



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

Oral history interview with Joseph T. Fraser,  
1979 Dec. 1-1980 Jan. 30

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

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# Transcript

## Interview

**JF:** Joseph Fraser

**PL:** Patricia Likos

**PL:** Mr. Fraser, you were born in Philadelphia; how did you become interested in the arts, the visual arts?

**JF:** Well I don't know that I had a very intimate interest in the [visual] arts until I was certainly out of high school. I had the good fortune, I went to the Northeast High School in Philadelphia, and I had the good fortune to become a friend of a gentleman teacher who was head of the History Department. He also was a pipe organist and played in one of the big churches here in town. It was very large, and a new organ had been installed in the church where he played. He needed an assistant and I played the piano, not very well, ever but I played and during the work with him and studying the pipe organ with him I was with one of the most cultured gentlemen that I could ever had, that any growing boy could have enjoyed. He was a wonderful fellow, marvelously well read, and he spoke a couple of languages besides his English. He was a thoroughly cultured and splendid chap. His name was Oswald Michener and he later became the principal of the old Central High School down here just on North Broad Street, not very far from the Academy. So that I think that it was an aesthetic interest, but it certainly didn't have to do, really, with the arts of painting and sculpture particularly. And . . . [PAGE TWO MISSING] . . . here to Philadelphia, one of the men had been a former Philadelphian and knew my family, they lost the fourth man who played the piano and did their accompanying and he was the second tenor so they asked me if I . . . and I was too young to be in the Army, so I persuaded my parents that these fellows were all right. And it sounded like I was doing something, I'd tried to get into the Army but my parents objected. I wasn't eighteen, and my brother was already over there, he was six years older than I was. So they finally gave their consent and I went off with these fellows. There was a tiny little salary, it was really only expenses that were paid, but it meant that I had living expenses all paid, you see, and I did get a little bit of money together in the year with them. And when I got out of that I entered college the fall of 1918 and went into uniform. I was in the Student Army Training Corps, they called it. All the big universities did this. But of course the war ended in November, by the first of 1919 I was out of the Army again and there really was very little discipline or anything else, but it was supposed to . . . and a few of the fellows who had gone for the first month had been transferred to Officers Training Corps, that was what the idea was. But it also meant that I was there just a very short time. When then I was in . . .

**PL:** At the University of Pennsylvania?

**JF:** At the University of Pennsylvania and this same man who'd been such a fine influence while I was in high school gave me extremely good advice. He said, "Don't just go and take a general course." He said, "I think you owe yourself a profession." And he said, "Now you just think . . .", and he'd gotten some literature for me and we looked over all this sort of thing and I had enjoyed drawing and we looked over all these things and I decided maybe architecture was what I would try to do. And so in 1918, in the fall when I went to college, I entered the architectural school at the University and graduated then four years later from the University and that was one of the high spots of the school's record. They had had as head of Design Staff, Paul Cret, a Frenchman who had come over before the war and had a fine very important office here in the city. It was originally a Paul Cret, a single name, but he had four partners within a few years and they were Hardison, Huff, Livingston, and Larson, which after Cret's death the main contingent of those four men continued the office and the office got to be known as H2L2, there were two H's and two L's: Hardison, Huff, Livingston, and Larson. Well, Paul Cret was a great designer and an inspired teacher. He did some very, very fine buildings. There weren't very many things in Philadelphia to his credit but he was the designer of what is now the bridge over to Cambden, called Benjamin Franklin Bridge. And then he had things, oh, he did some beautiful things all over the country. But he was an inspired teacher and I did have four wonderful years with him. I had the good fortune in my junior year of working with the critic who was in charge of the junior students, a man by the name of Robert Armer McGoodwin, who had a small office, but he was very well known. This was a rich period in Philadelphia when some of the suburbs were being very handsomely built up with important buildings and they spent a great deal of money on them. I had the fun of going into his office, he's asked me in my junior year if at the end of my senior year I would come right to him, and so it worked out that way and I went directly from college in the spring of 1922 into Robert McGoodwin's office. I was there until the Depression wiped all the architects out. In '29 there was just nothing there were a few years. I was ready for a partnership there in that office and had a wife and two children and just the whole bottom dropped out. There was nothing to do. We had to give up our little house in Chestnut Hill and go over to Jenkintown to live with Mrs. Fraser's parents and things of that kind. I played the pipe organ in the middle of St. Luke's church in Bustletown which was a part of Philadelphia and I got

the salary of twenty dollars a month and that was the income we had for three years! I don't know how we ever got through the whole thing, it was simply terrific. And of course, I had expected always that I would go back into architecture.

**PL:** During the years that you worked for the firm, what kind of work did you do with them?

**JF:** Well, he was a residential architect. There were some wonderful developments right in the center of Chestnut Hill. One group of the houses were called the French Village and I had the fun of designing those houses. They were lovely stone houses with slate roofs, steep slate roofs. That was of course in a time of very great eclectic measures. When you were studying the practice of architecture your client might come and say he wanted an English house for they wanted an American Colonial house or they wanted an Italian villa, don't you know. You were a designer and you were an artist. The emphasis all through my college years, we were all treated as artists. Architects then, architects' training was the training of the artists, and the design was the principle thing that you were judged by and I suppose this was all easy in the end, it was a wonderful background for me. Finally I got a job. The Academy of Fine Arts had a summer school, had run a summer school out at a place called Chester Springs, it's just thirty miles outside the city beyond Valley Forge, and it ran just as a summer school for four months, and it was in that very beautiful part of Pennsylvania, untouched. The Perkohan Creek ran through the place and they siphoned water off into a wonderful outdoor swimming pool, and it was just one of the most exquisite places. And so we went out there, they gave me a house there on the property, we owned over a hundred acres and there was very little salary but they did pay me a little salary, and of course, they fed us. Thanks, really, to my being lucky and having Mrs. Fraser, an extremely gifted cook, and she just, you see me healthy at 81, I'm that way just because of her. We went out there to that place. We had students from, oh, we'd run from 40, 50, sometimes up to 80 students.

**PL:** Was this in the summer program?

**JF:** Just the summer program. Then, well, one for the reasons for my going was that when the war came, they had found that they summer program out there was an extravagance which the Academy couldn't afford to keep going and they had closed down the summer school, but there were about two or three years just before that happened when the summer school as a place had become so well known and so advantageous, it was a heaven for students, that they had run it for both a summer and a winter school, and that of course was very much of our expenses because there were very few artist students who could afford to go to a boarding school. Not only the war brought about the closing of the summer school but it had been an extravagance, a very expensive one.

**PL:** Were you the director of the school during the thirties?

**JF:** No, not then, I wasn't. I went out there, the president under whom I made my connection with the Academy was a man whose house I had designed while I was in the architecture business. I knew him and his wife before we went to the interview to see whether they'd take us on to run the summer school.

**PL:** Do you recall his name?

**JF:** Alfred Gustavus Baker Steel.

**PL:** You certainly do.

**JF:** And he was president for ten years and he'd been president for a couple of years before I went there. So that I took my family from the attic in my in-laws' house in Jenkinstown and we moved up there and of course, when the fall came, the summer school closed and they didn't quite know what to do with me, but they did seem to think that maybe there was something in the future and so they took me in to the Broad and Cherry Street and that first winter I really just laid plans for another summer at the Chester Springs because there were lots of things that I would like to see changed that we could enjoy that weren't there the first summer. So, at any rate, I went there, spent the winter in the Academy without any specific responsibilities except to plan for next year. So the next summer we went out again and Mrs. Fraser planned all the meals and did all the marketing down in Phoenixville or over in Paoli. We had access to two very good places to do our marketing.

**PL:** About how many students did you have?

**JF:** Between 50 and sometimes it was up to 80 or 90. They had to come for at least two weeks but some of them came and spent all summer. It was a come and go thing, and it was heaven, it was just wonderful. We got a heck of a lot of students and there was a great big old barn on the place that had been torn apart and they had a sculpture studio there that was really superb. On the first floor, which had been the old cattle floor they'd put a cement floor all over that and we had cows and chickens and goats and sheep and anything else, just right in the rooms. The kids could model, these could act as models for the students. And a wonderful great skylight to the north they'd put in, in this old barn and so the place . . . There was another small barn we used as an

exhibition room and the meals were very simple but there was a dedication, the kids just were, they were out by, we had breakfast I think at 7:30 or 8:00 in the morning. By 9:00 there wasn't a person really right around the buildings, there were all off all over the landscape and in the artists studios. And then the faculty members all were fellows who were teaching in the winter at Broad and Cherry Street, so they came out and they had a time. So all through the week there would be a different instructor and a couple of them came and would spend a night there with us. There was a fine tennis court on the place and a beautiful swimming pool, it was just paradise. We made, of course, very sweet and intimate friends. We as a family sat in this great long dining room with the students, all three meals, you know, every day, and we had to me, there were very few cars then so that in the evenings we had to make our own fun, don't you know, it was kind of primitive, but delightful, just as delightful as it could be. The thing ended finally almost because a lot of the professionals went out. After the war the men who chose to be artists on their Veterans Administration program, and they chose it because, a lot of them, they weren't into particularly in being artists and we had to accept them simply because it was part of being patriotic and the government of course would succeed to place a lot of these fellow and if they chose a legitimate place, of course their tuition was paid.

**PL:** Do you remember any students in particular from the summer schools?

**JF:** Oh, we still keep in touch with them. As a matter of fact, just this morning there was one student who was there on the first year that we went. He had just come, had graduated the year before from Harvard College, but he was studying painting and he was with the Academy studying for three years and he won a European scholarship to Europe and came back and had another additional year at the Academy on his scholarship, and then, because he was there and was knowledgeable, having been a student at Chester Springs, he became my assistant for a while and we moved him in town and he ran the school in town, the school part of the Academy in town for me for several years.

**PL:** What was his name?

**JF:** Henry Hotz. And his parents were both very professional singers. His father was a great baritone and his mother was the best local coloratura soprano there was in the city, so he came from an interesting background, too. And then the Second World War came along and he went into the Navy and I lost him as the head of the school and when he came out of the, I don't know, he was in the Navy and when he came out of the Navy he did that . . . He was married Athena and he had one child and he felt that he really couldn't go on in the art game so he had no thought to come back to us, and he got a very good job with the Curtis Publishing Company. It had to do with the color reproductions, so many of which were just becoming so popular and they were used more and more by the press and by the magazines, and so he had a very good job for many years until the Curtis closed down. I tell you all this because you asked this particular question: did I know any of the students? Well, here was this one fellow that we've kept in touch with all these years and now he has retired and he was on the phone this morning talking to me. He lives out near Westchester.

**PL:** So you found that you liked education.

**JF:** Yes, of course. We immediately, well, they had had a very simple connection with the University of Pennsylvania, the Academy had when I went there, but we enlarged that and it was what they called the coordinated course. The students who were painters and sculptors in the Academy could pay the tuition out at the University for the number of courses they took and a great many of them took late afternoon courses and even evenings so that they could do their major time at the Academy. They had to, of course, make their grades on the work they did at University and if they went over a period of four years and had good grades they could get a degree, as well. Of course, the students at the Academy normally didn't, there were no degrees in painting and sculpture, but they were granted degrees really on the work they did, all the technical work at Broad and Cherry and all their college work out there. It went on for years and then there was another aspect of that that was interesting because of course I'd been at the University in Architecture, and one of the most interesting programs of course during that period was of Paul Cret and this French background, and also really all the design, there was great designing being done in the United States, all influenced by the Beaux Arts movement and so all through my college training I wasn't trained to do houses or any specific thing, they were all grand programs of great libraries, music halls or convention halls, planning of cities, don't you know, but all based on the great French plan idea. Paris, everybody looked to Paris and so that when I got to the Academy and found this coordinated course going there anyway . . . I've skipped a little bit. While we were at college I was conscious of the fact that there were programs that were issued with certain architectural problems which would involve not only the architect but involved the coordination with a painter and a sculptor, and so the students from the two schools worked on a common problem over a certain period of about six weeks every winter. A small group, you see, did this thing and they had both criticism from the architects at the University as well as the architects have the advantages of criticism for the artists who were the painters and sculptors who were at the Academy, you see. It was a wonderful program and of course I did it with enthusiasm and a certain knowledge because it was right down my alley. The Academy for a great many years has been very fortunate in having an endowment under the name of Cresson, you've seen that, and the Cresson Awards were rich, wonderful awards. It meant

that a student in winning that award could go abroad for three months of the summer, all expenses paid, and he wasn't told to do anything, only that he had to bring back some examples of the work he did while he was gone, but they were allowed to do all kinds of things. There was one boy I remember who had become very interested in portraiture while he was at the Academy and he went to England, I guess some of them went over to England and then went over to the Continent of course then they all went on boats, and they'd go to Italy and then work up from Italy, but most of them did the whole trip, Italy, France, all the way up through England and back. And he went to England first and then there was a great collection of Holbein drawings at, not Windsor Castle, but there was this great collection and he stayed all summer long and studied nothing but Holbein. This is no criticism of that at all. And while they were there I would go over sometimes to see them off on the boat and then all the time they were over there we got letters and postcards and this business of breaking up our house now, I've got hundreds of postcards from the kids who traveled. And then of course after their travel they scattered all over the United States and some went abroad and we'd keep hearing from them all the time. Some of them are down in Florida, we've got some intimate friends down in Florida. A girl from Annapolis lived in our house for a while. This little house when we took this house we had the two children but Sally was just a baby and Joe was a little bit older and we had two rooms up on the third floor that we could rent out to students, oh, I don't know, 3 or 4 dollars. And of course my salary was very meager. We rented these two rooms, they were lovely rooms up there, they had fireplaces in them. There were 6 fireplaces in his house. And so we were very close to these students. On girl who was up there, she was there for three winters and there's a stairway, a cellar stair that goes out on the street, and there was a lovely great big laundry room at the back in the basement and then we heated the house with coal, a great big coal heater in the front part here and there was this great big lovely room at the back and the kids from the school had their parties and the one girl cooked meals down in the basement and she used the cellar door here, you know, and we lived a wonderful life with the students and got to know them all, or course, very intimately. The art students are a great lot. they're not a very orthodox bunch, just as artists aren't orthodox in the way they think and do, and they break the rules and they do a lot of questionable things sometime but we need these kind of people. I could live with them handsomely and very happily because it was just marvelous to think that I would play some role in the training of these people, so that Mrs. Fraser and I enjoyed a remarkable life. Of course, what happened was that I had the school for only 2, I took the summer school one summer and then I was at the Academy the next winter and I took the summer school the next summer but then at the end of that summer and I have told you that "Bud" Hotz came in and helped me then with the school, as the curator of the school, and in, it must have been two years after I went there, if you look under Who's Who these dates are all down, I don't have them in the head, but the old gentleman who had been the director of the Academy died.

**PL:** Was that in 1938?

**JF:** That would be about 1938, and of course I'd been with the Academy there for three years at least before that. Then when Mr. John Andrew Meyers, the old director, and he died they asked me then if I wouldn't take the directorship. So I only really actually ran the school alone for just the first three years that I was there, and of course the last of those three years I guess I had Bud Hotz there. The record would show all of that. Then, taking that over the school was still under my direction, but it didn't mean that I had to take much responsibility in changing the faculty or anything, the men, the thing just went on pretty much the way it had been going and the system at the Academy was one where you hadn't in a sense artists in residence, but they were merely all artists from Philadelphia, or some from New York, and those men came to the school for one day a week.

**PL:** Who was teaching at the Academy when you took over the directorship?

**JF:** Well, Daniel Garber, whose portrait, one of his pictures, is right here. He was one of the leaders in the school that grew up with the colony almost at New Hope so that Daniel Garber and Francis Speight, one of Francis Speight's landscapes is all the way back at the end of the room there. And Henry McCarter whose landscape is right there. These men were all on the faculty then, and of course they all became staunch friends so that our house is enriched with lots of memories of those fellows with whom I've worked and then of course over the years they've changed. There came along Franklin Watkins, that little landscape there over the davenport is one of Franklin Watkins' paintings. And we became very staunch friends up until he died. These fellows all . . . they were unique, no two of them were alike and they were allowed, the Academy never ever I think put any stamp of the institution, if you will, on them because these men, when we went into their classrooms, why they taught.

**PL:** You worked closely with them, then, as director?

**JF:** Oh, yes indeed, and a lot of them, as I say, after I became director . . . the faculty, of course, has changed over the years but from that time on I had influence on who the incoming new ones would be but as director the school was under my care too, and we had a good many, there were quite a few changes in the curator, the head of the school is called curator, and that didn't pay a great big salary and we had some terribly nice people who helped there but it still had to be under my direction all the years then that I was still on hand but I think later on, when the salary could be an improved salary and it could attract more able people, more experienced people, why, I didn't have as much responsibility with the school work.

**PL:** Did you have any goals or interests in changing anything about the Academy, or were you pleased with the way it was going and in maintaining it?

**JF:** Oh, I really think I, I don't think I had any feelings of any great need to change the school in the best sense, because there are no rules about painting and sculpture in the best sense. Lots of things can be taught, but the system is an excellent one and the best art schools have all run because they had good artists on the faculty. They weren't professional people in the true sense, not professional teachers, you see. And then, of course, as soon as I became director I inherited the tremendous business of the annual exhibition and the use of the galleries themselves and the care of the great permanent collection, but that's an entirely different phase of my work at the Academy. I think maybe the experience there does divide into the work when I was only with the school and then the work when I had the school along with the Academy. Then later the gallery and the permanent collection and the great big exhibitions that we staged there took my major time. All of the years there we had a very slim budget and there were loads of things that cried for attention, and fortunately since I was away the regime has . . . nearly all the board members have changed and the people who were interested have changed and they have found money and they did this wonderful restoration to the Furness building and air conditioning and so on, the vaults, of course, have all been air conditioned so that the pictures get very much better attention. We had so little money even to care for the pictures, the cleaning of the pictures. With a collection as large as ours we should have been doing it all the time, and I went for years without a conservator on the staff. That's another chapter.

**PL:** Did Furness have any influence on you, or what was your opinion of him when you were a young architect?

**JF:** It was a fascinating era. His things were unique. He was an artist and nobody else did anything quite like Furness. He was an important fellow. The Academy was fortunate to be housed in a building that was so unique, there wasn't anything else really quite like it so with the restoration it's given the present regime a wonderful lift to feel that they're in, that very building they're in has started a new era, don't you know? The whole thing, the building, is splendid. The old galleries were so hot in the summertime up there on the second floor, people didn't come in in great crowds unless it was something very special. It was too hot. The sun poured down the skylights, the whole ceiling of the building is all skylights. And then, in the winter, by the same token, the cold just came down from the skylights the same way and, there was one . . . There always used to be a, it was traditional that the president of the Academy and his wife would entertain the hostesses and there would be a line of important ladies to open the show on the first night. The entertaining was always very lavish and splendid and they all wore the best bib and tucker and we all had to wear tails, always white tie and tails, and we'd wear out a pair of white kid gloves just shaking hands at the top of the stairs. This of course was still another thing, but it does seem as though there was, the thing that I've told you chiefly now is my first experience at the school and I have no criticism really, or I didn't then really feel that much had to be changed about the school. Those kids that were there had a wonderful chance to get to know each one of those artists and when they went out, and of course the most talented of them, so many of the talented ones, won these wonderful scholarships to Europe, you see. And then among those, some of them even later on won Rome Prizes and went to Rome, you see. The fundamental thing was ideal behind the school and its changes.

**PL:** In your years at the Academy, your responsibilities were divided into two main groups: the administration of the school and the planning and organizing of the major exhibitions. Let's talk about the school first. What was your relationship to the administration of the school?

**JF:** Well, I had a very interesting and a fine introduction because my first responsibilities had to do with the summer school that was out in Chester Springs, and that school had been established way back in about 1920 or so, and it ran only for about three months in the summer and the students, any student from anywhere in the country could come and they were boarding students and they could come for as short a time as a week or two weeks, and a lot of them did. And then lots came out for the whole summer. And never having had anything at all to do with running a school, let alone an art school, and going out and having a boarding school where we had to plan the meals and run the place physically, it was really quite a responsibility. But it did mean that I saw the students very intimately, and then because I felt a need of some help on their level and because there were . . . we were rather isolated out there in the country and there was a swimming pool that seemed to me that it ought to have some kind of supervision some part of the time, there was a fine tennis court that needed some physical attention, so that I asked for and they gave me enough scholarships so that for a least half the season I would have two boys and two girls, and they could also keep me alert to the problems that sometimes would come up in dormitory living, you see, because they were right with all those students. And then the girls, they served a tea in the afternoon when the youngsters had all been out painting all day or up in the sculpture studio and they would come down there for ice cream and a cup of tea and the girls who were proctors took care of that tea for us, and the boys scrubbed the swimming pool which had to be scrubbed out every three or four weeks because the Pickering Creek simply almost ran through this big concrete pool and it got very dirty looking, the water was never dirty, but the sides of the pool needed attention. You see we lived with the students right away and we had meals with them, three meals a day, and all sat at the same tables so that right away I had that very intimate contact. Then too, I got to know the instructors out there too because almost all the men who were on

the greater faculty came out a day a week so that . . . and we had to arrange, and we had another student who would come out and his chief job would be to be the driver of the station wagon. We were just far enough from Paoli and Phoenixville to have to arrange for all the arrivals and leaving of all the students, and it was a time when there were very few automobiles, the students didn't own automobiles. Well, not having automobiles we had to make our own fun, and it didn't mean that after dinner at night everyone went off somewhere, they all still were there all hours of the day and night, so that my getting to know the students was immediate. And then, of course, I had had the delight of, directly after I graduated as an architect from the University I had the fun of going abroad with another fellow student and we had four months abroad. And then the moment I had work with the students I couldn't but be conscious of these wonderful prizes that the Academy could give to its students by Cresson scholarships which gave them three months abroad in the summertime. And I quickly realized that they need help just as . . . I had gone abroad with very little background, but as an architect and studying architecture I think maybe the scope was wider and we had had to do more research than the painters and sculptors, but at once I felt that I could give them some help in guiding them because most of them really didn't know whether Italy was north of England or not and they were afraid to study very much about it because if they lost the work would have been done for nothing and they really were very sensitive people, you know, people with the creative urge and so this was another factor in it all of my getting to know very much about them. And then, because the instructors came out and we had to go to the station to get them and we had to take them to the station again afterwards and a few of them would stay once in a while, overnight, but the students had to be close. I think of one interesting little experience we had with Daniel Garber and he was of course one of the leaders and perhaps, I think, one of the very best at the school of painters who settled in New Hope, up on the Delaware River. And he would come and stay overnight with us. He roomed in the dormitory building, the men's dormitory building, but there was a room there call the Washington Room because it was a genuine tradition that Washington had been quartered for a while in that building and so there was a room on the second floor of that dormitory building that some friends had put some quite nice Early American furniture in there was a nice old high post bed and Garber just loved it too, and he had a great appreciation for those particular things and so . . . of course, his chief interest was landscape and he had gone down one afternoon right beside the tennis court, as I recall, there was a very beautiful single tree that he was talking about the technique of recreating the feeling of foliage, you see, and the light through the tree. At any rate, he chose this great big Catalpa tree and spent a couple of hours and did an exercise, or a sample sort of, you see. He didn't finish it all up and the kids were very interested in the thing. Instead of painting that time they were all around him watching this thing, all very informal. Well, he thought, he'd said certain things he would do that very next morning because he wanted something else, there was something more that he needed to tell them, and so that he after breakfast with several other he went down again to the same place to finish this thing up. The Catalpa tree is a peculiar thing because it attracts a certain kind of worm that's called a Catalpa worm and overnight the Catalpa worms had eaten every leaf from the tree. So I think, of things of this sort. The sculpture studio had been a great barn, the cattle floor had been cemented over and it meant that you could bring live animals right in on the floor and make a work from a live cow or a horse or a goat or sometimes they had sheep, and they'd bring ducks and turkeys in on the floor. And then the upper part was a studio, too, but this wonderful facility, you wouldn't have anywhere. And in front of this there had been the old cattle yard, and that had a low stone fence all around it, and they would do what we called croquis sketches, these were things from moving models, human or animal, and they would have certain days when the whole school would sit on this wall all the way around this enclosure and they'd draw from these living animals, you see. It was an experience that not many artists have and of course because they were all thinking of the same kinds of things and had their ambitions, why it was a very happy thing. And then in the evening we all had to make our own fun. It was almost primitive or old fashioned, because we'd play charades and there was an art game that they played of guessing from names that were passed out that a fellow had to draw before the class and they would guess what he was drawing. They would give them such words as "fog", or "experience", or "laughter" or "lichen", don't you know, things of this kind, and they would draw something that would tell, and the whole class would stand around and yell what they thought this fellow or girl was drawing. This was a unique place.

**JF:** Well, that brings us, I think, up perhaps to a part where we were going to talk about some of the faculty. They, of course, were the school. There was no telling any member of the faculty what he would do in his classes when he went into the studio and the door closed, that was his forte, and what he did there was just up to him. And we did, this business of training an art student has no particular rules. All of the men on the faculty had gone through and were still going through the process, which is difficult, of being an artist and finding your way through, and the business of not only learning technique in school and some discipline and exercises, just as the pianist has to do his finger exercises, the artist too is certainly aided by the careful drawing he does, for instance maybe in using the model, but all this was there. These men had all gone through this thing and lots of them were still struggling artists because we had tried all the way through my experience there, as young artists, some of them just only out of school would come back to give us certain help on the faculty too. And I think they have continued to do that since I have gone away. This is fine because it brings the arrived artist closer to the student and they feel nearer to the problems that they have to solve so that these men, they all were different. As we sit talking about this thing today, one of the loveliest pictures that hangs in our living room at which I'm looking now is by Henry McCart. Henry McCarter did not have a great big reputation and he wasn't known very

far beyond Philadelphia. He had been a very successful illustrator in that period when American illustrators were really great artists and they did wonderful stuff. It was the kind of thing where there would be a center like the thing that happened out at Chad's Ford with N.C. Wyeth, you see, and the men of that era, and McCarter had been a very fine illustrator. Then he went abroad for quite a while and he fell in love with the French Impressionists and came back with really new ideas and his approach was different from everybody else but he was an extraordinarily sensitive chap and as I watched the classes that went in to have their . . . the influence that these different men had on them, it seemed to me that McCarter always attracted the most creative and the most sensitive. When he finally gave up his illustration and did nothing but paint he had a hard time of it because he didn't pay much attention to selling his things, you know. He fortunately made some very wealthy friends and they kind of looked after him so that he'd go into his class and tell them all about the dinner party he'd been to the night before, what the menu was and what all the ladies were wearing and what the table looked like and all this kind of thing and they were all very handsome and his descriptions were swell. But then he'd finally come along to something and he'd get back to painting and he'd throw pictures on the screen and often I think he'd forget who had painted them but it had something in it that he wanted particularly to tell them about. And there would be some jewel of sensitivity and knowledge that he'd pass on to those people in the school that seemed to me were the most gifted that were there. So he always had a group of people around him who had a really kind of almost snobbish feeling about being part of that circle, don't you know. Well then, on the other hand, you had someone like George Harding and he and McCarter didn't always get along although I think they admired one another. Harding, on the other hand, had the class in mural decoration and his job was to teach people the technique of painting on anything, indoors or outdoors, on metal or on plaster or on stone and the concepts of making a decoration as different from the thing that you put just within a frame or something you were just going to hang on the wall. It's a very different kind of approach you see. So that the thing that they did in Harding's classes were very different and we took one of the rooms up there at the Academy and cleared it out, one of the studios, and divided the room into little cubicles, big enough for a fellow to work and keep a kind of material around him that he could keep for research and so on. We tried to build up the materials in their library that hadn't been stressed before, we'd give him material on all kinds of things, without the access to animals, although occasionally they'd take classes out to the zoo to draw from the animals, but we had quite a library. In the library there was a fine amount of material on all kinds of animals and plants so that when they were working on these decorations, they had material there from which to work.

**PL:** Was there more interest in mural decoration because of the WPA program?

**JF:** That's exactly what was happening. and he was very successful and some of the largest and most successful of the decoration that was done for the New York World's Fair was done by George Harding, you see. So he was talking about something he knew about and I think that in the time that he was there I can think of 6, 8, or maybe 10 students who went out from there, from their experience with him they went out and they did decoration and they had a technical knowledge that was unique and there was no other school I think that was doing that same kind of thing. Well then, of course that was early. The earliest fellow I remember whose name comes to mind right away was Hugh Breckenridge. Now he was an early abstract fellow, he managed to break his paint and do things that you just don't see, his compositions were interesting. He was active as was Garber, and Albert Leslie for instance in sculpture, in the days when the annual exhibition in several of the institutions throughout the country were all important to the art world. And the building up of those exhibitions and the fact that every year the fellows that were really ranking had to be shown all over the country, communication wasn't as easy, the reproduction of art, art books weren't as easy to be got at, color reproduction wasn't as good, don't you know, so that the business of just . . . given the approach of the youngsters in school, was all changing at that time, so that Hugh Breckenridge who is almost forgotten now, and I don't know that he was a very great painter, I don't believe perhaps he will continue to be rated, but he rated at that time because he was in all the great big national exhibitions which was an important thing to be in. And then of course we always had tried because New York had been an attraction to all artists, it seemed important to us to have someone come down from New York and over the years there was a succession of fellows that came down, one at a time. We would have some one of those fellows and that tradition has gone on and even now one of the only fellows I guess who continued there in the ten years since I've been away has been Julian Levi whose reputation has still been maintained, and he had been a student at the Academy. He came back bringing the kind of atmosphere and the knowledge of what the American artist goes through if he has to face this business world that is the New York gallery world so that Julian Levi was another man involved and he's been up there now for a very long time. Then we come to Francis Speight who was a Southerner, comes up from the Carolinas, and a very timid fellow. He came to the Academy and his forte became landscape and he found it was fascinating to paint the hilly towns of Conshohokin and Rocksborough up on our Skoko River, and early he got prizes in some of the big national exhibitions and he made a connection with the old Milch Gallery in New York and that was a very happy thing to have happen. Garber as I recall never had a New York gallery. He found a way of making himself known. He and Mrs. Garber had a very beautiful house up on Green street here in Philadelphia and in the fall of the year after he had had a summer of outdoor painting they would have a great party and they were clever in the people they got to know. I think one of their great friend was Thomas Gates who was the president of the University of Pennsylvania and people of that ilk, and they were cultured people and they would have these



parties and he would then have his house filled with his new paintings and he almost made his reputation on that sort of thing. And then again he was shown all over the United States in these great big exhibitions. There was the Corcoran show in Washington, the great show at Pittsburgh, the Internationals there, and of course all of the American artists wanted to be in that, that was where Franklin Watkins got his start, he got the top prize as a very young man and brought the thing to Philadelphia and all of the Philadelphia art world because of his success. But this was all part of this thing that I was mixed up with, you see, and in another talk that maybe we'll have I'll talk about more of my experience with the exhibition world and the Academy's permanent collection but as far as school goes, and of course we're talking at the and this business of Francis Speight, to get back to Francis he was almost inarticulate, a very timid fellow, shy, but he did thoughtless things, and he would forget to bring his palette or he'd drop his paints or he'd lose something out of his car. He did an awful lot of things that were simple things and the kids loved him. I think he had admirers always through the school. Now he was teaching when I went there at the beginning of my work at the Academy and that was all the way back in 1935, and he is still teaching in the summer school. He comes up from the Carolinas and teaches there landscape advice to the kids in the school after all these years.

**PL:** What was the secret of his success with the students?

**JF:** Of course they admired him. It wasn't as though he had such gems of knowledge to give them about how to paint. I remember talking to him one time about, a lot of his things got to be quite grey in color, as though it were a cloudy day when he painted, and I spoke to him about it one time and he said, "Oh, you Mich, when they began selling my paintings," and they had quite a success for several years and he sold a lot of his things and he said Milch began to say, "Why don't you . . . you've got another grey one, why don't you paint some more of those that are full of sunlight?" Well he said, "I started with the sun, the goes in and he says somehow or other so many of them, this is the way they turn out and this is all I can do." All of these things I think of as background, these fellows who were different in personality. Then Hobson Pittman came along, and he was with us for a very long time, and he had a certain very intimate following within the school. He gave the students a great deal of help, I think professionally, too. He was successful and successful all the way up until the end of his career before he died and he had sold pictures to every museum I'm sure, in the country, and he had had that kind of recognition. I remember particularly one year when he helped me as chairman on my painting jury and I went through all of the galleries in New York to pick up the stuff for my invitation. As we went into these galleries, all knew him, and they talked about the market. I found that there wasn't an art institution in the United States that didn't own Hobson pictures. So that he brought something of that kind with him, a very different thing again.

**PL:** What was the policy regarding the hiring of faculty during your directorship?

**JF:** There wasn't any policy, I don't think. Breckenridge finally died, and well, there was unhappiness when Mr. Leslie left the faculty and then Walker Hancock came on who had been an Academy student and went on to Rome and then came back and he began doing a lot of monumental things and still is working. And of course the thing in Philadelphia that everybody knows about Walker Hancock is the lonely little goat that's in Rittenhaus Square. But Walker brought still another side to all this because he was by nature a scholar, a classicist, really, and a very cultured fellow. Another man sort of in that same category was Franklin Watkins and Watkins was a gentleman to the core, he was one of the most supremely civilized guys you'd ever want to . . . he read well, don't you know, and he brought another phase to this, so no two of them were alike at all. None of them, I think, tried to teach the students to do it their way. Another one of the students who was very popular and also enjoyed a lot of success and had a dealer who was very good to him was Walter Stupfig. He's a little more near this era. Of course it has been so many years since he died. He died in mid-life so he didn't get to be a very old man, but he also . . . again, he had his following, and one of the nice things about the Academy was that nobody told any of the students who they had to go to and how much time they had to give to any one of them, that if there were eight men on the faculty it only made good sense perhaps because we thought we'd made good choices and they were all there because they had something to give. They would give different things and perhaps the student was wise who would see what he could get from every one of them. But if he came and could only get it from one, and he only went with that one, that was all right too.

**PL:** Did the present faculty at any given time have a lot of control over the new faculty member would be?

**JF:** No, they didn't, except that I think, and I suppose the changes have been made since I've been away, the same sort of thing. You couldn't help being director of the whole thing when a vacancy came along or some emergency where you had certain requirements: there were men on the faculty that I felt close to and also whom I felt I would give me the best professional advice and I would ask them, and I often didn't choose any one of them and say he was the fellow and that everybody else would know that I was taking Mr. X and doing just what he said. But I would talk when I had to consider getting someone else. I think, for instance, my mind would jump over to, well, two of the fellows, three of them there who are teaching there now, came out almost right out of school, and that's Ben Kamihiro and Jimmy Luders and the lovely girl who's enjoyed such success, Liz Osborne. Now there are three. Now you see they had their followings and they're not any of them painting at all like any of

the people in the faculty, but I think, and they all came on faculty while I was still there. And I remember talking to the other faculty members and there wasn't any policy that set us up and I hadn't anybody above me that I had to answer to. The school was rather a unit unto itself and the president of the Academy was the one who had particular interest in who the faculty would be. They let the professional thing stay in professional's hands, don't you know.

**PL:** What were you looking for in a new faculty member, what was that quality that might convince you to hire one person over another?

**JF:** Oh, that's difficult to say. You can't foresee just from the person's work sometimes how they'll work when they're in the position of having influence and what they'll do for the students. But I think that there was a quality that was maintained for the Academy's reputation in having truly professional people, don't you know, not anybody who played at it. It was all very serious business and it was good to have people around who had gone through the mill and would inspire the students and lead the students on because of the solutions to which they had come, don't you see. SO I think that, I guess that's the only thing that I can say about that it wasn't that I knew a lot of them personally before they came. When I went in it was not my idea nor did I have the ability or the knowledge to at once change the faculty. The faculty I found there when I went there stayed, most of them, right along for years.

**PL:** What sort of relationship existed among the faculty members?

**JF:** Well, they didn't always get along, and sometimes at Cresson Day when it came for these prizes, you see, they often had their favorites, don't you know, on the wall, and oh, there were some wild times just among the faculty themselves. I remember one day, I guess this is all right to tell this story, yes, I guess this is all right. This is an example of this professional business that I talk about. There was a period of time back there when there was a man by the name of James Chapin who taught painting and he had had a lot of success and he'd won some national prizes and so on and had a good dealer in New York, and an awfully nice fellow, and I got to know him very well. The then president of the Academy had liked him as a friend, they got to be very good friends. But Jim Chapin, he painted in a very realistic way, and I think he was a businessman sufficiently so that as perhaps the kind of thing that he had been doing maybe wasn't winning prizes or he wasn't being so popular. He went off and did several commercial jobs and he did an ad for one of the tobacco firms, cigarettes I guess it was, and he did a painting of a man holding a big tobacco leaf and the sun had hit this leaf and it was a bright gold, see and it evidently was very successful from the commercial standpoint, and so successful that the company that had paid him for doing this thing paid him extra for continuing the ad. Often with those things there's a contract where a man does a certain job and they can use it just so many time, don't you see. This thing continued for quite a time, and the students didn't like this. Finally, a strange thing, the word moved through the school that he had . . . even this was a kind of violation of professionalism in the fine arts, you see, and they boycotted. Almost the whole school gave up going to his classes. It's the only time I remember anything of that kind happening. Yet he was a nice guy himself and the run of the mill people would say he was only doing what anybody would do, he was selling his work and he was doing something that he could do and he did very well, you see, but this was something that the students somehow didn't like.

**PL:** How was the situation resolved?

**JF:** Well, he left the school and of course it was a relief in a sense because it was a very embarrassing thing to have a man in a situation like that. It was the only time that I had run into anything of that kind. I guess Jim Chapin's still living. I don't know where he is now and I don't say this to damn him, you understand, but it does maybe give you some . . . another little angle on what the school is, and what an artist's life, what were some of the problems that they faced.

**PL:** Franklin Watkins said in an article that around the time that you retired that you had the power of love and that . . . what had made your administration so successful was your ability to relate to people in a cooperative atmosphere that you created. I know he also did a very handsome portrait of you as well, and you were particularly close to him. Would you like to talk a little bit about Franklin Watkins and what he contributed to the Academy?

**JF:** Well, he again in some super way did a splendid job. He represented sort of an ideal that was wonderful. He was a handsome chap, you know, he was a very fine looking fellow, and he was gentle and he'd had lots of success and he lived with grace and he was well read. I never felt that he had exactly a circle of students around him in this way of some of the others. They all had tremendous respect for him, and I'm glad he spoke of me that way because I loved him. He was just one of those splendid fellows. The business of painting my portrait was just a wonderful experience for me because I just liked to be in his presence and he started to paint the portrait at his studio where he lived in the summer time down at Avalon, and he had a lovely house and studio down there. He started painting the portrait down there and it was in the summer and I would go down on a Thursday morning early and get there by about maybe ten o'clock and he'd paint before lunch and then I'd have

lunch and Ida, his wife, who's a very sweet gal and just as nice and understanding as he was, and we'd have lunch right there in the house and then he'd paint all afternoon. And then I would stay the night with them and he'd paint the next morning, then paint maybe until three o'clock in the afternoon and then I'd drive home on Friday afternoon. And I did that week after week, I guess I did that maybe six or seven times. I thought the portrait was certainly coming along. Of course, we talked all the time when he was painting. And then Ida was taken very ill and she had to come up to Philadelphia for a hospital experience that was very unpleasant and very frightening, but when she was recuperating, and she did, fortunately, the doctor said the really the fall had come on and she shouldn't go back to Avalon again and they would stay in Philadelphia. Well that meant that they moved all their things up here and they lived out here on Spruce Street, on the south side of the street in the 19- or 2000 block. He had the fourth floor of one of those great big old houses, a wonderful studio. And so we started this thing again. He had brought my portrait up and started doing work with it there. And I think he worked with me maybe twice there in the Spruce Street studio. And then I went out one morning and I found a completely empty canvas. He'd scraped the entire work out. He felt that he was working under a different light and there was a different atmosphere about the whole thing and he wasn't happy with it at all and so he'd just taken it all away. So he started all over again. And I must say, while it was kind of a shock, I guess because this meant that if the sessions that I'm going to have sitting there with him would have stopped very soon; they stared all over again, and I went out to the studio here I don't know how many times until the thing was finished. And the pose that I had in there is always a little awkward, I think, and people wonder why I have such a funny hand up in my pocket. While he had known me intimately, during the time my deafness had become very acute and I'd gotten an early hearing aid, and at that time you carried a great big thing like a great leather wallet that had a battery in it and you had it in your pocket and to regulate the volume of this you had always to get your hand up in the thing. It had a long string on it that gave me great dignity, it was very swank, as though I had a lorgnette or something. He thought it was all right but it was a terrible nuisance. So I got the habit of putting my hand in that pocket and somehow or other that, to him, meant something. TAPE RECORDED INTERVIEW WITH JOSEPH T. FRASER, JR. DATE: DECEMBER 13, 1979 INTERVIEWER: PATRICIA LIKOS

**JF:** JOSEPH FRASER

**PL:** PATRICIA LIKOS

**PL:** We've been discussing Franklin Watkins and his significant contributions to the Academy. Would you like to add anything to his role there in later years?

**JF:** Yes I would because he was a very important factor. I think probably lots of museum directors find themselves rather lonely in that their boards are not art minded or professional in lots of ways, so that to have a very keen understanding of the faculty members who are utterly professional is a great help. And then of course sometimes it happens that we are fortunate enough to have some very knowledgeable people on the board of directors, and I think that the next phase perhaps is speaking of Watkins, I had the good fortune to have had him on the board of directors for several years. This was a great boon. Of course I had worked over a period of years to get the Board always to have a faculty representative, they weren't members of the Board, but I'd worked it out so that one member of the faculty always was at the Board meeting. They got to have some notion of what the Board did and the Board on the other side had opportunity sometimes to question what was going on in the school. Well now then, Watkins, who was a very cultured and well educated man, and so extremely sensitive, was a wonderful fellow there as a counselor, and all the men on the Board had great respect for him so that his position was rather rare and unique above all any other of the faculty. For several years there he was a member of the Board and the combination was improved even because of the advent of Ted Richardson and Constance coming from Detroit after he retired out there after a great many distinguished years and amassing a splendid collection for Detroit. He was anxious to have much more time for writing and so he finally retired out there and was about to step aside and give all his time to writing when Henry DuPont got hold of him and made it very attractive, I guess, for him to go down to Winterthur and he took care of Winterthur for, I don't know, 3 or 4 or 5 years. I think that was a job that gave him opportunity to continue a good bit of his won research, too. I remember that Constance Richardson who was an outstanding painter in her own right, she was a splendid watercolorist, I think she didn't like living out in the country there, it was a beautiful place to live and the surroundings were all very elegant and fine, they were there for four or five years. And then when that was over they realized a sort of dream they'd had. They had both been students in the Academy and they were married shortly after their student days before both of their professional careers had begun, and they had always loved Philadelphia and had wanted to come back and live. So that after the Winterthur affair they came back and they bought one of the splendid houses down in Society Hill that had been designed by Kay who is now so very much in the limelight. As soon as I realized that we had somewhat of a scholar, such a brilliant man and such an understanding friend in Philadelphia, I suggested to the Board that they ask Ted Richardson then to become a member of the Board, a full member of the Board, and they agreed. That began a splendid period when I had these two men, Watkins and Richardson, both who understood all the subtle problems that went on professionally you see, so that I can't think of one without the other. They were very dear friends also, so that this was an interesting era and a kind of nice thing to happen even though it happened so late in my years there. There are some of the members of the faculty that I think that we missed when we talked the other day, and I

thought afterwards of Morris Blackburn who has taught there for many years. He was a well known artist here in the whole community, he was quite a character, he was a very outgoing fellow and as a member of the faculty one of the things that I always felt his own enthusiasm was so great that . . . he had the print department. And of course that physical thing that the lithographers do, carting around these monster stones and the preparation for them, and he was the kind of fellow who would roll up his sleeves and do any manual thing and he was a great fellow, he and he wife were informal in entertaining artists from out of town and friends, he always had some foreigner there at the house unexpectedly, and they lived kind of a Bohemian life but a very attractive and wonderful life. In the school he played a role, the kids came out of his class almost physically exhausted. He excited them, don't you know, and he'd be just in there fighting all the time. And he also had a faculty which was shared by another member of the faculty, I don't think I mentioned Julius Bloch and Julius Bloch did a great deal of genuine creative painting but he also did a great many commission portraits in and around Philadelphia, and Julius and Blackie had this in common, they were great ones for taking a hold of the timid soul and kind of giving them a hand. And even in Blackie's case sometimes he'd champion those who were not quite so strong and maybe while they needed the encouragement they also broke all the rules and didn't come out too well at the end after all. But these men, I tell you all of this because I think it's a factor that ran through the school the qualities and the inspiration that his variety of men brought to all these students was terribly interesting. Now I think we may have covered most of the faculty. Do you have someone else in mind?

**PL:** Did we talk about Joseph Pearson?

**JF:** No, I don't think we mentioned Joseph Pearson, he was there when I first went. He was a gentleman, oh my, and a very handsome fellow, white hair, very dignified, wore terribly interesting clothes, had a fine house up on the Redding Railroad up near the Cathedral. He was a thorough artists and dedicated but I don't believe that his work ever had the recognition of a lot of other people and when the time came when he retired because of his health, he just dropped out of the professional picture altogether. I remember distinctly Franklin Watkins talking about there difficulties sometimes in Pearson's class when he was a student under Pearson, you see, and Pearson was pretty lacking in understanding at times. I remember one episode when Walter Stumpf, and we maybe mentioned Walter in another talk, Walter was in the class and he did rather unusual things. Pearson had a life class and a model posing and he was very upset to find that Walter Stumpf in the class up on Cherry Street was painting the nude against a woodland scene, and a lot of flowers in this thing which weren't in evidence at all, all out of Walter's head, and it upset Mr. Pearson very, very much and after evidently going into his class several times and not finding very much that he could do to help Walter Stumpf, why he came and asked to have Walter Stumpf removed from the school, which we didn't do, of course. But this gives another angle, don't you know, to the business of coping with what happens in an art school.

**PL:** How important did the Academy's administration consider the professional success of its faculty? If someone were a dedicated teacher, doing well, but they did not have a burgeoning career, or weren't widely known in the art scene, was that a factor in maintaining a certain faculty member?

**JF:** No, I don't believe so. I think the Board was rather, almost strangely, aloof from personality and the effectiveness or non-effectiveness of the men there. No, they left that to the professionals. Starting all the way back in the early days, there was a fellow there that I got to know closest, who was Garber, and he was the kind of fellow to whom I could go always. He was almost unbiased and he could give me excellent advice. Just before I'd gone tot he Academy, of course they had quite a wrangle because of Arthur Carles, who had been a teacher there, and he was very difficult. He had a terrible alcohol problem and I think that in this there were people other than those who were directly connect with the running of the school who found it difficult because this man was getting a salary and each one of the instructors you were rather counting on being at a class at a certain time, and Carles would go off on a bat once in a while and just not appear, or if he'd come to the class he was probably not in ideal condition to do his work. And yet Carles had a surrounding and Franklin Watkins was one of his great devoted students, although carles was a good deal older than Watkins. There was quite a group of people who just admired Carles wonderfully and they painted afterward, more or less, they took even his palette they would study so that I think now we've mentioned a great many of those who had been there before me. Carles I got to know very well. He helped me with jury work and he was very important, but this alcohol problem meant that he was difficult and he really didn't take care of himself. Fortunately, he made friends with people who could assist him even in his living and support. There was another artist in Philadelphia who fixed up a studio on Chestnut Hill and just gave it to Carles as a place and he eventually died. He lived in a very frugal way and he had a daughter who finally came and lived with him. And I do remember, here we are at Christmas time, an experience with Carles when I went out there oh, maybe a month after Christmas, and I knew that most of the time he was alone in the house, I forget what my errand was, but I went into the house which was very lightly furnished and not at all attractive, but someone had put up a Christmas tree in the room in which we sat, and no one had taken the tree down and all the needles had just fallen on the floor and then they were there in a heap and it was sitting in the room with a few odd ornaments hanging on the bare branches, and no one to take care of him and it was a pathetic awful experience to think that this man was alone, a sort of token of disregard and thoughtlessness with this Christmas tree that was bare. I've always remembered this as one of the pathetic things that sticks in my mind, because he was a rare guy, he could be a sweet fine fellow. He was on he jury

several times. He helped me tremendously. One time we had asked John Marin to be one of our jurors. We will get around I hope in another session to the business of the exhibitions. But I had asked John Marin who was certainly a top ranking fellow in that rare bracket. I didn't know him well although I had met him, and he was coming down here and I was at my wits end to know how I would entertain him. I think this we can put off until I can bring this in with my exhibition experience later on. So I think that much have covered the faculty pretty well.

**PL:** I just thought to bring up Ted Richardson again. Was there any way in particular that you think he influenced the rest of the Academy, or was it just his judgement and presence which made such a difference?

**JF:** No, I think he did the influence, because there was a period there when there were suggestions, we were handicapped for space, there was no doubt about that. I don't think anyone was anxious to have a bigger school but we were cramped and this was before any of this renovation took place, and there were handicaps just in the physical building itself. One of our Board members had been the chief factor in our acquiring the old hotel there on Chestnut Street which now houses the Peale Club galleries. At that time also there was an influence within the Board to perhaps buy the old Curtis Publishing Company building down next to Independence Hall. And with the Board and members of the faculty, I remember a day when we all went down as a committee to look the thing over and it seemed that it was just not at all the thing to do. but in that particular episode I recall that they listened very much to Richardson. He was advising against buying the thing, and so was Watkins, as a matter of fact. In this one instance I remember definitely where Richardson gave professional advice and his knowledge of what the school was and what it stood for and how the Academy functioned, and the Curtis Publishing Co. building was not for us.

**PL:** There were many other people working at the Academy when you were there. Perhaps we could speak of some of them. Mrs. Loren Eisley, for example.

**JF:** I'm glad you brought up Mrs. Eisley because she was a wonderful boon to me. I think I must have mentioned somewhere else of that fact that we really had a very meager staff, and there were very few of us and I think at that time I had a secretary and the head of the school had a secretary, but I think they were the only two members of the staff who could claim secretarial help. But for the most part a great many of the others, the librarians were not really trained librarians, they did awfully good work but they were not trained and my assistant turned out to be Mrs. Loren Eisley. Mabel Eisley was a cultured, very alert and intelligent lady, gracious in her manner, and she was of infinite help in any of the little problems that came up. All of the faculty liked her so much. When any problem came up with the staff particularly, she didn't see very much of the school, but she was always on hand to help in little rough spots, you know, and very, very good looking lady and she had a manner and she wrote well and she could help me with the catalogue and if I wasn't on hand I always had the assurance that anyone coming in from the outside was going to have just excellent attention and a courteous reception in every way so that Mabel Eisley played a wonderful role there and of course it was a privilege to get to know Loren, her husband, who was such a distinguished fellow. He had his first great success just after Mabel had come to give me help, so all throughout his succession of books, and I have up until a few days ago when I took this room apart, I had all of Loren Eisley's books on my shelves because we had gone each time when they had their first day sale and so on so that the Eisley's, I feel, were an important connection I had at the time. In other words, I speak so highly of Mabel as my assistant, and then even before Mabel came to me, I had Elizabeth Swenson. Elizabeth Swenson had been for a great many years with the music school on Rittenhaus Square, Curtis Institute, and she had an important job there, she knew all the musicians and she knew all the officialdom and so on and then for quite a few years her name being Swenson, she had a Swedish background, and she played a very important role in the little Swedish museum down in South Philadelphia which still is functioning. She did my public relations for me. She had these musicians as friends from the Curtis and we had through her interest Bill Sokoloff who was a pianist and his wife, both of whom we got to know so well, and we had a long series of beautiful Friday evening free concerts in the Academy galleries and we would always stage the time with special shows there so that it was an excellent feature that just added to all of the delight, people would come, you see, to enjoy the pictures, sculpture or what now in the shows before the concert would begin, and we would have the rooms filled. The acoustics were absolutely splendid. So that Elizabeth Swenson not only played a role as being very efficient, and she kept lots of good record, a lot of records weren't, haven't been touched.

**PL:** What was her role at the Academy?

**JF:** She was public relations. And there again, she had a splendid manner and was very able so that although we didn't have a staff doing this, anyone that was there did all sorts of things. And Elizabeth again, those two ladies were just wonderfully helpful. And a few younger ladies who were out there in the front offices there were only a group of us, and our Christmas parties were always such a delight because it was like a family getting together. And one of the fun things is when Christmas comes along I still get Christmas cards from several of those people. We sang our carols, it was a comfortable time and a nice bunch of people.

**PL:** If we could return to the Eisleys for a moment, do you have any particular recollections of Loren Easley himself in your contact with him?

**JF:** Oh, well yes I did. Loren was difficult in company. He was shy, definitely shy. And then he was so involved and it seems to me so much was going on in that very brilliant mind that he was far off a lot of the time. He's been here at our house with other guests and he would sit in a corner and would have nothing to say at all. But everyone accepted that he was very bright and wonderfully knowledgeable in archeology and scientific knowledge, Darwin was his god, he knew everything about Darwin, he could even talk about it to people. I was always proud to think I knew him. And then of course when he first wrote these things they hadn't any thought of their being successful, and that first book, *The Immense Journey*, went to the publishers and they had trouble getting it published but the publisher had said that they would be, whether they didn't sell a book, that they would be proud to think that they had that book on their list but it turned out to be extremely successful and sold thousands of copies. Well, there it is, is that what you wanted of Loren, because he wasn't an intimate factor in the Academy life, really but several of us got to know him, of course.

**PL:** Well, Theodore Siegel who was the distinguished conservator for the Philadelphia Museum of Art got his start at the Academy, I believe.

**JF:** That's right. I'm glad you brought Ted up because he, again, played a fine role, he was just an excellent character. He came to us in a unique way. In my work for gathering the exhibitions for the Academy I got to know was very friendly with the director of the Brooklyn Museum and he called me on the phone one day and said that he had a young German boy, not much more than a boy, in his office who had come over out of a wonderful background, technical background, in Vienna, and he was looking for work, and there wasn't anything for him in Brooklyn and he called up because he thought I might have something. Well I had no money at the Academy really to do very little restoration, and we did have a man to whom we had given a room, named Schindler, Joseph Schindler, and he took in restoration work on his own and then did what we needed or could afford to do on the side. And Ted came over and they met, and this was a difficult thing because Schindler's family, he was a Jew, and Ted Siegel was a German and he had come out of the army and Schindler's family had all been burned.

**PL:** Was this in the fifties, or the forties?

**JF:** And those two fellows, it was a trial for both of them, I think. Schindler said that their profession would bring them together, and Ted was very understanding in many ways and they were together for about a year. Again there was very little work from the Academy but they shared the room together there. And then Schindler had a tragic death and Ted stayed right on and of course continued with us for years. He and his wife, who as you know is a splendid printmaker, she was one of the most active people in the little print club there on Van Pelt Street, and they were a wonderful couple and they came first and they were not married, and when Helen came to this country and they were married, Mrs. Fraser and I had entertained them and gone to the wedding. And then she had not come in under the quota and the only solution to their living turned out that she had to live in Canada and Ted would go up about once a month and see his wife, and he had very little money too at the beginning of all this but they were a wonderful couple and I'll always look back on the episode of having the influence on these two fine people again, there she was very talented and he then of course quite soon after he came with us. Henri Marceau had asked him to come out and do part-time work at the Philadelphia Museum, and that continued for quite a long time and without putting dates on it, there finally came the time when Henri had, and the Museum of course had the means and so much work to do that they needed to have someone full-time on their staff and they asked Ted to go and of course when he came to ask me about it, why I said of course he could go because it gave him a fine steady income, don't you know, and it was a great honor to be there and I think they held him in very high esteem and he did a tremendous amount of good work out there. Professionally he was very knowledgeable, a chemist, you see, he knew everything about color and the preparation of paint material and while he was there at the Academy, of course, he was a wonderful boon in the faculty way because the students all got to know him. He was quite young. And then he took Joe Amorotico who now is the conservator at the Academy and he trained Joe and so we weren't so much at a loss, you see, when Ted went out to the Museum and of course Joe was still working at it and Ted of course came to a tragic death, he died in the surf, he had a heart attack down at the seashore.

**PL:** Would you like to say something about him as a person, as a personality, what you remember about him?

**JF:** Well, when he came, he was very, very bashful, very timid, and he had a stern, almost military training and I remember the day he came in he stood so straight and he had a little bow, and he called me Doctor Fraser, and he thought since he was talking to the director I must certainly be a "Doctor". Well, I didn't let that go on very long, I correct that, but he was a dedicated fellow, he knew his work, and we were able as time went on to give him a very much better place in which to carry on the work. One of the first things that he did of major size, we had done some cleaning up at the Academy, moving things about and we had a lot of roof leaks, and this is a good thing to record, the Academy owned those great big Benjamin West, *Christ before Pilate* and *Death on a*

Pale Horse, and they were great big paintings and had hung for many, many, many years way up above the stairhole in positions, their mooring was perfectly staunch and they never did fall down but when you looked up at them you really couldn't help but feel that sometime they might fall down because they were so big and they were at an angle to the wall and right up over the stairs and they hadn't been cleaned or anything done to them for years and years. So we took them down and one of the first big jobs Ted did was to clean Death on a Pale Horse. And he had of course to lay them flat on the floor and we had to close the gallery there and it consumed the whole of gallery B. And of course everybody was interested in watching this thing go on and the preparation of the back when it was put down face down and to see all the old canvas treated behind it and so on. And of course by this time it's being done again by Joe Akorotico so all over again. But that was early in the career of this fellow and it was . . . and he did such a conscientious job and a difficult thing, so monstrously big. You see, he had to crawl all over it, you couldn't do it up on the wall and when it was on the floor of course you had to guard it by covering great parts of it and you were on your tummy most of the time. So that Ted's life with us was a very important one. [TAPE THREE SIDE ONE - JANUARY 30, 1980]

**PL:** Mr. Fraser, some of the responsibility, the greater part of the responsibility at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts was to organize the exhibitions. Can you describe to us what role you had in the planning and execution of the exhibitions?

**JF:** I'd be delighted to because it was a very major activity that consumed the small staff utterly. I look back on it and wonder often how we managed to do as many and just physically carry it off. Of course the Academy has a remarkable record of serving the American artist by showing his work, and while foreign work was shown here for certain exhibitions and also on special exhibitions came that perhaps were traveling things, the major thing that was done in the Academy every year on the exhibition side was its Annual exhibitions of which there were two regular, always a watercolor, drawing and print exhibition which came in the fall and that included generally one room of miniatures. Then in the end of January there was a great oil and sculpture show. Now these were American exhibitions and the world was at her place then, it seemed to me. Communications were not what they are now and these great big exhibitions provided, were courted by the American artists because they had a limited number of places where they could show their work and of course there were always sales involved in these things too and nearly all the various institutions who gave these annual exhibitions had large purchase funds, and out of these purchase funds the permanent collections were all made up. So that it was a great big job to gather them together. There also was a certain competition because when I would go to New York, I ought to tell you a little bit about how they were organized. I would go to New York, oh, weeks ahead of the exhibition and each instance we would have a painter selected, a painter of national reputation, who would give of his time and that time it was an honor and juries and chairmen weren't paid, it was an honorary thing to be asked to do these things. And with those men we tried to invite a nucleus so that when the January exhibition of Oil painting and sculpture came along Philadelphians had an opportunity to see a sampling of that year's work really from all over the country. Now you couldn't of course go the country over to hunt them out, but we did go to New York, always, and spend some days visiting all of the galleries there and the dealers. And of course the dealers in New York were really representing just as many fellows from the West Coast or Chicago or New Orleans or so on as we would have found if we had done the very laborious job of going to their home towns. And that nucleus guaranteed a showing which told the Philadelphia public what was going on and then the prizes were sought after, medals were popular, medals are almost never given anymore, and there were purchase prizes. Of course the artists always loved the purchase prizes and there was great competition because the old Academy was never very well off financially and while we did have a few established funds and we bought then under the category of that fund, you see, and so each year we did spend those limited amounts and those things were sought after. But we had a hard time and sometimes Pittsburgh would come along that was the Carnegie show would come open and when we went to the dealers to see what was available for us, why we would find that maybe Corcoran had just been there ahead of us and there was a vying and nearly all of them had more money to spend than we had. But of course again there was enough, but when you went to the Wren gallery and you asked for a new Hopper, let's say. Well the week before the Whitney had been in and Hopper is painting very slowly so that there were only two new ones and the Whitney had already spoken for one, that was the kind of thing that went on. It was a great big job. I would spend two or three weeks with the chairman, one painter and one sculptor . . .

**PL:** From the Academy?

**JF:** No, no, they were national figures.

**PL:** They were not members of the faculty, then.

**JF:** No. And then they were joined later on when the work was sent from all over the country for judging, and we looked at thousands of things were sent. There were also sometimes thousands of things sent to New York. The warehouse in New York were all set up, they could do it for Carnegie or they could do it for Washington just as they did it for us, and all these hundreds and hundreds of things were assembled there and I would sit with the jury, I was a clerk only, and record what action they took. So that it was a major operation. Of course before we

had done that we would, I would spend a week or two with each chairman and we would visit all the galleries and they were given the privilege of outright inviting. The things that were sent to the jury of course had to pass and have sufficient votes of the group of men, you see. There would be a group of painters judging paintings and a group of sculptors judging sculpture. They were different each year but we tried to get . . . and if you'll look back on the catalogues of those years you'll see that the major ranking and gifted artists in the whole of the United States served on those juries and very many of them as my chairmen. And of course I had the wonderful privilege of getting to know those men very, very well because we'd take hotel rooms up there at 57th Street and work morning, noon, and night going into all the galleries, and then often there would be special exhibitions of maybe one man shows in New York that we had to see, and we could of course choose from those and bring the things work here. And then the exhibitions were all opened by very interesting and nice social affairs. And the oil and sculpture show that came in January was always a particularly dress up affair and the president of the Academy and his wife always entertained the wives of the Board, a certain number of ladies would stand to receive on the night of the party and I look back on the nights when we couldn't have thought of coming without your white tie and white kid gloves and stand in line near the head of the stair and say hello to all the people. I prided myself then on knowing so many of them, and as the people came up the steps I think some evenings I could call 90% of them by name. And of course the rooms were filled with great crowds of people and there was a great to do about it. But this meant that for weeks ahead of the show the preparation was all gone through. There was on aspect I think I should mention but I like to feel that the Academy was always conscious of playing the role of advancement and encouragement to living artists, and so the building up of the collection was terribly for the artists but it was terribly important to the institution too, and while some of the other institutions had greater means, we were all buying in a rather similar way. Now those things still went on and I happened to still be here in the Academy when we celebrated our 150th birthday, and that was in 1955 and that show was a different kind of show, but it did mean that we tried then to, we did a different kind of exhibition that year, and we had really, I think there were about twenty artists, no, I'm confusing my story because for the celebration we had only about 120 artists. But hey were all people who had had great intimacy with the work of the Academy and many had studied here and many had taught here, and it was like 20 one-man shows, and the whole galleries were consumed with that celebration.

**PL:** Were these artists invited?

**JF:** Oh yes, this was all an invited thing, and that meant to get the very best things to represent those individual artists we had to borrow from these institutions throughout the States, but then the show in 1955 was all organized and this was at a time when a great many people were looking with a hesitant eye at abstraction and a lot of people resented this thing very much and nearly all of the exhibitions that had been sent abroad had been sent over by the Museum of Modern Art in New York and their slant was on very contemporary things and lots of people were ready to call them, oh, they were all Bolsheviks and they were wild people and this was not a good thing to do so after we had organized the exhibition of that year, when we had these very important people starting with Charles Wilson Peale and going to Mary Cassatt and the wonderful list of important people, they came and said, will you send this exhibition to Europe? This was when it was all organized and was actually on the walls and we had borrowed the pictures from all the museums in the country, it was a tremendous undertaking. But it meant that it was an honor to the Academy to be asked to do this thing so we got our letters out right away and while we didn't send the whole show over, about 50% of that exhibition went abroad and then nearly all of those people who did say that they would lend us things to be sent to Europe, they said it would have to be personally conducted. And it fell my lot to go really care for the pictures while they traveled so that Isabelle and I had a really wonderful experience, a very busy one and with tremendous responsibilities because we traveled with several million dollars worth of work and it wasn't always handled in the most professional way, at least as carefully as it sometimes was in this country. And we opened the exhibition first in Madrid, and of course we went over without any Spanish, but they gave us all sorts of good help, and the experience there was something. We were in Madrid just two weeks before the show and of course the American ambassador was there and there was a great to do about this thing. And then from Madrid we went to, I'll never forget my qualms when I saw the whole exhibition leave Madrid Museum, because fortunately it was the time of year when it never rained in Spain, but nevertheless, all the exhibition traveled in open trucks, not closed trucks, and they had great struts on each side and around the back of the truck and the thing was kind of tied together like a great bundle and when I saw that exhibition sway down this drive away from the museum I wondered if we'd ever see it again. It went then to Barcelona and then by boat to Naples, and the second showing was in Florence, and then we of course went with the show in Florence. Two weeks we had to get out a catalogue there and interview all the newspapers and the movie people and all this kind of thing. And it was a great big undertaking and a very thrilling one. Well then from Florence and of course it was fun there, six weeks we were there, we shooed for six weeks in each place so I was six weeks in Florence, and having studied architecture and traveled abroad, and Florence was one of the great thrills of my first European trip, it was great to be in that beautiful city for six weeks at a time. The show was held in one of the fine old Renaissance palaces it wasn't really ideal as a gallery but it was beautifully put up and it was such a lovely thing to do. From there we went to Innsbruck and went through the same processes there. There were parties given and special receptions and so on and then by that time we had been away for four months and I couldn't be away any longer and then a splendid gentleman who



was in charge of the USIA in Innsbruck who was about to make a change in his appointment and they had arranged with him and he took it on to Holland and on to Stockholm and so the show was on the road for six weeks in each place and it did certainly give the Europeans a sampling of what had gone on in the United States, because it was a retrospective, you see, and took us all the way through Charles Wilson Peale and William Rush and Mary Cassatt and all the way up to the contemporary people.

**PL:** Did it contain the work of the moderns, like Arthur B. Carles?

**JF:** Oh yes. Carles and Marin and I guess our own Henry McCarter were the last three in the lot but shown here they each had a room to themselves, you see. There it had to be mixed up, we didn't have the same opportunities to show them individually. And then of course there was a great deal to do about the catalogue for a show of that kind and the responsibility was a large one but we brought them all back safely and we had no major hurt to any of the exhibits so there's a fitting climax, really, to my experience on the exhibition side. It had been one of the activities that chiefly concerned my time but of course that was in 1955 and I didn't retire until 1968 but I look back on that European trip and taking those beautiful American pictures and showing them all to the Europeans as a great thrill.

**PL:** In addition to the Annual exhibit and special exhibits, there were frequent exhibitions of work of individual artists and I thought we might talk a little bit about them. Getting back to the moderns, the kind of enclave of modern artists that existed in Philadelphia, how were they received by the more academic or conservative branch of the Academy, did they have to struggle for acceptance or did they closely unify their style, or was that just kind of a coincidence of their artistic interests?

**JF:** No, I think we tried in the selecting of the juries, particularly the chairmen, to choose men of catholic interest, fellows who were broad minded, and I think the annuals right up through until the last one were broad minded affairs. They were not dedicated just to academic work, nor were they entirely dedicated to totally abstract things. I worked diligently to see that was so. It was a period of change and it was only what we had really done always, it was showing what was happening, you see, and of course it didn't please a great many people, but the exhibitions were broad in their aspect and it didn't mean that we'd suddenly come upon a new period and they'd all be abstract or difficult to understand. But we tried in handling the things, to put the things that were happy together they were together. I don't know whether there's more we could say about that. I think that as we went along it did seem too that as we selected, made these selections for purchase, it seems to me that we tried to echo the times, and so we were buying some contemporary and abstract things from those exhibitions. One of the very nice things that took place over the many years of the Annual exhibition was that there was one not a very large sum that was available every year that bought the work of young and unknown people, and because they were young and unknown the prices were not very high and all through the years a great many Philadelphians were fortunate enough as being nationally known, and of course the juries generally were of national importance, you see, and very often the young people, even right from school, because they could submit to the jury, you see, and it was not at all unusual when even the students sometimes at the school would pass the jury and maybe have their picture purchased by the Lambert Fund. And I don't know even as I talk to you now, I haven't heard talk much of the Lambert Fund recently. It wasn't a group of pictures that was highly distinguished, but there were some splendid pictures in it, splendid pictures, and the fun of it was that there were packets that had been bought in the Lambert Fund of men who later became member of the jury themselves, you see, so that the Academy played this long role of giving assistance to the living artist and this is the first importance, I think.

**PL:** I know a good example of this is the career of Violet Oakley whose work was purchased by the Academy when she was quite young and she was awarded a gold medal. She showed at many different times at the Academy. Did you ever meet her or have any recollections of her?

**JF:** Oh yes, I knew her very well. She was in a great many of the exhibitions and then her interest was broad and she had been done some miniature work and in the fall of the year when the miniature show, there was a miniature society, the Philadelphia Miniature Society, chiefly made up of ladies, and they did these beautiful, rare and they nearly all . . . they weren't traditional and the technique they used was also the traditional technique of watercolor on a very thin sheet of ivory. And those exhibitions brought in . . . Violet Oakley was thoroughly conservative. I always felt that maybe some of her early work was some of her best work. The thing that I think she did best was the decoration in the Governor's reception room in Harrisburg where she did the life of Penn. She did a tremendous and very valuable piece of research to get most of the material and the background and the costumes of the time and all that sort of thing. She was a very serious and important graphic artist in our city.

**PL:** I know that as early in 1947 Andrew Wyeth had an exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy and he had one later on.

**JF:** Of course we knew Andrew Wyeth very well most of his life and we knew his father, N.C. Wyeth who was an

illustrator and I had the delight of staging a major show of Andy's work and the year now slips me, but it broke all records for attendance and it was, I don't know how many weeks it was here, but the line would form outside the Academy and go down Broad Street and there were days when it went around March Street and up 15th Street, of people waiting to get in. And they came and sat on the floor and nursed their babies and there were black and white and yellow and everything under the sun, it was a great do and it did break all records for attendance. I enjoyed very much working with Andy, I think he's a splendid fellow and one of those men who was then on the Board and who later for a while was president, Edgar Richardson, who was written the best book on American painters, he was an intimate and very close friend of Andrew Wyeth. He gave me lots and lots of help with this thing. But it was a great do for the Academy when we had this one show, we had such lines of people waiting to get in.

**PL:** You made a reference earlier to John Marin.

**JF:** Well, John Marin of course was one of the adventurous fellows and I think among the artists, and I tried always in my work to listen to the artists, and the profession was important to me and it is a profession, but it's a subtle sort of thing. The layman can't quite understand a fellow who gets up every morning and just goes into a room for perhaps and sits all day and paints and hasn't the same maybe responsibilities. But goodness knows he sells not enough of his work to make it very remunerative, so these people are dedicated people, and they're hard to understand and lots of them break a great many of the rules and this is true with the students in the school. They live in a world, each fellow, that is his own, so that with John Marin, who . . . he was one of those early fellows who began to step away from the representational. But John Marin was one of those who all the artists praised, they all, I just don't remember any artist with whom I worked who hadn't great respect for John Marin. Now this is a peculiar kind of thing, but the professionalism among the artists themselves there is something very real in their understanding of what the other fellow has done, even though they may paint or sculpt very differently from the other fellow but you bring up John Marin, he was one of those who was in our 1955 show and whom we took abroad, and he was a great friend of Arthur Carles and they had lived in Paris together for a considerable length of time and he of course studied here at the Academy you'll remember, so this was all tied in. He and Charles Demuth, he didn't call it Demuth, he called it Demuth, and he was an odd character and I got to know all of these fellows you see. One of the men who helped me a great deal on the faculty, well, over a period of years that I had the responsibility of these big exhibitions. We quite often endeavored to have a member of the faculty on the jury and the very first one that I had charge of, ,predecessors's name was John Andrew Meyers. He was quite an elderly man and he had asked Franklin Watkins to be the chairman of the jury on this particular year just after I had had my first summer at Chester Springs. When the time came to do all this work of going to New York and organizing the show, Mr. Meyers wasn't up to it physically and so they asked me if I wouldn't take over. And I had the fun of doing all the detail work of the first show under the guidance of the great Franklin Watkins, and that was the beginning of a long and lovely friendships and we were together many, many years after that. He was not on the faculty at that time but he was a very influential member of the faculty when he came here. I'm glad you brought up those names because they all were very meaningful in our background, right here where we sit. I don't know whether we ought to record in our little conversation that today we decided to come to the old Academy itself to talk, and because the galleries were very quiet, we're having this little conference in Gallery F which has seen so many, many exhibitions. And of course, you see, the staff was very small, and you must note that with all those exhibitions I hung the shows, I arranged the shows. We had a crew of about five men who actually drove the nails in and maybe it would be interesting for the people who are listening to know how we hung pictures on the walls. In a gallery, at least here at the Academy and many other of the galleries, the walls are covered under whatever you see with your naked eye, they were lined with 1 1/4" planking, wood planking, and when you hung a picture you drove two nails on the bottom line and you rested the picture on the two nails at the bottom. They didn't actually take all the weight, but that established the bottom line. And then we had a form, what they called a hammer hook that was just made for this purpose and you could drive the nail into this position, the nail had no hook on it so that there was nothing to fasten to, so that these things came with a kind of funny crook in them and you could drive the nail where you wanted it. And then on the back of each painting you put a screw eye, and when you put the screw eye in you turned it on the level and that meant there was a little hole that just fit over that hook. And that's the way the pictures are hung, they're not on wires, very seldom. You'll nearly always find that there are holes in the wall. There was one period of time when we didn't have the opportunity to change the wall hangings very often, but there was a time when we had to make some changes and we took the old burlap that had been on the walls off and we found that all along the lower part of the walls where we drove all these nails, there was just pulp, there was no place any longer to drive a nail. And when we went to buy lumber to replace the timber that was on there against the wall, they didn't any longer cut wood an inch and a quarter and so what we did was to take, because these walls are very high and there were very few holes in those way up towards the cornice, so we took all of that from the top and put it at the bottom and the boards that went up to the top were full of hole, just pulp, really, they stayed until this restoration. I never did come up to watch that part of it, the doings going on, but they must have been very surprised to uncover the walls and find these terribly hacked wood walls all the way up in the air, don't you know, that never had any pictures on the.

**PL:** As an architect and a former director, how do you feel about the restoration of the Academy?

**JF:** Oh, I think it's been a splendid thing and of course, as an architect, I shared an enthusiasm for this man who was brilliant. His architecture was unlike anyone else's and every artist is endeavoring to find a signature and he did find a signature which was very, very interesting indeed. And so on that score I think that to really make again an archeological study and to bring the galleries back to very much the same condition they were in when he left them was a wonderful thing to do. The old building is handsome now. I think there must be some handicap in that while we had to just do makeshift on the walls and they were simplified as much as ever, but as the paintings became changed, it seemed as though the very negative background was really quite ideal in many ways.

**PL:** By that, you mean the white background, or a neutral?

**JF:** Well, not always white but a single color and definitely a very neutral color. And now of course as we sit here in this very swell room, garish almost with the almost Moorish decorations, it must be a little bit more difficult to house all of our contemporary paintings because when we would have completely, right now there are paintings in this room that are utterly happy in their surrounding. But we would have the entire galleries filled with a contemporary show and it was a bit hard to hand De Kooning, for instance, in rooms of this sort. They're solving the problem and I just think they've had a series of wonderful exhibitions since I've not been around and the galleries have all looked very, very well.

**PL:** The Pennsylvania Academy is maintaining many of its traditions in spite of the fact that the art world has changed many times over. Do you feel that the Academy should take any particular direction, or have a different role today than it once had? What future would you like to see for this institution that you nurtured for so long?

**JF:** That's hard to answer, really. I have to emphasize that we talked of serving the living artist and I think so long as they can do this well, well then they're doing a great job. The artist has a hard time, pretty nearly all the artists have a hard time, whether they be painters, sculptors, musicians or what not, and they need the institutions who appreciate the rareness of the gifts that they have, and someone must be around who's sensitive and understanding in their eccentricities and their needs and be very sympathetic with the creative fellow, because we need these people in our civilization, you see, even though a lot of their courage has been questioned at the time, so many of them have lived to inspire and give delight to thousands of people still and all these revivals of the best of every period, so that over and over again the thing works, but chiefly the Academy must never forget that it exists because of artists, it is an artists place.

**PL:** Contemporary artists, primarily, it isn't really a museum you're saying, but a contemporary place.

**JF:** That's right. The Academy, because of its age, started to be a museum at once. The early packets, you see, it had exhibitions within the first year of its founding down on Chestnut Street and it has all these years, but the artist must be the prime interest and problem for the institution.

**PL:** What is the value of the artist to society today in your opinion, what does the artist have to give society?

**JF:** Well, that's a hard one, too. It used to be, the word isn't used much any more, the quality of beauty was something they gave and gave and gave, whether of furniture or architecture or painting, and now our contemporary world, in architecture where so many of our current buildings are very stark and harsh and not given to decoration at all, and maybe I'm just old enough want that enrichment which I miss in so many of the things that the architects are doing. They came along when all of the, along with the abstract painting and sculpture, they needed very much more intense training as engineers, for instance. The building, of putting stone on stone which was obvious, one stone supported another, but now as the techniques for building have all changed why you can have great structures cantilevered, hanging in space don't you know, the material used is very different. I think there are lots of people that get a great joy out of this starkness and the bareness and decisiveness. The architect, and I get back to that all the time, when I went to college and studied, I may have said when I talked to you before, we all went as artists. I think the schools of architecture all thought that they were training artists. Now I think that the architect is not looked at in the same sense of being an artist. He can still do beautiful things, but the business of what is beauty is pretty subtle, too, and beauty can be found in something very, very simple, it doesn't have to be rich. But there is a starkness in a lot of this that's almost repulsive because there's no, there's a limited delight, and so much of art ought to be giving us delight. There's so much of the mundane around us that to be able to look at a painting and get a great lift doesn't mean that the abstract fellows, certain of them have done the same things, but the subject matter has been very important. I'm not unsympathetic with the contemporary thing, but I do think it lacks something. The painter, I think, he always was hoping that he was going to paint something that would not just satisfy his immediate need but that would live and give delight to other people. I think that too, along with the art picture today which isn't even considered by the best to be a very permanent thing, because they use very flimsy materials and they don't expect it to last long. We were trained to build well and staunchly and beautifully and that building, to

serve its purpose first of all had to solve the problem, but also it was a thing of beauty and it would last. But I think as lot of painting and the sculpture and the architecture is looked at now as not a permanent thing at all, it satisfies the immediate need, and maybe it's more a practical need, or an economic need. And I think that people who study painting and sculpture, they think rather differently about it, the genuine artists, it seems to me, so many of them, they're moved by, oh just the quality of a line that Rembrandt would draw, just the beauty of a thing as simple as a simple line can be drawn, which is exquisite. And I do think we do miss something of that kind of thing now. I think that . . . I haven't seen the new addition to the museum in Washington that Pei has done, and it's hard for me to expect that maybe it does rak with the good old McKinley White kind of thing that the old museum stood for. I don't know, we're living in strange times. Of course it doesn't mean that an awful lot of fine art went on when the world was in a mess too, war and all kinds of hardships. But now I think maybe we are in a restless sort of period and just where values are hard to come by. But there is a sensitivity in the artist that is rare and fine. Those who are in the institutions are privileged to work with. I always felt that it was a great thing to be associated day after day with these fellows. Nearly all of them became our friends and here we are now just moving fro a house we lived in for so many years, going out to a retirement home and taking paintings with us, and a good many of them, the faculty at the Academy are going to be largely responsible for the delight we have in our new quarters.

**PL:** Do you have a favorite painting or sculpture here after your many years here, is there something on the walls you've always looked for, a particular favorite?

**JF:** Well, no I don't think I've got a single favorite. One of the swellest ones to me is not such an important one but it's Franklin's Sailing in the Mist, do you know the picture? And if I think suddenly of one that gives me exquisite delight I think of that one. But there are lots of others and here we are in a room that has swell things in it. Here's the Fox Hunt right at our backs, and certainly one of the most talked of and certainly truly one of the finest. This is a wonderful room and we had such wonderful times in here. Speaking of the Annual again, and the restoration and the hardships that we had sometimes physically, did I tell you before they used to have these very beautiful dinners up here in the galleries on he opening nights, and on one of these affairs when the ladies were all dressed in their very beautiful gowns and men were all in black and white, there was a terrible snowstorm and a high wind and of course, the whole ceiling being covered with glass, the cold came through without much resistance. Also, the wind came through and the wind blew so hard and the cold was so intense that the candles were blown out on the dining tables and all the ladies had their fur coats on at dinner. I think of that in this room. Oh, we had wonderful times. They gave me a wonderful dinner in this room. The Women's Committee and they were all dear friends of mine, and they did a great job. We sat a long table up there at the end of the room and there were just dozens and dozens of sweet friends, so when I'm in the room I can't help but feel there are lovely ghosts all around us and all of them good friends.

**PL:** Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]