations that are completely dedicated to art.

PC: Well, some have, you know, a more general interest, specific interests.

RC: Most of the foundations are, as I say, really conduits for a group of patrons charitable activities. They put money into the foundations. It's easier to find out of the foundation that it is personally because you can lump securities in and sell them and then have the money to use. But none of my foundations are particularly oriented to art. Although they give to museums but they also give to everything else.

PC: Okay, are there any other things that you think we could talk about at this point? I don't really have any other questions about the ....

RC: Well, I constantly express regret at the turn which so many collectors have taken toward commercialism. I think there is a true broadening of interest in art to begin with. I think there are more people really interested in art than ever before and I think there are advantages that the present collectors have against the collectors of the earliest part of the century. I think that the Fricks and the Mellons and people like that bought art that they really weren't interested in, that it was the thing for a rich man to do and their dealer told them it was a good Greco to buy and they bought it. I think that today's collectors are much more personally involved. What I regret to some extent is that they have too much of an eye on the market.

PC: And they've become pseudo dealers?

RC: They've become, well, pseudo dealers or at least pseudo investors. That they're mixing their collecting with the investments side of it. There may be a justification for it in the sense that today things cost so much that when money of that kind is spent there must be an eye turned toward the investment side of it. Maybe there's that justification. But I find too many of the collectors I talk to talking about their collections in the same way they talk about their stocks and bonds. You know, I bough this two years ago for $2,000 and I sold it for $5,000. Well, that's a very pleasant feeling that something you bought for $2,000 is selling for $5,0000, but I think it's a question of emphasis. I don't think you can divorce the financial aspect altogether when you're paying as much as pictures cost these days. But, as I said before, talking with young collectors I try to persuade them as strongly as possible that they should buy what they like, buy it because they like it, and if they don't like it they shouldn't buy it, simply because somebody, some dealer says, look, buy it now. Even if you don't like it three years from now bring it back and I'll give you twice as much for it. That's not the theory on which to buy. Wait, look, don't buy quickly. Go around and look at everything that's there. When you see something you feel you can't live without strain to buy it even if it's more than you want to pay because that's the one you'll enjoy. And forget about whether it goes up. If it goes up that's a plus, that's fine. But buy it because you want it. And I think that there are just masses of people who are more interested in being collectors than they are in the art. Everybody wants to be a collector these days. Everybody who has two pictures has a collections. We try to shun the word collection as much as we can. I mean when you have to give credit if you loan a picture, try to tell them to put down property of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph F. Colin instead of Collection. I think this thing has become a kind of fetish with people.

PC: And then everybody has a private museum too.

RC: That's right. Everybody is a collector. And also to learn about the things they buy as they can, look at them week after week, read about them. It's part of the fun. So few museums as I go around the world have intelligent labeling of their pictures. I like to know the dates of the man, I like to know the date the picture was painted to the extent that it related to different parts of his career. Labeling in museums is very unsatisfactory by and large. But they may know that most people probably aren't interested in the details that we're interested in. We had a great experience this spring. We had letters from Alfred Barr to Russian directors and we were at the Hermitage on a Sunday and we were welcomed by the Director and some of the curators and spend the day. There were huge crowds, bus loads of people. You could hardly see the pictures. We said we'd be back on Tuesday. And they said, "What are you doing tomorrow?" We said, "The museum is closed on Monday." They said, "Not for you." So we had the whole Hermitage to ourselves all day Monday with curators taking us through the collections. Nobody in the place.

PC: Oh, that's fantastic.

RC: It was a great experience. You could really see the pictures. It was a great experience being in a museum absolutely alone spending as much time as you wanted and nobody moving in front of you and nobody peering over your shoulders. It was really a great experience.

PC: Okay, I want to give you a loaded question. What do you think is going to happen at the Museum of Modern Art now with the changes that are going on and the chances are will go on for the next couple of years or so?

RC: Well, changes of what kind? I don't think there are more changes now than there have been in the past. It's a bigger institution. There are always changes. I think changes are always for the better. I mean I think that a museum that isn't changing, that is standing still, is really going backwards. Are you talking about the changes

in directors? Is that what you're talking about?

PC: Well, the directors, the curatorial changes, the reaction of the art world.

RC: Well, you see what's happening to the Museum of Modern Art, we're coming in art history to a bridge period. The Museum started around 1930, as you know. Alfred Barr at that time was a very young man. For so many years the Museum of Modern Art was Alfred Barr and Alfred Barrr was the Museum of Modern Art. And now this was all to the Museum's good. But there comes a time when no matter how good a man is he can't last forever and you therefore have to make a change and you have to turn things over to a younger group. I think that's happening at the Museum. I think there'll be some growth pains. There's bound to be in the change from one tradition to another. But I think that he staff is very competent staff, that there's no sense in trying to decide whether Bill Liberman or, what's his name, Bill ?

PC: William, Agee?

RC: Oh,no, I mean the man who's the professor at NYU.

PC: Oh, Rubin.

RC: Bill Rubin. There's no sense in trying to to say is Bill Rubin or Bill Liberman as good as Alfred Barr. They're different. They're a new generation. And it's probably sie that they are different and a new generation. Alfred had his time and did his stuff and built up an amazing collection and a very powerful institution. And now somebody has to carry on. There may be some pains during the interim until the proper people are found. But I think there's a very strong staff. I think that the architecture department and the film department and the painting and sculpture departments have very able people in them and I have complete confidence that they'll be able to go on. I think that like any institution a stronger director is needed. That somebody has to be the boss no matter how many able workers in the vineyard there are. Somebody has to be the boss. And such a person will have to be found. And it's not easy to find them any more than it's easy to find a good president for a corporation now.

PC: I understand that museums now across the country are having tremendous problems getting directors.

RC: Tremendous problems. A regular game of musical chairs. When anyone is hired from one place they shift all over the place because there's no supply of, but it's no different from any other field. I'd hire fifteen lawyers in this office today if I could get the fifteen lawyers I want. I can get 15,000 lawyers but not the fifteen I want. And it's the same thing in every field. We're all overworked here. Taking people of less competence than your standards require simply means more work because you have to check them and worry about what they're turning out. We'd take fifteen men if we could get the men we want. But so would every other top law office in New York.

PC: That's fantastic. But I wonder why in the museum's case it's so difficult because the universities seem to be turning out students and all those programs.

RC: Yes, but I think there are a lot of reasons. In the first place museum pay has been behind the pay of even academic institutions. It's being equalized now but for a long time it was far behind the top academic institutions. The universities can offer three months holidays. They have all kinds of advantages.

PC: Graduate students can do work and research.

RC: That's right. All kinds of things. So the competition for the top notch intellect in the art field is, like competition all over, very tough. The fact that the universities are turning out art students isn't the answer. Oh, 15 or 20 years ago Arthur Judson who was then probably the leading concert manager in the world said to me, "You know the Juilliard and all of our other music schools every year turn out a hundred pianists who can play faster and louder than Rachmaninoff but they're not Rachmaninoffs." And this is the problem. You can turn out loads of students but how many of them are top fellows who can run an institution? And this is a problem in every field, lawyers, executives. The shortest supply in the world is top corporate executives. They keep stealing from each other.

PC: Offering more bonuses and stock options and all kinds of things.

RC: More bonuses and more salaries. And God knows there are loads of people working in business but the number that is of top caliber is always limited in any field. And this is even more so in the museum field because you start with a relatively small supply and the relatively few top institutions where the training is good and where people can go through and really learn how to run a show. If you'll turn off that thing for a minute I'll express some opinions to you about .... You take a person like Sherman Lee whom I think is the best museum director in the United States today. I think that Sherman Lee could have had the Met if he wanted it. I know he

was offered the Fogg. He was very much tempted because it would give him a lot of time to teach and so forth. But he couldn't resist what he has at Cleveland, which is a $2,000,000 acquisition fund with the fun of buying. But I think Sherman is the most serious and most able museum director in the United States. I think Perry Rathbone in Boston has great ability. But there are major museums in the United States with directors who I wouldn't make an offer to, really major museums. So that the supply is very short.

PC: Well, it's a difficult kind of person you need. Someone who understands scholarship and business and a broad variety of art things and can work with people, trustees.

RC: There are 166 vacancies in presidents of American universities. Now you'd think they could draw on faculty and so forth. They can't get them for the reason that you're just pointing out, they need a man who can get along with trustees, who can raise money, who can get along with students, who's a scholar. It's a tough job.

PC: That's extraordinary. Okay, we could go on about that forever.

RC: Oh, yes, that's an endless problem.

PC: Right.

[END OF INTERVIEW]