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Oral history interview with Perry Townsend  
Rathbone, 1975 Aug. 8-1976 Sept. 24

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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Perry Townsend Rathbone from August 8, 1975 - September 24, 1976. The interview took place in New York, NY, and was conducted by Paul Cummings for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

## Interview

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's the 19th of August, 1975. Paul Cummings, talking to Perry Rathbone, in his apartment in New York City. Let's see, you were born, to start at the beginning, Germantown, Pennsylvania, right?

PERRY RATHBONE: That's right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um, could you give me some background, I mean size of the family, what life was like generally through primary school?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. Well, I was born in Philadelphia, more or less, but actually, that is in Germantown, where my father was in business for a year or so, having come from New York, and I was going back to New York as an infant and grew up here. And I grew up in a place that was interesting enough to me at the time and has become more interesting in a sense, since then, because it was Fort Washington Heights.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: I was, yes, conscious of city life anyway and there, as a child, on Sunday afternoons, I would be taken to George Grey Barnard's Cloisters.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: I suppose the first museum I ever entered and I remember the atmosphere, even as a very small child of four years or five, something like that. My brother went to the Barnard School, which George Barnard established, in Fort Washington Heights.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yeah, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And we were a little further afield as far as the old buildings estate, which was an abandoned castle, standing on the very sight of the present day Cloisters, if I'm not mistaken, and that was a beautiful, great, open tract of land, just perfect for Sunday afternoon walks. Some of the earliest photographs of the family album are of the family in that place. And then I remember terribly well, going across the Hudson River, on the Dyckman Street Ferry, to Palisades Park, and spending Sundays there and Saturday afternoons, paddling on the shores of the Hudson and so on. So I really grew up in the city where my father lived since he was 21, and then moved to New Rochelle when I was about oh, seven or eight, something like that, I forget exactly.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now what, what was your father doing, what was he engaged in?

PERRY RATHBONE: My father? Well my father commenced his life as a photographer and writer. He was a very gifted photographer, especially of animals, and of sporting subjects, and wrote for *Country Life* and *Outdoor Life*, *Field & Stream* and that kind of thing, and also photographed animals on commission. He was really a very artistic man, and I think some of my own artistic inclination, I inherit from him. In later years, he was with the Robert Graves Company, the manufacturers of wallpaper, with offices at 33rd Street and Madison Avenue, and after that with H. Jaeckel & Sons, you may remember that name. It was a rather famous furrier—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It sounds—yeah, right, right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: —here in New York. Yes, the head of the firm was an old, old friend, a shooting friend of my father's actually, and he, I think he must have been with the firm for about 25 years. So that's what—why I grew up in New York, near Westchester.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Do you have brothers and sisters?

PERRY RATHBONE: One brother, one brother two years older, but someone very close to me all my life was the late Donald Oenslager, who was my first cousin, and although he was nine years older than I am, he was a great friend and a great influence and someone as close to me as anybody in my family really. And as a young man,

as—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where does he come into the picture, at what age roughly?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, he was born in 1902 and I in 1911, and from our earliest years, he grew up in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and when I was a very small boy, one of my earliest recollections was going to the Oenslagers in Harrisburg, for Christmas.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it started when you were a child.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes, and the Oenslagers would come to New York and we would always see them then. And so he added a great deal to my life. As I grew a little older and was in school, and he was already established here in New York or beginning his career in New York. I would come to his apartment on Perry Street in Greenwich Village, which at that time was a very attractive, bohemian part of New York.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And he had two roommates. One was a fellow called Bud Reed [ph], a classmate at Harvard, and the other was John Mason Brown, and together they made a marvelous—

PAUL CUMMINGS: My heavens. [Laughs.]

PERRY RATHBONE: —home for themselves there, and I felt, you know absolutely swimming in everything that fascinated and interested me at a very early age. And we would go to the Provincetown Theater, the *Grand Street Follies* and all that sort of thing that Donald would provide.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah. But was there interest at home, in art, books, literature, music, things like that or —?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well yes, yes. I would say it was mainly from my father. My mother was really not very artistic but my father was constantly concerned with things artistic, and when I was a boy, aside from going to the Cloisters, my first recollection of the Metropolitan Museum was with my father and my brother. I suppose the date would be about 1915 and I remember vividly, going there with my father, who was a rather intrepid character and had a great personal charm and who could talk anybody out of any possible objection that he might cause. He saw, in one of the rooms devoted to American furniture, a desk, which he knew perfectly well had secret drawers, an early American desk, and he thought it would intrigue my brother and me if he showed us just how those drawers worked. But of course there was a cord across the door of the gallery, but that didn't do—that didn't hinder my father. He just stepped over the cord and coaxed my brother and me to come under, and then he tiptoed across the room, he went up to the Governor Winthrop desk and just touched the right spot and out flew a drawer! It was an experience I'll never forget. [Paul laughs.] And then of course, we retreated to where we were supposed to be, but he knew perfectly well if a guard had come along, he would have said, well, you know, the boys wanted to know about this desk, or something.

Anyway, he was a very original man, very much loved by everybody and as I said, very artistic. He took us to the theater and oh, I don't know, he grew up under the influence of Edward Noyes Westcott, who wrote *David Harum*, and a man who was—had a rather humanistic culture and I think taught my father a very great deal. So, that's how—that was one influence on my life. The others were from Donald Oenslager and my uncle, Willard Connely, my mother's brother and Donald's mother's brother, who was a writer. He was a journalist early in his life, for the New York, *New York Journal*, I guess it was. Anyway, he also became a scholar and wrote a number of important biographies of Restoration figures, such as Wycherley and Farquhar, and then eventually the 18th century, wrote an important biography of Richard Steele, and finally got down to Whit Rummel and characters of the Regency novels.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Almost modern.

PERRY RATHBONE: Almost modern, exactly. But he was a great father, deeply devoted to Donald and to me. He taught at Harvard, where he took his masters degree, and then studied at Oxford. So he and Donald more or less guided me in my choice of curriculum at Harvard, and followed my career there with great interest.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, before we get that far, what kind of schools did you go to in New York?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I never went to school in New York. I was too young to go to school. My brother, as I say, went to the Barnham School.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And when I was about school age, my grandmother died, and that meant moving, going up

to a place called Greene, New York, where the family, a couple generations of the family had lived, and when my grandmother died, to spend, I suppose, the last months of her life. And there, I went to school, I think this was in 1917, for the first time, to the village school. But then the winter of 1917 was a horrendous one, record weather. I think somewhere around 40 degrees below zero or something, and finally, my mother got so tired of trying to keep my brother and me from freezing in bed, because the house and the furnace really wasn't adequate to that winter, that we went to Atlantic City in March, and there my brother went to a Quaker school, I remember, and I guess I didn't go to any. It must have been after that, it would have been 1918, that we moved to New Rochelle, and there I went to public school, Stephenson Grammar School, as I remember very well. And uh, but within a year or two years, we moved to another part of New Rochelle called Stephenson Park, and I went to the Stephenson School, which was a public school, and there I had mostly New England schoolmarm for teachers. Hardly unforgettable luck, I must say, I look back with admiration, at those women. Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Then I went to the New Rochelle High School.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were there any that you remember particularly?

PERRY RATHBONE: Teachers?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Or subjects that started to interest you specifically, or was it just the whole atmosphere?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, the whole atmosphere. I respected it and I liked it. I remember, I remember being involved—well, I was a Boy Scout, which interested me very much. My father was very keen about that because of his love of animals. He would be drawn into Scout meetings and talk about dogs and how to handle them, and how to care for them and so on. And I, of course, went out for merit badges and I think the only one I ever got was on art, because I very much liked to draw. I adored drawing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Uh-huh. When did that start?

PERRY RATHBONE: Very early. I think—I can't remember when I didn't like to draw. I was always attracted by visual expression, what was created by others or what I tried to do myself, and this continued through school. I took courses in art in high school. I don't think they amounted to very much but I enjoyed them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you like all the moving around from school to school and town to town?

PERRY RATHBONE: It does sound rather peripatetic doesn't it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Lots of activity.

PERRY RATHBONE: Lots of activity.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: I don't know what it was. I suppose my parents weren't satisfied with where they were living or something. But I remember my mother often saying how many times she moved in the first 10 years of her marriage, that is from 1907 to '17. I forget whether it was eight times or seven times, but something like that. And ah—[laughs]—but we settled in New Rochelle and lived there for what seemed a long time, 10 years or more, until I went to Harvard.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you ever get interested in photography, seeing that it was an activity in the house?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, only in my—really only in my father's work. I had a Brownie of course as a boy and used it, and used to take pains with my photographs, but I can't say that I really ever aspired to be a photographer the way he was. And ah—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It never developed into a big hobby of any support.

PERRY RATHBONE: No. With me, no.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, no.

PERRY RATHBONE: It really didn't, no. I collected coins. I was a natural kind of collector at an early age, and coins absorbed me more than anything. And one of my favorite haunts in New Rochelle was the pawn shop on Division Street, where I would go pore over coins and buy those that I could afford, you know, from a coin broker, and then somewhere that coin collection still exists but I don't know just where it is. I think it's time I

found out. [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. You may never know what's there.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Quite a lot of them were early American coins and those seem to be going through the roof, so it would be just as well to find those things.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, terrific, terrific.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. Well anyway, I—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, were you active in other, say in high school activities?

PERRY RATHBONE: I was always in plays. I was very much an actor. I liked to be in plays and I seemed to have a certain gift for it. And so I was quite often importuned to get into this play or that, and that I really liked. The only thing that was rather big in my life in these school years was going to that same village called Greene, each summer, because after my grandmother died, we kept the old family house and everything in it. It was filled with things from the 1820s and '30s, when it was built, and I developed a very keen interest in antiquarian Americana and learned a lot from reading the papers that my great-grandfather had left behind, who was a physician and a very methodical man, he kept his correspondence. I developed a very keen sense of history and American social development, resilience, through that connection.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's fascinating.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Rather different from most boys' experience, I thought, and that stayed with me always. I'm a careful preserver of papers and I have the patience to read antique handwriting and so on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes, with all the squiggles.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, exactly, archaic forms of letters.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But now, did you have any particular directed ambitions by the time you were in high school? Did you want to—

PERRY RATHBONE: Well that's a good question.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —be an actor or painter?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I really wanted to be an artist of some kind, I didn't know what kind, and I really never was able to prove to myself that I had any great creative gift, or even a great facility. I had a natural aptitude but I never became a really skillful draftsman. I could draw and liked to paint watercolors and so on, but I never felt that this was the driving ambition that would determine my life. Then there was the example of my cousin Donald. He said maybe I could be a stage designer, maybe after that I could be an architect or a landscape architect, and it was about—this was the state of my mind at the time I went to Harvard.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now how did you pick Harvard?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, because the family tradition. I have an ancestry which is very closely associated, going back to the 17th century. The seventh president of Harvard was my ancestor, and Donald's by the way—our families were related—and all down to the time of my great-grandfather, all the generations of that family by the name of Willard had gone to Harvard, but my great-grandfather to Dartmouth. But Donald had gone to Harvard and so did his brother and so did his father, John Oenslager. It was sort of the family college. And my uncle had taken his masters degree there, my literary uncle, who thought that Harvard was the only place. That was quite exclusively his view.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now he was—which one was he again?

PERRY RATHBONE: He was my mother's brother, Willard Connely, and he said, "Well of course there's no use thinking about any other place." And so my mind was early directed towards Harvard. I managed to pass the college boards, which of course was the bugbear of every youth my age. You know what that's like, to get through those college boards and satisfy yourself and your family. Yes, like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That some work had been done somewhere.

PERRY RATHBONE: That some work had been done along the line yes, and that you weren't as perfect, with a good plan, after all. So ah—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what did you intend to do once you got to Harvard? I mean, did you have a plan?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I knew there was—I knew that my information was so strongly art oriented, that I would study fine arts, to see what would come of that. And it was Donald and my uncle who more or less laid out my course of study the first year, and I began as a freshman to study fine arts in the general course that ah, is well remembered for a long time. It's ceased to be given now, under Arthur Pope, who was a great teacher, who taught us what he called the, "Language of Drawing and Painting." It was a marvelous course.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Does that relate to his book very directly?

PERRY RATHBONE: Very closely.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It does, yeah?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. But I think it's a marvelous approach to an underlying study for future development in the field of art history. And I concentrated in that, and I think it must have been by the time I was a sophomore, that I realized that Paul Sachs's course, "Museum Work and Problems," as it was called. It wasn't really so much the museum administration—although that was an aspect of it—that appealed to me most and where I thought that I could bring my own natural talent and interest in art to bear.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, did you take any studio courses?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, I took one, under Martin Mower, who was an old-fashioned teacher, one of those friends of Mrs. Jack Gardner, who was a small-time painter but a real aesthete and a very able draftsman, and he gave a course in drawing. We drew from the model, we learned how to work in a more sophisticated way in watercolor and so on. A course which, of course, is since discontinued and more or less absorbed by what happens in the Carpenter Center there. But um—

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was the Pope class like? I mean this was really the first art history you've had wasn't it, in terms of—

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. Yes, it certainly was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you like that?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, it was perfectly fascinating, because in the first place, you were dealing with art at a very high level for the first time and in a serious way. You were being introduced to Japanese prints for example, and the wonderful artistic impulse behind those expressions, to Indian miniatures, to Greek vase painting, to the whole, the vision of Vermeer, to the revolutionary style of Giotto. It was a broad spectrum of artistic expression, which we came to know quite intimately, owing to the techniques that have been developed by Arthur Pope and the great mentor who preceded him, Dr. Denman W. Ross.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Who was also a great influence on Donald Oenslager. Donald was fortunate enough to study with Dr. Ross and go to his house for seminars. Harvard was still small enough and the classes small enough to permit that kind of—

PAUL CUMMINGS: To do that.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Yeah, very intimate and an altogether delightful way of learning. We weren't able to do that until we became graduate students, with Paul Sachs, who would invite us to his home in Cambridge for similar seminar sessions.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were there other instructors there who were important to you or courses that were?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes there were. Yeah, yes, especially in the fine arts field, where I came to see more of those personalities. One of the great influences was Chandler Post, who was a model art historian because he was so precise and had such a splendid clear delivery of what he knew and what he thought. He was a mar—had a marvelously organized mind and a wonderfully organized course, and he provided me with a great deal of art historical framework, on which I still rely, but he also was quite pedantic, quite unlike Arthur Pope, who was more theoretical and more experimental in his look, his outlook and his understanding. But he was an important person nevertheless. Another one, of course Paul Sachs was a great, great influence.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now how did you come to get into his course?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, he also taught undergraduate courses you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, he did?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. He gave a course in French painting, which I took, but I also remember very well, the museum course was—had only been given since about 19—well I'm not sure, about 1923, or something like that, '23 or '24. And here, this was ah, I went to Harvard in '29, and by '30, by 1930, I had about made up my mind that I would study with him when I graduated. And the course had become so popular by that time. There was something like 28 people in my class. Since then, I've known classes to be as small as six and eight and so on, but this was an unusually large class and there were quite a number of rather—people who have become prominent since, in that class.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who were some of them?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, one of them was Charlie Cunningham, who has had a distinguished career as you know, as a museum director. Another one was Henry McIlhenny, who became a staff member of Philadelphia, and then a trustee. Another one was John Thacher, who was the Director of Dumbarton Oaks in Washington. Um, let me see, who are the others? John Newberry, who was a collector from Detroit, and also joined the staff of the Detroit Art Institute. Ah, um, let me see, Paul Harris. Oh, James Plaut, and he became the first director of the Institute for Contemporary Art in Boston.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right. That's quite a group of people.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, it was quite, it was quite a group yes, it really was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you find, you know, these people as fellow students in those days? [They laugh.] You know?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, it's a funny question to ask. They seemed perfectly normal.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Reasonable people at the time, it seems to me, and in our social life, which Sachs saw to it existed. Of course, he thought it was important for us to know each other in a social way and not just in a classroom way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: I think we were all very stimulating to each other, that's the way I look upon it, and he saw to it that we had this sort of informal exchange by—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, how would he do that?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, he lived in a beautiful big house in Cambridge, which Harvard since has unfortunately tore down, called Shady Hills. It was a rather big house, federal house, from about 1800, which had been the home of Charles Eliot Norton.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. So uh—and actually Walter Arensberg had lived there at one time, when he was on the faculty at Harvard briefly. So when, when Sachs went to Harvard, I think in 1915, the house was available and he forcibly bought it and lived there all his active life, and it was a spacious house, and he was a very hospitable man and so was his adorable wife. So he liked to have—he was very gregarious too, and he liked to have these young people there, asking him about this painting by Cranach and that drawing by Degas, and this bronze by Sant'Agata or somebody. He liked that kind of informal exchange and that had a great deal to do with our education and our coming to feel at home with art, shall I say.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I always got the feeling from people who studied with him, that he was a person who in many ways, as you just almost indicated, kind of planned their social career, you know, because a number of people said "Oh yes, well I went to Europe and he'd send letters to so and so, and to himself, and said now you must go here and you must go there and see these people."

PERRY RATHBONE: That's right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And on and on and on.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes he did that. He, he was very strong on contacts and he was quite right, because he recognized how much of the art world was made to go round by this kind of personal contact. That's just the way Berenson understood, something very similar.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And how much of a scholar you might turn out to be, and I remember one of his favorite terms was a closet scholar, meaning somebody who is shut off from the world. I don't know how much of one of those you might happen to be or turn out to be, but still, the contacts that you made outside of your closet would invariably be very important to you. He's been proven so right, over and over. And I remember when I became director of the Boston Museum, he often advised me, he said you know, you must see as much of your trustees as you can at home, it's a very good idea to see them at home. Don't let them see you only at meetings.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. See them as real people.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Rather than just as names, bodies coming and going.

PERRY RATHBONE: Right, yeah. He had a wonderful sort of personal understanding of life. He wasn't ah, he wasn't, how shall I say it? A stereotype teacher at all. No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what were his classes like? You know, the people I have interviewed, six or seven people that have studied with him, and they all make it sound so kind of grand and relaxed.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well his lecture classes were not that. His lecture classes were not terribly, not as agreeable as they might have been, because he read his lectures.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

PERRY RATHBONE: Whereas Chandler Post extemporized. He didn't extemporize, he memorized his lectures and he repeated his lectures word for well chosen word, whereas Sachs read his lectures, and that was a little bit less—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —stimulating.

PERRY RATHBONE: Stimulating. Where he was at his best was in his seminar classes, which as museum classes were, invariably. And there he had a wonderful gift for drawing out the students and making them discuss points and policies with one another, and he would act more or less as the referee or the chairman, the interlocutor or whatever, and introduced comment as it occurred to him to do so. Then because he knew that this easy give and take, and flow of the conversation, was valuable, not just an evanescent distraction, he had his secretary, the faithful Mary Wadsworth, take down, verbatim, virtually everything that was said.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And those sessions were typed up and then run off on a mimeograph and each one of those sessions was distributed to us in mimeograph form the following week. And these minutes or notes, proved to be very useful to read over, to fix into your mind, the name of a personality who may have been introduced, like, for example, Belle da Costa Greene, who was too—we were too young to have known her, but she was somebody to conjure with in those days.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And he would give a thumbnail sketch of her significance, her background, her personal gifts, her scholarly college, her place in the art world, and there it would be on paper afterwards too, so you see how Greene was spelled with an 'E' or without, and how do you spell 'da Costa' and all this.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: It was a very effective way of teaching, yes. Some of us would cut up those minutes and put them on cards or in books, according to the subject matter—collectors or museum directors that have been discussed, or dealers or what have you. Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now how would he take one through a class? Did you have a program or a syllabus of any kind, or was it just—

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, we had a syllabus, we did, and it had to do—well of course, one big category was



dealers and the art market, and the relationship of museum people, and museum directors especially, to that. Another would be on art literature and libraries and that. Another one would be on the physical maintenance of a museum, and he noted, to impress us with importance of what he called housekeeping, maintaining a tidy ship you call that. He would make us actually come one morning early, at the time the guards and sweep-up people arrived at the Fogg Museum, and help.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really?

PERRY RATHBONE: We'd dig out brushes and brooms and dust cloths and actually clean the place. Yes, he said—he thought that some of our number were rather too privileged or, you know, a little too removed from the humdrum side of life, and he'd say, "Now I'm going to see to it that you soil your lily-white fingers so that you won't forget it."

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's terrific.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And so he had the sense of a graphic education too. And then we would—the topic of installation was a very important one. He would make us all design, to the best of our ability, an ideal museum case, and then to get close to the problems of organizing an exhibition. Each museum class would be required to organize and stage an exhibition in the Fogg Museum during the year. He made us write a release for a newspaper, about a new acquisition, and then a release about, about an exhibition.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it was really very practical in many ways.

PERRY RATHBONE: Very practical. He made us form the habit of making a gallery of art in any museum where we happen to be, and before we left it, to decide which of all the works of art in that gallery you would choose above the others, for your own ideal museum. This kind of thing helped to stimulate a critical approach.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Decision making too.

PERRY RATHBONE: And decision making, exactly, yeah. He taught us that nothing is more important than the personnel of the museum. "The museum is as great as its staff," he was fond of saying. He taught us to be humble by telling us that the museum man's name is written in sand, you might as well make up your mind of that now.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That must have been cheery. [They laugh.]

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, you know, when you're 23 years old it doesn't matter. When you get to be my age, you see how right he was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, dear, yeah. [They laugh.] Oh wow, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. So it was a really great experience and you knew you were dealing with a vibrant personality who would, if he liked you, and fortunately I was one that he liked, he would never desert you, that he would always be vitally interested in you and your career, ready to help you in any way, ready to be critical if necessary, but never indifferent. And his wife supported him in that by taking a deep personal interest in all the students who came his way. I was really—I've never seen anything like that. It didn't matter how many years interval it was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It could be 10, 20 years later, you could go and write him a letter and call him up or something, and still?

PERRY RATHBONE: He was absolutely thrilled when I went back to Boston, from St. Louis, and certainly the warmest welcome, and his wife, Meta, did too. It was very heartwarming, wonderful. He was a great man and he was a great influence on American museums.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. How much of his classes would you say were based on his own imagination or based on observation of museums he had been to, his own experience there?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well actually, his own experience was pretty limited.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: It's astonishing. He never, he never had any experience, except in the Fogg Museum, because he quit the Goldman Sachs office to go teach at Wellesley, because he discovered that his chief interest was in collecting prints, and then drawings, and in studying art history, and instead of studying the stock market and investment banking, which was his father's, his father's business, and his brother's too.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: So he took his share of whatever it was at Goldman Sachs, which he often pointed out was far less, actually, than his brother Arthur's share turned out to be, because Arthur remained associated.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, he was a stockbroker.

PERRY RATHBONE: He was able to buy fabulous works of art, especially paintings, and went to teaching. But his—I don't know how soon it was after he went to Wellesley that he was asked to come to Harvard by Edward Forbes, and be associate director. Edward Forbes felt the need of someone to complement his own gifts and talents, and sensed that Paul Sachs was the man. Paul Sachs is somewhat younger than Forbes. Sachs was born, was in the class of zero-zero [1900] or naught-naught, or whatever they call it, aughty-aught, and Forbes must have been a few years older, but they became the perfect team.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you study with Forbes at all?

PERRY RATHBONE: I did, as a graduate student. I don't think he gave any undergraduate courses. He was the director, you know the spiritual director, the titular director, but he wasn't the most practical man, and then Paul Sachs was. But yes, he was a wonderful influence too, a great idealist and a man particularly concerned about conservation. He made us all feel the vast importance of conservation, first and foremost, as nobody else did. I think he was ahead of the game, ahead of everybody at recognizing the increasing need for maintaining works of art as close to their original condition as possible. And he gave a course in methods and processes, which a number of us in my museum class took along with the museum class. We were able to take, I think, three other courses.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was that class like?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, it was a laboratory class. We met and listened to his instruction about processes of painting, particularly medieval processes; painting in egg tempera, for example.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And preparing a gesso panel and building out the [inaudible]—

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it's materials and everything.

PERRY RATHBONE: With materials. We all had to master the art of gilding and polishing our gold leaf with a wolf's tooth, and painting on parchment with white of egg. Every aspect on how to paint a fresco, a secco, and a fresco fresh, a true fresco, buon fresco, on a freshly plastered wall, right there in the studio of the Fogg Museum. Oh, it was fascinating. Most of us copied the details of that marvelous Catalonian Romanesque chapel in the Boston Museum, a 12th-century chapel that had Romanesque subjects, saints, and so on. And that was—well, it was also lectures, informal talks they were, that Edward Forbes gave, and it was most instructive.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How accessible was the museum to the students in those days?

PERRY RATHBONE: The Fogg Museum?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. And the museum in Boston.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, the Fogg Museum was, it seemed to me, very accessible, very accessible indeed. We were able to go to the storage whenever we wanted to. There wasn't the same need for the sharp kind of security measures that are necessary today. The Boston Museum was a very different kind of place from what it is now. One difficulty of course was getting there if you didn't have your own car, because it's not far from Cambridge but it's a long way if you have to go to Park Street, down Huntington Avenue, but we often went there. We didn't very much have contact with the staff though. The staff was rather aloof and the director certainly was. I mean, whenever you even thought about meeting him, much less seeing him, he was somebody very remote from our lives and it was Edward Jackson Holmes in those days. And then about the time I took the museum course, about that time, Harold Edgell became director, and he had been there at Harvard, as you know, was the dean of the School of Architecture, and he also gave courses in Italian painting, Expressionist [inaudible] paintings, which was a specialty.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well I'm curious, during the days of Harvard, did you decide to become an instructor or a teacher or a museum person? What, what was going?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I decided that—I can tell you in 1934, which is the year I finished my graduate year and my family could no longer afford to keep me going at my education, that was five years, most of it during—well, all of it during the Depression of course.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: The crash occurred about a year—about a month after I arrived in Cambridge. Um, I was ready to do anything of course, and I wanted to do something in the museum if possible, and it happened that there was an opening in the Detroit Museum, in the Education Department there, the reason being that the chap who had held it was not really adequate to the job, and the Carnegie Foundation, in order to lend a hand to ailing bankrupt Detroit, had made a grant to support the education work through those lean years. And I went out there as a member of the staff, but I was actually paid by the Carnegie Corporation, instead of by the city of Detroit.

PAUL CUMMINGS: By the city, yeah. Well, you know, how did the Depression affect the university life in those days?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I don't, I don't know that it did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was it very apparent to you or were you so involved with that world, that that was really what was going on?

PERRY RATHBONE: It didn't, it didn't really. I don't remember it affecting us really at all. I think we were more worried about what would happen when we were booted out of Cambridge and we were out in the cold world. We felt quite sheltered there really, during those years, and life, of course, on the campus was not expensive back then as the way it has become.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

PERRY RATHBONE: I think my tuition was \$400.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's just about—

PERRY RATHBONE: That will keep you in college for about a month now or something, I believe. Four hundred dollars was the tuition, but that was twice as much as it was when Donald went to Harvard, it was \$200, in the early '20s. Four hundred dollars and I lived very comfortably. I had only one roommate that was an upperclassman and I think the room was—was the room? Room rent was \$350 a year, something like that, and our meals, I don't know, I can't remember what they were, but it was nothing really serious. Um, and then so far as our recreation was concerned, there was—the amount of social life that was provided for Harvard students, if you happened to be on the right list, was just endless, because Boston was a great center of social activity in those days and there was one debutante party after the other. And I spent a lot of time at those affairs. I enjoyed them very much, you know, they were beautiful. They were lavish and beautiful, and they were—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Those were the days of the long dresses and gorgeous clothes.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, and gowns, pretty girls and orchids, and two orchestras who never stopped playing, you know, from 10 until three in the morning, and of course the bad part of it was the awful stuff we drank, because it was still Prohibition and bootleg, dreadful. Dreadful mixes of rum, so-called rum and tea, and so on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And who knows what.

PERRY RATHBONE: God knows what. Awful. But nevertheless, I bring that up because you asked me what it was like and we really felt quite [inaudible].

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were you active in extracurricular events?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, I was. Yeah, I was—my principal thing that took my time was the *Lampoon*. There, my modest ability with the pen as a draftsman got me onto the board of the *Lampoon*, which I enjoyed enormously. But one had to heel to the *Lampoon*. You had to fill a certain number of pages with what was acceptable to the editorial board before you qualified for election.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. So I earned my place on the board of the *Lampoon* drawing cartoons, and that provided a competitive social outlet, you know just in a clubby way. Yes, because we dined there every week, we had dinner once a week, and then plenty of committee meetings and other things. And that I enjoyed very much indeed and in those days, football season was very active socially in the *Lampoon*. We'd have a post-game tea dance that was always a great deal of fun. You would take your best girl and you know, make a night of it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was great fun, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Great fun, yeah, really, it really was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The great days before the real world.

PERRY RATHBONE: Before—exactly, before the real world, when we really didn't care much about what went on outside. I thought when I left Cambridge, that I never could be happy anywhere else. That's the impression it left upon me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: My goodness.

PERRY RATHBONE: Really. And then I went out to a place I'd never been before, namely Detroit.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was that like? I mean here you were, 1934, appearing in Detroit, which is the middle of the Depression.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I must say, it was, I think a little—in many ways, because if I remember this correctly, the museum itself, the Detroit Institute of Arts, had been closed when the city was close to bankruptcy. They actually closed the museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It sounds like New York today almost.

PERRY RATHBONE: Like New York today, not different really. And the curatorial staff, that is all the men on the curatorial staff, and the director, William Valentiner, had resigned. Valentiner, in his courageous and gallant way, led the way and said, "I can see that the budget simply won't sustain our salaries, I shall be the first to go"—and his salary, I think was \$10,000—and "I will manage somehow to survive." And the men on the staff—and there were quite a number of them, because they built up an important curatorial force there—all did the same thing. Heil, Walter Heil—who was the curator of paintings, went to San Francisco and found a job at the Legion of Honor or the De Young Museum, rather. And Benjamin Marsh, who was the curator of Oriental art, went to Ann Arbor, and Aga-Oglu, the curator of Near Eastern art, went also to Ann Arbor. And who else? William Suhr, the restorer, came from New York. Anyway, it was everybody, it was everybody had scattered and when I worked there, nobody had returned. But within two months—that is in November, I went there in September of '34—within two months, Valentiner came back. In September of '34, they managed to pull themselves together to the extent of paying his salary, and that was a great moment. Everybody talked about it in advance, how exciting it would be when he came back. Just wait until William comes, and he certainly lived up to his reputation. The place began to hum with activity and really, it was transformed, the whole atmosphere, by his being there, and I began to feel for the first time in my life, what a great difference one person can make in a big organization.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Isn't it true?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, just one.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Just one. A man full of positive ideas and action.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, he was a very different kind of personality from Sachs say, wasn't he?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Oh yes, he was very different. Oh, he was another, another book altogether. Now, I was fascinated, to find myself involved with two such different types, with different outlooks, personalities, everything, but it was an education for me, to go there. It was a very, very valuable extension of my art education, as it turned out.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now you went there, in the Education Department, right?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But now you were also somehow involved with Wayne State at the same time?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, at the same time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was that?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, there was—Wayne State, it was just called Wayne University in those days, the state support was added later. It was really a city, county, state and city university, which occupied an old big high school building not far from the Detroit Institute of Arts.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was across the way or something.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, not far. And there was a whole class of freshmen interested in the survey course in art history. So I gave it, I think I gave it for two years, a survey course on western art, not eastern, western art, and I must say, I was very depressed by the quality of student that I had in my classes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You had no teaching experience at Harvard of any kind.

PERRY RATHBONE: No, no.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So this was your first.

PERRY RATHBONE: First teaching.

PAUL CUMMINGS: First teaching, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: I just did my best to imitate what I had learned at Harvard. I'd imitate the teaching methods and lecture. It was a lecture course with notes and blue book examination and all this kind of thing. And it was a rather depressing experience altogether, because the students were so, I thought, were so inferior.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I, the only students I've ever known at that age were the ones I'd known at Harvard of course, so there was—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Somewhat different.

PERRY RATHBONE: It was somewhat different, yes, and my boss, as head of the Education Department there, was Edgar Richardson, E.P. Richardson, who was also very influential in my development.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way would you say?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, he was also quite different from Valentiner. Richardson was a very reflective and deliberate and slow and thoughtful, very thoughtful man. He wasn't given to sudden inspiration the way Valentiner was. He was an entirely different temperament and I think he provided an excellent example as a teacher, because I think he lectured extremely well. Not that his presentation was very exciting, it certainly wasn't, but it was very well thought out and he expressed himself with precision and great taste and individuality too. And his interest in American art was already apparent when I went there and I learned quite a lot from him, and saw how scholarly one could be about American art through his example.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So that was a kind of first introduction to that aspect, was—

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. I was always sympathetic to American art because of, clearly, the family background. I was already attached to something about which one could hardly read in those days, there was nothing published. For example, I grew up with the genre engraving of the *Jolly Flatboatmen*, you see, this thing that has since become so famous, that was done in the house, in the country, by George Caleb Bingham. And also, the *Farmers Noonning*, by—you know this one, it's a picture by Mount—and other works as well, Cole's *The Voyage of Life*, all those things. So I was happy to associate with somebody who had similar experience and exposure to a kind of forgotten part of art history. And thanks to his example, I followed him when I went to St. Louis and investigated a little known St. Louis artist by the name of Weimar [ph]. Wrote a biography of him, Keystone published a "life and times" and so on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now there's been nothing about American art at Harvard was there?

PERRY RATHBONE: No, nothing at all. Never mentioned it. Only Winslow Homer was referred to because of the rich collection of Homer watercolors in the Fogg Museum, thanks to the generosity of Harvard men who had given their favorite pictures to that museum. Sargent was mentioned because he was a kind of demigod of Boston who could hardly be ignored.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Whistler maybe.

PERRY RATHBONE: Whistler, yes, Whistler was mentioned, yes. Of course, he belonged to the English school, but no, American art didn't figure, no. No, no.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's fascinating.

PERRY RATHBONE: Hmm?

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's fascinating, when you, you know, realize how, in terms of time, how really little time this was ago.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, it's really—now, I'm not such an old man as all that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [They laugh.] I mean just, it didn't really exist even.

PERRY RATHBONE: It didn't exist. The first serious book in you know modern times, came out, I think, in 1929, and that was a book called *Art in America*, by Suzanne La Follette. It was a very, very good, sound book, but she didn't pay the homage to American artists that she might have. She was very guarded in her appraisal and appreciation, you know, of people like Bierstadt and so on, Church and the others. So it was—I found myself involved with a subject that didn't interest too many people. I had written a thesis for Harvard on primitive portraiture.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, my honors thesis, I wrote one of the earliest writings, I suppose, on this subject, and in those days, I found that the Frick Art Reference Library, according to Frick's careful campaign to gather photographs—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh right, the photographs. Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, that she had not overlooked these early artistic works, artistic documents, and I spent hours there, selecting the photographs to illustrate my own study of New England. I called it "itinerant portraiture" in New York and New England, basing it more or less upon the activity of those portrait artists who traveled from village to village and town to town.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fascinating because just a few years later Jimmy Flexner was there doing similar things.

PERRY RATHBONE: That's right, yeah that's right. They asked to have a copy of my thesis at the Frick Library, so I was very proud, I had become an author already. [They laugh.] Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, great. Well, you know what did you do? You moved to Detroit, you had to find a place to live.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh my God, that was something.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And get settled into a very one-business city, that's what it was then.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes it was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: With no business there.

PERRY RATHBONE: With no business. Well again, I was quite lucky in being introduced to Detroit by a classmate in the museum course, a fellow student, John Newberry, who came from Detroit and was in a very privileged position there because he was from a very rich family, and was interested in art and knew what was going on at the museum. It was he who knew about this vacancy in the Education Department—

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: —and said why don't you apply for it, and that encouraged me. Paul Sachs thought it was a good idea, so I just went out there. He himself was so well off that he didn't even drive his own Packard car back to Detroit. He had a beautiful Packard Convertible Coupe and sent me out to Detroit with a driver. You see, I enjoyed the trip very much. I had never been west of—I hadn't even been to Buffalo. We stopped at the old country house, my old family house in Greene, New York, on the way. We stopped in another place called St. Thomas, in Ontario, and finally reached Detroit in two days or something.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's a marvelous trip.

PERRY RATHBONE: It was a marvelous trip and motoring in those days was a lot of fun. You know, it wasn't just hard work. And the driver, a chap named Campbell, I think, was a very agreeable man, and so there, I found myself a guest of the Newberrys in Grosse Point, which was the height of luxury and comfort. And pretty soon, Jack came from Cambridge. He introduced me to friends and so on, family, and I met Richardson, who was my boss, and after I'd talked to him for a while, he asked me to write him a letter, talking about my feelings about the position and my background and so on, and he said, "you're on," for the first of September. That's how it began but because of Jack Newberry and his friends and all that, I found myself in the midst of a very pleasant

social life as well. I met people my own age who had artistic interests. But I lived, after I left the Newberrys' house, I lived in, really as I look back upon it, a rather grim house, right behind the museum, that was called John R. Street. It was a declining neighborhood. I suppose the house had been quite good at one time. The house was maybe 1915 or something. I had one room and the bathroom was down the hall, and downstairs lived an artist, a very nice artist by the name of Pappas, a Greek. He was a hearty fellow whom I came to like very much, so I wasn't entirely lonesome there, but it was a pretty, as I look back on it, rather grim.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Stark.

PERRY RATHBONE: Stark, yes. Nevertheless, I had parties for my young friends and we had a phonograph and so on. So it wasn't so bad and I was able to save some money out of my salary and finally bought a car, which is what everybody in Detroit had to do. [Paul laughs.] Within two years, I was able to buy a Ford car, and I kept it 30 years and I've since given it to my son, and I paid, I remember vividly, I paid \$630 for it, brand new, and the last I heard, it's worth about \$6,000. It's a Ford, open Ford Touring Car.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, marvelous.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, terribly good looking, and I drove it for 30 years, just giving it up, I just handed it over to Peter.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, terrific.

PERRY RATHBONE: He was rather pleased.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's great.

[END OF TRACK.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: This is side two. You talked briefly about Wayne University.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And what actually did you do at the museum, what were your activities there when you arrived?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, when I arrived at the Detroit Museum, I took my place in the Education Department, which consisted of Edgar Richardson as the head, and two assistants. My assistant was a rather beautiful, certainly striking, redhead by the name of Marian Heath [ph], and she had had quite a lot of experience there for several years, especially with school groups and clubs and things like that, and knew how to express herself fluently and so on. Her knowledge was not very profound certainly, but she was—I think she was effective.

PAUL CUMMINGS: She worked as a docent, it was more of that.

PERRY RATHBONE: She worked as a docent, and that really is what I did too, was to work as a docent, occasionally to give a lecture for the public, in the small lecture room, and, in time, to teach this course for Wayne University. And I sometimes went out from the museum and gave talks with slides and things like that, but I took endless classes of schools through the museum, and of course concentrated on those areas that attract the mind and imagination of the young most effectively, like the Egyptian Collection, and so on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why do you think that always appeals to young students?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, it was very graphic. It was very graphic and it appears to be elemental, or elementary. It appears that way, because it is so graphic and so clear and they're easily recognizable human beings and there are animals and other things that appeal. Then there's the everlasting morbidity of the human kind, which gets a big charge out of something having to do with preserving the dead body.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Just as plain as that. And I came to the conclusion, in time, that in order to operate a Museum of Arts successfully, you have to have at least one mummy. [They laugh.] So of course there was, there was a mummy at the Detroit Museum, which helped a lot. And I learned from Marian how to draw the children out by asking them questions. That was a technique I had not learned at Harvard to be sure, but I soon picked it up from her.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What would she do, I mean what would you, what would you do?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, she would just say now "What do you think is going on here," or "What do you think is

happening there?" One story I love to repeat, that came from that technique, was asking a school group what they, what they thought of the Rodin, the *Thinker*, which sat on the front steps of the Detroit Museum, as he sits on the steps of so many others.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: "What is he thinking about?" It's a reasonable question to ask the little classes of schoolchildren and there's always the usual pause and shyness and lack of response, but after a while a little boy braver than the others stuck up his hand and I said, "Well, what do you think?" He said, "He's trying to think where he left his clothes." [Laughs.] This guy was thinking of it. I remember, I remember another—asking a school class if they liked this picture and they thought that was a good picture, trying to get them to—trying to stimulate their critical approach, looking at modern pictures, which are a little different from the ones they found in their storybooks.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: This was a Kokoschka, of a little girl clutching a doll. Oh, um, one child said, "Oh yes, I think that's a good picture." And I said, "Why do you think so?" "Well, it says okay in the corner." [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: So you know it was very—you know, you get those unexpected answers from such an audience. And then of course there are the usual club groups, especially women's clubs; the PEO Sisterhood, things like that, that sound very strange to me. I have never yet have found out what the PEO Sisterhood was, but they would come repeatedly for instruction. I must say, it got a little bit unrewarding and tedious, but what it did for me was to give me the opportunity of studying a collection, which was very ramified [ph], that was part of the program with the Detroit Museum under Valentiner, and much of it had been published in the bulletin of the Detroit Museum, which Valentiner had written pages and pages for. So there, there was a lot to learn there and I recognized that as a valuable experience, as well as teaching.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How much do you think a museum can do for those endless groups of people that troupe through like that?

PERRY RATHBONE: I really think it's—much too much is expected of the museum and one of its problems, I think, is that very fact. I really think that the museum is only good as a laboratory exercise, on top of a certain amount of book learning or formal instruction. You certainly can't expect the American public to learn about art from going to museums as a school group.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean, I, you know, wonder. I go to the Met, I used to the Met a great deal on Sundays, and I don't, because 60[000] or 70,000 people make it a little crowded.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, it's impossible.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And I wonder, you know, like why are all these people here? You know, what do they see, what do they do? They walk around, you know, with staring expressions.

PERRY RATHBONE: I don't know. But then you wonder if they really are any different at the Louvre or the Vatican, or wherever it may be. It seems to me, the museum going public today is about the same everywhere. In Japan, I've observed a more studious and silent approach; they don't talk all the time. The American museum people seem to talk as much as look, but the Japanese, I've observed, are very, very quiet lookers, intent lookers. Just how they got that way, I'm not just sure. They seem to have more of an instinctive understanding of visual language.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well also, their art is more ritualistic. [Cross talk.]

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes it is, and I think they are taught to be visual from an early age.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, and the handwriting calligraphy, drawing, relationship.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, exactly, and their cultivation of nature, arranging flowers and all that, is all very much a part of their education. [Audio break.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh but you know, to continue about Detroit, now here you were, working with Richardson, who had American interests, and with Valentiner, who certainly had European interests. What—now, how did you juggle with—there, I mean in terms of your own interests? You know what was developing in your own, your own ideas?



PERRY RATHBONE: Well, um, of course I had to pay attention to my educational activity the first two years that I was there, and toward the end of my first two years, when I was working with Richardson almost entirely, and also absorbing a lot from the library, which was a good one, and from the curators who remained, like Adele Coulin Weibel, this marvelous old Swiss curator of textiles and a remarkable scholar herself. I absorbed a lot from my professional association with her. Um, at the end of my second year, in 1936, the museum had come into possession of a lovely house in Grosse Pointe.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, the Alger House.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, the Alger House, the Russell—this is Russell Alger. Following the death of her husband, offered it to the museum as a branch museum in Grosse Pointe, and it was a house designed by Charles Adams Platt, so it was quite purely Tuscan, very simple in his plan, very open, really quite well suited for public use, and with all this Tuscan Renaissance background and with a very considerable collection that Valentiner had built up, of Renaissance decorative art, it was decided to make the first floor, which had this special style and character, into a museum of Italian Renaissance decorative arts. The second floor, which were all sort of enormous interiors, of galleries for lone exhibitions of one kind or another, and provide Detroit with a branch. Detroit, being an enormous rarified city, it seemed a reasonable thing to do and Valentiner wanted me to be the first curator. Well, I was very flattered, quite surprised, that I should have this responsibility at such an early age, because in 1936, I was 25. He said, "Never mind, never mind. I began very early myself, everything will be all right," you know, "I'm very—I have great belief in the young," that kind of optimistic character. I said "Well, with your assurance and help, I guess I could do it." "Oh yes, yes, yes of course." So, I came to New York repeatedly with him and we found lots of things to borrow from French & Company. They were loaded with Italian furniture because the style, the vogue for things—

PAUL CUMMINGS: These had changed, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: —was declining, and there was plenty left on French's hands, so to speak; they'd gone through several receiverships I think. So they were perfectly willing to lend, hoping that they would make a sale, and we borrowed all sorts of things that could never be found today, not that they were so choice and rare, but the sources have just evaporated, have disappeared. And filled up the four major rooms on the first floor with this kind of thing and with paintings of a second strain, of a second owner, from the storages of the museum otherwise.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And there were bronzes and there were carved wooden candlesticks and there were coffers and lecterns and you could see it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Everything, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Tapestries and everything. And we had a splendid opening one afternoon in 1936, and I remember very well that I was expected to be in a cutaway, and I hadn't a cutaway at that time, but I had one made on occasion. That's how things were in the 1930s, it's hard to believe but true.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now people are showing up with T-shirts.

PERRY RATHBONE: T-shirts and tennis shoes. And Valentiner was dressed the same way and there we were, received all our fancy guests from Grosse Pointe, and then we put on a series of exhibitions. Also, we developed the gardens, thanks to the Garden Club of Grosse Pointe, they contributed much of the money and time to beautifying the grounds that overlook the lake, what was Lake St. Clair.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It sounds like a marvelous place. Yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: A perfectly marvelous place and it was, it was a great attraction. But there I was from 1936 until 1938, only two years actually, seemed longer. When Valentiner was asked to come to New York and organize a great exhibition of all the masters for the World's Fair.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Now I'm curious about Alger House. How do you think that worked in terms of a branch of a major institution? I mean is that a practical idea or does it become a little entity unto itself do you think?

PERRY RATHBONE: It wasn't a very practical idea as it turned out, because it became more, it became more a museum for the privileged Grosse Pointe.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh I see.

PERRY RATHBONE: Than it became a museum for the city. Ah, whether it was because we couldn't publicize it effectively enough in the city to attract people there, or because they wouldn't be attracted by a museum of

Italian Renaissance decorative arts anyway. They probably wouldn't have been interested in the exhibitions that we staged in the galleries upstairs. I don't know, but it never really caught on as a big popular thing in the city. The idea is like so many things; the theory is fine but in the application of the theory it often fails. And it seemed to me, as I justified it in an article in the bulletin, that so much—Detroit had lost so much of its own inherited beauty, its own urban beauty, which was really remarkable around 1900, judging from the evidence that I was able to gather in my researches, it had become a most disheveled kind of place when I lived there. The old city, you could still see kind of showing through this overlay of modern industrial life and the commercialized buildings. It was really a pathetic sight, and this seemed to be a kind of redress for what had been taken away.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see yeah, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: You see? But that was, as I say, my justification, but it didn't—I don't think it really worked that way. And I think people sort of forgot about it and when the—when it was—when I left and went to the St. Louis in 1940 and John Newberry became my successor there, and then he went off to the war—as we all did and during the war—it fell victim to the international pressures and the city decided it would no longer support Alger House. It was thrown back onto the—I don't know; they transferred it to Veterans Administration, as kind of a clubhouse now for, for the veterans of Grosse Pointe and all those works of art were taken back to Detroit.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. What about, you know because the city of Detroit really supports the museum, doesn't it? I mean it has private patronage, but the certain basic lump of the budget comes from the city. Do you think that's practical, for museums to function in that way, you know, being part of a, let's say politically controlled budget?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, it should, I think it really should, and some day in this country it will be, I'm convinced.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean become like the Kunsthalle things in Europe, where it's just part of—

PERRY RATHBONE: I think so.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —everything that goes on.

PERRY RATHBONE: It becomes, it becomes a matter; it becomes a matter of civic pride. If the cities manage to maintain themselves as cities and not as just abandoned old urban centers, this will come to pass as it is in Europe, where it is a matter of pride that the city, especially on the continent—the city owns a museum, operates a museum of such and such a caliber, whether it's in Italy or Germany or Switzerland or where are you. In this country, we're not—we're hardly old enough, it seems, for the museum to be taken as a matter of course. I don't know how long that will take of course, but I—

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it's still a lot of cultural assimilation to, to develop.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, exactly, and in this country, where there's so many ethnic groups all now being more and more vocal and more and more vying for attention, you know there will be the Poles and such would want it to be a Polish museum and the Italians somewhere else would want it to be an Italian museum, and it's not—the situation isn't the same. And I don't think that such—I think that ultimately, the commune or the city government, is going to have to support these institutions, with the aid of the federal government, maybe dollar for dollar or something like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah. How did you find your first years, say the years of Detroit, standing in terms of Sachs's preparation, I mean was he accurate in what he told you?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, was it perceptive in terms of what—he said this is what's going to happen to you?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, in many ways. One of the things that Sachs laid special stress upon and it belonged to his generation, and is still applicable to a large degree, was the cultivation of individual collectors and connoisseurs at a given locality. Very important. He encouraged us to visit and to cultivate and to mill those people who would ultimately enrich your museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right. Was that the purpose behind?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, sure, as well as certainly to get money and art, that's—that was one of our principal responsibilities, and um, Detroit had a large number of such people when I went there, many of them thanks to the stimulation that Valentiner had provided. And um, in time, I came to know all those people and when I think of the amount of works of art they owned in those days it's fantastic. I mean there's no such thing today anywhere in this country.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, it's astounding, what people own today though.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. Of course what they owned were important historical works of art.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well that's what people were—you know, Duveen was selling.

PERRY RATHBONE: What Duveen was selling.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And Gimpel and Wildenstein, all those people.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. I think is what—

PAUL CUMMINGS: They didn't have Degas or Mary Cassatt.

PERRY RATHBONE: Not, not, not so much but they were beginning to have those too. Well for example, the Edsel Ford house was just unbelievable, what you found there. I mean imagine a Benozzo Gozzoli of superb quality, you know, done with gold background. Well, where would you find that today in anybody's house?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, they've all gone to museums.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, sure, and they haven't been replaced by a second one.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. There are no second ones.

PERRY RATHBONE: There are no second ones anyway. But there are all sorts of wonderful historic works of art that Valentiner had helped them to buy, both painting and sculpture, because he didn't allow people to—

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was his style of doing that, do you know? How was he able to stimulate that enormous amount of—every place he went, it seems he churned everybody up.

PERRY RATHBONE: He was very practical about it, and what he did when he first went to Detroit, he went there as director in 1923, and he had a very effective president, a person named Ralph H. Booth.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And Booth was part of that publishing firm in Boston.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, Cranbrook and everything.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. His brother was George. He had been ambassador to Denmark and he was a worldly fellow and it was he, I think, who actually located Valentiner. He knew about his reputation at the Metropolitan, followed what had happened to him during the war, when he was in Europe, and soon, Booth was able to introduce him to all those people who were cultivated, rich, and interested in art. The group included Edsel Ford and his wife, and her sister, and Robert Tannahill, the cousin, and I forget now, what others were in that group. But he organized a seminar for those people as soon as he could and they met every month or every two weeks or whatever it was, for seminar discussions about art, and he taught them a great deal about what they came to know about European art of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, around the table with Valentiner.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Which is um—[laughs]—fascinating.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. And, and he—[cross talk]—yes, and he excited them so by his understanding and insight and his immense knowledge, that they were encouraged to buy works of art, which he would help locate and persuade them to buy, and at the same time, remind them that the museum would be the ultimate destination, you know?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. He was planning his collection a generation ahead of time.

PERRY RATHBONE: Exactly, absolutely, and he was perfectly steadfast in this goal and activity. He was really wonderful about it and amongst those people, he just became a household word. He was, what else shall I say? He just was idolized by everybody who knew him, and he did it all through the power of his own intellect and his own kind of almost messianic devotion to art, it really was. He just thought of art as the greatest human expression, and the more you could have of it, the richer you were, like that. And it didn't matter whether it was Tino di Camaino, which is one of his great enthusiasms or whether it was Kissner or Ruo [ph], or Henry Moore or whatever. He was right there, involved with it there. But that's how he did it and that's how he built their confidence.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it's very personal situation.

PERRY RATHBONE: Very, absolutely, very personal contact, and he believed that. And um, and then there are other people who became less involved than the ones I've mentioned but nonetheless were very much touched by his activity. He was always very concerned about practicing artists too, the artists who were right there in his midst. Even though he couldn't always believe in them as being very significant, he was altruistic enough always to encourage them by buying things himself, by buying works of art and paying attention and being concerned.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I know a couple of painters who say they owe their careers to Valentiner purchases when they were in their 20s.

PERRY RATHBONE: Is that so?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well you see, that's the kind of thing that would be his greatest reward, because part of his almost messianic attitude toward art, really was generally worshipful. Yeah. And he would be able to back up all of his activities by some philosophical justification. He's, he's a whole interview by himself, really.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now he's a terribly different kind of person from Richardson.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, oh yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Richardson to me, the few times I've met him and what I know about him, seems much more quiet, much more formal, kind of contained or something.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes and kinetic [ph], whereas Valentiner, he was just the opposite, he gave off sparks, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But yet, I never get the feeling about Valentiner that he was a showbiz kind of personality.

PERRY RATHBONE: No. No, no, oh no.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean it wasn't, you know.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh no, not at all, he was very formal actually. He was—had a sort of stiff neck formality about him, which was mitigated by his tendency to, to snicker. [Paul laughs.] He had a funny little snickering laugh and was very easily amused, and would quickly put his hand to his mouth as if to conceal his mirth. He was ready to laugh at every foible of humanity you see, and took a very humorous view of life, whereas Richardson was always deadly sober about most things and whose humor is very, very quiet. Valentiner was effervescent and loved to laugh, and did so all the time, and he could laugh at himself as well as everybody else.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's an accomplishment.

PERRY RATHBONE: It's an accomplishment, yes, oh yeah. So he was very, he was very appreciating for this reason. He's a rather hard person to describe but—and he was viewed with great suspicion by his colleagues in this country, by his museum director equals, for two reasons. One, that he didn't attend the meetings of the Association of Art Museum Directors, an organization of which they were all very proud and for very good reason. But he simply didn't have the patience to sit through those meetings and talk about insurance and packing problems and stuff like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Tim, will you trade my show if I trade your show, and all that talk.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, that sort of thing. He simply couldn't do that and he didn't have enough American background to find it the kind of clubby thing to do, which is what all of us have found, to be quite frank. It's been a kind of—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —camaraderie.

PERRY RATHBONE: Camaraderie and a very pleasant, clubby thing, extending to our wives and even sometimes our children and all this. He—this was not part of his background, so he got none of that satisfaction. And he didn't, he just couldn't tolerate the discussions, [inaudible] so this was resented. And the other thing that was resented was the fact that he was called upon constantly to give opinions about works of art that were on the market, and this was much the habit of his European contemporaries, but it was frowned upon in this country as being something commercial.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why is that?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, because you become in a sense an interested party in a commercial transaction and

there's plenty of room, you can see where there'd be lots of room, for corruption.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, which appeared in many cases, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And I can assure you that Valentiner was never guilty of any kind of ah, what is it called? Kickback or anything like that. Never. If he accepted a favor for a museum, in return for having given an opinion, it would be in the form of a work of art.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, a dealer or somebody.

PERRY RATHBONE: Which he would give to the museum. And you would find a lot of things in the Detroit Museum that were given by Valentiner, that either he himself bought at an advantageous moment, or that had been given to him as a thank offering, but never—he was the most honorable man.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do you think he was able to maintain that untouched kind of level for so long?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I don't know he wasn't—he was the least worldly person. He had no desire for worldly possessions or if he did, he never said so and he never achieved anything. He never had any, anything at all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: There was a great collection?

PERRY RATHBONE: He had a marvelous collection of German Expressionists, but he bought those things or accepted those things as gifts from the artists whom he befriended, understood, wrote about. And you know beginning about 1918, '19, as soon as the war was over, things that nobody else would buy, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was he instrumental in your interest in Beckmann, say, or some of the German Impressionists?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, I think yes, he and Curt Valentin, together were quite influential. I mean, most of the German artists I'd never heard of until I went to Detroit, I mean nobody ever mentioned the name of Paul Klee at Harvard.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, it's too modern.

PERRY RATHBONE: It was too modern. He died in 1940. It was 1934 but he never, never was missed. No he was—he came with that wave of German emigrés.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But um, you know what, what role did Richardson have in this, because we have said very little about him.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, Richardson, he was assistant director at this time, as well as being—as well as being heavily involved in education. And so he did all the administration of the museum in Valentiner's absence, and Valentiner, it was always understood, would spend a long time in Europe, pursuing his researches and looking for works of art for the museum. So he would normally leave in May and be gone until perhaps October, and during all those months, the museum was really Richardson's responsibility. He and ah, the secretary of the museum, Clyde Burroughs.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. He remained very loyal, sure, and Clyde was the businessman who did insurance and dealt with the city over matters of jurisdiction and ah, you know the roof and the grounds.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Maintenance.

PERRY RATHBONE: Maintenance. And Richardson did the artistic aspect of the museum, the correspondence with other museums and interviews and so on. So he was busy in an administrative capacity, dealing with the curators too and installation of galleries and things of that sort. And as I say, he was always busy writing. He was very, he was very—how shall I say—consistent, a consistent writer.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well you wrote frequently when you were in Detroit and in the years after, in bulletins, magazines, journals.

PERRY RATHBONE: True.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you find time to do that?

PERRY RATHBONE: I don't know. As I look back I often wonder. But I do know, you know, I know this, that every

time I read about some former person whose face is on the cover of *Time* magazine, I read that he worked 16 hours a day, you know, it's always been that 16, seems to be the minimum. I know perfectly well that the effective museum people in this country, and there are a great many of them, are about as hardworking people as there are. You know, there's no such thing as a museum slouch whose name is known, they just are busy all the time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well you have to be.

PERRY RATHBONE: You have to and you write your bulletin articles on weekends and late at night, and I find at my age now, I simply can't stay awake as late at night as I have habitually stayed in order to finish something.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: That really is one of the obstacles [ph], it's really very hard work, really hard work, and I think it goes for some, some responsibilities are less than others we all know but still, a museum job, I think is like the job of a minister, you know it's never done. You're always at somebody's beck and call.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. I was amused that on Sunday evenings the phone rang and I answered it and my wife was upstairs. I answered it and I said—and she heard me say, "No it isn't," and afterwards said, "Who was that on the phone," and I said I don't know who it was but somebody called and said, "Is this the Boston Museum?" [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was too much.

PERRY RATHBONE: It was too much.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's horrible.

PERRY RATHBONE: So when you become mister museum, you see the flavor lasts.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Anyway, could we talk about the World's Fair?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Which ah, Valentiner was—and then I think we can stop.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. Well, that's another side of him.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was a whole big edifice.

PERRY RATHBONE: It was a whole edifice that had many ramifications, many glories and many miseries and many anxieties, oh my God. It was great for me—

PAUL CUMMINGS: In terms of what, because he started it originally right, and then you—I can't remember, but you—

PERRY RATHBONE: He didn't start it. It was started—the brain for the—the idea was hatched from the brain of Louis Levy, as far as I know, Louis S. Levy, I think, who was Duveen's lawyer and was in one of the major law offices here in New York. I don't remember whether he was with Cravath, de Gersdorff, Swaine & Wood. That law office didn't figure in the proceedings but at any rate, Louis Levy was an important lawyer and a very shrewd one, a very smart man with a kind of you might almost say German-Jewish interest in Dürer and Old Masters German prints, which went often with the elevated Jews in Germany, and he got the idea that it was an enormous mistake for New York to put on a fair, just as it was put on in '39, without any reference to art, and he felt himself very in touch with both art and money, and he went to Duveen and asked him. I guess it was Duveen, I'm not sure he went to Duveen, but at any rate, he thought in terms of Duveen and Duveen's clients and soon got the idea that Valentiner would be the man with an international reputation, to organize this show for New York, and in that he was quite right. Valentiner was thrilled with the invitation, because it meant being in New York for a year, instead of Detroit, which you know could be—let's face it, I mean outside of the museum, Detroit didn't have any great appeal for Valentiner. And he, as soon as he had said yes to the job, he asked me if I would come with him, to be his assistant, and well, I was delighted too.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: You know? I was delighted, thrilled with the idea of being in New York for over a year. And so we came here in—I think it must have been January or February of 1938, recognizing it will take us a whole year

and more to organize this fair. And had offices at 1 East 57th Street, in the Squibb Building, and there we labored for weeks and months, and months and months, and finally, a year from the following May, 1979, after great struggles with the Hod Carriers Union, and other impediments, we managed to open that exhibition.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That must have been difficult, to borrow all those things.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, of course it was, and we borrowed from places as far away as Melbourne, Australia. We borrowed from the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and from the Louvre, and from the National Gallery in London. We weren't able to borrow anything from Germany because the Nazi revolution was in full sway, and that was impossible. But we borrowed phenomenal works of art that added up to a total of something like \$27 million, which at that time was simply unheard of. We had a fearful time placing insurance. I don't know how many months it took to place insurance.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Can you think of doing that show today though?

PERRY RATHBONE: No, it would be perfectly impossible, totally impossible, certainly impossible. On top of the—oh, I can go into greater detail about this later. The problems of the architect and the underwriters and the security measures, the sales desk and so on, the ornamentation of the courtyard by a modern artist, well it would fill a book, but it was all, it was a great, it was a great experience and really a great event. It couldn't have happened without Valentiner.

[END OF TRACK.]

### **August 27, 1975**

PAUL CUMMINGS: This is side three. It's the 27th of August, 1975. Paul Cummings, talking to Perry Rathbone. Um, I think it would be interesting if we could pick up some more on the World's Fair and your association with Valentiner, which must have been very direct.

PERRY RATHBONE: It was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because it was really the two of you that were doing this. Did you—did he become, you know, a different kind of person, or was he clarified to you as a personality during this time? You worked with him at the museum already three, four years or so, but was this close contact a development, was it useful to you in finding out how a museum director of his stature accomplishes an exhibition of this scale?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Valentiner was one of those people whose name you would have to get over before you established a relationship with him, because it was such a formidable name. But he soon proved to be extremely human and an easy person to know. He was very, very friendly, though he retained a kind of central European stiffness, he didn't intend to be stiff at all. It was just a matter of his upbringing, it was habitual with him, but he was a very warmhearted and sympathetic human being, with a delightful and effervescent sense of humor, especially the humor arising from *La Comedie Humaine*. I think we already touched on how he came to be selected for this task in New York, as the director of the *Masterpieces of Art* operation.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, not really, no not really.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I believe the idea was hatched in the mind of Louis S. Levy.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The lawyer.

PERRY RATHBONE: The lawyer. Who was Duveen's lawyer as I remember, and I think he also was the lawyer of the Marquis de Cuevas, who I believe was a Chilean of Spanish extraction, who had married Margaret Rockefeller, I believe her name was. At any rate, she was a niece or grand-niece, of John D. Rockefeller and had a great deal of money and de Cuevas knew how she should spend it. Louis Levy also felt that the masterpieces idea would appeal to de Cuevas and it did. So once Levy had been more or less assured of something like a quarter of a million dollars to finance this enterprise, he went to Duveen, or maybe it was his own idea, and said who should organize it? Well the most, really the most international figure in America at that time was William R. Valentiner, and also known as a man who had staged great exhibitions, a man of great energy and enterprise. And he accepted with alacrity and soon thereafter, asked me if I would come to New York with him to help him in every way, and of course I was delighted to do that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, did this mean you severed relations with Detroit or was it a leave of absence?

PERRY RATHBONE: It was a leave of absence for both of us and it was to last for the best part of two years, because we recognized it would take at least a year.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, to organize it, to be there, and then return everything.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And so the fair opened in April officially, as I recall, and closed on the first of November, and so that was the best part of 1939. And we went to work, as I remember, in January or February of 1938, we found ourselves in offices in Number One East 57th Street, in the Squibb Building, and had as our associate, a very, I found, a very amiable man who became a very—a good friend, Norman Mackie [ph], who had recently been an important partner in the antique furniture business in New York. He became our business manager, the man who had to deal with the awful problems of insurance and employment and paying the architect and all that. And we had an unforgettable Australian secretary, Ms. Joan Shepherd, who answered the phone and did all of our correspondence and became part of the team. Another person who was quite involved, especially in view of the publications that were in sight, was Alfred Frankfurter, who was the editor of *ARTnews*. That was more or less the team, with Frankfurter not devoting full time but coming in frequently to conferences [inaudible]. The Duveen premises within number 50—I forget the number but at the corner of 56th Street and Fifth Avenue, that splendid, beautiful building, and there was a magnificent library at our disposal, and that became very important to obtain the catalogue.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was the famous Duveen Building wasn't it?

PERRY RATHBONE: The famous Duveen Building, designed after the Ministère de la Marine in Paris. And in that library was another remarkable and important character by the name of Bacall [ph], who had been Duveen's art librarian for many years, and he was filled with stories about Duveen and his operation that enchanted me and would fill a book. But there, I spent many hours doing research on the pictures that were gradually promised to us.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, how was the idea of the exhibition evolved? What was it, you know, supposed to cover, and did it eventually do what the original idea was?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I think I did say previously that Louis Levy himself was dismayed and astounded when management of the fair did not include any exhibition of great art. But he also recognized that one of the chief problems to master was appropriate housing for these masterpieces. A fairground doesn't sound like the safest place on earth. Most of the buildings are of the transitory kind, of insubstantial materials and so on, but he was not a man easily put off and eventually we solved that architectural problem. But we had to be able to say to the lenders, who were eventually forthcoming, that they would be lending to not only a World's Fair, but to a building, which was fireproof in every way, that was under 24-hour guard, that would have whatever barriers were necessary to keep the large crowds at least at distance, and all the other safeguards and security measures that you would expect. And on the strength of all that, plus the great prestige of Valentiner in Europe and America, and farther afield, we were able to bring together 125 masterpieces, I believe that was the number. It may have been more, I'll just check that. The idea was, it was called *Masterpieces of Art* and we took as our field, European painting from the beginning of wonderful paintings, should we say, that is probably 14th century, down to the end of the 18th century, and ah—but intended to be full scope of the achievement of European painting over those centuries. And we took the world as our field for collecting and didn't hesitate to ask the great national collections everywhere for loans. It was a difficult time to achieve this because everybody knows that the Nazi revolution was in full force in 1938, when we were gathering, and the whole thing was to come to a terrible climax the following year, with the outbreak of war. And there were already strong prejudices against borrowing anything from Nazi Germany, and we didn't, but we did succeed in borrowing from faraway Australia.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: A very precious picture, a van Eyck, the famous little *Ince Hall* van Eyck, with Madonna and child, tiny, a precious picture; that was a great triumph we thought. And we borrowed some pictures from Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, from the Louvre and from the National Gallery in London.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you have to go to many places? Were you refused a great deal for one reason or another? Did you send out 500 requests to get 100 pictures?

PERRY RATHBONE: We, we chose our targets pretty carefully and we recognized it was very difficult to borrow from the Italians and we did not succeed, the reason being that we were faced with a rival fair, you may recall, in San Francisco in 1938, if I'm not mistaken, and the Italians had gone overboard to lend to that fair and therefore, they weren't prepared to lend to the New York fair, and I think, in a last analysis, they didn't lend anything. The Spaniards are notoriously difficult to borrow from, we tried but we didn't succeed. The Louvre was very generous, the National Gallery, London was very generous and the Dutch were very generous. I don't remember asking the Swedes or any of the Scandinavians or the Irish. Of course the Russians were out of the question in those days and so were the Poles, for the same reason.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: I don't, I don't remember precisely, about the Austrians, whether we approached Vienna or



not. But anyway, we got together an astonishing collection of rare and famous pictures. Such an assemblage could never be brought together again, never. This took an immense amount of correspondence and a tremendous amount of negotiating so far as insurance coverage concerns, as you can well imagine.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Absolutely, absolutely. How did you find all of this in your own terms of working with him and seeing this mammoth exhibition evolve? It was really the first big project you've worked on, was it not?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well it was, and we had editorial meetings, which were led by Valentiner of course, but where, as I remember, Alfred Frankfurter participated and I did, and there may have been others. Well, Mr. Levy occasionally came, and everyone came with preconceived notions of what should be included and put forward their ideas, which we sifted and then came up with ideal lists, which of course were two or three times the number of pictures we succeeded in borrowing. But um, one triumph or one successful bid led to another, and we could refer to the fact that "thus and such museum would lend, are lending; therefore, we expect that you will or hope that you will," and so on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Once you get the first few then the others start to come along.

PERRY RATHBONE: Right. The Metropolitan was very difficult and for reasons that are quite easy to understand. They felt that every visitor to the fair would actually come to the Metropolitan anyway, so why should they lend to the fair.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, ship it across town.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Then there were other, there were other museum directors who were—meant solace to both Valentiner and me, such as "Chick" Austin in Hartford who, as you know, was a man of great flair and a great instinctive, unrestrained love of art, and he, I must say, didn't feel that the Hartfordians so deeply appreciated what was in the Wadsworth Atheneum that they couldn't do without numerous masterpieces, so he was very, very generous. He said, "I will be very glad to send them to New York so somebody will come and see them." And so he was able to lend marvelous things, like the Piero di Cosimo and other pictures that are hard to match elsewhere.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. He was wonderful to us.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh terrific, that's great.

PERRY RATHBONE: And I can't remember that any American museum which had a lending policy was anything but cooperative, and the private collectors that existed in those days and possessed Old Masters was prodigious. I think if you went through that World's Fair catalogue today and just checked through it to see how many private lenders there were, I can't remember offhand, you wouldn't find that any of those collections could be matched or duplicated today, the scene has so totally changed.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yeah, yeah. Well, and many of them have gone to museums now.

PERRY RATHBONE: Many have gone to museums. We were fortunate of course, in having strong backing in Detroit, where Valentiner was much loved, especially by the Edsel Fords and Mrs. Lillian Haass, and other people with, with fine pictures, the Fisher brothers and so on, and we could use those loans as a certain leverage.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: I might add that it brings, brings to my mind, the fact that we were not perfectly exclusive for paintings, because Valentiner saw that in certain eras sculpture, at least according to the view of 1938 and '39, was just as important as painting, and therefore, we did include a number of Renaissance sculptures and medieval sculptures, but we didn't bother with the Baroque because nobody in this country understood Baroque in '38 anyhow. I'm sure Valentiner did, but he wouldn't have thought of introducing them, but in those early periods, and he having a special sympathy for sculpture, we felt it was necessary to represent the age with certain well-selected sculptures. So that's how it came about, and I remember very well, I won't forget, meeting the wonderful loan from Holland. I think they lent five pictures, including the famous Vermeer, the *Milkmaid*.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really?

PERRY RATHBONE: From the Rijksmuseum, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You couldn't pry that out now for anything.

PERRY RATHBONE: Not for anything. I remember so well, the present director almost to be emeritus, Arthur van

Schendel, who was delegated at that time, as a young man at the Rijksmuseum, to be the courier who conducted his nation's treasures to New York. And I went out on the tender in New York Harbor, out to the *Nieuw Amsterdam*, to meet van Schendel, went aboard the *Nieuw Amsterdam*, where he had a first class cabin, surrounded with beautifully packaged masterpieces, to greet him and welcome him to New York, and come in on the ship with him and get him bestowed in his hotel and all that, and we became very good friends and remain so ever since. But that kind of event, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now what happened when that finally was terminated and things were returned to their various owners?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I can tell you that the whole enterprise was fraught with difficulties. One of the most amusing was the introduction to the scene of a Baroness d'Erlanger [ph], who was a particular friend of the Marquis de Cuevas. Somebody who had to deal with our titles as it were, and she was obviously looking for something from him that would pay. And he used his influence to see that she was engaged by the architect, as the kind of interior decorator for the galleries, and she had her own ideas of how the gallery should be decorated, I mean what materials, et cetera.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh goodness.

PERRY RATHBONE: And I think she was a French woman, at least she had a French title, and I think she was French. But she was, I must say, a rather pretentious person and complained to the gallery, which meant de Cuevas. None of her ideas fitted in with those of the—what is it, the administrators, or with those of the architect associates.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, dear.

PERRY RATHBONE: And she—but in the meantime, she was a terrible gadfly and really quite a nuisance, and naturally we joked a great deal about her.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well she had to prove her worth from everything else. Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, exactly, and in the end, Valentiner went almost crazy, having to deal with her on one side and de Cuevas on the other, and Louis Levy and so on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He must have been a good politician though.

PERRY RATHBONE: But he was—yes he was, he was a very good politician, but he finally went to de Cuevas, I remember, and said, we certainly have to do without the Baroness d'Erlanger [ph], she's so—[inaudible]—at this point, that my staff would quit. And so as—I don't know this for a fact but at the time it was said that he paid her off, \$10,000, and she disappeared from our life. But that was just one disturbance.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That little event, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Others of course had to do with the problems with building. The underwriters who had taken this big risk because of our exhibition, totaled \$27 million, insisted that not a stick of wood be used in that building, which was quite absurd. They wouldn't even permit the benches, which each gallery had to be equipped with, to be built of wood.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

PERRY RATHBONE: No, not even the benches. They had to be made of solid concrete and were. Yes, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Just what you want to sit down on after walking all day.

PERRY RATHBONE: Precisely. And the architects of course, they were wonderfully longsuffering and I made very good friends with them. The architects were Harrison and Fouilhoux. Fouilhoux was Wallace Harrison's partner at the time, and much of the design detail was assigned to Edward Matthews. Edward Matthews, who was an architect independently but was with a firm at that time, and he and I and also his wife, became great friends as a result of this association. We were fast friends to this day.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Terrific.

PERRY RATHBONE: But I would have to go to the architect's office and work out the details of, oh, the installation of this and the number of steps there. I can't tell you all the details, the sales desk and whatnot. But there was—it was interesting but it was full of problems, and then the building problems were even more fallible because toward the end of the winter or early spring, when our building was nearing completion, there was a Hod Carrier strike, so that everybody walked off the job. But meantime, the capitals of the world were sending

their masterpieces to Flushing Meadows and we weren't sure at all that we would have a place to put them or a finished place to put them. The Hod Carrier strike lasted for several weeks as I recall, and it affected all the building trades or those things, so that the walls, so that the masonry, that was built of concrete blocks, was still pretty wet when the drapers came in to cover the walls with velvet, because according to the style at the time, this was the only appropriate background for the masterpieces. And ah, the velvet hadn't been on the walls very long before it began to bellow and drape, because it became filled with the moisture that was still in the masonry.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And to get the folds out of the velvet was a major problem and I'll never forget how many electric fans we corralled from the fairgrounds and elsewhere, but on a score so that every one of the—what were there 50 galleries or something—were filled with electric fans going full blast, trying to—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —get the moisture out of there.

PERRY RATHBONE: Get the moisture out. Well this meant everything had to be collapsed into, you know, one third of the time really necessary to hang these masterpieces, and I remember once they were hung, the lights had to be adjusted and we, in the end, determined to use individual reflectives, such as in that picture, which were designed by Richard Kelly of New York, one of the best lighting people in town and he wanted to seem very conventional and not very original the way of lighting works of art, and really had great virtue. But all these things had to be attached properly to the walls and then adjusted, and I remember very well, getting up on a stepladder at some eleventh hour, to adjust the light over a picture, when the two or three other workmen, electricians in the gallery, just walked out, and I said, "Where are you going?" They said, "Get off that stepladder or we don't come back," you know? Well, this is the kind of—I was just doing something instinctively impulsive, to help them get the job done.

PAUL CUMMINGS: There were union rules.

PERRY RATHBONE: The union rules. The show was to have opened, as I remember, in April, but we finally opened, as I remember, about the 20th of May, with considerable fanfare and ribbon cutting and all the Pinkerton guards in their uniforms in place, and the Marquis de Cuevas and I suppose Grover Whalen, all the usual dignitaries were there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: One would almost think that he was the governor in those days, Whalen.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, he was the greeter wasn't he, the city greeter.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, but I mean he was always everywhere.

PERRY RATHBONE: He was everywhere, always immaculately attired, you know, and he was mister New York. Oh yes, absolutely. Well, our problems had only begun it turned out, because the World's Fair, as everybody knows, was no great financial success across the board. The one great success, relative success, was the—was it called the Cyclorama? General Motors. No, no, General Motors.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, they had a huge—

PERRY RATHBONE: *Motorama*.

PAUL CUMMINGS: *Motorama*.

PERRY RATHBONE: And it was Norman Bel Geddes's view of the future, which I must say was prophetic, because it was a network of overleaves and superhighways and underpasses and who knows what, and you went on a little trolley all around.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yeah, it was very fascinating. That was a great success and it was good for us because it was just across the bridge from our building, so we certainly drew from that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: A lot of people.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, got them there in lines, but we never drew the crowds that we had expected, at 50 cents, it was only 50 cents admission and the catalogue wasn't very expensive either as I recall. The crowds never came and we began to lose money, as I recall, something like—it cost something like \$16,000 a day, as I remember, to keep it running with all the salaries we paid, and insurance and so on, and we weren't anywhere nearly meeting that expense. And um, Valentiner and I, and I think Mr. Levy too—anyway, those people who

were involved with the artistic side of things—resisted any effort on the part of those holding the purse strings, to reduce the exhibition by withdrawing certain very costly pictures.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The insurance.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. In order to make ends meet. And we protested violently against that, because we said it would be a misrepresentation to the public. We were advertising whatever it was, 101, 125 masterpieces, for 50 cents, and we weren't going to show them only 100. And um, I remember having explosive discussions with our lawyer on this subject, Bernard Bloomer [ph], the late Bernard Bloomer [ph]. And the other time in my life I can remember ever hanging up the telephone abruptly was in talking with him, because I became so irritated by his attitude. He also tried very hard to reduce my salary, but I called him into the plaza one day for a conference, in the lobby of the plaza. There I [inaudible], I heard him say he wanted to reduce my salary from the \$4,400 I was paid, to whatever else. And then I steadfastly refused and I said "Well that's—if my services are of no apparent value to you, then I think I should just leave. I can't live here and assume that responsibility for any less." I won that quail but in the end, the powers did—they made it known that certain pictures would be taken out to reduce expenses. Nevertheless, we—it was an artistic success without any question and I suppose nothing like it had been seen in this country before.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't think so, not on that scale.

PERRY RATHBONE: And we had very conservative success with our catalogue, of which we took immense pride, because it was most scrupulously compared, thanks to the efforts of McCall, who was a wonderful bibliophile, a librarian, a very good man, took endless paces to look up every reference we asked him for and so that book had—contains some very considerable value. A lot was—that fair, that exhibition, should not be confused with the exhibition of 1940. You may remember that the fair continued the following year.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, so it was a different one.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And um, in an effort to recover the losses of the previous year, a second exhibition, in those very galleries, was staged, but under entirely different auspices.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: They did—I think rather picked up where our exhibition left off, and it was largely 19th century, masterpieces of the 19th century.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But after that, where did you—did you go back to Boston, because you went to—I mean Detroit.

PERRY RATHBONE: No, not to Boston.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You went to St. Louis.

PERRY RATHBONE: I went to St. Louis. I went back to ah, I went back to Detroit, because my leave of absence was over.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: It must have been about December, because the fair closed in November and I think in December, I went back to Detroit and went back to Grosse Pointe, to be precise, to Alger House.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Alger House, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: And about that, not long after that, I know it was in April, I went to St. Louis.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did St. Louis appear on the horizon?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well that's a rather interesting story. The St. Louis Museum in those days was rather notorious, because everyone knew, everyone in the museum profession knew, that the director was saddled by a vicious and ever-present president.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who was that?

PERRY RATHBONE: And his name was Louis LaBeaume. He came from an old St. Louis family and he had been trained in architecture at the Beaux Arts in Paris, which gave him you know, a passport to infallibility, and I think is a weakness in architects.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

PERRY RATHBONE: It certainly was with him. And as the architectural profession declined during the Depression, during the years of Meyric Rogers, was president, was director of the St. Louis Museum, Louis LaBeaume found himself with more and more time on his hands and he also was very, very interested in the decorative arts and in enhancing the architectural settings of the museum, which was very much a done thing at that period. And to be sure Meyric Rogers had also been famed architecturally and had assisted, in a crucial way, in the design of the new Fogg Museum, which opened in 1929. Then after that he directed the Baltimore Museum and it was from there that he went to St. Louis.

PAUL CUMMINGS: To St. Louis.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. But soon, the interfering hand of LaBeaume became evident and after a while it became an absolute bane of Roger's existence, and it got to the point where everybody at the museum of course knew about this ogre, who incidentally was a great wit, an entertaining man, but you wouldn't want him for your master in a minute. Poor Rogers suffered mightily, and instead of meeting him head on, Rogers was inclined to talk about him in social circles in St. Louis. Well, LaBeaume had quite a lot of friends and this gave him an excuse to despise Rogers and Rogers, in the meantime, had every reason to resent LaBeaume because LaBeaume would go abroad and on his own, as president of the museum, would contract to buy an entire interior, have it shipped to St. Louis, installed in the museum, after his own designs, and then ask the director to come and admire them. And this happened over again.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Oh, goodness, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: So that anybody in the profession was naturally sympathetic to Meyric Rogers and had to have studied LaBeaume. Well that was the situation there when a younger, less experienced colleague than I, came along to Alger House to see Valentiner and say hello to me, and he said that he had applied to the St. Louis Museum, because he understood that Rogers had just resigned, and Rogers did, after 10 years, precipitously resigned and gave the trustees 30 days' notice and had secured a job at the Art Institute of Chicago, as curator of decorative arts. And I told this to Valentiner and he said well, "I'm sure that he's nowhere nearly as qualified as you, to be director of that museum," and I said, "Dr. Valentiner, I'm only 28 years old." He said, "It doesn't matter." He always encouraged youth, that was one of his great things, a great encourager. He said, "Even if they don't want you, you'll have your hat in the ring." He said, "I will be glad to recommend you wholeheartedly, because I think you could do it." I was not sure. I was a little more skeptical than Valentiner. He said, "I should hate to lose you, I don't want you to leave Detroit at all. It's nice you're here and I enjoy having you on the staff, I'm proud having you here, but you've got to break away some time. Maybe life is too comfortable here for you anyway. Maybe it's too comfortable and maybe it's time that you, you know, you felt up against it a bit." So he said, "You go down there and I'll write you a letter," and so I said, "All right, all right, that's all right, he'll back me up." And then I asked Paul Sachs. I told him what the situation was and Sachs, most enthusiastically responded and said, "Of course I'll write a letter to LaBeaume and tell him that you're just the man." And of course, so that's how it happened, and I went there. Soon, I had an answer that said "Do come. We have a number of candidates, we'd be happy to meet you, I'll bring them all together on such and such a date." I went there and I must say, it was a most uncomfortable hour and a half in my life at that age, to be surrounded by these old formidable trustees, you know, shooting one question after the other at you.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How were their questions?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, they asked me what my educational background was in detail, whom I'd studied with. They asked me what the budget of the Detroit Museum was, how many books there were in the library, how many prints in the print room, did I know about prints, as well as art literature. Oh, I can't tell you.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Everything you could think of.

PERRY RATHBONE: Everything, everything, and they were watching every minute you see, and then within a couple weeks, LaBeaume said they were going to have a meeting of the committee, to find a new director and that we would like you to come back for a second interview. So once more, I got on the Wabash train and went down to St. Louis, and had another hour or two with the same men, asking more questions. And ah, I thought well that's that. Then, if you can believe it, a couple weeks later, they said, "Will you come again?" a third time. Well it shows how careful they were, I must say. Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It has its advantage, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, and they gave plenty of their time. And the third time, we met in Louis LaBeaume's office, in this musty old Dickensian office in the heart of old downtown St. Louis, which was so smog-ridden in those days, you wouldn't believe it. You know they talk about Pittsburgh being like that, I'm sure St. Louis was worse. The coal smoke was coming out of the trolley cars, you know, like a little chimney like you see on a—

[inaudible]—toy. You wouldn't believe it. I was fascinated but appalled too. Anyway, there we met again and I remember the last question they asked me, what my religion was, and I thought well, they can't go beyond that. [They laugh.] So I told them that and that seemed to satisfy them. Then Mr. LaBeaume—then Daniel Catlin, who was vice president of the trustees and a very different man from LaBeaume, kind of a man you would pray to have as a museum president, from an old St. Louis family, with an adorable wife from Boston. Now he said, "We're going out to my house on Westmoreland Place and continue this meeting out there." So we all got into cars and drove out to this fashionable Westmoreland Place, to his charming house, and then he was very good at making cocktails, I must say. He made the most delicious daiquiri cocktails. It was an April afternoon and April means springtime in St. Louis, like Detroit, it was full spring. And he makes these cocktails and passed them all around. There were about I don't know, eight, maybe his executive committee, there may have been only five or six at that point. He said, "Well, before we do another thing gentlemen, I just want to raise my glass and drink a toast to the next director of the City Art Museum of St. Louis." That's the way it was told to me. [Paul laughs.] Yeah, and it was an unforgettable moment and done with [cross talk], thanks to Dan Kaplan. Then we had a very nice, sort of social time together, time where I could see the whole thing, the sun setting through the venetian blinds.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, marvelous.

PERRY RATHBONE: Then I took a train, you know, we did everything [inaudible], so I took it from Union Station, by upper berth, back to Detroit that afternoon, and I can remember, I was so overwhelmed that the responsibility was suddenly mine, and that I really hadn't expected it. I thought to myself, but you have to really—I, I can remember, it was the only night in my life I didn't sleep at all. I just turned over and over and over in that upper berth, and wondered what in the hell.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What have I done now?

PERRY RATHBONE: What have I done now, I've burnt my britches. [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did Valentiner say on your return?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, he was delighted, he said, "Well, I knew it, I knew it would happen, of course, I was perfectly convinced, and you can do it once more, and if I can help you in any way, you can always count on me."

PAUL CUMMINGS: But that was a pretty good size museum even then wasn't it?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, it was. The budgets in those days was something over—well it was around a quarter of a million dollars, which seemed a lot of money then, and it all came from the city and you were under constant scrutiny of the city fathers.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Who were very, very critical of the money that they had no control over, and how it was spent you see, because it was supported by a mill tax, automatic tax support.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see, so everybody supported it.

PERRY RATHBONE: Everybody in the city supported it and they had no control. It was a most exceptional situation.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think that's useful?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, there wouldn't be any museum practices otherwise. Useful and it has two sides to it. It made people too relaxed about the museum in St. Louis. They didn't feel personal responsibility for it because of this tax support.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean in terms of trustees and benefactors?

PERRY RATHBONE: No, in terms of money.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

PERRY RATHBONE: In terms of private money. If you compare it with the Cleveland Museum, for example, where—which has no city support whatever, or it hasn't had until very recently.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, but Detroit had city money didn't it?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, Detroit had, but Detroit you see, is a heavy industry city with terrible union problems and labor problems and racial strife, which St. Louis never suffered from. St. Louis is a city of small industries, much more conservative.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's kind of bland in a way though isn't it?

PERRY RATHBONE: Bland?

PAUL CUMMINGS: St. Louis compared to Detroit?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, yes, nowhere nearly so rich as either Cleveland or Detroit, not to be compared with those Great Lakes cities, and with a rather important German population, with its conservative character. It made for much greater stability. But St. Louisans were not prepared to spend a lot of money on their museum, they didn't. They spent a great deal on hospitals and the church took a great deal, and it was awfully hard to break that habit and bring people to realize how necessary it was to give to that kind of culture.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was there a fair attendance at the museum?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes, attendance was good, and one thing I liked about it very much was it was open every day of the year, every single day from 10 to five, except Christmas and New Year's Day. This, I think was because it was a city institution. It was like the public library and like the zoo and those two institutions benefited by the same kind of mill tax.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They were open all the time.

PERRY RATHBONE: All the time. We were always open to the public, you can't criticize us for being shut, you know, that's not true. And it was very nice to see how many people came by that city on Sunday morning.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Hmm.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. I think it's because it had become an old habit.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, to go to the museum on Sunday.

PERRY RATHBONE: Sunday morning. I tried it in Boston. We opened the museum Sunday morning in order to bring people there, to patronize the restaurant and build up Sunday morning attendance. It took a long time to get people habituated to those hours, but in St. Louis, that was the time to go.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah. Well you moved there then, in 1940, right?

PERRY RATHBONE: Exactly. I went there in 1940, on the first of August, following my first trip across the country.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, what brought that on?

PERRY RATHBONE: In 1940. Well, ah, a couple things. I had never been west of Detroit. I had been to Chicago, to the World's Fair in '34, but I'd never been beyond that, and you couldn't go to Europe because that was all shut off, as you remember. And my friend, Curt Valentin couldn't go to Europe either, although that had always been his beat for the few years he'd been here, he came in '37. It was a business thing for him but he just couldn't go, after '39, that was the end. And he had already been to California, he'd flown out there, but on a holiday before I went to St. Louis, I thought that's a great thing. I had this nice car I bought in Detroit in 1936, a Ford, just the right thing, and so together we drove all the way across the United States.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that must have been fun.

PERRY RATHBONE: From Upstate New York, where my family summer house was, all the way to Seattle, down the coast and across through the desert to Denver, and because Valentin didn't drive, I had to do all the driving. And I think we drove 7,000 miles.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. And we finally, in Denver, put the car on a freight train to St. Louis and took an air-conditioned sleeping car. [They laugh.] Yeah. But it was a very great trip, unforgettable and together we knew quite a lot of friends, art friends and others, scattered across the country, in Idaho and in Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, and so on. So it was really a kind of introductory thing for me and we stayed—I think Curt Valentin stayed in St. Louis a couple of days and I—we went out to see the Pulitzers right away, John and Louise Pulitzer, who were old friends of mine, and um—

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you come to meet Valentin?

PERRY RATHBONE: Through Valentiner.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

PERRY RATHBONE: You see Valentin had been in the Art Department, the art—yes, the Art Department of the Buchholz Bookstore in Berlin. He had been with Alfred Flechtheim and learned a great deal from that famous dealer and then had been made—put in charge of what was very much the ideal via [ph] gallery here, books and modern art. And then when the Nazi revolution came, he was forced to leave Germany and came here with very little money of his own, but with the solid backing of Buchholz, who promised to provide him with works of art, and I presume some money, I don't know precisely how much. But anyway, that was the—his one mainstay. And of course Valentiner went to Berlin every year, knew exactly what was going on, and when he heard that Valentin had established himself on West 46th Street, the wrong address certainly, just off Fifth Avenue but still, not really in the art beat, he said, "I think when you go to New York, you want to go and see Curt Valentin. He's just establishing himself here, you like the kind of thing he will be dealing in, German Expressionist Art, and he's an important person in the art world, go and say hello," which I did. I remember Valentin was so shy he didn't say anything, so I thought well, that's very odd, he's so interesting. [Laughs.] But it's because he was shy of his language because of the newness at the time, and really rather shy anyhow but ah, in spite of that, then you see. That was '37, and I came to New York in '38, at which time he moved to 57th Street, near where I was, and I came to know him very well during that year in New York, and we just seemed to like each other.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: We learned a great deal from each other. I learned a great deal about Germany and Europe and modern art, and artists and him, and he learned a great deal about America from me. He was so totally continental and I was so totally American, one of those things.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Good contrast.

PERRY RATHBONE: Good contrast, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's fascinating. So, you know in the fall then, you moved to St. Louis.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, that's right, and from that moment on I stayed there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How was the, you know, the activity of acclimatizing yourself to the city? Was it as interesting as Detroit or different?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, it couldn't be—it couldn't have been more different really and in a way, it was much more agreeable because in the first place, you didn't feel this tremendous difference between the rich and the poor. The rich in Detroit were so super rich and so obviously so, and the poor were so destitute, and the city of Detroit was so depressing because it had outgrown itself and the industry had somehow smothered daily life of the city. So you're always in the midst of some forlorn kind of environment, which I found rather depressing. And also the climate of Detroit, the winter is miserable. All those Great Lakes cities are shrouded with fog for weeks. Detroit—St. Louis was a very different place because it was—there was a much better amalgam, I felt, of people, and where in Detroit, you felt there were closed circles of society, whether they were people who belonged to the rather privileged group in Grosse Pointe, or a somewhat less privileged group who lived around Grand Boulevard, or people who lived in Birmingham. In St. Louis, on the other hand, you felt there was a wonderful overlay of all circles of society.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why is that, because of the wealth or because of the types of people or the city itself?

PERRY RATHBONE: I just don't know. I don't really understand, except that the wealth in St. Louis, I thought for the most part was much, much older. It's an altogether much more stable and, and amalgamated community. Of course it had its differences and there's a lower class Italian community. There was a very solid bourgeois German community that we didn't have much to do with, but otherwise it was very cohesive and the university circles, for example, Washington University was an influential and important university, where you met the faculty and mingled with them and their families. But in Detroit, I never met anybody on the faculty of Wayne University, except—[cross talk.].

[END OF TRACK.]

**September 24, 1975**



PAUL CUMMINGS: Okay, this is side four, 24th of September, 1975, Paul Cummings talking to Perry Rathbone. Let's just go back for a second or a minute or two, that you had some other thoughts on Valentiner, before we really get into St. Louis, which is where we left ourselves chronologically approximately.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um, now I just wonder what they, what they were.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well now I, of course now I forget what it was I already said about him. Perhaps you could remember.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I think if you bring up a topic I could remember whether it is.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, it had to do with my own experience with him, which was quite intimate and lasted over a number of years, and it was very important to me and informative in my own outlook and understanding.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, as a museum man and also as a connoisseur of works of art. Valentiner, I may have explained to you, the situation of the Detroit Museum when I arrived there in September of 1934?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Let's see, there had been—not exactly.

PERRY RATHBONE: This was—I had just left Harvard.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And I was introduced to a job there by my friend John Newberry, in the Education Department of the Detroit Museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right, we've talked about that.

PERRY RATHBONE: Do you remember that? I talked about that. And the museum had been through the wringer, owing to the early days of the Depression.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh correct, yeah, and everybody left or something, right, yes.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, I guess I—I think I did talk about that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And about—the main topic of conversation was the impending return of Valentiner. Did I tell you about that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right, you've talked about that, correct.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes, and so as soon as he came, everything just sprang to life and the whole place looked up and was full of optimism and full of enterprise and go ahead and excitement. He had this—the ability to generate all of that, because his mind popped with ideas, and he was somebody who people were eager to follow. I think I may have mentioned the Franz Hals exhibition, I don't know, but he—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Briefly, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: But he—but he was one of the few people at that time who was really equipped to stage big exhibitions of international importance because he had so much entrée and so much influence with the old generation of collectors, many of whom had depended upon him for his advice and guidance and expertise and so on, and one of his principal subjects of course was Franz Hals. And he had never organized an exhibition of Franz Hals, but he took this occasion, I believe it must have been 1935, almost immediately, to stage a Franz Hals show, following a famous exhibition of Rembrandt, which he had staged in 1930, just before the Depression broke and he had to depart. Well, that was a big occasion for me and for all the staff, because it introduced us to, to ah, the best available Franz Hals pictures in this country. And it really hurts me to realize that one of the centerpieces and sensations of that exhibition was the, was the large family group that had belonged to Otto H. Kahn, the most brilliant of Franz Hals, which was subsequently, deeper into the Depression, I suppose it was late in the '30s, was sold to Baron Thyssen, and was now to be seen in the Thyssen Collection in Lugano, a terrible loss to this country. But it was that kind of thing that made the show a brilliant success, and it also afforded an opportunity for scholars like Valentiner and Richardson, who was on our staff at Detroit, and others to reexamine Franz Hals and to refine their understanding, gather material for future publication of this painting or that

period, and so on. So it was characteristic of the kind of contribution that Valentiner made.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was he like as a person though, to work with? I, I find, in the few letters, interviews, where people talked about him, I can't really get a picture of how—

PERRY RATHBONE: Of the man?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, of how he worked, on say a day-to-day basis. Was he, you know accessible or explosive?

PERRY RATHBONE: No, not at all. He was a very, very kindly man, very generous minded and generous with his money. He set money aside for the future but always was concerned for the welfare of other people. He was an extremely energetic man, but he also had physical weakness and had to nap habitually, every single day. So he had to work somewhere near where there was a bed and ah, he used to tell me, with great humor, about a situation in his Berlin home, when he was living there with Mrs. Valentiner, who was apt to stay in bed in the morning, and he was apt to go to bed for a nap after lunch, and early to bed at night, and people complained about the Valentiners, that at least one of them was always in bed—[they laugh]—which of course amused him very much. I think he had a very good sense of humor about himself and about life in general. He was very approachable, although he was a little bit formidable looking, because he had the kind of Prussian erectness in his stature and he had a rather commanding face, somewhat birdlike, I would say, piercing blue eyes and a sharp nose, but pretty soon, if the slightest bit of humor developed in an interview, he would be the first one to laugh and make you laugh. He had a very easy manner that way. He was an assiduous worker, the most diligent worker. I enjoyed a certain amount of social life, then as I do now, and I spend a good many evenings with my friends. I like to dance and I like to drink and I like to go out with my girlfriends and have a good time. Valentiner went to social gatherings rather as a duty, and he always became bored with such things long before the evening was over and would, would go home if he could find some escape. And neither did he often stay at a movie until it was over.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really?

PERRY RATHBONE: He would get restless and leave; he'd get bored and want to get back to his books primarily and conserve his strength for his intellectual labors, which were prodigious. He had a fine working library behind him, in his study in Grosse Pointe, where we lived together, under the same roof, in Alger House. I think I touched on that earlier. But his mind was so, so um—what shall I say—adventurous, that he would simply go to the Detroit Museum library, and pick down an old volume of some periodical and tuck it under his arm, maybe take two volumes, and go out to Alger House, where we lived, and say, "Well now, I will look in these magazines and perhaps I make some discoveries." Discoveries, he was always like, "to make discoveries." And he would be stimulated by some old subject that perhaps could be reopened, or some new evidence that appeared, that would shed light on some work of Donatello, who was one of this favorite subjects, or Tino di Camaino, another, or Giovanni, or one of those late medieval Italian sculptors, whom he had a special devotion to, not to mention his fascination with Leonardo, his absorption with Michelangelo, his thrill with Cellini. He was a man of universal concern with the whole unfolding of western art, that is, from classical times onward. Those—that partly explains his method of work. The other one, of course, was his annual visit to Europe, and that was a great occasion because he traveled widely and tirelessly, and picked up ideas from what he saw from exhibitions, from scholars that he consulted and so on, and came back loaded with ideas, I always felt, as well as with works of art for the museum. So that all together, he was a very, very stimulating person.

He, in his personal habits, he neither drank nor smoked. His stomach wouldn't tolerate drink, nor his head either for that matter, as far as I could observe, and he never smoked at all. He liked to play the piano and work out his nervous energy on the keyboard, which he did with an amateur's accomplishment. He was, in other words, very fond of music in a rather characteristically Germanic way, and he loved German literature and all literature. He had a tremendous feeling for the greatest English literature and was conversant, deeply conversant with Shakespeare. But of course, his greatest literary god, I suppose, was Goethe, whom he liked to quote and who sometimes you would catch him reading, he would be reading one of his set of Goethe, and inspired me to learn some Goethe by heart when I was living there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes, [speaks German]. So yes, "Perry, you must learn that. You must learn that because it will help your German and it's good philosophy and one of you all should know, one of you all should know." So he was, he was thoroughly delightful and absolutely beloved by the staff and a great figure there in Detroit all those years. Well, I think it's important to know about him, because he was a great influence, he had his detractors and his very severe critics. I think we touched on those earlier didn't we?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Some of them, yeah, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Which arose from his impatience with museum professionalism, you know?

PAUL CUMMINGS: What is that?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, what it really was, was the pooling of problems in the meetings of the AAMD, and then discussing standards of behavior, of ethic, of installation, and then the boring subject of packing, shipping, insurance, staff standards, all that administrative kind of thing that he was—has little time for. So he sort of snubbed those meetings, at least it was taken as a snub, and this led to his unpopularity with many museum professionals. Plus the fact that he was sought after for his opinions, his written opinions, some of which were, I think rather hasty and ill-considered, but they were not commercially lucrative, which he was accused of. But he somehow rode out that storm of criticism and he had stood in extremely well with all the great collectors of his generation. He came here in 1908.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's right; he was really here for a long time wasn't he?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, he was here. Well, he came as a very young man, very much in demand socially, in the rather splendid New York of those days, and because he was German, because he was a foreigner, a European of knowledge and distinction, he was sought after by the great hostesses of the day, as well as the collectors, and he was filled with marvelous stories about those experiences. He became a very good friend of John G. Johnson of Philadelphia.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes.

PERRY RATHBONE: Did the catalogue of his Dutch pictures, which is still a standard work, and Johnson took such a fancy to him that though he lived in Philadelphia and Valentin lived here. I believe it was on Central Park West he lived, the West Side. Johnson provided him with a saddle horse, which he stabled, yes in Central Park, and went riding in the park every morning.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How marvelous.

PERRY RATHBONE: He lived like that for a long time. And then he would be entertained by prominent and rather glamorous people, like Rita Lydig, have you ever heard of her?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Vaguely.

PERRY RATHBONE: Rita Lydig, yes, L-Y-D-I-G. She was Mrs. Lydig, and I believe she had some Latin forebear, whether it was Cuban or what, I think something Spanish about her. And she was a very glamorous and a good-looking woman who gave grand dinner parties. And Valentin would describe how she received her guests in one of these houses here on Fifth Avenue, at the top of a flight of marble stairs, swathed in some wonderful red brocade, you know looking like a sergeant standing there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh marvelous, yeah, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, with her bare shoulders and her head of hair and so on. And then he told me one time, he told me that sometimes he would sit next to her at the dinner table and she was a very animated woman and told stories in an exciting and dramatic way. And in the midst of the excitement of the story, she would sometimes reach out and grab him by the arm, grasp his arm, you know, and he said it just sent shivers all through him, because he was so thrilled to be that intimate with this glamorous, good-looking gal. She also collected works of art, as so many prominent people did in those days, in a Renaissance way. You had to have a Della Rovere here and well, a Gillendile [ph] there, you know, bronzes here and terracottas and panel paintings, all that. Then of course, another person who we knew extremely well was Anne Morgan, J.P. Morgan's daughter, and often visited them in their camp in the Adirondacks, which was a quite stylish thing to do and ah, and Helen Frick, of course he knew her. She was younger but he knew her, and of course was familiar with what Mr. Frick was doing in those days, it was very exciting.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Then the war came, which brings me to that clipping, and he was in Munich. Is this at all interesting?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: He was in Munich when war was declared, I believe on the first of August, 1914, and in an impulsive young man's way and thinking this was only going to be a Balkan skirmish, as others did at the beginning of the war, he rushed to the colors and signed up and became a sergeant or something almost overnight. And so he was suddenly off to the New York scene and the Philadelphia scene, where he was also a great friend of Henry McIlhenny's father, John McIlhenny, president of the museum, a collector incidentally. And

it was from Henry McIlhenny that I got this faded, crumbling clipping the other day, which has now been mounted so it will be preserved. It represents—it is a picture of Valentiner, with these big blue, sort of doll-like eyes, and a perfectly innocent, extremely young face with a German helmet on, those pointed things that were worn in the first war, in his full uniform, and it goes on to say that Dr. Valentiner is now involved with Verdun, and the Western Front or something, and went on to say we miss him very much, this is the first picture that we received of our young friend, or something like that. It's unbelievable. I don't think—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Incredible.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, incredible, and you really should land a look at it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, that's marvelous.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. But anyhow, the result of his being a German and fighting on the German side in the war made him totally *persona non grata* with Ms. Helen Frick. In fact all Germans were excluded from the Frick Library after the war, now you know that, and anybody who couldn't prove himself to be non-German, who wasn't, who was suspected to be German, was excluded, and Valentiner simply was not allowed to go there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That happened, I mean until the '30s or the '40s even.

PERRY RATHBONE: I guess it did, yes I think it did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because when John Rewald came over, he had the same problem.

PERRY RATHBONE: As late as that, really?

PAUL CUMMINGS: And he mentions it in the first volume of his *History of Impressionism*.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, does he mention that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: It must have been—it seemed very quaint to him.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, he hated it, it was terrible.

PERRY RATHBONE: Of course, and Valentiner said to me, you know, of course he was sensitive when he came back to this country, because the feeling here ran very, very high. I'm old enough to remember it myself. I was a child, but don't think it escaped my sensitivity, not at all. I knew all the slogans and I knew all the war songs and the whole bloody business. So when Valentiner came back here, he said almost everybody greeted him with great warmth and so on, but nothing compared with the warmth of people who he greeted in England. Somehow he said—and he said you know, it is people who occupy the same status in life or the same level of life or activity or class or whatever you want to call it, who are much closer to you than people of your own nationality who are in a different category. And he said that his friends in London embraced him when he first appeared there and dropped all sense of animosity or any kind of, any kind of—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Hmm.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes—friction. Here, it was more difficult to adjust.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I wonder why.

PERRY RATHBONE: I don't know. Mrs. Frick is just a good example of it, but you know people went so far in this country, in St. Louis for example, to change the name of Berlin Avenue to Pershing Place.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, and to this day it's known as Pershing Place, when it was you know, St. Louis is full of Germans. It was called Berlin Avenue, and I was told there in St. Louis, that people who have—at that time who had dachshunds, the dachshunds would be kicked, innocent by the way, an innocent dog.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh no.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because it's a German dog.

PERRY RATHBONE: A German dog, a German name.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Strange, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: And you know that Wagner couldn't be played and all the rest of it. Anyhow, of course he felt that rather bitterly, but that's, all that seemed to have been forgotten quite readily in Detroit, where he became a great favorite.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But now, you know, if we can move into St. Louis, which is where we have you being toasted by the trustees at this nice house in the country.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh. Oh yes, well not in the country, at Westmoreland Place, which is one of those great big private places.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. So you then, it was 1940 and you moved to St. Louis. Where did you live and how did you, you know, get, get set up?

PERRY RATHBONE: That's interesting. I was—first, Louis LaBeaume, this curmudgeon-like president, did a very nice thing for me as soon as I arrived, within a month, or less than a month, maybe a couple of weeks. He gave a cocktail party for me to meet all the young men in St. Louis. It was a stag party at his house on Waterman Avenue. It was a very, very nice occasion, and nice of him to do, and in a small community like St. Louis, you have to know all the sort of presentable and interesting men, no matter what—I mean even much younger than Louis LaBeaume, who was a man of 65, 70 or something. And at that cocktail party, I met two brothers by the name of Davis; Vitor and Lionberger Davis.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, you may have heard of them. And their father was an extraordinary man, quite a devoted collector, and a man of staunch opinion, a great supporter of Roosevelt, amidst all of his Republican friends and so on, a banker, and a stockbroker, and whatnot. These two boys immediately asked me if I would come and live in their house that summer. Their parents were away, they had plenty of room. Come out to Brentmoor Park, it's a big house and you'll be comfortable, we'd love to have you. Well, it was the kind of hospitality that, you know, it's somehow very symbolic of this country and especially the farther west you go. So, I of course accepted, because I had no place to stay but my hotel room at the time, and moved out there and I stayed there, I think it must have been for six weeks anyway, six weeks or two months. And another chap, a friend of Lionberger, a little younger, by the name of Sammy Blodgett [ph] was another guest in the house, and so we just had this sort of bachelors hall there. It was a short distance from the museum, so I had my little Ford '36 Phaeton, which I had driven to St. Louis in, and that I just went back and forth. So that lasted that summer and of course I met more friends and found St. Louis a very cordial and hospitable place. Then, soon thereafter, I was intrigued when I heard about some apartments built around the turn of the century. They were duplex apartments on the other side of Forest Park, from the museum, in Leclide [ph] Avenue. That sounded very attractive to me and I—one soon became available and I rented that duplex apartment, small apartment, but two floors, for, I remember distinctly, \$55 a month. And I soon engaged a young negro girl to come every day and, you know, make the bed and clean and wash out the dishes and whatnot, and I paid her \$6.25 a week for her services. Sometimes she didn't turn up, I have to admit, but by and large it was a pretty good arrangement. And there, then of course being a bachelor and young, I was quite widely entertained and made lots of friends, friends who later on became good friends here, and once in a while I'd give a large cocktail party in my apartment, to return the hospitality that I enjoyed. That was how I lived for two years, until Pearl Harbor, and then—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —it all changed again.

PERRY RATHBONE: There is going to be a big change in your life Rathbone, and there certainly was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, now what, what was this like? I mean you were what, 28, 29, something like that.

PERRY RATHBONE: I turned 29 in July of the year I went there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So that all of a sudden here you were with an institution, um, trustees, curators, janitors, whatever, where do you start?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, it's a very, it's a very—it's a very, very good question, where do you start. Of course you have to continue doing the things that were already more or less expected and entrained. Of course, I did that to begin with while I was getting my bearings and deciding what could be done with this institution. And I was continuing along those lines when the war broke out and I was gone for three years, and when I came back, they really began to change the museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were there staff people that were helpful or competitive or a wait and see attitude?

PERRY RATHBONE: No, I must say, I have very good luck that way. I had a very good, cooperative staff. I had a certain amount of difficulty with some of them but nothing extraordinary. They were—it was all a very sort of low, low gear, quiet, easy-paced place, um, well, I'll just state with certain prejudices that they borrowed from the South. For example, one of the things that I couldn't believe when I went there was that no negroes were served in the restaurant. There was a small, informal, quite adequate restaurant in the museum, a necessity because the museum was so removed from the city, nothing nearby, and the staff needed to eat there if nobody else. And, Negroes were not permitted to come into the restaurant and sit down.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was there a sign to that effect or was it just part of the—

PERRY RATHBONE: No, no, no sign.

PAUL CUMMINGS: One understood.

PERRY RATHBONE: It seemed to be understood and if a negro came, the waitress would say well if you just wait here and if you would like a sandwich, you can order a sandwich and we'll hand it to you here at the door and you can take it somewhere else. Well, you know, you look back, you can hardly believe it. And this seemed to be very curious.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It still happens though.

PERRY RATHBONE: Does it really?

PAUL CUMMINGS: In some places.

PERRY RATHBONE: Is that so?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, it's amazing.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I thought that was awful, especially in view of the fact the museum was a public institution and negroes taxes as well as whites taxes paid for it. That, I did nothing about until after the war, but when I came back, I just said to the restaurant manager, who like so many other people on the staff, people at that level, had these strong prejudices against blacks and as usual, it was the intelligentsia who led them away from that habit of prejudice. I just said to Ms. Nelson, you know, we simply can't continue like this and as of the first of February, or whatever it was, I want anybody who applies at this restaurant to be seated and if your waitresses won't wait on them, then we'll get some other waitresses and we'll continue that practice. Well, that's the kind of provincial and um—what shall I say—reactionary kind of atmosphere that prevailed there. There was a strong feeling about modern art, there was not much interest in that. Oh no, and one of the burning issues there, that Meyric Rogers, my predecessor, had just lived through, and that was the purchase of a very beautiful Egyptian bronze cat of the Saite Dynasty, from Joseph Brummer, for \$14,400, and this of course was paid for out of city money.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: At the same time, the artists of St. Louis were starving. They couldn't get a hearing, they couldn't get a showing, they couldn't sell a picture of a sculpture, and they were hopping mad.

PAUL CUMMINGS: All of this money left to the state.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Of course they thought all of it should be spent on their works of art, none of which would have been heard of, I'm afraid. Nevertheless, that's the way artists feel and you can't blame them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: So, there was a serious diplomatic problem there to overcome and old Louis LaBeaume, who was quite a wit and a very caustic tongue, had weathered this storm, along with Rogers. The press made a great deal of it because it was really quite a football, and they—he was telephoned by the press one day and he couldn't come to the phone and they asked why and he told the maid or whatever to say he was very sorry, he had "bronze catus." [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Marvelous.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well anyway, the artists went so far as to picket the museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. This is just more or less on the eve of my coming, in 1937, '38, '39, like that, and they

were determined to see changes. And so, we laid special emphasis on the annual St. Louis exhibition, which had been a thing for a long time, but which I also felt was a terribly ingrown and too parochial a thing. And uh, originated the Missouri exhibition, which embraced the whole state, and 50 miles of its borders, just to give a bigger context than it had before and incidentally raise the level, because you'll be drawing upon—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —more people and a larger area.

PERRY RATHBONE: And talent. Yes. And then after a while, we worked out a scheme whereby St. Louis would have it one year and Kansas City the next, and we would share the burden of organizing this thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Would it go from one museum to the other?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes, exactly, and of course organizing a thing like that is just taxing, it really is horrendous. Oh my God.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. You must have got hundreds and hundreds of—was it a juried show?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, and we always had juries of real distinction and that would attract attention to the show and yes, we always made an event of it. But people were very sensitive to what they saw there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you find that the structure of the Detroit Museum differed greatly from St. Louis, or were they fairly similar?

PERRY RATHBONE: No, it was quite different. The St. Louis structure was much, much simpler and much more manageable because though both of them were supported by the city—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: —the St. Louis Museum was supported automatically by a mill tax.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you knew that every year, you were going to get X amount of money.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, exactly, according to the amount of taxes that were gathered, we had our share to which no one else could lay claim. There was no control over whatever and the unique aspect of that thing was that while it was public money contributed, or provided only by taxpayers, it was controlled by a board of trustees who perpetuated themselves and without any representation from the city government. That's extraordinary, I think, in municipal annals, don't you?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, it's—

PERRY RATHBONE: You would expect at least an ex officio mayor or comptroller or something.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I think, I think in Baltimore, Adelyn Breeskin said that when she was there, she would go to the city council meeting and talk, and I don't think they had anybody on their board from the city there ever.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well that may be, but that's not quite the same thing, Paul, because—

PAUL CUMMINGS: They get a large sum of their money every year from the city, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: A large sum of money. Well, that scheme corresponds with the Detroit one, whereby each year the treasurer or the director or the president or all three, would stand before the common council or whatever it was called, and justify the budget for the forthcoming year. And um, but very often in Detroit, the budget would be cut in two and create havoc.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, oh I see, so that in St. Louis you just, if the taxes went up 40 percent, that meant you got more money because your mill tax went up.

PERRY RATHBONE: Absolutely, and we didn't have to spend any—you didn't have to expend any energy defending the museum's place in society.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Fascinating.

PERRY RATHBONE: Or justifying how the money was spent for works of art. Nothing. And the same was true of the zoo in St. Louis, which subsisted on the same basis but with twice as much income as the museum and the public library. Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's fascinating.

PERRY RATHBONE: And that was a law that went—was passed in 1911, and making—well, it made use of a building that was erected for the World's Fair in 1904, and it was supported that way. And it was good in one way, because it meant, it meant a steady income, an unquestioned income for the museum, but it also relieved the well-heeled public of St. Louis from any sense of responsibility for its welfare.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

PERRY RATHBONE: Therefore, it attracted no money for support whatever.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean if you really wanted to buy something expensive, it was hard to get money.

PERRY RATHBONE: It was very hard to get money because everybody would say oh, this hospital needs it, St. Louis needed it or St. Vincent's, or this school or that university, and often, the museum was not taken care of. And it really worked very much to the detriment of the museum, when I compare it with the Cleveland Museum, for example, but St. Louis may be far older and Cleveland being entirely profit, entirely profit, like the Boston Museum for that matter; it just was millions of dollars.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's fascinating. I guess when people feel responsible and they have to do it, more will happen than if they can assume, you know like the National Endowment is going to give us \$100,000 for that exhibition or something.

PERRY RATHBONE: Exactly. And you know, there were two funds, perhaps three. There were two funds for buying pictures in St. Louis when I went there, and they each were worth about \$100,000; one for American painting one for oriental art, the Bixby Collection and the McMillan fund, that's all there were.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was a capital.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, capital, yes a capital gift, and that's nothing, \$200,000 is nothing. So the purchases, the acquisitions were made out of what was left over from operating the museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh I see, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Of course we tried to operate the museum—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —close to the line.

PERRY RATHBONE: Close to the line, so we have something left to enrich the collections, and that was all right as far as it went, but when something like the cat was bought, under the circumstances, all hell broke loose. And you were also obliged, as a city institution, to publish the price tag of everything you bought. Well in those days, you know, buying a Picasso isn't like buying a Picasso today, where nobody raises an eyebrow, but something as far out as Picasso, oh my God, the whole town would start to talk about this outrageous expenditure. One of the purchases that I was responsible for, I remember, was a marvelous faun, marble faun, attributed to Montorsori [ph], who was a follower of Michelangelo and much influenced by Rousseau and so on. A famous piece that belonged to the Barberini family in Rome and Mussolini let it go out in exchange for the Barberinis giving *La Donna Velata*, Raphael, to the state or something, and this marvelous sculpture, which is a fountain, cost \$20,000, and when that appeared in the press, because it was a faun, and a lot of you know illiterates in St. Louis didn't know what a faun was, the press decided to have some fun with me and put it on the front page and say what is it, and all that kind of thing, and the comptroller of the city is not at all sure the money is being properly spent and so on. And then, this would really get my dander up, I'd say, all right, I'm going to be cruel to the paper. "If St. Louis wants to have a museum, all right, if it doesn't, it's all right with me too," you know—[they laugh]—that kind of thing. But they laughed you know, like a bunch of provincials that were writing about this museum to elevate their taste and you know. So there were those problems, there were real challenges, and that sometimes it inhibited you in buying, with public money, really what you thought would be an expression of modern art.

PAUL CUMMINGS: There would be a hassle for six months afterward.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. Because they would, you know, make fun of what you're doing, and they would always threaten or revoke the law by referendum if this goes on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh I see, the sword of—the pen of Damocles.

PERRY RATHBONE: That's right there's always that threat. Well, at least, Paul, it was perfectly obviously to me, what we needed to do, and that was to establish a Friends of the Museum. The museum had no membership; it had no privilege for anybody.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?



PERRY RATHBONE: None, none at all. Neither did it ever charge any admission, and it was open every single day of the year.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Just like the subway, it just went on and on and on.

PERRY RATHBONE: Exactly. Christmas and New Year's Day were the only exceptions. It was open every other day, including Thanksgiving and everything, and it was open on Sunday from ten in the morning. I thought that was wonderful. I thought that was a real public service, a museum that is never closed.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: Fantastic. Well, that policy of course was an outgrowth of the public support, like the zoo. If the zoo was open, why shouldn't the museum be open, or the library?

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's the same thing.

PERRY RATHBONE: The same thing. But there was no special class of people or Friends of the Museum who would contribute to its betterment or [inaudible], but I established that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When was that?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, it was 1950 I think. I think it was 1950.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, was there any pre-World War II patronage in terms of gifts and works of art?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, some, oh yes there had been gifts, sure, there have been gifts. For example, when the first Mrs. Pulitzer died, Joseph Pulitzer wanted to do something in her memory and gave a beautiful English room, a room in the mid-18th century, and furnished it. That's still there as the Pulitzer room, as a characteristic gift. And yes, and people—Daniel Kaplan, the—who, well, the first Daniel Kaplan was a rich tobacco merchant in St. Louis and collected salon pictures of the '70s and '80s, and when he died in 1970, his widow gave the whole collection to the museum. And there are other isolated works of considerable importance that have been given, sure, but there was no organized effort to raise money for the museum for any purpose. So I thought one of the most successful people in the whole field in this country, at raising money and ingratiating the museum with people of means, was William Milliken, and he also could speak with an impassioned style about this matter. So I asked him to come and organize—not to organize, but to address the first meeting of the Friends of the Museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you promote that and start it? I mean, you had to—

PERRY RATHBONE: Well first of all, I inaugurated a women's committee. I thought that there was a lot of talent there that needed to be harnessed for the benefit of the museum, and I found the women of St. Louis very responsive and intelligent and enterprising and really wonderful to work with. And I asked them to make a list of all the likely people, all the—I think there were about a dozen women on the committee. To make a list, to get together a thousand names if we could, and send an invitation to those people as people we thought would be interested in being charter members, or something like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Of the Friends of the Museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Have a little cachet there.

PERRY RATHBONE: A little cachet, exactly. And we would have an event at the museum that they would enjoy attending and in the meantime, I myself approached—oh, I don't know—as many as 15 men and women, mostly men in the community, and asked them if they would be life members, founding life members at \$1,000 apiece. And I remember that was quite a thing for me to do, pick up the phone and talk to those tycoons, many of whom I only knew slightly, but all of whom had known who I was. I think the night we opened and when William Milliken came to speak and I made an address and so on, I think we had already—I can't remember whether it was \$7,000 or \$11,000 in life memberships to begin with. It was sort of the last thing to announce before we even started, that we had that kind of a kitty.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What intrigued those people or how did you persuade them to become a life member? I mean it was a totally new thing.

PERRY RATHBONE: A totally new thing. Well, I think it was mostly on the basis of competition with other museums. I think they began to feel the St. Louis Museum had been shortchanged and Kansas City, you see, on the other side of the state, was very well heeled with the Rockhill Nelson endowment. And then I could draw comparison with Minneapolis, which was so rich compared to St. Louis, and not to mention Chicago and

Cleveland, and even little Toledo, the city of Toledo, was tiny compared to St. Louis, and yet its museum was immensely rich and I said, "We simply can't compete in making this museum what it should be at this point without your help."

PAUL CUMMINGS: People get angry if they feel they've got a second rate anything.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, absolutely, so you played upon their pride, their community pride, and also the fact that I did my best to persuade them that they would enjoy it, that we'd be able to improve the publications program, the whole series of events that would take place at the museum, and that it would be—it would penetrate more deeply into the community and you enlightened people out there should recognize what that means, and I think we can prove it to you in a short time. And it was this sort of thing, and they would ask—we couldn't give them the privilege of free entrance, because there wasn't any entrance fee.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: We were at a disadvantage there. We had to be very careful about private parties in the museum, because it was a totally public institution, and so on. But we finally built it up so—I forget how many members are on now, but it's grown tremendously. We put on the first benefit the museum had ever had, in the form of a ball, I think, about 1952. We put on a splendid ball in that big—you've been to the museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, I haven't.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, it's a palatial building.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I've seen photographs of it.

PERRY RATHBONE: With an immense hall, immense sculpture hall in the center. We put on a great ball there with the aid of Famous-Barr, which is one of the leading department stores, the May Store, that young May, Buster May, was very interested in the museum. He became a very close friend of mine, very cooperative. Their design team came in and transformed the whole thing. Oh, it was—and we had not—[inaudible]—but Dani Leroux [ph] was a great friend of mine and also of a girlfriend of mine there, Mrs., now Mrs.—Lady Smithers now, actually, she came and was sort of the star of the ball, you know or the leading ballerina. That made it very glamorous and people responded and we cleared, you know about \$10,000 or \$12,000, which seemed a hell of a lot of money then. [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Well, one—you know, I would think when something so new starts in an institution which has been existing for a while, you know, what—for example your women's committee. Why did they get interested? Was it something for them to do, that gave them some status in the community or it was a new thing and that in itself was interesting?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well yes, I think so. In the first place, I think they—well, I don't know, Paul, just how to answer that, what their motivation was. I knew very well what mine was. I think it boils down to being sociable with other people who you like, having a common interest. I think a common interest has a very great deal to do with friendship, you know friendship just between two human beings who don't have much in common; it doesn't go very far.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Inaudible], right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: You know, you have to have one common thing to discuss and by discussing and talking about it, you learn about your friend and your reflection. And I think that kind of social bond was the principal attraction. Plus the pleasure of arranging special events at the museum, which no visiting museum director or his staff can do. They just don't have the time, they don't always have the know-how, and it's amazing how much those women can do if they're given the challenge.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They became your social directors or something.

PERRY RATHBONE: They did. And they also had great respect for questions of taste and appropriateness, when it came to arranging these things and I think they felt they were learning as well as doing. I think these were the—as far as I could see, that's what motivated them. And then they set up a scheme whereby they were renewed. They didn't stay on the committee indefinitely; they rotated, you know, so it was always somehow churning new talent and force.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And everybody got their chance, so they just knew they wouldn't always be the third lady on the left all the time.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yeah. And also, they—and by this kind of activity, they began to find people in the community who were drawn to the museum or wanted to do something special for it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh right, right, because otherwise, they would have a hard time to manifest their interest wouldn't they?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well precisely, because the staff, being so small, it couldn't possibly mingle sufficiently in the community to attract all of the kind of potential that was there, but as soon as you spread it out amongst a lot of people, through their contacts, there were sort of feeder lines that came into the museum. And it was great fun to watch this grow, feel the strength of the museum developing. We always had a good press in St. Louis, I must say, that was, that was wonderful. The *Post-Dispatch* was a most conscientious paper. They never published anything about acquisitions that they didn't understand and get accurately, you know if they didn't quite understand a release, they would telephone to get it right. That was admirable. But at the same time, it took years before they got an adequate critic, years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, well it's very difficult. There's not enough galleries really out there.

PERRY RATHBONE: That's quite true. But they didn't even quite believe in it you see, whereas they always had a music critic and felt that was necessary.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, it's the German tradition in a kind of way.

PERRY RATHBONE: Maybe it was that, had something to do with it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And there must have been a lot more concerts going on, music groups.

PERRY RATHBONE: That's right; there was a lot of music.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Choral societies, all that kind of thing.

PERRY RATHBONE: That's true, that's quite true, much more than the art gallery thing. That's quite true. But they, they finally—but now, the scene is very different. They pay strict attention to what goes on and the whole thing is quite different. It's amazing that if you could have seen the inadequacy of the museum when I went there you wouldn't believe it, and you know, I learned that in the early days of the museum, for several years, the so-called curator [inaudible], who was an old, tired and not very successful artist, lived up in one of those attic rooms with his family.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really? Like the Louvre.

PERRY RATHBONE: Really. Yes, yes, like that. Well, I couldn't believe it. I forget his name now, but this used to be told to me by the older members of the staff.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was there a large staff there when you came?

PERRY RATHBONE: No, not at all. There was a director and a curator, and curatorial assistants. There was a secretary who kept the minutes and was in a sense the business manager, and there was a treasurer, a paid treasurer, and his office, and a registrar, and a superintendent of the building, and all the rest, there were about four members of the Education Department and the rest were guards, that's all, that's all, a tiny staff, a tiny staff. Yeah, it really was, and so in a way, it was easy for management and in a way it was maddening.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because it's such an enormous place.

PERRY RATHBONE: It's such an enormous place, and the problem of acquisitions was a formidable one, because I had to be a sort of jack of all arts, and apply my critical capacity to everything; eastern, western, modern, old European, Baroque, medieval, no matter what. My curator was a remarkable man, Thomas T. Hoopes, Dr. Hoopes. He knew everything there was to know about arms and armor, whether they were defensive weapons or offensive weapons, whether they were firearms or whether they were hand, or whether they were crossbows. He knew everything, yeah, he was an extraordinary scholar, but he was—while he had a broad cultural interest, he wasn't a man of very much aesthetic judgement or feeling and therefore, he wasn't willing to express opinions aesthetically.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh I see.

PERRY RATHBONE: You see? And a man in my position, having to initiate this acquisition and that, I was always looking for someone to check my own impressions.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Where did you go then, for that?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, sometimes I would go to friends, you know, Pulitzer for example. I would try things out on the Education Department, on those women there who would have quite a lot of exposure and read a lot

anyway. If they hadn't had so much formal training, at least they read a great deal. Ah, well sometimes, very often, visiting museum people, scholars and specialists who would come along. I would take the occasion and pick their brains and expose them to this, that and the other, and sort of made do like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where did the Paul Sachs influence or training rather, come in? I mean because here, you really had to make every, every decision.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I can say that he had led us down many paths and he had made us be conscious and aware of the whole panorama of world art, not to confine ourselves. He threw all sorts of problems at us that offered a variety of experience and judgments. So, and of course training at Harvard and then in Boston, with the museum there, you were exposed to quite a lot. So I would say that he prepared us that way, quite well. Plus, the fact that he insisted very much about the biographies, so we were pretty well aware of where to look for, study this field or that subject.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was there a good library in St. Louis?

PERRY RATHBONE: It was not bad, in the library, in the museum, not bad, not bad. It's much, much better today, but it was really—I can't say. I think they have done pretty well with the library, and they had a darn good print collection, which was a big surprise to me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Wasn't Davis a patron of that?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, he collected prints, the library, Davis, right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: He collected prints. He liked Dürer and Rembrandt especially, that sort of belonged to his generation, and then he also had a great deal of love for Seymour Haden and Whistler and other people, you know whose reputations have somewhat faded by the time I got to St. Louis. Yeah, and Dr. Clopton, Malvern Clopton, who gave his collection to the university, was always on loan at the museum, first class. And then, and then there was another very good collector of modern prints there, what was his name?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Modern.

PERRY RATHBONE: Can you remember?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't remember offhand, no.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, I'll think of it later, but that also came to the museum as a gift, that was eight or nine thousand prints. A wonderful collection, modern, primarily modern. Um, what else can I tell you? There general scene.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How are you—how are the trustees picked, of the museum, by themselves?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, they were self-perpetuating, and by and large they were good. They were—they had good leadership as soon as LaBeaume retired, when he retired, six months after I went there, with great relief, because he was, you know he was so overbearing, he was such a, well, martinet, and prided himself on being.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He knew what he was and liked it.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. I remember the famous case often cited was when Alan Priest came to St. Louis to request the loan of the famous gilt-bronze panda, or bear, Han Dynasty, but our zoo director in St. Louis was sure it was a panda, and I think that makes more sense than a bear; after all, kind of a sacred or semi-sacred animal. And LaBeaume refused to make the loan. He could be like that. This was to be a splendid show of Chinese bronzes at the Metropolitan Museum, and he said to Alan Priest, he said, "You go back to New York, you're not getting the panda. The people of St. Louis have paid to have that panda here, for the St. Louisans to look at, and not a lot of New Yorkers." So, you know, in other words, get the hell out. He had the kind of attitude and then he turned to someone and he said, "You know, there aren't but a few absolute monarchies left in this world, but the St. Louis Museum happens to be one and I'm in charge." Yes, that's the way he was. Isn't that incredible?

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Oh, marvelous.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes, and he got away with that kind of thing. He would shock the St. Louisans. But then he, he shocked me. I think the first trustees meeting I attended after I had become director, I had been to New York on a shopping expedition and to select works of art for the annual American show. This was the show in addition to the St. Louis show that was a permanent fixture. And I came back with two things that I will never

forget. One was from Joseph Brummer, the life-size Maillol of *Venus with a Necklace*.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: You know. It was \$3,500, you know, an absolute gift. There are only five casts of that, you know, and it's a beautiful thing, and that I presented for consideration of purchase in the first meeting, and Louis LaBeaume took the occasion, as we were going upstairs from the trustees room, which was the library, the second room in the library, we used for meetings. We went up into the sculpture hall, where I'd had the bronze placed for the trustees to look at and vote upon, and on the way up he said to me, "Rathbone," he said, "I saw that Maillol up there when I came in today, I looked at it pretty hard, and I wanted to tell you, to me, it just looks like an undressed woman." And I said, "Mr. LaBeaume, I'm shocked to hear you say that." I heard myself say this, where I got the courage, I don't know; it was just reflex pure and simple. And he sort of looked at me but he didn't say anything and um, he just shut up, and I think it was because I didn't agree with him, that he probably began to respect me more and began to wonder about his relationship to the other trustees. I don't know. At any rate, we voted that afternoon to buy it and that was that, and six months later, as I say, he retired, but before, he came to the museum almost daily, and looked into my office. No museum director wants that to happen.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It really was a fight then.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well it was. It was kind of survival I guess, and as I told you before, he had practically destroyed Meyric Rogers. [Audio break.] I want to tell you.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. There's only a minute left, of tape.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh good. On that same expedition, I went to see Langton Douglas, a rather famous character who had been a pilot and the captain of the British Army and all that, and a considerable scholar and scout, who found wonderful works of art. He came to New York with his young wife, Jean Douglas, and got in touch with me and asked me if I would stop in at the Gladstone Hotel, where he had rooms, to look at what he had to offer. And I saw his things there, none of which interested me, but Mrs. Douglas then said, "Oh I have something to show you, Mr. Rathbone, perhaps that would be of interest to you," whereupon she produced a lovely drawing by Cézanne, this big, of a tree, about 1885, '90, something like that. Oh, I said, I think that's very attractive indeed and a nice drawing by Cézanne, and I said, "How much is that?" Well, she said that's \$200. I said, well, I think we better send that along to St. Louis, show it to the trustees, so she did. I was standing in my office, just on the floor, leaning against the wall, when he came in one morning, LaBeaume came in one morning and looked around appraisingly, and he saw that and "Well," he said, "That—I hope you're not going to offer that to the trustees for sale or to buy," and I was so insulted by this attitude, I just was boiling inside and I said to myself, you so and so, you will not get the chance to humiliate me in front of the other trustees, I just will keep it for myself, and I did. I have it to this day.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who succeeded him?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, a perfectly marvelous man, the kind of president a museum director would pray for, Daniel K. Catlin, the son of the collecting Catlin, and he was the president during the rest of my administration.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh good.

[END OF TRACK.]

## **October 9, 1975**

PAUL CUMMINGS: Let me just say this is side five and it's the 9th of October, 1975, Paul Cummings talking to Perry Rathbone. One of the things that I wanted to ask about was, did you have any preconceived idea of what you would do as the director of the St. Louis Museum? And what was it—in your mind, was there an idea or an ideal of this is what a museum director does, and what happened in reality if such a thing did exist?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Well yes, of course I did, and I suppose inevitably, I took as my model, William Valentiner and the Detroit Museum, with the full recollection of my experience at Harvard, under Paul Sachs as well. And my ideal there, was to involve the public in a much bigger way than it was already and to develop a museum staff, to develop its publications and to, in a general way, make the museum much more deeply felt than it had been.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean really bring it out of the building, into the community.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. It was a rather stuffy place and it rather reflected the man whom I described in our last interview, Louis LaBeaume, who was very ah, who was rather aloof and autocratic and quite—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was his fiefdom.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, his fiefdom, exactly, yes, and I thought that was awful and unnecessary and I found that the one way to do this was to introduce exhibitions that would be—that the public would respond to, the very general public of St. Louis. So it isn't a rather special public sense as you would have at Harvard or in Boston, or in New York for that matter, and the idea then, I felt, was to popularize the museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now how much of that really got going before you went into the Navy?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, not a very great deal, to tell you the truth.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Not much. It was only about two years.

PERRY RATHBONE: It was only—yes, there were only two years before I went into the Navy, but I ah—what was it now that they gave me that encouraged me? I found that while the museum was not really as popular as it should be, amongst the intelligentsia, amongst the educated young people that I met, and their parents and so on, the museum was really quite a familiar place, and I think one reason was that St. Louis is not overloaded with museums. Some cities have quite a few museums competing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And historical societies, oversized libraries is one thing, and the universities.

PERRY RATHBONE: Exactly, and St. Louis was not like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So, there's no university museum then either.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well actually the—that's a good, that's a good point. The first museum in St. Louis was a university museum. It belonged to Washington University and it was in a fine building, designed by a Boston architect in about 1875 or '76, in downtown St. Louis. But ah, when the World's Fair came along and the university decided to move to University City, just outside the city limits, and establish a new campus, in new buildings, they abandoned the old building and um, recognized that the World's Fair would leave behind the splendid residue of Cass Gilbert's city, what was to become the city art museum, and that would be the obvious place for the university collections to be lodged.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

PERRY RATHBONE: You see? So the nucleus of the whole idea really was the university.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Okay, fascinating.

PERRY RATHBONE: And it was thanks to—yes. It was thanks to a farsighted, generous minded and public-spirited merchant by the name of Wayman Crow, who built the old university museum and who also subsidized and patronized America's first sculptress, who studied in St. Louis, though she came from New England, and that was um, do you know who I mean?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Patience Wright or something or other.

PERRY RATHBONE: No, no, she's 18th century. This is, this is 19th century.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The other one.

PERRY RATHBONE: He sent her to Rome to study, because she'd come out to St. Louis to learn anatomy. They wouldn't teach her anatomy in New England in those days, it wasn't for women. She found St. Louis was more liberal and out she came, and found her patron. What's her name?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I can't think of it.

PERRY RATHBONE: You can't think?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

PERRY RATHBONE: Could you turn that thing off. [Audio break.] Hosmer.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Harriet Hosmer, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: That's right, yes. So it was—Wayman Crow was the father of all this, a museum idea there. And um, I was very pleased, as compared with Detroit, to find so many intelligent, well-read, art-directed people in St. Louis who were very familiar with the museum, and that gave me a very good feeling. This was not the case in Detroit at all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was more difficult.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well Detroit, you see, was being transformed into the mess it is today, going to heavy industry, and the influx of ill-educated people, both white and black, from the South, who transformed the city into what it is now and there wasn't this nucleus, or even more than that, this rather broad society of well-educated people with the intellectual curiosity and aesthetic cultivation that I found in St. Louis. And I thought well, let's, let's carry it further, let's attract more people here and give them good reason to come. So that was really my idea, and it worked, and I found some interesting things along the way. For example, I discovered that one of the most important people in a museum of that size and in such a community is the guard who is nearest to the door.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, because he's the one who gets all the questions.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, and he's the one who is part of the museum image. We were very fortunate to have a courteous and rather courtly Mr. Roberts was at our front door. He was a Welshman and very proud of his lineage. He had perfect manners and he liked people, spoke to them, was helpful, and, and he really, I can't tell you how much he meant to this thing that I set in motion, of making new friends for the museum. Well, incidentally, including the artists, who had been rather, who had been rather uh, abused verbally anyway, by the former president.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really, he didn't approve of what they were doing?

PERRY RATHBONE: No, of course not.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No interest?

PERRY RATHBONE: No. No, no. He had a rigid Beaux Arts training, so you can imagine what modern art looked like to him. That was another thing. I was quite determined to build up the collection of modern art in St. Louis, which was very narrow.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Didn't they do an annual exhibition or a regional show to expand it.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, we did—well, yes that's right, it was the St. Louis exhibition, which was pretty bad, because it was too limited a field. That was during my time, early in my days, and we expanded that to make it a Missouri exhibition.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you think exhibitions like that do in terms of either the careers of the artist or in the eyes of the public, both—because every museum seems to do them under annuals, biannuals, surveys, whatever.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, what does it really do to, to a St. Louis artist who really spends all of his life there? Is it important?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, it's immensely important, immensely important to the artists and really quite important to the public, to the museum public.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But I mean does it stimulate patronage of those people?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes, we made it a point to market the works during the exhibition and we did sell a considerable amount, but it was mostly the recognition that artists in St. Louis received from the judges who were selected.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, the jury show, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, and brought from afar. As I have noted, we always have three, at least three members of the jury; a museum director usually, an artist and maybe a collector. But bringing those artists from outside and museum directors from outside, meant a very great deal to the artists who were struggling for recognition and to feel that they are on the right track. And that's true of many communities throughout the country. I served as a juror time and time again, it seems to me everywhere, while I was director at St. Louis.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, you know, Seattle and Los Angeles, San Francisco.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's a good way to see things.

PERRY RATHBONE: It's a very good way. Oklahoma, several places in Texas, Chicago, I went everywhere, and it was—that was an education. Now, most of those artists whom you encounter, and there are hundreds, you never hear of again.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: They nevertheless provide a kind of local market, and there is a local patronage that's very attractive. People develop loyalties to their hometown artists, they enjoy having their sculptures or paintings or drawings or whatever on the walls, or their ceramics, and so on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, some of them do very well financially and have marvelous establishments.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, it's quite true, it's quite true. So they really fill a need, yeah, and I encourage that, but try to, to lift it up. I remember the idea of course, of my predecessor was, that this is a St. Louis museum, therefore we serve St. Louis artists and not those people living over there in Columbia, Missouri, or across the river in East St. Louis. No, they're not paying the taxes. But I thought this was a very narrow view.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you have any problem, once you made it a state wide and a little larger in terms of support of various kinds?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did they say, you know, now you're letting everybody into it, what are you doing?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, we had our problems all right, and there were several irksome ones. The most notorious had to do with a print that was submitted from an artist living in Indiana, well beyond the 50-mile limit of the borders of Missouri.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: But he wouldn't have been noticed at all had his work not offended the Catholics of St. Louis, of which there are a large number and of which a large number are the educated, intellectual people of the city, unlike the case of many American cities. This represented a rather unattractive fat woman, sitting on the edge of an iron bed with a crucifix around her neck, on a chain, and it was called the *Immaculate Conception*, for some wry reason. It was a satirical print which didn't offend me as a Protestant and a broad-minded person, but it certainly offended the local Catholics in the community and there were letters to the papers and telephone calls to the museum, and, and really it was quite serious. And the Catholic member of our board of trustees at the time, who was incidentally involved in making stained glass for Catholic churches, you know didn't want to be involved with this kind of slur on religion and he said he would simply have to resign if the work were not removed. But for the trustees to remove the work from the exhibition was another critical matter which they didn't wish to exercise.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So they gave it to you.

PERRY RATHBONE: So of course they always give it to the director to be solved. And then the other amusing thing was that one of the more prominent Jews in Missouri was also a member of our board of trustees and he thought that he didn't want to be trapped in this thing either. If the Catholic was going to resign, he felt that he'd have to resign too, in fear if he stayed, that that would be considered a condonement of this, you know? Oh, it was a fine—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —pyramid.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh my God. Well, finally, we did some research on the artist, whose name I regret to say I have since forgotten, but he was a sincere man it turned out and was, I think at one time, on the faculty of the University of Indiana. Anyway, it was from near Bloomington, Indiana that he lived and had sent this, and when we discovered that, we found that he—we could fault him on a technicality.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. He was beyond the range.

PERRY RATHBONE: He was beyond the range, and so we gathered in Mr. Schoenberg's office downtown. He was involved with stocks and had a number of telephones in his office. So the board of trustees sat at these various telephones while the president put in a telephone call to the artist and said we are up against a serious matter here, which indeed I think had been in the press and he was already aware of it, but was standing back. But he said it's a very great embarrassment to the museum and we don't want to offend any segment of this community and [inaudible] the museum, so on and so on. And we find, incidentally, that you have misrepresented your residence or something, you really don't qualify and if—on the strength of that, we don't want to remove your work. We are asking you voluntarily to do so, and we think that in fact that you are under



false pretenses.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You kind of just slip in there.

PERRY RATHBONE: It wouldn't be such a bad idea, or words to that effect. And I remember, with what relief we heard him say yes, he would give us permission. And there, the matter ended, but that was just one rather amusing incident.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It always intrigues me though, that even a minor work of art can inflict a lot of activity or a response.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. I remember another work, and this is interesting I think, that caused a great stir, because it was so uh, far out and unconventional and looked rather, well—how should I say it? Outrageous. It was like sort of—[inaudible]—bourgeois, on the part of Ernest Trova, who has since become very famous with his *Falling Man* and everything he's done with the *Falling Man* motif.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But he made very funny paintings in those days.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well this was, as I remember it, it was a kind of proto-Abstract Expressionist work, which was really a sort of mess of colors on a canvas, and nothing like that had ever been submitted before, and it was accepted by the jury, you see. The jury was very liberal. This caused quite a stir, but nobody dreamt at the time, that Ernest Trova would one day emerge as this well-known American artist.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's marvelous.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. The other irritating thing about those shows was the fact that artists were very disinclined to pick up their work when the show was over.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, it would stay there for months.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes. They were required, you see, to pick it up, that was part of the understanding, and they signed the agreement and so on. But they would disregard that, an artist will, you know—rather unconventional, and that's all right, but later on, a problem for us.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Storage.

PERRY RATHBONE: Storage. So finally, we said if, after a certain date, your work is not collected, there will be a charge of 50 cents a day, or something like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Like an overdue book.

PERRY RATHBONE: Like an overdue book at the library, exactly. And then we said after a certain number of days, the pieces will simply be taken away and we no longer hold ourselves responsible for them. And you know, it really worked very well, but still, some artists would leave it there for a month or so, and then come in and pay the fine. [They laugh.] Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, it's fascinating. Now you had also mentioned that one of the first things you did was to go out and visit collectors in the area.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was this done as a program? I mean people have often said to me, you were very ambitious about building up collections.

PERRY RATHBONE: Right. Yes, and it certainly paid off, Paul. You see, as I may have explained earlier, I landed in the home of a collector, just by good luck, in the home of Lionberger Davis, where I lived with his boys and Blodgett [ph] all that summer. I made a very good friend of him and in the long run, he gave to the museum all of his really marvelous collection of Chinese bronzes, a wonderful collection, yes. And also, quite a large number of Persian miniatures, which he—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, which he also collected. Yes. So that was sort of number one. And then the very first people I visited when I landed in St. Louis in 1940 with Curt Valentin, was Joe Pulitzer.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, had you met him before?

PERRY RATHBONE: I had met Joe yes; I had met him at Harvard, but very briefly. I met him only once, because he was two classes or three—I think three classes below me at Harvard, and I think I must have met him when he was a freshman and I was a senior.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh I see, so there was no real?

PERRY RATHBONE: No. He probably—well yes, he—his wife remembered me, from having gone to Philadelphia, to museum affairs, and being entertained at Henry McIlhenny's house, because she was a childhood friend of Henry McIlhenny. And so she remembered me very well, and of course Joe Pulitzer had already made the acquaintance of Curt Valentin.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: So we ride out, so we arrived at St. Louis and the first thing we do, we were invited to come out there for drinks or supper or something, and I saw his collection for the first time and, there again, I thought, well there's real potential here for the museum. Sooner or later, he will certainly want to do something nice for the museum, and so that was a very, very natural thing to do.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were there other collectors there who were collecting modern things?

PERRY RATHBONE: Very little.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Not very much.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well no. No, no, he was really the only one, Joe Pulitzer. But there were old, old collections like the Bixby's collection, had still existed to a degree and the Wallaces had inherited things from the Fausts, Old Masters and some Impressionists and so on. And so I became aware of those things and looked up the collectors and showed my interest, you know dropped meaningful hints. But so far as stimulating the collectors was concerned, this, I got more involved with that after the war, when I went back to St. Louis. And trying to interest my friends in buying works of art, and sometimes I succeeded and sometimes I didn't. I, myself, always loved to have works of art around me and bought what I could with my very small means, because I started in St. Louis at \$6,000, I made in total, with a promise of getting a raise to \$8,000 as director, within two years, which happened.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And then you went into the Navy.

PERRY RATHBONE: That wasn't much. Yeah. That wasn't very much money to spend but things didn't cost much either. But I persuaded, yes, I persuaded Martha Love, for example—who was the friend who introduced my wife and me, and later became a trustee of the museum—to buy works of art.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you meet your wife in St. Louis?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, although she was English, half English, but grew up in Europe. She had made a friend of Ms. Love in Europe skiing, I think in France, where my wife lived, and was visiting her in St. Louis when we met. It was very nice. It's surprising, having been born in Cairo, to have a lover in St. Louis. Memphis was not a far distance in both cases. [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Both locales. Well let me see, um, oh yes, sometimes—well, there was another remarkable collector there, a person, one of our trustees, L. Guy Blackmer was his name, who had the curious and unaesthetic calling of making sewer pipe, but who had an absolute passion for, for art, and especially Oriental art. He collected small bronzes, which now would be worth a king's ransom, but in those days, with his not modest means, he could buy and fill the cabinets of his house with beautiful bits of Tang this and Wei that, and Sung.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, marvelous, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, absolutely, yes. And so he was a great joy because he was so deeply interested, and intelligent about this whole thing. Then there's another important collector of Chinese ceramics in St. Louis, and the person was Samuel Davis. His brother, Dwight Davis, Davis Cup Davis, you know, who had gone to Harvard and somewhere picked up an interest in Oriental ceramics and built a beautiful collection, which came to the museum upon his death.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see. Why are so many Midwestern collectors interested in the Orient?

PERRY RATHBONE: I, I—that is a good question. I really don't know. I do know, however, that Mr. C.T. Loo was

one of the most influential dealers here in keeping alive the interest in Oriental art. He was—he came to St. Louis regularly and he was the principal source of the Davis Collection, and he was the principal source of the Lionberger Davis, no real relationship there, the Lionberger Collection of Bronzes. He was very instrumental in the Pillsbury Collection.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, in Minneapolis.

PERRY RATHBONE: In Minneapolis. And um, and so I think one has to credit enterprising dealers like Loo, who also had a very pleasing personality, people liked to see him coming.

PAUL CUMMINGS: A Minneapolis collector once told me, he said, "It's as easy for us to go to the Orient, because we own the Northern Pacific, as it is for us to buy a ticket, go to New York, and then get a ship."

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, that may have something to do with it, it's very possible. I know that Lionberger Davis had gone to the Orient as a young man, when he left Princeton. I remember him telling me that his grandmother, I think it was, sent him around the world and he had been enthralled with Japan and China. So that, I suppose, accounts for his interest.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because everybody, I know so many people in, you know, in St. Louis and Kansas City and Minneapolis, all of them—that whole—along the Mississippi there.

PERRY RATHBONE: It's quite true. That's quite true and even Cincinnati.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Chicago.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, in Chicago, absolutely true. I don't know what the connection is really.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Anyway very soon, 1942 comes along, or '41, '42, and you go in the Navy. How do you select the Navy or was that selected for you?

PERRY RATHBONE: I don't remember if it was selected for me or not. There wasn't any particular reason except I volunteered. I wasn't—and I volunteered as an officer and ah, when I found that—well, I suppose some of my friends were doing it, I mean we all—it wasn't long before we got a card, designated, our status was designated.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Do you remember? I only remember what the lowest status was, what was that the four, four-F or something.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, four-F, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. Then you were good for nothing. But I was—my priority was pretty high, and I do remember applying for the Navy in St. Louis and being held over because I was told I had a second-class occlusion. Do you know what I mean by that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, it meant that my upper teeth overshot my lower teeth by about an eighth of an inch or something like that, and this is not admissible at Annapolis. Those are the standards that were at first applied and I thought for a while, I was going to be excluded, they kept me dangling, but in the end, I guess they decided it didn't matter too much.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now what preparations did you make at the museum, because somebody had to—

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, that's very interesting.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —watch and take care of eventualities to be thought of.

PERRY RATHBONE: Of course. One of the most interesting people on the board of trustees when I went there, and there were nine, and one of the newest recruits was Charles Norgle, and Charles Norgle was a very lively personality and a very personable man, with a delightful conversational ability and a lively mind and a good sense of humor, and a great sophistication, and all those things that they cultivate, you know. And he was an architect, so of course he wanted to display his taste, and he also um, was one of those people who had sided with the director, my predecessor, against Louis LaBeaume, who it seemed, in the interim between Meyric Rogers' resignation and my appointment, had maneuvered to get himself made director of the St. Louis Museum. Yes. And this was a grand scandal, and the closer he got to satisfying his ambition, by one judicious move on the chessboard after another, the more aroused very courageous men like Charles Norgle, and William

K. Bixby—William H. Bixby, the son of the collector, who was also a trustee—and two or three others, became so aroused that they met and decided amongst themselves that if Louis LaBeaume made one more move in that direction, they would resign and make their reasons known to the press. So, you can see the sort of person he was and Bixby too, obviously sterling, the first great trustees, couldn't have been better.

And so Charles Norgle was—well, everybody knows that architecture was in a decline in the '30s, and with the advent of the Second World War, it went into a tailspin, and Charles Norgle was quite pleased to be able to close his office for the time being and separate from his partner, Frederick Dunn, and take over the reins of the museum. He had had experience with museum work at Yale, where he was involved with the Yale University Art Gallery for two or three years. And in fact, his wife whom he married about this time, was also on the staff at Yale. So I felt the museum was in very, very good hands, because he was, you know, a sterling character, totally reliable, and would run the museum as close to my own principles as possible in my absence, and he did, and I was gone for well, the better part of three years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Three years, yeah, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: And when I came back, he dutifully made way for me but decided to remain in the museum field, he liked it so much. Architecture wasn't picking up very fast and uh, so he sort of threw his hat into the ring, remained at the museum, an assistant to me for several months, and in time became director of the Brooklyn Museum. That's how that happened. Yeah. And moved off to Brooklyn, forsaking St. Louis, which he really hated to do, because he was very attached to that city. He liked his life, he liked the society, he liked his friends, he liked the museum, he liked me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was a nice world.

PERRY RATHBONE: It was a nice world, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what did you do in the Navy, what kind of, you know?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, well that's interesting. I first went to Harvard, went right back to Harvard. I was given an officer's sword by my staff as a parting gift, with a lovely ceremony, of which Guy Blackmer, whom I mentioned earlier, presented it to me with some speech and versification and whatnot, and I drove off. I asked Curt Valentin to come out to St. Louis and drive east with me. He couldn't go to Europe any more, you see.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And as I say, he had come out several times at my behest, had even made some friends there and Ms. Lauden [ph] before she came to know Joe Pulitzer better. So he was very happy with the idea to be out there for any reason, and making a little holiday by driving east with me in my, by then, new car, which has since become an antique Ford Phaeton, and we drove east through Kentucky and Tennessee and the mountains in North Carolina, and stopped and we saw—we were seeing, you know interesting places and interesting to him as a foreigner, and to me too. And then um, let me see, then I guess I stopped at my mother's home, she was then living in—she lived in our summer home in Greene, New York, stopped there and then went on to Harvard and trained as an officer, where I spent two months. October, no September and October, three months. August, September and October, yes, living in the old Harvard Yard and then all those familiar places and well, no use to go into Navy training but I must say, it put me into better physical shape than I have ever been, no question about that. You know, you got up at six o'clock in the morning, to the sound of some awful call or other, and then you ran around Harvard Yard, all the way around a few times, and then did sitting up exercises there in the elm trees, to the sound of amplified music, until the great chime of Memorial Hall would ring the hour—I guess it was seven or something, and by that time, you were to dress and march to the Harvard Union for breakfast, and then we went to classes all morning, marched and took classes, in platoons of 15 or 20, whatever it was, marched everywhere and took up all these boring studies. Oh my God, they were something.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did it look? I mean this is a totally new experience of a place you knew so well.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, it was a totally changed world. It was a totally changed world and I just remember—and I have some snapshots that were made by one of my mates of the class, in session, and most everybody was either asleep or half asleep, leaning tediously on their hands. Oh, it's a marvelous document. Actually, that's the way I felt all the time and I really almost—well, I embraced the march in the afternoon, because at least you were doing something that kept you awake. We would march to Soldiers Field, across the Charles River and on to the great stadium, and march up and down all afternoon, doing, you know, to the rear, to the rear, place march, and all that kind of thing, until we kind of perfect ourselves and compete with the Navy platoons and all that kind of thing. And by the end of the day you were so exhausted with what you had to do, you'd hit the books for a while after dinner and then go to bed, and it all started again at six.

Well I remember regularly eating two lunches. Every day I had two plates of whatever was there, all the time. I

had such an appetite. Then the blessed Friday afternoon would come, I guess, or was it Saturday? And I had known Philip Johnson slightly at this time. I'd met him here in New York, maybe through Curt Valentin, at the Museum of Modern Art or something. And he was studying architecture at Harvard at that time, at the Harvard Architecture School, and he had built himself a house characteristically, on Ash Street, the most modern domicile in Cambridge.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Isn't that the one with the wall or something?

PERRY RATHBONE: The one with the wall, which is just as high as the roof, and has a closed courtyard, which was on this wall along the sidewalk. Well that was like stepping into a paradise. I would dash over there as soon as I was released, because we were kept within bounds all the time. But at a certain hour, probably six o'clock on Friday or Saturday, we were released for 24 hours. It must have been Friday, I mean Saturday night probably. For 24 hours, we were at liberty. I would make a beeline for Philip Johnson's house and there would be a lot of his fellow students, a few old friends from Cambridge days, having cocktails, it was simply marvelous. He was a wonderful host.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. He was so full of sympathy and witticisms. It was simply delightful.

PAUL CUMMINGS: To carry on, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. Oh yes, that was okay. Well, this went on for two or three, three months, and then my orders came, that directed me to Washington to join the public relations staff there, and specifically the Combat Artists Program, because early in the game, the Navy and the Army both adopted a scheme whereby the war would be documented by American artists. And um, the material that they turned in, that came back from the front, had to be taken care of and made use of, for whatever purpose.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who was involved with that in Washington when you got there?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, a man by the name of Parsons, who used to be director of the Corcoran? No, he wasn't the director was he? He was assistant to Powell Minnigerode at the Corcoran Gallery, Parsons was his name, and he was sort of a low-pressure fellow, and he was close at hand when this started, and of course was selected to do that. And another officer who had been on the staff of *National Geographic*, by the name of Long, was our chief, but I was associated with Parsons, and also with an artist called Jon Whitcomb, who was a magazine cover artist. You know his name.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I've heard it, yeah, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Um, and the artists in the Combat Corps would come and go, and amongst them were Dwight Shepler, the late Dwight Shepler, who was an accomplished watercolor painter and did mainly sporting subjects like skiing and fishing and that kind of thing, and William Draper, the portrait painter, Albert Murray, the portrait painter, Mitchell Jamieson, who was a very accomplished watercolor artist, I think a resident in Washington. Oh let's see, there were several others whom I knew less well. Well, never mind.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now what actually did you do? Things would come in the mail?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. They'd come back and they would have to be, they would have to be matted and they would have to be catalogued and they would have to be—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, curated.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, curated, they have to be housed and stored. And we also had to select those that we thought were the most effective for propaganda purposes or for illustrating stories about the war. Yes, that was it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think that was an interesting idea to have you know, war correspondent artists like that, making drawings and things?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, oh yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Would you think those documents would be interesting today?

PERRY RATHBONE: Sure. And they will become more interesting as time goes by, and they were, they were of everything. There were combat artists in North Africa.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: That invasion took place when I was in Washington, and we were all sworn to total secrecy about that. It was very exciting to be involved, knowing what was going to happen before it happened you know, for the first time, and there were combat artists there who made some very fascinating drawings of that operation.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How much time were you in Washington?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I was there only, I think it was only six months, before I got orders to report to the South Pacific. But I didn't know where I was going, I only knew that that was my destination. It was all in code and we weren't supposed to tell anybody where we were going. I did have to report to San Francisco and then to a place called Hueneme, which is down south of San Francisco, which was a loading port. I enjoyed San Francisco very much. I was there a week or so and my fiancée came out from Washington and we had a grand time together. We went to the theater, visited her cousins in Montecito, and oh it was glorious, and then everybody looks at you because of your uniforms. They doll you up plenty, and that was sort of fun, that sensation of being—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Grandeur.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, of grandeur, of being looked at and all that. But, but the boring thing was at hand, when I boarded that ship finally, after seeing Gertrude Lawrence in a lovely thing called oh, not "lost lady," or something like that. It had to do with psychoanalysts, psychoanalysis. Anyway, it was a great thing, to do that right before I sailed. *Lady in the Dark*.

PAUL CUMMINGS: *Lady in the Dark*, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And this, this vessel came up from Hueneme and landed at San Francisco, and there we boarded and set off for the South Pacific, in a new cargo vessel called the *Cape Perpetua*. We were ten officers I think, as passengers, and what the cargo was, I have no idea, I never did find that out. I think that was all top secret. And we set out across the Pacific and when we got down there near the islands, which were where the waters were beginning to be infested with Japanese submarines, we zigzagged all the way to New Caledonia, to Nouméa. And at one point, we were being so steadfastly chased by a Japanese submarine, which was reported apparently from a reconnaissance plane, to our radio operator, that we put in at Suva, in the Fiji Islands, until we could shake that jap. And there we spent two, two or three days in this fabulous island, once you know, a cannibal island, there we were, I was thrilled. It was absolutely, [they laugh] it was just like Somerset Maugham everywhere, yes, it was. I've always been very curious about the world, so I was quite satisfied to have had that experience, in spite of the endless discomfort of that voyage and the society of my fellow officers was enough to kill me, it really was something terrible.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why, in what way?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, one of them was a very belligerent, aggressive, easily sensitive and touchy chap from Texas, and once, he really wanted to—he really wanted to beat me up, and you know it's pretty serious for officers to fight with one another.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: It's a serious offense. But he—I said something that he took great offense to, I forget, that was a real crisis. Releford [ph] was his name. But anyway, he cooled off and we were on the surface, friendly enough. I used to try to learn to play chess from Sparks, the radio operator, but I never got very far with that. I read *Eugenie Grandet* and improved my French on the way, but there was time for anything and everything.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That must have taken weeks, didn't it?

PERRY RATHBONE: I think it took 30 days, imagine. We finally arrived, after these two or three magic days in Suva, where we mingled with the natives and went to call on a native chief, and went into his hut and met all his family, had our photographs made, and so on. Oh, it was absolutely wonderful, I was thrilled. We pushed on to New Caledonia and got there in April, as I remember, of 1943, and there I stayed for—got there, stood there all together for nearly two years. Eighteen months was the normal tour of duty, but I stayed there longer than that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did you do once you were there?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well that's a good question. I had curious assignments. They didn't know quite what to do with me, with my background, and the Monuments and Fine Arts Corps had not yet been organized. I went to work as a—I was in press relations, public relations, because that was the slot for the combat artists, and I was assigned to censor, censorship duty, censoring the war correspondent stories that were flowing down to Halsey's headquarters in New Caledonia, from Guadalcanal and from Efate and from, from all those islands, Truk and

everywhere else, where those terrific battles were going on, in the Battle of Coral Sea and [inaudible]. And it was really just like *South Pacific*, just like the book, it really was. And there I would sit all day, with a razor blade in one hand, reading these tissue papers, on which the correspondent stories were typed, and cutting out, you know, whole sentences where battleships had been designated or there were—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Did you have a guidebook or something, of things to?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, we were given a briefing on what was to be eliminated and what could be let—what could go through and it was rather interesting, because you read the news before anybody else did. Yes, that was interesting, but it got to be tedious, making these pianola rolls from the correspondents' scripts. But I also came to know a number of the correspondents that way, and they were interesting, they were very interesting people. They had broad experience elsewhere. They'd been to dangerous locales; they'd done all kinds of things.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Would they submit things to you and then you gave them back, or they would send it to you?

PERRY RATHBONE: No, we didn't give them back.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You then sent them on.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. They didn't know what we were cutting out of them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

PERRY RATHBONE: They were told what not to refer to but you know, like any good reporter, they'd try to get away with it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Put it all in.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes. But then, they were all living in a place called Quonset Village, because the officers' shelters were Quonset huts, and that was a very nice place with some very nice men there, I must say, from everywhere. I enjoyed their society a lot. When you could pick and choose, you found some very nice friends and actually, I'm still in touch with some of them 40 years later.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. I got a letter the other day, from a friend in San Francisco, who was in communications there but happened to be a very good artist himself, a very good watercolorist. He's on the *Chronicle* of San Francisco. Yes, whenever I'm in California, I always look him up.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, fascinating.

PERRY RATHBONE: It's amazing. And a few others too, that we kept up with. But um, I lived in a place called the Receiving Station, which wasn't select at all like Quonset Village. That came along later and was much, much bigger, and I didn't, I must say I didn't—I'm a very tolerant person, but I didn't really like any of my hut mates very much, there were eight of us. None of them were really—not offending, but I didn't enjoy their company too much, but I found good friends elsewhere. And then William Draper came along for the South Pacific, and that was great fun, because he's a very entertaining man and very much a naturalist. He loved plants and animals and everything, and he was determined to gather orchids from the jungles of bougainvillea, between canvases you might say. You would see him climbing up trees, risking his life to pluck this rare bloom.

PAUL CUMMINGS: While there's war going on there, he's chasing flowers.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, chasing flowers, exactly. And so he brought these things back to behind the lines in New Caledonia and there he had to tarry for a few days and I won't forget, that he entrusted them to a man who was the receptionist at the Receiving Station, he thought he could trust him. And this fellow was very much given to decorating whatever place he occupied and didn't like these rather ugly tubers just sitting around, so he took it upon himself to have one of the men paint a lot of tin cans all the same color, kind of oranges, I don't know, and planted all these things in, in dirt, which is the last thing you do with an orchid tuber, and Bill Draper, when he found out, was fit to be tied. You know, having risked his life in the Solomon Islands, to recover these rare—they were almost smothered to death in soil. Well, he managed to rescue them and actually carried them back to this country.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And potted them?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, and kept them alive.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: It was fantastic. Well things like that, of course kept one amused.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you were in that one place then, for all that time.

PERRY RATHBONE: All that time. And Halsey had introduced something very interesting. First of all, he permitted us to take off our neckties, you know, the uniform, the summer uniform, undress uniform, was khaki with a black necktie. And he said when he went there he said, gentlemen take off your ties and they did. But we didn't roll up our sleeves, that was different. We wore long sleeves. The Aussies who came from Australia rolled their sleeves up in a tight little [inaudible]. Oh, it looked like hell, I thought, but anyway, we wore no ties and we worked every single day. That was Halsey's scheme, you worked every day, Sunday was just like Tuesday, but you had two hours off for lunch every day and that was a most lovely regime, because we went swimming every single noontime. After lunch or before lunch, we'd go down to this lovely crescent beach at the end of the Receiving Station, called Anse Vata, and lie in the sun and swim in that delicious water, you know like liquid air, it was incredible.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He sounds like a good manager. He made you work but gave you some goodies on the side.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, he really was, and he was immensely liked. He was, I think the most popular admiral, certainly in my part of the woods, and he was also very fond of entertaining. Not that I got in on much of that, but certainly the flag officers did and some of the correspondents, and I used to hear about it. We were also blessed with having this one contingent of girls from Australia and New Zealand, the so-called kiwis of New Zealand, and the girls from Australia, who assisted in secretarial work and so on. And there were always the Red Cross nurses, Army nurses, Navy nurses, but those girls from down under were especially attractive and we used to have a lot of fun there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, because we'd have dances at the Receiving Station, at Quonset Village, and invite the girls, you know like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Fun and games.

PERRY RATHBONE: Fun and games. Sometimes we'd go dancing. I myself made it a point to meet as many of the French as I could there, because I wanted to take advantage of being in a French colony and not just sit around and uh—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, and gripe about being away from home, it just didn't seem to make any sense to me. And so I took the French newspaper and read it every day and made friends with French families wherever I could.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How, how easy was that, given the situation?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, you know, well, through friends at the Receiving Station, at the Quonset Village, I met the French naval attaché, Jacques—[inaudible], who was another one of those gentlemen I see occasionally. He lives in New York now and I saw him just the other day.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh did you?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. He introduced us to a very nice painting that Christie's sold. He's a retired stockbroker now, living here in New York, and—[inaudible]—because of his elevated position, knew the governor, Talek [ph] was his name, he came out there during the war, bringing his daughter with him and his wife, and he had a sort of coming out party for his daughter in the governor's mansion, to which I was invited and a dance. It was all very attractive, very charming really, and through him, I met other French people; the consul. And I remember well, going to the consulate for dinner a number of times and there they had the happy custom of applauding the cook if the meal was good.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, marvelous.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. So the cooks in New Caledonia invariably were Tonkinese and they would be ushered into the dining room or beckoned or summoned into the dining room, and then somebody would come and you would clap like that. [Claps.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, marvelous.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, and then he'd smile and bow, and smile and bow. It was very great.



PAUL CUMMINGS: The next time one goes to the Four Seasons or something.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, just try that. Yes, ask for the cook to come in from the kitchen. [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Wouldn't that be marvelous?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, that would be great, it would be sensational. But I liked all those native touches, you see, it gave me a big kick.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Seems you really got involved with the country, other than just office and military ritual.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes. Oh yes, and then I met a Frenchman, a French count, who had been involved with the nickel mines in New Caledonia and employed by the Japanese. You see, there are rather large deposits of nickel there and the Japanese had exploited those, but when the war came, this poor fellow was sent off to Australia and put behind a, you know, high fence for six months or eight months or something. Finally he was released and came back to New Caledonia, and he just lived there idly, in the hotel, the Sebastopol, which was as I say, pure Somerset Maugham. And I met him somehow or other and asked him if I could come and have French conversation with him, and he was delighted—I paid him. I went to him a couple times a week, spent an hour speaking French with him, which I thought was better than just wasting my time. And I saw him a few times in France since the war.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What does he—what happened to him?

PERRY RATHBONE: He was—well, he went back, he was employed in some mining operation in France. He was a graduate of the École [inaudible]. But it was interesting, what people you would bump into there. There was a place called the Cirque Civil [ph], which was the social club of Nouméa, which was taken over pretty much by the American forces, where you could go and have dinner. They served dinner every evening, and I think it was a dollar and a quarter for a steak dinner, because when—although our food did improve and the Navy mess did improve, it was simply an unbelievable deal. It was nice to change the pace by going to Cirque Civil. There was a great deal of beef in New Caledonia because it was not profitable to ship it overseas, and so it was abundant and cheap. Sometimes, some of the more imaginative officers would go off to the country, to a farm, where meals would be served by prearrangement. I did that many times. It was a great fun, to drive off maybe 20 miles, to this farm or that farm, and have a really delightful time, always served by Japanese women. The maids and waitresses and their nursemaids in that part of the world were always Japanese, and they made wonderful, wonderful servers, and the food was very good. It was kind of a cuisine, Provençal, you know? And one of the features were the curious oysters that grow in that part of the world. They look like big, mossy stones that come up off the bottom of the sea. They don't look at all like shells but sure enough, you can, you know by enough maneuvering, can get them open, and inside is a very coppery oyster.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Are they large?

PERRY RATHBONE: Varying in size, but they would come out to the table and there would be this great heap of what looked like rocks, in the middle of the table. Yeah, yeah, those were a great feature.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Fascinating.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. The rest of the food we had, had a real French bias, so it was greatly appreciated.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what—were you there until the end of the war or did you come back?

PERRY RATHBONE: No. No, no. I was there until the—until December of '44. I finally got my orders, but I had to report to what was called CICPAC, the Commander in Chief, Pacific Ocean, in Pearl Harbor, and there I stayed until February, for reasons I never found. I don't know what they expected to do with me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You were just there.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, and I was longing to get home and get married, that was—my poor wife was going crazy, because she couldn't set the wedding day, because I couldn't tell her when I was coming. But I finally got orders and it must have been in January, and got home as fast as I could. And I flew from there, from Pearl Harbor, in the Mars, maybe an aircraft you never heard of.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: You do remember?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I've heard of those, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well the Mars was one of a kind, it's the only one that was ever built and it was called X-something, because it was still experimental.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: The size of that thing, I'll never forget, because I'd flown from New Caledonia to Pearl Harbor in a PB2Y-3, which was a pretty big seaplane as you know, but one of those can nestle right out on the wing I think, of the Mars. It was so big it had two decks, the second deck being reserved for sleeping bunks. And when we took off in that craft, it took 11 hours to fly from Honolulu to San Francisco. We hadn't been gone more than an hour or two when they discovered two stowaways in the wing. The wing of the plane, it was so big, there was that much clearance, and these chaps who wanted to go stateside, as the expression is, had concealed themselves in one of those wings and on a routine check, I suppose, they were found.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's incredible.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well I was made very conscious of it, because the captain had ordered that they be seated in the passenger cabin, where they could be watched, and I happened, with my companion on the voyage, was sitting in the first two seats, and that's where they were placed, and I and my companion had to go up to the second deck, to the bunks, and spend the rest of the voyage lying on the bunks instead of sitting down. [They laugh.] Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: It's fantastic.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But that carried hundreds of people didn't it?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes it did, oh yes. I forget the number. Oh yes, it did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was an astounding ship, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: But apparently it wasn't profitable or something. But I didn't tell you what I did after the—I got through with my assignment as a paper cutter. I was then—then you see, the correspondents moved on, they moved up north, as the—after the Solomons fell and [inaudible]. So they moved on and the press officers moved. Then I was made priority officer, Naval Air Priority Officer, of the South Pacific, NAPO, my title was NAPO of SOPAC, and that, that entitled me to a jeep and that was an immense step upwards in the hierarchy of the Navy and I became very popular, because everybody had to go through me in order to get home with a certain amount of luggage, and I was very much courted and pursued, and I liked that very much. It was fun being so popular. And you know, I could tell how many Red Cross girls could go or how many [inaudible]—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic.

[END OF TRACK.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: This is side six.

PERRY RATHBONE: My art involvement, it goes back to Draper, because fortunately, he ran out of paints at this point, and the only place to supply him with paints was Australia. And I had not had any so-called rest and recreation since I had been there, so I was given 10 days in Australia, and Draper and I flew down there together to, first to Brisbane, which was a miserable experience, but finally, we took the train and got to Sydney, and that was an absolutely joy. Taking the train was an experience because they don't have any dining cars or didn't in those days, and at one point the train just stopped and all of a sudden we realized that everybody wasn't on the train. We asked and we didn't know we were stopping for lunch, and sure enough there we were, at a station with everybody feeding at the counter.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. Where they all just, you know. Anyhow, we were wildly entertained in Sydney, because it was the most hospitable place, and being two young men, two Americans who still were very much in demand in Sydney, we went to one party after the other. Each party would produce another half a dozen invitations and we never had a quiet moment. But we did take some time to go to the museum and I looked up a very attractive Australian family, to whom I was introduced by a fellow officer, and went out to the country to visit them, and that was all really, really great. And then, but the funny thing was, we stopped at the Hotel Australia, which I learned the other day had been pulled down, to my sorrow. It was sort of like the plaza of Sydney, old and established and very grand and just the kind of place you like to, you like to stop, you know not like a Jolly or a Holiday Inn or one of those horrors, it was really great. It was very amusing too, because the main lobby was also known as the snake pit, where all of the girls in town were, so a snake pit.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where all the action was.

PERRY RATHBONE: The action, yes. And this hotel, I was told that Robert Louis Stevenson, when he was in the South Pacific, had to stop to book a room, but had come into his hotel in his shirtsleeves and was told, we're very, very sorry, but they didn't accept any guests in their shirtsleeves, and he was turned away. Well, you can hardly believe it. Now the poor thing has been torn down, but we stayed there and, and what happened was we had such a good time, that three times, we missed our plane back to New Caledonia.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, dear.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well that was a fine thing for a naval air priorities officer to be doing; you know I was spending my time in New Caledonia scolding all sorts of people for not showing up.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Here you were, showing them how to do it.

PERRY RATHBONE: Now I was showing them how to do it. Well, it was just a question of staying up too late and oversleeping. So, it happened that we happened to return to New Caledonia, not by Navy but by an Army plane, by an ATC it was called, Army Transport Command. So, when I sought to book ourselves the fourth time, I was summoned to major somebody's office, whose office was in that hotel. He asked me to come upstairs and I was shaking I thought, what the hell is going to happen to me now. And he said, "Rathbone, this is pretty serious, it's pretty serious and of course, I could throw the book at you but I'm not going to do that." Then he said, "I'm going to see that you get on that plane tomorrow. You see that box over there," and he pointed to a box like that, reminded me of a suit box. He said, "In that box is \$23,000 in cash, cash, legal tender, American cash, and you're going to carry that back to New Caledonia, yes, to the Army command there, and get a receipt for it when you take the plane tomorrow, you see? You just call for that box when you leave the hotel," and I did and I caught the plane, and delivered the \$23,000. I'll never forget it either. [They laugh.] Well, Draper had bought his paints of course and came back to New Caledonia, and then he went back into the fray out there. He had some very thrilling experiences. He'd be an interesting man to talk to. He did indeed. I never saw any action. Occasionally, a scouting plane, the scout plane would come over and everybody would get excited.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, after you left the Hawaiian Islands and came back to California, in '45, where did you go, to San Francisco?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, I went to San Francisco, yes, I went to—incidentally, I didn't do anything in Hawaii the time I was there, those weeks, nothing at all, nothing was assigned to me to do. So of course I traveled everywhere I could, and I went to Hawaii, to the great island of Hawaii, I climbed up to the volcano. I went to the Bishop Museum over and over again. I got to know the Honolulu Academy of Art by heart. I made friends and looked up connections, I wrote letters to my fiancée. We did our best to celebrate Christmas without a Christmas tree and that sort of thing. But I went swimming almost every day, at the Officers Club on the other side of the—was it called the Pali, isn't it? There's a pass in the mountains there, on the island of Oahu, which is called the Pali, I think, and on the other side was the most beautiful Officers Club and a great beach, where I would go and read on the beach and enjoy a very nice lunch, and then come back in some Navy vehicle. It was very leisurely, nice existence, it really was, but I was longing to get home and get married, and that finally, finally happened.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So where did you get married then?

PERRY RATHBONE: In Washington, where my fiancée lived. But coming back across that country in February, across this country in February, was an incredible experience. I was warned how cold it would be, because the plane would be unheated, an unheated DC-6, I think it was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: An icebox.

PERRY RATHBONE: An icebox. And I was told to go to the Navy Air Station in San Francisco and pick up a sleeping bag, a fur-lined or feather bed lined, feather-lined, I guess fur-lined sleeping bag, which I did, and I never appreciated anything more, because we took hours and we came down somewhere, as I remember, in Kansas, and somewhere else in Texas, and then finally got to Washington, and I had this sleeping bag and finally, we were maybe 15 hours or more. I would be able to climb into that thing, lie down on the deck where admirals and captains and others are sitting there huddled in their great coats, trying to keep warm, sitting on, I guess the bulkhead. Yeah, that was some experience. But anyhow, then I got married on the 10th of February, 1945, and finally found a place to live in Washington, after we took a little honeymoon to St. Louis. We needed to go back to St. Louis on our wedding trip. Well, anyway, we wanted to go to Jamaica, but we found the only way we could go to Jamaica and it would be possible to go there, but you had to go to Miami in order to take a ship or a plane, and the only way to get to Miami was to stand all the way from Washington.

PAUL CUMMINGS: On a train.

PERRY RATHBONE: With no seat and no sleeping accommodations, nothing, and we decided not to do that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's too much, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Too much. So we went to St. Louis.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Nobody's going to St. Louis. [Laughs.]

PERRY RATHBONE: Nobody was going to St. Louis. And there had a good—we had a lovely time, as you can imagine, with all our friends.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, how long before you got out of the Navy then afterwards?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, then a very curious thing happened. When we found the house in Georgetown, a very nice little house, just exactly right for newlyweds, we hadn't—we'd scarcely signed the lease when I got orders to report in Europe, with the fairly newly established Monuments and Fine Arts Corps. Well incidentally, when that was invented, when that was established, and I was in New Caledonia, I went once, to Halsey's office, and talked to his flag lieutenant and tried to get myself transferred to Europe, where I would be—I could do something that everybody couldn't do. But no, not at all, in those days you had to work out your 18 months, not less, then you could be transferred. And so, they did have my application in Washington and to be sure, as soon as I got there, they said, "Will you transfer?" I said, "Now?" I said, "I've been out of this country for nearly two years, I've just gotten married, I've just signed the lease on my house in Georgetown, I'm not in any mood to go to Europe right now; not until I've had a little, a little duty in this country." They said, "Well that's understandable, that's fine, we'll send you in the autumn, spend the summer here," all right, I'll settle for that. Well, you know what happened. That was '45 and it wasn't long before we had VE Day. I think VE Day came in May, and VJ Day came in August, and I was here in New York, on duty in New York for two months, over there at the Marine Terminal.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, in Brooklyn.

PERRY RATHBONE: You know the Marine Terminal in La Guardia.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, La Guardia, yeah, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, that was my office there, and I read the [inaudible] reports of the day and was terribly bored, terribly bored. That, that's how I finished my Navy career, and then I went back to Washington, you know, by December I was mustered out as a lieutenant commander. So, that doesn't have much to do with art but it has a lot to do with life.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. So that was the end of the year. Did you go back to St. Louis right away or did you do?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, we went back right away. What we did—no, we did, we went back by way of Cambridge and Boston. Isn't that an odd thing to do? Well, no I'll tell you what happened, yes. My car you see, most everybody sold their car when they went into the Navy or the Army, but I didn't. I was so attached to my car, which one could no longer buy, it was about the end of the Ford tradition of an open Phaeton, touring car, and I bought my car in 1936 in Detroit and in 1942, I drove it up to Binghamton, which is where my brother was living at the time, there in Greene, New York, found a garage, an empty private garage, and had it—and rented that garage during the war, had the car put up on blocks. So when the war was over, I had a car and that was a blessing. I had to go up there to retrieve it. No, I guess I rode it—I had it in Washington, I rode it down to Washington, that's right. Anyhow, when we decided to go back to St. Louis, we gave up our house and the Marines helped the Navy move our goods and chattels. I uh, my wife and I decided to drive. We drove all the way through Pennsylvania, through New York and through Cambridge, and visited old friends, and I introduced my wife to old Harvard friends and faculty who were still great friends and so on, and then drove across the country in that open Ford. We stopped in Buffalo, to see other things there, maybe it was Andrew Ritchie [ph], I think we did, he was a director there, and got to St. Louis that way. Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So what, by the end of the year then, you were—?

PERRY RATHBONE: By the end of the year, yes that was in November, we did that, we got to St. Louis in December and my first child was born in January. So it wasn't just the way to treat a pregnant wife.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Bottling around the country. [They laugh.]

PERRY RATHBONE: No, I think we sprung a leak in the roof on the way, because the canvas had given out, [cross talk].

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: It was the front seat so she was quite exposed. Anyhow, that's what happened to us, and there was no place to live in St. Louis either, and so we—our friends, the Pulitzers, well, Joe Pulitzer's father, who had a large place on the country club grounds that had an old laundry building and kind of servants' quarters on the premises, was turned over to us to live in until we could find a place, and that's where we were living when my son was born. We lived there until, I think, until June or something, and finally bought a house and did things to it, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was it like to go back to the museum after having been away for all this time?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I was very much liked by my staff and they were just absolutely delighted to see me back. They gave me a very, very warm welcome and—let's see, what was it like? I don't know, it seems to me, I managed to pick up the reins quite easily. I don't recall any serious problems.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And did you find that the war had changed things a great deal, were people's attitudes different?

PERRY RATHBONE: No, I can't say that they were really. No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was over with and they wanted to go back to the way it was.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, oh yes, as quickly as possible and forget the terrible—you know the anxiety that one forgets, but I remember being very conscious of the terrible anxiety, the terrible weight on one's heart about what was going on in that war, and the awful destruction, if your concerns were like mine, for the beauty of the cities of Europe and Asia, and then to wake up one morning and find another thing has gone, and you think of the terrible tragedy of Dresden, for example, one of the most beautiful cities in Europe, being perfectly, absolutely leveled. We'd already lived through the horror of the Baedeker raids on Britain, you know, and then to think of the carnage and suffering and everything, it's—it was an awful atmosphere in which you tried to forget but you never could. When it was all over, there was a great lift in one's spirits, yeah, I remember that. Oh, I think they began to pay me more money, which was nice too.

[END OF TRACK.]

### **October 22, 1975**

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's side eight, the 22nd of October, 1975. Paul Cummings, talking to Perry Rathbone. I think one of the things that was interesting to talk about after the war and going back to St. Louis again, is to talk somewhat about the collectors, because this is a time you really did start to work with them. You, I think had mentioned Pulitzer and Davis and a few others before, and I was just wondering how things developed after the war and when you knew you would be there, uninterruptedly for a while.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, exactly. [Inaudible.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But he maintained an interest didn't he?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, oh yeah. Oh sure.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Active. He was really the modern collector there wasn't he?

PERRY RATHBONE: He was the modern collector, that's perfectly true. He was really quite alone.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Were you able to get some others going?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes. I wanted to mention another influential person, who was Vladimir Golschmann, the conductor of the symphony, who was a Frenchman and had picked up a taste for contemporary French art in Paris and he exerted an influence too, because he had a number of cronies who liked to play poker with him and he would take the occasion to stimulate their interest in modern art, over the poker table. And so he was—sometimes he would even persuade them to buy something, either from him or something he himself had seen in Paris, and he very wisely began early to buy Picasso prints, where he couldn't afford the pictures that Joe Pulitzer was buying. And some of his richer cronies, he certainly could afford the prints and made a beautiful collection of those, and he also had a couple of small Picassos and a Braque or two.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He owned some quite nice paintings.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, he did. There was—I spoke about May I think earlier, didn't I?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, just briefly.

PERRY RATHBONE: Morton May. Morton May was interested in, when I went to St. Louis, and Rouault, he had a large Rouault, and he had an early Léger, and I can't remember just exactly who else. But it was through me that he met Beckmann, Max Beckmann, and he made a tremendous collection of Beckmann's paintings.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now how did Beckmann come into your life?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because that's a long, involved—

PERRY RATHBONE: That's a long story too, yes it is. Well, that's not so hard to make clear to you. He came into my life because, first of all, I was very conscious of his art and had always admired it through Valentiner's introduction way back in those Detroit days, because at that time, one couldn't learn anything about German Expressionist art, except in Detroit, Michigan. And so when I came to know, through Valentiner, as I think I explained, Curt Valentin, it wasn't long before Valentin was in touch with Beckmann. He didn't know him before, because he had left Berlin in 1937, about the time that Valentin is becoming really active in the Berlin art world. Well, he'd been active maybe four or five years. At any rate, it wasn't until he wrote to Beckmann in Amsterdam, just after the war, and organized an exhibition of Beckmann's paintings, which was made up largely of pictures of the Amsterdam period, that is from 1938 to 1945. And ah, I think it was in that exhibition that the great triptych in the Museum of Modern Art was first shown, not—because it dated from those very—really from the last years in, the months in Berlin, and then Beckmann had the picture sent to Amsterdam as I remember it, and it was sent to this country. That picture, Joseph Pulitzer very wanted to buy for his collection, but his wife objected to the bloody aspects of it. There were some rather savage details in that picture that she found unacceptable and so Joe didn't press the matter, but I do remember vividly, that he could have bought it for \$2,500.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The three panels?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, the three panels, and I believe the Museum of Modern Art paid not any more for it. And in a way, it was better for Beckmann's reputation that it went to the Museum of Modern Art, because it's had tremendous exposure.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes.

PERRY RATHBONE: I'm sure it's almost never done. Anyway, it was in this way that I became more involved with Beckmann's art and more desirous of owning a Beckmann, and to be sure I did buy one from that first exhibition that Valentin held; a beautiful still life of 1944, made in Amsterdam. Well, I of course followed the activities at the art school in St. Louis quite closely, was often involved with their activities, and Philip Guston became a friend of mine at this time because he was the artist in residence. The time came for him to leave, and they were looking for someone else and I proposed Max Beckmann come there, and Curt Valentin said he had learned that Beckmann was eager to leave Amsterdam. It wasn't an environment entirely conducive to his creative activity and he was eager to get out of Europe and he was thrilled at the prospect of America, which he'd never seen but was stimulated by. And so, it was through me that he knew about this opening in St. Louis and my urging that they take him on, that he came, so that was a great event. Meantime, before he did arrive, I, in the summer of 1947, went to Europe with my wife for the first time since the war, and went to Amsterdam and there met Beckmann, and Valentin was there at the same time and I remember celebrating my birthday on the 3rd of July in Amsterdam, with Max and Quappi Beckmann, Curt Valentin and Rosamond Riley—now Rosamond Russell, but in the meantime she was Rosamond Bernier—Stephen Spender. A memorable occasion and at the same time, I began to look at the Beckmanns in his studio, because I felt that once—as soon as he came to St. Louis, he should be welcomed or celebrated, with an exhibition of his work, a full-length exhibition as comprehensive as we could make it. So here was an opportunity to make the first selections, which I did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And of course, Max was very excited at the whole prospect of a show in St. Louis. And to be sure, the following spring, after his arrival, in the autumn of '47, or August, September, something like that, we staged this great Beckmann show, and from it the museum bought a major painting and the—and Washington University, which had its own funds for works of art bought a painting, and several other lesser works were sold, as I remember it, but it immensely stimulated the interest of Morton May in Beckmann and his art and also in him as a person. And May was also a painter of sorts, he was an amateur painter.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I didn't know that.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And you could quite easily see the influence of Beckmann upon his art in the years following. Well, that was the beginning of May's interest, and it lasts until this day, and he has amassed something like 60, 60 to 70 Beckmann oils and a few drawings. He's never shown very much interest in

drawings, but he was thrilled with Beckmann's art and he's been very steadfast in his admiration and I would say, sort of, intuitive understanding of Beckmann's meaning.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'm always curious when a collector gets to deeply involved with one artist like that. How does it happen or is it not visible?

PERRY RATHBONE: It's hard to say, it's very hard to say, but sometimes, I think it become almost—well, it becomes a programmatic thing, especially if an artist isn't immediately taken up by lots of others. Then, the patron, in this case May, feels not exactly responsibility for this artist, but he feels that he must prove, over and over again, how great he is, by one more acquisition after another. And he always showed Beckmann's pictures with a great deal of enthusiasm and occasionally would give one away, to demonstrate further, his belief. Anyway, he was an important factor in Max Beckmann's experience in this country.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was it—what was it like bringing Beckmann to St. Louis, because there's a great German population there and, or was he not amenable to them, or they to him?

PERRY RATHBONE: Really, the German population of St. Louis didn't touch him at all. They really had nothing to do with his life there, though I can see on the surface it might have had, but not at all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It didn't, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: No. And uh, while Max Beckmann was deeply German, through his education and exposure to German culture, he didn't think like a German. I—his thought was always much more international or worldwide or philosophical and—just as his art is really not German in its message or meaning. Maybe you see Germanic traits in it, I think that's not hard, but when it comes to the thought behind it, I wouldn't say it was in any way Germanic. No, he, what he most wanted to do when he came to America, in his maturity, you see, Max Beckmann, when he came in '47, was 63 years old, I think—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: —was to influence the younger generation and, of course, he was teaching at the art school, where he was much loved and most highly regarded as an absolute sage and genius. But in spite of his desire to communicate, he never mastered English and spoke in a mixture of English and German.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So like Hofmann in a way.

PERRY RATHBONE: Sort of like Hofmann, yes. But there was his wonderful wife, Quappi, always at his side and always ready to translate for him, and her knowledge of both English and German is so subtle that she could convey his meanings most effectively. Yes. Sometimes she didn't think her English was quite polished enough, and often, in translating Max's lectures to students, she would ask me to refine and polish a meaning, a phrase, a sentence. I spent a good deal of time in that way, with Max and Quappi together.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How were they received, you know, because he was a well-known figure not you know, not stopping in New York but coming right there.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, it's a good question. They were received with all kinds of, you know, different, shall I say stereotypes, courtesy. They were much admired and much loved by various members of the faculty but after the exhibition, when his whole art was put on view, including the triptych, the *Departure*, with his chopped off hands, and some other aspects of the show that were rather more sensuous than certain followers in the museum were accustomed to, there were a few raised eyebrows, I remember distinctly, and a certain amount of malicious gossip circulated amongst the university, its faculty and trustees, that was unflattering to Max. And even to Mrs. Beckmann, which was most unworthy of St. Louis and of the university, and that used to irritate me terribly. But I remember Charles Belknap, who was a trustee of the university at the time, asked me specifically if I thought it was true that Mrs. Beckmann was having affairs with other men. And this was such obvious malicious gossip, that I was pleased to be able to snap on that, but it provoked me to think that anybody at the university would stoop to that in order to denigrate—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, they must have been very competitive. I mean he was an internationally known figure who came out of nowhere in a big exhibition.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He certainly must have attracted students.

PERRY RATHBONE: He did attract students, indeed he did, and just who it was on the faculty who disapproved or thought that his expression was too raw or too unvarnished or something, I don't know. I know that the chancellor's wife was not too pleased, although she liked the international prestige of Beckmann.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When it was too close to home.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, I think it was something else, but then her taste in art was very, very limited anyway. But so far as the collectors and young people are concerned, he was an immense favorite, despite of the fact he didn't have ease of communication. He somehow, by his very presence or by his expression and by his art and his devotion to it, he made a tremendous hit. And it was nice too, that there wasn't, long before invitations began to come to him to appear elsewhere.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: On one occasion, he went to university—he went to Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri, which is a girls college, as you may know, and asked to lecture, and he wrote a lecture in the form of letters to a young woman painter. A very impassioned series of letters in which he guided the student in her—in the kind of thought and attitude they must have towards nature and towards life, in an altogether original and remarkable way, and these letters are some of those things I helped to translate and were delivered by Mrs. Beckmann herself, with Max there on the platform, in Columbia. The following summer, he was asked to come to Mills College in California and—I think it was the following year. Yes, I believe it was the first year—and teach a summer course there, which he did and found very rewarding. And the other summer that he was still in St. Louis, he went to Boulder, Colorado, and on that occasion, I was asked to lecture on his art, which I did. During the first—well, it must have been the second winter he was in St. Louis—the exhibition that we organized traveled to several places, one of them being Minneapolis.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And he and Quappi and my wife and I were invited to come there in January, where I gave a lecture at the opening of his exhibition, and that was a perfectly wonderful experience, but a rather alarming one because Max was—suffered a slight heart attack while he was there, and finding the right medicine was a crucial episode I remember well. But he was fascinated, to go to such, such a cold and wintery place as Minnesota in January. The snow was deep, you know, it was up to your knees or higher, and the temperature was something like 15 degrees below zero the night of the opening, and it was all together, an expedition into the north country.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, terrific.

PERRY RATHBONE: But he painted one or two pictures as a result. He was thrilled with the scene of the Mississippi Valley from the train. We took the Burlington, the Burlington sleeper, straight from St. Louis to Minneapolis; it was a crack train in those days.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And he was overcome with the beauty of the landscape and the whole effect, which was something entirely new to him.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well he did portraits too didn't he, while he was there?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes he did, he did several. He did one of Mrs. Pulitzer, of Louise Pulitzer, Joseph Pulitzer's wife, which was a great success, and he did one of John Newberry, my classmate, who had known his art in Detroit, through Valentiner, just as I had. And he came to the point of disliking his portrait so much that he sold it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And Joseph Pulitzer took a while to accustom himself to his wife's portrait and wasn't sure he wanted to buy it, but in the last analysis he did and was very grateful he did. Yes. Because Max didn't paint the complimentary portraits.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. They were not glossy.

PERRY RATHBONE: No, they were far from glossy. He painted one of the most successful, I think, was of Fred Conway, who was a very genial and warmhearted man, an artist on the faculty of the art school in St. Louis, and he painted another one of Kenneth Hudson, who was the dean of the art school and who was really the man to whom Max reported. I think it's a less sympathetic portrait for pretty good reasons. And he painted another very charming portrait, a full-length portrait in this case, of Wally Barker, Walter Barker, yes, who was, I believe he was still a student. Yes, not yet a teacher, a student at the university at this time. He made a number of charcoal portraits too, one of them Ms. Greenwood, which we afterwards bought, I think we bought it at the Boston Museum during my days there, yeah.



PAUL CUMMINGS: Why do you think Newberry sold his?

PERRY RATHBONE: Because I think it was too—it was too revealing of him. I think he couldn't face the reality of it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Got too close to home.

PERRY RATHBONE: I think so, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's fascinating, I mean because he was such a collector, but yet it was too um—

PERRY RATHBONE: I think it was just too strong for him and he was very pleased to sell it. I remember, he thought he got a good price, he got \$8,000 for it, but that was quite a good many years ago. [Laughs.] But he also painted a portrait of my wife and another one of me, and that was—

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you like that experience?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, it was fascinating. He asked my wife if he could paint her as soon as he arrived and she was very flattered and of course acquiesced. His method of painting was not to do it from life, not from life, no.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really?

PERRY RATHBONE: He painted only from drawings that he'd made from life and those drawings were made not from a posed image at all, a posed figure, but informal sketches that he would make while you were conversing. So his habit was to bring Quappi, his wife, to our house, where she would sit and chat with Rettles, with my wife, while he sat off in the corner and just quietly drew, without ever asking anyone to hold still or look this way or that way. He formed his own impression by his very powerful vision he would put down on paper. He made several such drawings.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Charcoal, pencil drawings?

PERRY RATHBONE: Charcoal, usually charcoal, sometimes pencil. Then, he would retreat to his studio and you wouldn't hear anything about the portrait for quite a long time, but ultimately it would be done. He would, in the meantime, be making notes in his famous *Tagebucher*, and then he invited my wife and me to come and see the finished work. Well, it's quite an experience, to see yourself under Max's brush for the first time, because the pictorial impact is very powerful, but we were used to Max's art and we both liked it instinctively and immediately, and showed him that. And we discussed the painting for a bit and then he said to my wife, "You really like it?" and she said, "Yes, Max, I'm really thrilled with it, I think it's a marvelous painting." He said, "Then I give it to you." Well, we were both overcome at that gesture you know, and contested it of course and he said, "No, no, no, I insist. I wanted to paint it and I take great pleasure in giving it to you." He didn't say it in quite those words but in his mixed English-German. Then, not long after, he asked if he could paint me, and I of course said yes, and again, he made sketches, usually this time in his apartment at the university, where he lived, in the faculty apartments. I would go there to work out some translation with Quappi or something, and I remember once, he did catch me in a characteristic pose, with my foot up on a chair or something and leaning forward, and I think he said just stand there for a minute while I make a few notes. At any rate, that, that's the pose that came out in my portrait which, after a longer time than it took to paint Rettles, he asked me to come and see it alone, and I went, and of course again, I was overcome and excited and thrilled with it. And then he said "You, you really like it?" Similar, in similar words to which he addressed to Rettles and I said, "Oh, of course I like it, Max, I'm thrilled with it." He said, "Would you like to have it?" I said, "Well, of course I'd like to have it," and he said, "Well then you can pay." [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, marvelous.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I said, "I'm only too delighted to pay, this won't be the first Beckmann I've bought." So I did and I said, "Well how much will it be?" And he said I don't know, we'll leave that to our friend Valentin to tell you. And so it wasn't too long before Valentin told me, but what I paid was such an absurd sum, it's almost embarrassing to record, but it was only \$600.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And it's virtually a full-length portrait and a very, very handsome picture, a beautiful picture.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where did you—you know, what kind of reaction did you get when you first saw it there?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, a kind of shock because it's rather odd to see yourself as somebody else sees you, in such emphatic terms, and not that it was unflattering, it wasn't, but it was somehow even more than forceful

than life itself it seemed to me. There's this tremendous plastic projection and a very intense expression and great determination in my facial expression, which is what I think he must have liked, and—or thought was a strong characteristic or something. But he did have great difficulty with my face, he told me. He must have painted it eight or nine times, he said he went over it time and again and found it very difficult to satisfy himself, but he finally did. So it was—then there's sort of symbols in the background, some spear-like things are leaning against a wall and of course the temptation is always to ask him what he meant by that and he never would say. He always liked to be mysterious about his symbolism. Yes, yes, he said "Well, whatever you see in it, if you think it means that, that's enough for me, I think you understand me."

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think he had particular ideas or just used objects to fill in or articulate a plane or something?

PERRY RATHBONE: No, I think he had very specific ideas, and I think they were so far reaching and maybe in some cases so far-fetched, he didn't want to elaborate, but thought, well it's there for you to read as you please. And it may mean different things to different people. If that's the case, well, let it be.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It still works, yeah, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: I think that was it. He never would elaborate. I tried of course, in writing about him for the catalogue of the exhibition, to get him to demystify some of his pictures but he never would do it. And then he'd say well you tell me what you think, and I would, after hours of brain racking and speculation, I'd produce my interpretation and he almost always would say, "Yes, that's, that's about right." Then if I would try to refine it a little bit and say, "Well, maybe you meant this," he said, "Yes, perhaps that's more like it." Anyhow, he was very pleased at what I wrote about him, so it can't be too far off the mark. But a number of other people since have, have tried to interpret these, especially the triptychs, which have the most elaborate symbolism.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right. Oh, they're very complex.

PERRY RATHBONE: They're very complex. But that—then he gave me some drawings, which was very nice of him. He opened a portfolio one day and he said, "Well, what would you like, just take some." He was extremely generous, you know, and, oh, I think he must have given me six or eight drawings, and then he gave me one special one with a *dedicas* on it. I don't know whether it was after the exhibition or before he left St. Louis, I forget exactly, but anyway, he became a very, very close friend. We were very simpatico, and of course Quappi is, to this day.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did he come to like St. Louis, what did he think of it?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well he liked it very much.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What would he say of it?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, he knew—he paused in New York for a few days on his way there, just to get the feeling of this place, and then when he went to St. Louis he found it very much to his liking because it had a sort of mellow, settled atmosphere, which was not unlike the atmosphere in Frankfurt, where he had taught for so long. And he really loved Frankfurt, and of course Berlin was exciting to him for quite obvious reasons. He had been there early in his career and he was there briefly, before he fled to Amsterdam, but he liked the kind of mellowness of St. Louis and he liked the very particular beauty of the city around where he lived, near Forest Park, which—in which he loved to walk. He was an inveterate walker, always observing nature, at every hour and every season, and often walking with his little dog, his little Pekingese, to which he was devoted. Oh yes, he found St. Louis a very attractive environment all together and he loved to observe the people he came into contact with, the social circle that my wife and I moved in. Because his English wasn't very good, he didn't communicate much, but he'd take his place in the corner of a room and then you'd just see him absolutely, you know, peering with the greatest concentration.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Watch all this activity.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And he made up splendid names for people too, you know, that revealed their—for example, he loved to call Joe Pulitzer "Prince Pulitzer," because Joe has a rather princely style, behavior, you know, highly privileged and somewhat disdainful. [They laugh.] Well, oh yes, he was an enormous addition to our life in St. Louis. Well let's see.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I always think that, that it's fascinating when an artist of that note goes to live in a city for a while, because it does have an effect.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, most certainly, and it gave St. Louis a new artistic importance, the very fact that he had gone there and lived there, absolutely. I suppose one of the most famous international people who has ever

lived there, I mean internationally famous. Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you know, that show was in '48, right?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The following year, you did the *Mississippi Panorama*, which we were just looking at some of the clippings on. How did that exhibition evolve, where did the idea come from?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, the idea hatched in my mind, because the longer I lived in St. Louis, the more enthralled I became with the whole western scene and the development of the middle west and far west, beginning at the end of the 18th century. And I joined a very nice group of—a small men's club, a group of historians and bookish and literary people, called the William Clark Society, which was named for William Clark, the great explorer and later the governor of Missouri, and went on expeditions, which was an annual event. And of course I suppose maybe the nucleus of the whole idea was Bingham's work, which was brilliantly illustrated in the museum and I felt that there must be other pictures that would further illuminate this whole wonderful human experience, in a way the last frontier.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Except for the Amazon Valley, we read today, and maybe Antarctica. And so it was really in my own head that this thing emerged and the more I researched the subject, the more surprised I was at the great amount of material there was, that was pertinent to this theme. My other thought was that in my efforts to popularize the museum and make it a more meaningful place for more people, I found that a thing like the Beckmann exhibition and other shows that we did, were more acceptable to people if you had already demonstrated your interest, your intelligent interest in the art of their own territory. You see?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see, right. Whereas the Beckmann was almost international, this was very local, Mississippi.

PERRY RATHBONE: Very local, exactly, and now, the things that we brought together for that show, as you know, have absolutely zoomed into the spotlight and upwards in value.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well that was one of the first surveys of kind of the Midwest as a subject for painting and art.

PERRY RATHBONE: I think so. I think so.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Almost ever, that I could think of, except for maybe a Chicago exposition or something.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They were different in tone.

PERRY RATHBONE: They were different, yes. They weren't, they weren't regional, I don't believe that they were. They were the artists of the moment; they weren't retrospective, which this was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, which this was, yeah, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. What I hoped, as the exhibition took form in my mind and I began to gather material for it, was to locate one of the celebrated panoramas of the Mississippi, that is the moving panoramas that were a great, you know, feature of mid-19th-century entertainment, and there were, as I recall, something like nine. There were nine recorded panoramas of the Mississippi and I traced down as many as I could and came to a dead end each time, until one day, in the evening at dinner with Duncan Phillips in Washington, I sat very close to Horace Jayne, who at that time was Vice Director of the Metropolitan Museum and had come from Philadelphia. And I was going on about plans for our exhibition, which were taking shape, and I said, "Before we complete them, I hope we'll find one of the nine moving panoramas of the Mississippi," and I said, "Did you ever hear of one, have you ever?" "Oh yes," he said, "I know where there's one," and I couldn't believe my ears. I said, "You don't mean it." Yes, he said, "I certainly do. It's in the basement of the University Museum in Philadelphia. And I'm sure that they would lend it if you just addressed the director and showed your interest." Well, I lost no time in going to Philadelphia and sure enough, I dealt with Froelich Rainey, the director, and they were delighted to lend it to us. It was 348 feet long. It was, oh my goodness, the name escapes me at the moment, the work of the artist. I'll think of it in a second. Anyway, it was exactly what I had hoped it would be. This one had special emphasis on the life of the Indians in the valley and was based upon researches by an anthropologist who traveled and made notes in the valley, in the first part of the—second quarter of the 19th century, and had commissioned an artist to paint this into a panorama with the idea of making money.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Well that's—they used to charge a quarter or whatever it was.

PERRY RATHBONE: They'd charge a quarter, exactly, they charged a quarter, when a quarter was worth, you know, a couple dollars. And together with certain Indian artifacts which were exhibited at the same time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, this was an immensely fascinating challenge.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, did you install this as an operating panorama?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes, that was the whole point.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: And that was the whole point, to set this thing up as a theater, as an adjunct to the exhibition. So we brought the thing, as a loan, to St. Louis, and then, thanks to the mechanical genius of the curator of the museum, Dr. Thomas T. Hoopes, we were able to devise a scheme for rotating or unrolling and rolling up the panorama. It had one original roller, but the second roller was missing and had to be reconstructed with the proper—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —gears and everything.

PERRY RATHBONE: Gears, that's right. Then we had to rig the lights of course, the footlights, and make a proscenium arch, which we constructed out of some—out of boarding and relied upon some fancy wallpaper with architectural designs and swags of curtain, for the proper decorative effect. And then we had to provide the accompanying music, as well as the—as well as commentary. The commentary was more or less provided in the handbills that were distributed in the 19th century, of which a supply came with the panorama, fortunately. The music, we based the—the music was based upon a song we dug up in the Missouri Historical Society called the "White Fawn of the Mississippi," as sung by Madame Harriet Schwiesow, to great success at the Albert Hall or some music hall in London, about 1850. So this tune was taken on by Russ David, I think it was, who was the conductor of a jazz orchestra in St. Louis, and he managed to turn it into a music accompaniment on an electric organ. And so this was played as the panorama unwound and it moved across the stage, and to the delight of everybody. There are several retrospective shots, one of them was the burial of DeSoto, which took place by midnight, in the Mississippi River, as you may remember, so that the Indians wouldn't know that the great white leader was dead.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And this was a very beautiful scene, where a full moon was the feature, and at that point, a light was flashed on in back of the panorama, so that the moon was properly illuminated, and then another event with technical detail was the tornado of 1844 in Illinois, which resulted in what the handbill described as a hard loss of life, and this was a wild scene of a settler and his cabin being overturned and the trees whipped to nothing. And at that point, we had magnificent sound effects of course, with rolling thunder and flashes of lighting and all the rest.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh my heavens, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, it was a thrill, I want to tell you. So this, we played this in the theater, and I think we had about five performances a day, or something like that, and it was just a wild success. So, after, when the show was over, we thought well, what better place for this panorama than right here in St. Louis, and offered to buy it from the University Museum, and I think they said, "Well, we could have it for \$1,000," and we said "Oh, that's really much too much, and they sold it for about \$700." And they were very happy that it had found an appropriate home and the show was one of those things that, I don't know, it helped the reputation of the museum a lot. One of the things it did was to attract the attention of Henry Luce. In those days, when *LIFE* magazine was going strong, the greatest publicity you could possibly achieve was in *LIFE*.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And um, I had tried repeatedly to get somebody from *LIFE* to come out to the museum to see the show but nobody came. They were always too busy with one thing or another. Then, just as good luck would have it, one day along came Henry Luce and he telephoned the museum. Now let me see, I don't know whether he came because he had heard about this in his office, or whether there was something else he wanted to see in the museum. I honestly don't remember, but I remember being very excited by the fact that he wanted to come to the museum. So out he came and I had the dubious pleasure of showing him the whole exhibition, and I say dubious because he showed almost no reaction at all and I thought well, this is a bust, I'm wasting my time and I can't understand why this man isn't more moved. And he—we had a special performance of the panorama for him, which took about 30 minutes to run through that thing, and he sat there and said almost

nothing, except to nod politely, thank you. But the following week, there were five editors of *LIFE* magazine in that museum, they were all over the place, with color cameras and black and white cameras. Yes, you know, it was simply wonderfully gratifying, and the result was that spread I showed you in the scrapbook.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, the spreads, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Which led to the discovery of that other Bingham called *The Wood Boat*. Yeah. So those were very exciting days.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now how long was an exhibition like that up?

PERRY RATHBONE: How long? I think it must have been there about, it must have been there about, oh, at least six weeks; at least six weeks, maybe two months.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was a good catalogue as I remember.

PERRY RATHBONE: A good catalogue and the installation was quite elaborate, because it wasn't only a question of pictures, but we also discovered that there were quite a lot of models of those riverboats, which had virtually disappeared by that time. And I, in my research, I went to New Orleans of course, and there, in the Cabildo, the old statehouse, which is a museum today, I found several very attractive riverboat models made in the 19th century and discovered another one in Kansas City, in a private collection, and then one of the very best ones was in the Deer Creek Club, which was a rather small select club in St. Louis County, where people entertained, dances and cocktail parties and such things, and there, over the entrance door on a shelf stood this marvelous contemporaneous models of a riverboat, the H.M. Johnson or something like that. I have never seen a better one, but it was really beginning to suffer, because when the parties got too rowdy there in St. Louis, they were inclined to hurl a bun at it, you know, to see if they could hit the smokestacks or whatever, and it had suffered considerably. And I learned that it belonged to Joseph Pulitzer, the editor of the paper, the father of the collector.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Who, of course, I had come to know as a personal friend, and I just appealed to him and made it clear that this really remarkable and rare thing was being damaged and deserved a place in a museum. It was equipped with miniature bales of cotton and barrels on the decks.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, the whole thing.

PERRY RATHBONE: The whole thing, and the bridges that let down, you know?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, the bow, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah the bow, exactly, everything. And so he very kindly said, "Well, if that's the case, I'd be very glad to give it to the museum, where it will be safe." Well, that was one of the features of the show, and then we found, by getting in touch with the riverboat buffs, that there are people who had collected the china from riverboats, others who had collected the bells, and others who had collected the wood sculpture.

PAUL CUMMINGS: All the objects, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: All the objects, and these had to find their place in the exhibition, and they required installation. But it made for a wonderful experience.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now was that a very popular exhibition in terms of people?

PERRY RATHBONE: Attendance?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. And the catalogue had a wide distribution and fell into the right hands many times, in many cases, because I remember letters would come to us about the catalogue. None of this sort of thing had ever been published before.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh I know; it came out of nowhere.

PERRY RATHBONE: It came out of nowhere. I remember one enthusiast from Chicago who wrote and said, "I have your catalogue in my lap in front of me, every page is a glory," he says. So you knew you were touching some hearts and minds and it was a grand piece of Americana and, and it gave a marvelous spotlight to Bingham, and um—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Which is still going on. The catalogue of historians is coming out now.

PERRY RATHBONE: Absolutely. That brings me back to my first hours at St. Louis, and stop me if I have touched on it before, about the Bingham and the museum?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

PERRY RATHBONE: The Mercantile Library, and all that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, no.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well that's an amazing aspect of things, as you look back especially. But I went there, I found, in the main galleries, the very beautiful Bingham that Meyric Rogers, my predecessor had bought, called *Raftsmen Playing Cards*.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Beautiful, you know, in superb condition, which he had bought from the Berkshire Museum for \$1,500, in about 1936, and that, together with Bingham's self-portrait, which had been offered to the museum by descendants, I remember, where the two Bingham were given a place of honor amongst the other American pictures. But downstairs were all the paintings by Bingham that belonged to the Mercantile Library and had belonged to it since the 1860s. Well, one of the first things I did was to bring all those Bingham upstairs, to the main galleries, and I remember getting a sniff or two from Mr. Louis LaBeaume, who wondered what I was doing with those Bingham. After all, they're good enough to hang them downstairs and so on, why don't we hang the museum's own things up here, this attitude. Well, I think these things deserve a great place.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What interested you in them?

PERRY RATHBONE: Just, just the pictures themselves, they're just so compelling. I believe it's because I have a deep-seated love of Americana and the American scene anyway, and I'd never seen these Bingham before, though a large number of them had been shown in New York, at the Museum of Modern Art, which was this—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Remember? Meyric Rogers had organized the first Bingham exhibition and someone had seen it, someone from the Museum of Modern Art, who came here, but I didn't see it. Anyhow, it was just very exciting pictures, they were so full of the flavor of the country and its history and its folklore and everything. Anyhow, it was only a matter of time before the museum was able to buy all those pictures, and three of them were bought in my time and two were bought when Charles Norgle became director after I left, and then two were bought by the Boatmen's National Bank in St. Louis, and they still own them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And that alarmed me, when they were sold secretly by the Mercantile Library. I was sure that Knoedlers or somebody had slipped in, in the dark of night, and spirited them away, which is something I always feared as their value began to rise, but that wasn't the case. It turned out that they were bought by Tom K. Smith, who was the president of the bank and took a great interest in Bingham. Then—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, they're very famous parts of the bank now aren't they?

PERRY RATHBONE: They are indeed, I mean, gosh, they could carry the bank if it ever failed I think. Then, the other great thing were the drawings you see.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: There were 112 drawings in a notebook, in a canvas bound notebook which used to be kept by Mr. Clarence Miller, the librarian of the Mercantile Library, in the deep drawer of his old Victorian wooden desk, that's where they were kept always, and I would go to the library repeatedly once I knew they were there, and pore over those drawings, devouring them more and more each time. And, of course, the drawings figure in the *Mississippi Panorama* and later in the show called *Westward the Way*, but we could only open it to one page. Nevertheless, we would turn the page each day and so on. And on that occasion, we had, oh, we must have made photographs of something like 75 or 80 drawings for the first time, only a small selection had ever been photographed. It seems impossible but that's the case. The second time we showed those drawings, I persuaded the trustees to make an offer to the library to purchase them, because they really belonged in the museum, where they would be properly cared for and properly shown and so on, and we offered \$10,000 for them. And the library, not needing money at the time, just refused the offer and decided to keep them, which from their point of view was very wise, because they were evaluated by a New York dealer about six or eight months ago,

at \$3 million.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes, and what he obviously was trying to do was to buy them away from the library. And I became sort of exercised about this, and I wrote a couple of letters to the *Post Dispatch* and told them that I thought that the trustees of the library had a moral obligation to do what they could to keep them in Missouri, where they were intended to stay by their original donor, who had given them to the library. And I said I thought they were—it was a breach of their trust, to allow them to find their way into the American picture market and they ought to stay there. Well, the result of the—well, this effort, mine, and that of a lot of people, has brought them within the control of Missouri and the governor of the state has now pledged one million dollars in state funds, the second million to be raised by contributions, so that they'll stay there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: My heavens.

PERRY RATHBONE: It's a bit of history isn't it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's a long way from \$10,000.

PERRY RATHBONE: Figure it, yes, or from the—I don't know if they were even worth \$10,000 in 19-, probably '40 or '41, when I saw them, and they were little known to anybody, but they were an absolute treasure, you would have been impressed immediately.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, astounding.

PERRY RATHBONE: In all accounts, this marvelous little Dickensian fellow with white hair, "Well, Perry any time, you know, come on down, enjoy yourself." [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What would he think today?

PERRY RATHBONE: What would he think today? Yes, well they've been locked up in safe deposit vaults for the last five or six years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's incredible.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, yeah. Well anyway, that was my introduction to Bingham.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now was it easy—I'm curious, about the idea of a Mississippi panorama, because you must have had an exhibitions committee didn't you, or you proposed the exhibition ideas to the trustees or something?

PERRY RATHBONE: No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Or didn't you have all those rituals to go through?

PERRY RATHBONE: No, we just reported to the trustees what we thought would be a good idea, and the trustees always said yes. And I would give my justification. Um, if Mr. LaBeaume had remained on the board of trustees, I'm sure he would have disapproved, because it wasn't the kind of art with a capital A that it has since become, but ah—

PAUL CUMMINGS: What about that transition, you know, from pictures to art with a capital A?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, it's an interesting thing, how it's grown. I think it—you see, I was a very young man at the time, and I think these changes usually come from young minds and young spirits who are let loose in the art world. And sometimes they pick up these ideas in their academic surroundings, sometimes from their reading or travel or whatever, but I suppose that had a lot to do with it. And the rather fixed and inherited attitudes such as LaBeaume represented, were beginning to crumble for various reasons at this time, and then after the war, things seemed very different anyway and I think a more liberal attitude was stirring.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So one could do something new without—

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, without objection. And then there was always the wonderful example of the Museum of Modern Art, which had a marvelous publicity thing behind it, so that whatever it did was always well known. I remember what an inspiration the Museum of Modern Art was to me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, by the style with which they did things for one thing, by the boldness and conviction with which they did others. Their originality, and the fact that they weren't—they didn't wear the same mantle of total—how should I say it, I don't mean the word respectability but kind of um, well, whatever—the Metropolitan Museum stood for the actual establishment, you know, and all that it meant, with a certain pomposity, that the Museum of Modern Art entirely lacked. It had an informality that was very attractive to the young mind, and I think their desire to break out in new directions inspired me and my colleagues at this time. I think that is the best way to answer that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was that—were they you know, by act, youthful inasmuch as they would do new exhibitions or show things in unusual ways? You wanted to propose a modern idea?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That you could all—they gave you a certain leverage with people.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Then you could say, "Well, such and such an artist has been exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art after all," and although this was early still, in the museum's history. They had made a big reputation within 15 years. They were only founded in '29, and by the time the war was over, the Museum of Modern Art was what, 16 years old.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And although that's very young, they still had a certain prestige.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Everybody knew about them.

PERRY RATHBONE: They what?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Everyone knew about them.

PERRY RATHBONE: Everyone knew about them, yes, which was another thing. I recognized the power of publicity, and just from looking through those pages, reminded me of what emphasis I put upon publicity for the St. Louis Museum. I felt it absolutely essential to the kind of existence it deserves.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Getting the information out, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: And competing with the zoo you see, which was always more popular and commanded twice as much money from the public treasury, and the symphony of course, always was reviewed, every concert. Getting the museum exhibitions reviewed in an intelligent way was the hardest thing to do.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was there a noticeable effect, say you know, a color page in the press, or a big story about new acquisitions, or an exhibition? Would things happen that you could say ah-ha?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And more people would come?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, they would respond, and for example, a major acquisition at the museum would always get a big play. It was made up of several factors. I think I touched on one or two before. One was that we were spending public money, so it was a matter of public interest. Two, the museum didn't compete with so many museums, as for example the Boston Museum does.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And thirdly, the intelligent direction of the *Post Dispatch*. The informed direction of people like Joe Pulitzer and his father, and his grandfather, who saw the value of cultural reviews and cultural information. That's why the publicity there was superior, I thought. And just for example, the trustees of the St. Louis Museum were very conscious of two artists; one was Rembrandt and the other was Frans Hals, and often when I would bring up, for acquisition, some other work, they'd say, "Well, where's our Frans Hals, when are we going to get a Frans Hals?" And you could talk that way in those days, you know, with the possibility not so remote, I mean it would take money, yes, but it wasn't a remote possibility as it is today.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Where would you go for a Hals today?

PERRY RATHBONE: Where would you go for a Hals, yes, exactly, where? And so I was very glad, during my tenure, to satisfy those two longstanding desires. First we bought a Rembrandt and then the last acquisition that I made was a Frans Hals. And both times, the *Post Dispatch* published those pictures in a full page, in color, on



the front of the Sunday section, the Sunday picture section. You know that's the most you can do isn't it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where do you go?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yeah.

[END OF TRACK.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: This is side eight. Well, why don't we just talk about those two acquisitions; the Rembrandt, which was the earlier, wasn't it?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Well it's a big day in any museum if it buys a Rembrandt. And I had looked, of course, trying to follow the trustees' desires as conscientiously as possible, every time I went on a buying expedition. And in London, about 19-, I suppose it was about 1948 or '49 or '50, maybe '50, I saw a Rembrandt which I thought was entirely worthy of the museum. It wasn't the first one I'd looked at by any means, but this one really hit me between the eyes and it was owned by the firm of Colnaghi and had been the proud possession of Otto Gutekunst, who was a member of that firm for a long time, and he had kept it in his private collection, but upon his death, his widow decided to let go of it and of course offered it through his firm of Colnaghi. Well, I saw the painting, and I was thrilled with it, and learned that it had first been seen in modern times, by the late Captain Douglas.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes.

PERRY RATHBONE: You know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Of him, yes.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Langdon Douglas. And he had discovered it in a house in Staffordshire as I remember, about 1912, and he brought it to the attention of the Rembrandt pundits at the time, and it had been duly published and was well known, accepted and everything. But one of the great things about it was the fact that it was in immaculate condition. It had never been damaged and repainted, it had never been subjected to the reliner's iron, as was the case with so many pictures relined in England, and it was a portrait of a man with a bright and attractive face, and suggestive of a smile, an unknown man, late Rembrandt, rich, unbelievably rich in pigment, and the price didn't seem beyond our means. It seems nothing today but at the time it loomed large, it was \$150,000.

So I came back to America with high hopes, and the right photographs and whatnot, to show the trustees, but before I could go very far, as I recall it, William Davidson of Knoedler's rang up and said, "Oh, we have a picture here that I think you admired at Colnaghi's last summer and it's really ours to sell," and I said, "Well, I didn't quite figure it that way." Well he says, you know, "We work closely together," and I said, "Well, that's all right." But as I remember, the price was—he said the price was \$150,000 but I said that was the price so it cannot be any more than that. No, he said, "Well, I guess that's all right, we'll settle for that." The picture came out to St. Louis and then I gathered the trustees all around in my office one day, I think on a Sunday morning or something, because the time was actually of the essence. And they met in solemn conclave there and said we haven't got enough money and I said, "Well, now one way to get enough money is first of all, get a reduction from the dealer, which I think we can manage somehow, we'll try anyhow, and the other way is to, is to raise it privately, raise the balance privately. But the most important thing is to have the picture here and because I think it will inspire people to give," and so on. So it then fell to me to bargain with Knoedler, with William Davidson of Knoedler, and we settled for \$130,000 for that picture.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How, how could he reduce it?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I just said we haven't got that much money and uh, I'm very sorry, I know the asking price is \$150,000, but it won't be the first time you've been asked to give a reduction and museums sometimes have that privilege anyway. And ah, we haven't got the money and I don't see where we would be able to raise it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But he was willing to go along with it.

PERRY RATHBONE: He said, "I'll have to talk to my colleagues here and my partners and let you know," and he did, two or three days later. I forget just how far short we were with balancing our budget. Maybe we had to raise \$25,000, something like that, but this I can't remember precisely. I just remember asking various people to come to the museum and see the painting in my office and I asked them to contribute, and they did. I believe Mr. Schoenberg gave, he gave \$5,000 and Mr. Pulitzer gave \$1,000, and so on, I don't really remember. But I do remember asking Mrs. Gaylord, who I never asked anything of before. She was the wife of the man who created Gaylord Containers, a very profitable St. Louis concern. And she looked at it and just, and turned to me and said,

"Why," she said, "It's perfectly marvelous; it's the Mona Lisa in pants." Because this man has a very quizzical smile that was quite riveting, you know, and that helped, that little phrase helped me to sell the picture to quite a few other people, you know a thousand here and a thousand there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. [Laughs.]

PERRY RATHBONE: And after we passed the hat enough times, we had enough money to buy this thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, marvelous.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And then we put it on public display. We had to announce the price, which was customary, and the *Post Dispatch* ran it on the front page of the daily paper and later, on the front page of the [inaudible] Section, in color. But this attracted St. Louisans immediately, they couldn't wait to come out and see St. Louis's first Rembrandt, as it was billed, and they came in crowds. On a Sunday, I can't tell you how many people were there, all admiring this wonderful picture.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, and it was just a great success.

PAUL CUMMINGS: If you were to go out and buy that it would cost you—?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, today, well, today it would be, I would say close to a million.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well then the Hals, the search for the Hals was—took longer. Again, certain Hals's were offered but didn't appeal or the condition wasn't good enough. Some Hals's are a little bit dull. Most of them are brilliant, as you know. And the later, again, the later in a way, the most exciting, the more exciting, and just when I was, well, not quite packing my bags but darn near, to go to Boston in 1955, Bill Davidson at Knoedler once again, was involved, and he rang up and said, "I think I have a Hals that you'll like and can you come and look at it?" I said, "I'm on my way to Boston but I can look at it on my way, and I also will have to raise some money on my way because we certainly don't have enough here," because again, it was \$150,000, and this time there was no possibility of bargaining, that was made clear. They said it was net \$150,000, so that I said, "Send the picture out," that's right. "Send the picture out and I'll see how the trustees feel," that's exactly right, and it came out and they were absolutely bowled over. It was a marvelous portrait of a woman, a three quarter length, in the so-called black period of Hals, painted in the 1640s, I think 1648, wearing a customary lace collar and cuffs, with a little bit of pink showing through the lace of the cuff, and a lively expression, beautifully painted hands, a kind of gold chain at her waist or something, and in lovely condition. I asked where it came from, well he said, "I'm not at liberty to tell you until sometime after the picture is sold, but if you will take my word for it, it comes from a very good source, I will let you know."

Well, the trustees wanted it very badly but we were short \$75,000 or something, and so I said, well I'm going to stop and see my good friend John Olin, who came from Alton, Illinois, across the river from St. Louis, and was the head of Olin Industries—Remington, Rand and Olin Industries—a very rich man and had become a good friend of mine and had been generous when I had asked him for other gifts for the museum. So I thought, I'm going to see what it's like to go and ask a man for \$150,000. Why not, you know I thought, why not? I have nothing to lose, he can always say no, but still, such a thing makes one uncomfortable. So I went to his office, I didn't go to his house. I went to his office and John Olin was a rather poker faced man without much expression, but a very kindly man nevertheless. I showed him the photograph of the picture in question and well, he said, "Perry, how much?" I said it's, it is \$150,000, and I can assure you it's worth every penny of it. He said, "Well let me, let me see the picture. How am I going to see the picture?" I said it's in St. Louis. He said, "I'm not going there for quite a long time, I've got obligations here and there." I said, "I think I can take care of that, I'll have the picture sent here to New York, for you to see." When I got to Boston, about the first thing I did was to telephone St. Louis and say please send the picture, because I'm sure Mr. Olin is going to do something. I don't know how much but he'll do something and save the day. So they sent the picture to Knoedler's, back to New York and John Olin went around to see it and wrote to me afterwards and said, "I'm very sorry to disappoint you, Perry, haven't got the \$150,000 that the picture costs, but I'm happy to contribute \$50,000. So you can take what pleasure you like in that factor or whatever gratification, and I hope the museum can raise the balance and keep this beautiful painting." And they did, there was somebody from city funds and then the trustees and Charles Norgle, after letting my successor help to raise the balances, I remember, we kept the picture.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They got it.

PERRY RATHBONE: They got it. So that's—so, months went by and maybe a year or so, and I approached Bill Davidson again and I said, "Now it's about time you told me where that picture came from. I have discovered

that it is the companion to the portrait of a man which has been in the possession of the Kansas City Museum on the other side of Missouri for the past 30 years, just as fate would have it, and I know it came from the old Wilchek Collection in Poland, but I still don't know who the most recent owner is, it's a well-kept secret." He said, "Well now I can tell you. It comes from Robert Sterling Clark," the great collector of brother Stephen Clark, who then was proposing his museum in Williamstown. And I said, "I'm absolutely staggered with that." I knew that his collection had been in storage in Canada for a long time, since the time of the war.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh right, that's right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Remember? Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's where it was.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And so I said, "Well I'm fascinated to know that and I've got to know why he sold it, because if a man is building a museum, why would he sell one of his best pictures?" Not making any money. In time, I was able to go to Williamstown and there met Peter Gill, who was the director and Peter, I said, "Why did Mr. Clark sell that painting?" He said, "I implored him not to. He one day sent word for me to ship it from Toronto, or wherever it was in Canada, to New York, to Knoedler's, and I had to do that, but I implored him not to sell it and when he did I asked him why, and he said, 'I always thought she was and ugly bitch.'" [They laugh.] So thanks to his feeling about the subject of this picture, it's one of the principal ornaments of the St. Louis Museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's fantastic. Why do you think dealers tend to cover the last owner of a work like that so often? You know, the museum is not going to run around behind them and you know, try and make a deal, because it's pretty difficult usually.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, it would be pretty difficult, yes. In this case, I don't really know. Sometimes of course, they have reason to conceal the source, because they're afraid that you will find out how much they paid by going to the owner, and that might be an embarrassing fact.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That they only paid \$10,000 for it and they're selling it for \$100,000.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, something like that, yes, exactly. And the other thing is, they don't want word to get out to other dealers, what their sources are.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: You see?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Very secretive activity.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, for fear that the other dealers might offer more for what they're buying. And ah, what other reasons, I don't know, unless—I don't know whether Mr. Clark wanted to keep it a secret from Mr. Gill. I don't know what the reason was, he never explained.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because it's all, it's such a standard practice almost, you know?

PERRY RATHBONE: It really is, it really is. Well that's—those are the, two of the great masterpieces I was able to buy for St. Louis but maybe we should close on that note.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Okay, why don't we—

[END OF TRACK.]

### **November 5, 1975**

PAUL CUMMINGS: This is side nine. It's the 5th of November, 1975, Paul Cummings talking to Perry Rathbone.

PERRY RATHBONE: I have been asked to come to St. Louis not only this weekend, which I have accepted, in order to do a charity job for the university, for Washington University. Did I mention that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No. What was that?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, they had been offered a large collection of Oriental rugs, but they need to have them sold for the benefit of the museum of the university, in the field house on Friday night, so they're making a thing of it and they have asked me if I would come and do the job.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Be an auctioneer.

PERRY RATHBONE: Be an auctioneer, because there's still some, I suppose there's some value in putting my name on the thing. And of course I said yes, I could hardly say no, it's good for Christie's as well as for the university. But then hot on the heels of that, I was asked to come the following weekend, the following Thursday I think it is, when the Bingham drawings will be unveiled at the St. Louis Museum, which is the beginning of a fundraising drive to raise the money to match the government.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh right, that you had mentioned, the governor's got it.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, \$1 million, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: I was asked to dine with the governor and a few others, after that sale or after that opening, but then I simply can't go back to St. Louis twice in a week, that's my salary point.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why not?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well why not? Well, it just happens that I can't do it. [Audio break.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: All right.

PERRY RATHBONE: To keep those wonderful drawings in Missouri.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And I wrote a couple letters on behalf of this campaign, to the *Post Dispatch*, where the controversy became public and when New York dealers, especially Hirschl & Adler, who are putting a gigantic estimate on them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Bid, yeah, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Quite unrealistic, but I think the intention was to somehow price St. Louis out of the market by quoting such an intimidating sum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that they would be scared.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, because they knew they couldn't compete. Anyway, fortunately Governor Bond stepped in and recognized the great value of these drawings to the future of Missouri, and he got the legislature to agree to putting up the million dollars as part of the purchase and the rest will be raised by subscription. And I remember in one of those letters I wrote, I pledged a gift of \$500 toward that fund if it became a public undertaking. So I'm sorry I can't be there, because I'm very sympathetic to it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's right. Well, back to St. Louis all the time.

PERRY RATHBONE: Back to St. Louis, yes, all the time. You can't get St. Louis out of your life once it's there, so it seems.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's fascinating, but you know just to continue, which is where we were chronologically more or less, in 1949, you did that marvelous *Mississippi Panorama*.

PERRY RATHBONE: Right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did that idea evolve, as well as the exhibition?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, the idea evolved partly from my exposure to paintings of this part of the country, and amongst them were some pictures by Charles Wymark, who we should come back to for a minute, to the Bingham's of course, and I think it was probably a kind of nostalgia that I developed while I was in the South Pacific, when one had plenty of time to think about things that were far away and that were part of your life before it was interrupted by the war. And ah, it was then that I began to conceive the possibility that such a show would be meaningful, and it was just a question of finding little known material, and I think I did, in the last interview, touch on the discovery of the panorama itself.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Which was a great excitement.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's still there, right?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Afterwards, yes, the museum offered to buy it, because they thought this was the most appropriate resting place, and we got it for a very modest sum of money. I'm sure today, it would fetch an awful lot of money, because it's—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —almost unique.

PERRY RATHBONE: Almost unique as Americana and it has a fascinating history. Anyway, that was how the exhibition was conceived, and I think I spoke about some of the steamboat material we added to it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right, the pieces and things that went into it.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. After a while, we ran into some steamboat buffs, people who had collected the china and all that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, one thing that fascinates me about that exhibition and then the later one, *Westward the Way*, is that those are kind of history exhibitions. They're not necessarily high art all the way through. Do you think that exhibitions of that nature are successful because they're not sort of great high art adventures, or they appeal to the people because it's their more immediate world?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, I think certainly what we're talking about is the matter of subject matter, and the subject matter there has very strong appeal. It's full of nostalgia, it's full of poetry, it's full of local color, American culture.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, they had all heard stories about the river and knew somebody whose relative had worked there.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, and everybody's read—

PAUL CUMMINGS: That kind of—[cross talk].

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Everybody's read Mark Twain and, and it's very much in the bone and sinew of America. So I think you're quite right, that there's a very strong appeal for its cultural significance of the exhibition, quite aside from its artistic content. The artistic thing was certainly there, especially with such artists as Audubon, whom we feature.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Especially those great plates in which a distinctive western or Midwestern background or river background, like the curlew and like the barn owl, where you can see this great western river snaking away in the dusk or distance.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Audubon was so inspired by that part of the country anyway, as you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, his backgrounds are better than the birds sometimes, you know, they're just incredible.

PERRY RATHBONE: They're incredible. But he went down the Mississippi very early in his life and went to New Orleans, you know, and painted portraits in order to make a living, until he could break out and do his great naturalist thing. Um, there was not—there was all this pictorial thing, but also the literary one, and I think I told you about the William Clark Society, to which I belonged and where the early literature of the west was discussed and travelers' accounts and so on. And my colleagues and I in the museum found that by voracious reading, we could match almost every picture with some passage in the literature of the time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really? Oh, fascinating.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, which in a way often explained the picture that was in hand or the picture helped to explain the passage that was accompanied, that accompanied it on the opposite page. So we gave that book, *Mississippi Panorama*, a rather special value. It introduced or reintroduced lots of forgotten authors, and of course the libraries in St. Louis were full of such material. And I was lucky to have Catherine Filsinger, the assistant curator, and Thomas Hoopes, the curator, as fellow readers, and they were—they became just as keen to match picture and word as I did, and we spent many a long night reading pages and pages of western literature.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic, fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: So that was the inspiration and that was the result.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, there was never any thought of traveling an exhibition like that, I mean to another museum, or was it too difficult?

PERRY RATHBONE: It seems to me we were approached, Paul, as I recall, by various—yes, various sundry museums. People in Minnesota were particularly interested.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, Minneapolis.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, Minneapolis, where they're very advanced, you know in their museum, museology as it's sometimes called, and New Orleans was rather lame about it all, because they are so unorganized and so sort of retarded in their approach to such things.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mañana.

PERRY RATHBONE: That kind of thing. But it didn't come to anything because it was too difficult to move. It required a lot of special installation. Setting up the riverboats in some kind of sequence, to give a little suggestion of the river itself, with the little platforms and backgrounds and so on, I think put it out of the question.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It got to be too complicated.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes. And some of the owners of those models were very, very fussy about how they were handled and with reason, because they're quite fragile. And uh, those were the reasons that we didn't travel. But the catalogue had a very wide sale and we published quite a large edition, and I think it's still available. Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Terrific. Yeah, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: I think it is.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, in the 1949 exhibition, if one moves ahead a little bit, how is the collecting program going to be getting?

PERRY RATHBONE: By that time?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, by that time or getting into the early '50s.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, you mean the private collectors in St. Louis.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative], right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. It was beginning—yes. It was really beginning then, the economy was picking up, you know it had slumped some during the war and immediately thereafter. The economy was picking up and people were getting more adventurous about spending and I was already very eager to see my—especially my own contemporaries buy works of art. And I used to bring things back from trips to New York, thinking well maybe this one will buy that and somebody else will buy the other, and I had considerable success that way. I remember bringing back a beautiful page of studies by Gauguin, a rather large page of studies on which he had also pasted a watercolor, and there's a study of a Tahitian girl and so perfectly fascinating, which came from there, and I think it was all of something like \$4,000, and it was bought by Mrs. Werner, the son of Joseph Desloge, and sometimes I'd find some piece of primitive art that I thought would appeal to somebody else. I remember Louise Pulitzer bought a very good piece of Solomon Islands sculpture for her husband, for Joe Pulitzer, for a Christmas present. I brought back Paul Klees. I remember to my terrible disappointment, that my girlfriend, Doe [ph] Jean Lane was her name, refused to buy a beautiful little Paul Klee called *Demon Above the Ships*, a little Paul Klee of 1916, for \$150, from Nierendorf. I couldn't afford to buy it myself, at least I didn't think I could right then, I had bought something else, and she said no, she just didn't see how she could do that. She said she wanted to spend her money on Frito [ph] jewelry. So I was deeply disappointed, but that little watercolor is now in the Museum of Modern Art, and I suppose it's worth, I don't know, \$48,000 or something like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No? Yeah, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: One of the most remarkable collectors whom I developed was a man by the name of Lansing Thoms.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, now who is he?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, he was a Pontiac dealer in St. Louis and I forget what it was at the museum that attracted him, but he had never really been attracted to the museum before, but some exhibition that we staged brought him to my office one day and he was a very forthright man who had come from Michigan, where he had been an automobile dealer, and he was very enterprising and a keen photographer, did his own color photography and developed his own color negatives and so on, and I—he said, "I'd like to go to New York with you some time, I don't know any of these dealers, and buy some art," would you, would you help me? And I said, "Well of course, I would like that more than anything." Well, Lansing Thoms was rather known in St. Louis because his radio advertising program began with tom-tom drums. [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see.

PERRY RATHBONE: It gave him, gave that some mirth, but he was an extremely nice and enthusiastic man and he bought a lovely Mary Cassatt gouache, of her sister sitting in the conservatory. He bought a beautiful Dutch painting by Gerrit Berckheyde of the dam at Amsterdam. He bought a fine Cambodian head, one or two Tang pieces from C.T. Loo, and he had these things standing around in his office, so that his was certainly—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. The most distinguished office in St. Louis. I remember buying him, in London, a beautiful Greuze, a sanguine drawing. His taste was amazing. He was—if I thought it was good, he was very inclined to agree, and it seems to me, we never spent very much money, you know? I think that, that Berckheyde was around \$5,000, and the things from Loo were \$1,200 or \$1,800 or something like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, you know, when you would have a collector like that, would they at some point, offer things to the museum, would they make suggestions?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yeah. Yes, oh yes, and they would become good paying patrons of the museum, who contributed decent sums of money to the Friends of the Museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And since then, Thoms has become a trustee and has given a large number of his things to the museum that he bought under my stimulation and guidance. That was the idea. And another one was Gordon Hertslet, who was interested in American art, and he bought the Ashcan School for Painters. He was keen about watercolors and he also has become closely attached to the museum. It seems to me, he's given a large number of his things in memory of his wife, who has since died. There was Martha Love, who was a very close friend, who I remember bought a little, very nice little Teniers, and a superb Egyptian bronze of the goddess Neith, very fine, of very good quality. Who else? There were so many who were—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now were these generally people who came to you or would you meet people and make suggestions or try and stimulate?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Yes, there was some word of mouth, and then you would meet them socially and they would come to our house and see works of art there, and when dealers like Pierre Matisse would come to St. Louis, or Curt Valentin, I would introduce them. Dealers in those days usually carried their goods with them when they traveled. They don't do that anymore as well.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, they have transparencies.

PERRY RATHBONE: At best. Usually, they just stay here and wait for you to come to them, but in those days, Pierre Matisse would appear with his station wagon. I don't know whether you know about that, but he would make—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh no, really? How marvelous.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. He would make a couple of trips a year, right across the country, and he would have a few Matisses in his station wagon, a Modigliani or two, and a Rouault and a Léger and whatnot. It seems hardly possible today. I can hardly believe it as I tell you.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You'd need a Brinks truck or something.

PERRY RATHBONE: You'd need a Brinks, exactly. And he would just pull up to say, Joseph Pulitzer's house, and unload and then Joe would say, "Do come up, Pierre is going to be here," and we'd look at his things together. I may keep one or two things on approval. Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, marvelous.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, absolutely, and Duveen always came with a portfolio of drawings and prints and sometimes small gouaches or things that would fit into a suitcase and always with a great deal of enthusiasm, and we would get the possible buyers together. Then of course the most exciting for me, the most exciting development was the—my association with Mrs. Mark Steinberg.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes, that's a name I've heard.

PERRY RATHBONE: You must have heard that name.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Her son in-law, Richard Weil, came to see me one day. He was a perfect stranger to me, but he came to see me to say that his mother in-law, who had been widowed for about a year or more, was terribly in need of some kind of distraction, some kind of activity, something to fill her mind and her life. It was rather empty with her children married and moved away and her husband's gone. And she was a woman of very remarkable taste, but her taste did not extend beyond furniture, fine furniture, decorative things, and Richard Weil thought that she might become interested in works of art. He said, "Won't you come and have a cocktail one day and meet her and talk about it?" I was delighted of course, and very soon after I found myself having the first of many, many cocktails and very much caviar, which Mrs. Steinberg was very fond of serving to her guests, I'm happy to say. We hit it off very well from the start, with a great deal of mutual respect and admiration, and she was the most unpretentious person. She pretended she knew nothing but she had a very good sense of what was good, I found out, and had perfect confidence in me. We liked each other personally and it just happened at this time, that there was in my office, a beautiful Degas pastel of ballet dancers, a large pastel that had come from a collector in Philadelphia and it had been sent to Knoedler's for sale, and I'd seen it there and thought, well that's something that would do very well in St. Louis, maybe for the museum or maybe for one of these collectors, and I said to Dick Weil, "Well, there's that pastel that I think would appeal to your mother in-law, let's see," and he said, "Fine, let's send it over to the house," which I did, and she was crazy about it. Beautiful colors, her eyes were violet, a lovely thing, and it's a strong, exciting drawing underneath it all. And she said, you know, "The only trouble is, that because it has a glass over it, it reflects the light. Could we take the glass off it?" I said "Well, I'm afraid you can't do that, but I'll see what we can do to overcome that objection, because I do think that for, I think it was \$27,000, for that much money, and for that money I think it's a very, very good buy." So I rang up Davidson of Knoedler and asked him if—what he would do in a case like this. Oh, he said, "I know the reflector will overcome that mirror effect very easily, I'll send one out," which he did, and in a few days I took it over to Mrs. Steinberg's house and attached it to the picture, and that's exactly what it did, it knocked out almost all the reflection and because it wasn't a dark picture anyways, it's not so difficult to overcome that mirror.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, so you just put the light on the top?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, it's just like these things.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it worked.

PERRY RATHBONE: And she was thrilled. That was purchase number one, like that. Well, I was delighted, beside myself, myself stepping up, you know so boldly, number one. Well, it wasn't long after that, that she asked me, it was must have been, let's see maybe in January, this having been October, would I not come to New York with her and her daughter and Richard Weil and look for works of art? Well, sure. She said, "We'll just go everywhere, everywhere you think we'd find something that could go." So of course we went to Knoedler, we went to Rosenberg. Paul Rosenberg was still living then. We went to Sam Salz, we went to Wildenstein. I can't remember everywhere. I tend to forget the figures, but I remember we bought a Renoir, a beautiful early Renoir portrait. We bought a van Gogh, a landscape of Arles, a large and beautiful landscape. We bought a lovely Manet, of Chartres. We bought a Fantin-Latour, a flower piece. One, two, three, four, and there was a fifth. I remember we bought five works and we spent something like \$225,000. The van Gogh, for example, was \$70,000, maybe it was \$75,000. I remember discussing at lunch, about that. Well, she said, you know, "I liked it very much, but can't you go back to Paul Rosenberg and see if you can get a little better price for me?" So I said sure, I'll do my best, and I think we bought it for \$72,000, or something like that. It's got to be worth \$750,000 today.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Nice shopping trip.

PERRY RATHBONE: Nice shopping trip. Well, it really was exciting. There's a Renoir, almost \$25,000, you know. Oh really, and the Fantin-Latour, \$7,000, it was just the perfect one. Manet is always expensive and always has been. Manet was \$35,000 but still, you know. Well, that was very exciting and that was the beginning and we did



that numerous times. I remember buying two beautiful drawings from Rosenberg on a subsequent trip. And then Mrs. Steinberg said well, "I thought that you very much admired that Courbet that you showed us, of the two, of the *Greyhounds of Comte de Choiseul*, a beautiful picture of greyhounds against the sea, standing on a sort of beach with the sea beyond them. Very sensitive, sympathetic painting of these animals." "Yes," I said, "I like them very much indeed." "Well," she said, if you really like it that much, I'd just like to buy it for the museum if you'd like." I said, "Oh, of course," and she said, "All right, we'll just have that sent up too." You know, this is the answer to a museum director's dream. I think it was about \$22,000.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Just added on.

PERRY RATHBONE: Just like that, yes. Yes, and then after that, the following year, she said, "Well, how about a trip to Europe, do you think you could get away for a few days in the spring?" I'd never been to Europe in the spring before and it's a rather busy time for museum directors, but I thought it was worthwhile and so in April of about—what was it, April of '53, I think it was—we went to Europe for two or three weeks. We went to London and I went to see the new form of Marlborough, when Fisher, who was of course the partner of Lloyd. And of course we went to Paris, we went to the obvious dealers there, like Bram [ph] and ah, Jonas was still dealing in those days, Edouard Jonas.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes, yeah, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: He was there, just outside of Paris. We went there and I remember it very well, that while we were looking at the pictures upstairs, Walter Chrysler was in a room on a lower floor and afterwards, we learned that he, at that moment, bought a rather famous Renoir of Vollard dressed as a matador. Do you know that portrait?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes.

PERRY RATHBONE: It's a rather very mature, about 1910 or '12, something like that. And Mrs. Steinberg bought a beautiful, beautiful impression of Cézanne's *Bathers*, the lithograph, which was also published with color. But this was an original lithograph with Cézanne's own color touchings.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, marvelous.

PERRY RATHBONE: Very choice and special thing for \$2,500.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Twenty-five hundred dollars.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, that's all, \$2,500, imagine. Anyway—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, that was a lot of money for a print though, in those days.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I guess so but still, she did—she bought a watercolor afterwards, for \$10,000, a beautiful watercolor. Um, we bought a lovely, early Mary Cassatt from Marlborough, a beautiful one of a woman with a fan, dating from about 1880 or '81. It's early in her association with Degas, so it's full of sort of Degas's strength of design and anatomy and whatnot. Beautiful and for \$9,000, I remember. And uh, what else? Oh yes, we went—gosh, we went to Europe more than once. This first time I went with them, I remember it was about a 13-hour flights, and the only time I ever flew the Atlantic, in a plane with sleeping accommodation, that I remember was what was called a Stratocruiser, I think.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh right, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Do you remember it? It was two decks, that had a very deep belly.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And the belly of the plane was a very attractive bar. You went down a spiral staircase, into the bar, which was surrounded with a bench, and there you couldn't help but talk to whoever was next to you. I remember meeting a very attractive Englishman on that flight, spending the night drinking brandy and talking with him. And then we went upstairs to the, it seems to me, the—I forget where the bunks were, another part of the plane, or whether the seats made them into the bunks, or something, I don't know, but you more or less had to bunk with somebody. It was not exactly the same bed, but very close. Anyway, this chap, whose name I, can't—I could if I thought hard—and I, were virtually the same bunk there, flying the ocean. It was a rather unusual sensation, to say the least. Anyway, that was a very fruitful trip altogether. There were some things that we saw that we didn't buy, which I've always regretted.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well that's one of the endless hazards of the game, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Endless hazards, yes. And oh yes, I remember we went to see um, Berggruen in Paris, whom I've known of course, and there she bought some minor things I remember, a small bronze or something, and I bought, quite unexpectedly, a Picasso drawing and a little Nicolas de Staël for myself, because I just couldn't resist them. Why, it was a beautiful line drawing of about 1919, a seated nude, and the de Staël was small, what the prints [ph] call a number one, a small oil landscape, from 1949, I think. Anyway, I remember the two together were \$1,000, which is hard to believe today, you know unbelievable. The drawing, about \$700 for the drawing, and maybe \$300 for the de Staël, something like that. Anyhow, I've never regretted that plunge. It always seemed like a plunge to me, and it was, there's no getting around it, of course it was, sure. Well, it was about as exciting an experience as you can have. I stayed at the Bristol. Mrs. Steinberg and the Weils were at the Bristol and I was there for one night, but I was so horrified at how much it cost, not that it was costing me anything. I didn't even feel comfortable to have her pay for my accommodation there, so I moved to the Regina, you know was there on the Place des Pyramides, right near the Louvre. And um, I'd never stayed there before either, it was, it was very nice but fearfully noisy on the Rivery in town.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It never stops.

PERRY RATHBONE: Never stops, never. Ah, and then we went to see Louis Carré of course, and Richard Weil and his wife, Florence, were becoming more and more interested in modern art at the same time, and so they began to collect and on that occasion and other visits, they bought beautiful collages by Juan Gris and Braque, he was still alive. Oh, they had [inaudible] several collections because he had sold a few things.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now what do you think motivates someone like that to really buy so many things and then, you know, give things to the museum on occasion?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I often wonder myself, because I have never sold but two things. One was a—one thing I traded in, much to my regret, and the other thing I sold, but all the other things that I've accumulated in my life, I've clung to, you know, like friends. I feel it's almost a betrayal to let go of them. But one I came not to enjoy, and that was a little painting by Darrel Austin, which I bought before the war, and when I came home from the Navy, somehow I just didn't like it. And I said that to Curt Valentin and he said, "Oh, give it to me, I'll take care of that." I paid \$125 for it, so a couple of weeks later he said here's \$250, I got twice as much for what you paid for it. He had sold it back to Perls, that's where I bought it. The other thing was a portfolio of Matisse lithographs, *Dix Danseuses*—it's a well-known portfolio, you must know it—and I believe the Valentiners, I think William Valentin and his wife gave it to me for Christmas one year. And somehow, I didn't care very much for the ballerinas, you know in lithograph form, and I later on traded it to Curt Valentin, from whom it had been bought in the first place, for something else and I forget what it was by that time, I'm sorry, because at least from the monetary point of view it was a great mistake because those things are worth \$4,000 apiece today. Oh yeah. But otherwise, I stuck to everything I've ever taken a fancy to and bought, but why people dispose of what they buy, I don't know, unless they don't like them as much as I do.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But why also, did they just, you know, for example, the one painting with the two dogs, you know, "If you really like that, well, we'll buy it for the museum." Was that sort of a patronage gesture or friendship?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, I think it was. I think it was a way of repaying the museum for the time spent with—I think she must have felt a kind of obligation, that she owed the museum something. But she didn't need to feel that way at all because the most important works that we bought in those days were assigned to the museum by the tax laws then in operation.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. You could—in those days you could give something and get a return.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh you did it fractionally, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: No. You could give—well, you could give it fractionally if you wanted to, but you could give total, a work of art, and yet retain it for your life.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: You know, without forfeiting anything in its value. And so she took full advantage of that and for example, the Van Gogh is now in the St. Louis Museum and so is the Manet, and so is the Renoir, and uh, I forget.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So a lot of things came from her.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, oh yeah, the museum was greatly enriched as a result. But I think simultaneously,

she had the money to spend and she was having such a good time and knew that I would be pleased, and I would have something to show for the time I was devoting to her. But she was a very generous person. She had genuine generous impulses.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you have collectors who would, to say it bluntly, would try to take advantage of your knowledge to accrue things for themselves and not necessarily support the museum, or were they fairly generous?

PERRY RATHBONE: No, I think they were very decent about it. I'm not—I don't know of any case where anybody really didn't play fairly with me and what I meant to—no, nobody really. I can't think of anybody. No. And there—the Halls, I haven't mentioned them before, Thomas and Mary Hall, who were very artistically inclined, but they also had never been involved with buying real works of art. But I tempted them a few times and they succumbed and bought a beautiful Picasso drawing one year, I remember, and a Paul Klee and a Gerhard Marcks bronze. And I happened to see that Klee in Maine the other day and they said, "Well, it's already, you know, it's assigned to the museum, it goes to the museum, it's just a question of time." You know, you can also give a portion of a valuable of a work of art.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And now that Klees have become so valuable, those things that at least cost \$1,000 or \$2,000, are now worth \$40,000 and \$50,000, so it's very advantageous.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you find that many people bought with the eye of giving, because they felt the market would go up and there would be financial advantages somewhere along the line?

PERRY RATHBONE: I think, I think increasingly, since this time, that's been the case, since there have been so many demonstrations of immense increases in value. But at this time, one didn't expect it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In the early '50s it wasn't—

PERRY RATHBONE: No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —so heavy then.

PERRY RATHBONE: No, exactly. I think people felt that what they were paying for would not lose its value, but that it wasn't going to go up in any spectacular way. And you see, giving away the Van Gogh, for example, when Mrs. Steinberg did, she was going to take a reduction from the \$72,000. But if she had kept it and given it away, say the year before she died, she could have ended up with—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —hundreds of thousands.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well yes, darn near well, I would say three-quarters of a million. So, unbelievable isn't it? Well, to be sure the people knew what we were doing and to stimulate them further, we staged an exhibition called *St. Louis Collects*.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: And as far as I know, it was the first exhibition of its kind, but such shows have become commonplace, and even this term seems to be something that—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —that the universities have used it, and colleges.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, everybody, but as far as I know, that was the first. I remember pondering the grammar or the syntax or whatever, of this phrase, "St. Louis collects," you know, it doesn't sound quite like a sentence does it, because it had to take—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's a good title though.

PERRY RATHBONE: It's a good title because it's kind of a—it has a certain movement, sort of action. Anyhow, we did that show and rounded up everybody who had acquired something in the past, say ten years, and that was a great success, because I found people in St. Louis especially, were very curious about what other people were doing and how they were spending their money, because it's a community small enough to care particularly, because you know everybody.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, that's what I was going to ask you. Most of these collectors knew each other or came to know enough other through—?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, in some way or other. I found that all the social circles in St. Louis sooner or later interlocked, which was a very nice thing. It wasn't segregated the way the society of Detroit was, where people who lived at Grosse Pointe only—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —talked to Grosse Pointe.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, and they didn't know the people in Bloomfield Hills very well, and the people in Birmingham, whom I didn't mention, and things like that, you know. But in St. Louis, where there wasn't so much social pretension. They just—everybody, as I say, over in the Jewish circles and the university circles, the intellectuals and the social leaders, all, sooner or later somehow mingled.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Got together, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, and were very, very pleasant.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I've always had the feeling though, about Detroit, that most of the people are not interested in their city there, that there's a consumer attitude towards the city.

PERRY RATHBONE: Absolutely. It was a kind of living tragedy, that city, as I observed it in my years there, a city that once had been beautiful, exceptionally so, from what photographs I've seen and accounts I've read. There it was lying in ruins with this monstrous modern commercialism and industrialism swallowing it up. And the richest, the Grosse Pointers, had simply turned their backs on this mess every night and forgot it, and then they went down into it the next day as if going to a mine.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Took a shovel of gold out.

PERRY RATHBONE: Exactly.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah. Now, in '54, you did *Westward the Way*, which is another panoramic view of life. How did that one come about?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I think it was built upon the success of the *Mississippi Panorama* and the obligation that I felt, to do something about the 150th anniversary of that fabulous exploit of the purchase of Louisiana and the exploration by Lewis and Clark.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Too bad you couldn't get the desk there.

PERRY RATHBONE: The what? [Audio break.] The most brilliant, the most brilliant real estate operation in history, transaction was absolutely incredible. And the Americans really didn't know what they were buying, they just had the idea of the dimensions, but what kind of land it was, nobody really knew. There was not any scientific record, and that's what Lewis and Clark brought back, at the risk of life and limb, as you know, and I thought this was an enormously exciting thing to celebrate, and we decided to do so along the same lines as the *Mississippi Panorama*, with the pictorial record and the written record side-by-side. And it required the same kind of research, the same kind of exhaustive and exhausting reading, and the same team, there was Filsinger and Hoopes and Rathbone, and Eisendrath, who had become my assistant, William Eisendrath.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Who had come from Chicago to live in St. Louis, and was a very, very eager researcher too, and full of enthusiasm for what was going forward, so he was a great help. And there, because materials were [inaudible] and expensive, I decided that it ought to be divided somehow, to give a little form and clarity to this huge thing. So we broke it down into the land, the people—that is the white man—the Indian, the birds and animals, and transportation, westward bound, you know, whatever meanings. And those were the chapters that we filled in with pictures and again, with quotations. And I don't know if anything else marks that anniversary as significant as that exhibition turned out to be.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, because it's still, you still see that book.

PERRY RATHBONE: You do, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yeah, and people quote from it.

PERRY RATHBONE: Do they? Oh, that's very, very gratifying. Well, one of the most gratifying aspects of that, I have to tell you Paul, because it's very close to me, was the privilege of showing, for the first time in modern times, Bingham's masterpieces of *The Jolly Flatboatmen*.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Now that painting, I've known since boyhood, because it was one of the engravings made by the American Art Union. And my great grandfather, who was a physician in a village in New York State, was the local secretary of that particular chapter, section of the—[cross talk].

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh marvelous.

PERRY RATHBONE: So that he, of course, received the engraving of the year every year, and the house is still filled with these engravings.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, with their old mahogany frames on them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: Absolutely. And amongst them is that one, which of course in a way is the most engaging and delightful.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They're very sought after now, those.

PERRY RATHBONE: Even that engraving is sought after, yes. I was able to buy one for the St. Louis—for the Boston Museum about 15 years ago, for I remember, \$75, a perfect example.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Not any more.

PERRY RATHBONE: Not any more. Not any more, I know it. Well, of course, where this picture was, was a great mystery, because as other Binghamms have turned up and we've told the story of some recoveries, the greatest discovery of all was the one that's in the Metropolitan, I think. That was a perfectly unknown picture, descending, the *Fur Traders Descending the Mississippi*, or *Missouri*, whatever. I searched every avenue, as I did for the panorama, to see if we could find that picture, and one day, I was talking with my old friend Bill Williams, who was the director of the Corcoran Gallery, Herman W. Williams, who was a great Americanist, you know, and he really delved very deeply into American painting, he said, "Oh, I think I know where that is, where the original is." I said, "You don't, Bill." "Yes," he said, "It's right here in Washington." Well, I said you would do me the greatest favor if you would lead me to it for this very purpose, for our exhibition. He said, "Oh yes, it belongs to Clayburn [ph] Powell."

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. I said, "Well, of course I know his name but I've never met him." He said, "Well, I can tell you where he lives and all you need to do is ring up and say I sent you," which I did and sure enough, Clayburn [ph] said, "Oh come on, come we'll have a drink this afternoon or tomorrow afternoon, you can meet my wife," and so on, and I did. They lived in Georgetown and sure enough, here was this marvelous picture, a lot bigger than I expected it to be. It's rather bigger than the, then the *Fur Traders* at the Met and the pictures in—than the river pictures in St. Louis. Not as big as the political pictures, but bigger and right there, and in perfect condition except for the fact that it had obviously never been cleaned. Not that it was, not that it was dirty really, but it was lackluster with a little bit of film.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, the accumulation, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Exactly. And I just couldn't believe my eyes, well, that is a real—for me, a great discovery. Well, he said, "My grandfather—let's see, my great grandfather, but by the name of Powell, as I recall, won it in the annual, you know, annual drawing." Yes. He said, "In Albany, where the Powells came from, and it's just been in the family ever since," and he is the lucky man to have inherited this.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, at the time we borrowed it, he was very nice about lending it and he said, "Yes, of course, I'm very sympathetic with the show you're doing and we'd love to lend it to you." I forget what we insured it for but I should think about \$25,000, I would say. I remember trying to get Karolik to offer to buy it from Powell for \$40,000, but I couldn't get Karolik to spend anything like that ever, but I tried to. So I think it must have been about \$25,000. Anyway there it is, it's in the catalogue, and I was able to say it's the first time it's been published since it was first released by the American Art Union in 1847.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: [Laughs.] Yeah. And I think that picture will probably one day go to the National Gallery, which would be appropriate, but naturally, I coveted it for St. Louis and then for Boston. Well, Clayburn [ph]

wasn't prepared to separate from it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It would bring a fortune today wouldn't it?

PERRY RATHBONE: An absolute fortune, of course it would. Well that was just—

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you think it would bring in the market?

PERRY RATHBONE: I think it would bring three-quarters of a million dollars.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because it's such a famous—

PERRY RATHBONE: A famous picture and it's really perfect of its kind.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: Perfect of its kind. And then there are all those—you see, the marvelous things about, well, the sad thing about Bingham is I think he must have made a drawing for every single figure in all of his pictures, and I don't—there's no drawing for that dancer identified in a program that I've ever seen, that I can recall, the central figure.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, it may turn up some day, somewhere.

PERRY RATHBONE: You never know. Where can they be? Because all the drawings, with one or two exceptions in that notebook, the sketchbook so called, there's one singleton drawing in the Karolik collection, there's another in the Kansas City Museum, and there's one said to be in an envelope in St. Louis. It was in an envelope, business-size envelope, and it was a narrow drawing but it obviously had been cut, somebody had cut it to fit it into a little frame. Those are the only ones I know of.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now how, how successful was that exhibition in terms of response of the people?

PERRY RATHBONE: In terms of—

PAUL CUMMINGS: How happy were you with the response?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, I was enthralled, I was enthralled with it. You know, there is a plaster cast of this signing, that was made for the Louisiana Purchase exhibition, which of course took place in St. Louis—and another reason to have the show there, you know 50 years after that great event. And I'm trying to think who the sculptor was, whether it was Karl Bitter or—who it was I don't know, but it was quite good. It showed Jefferson and—who was the French minister of Napoleon who would go—Monroe was there, Monroe and Jefferson and this other person; three men standing on a table. And we had that dolled up and resurfaced and so on, because it still was in plaster, and made that a kind of feature of the exhibition, and surrounded it with wonderful Catlin paintings, and there was another experience. I had heard that there were a lot of Catlins, of course. Anybody who had done any reading in this field would know of a great many Catlins that belonged to the Smithsonian Institution.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: So I went there and I found that John Ewers, E-W-E-R-S, John Ewers, you may know him, was the head of the American Ethnographic Division, and it was to him I turned, to my surprise, for these things, and he said, "Oh yes," he said, "They're all up in the attic of the Smithsonian." This is the old Smithsonian Building, not the Renwick Building on the mall, but the one on Constitution Avenue. "You can just go up there and I'll show you where the lights are and just"—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —look around.

PERRY RATHBONE: Look around. And you'll find most of them are in drawers, great big cabinets, shallow drawers. And sure enough, there I explored to my heart's content, all alone up there in the Smithsonian attic. I was fascinated. You were surrounded by about 500 paintings there by Catlin, of every curve in the Mississippi and Missouri River, you know, and every kind of Indian activity; shooting buffalo and shooting the white fox, and descending the rapids and you know, prairie fires, everything under the sun, all right there, all in their little exhibition frames too, that you would have made for them. They were like the mahogany things on the engravings in the old house in the country, but they were grained to look like mahogany. Just, you see, very

plain, very severe, but very, very period in this [inaudible], and Ewer said the only condition that we impose on lending to you is that we be allowed to clean them before they go out, because they really would be quite an embarrassment to us, to be seen as they are. And I said well, "Nothing would make us happier." We borrowed, I forget how many, maybe 20.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So a lot of them.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, yes, 20 or 30 or something, I forget. Anyway, that was very exciting, to resurrect those things, and it was years later when Jacqueline Kennedy went to the White House, she—where she learned about them, I don't know, maybe from one of these publications. She thought they would be a very good feature for the second floor, and to be sure they looked marvelous as they were installed there, you know stacked about four, panels of four.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, because they're not very big.

PERRY RATHBONE: They're not very big, no, they're about like that in their frames, and they looked wonderful, filling those great big walls on the second floor, very high ceilings. It was an absolute knockout, for a president's house in this country it was perfect. Indians in full regalia, you know, and landscapes of the west. Marvelous. Anyhow, we didn't have anything like the panorama to, you know to—oh yes, the opening, that's interesting, yes, yes. I think I may have pointed out that I found it very necessary to lay heavy stress upon publicity, to keep up with the zoo and attract the money the museum needed and so on. So we did quite a few stunts in St. Louis and one of them, at the opening of, opening of *Westward the Way*, I was casting about for something to dramatize that moment, and just as good luck would have it, somebody told me that there was—there were a band of Comanche Indians in St. Louis or coming to St. Louis for some purpose or other, and they were able to do war dances and war groups and everything else. So, I managed to get in touch with this troupe, there were about six or eight, and asked if they would come and perform amongst the guests at the opening of the *Westward the Way* exhibition, as a symbol of the Indian life that we were celebrating after all, and they were delighted. And they came in at the proper moment in the evening—I don't know, whenever the largest crowd was there—and they just came in amongst the guests and asked them to stand back and they let go with a blood curdling war cry, you never heard anything like it, and they all had bells on their ankles you know, and rattles in their hands, and drums, and they danced around, a sort of snake dance, in that big hall, shouting and whooping and hollering. You could never forget it. It just thrilled everybody, you know, to be that close to Indian life, with this historic evidence all around them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. It made a great, a great hit.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you ever talk to them about the exhibition? Did they look at it?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I don't remember having much conversation with them. They all mingled with the guests. Well, they were all practically naked, except for loincloths, a few features, and these bells, so they were an exotic sight amongst all the black ties, you can imagine.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, marvelous. [They laugh.]

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, so it made the papers, which is what we wanted, and attracted a great deal of press.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. But you know, museums really have to do that kind of show biz thing, don't they, every so often?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, well they do in this country. When you depend upon the populace to support you, you have to attract attention, there's no two ways about it, and also to show that you're alive, because too many people think of a museum as just a quiet place where guards are sleeping, you know?

PAUL CUMMINGS: But now, they get so many millions of people, what did the Metropolitan report, 3.2 million last year?

PERRY RATHBONE: Something like that, unbelievable, yeah, unbelievable.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where do they go?

PERRY RATHBONE: I don't know but I just came from there this noon and you know, there was crowds of people just outside, like the crowds that used to come on Sunday, are there every day. I remember the Met, as a boy going to the Met, it was always very quiet, you know, I felt almost conspicuous being there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But now, you get jostled in the lines.

PERRY RATHBONE: Right, it's true.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's incredible. Um, well 1954 or '55, was getting on towards the end of your time at St. Louis, which in fact was in '55 wasn't it?

PERRY RATHBONE: It was, yes, in '55.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. What happened? Did you want to leave, did another opportunity appear?

PERRY RATHBONE: No. I never wanted to leave, Paul. When I went to Detroit, I went there, you know, as if I were doing to spend the rest of my life there and it was really quite difficult to pull up stakes and as I told you in an earlier interview, and the same feeling came over me when the Boston opportunity arose. I went to St. Louis and threw myself into the job and behaved as if I never were going anywhere else and I was never casting about for any other job or betterment. I just happened to be lucky enough to go to a place that was totally absorbing, interesting and rewarding and in so many ways as I can surmise, you know. There was no reason. My children were all born there, they all loved St. Louis, my wife was happy there. We had the dearest friends whom we keep up with to this day. We had a nice house and garden and there was no reason to leave at all, and a perfect president in the person of Daniel Catlin, and why go? And uh, I remember Guy Blackmer, one of the trustees who came to the museum a great deal, and not in a bossy kind of way, but just because he adored art and was devoted to the staff and lunched with us often, said, "Well, some day you know, we'll see you getting out of here, you'll be kiting out of here, you know it's just a question of time." And I said, "Oh, Guy, don't be ridiculous, I have no intentions of that kind." "Well, you wait and see." It was a sort of prophecy, you know, and I paid no attention, and one day let's see, how did this happen? I guess I had a letter from Ralph Lowell. No, no, this is how it happened, most peculiar. I was in Europe and I was coming back to St. Louis and I was stopping in New York, and I had the key to Curt Valentin's apartment. He had arranged for me to stop there while he was abroad, and so I was amazed after the night I spent there, the phone rang and it was Richard Payne of Boston, whom I didn't know but Payne of course was a familiar name. He said, "I just range up to ask if you might be coming—if you wouldn't mind telling me about Midwestern museums. I'm very interested in the subject and I thought I'd just—I learned that you are on your way back to St. Louis from Europe." He'd found out from somebody that I was stopping there. I guess he called the museum. And ah, "I'd like to know. I'd be glad to come to New York and, and talk to you if I could," and I said, "Well, as a matter of fact, Mr. Payne, I have to stop at the Fogg Museum before I go back to St. Louis, I've got to come up to Boston to go to the Fogg, to talk about an Etruscan sculpture that's been very much questioned, that we'd bought several years ago, and I want to talk to George Hofmann about that, and so if maybe that would be easier, to save you a trip." Well, he said, "As a matter of fact, that makes a lot of sense, because my office is on the way, it's right near South Station, it's on Federal Station. You just take Union Station here, I'm on the so and so floor, and then you could go on to the Fogg." I said, "Fine, that's great." So I went to see him and I found him very nice, a very nice man, in this rather dowdy old Boston office, and he asked me all kinds of questions about who was the director in Detroit and who was the director in Minneapolis.

[END OF TRACK.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Side ten. Anyway, so you were in Mr. Payne's office.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes and he asked me very particularly, about all sorts of people, and I was able to characterize them, and since he was a stranger to me, I was somewhat guarded in what I said. I didn't say anything unflattering about anybody. I thought to myself, what an extraordinary man. Here he is, he's going to make a trip out west to look at museums, and he's just informing himself before he goes, it was really great. I suppose it's very Bostonian, I thought to myself. And he said, "Yes, I've been a trustee of the Boston Museum for quite a number of years now, and I take it seriously. It's awfully kind of you to come along and give me all this information and I thank you very much," and I said, "Very nice to meet you." So I went off to see George Hofmann and I talked with him about the Etruscan Diana and all that, and I looked up Agnes Mongan, an old friend of course, and she said, "Oh, come and have dinner." This was August or late July or something, no or maybe it was early July, early July, late June. Well, I forget exactly. Anyway, she said, "Oh, come and have dinner with me," and then she said, "I'll take you to the train." So we talked about everything under the sun and gossip about the museum world and she drove me to Back Bay and the train was just pulling in and I said, "Oh, by the way Agnes, I saw Richard Payne this morning, and I've never met him before." "Richard Payne!" she said. "Yes," I said. "Perry," she said, "He's a power." I said, "Oh, is he really?" "Yes," she said "He's a power. Oh, this is very exciting, can't you wait, can't you wait?" Here was the train and I said, "Not this time, Agnes, another day." So I boarded the train and left her, you see, startled and filled with speculation, which went right over my head. Only then did I begin to realize what he was up to. He was so subtle about this. And I do remember the next day, I came back from New York and the next day, I went into Julius Lowy's—the place was on 57th Street in those days—and as I was getting something framed, waiting, I looked over somebody's shoulder who was reading the *New York Times*, and saw the notice of Harold Edgell's death. He had died up in New Hampshire, the day after I got back from that interview. And when I got back to St. Louis a couple days later, there was a letter from Ralph



Lowell, the then president, saying that Richard Payne, the head of our search committee for a new director, has reported his conversation of having met you in Boston, and we'd like very much for you to come to Boston and discuss the matter further. So, that was how it happened.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, it's fantastic. So, I made plans of course to do that. I didn't want to, I was so happy to be home after my travels and the idea of meeting a big challenge wasn't at all attractive to me, but I remember thinking well, I've got to do that. And I rang up Daniel Catlin, whose summer home was up in Dublin, New Hampshire, and I said, "Dan, I'm coming out to Boston and I wouldn't come that close to Dublin without talking to you [inaudible], and maybe could see you." He said, "Oh," he said, "Perry, it's pretty clear what they're up to, I know darn well what they're up to up there in that Boston museum. I don't think you'd better come out here." [They laugh.] Which was really very charming of him. He was still ahead of me, you know? I said, "Well, I'll tell you all about it when I come," and so I did, I went there and met Richard Payne and the committee. We went to lunch at the Union Club and I answered questions. They looked me over as hard as they could and then I went back to the State Street Bank and with the treasurer, Robert Baldwin, an extremely first rate trustee, had a further talk with him about finances and salary and all that kind of thing, and then I went up to Dublin, New Hampshire and told Dan all about it, and he said, "Well, I guess there's nothing we can do about it. I hope you won't leave us right away, we have to find someone to take your place," and so on. Well that's, that's how it happened, Paul.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But it was such a good opportunity.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well it was, I mean how could you not pursue that? The Boston Museum needs everything done to it, everything. I mean, it has fabulous collections, it has a wonderful but aging staff, all of which have to be replaced. The whole place is so in need of ventilation, of revitalizing in every way, it can't help but be an exciting thing to do.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: So that was what lay ahead of me, and maybe that's a good place to stop today.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Okay. I just wanted to ask one more thing?

PERRY RATHBONE: Go ahead, do.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What happened once you got back to St. Louis, after talking to your trustees and you know?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, let's see, what were the sensations. Well, I can't remember.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It obviously leaked out, as they say.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, oh sure it leaked out and everybody was way ahead of me in saying, "Oh yes well, when are you packing your bags?" And all that kind of thing, you know? And I said, "Well, I really, I'm really quite distressed at the thought of leaving here, where everything is so agreeable and where I love the museum so much and like the museum, I don't relish the fact." Had to get used to it. And there's no—the Boston Museum, what more do you want? I mean it's—after the Metropolitan, it's the great museum, a great comprehensive museum in this country, and needs you, and this kind of thing. I was still quite young, I was what, 44 I believe, the right age. So, it took a while to get used to the idea.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Fantastic. Okay, well I think that's a good place to—

PERRY RATHBONE: Is it?

[END OF TRACK.]

## **February 11, 1976**

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's side nine, the 11th of February, 1976, Paul Cummings, talking to Perry Rathbone. I think if we could just take up from—

PERRY RATHBONE: —leaving St. Louis.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Leaving St. Louis and going to Boston and setting up. Where did you live and what was this like, moving to an older institution, larger, dealing with people, many of those people had been on the staff forever it seems.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh right, right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it was a whole new kind of thing.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. I told you about Arthur Houghton's visit.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, what was that?

PERRY RATHBONE: To St. Louis?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, didn't I? Well that comes along now because I had already been offered the directorship at the Boston Museum, when a telephone call came one day from Arthur Houghton, who at the time was the president of the Metropolitan Museum, and he said, "Are you going to be home and free tomorrow evening, I would like to come out and talk to you, from New York." And I said, "Yes, as far as I remember, yes, we're quite free." He said, "Do you mind if I come and just see you and your wife in the evening?" I said, "No, not at all, please come to us for dinner." So he came and I remember little domestic details here. Rettles thought that it would be nice to give him a steak and just for three, it's a rather easy thing to do, so she bought the nicest steaks she could find. She'd only been a housewife for eight years and we didn't eat very much steak, which is obvious, from what I'm going to tell you. She bought the nicest looking steaks you could find, which as you know is always a round steak.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: When I got home I found that she had this beautiful round steak to be broiled for Arthur Houghton, well you know, we'd have chewed all night, would have never been able to talk a word if we had proceeded on that program. So I said, "My dear Rettles, you don't realize that a round steak is only good if it was ground up, and then it's delicious, but unless you've got an awfully good grinders. I'm going to take this right back and trade it in for a sirloin." So that was the first thing I had to do when I arrived home, preparing to receive Arthur Houghton; rush back to Mall's Market and got the appropriate steak and came back. And Arthur Houghton came, he's a very genial and charming man as you know, and all he came to do was to offer me the directorship at the Metropolitan Museum, and I said, "Well, of course I'm deeply flattered and honored. I must say, I'm a little bit overwhelmed at the idea, though I have been told by others that of course that's where you'll arrive one day, I never entertained the idea seriously at all, in fact I was overwhelmed with Boston." I said, "You know, Arthur, it would be quite wrong for me even to talk to you any further, since I'm under obligation to Boston, to appear there next May, having accepted the directorship. So I think you'll realize that it would be rather cattish of me to drop those trustees and pick up another group." Although I could see how—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —tempting.

PERRY RATHBONE: How tempting it would be, and I know a few people who might do that, but I said, "I'm not one of them." And he said one significant thing after that, he said well—and it was quite interesting too. He said, "How about five years from now?" [They laugh.] And I said, "Well, that's quite another matter but it shows that you're a far-thinking man and I admire you for it." At this time, they were having an awful time at the Metropolitan, trying to decide who was to follow Francis Henry Taylor.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: You see? Francis Henry Taylor, when he knew that I was going to be director of Boston, sent me a wonderful telegram, in which he said he was delighted. He addressed me as if I were a highly placed cleric, so to say an archbishop or a cardinal or something, and said he was delighted at my appointment and he looked forward to being a priest in my diocese at Worcester. So that was very nice to know that he was coming as my successor, but it was interesting too, that I should be asked to be his—as my uh, parish priest, so to speak, interesting that I was considered to be his successor. Anyway, so he went back to New York without solving his director problem. It was a good many months after that, that they finally decided that they have the best man for the job there in their own backyard, so to speak, in James Rorimer, who apparently, from all I hear, was itching for the job and I dare say that's true. So that was rather amusing. Then I had to prepare myself for this transfer.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And I said I'll come in May. This must have been let's say January or February, that Arthur Houghton came to St. Louis, but I also had to find a house, and that was a rather interesting experience. I went on to Boston a couple times, in advance of my date in May for that purpose, and also to talk to the trustees, and I remember looking for—looking at 20 houses in Cambridge, there were 20 houses that came on the market

during those months, and having a family of three children poses a special problem, public schools and safety and all that. I looked at houses dating from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries and the first house I looked at was a 20th-century house, and that was the house which in the end we bought.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And you went through all the others?

PERRY RATHBONE: I went through all the others and many of them were really quite tempting, many of them were. The 18th-century house was especially tempting to me, because it was very attractive, on Brattle Street, a wonderful big house, built about 1785, now lived in by Professor Mason Hammond and his wife, and they're great friends, so we see something of that house these days. But in the end, the house we bought was on Coolidge Hill, a place where I'd never been in my college years, and no wonder really, because it had been a farm up until 1925, and I'd gone to college in 1929, so it was being developed at that time, and the house that we bought actually wasn't built until after I'd left Harvard. It was bought—it was built in 1938 to '39, by the sister of the famous Harvard man, Lucius Beebe.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, whose name was Lucia Beebe, Mrs. Rockwood, and she had built the house with great pride, and no thought of expense. It had the reputation of being the best built house in Cambridge, and it was extremely nice. It has five bathrooms, which is rather rare, five bathrooms on the second floor.

PAUL CUMMINGS: My heavens.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And, oh, seven bedrooms I guess, including the maids' rooms. At any rate, it's been a very comfortable house for us ever since and I always wanted to live near my museum because I felt one of the obligations of a museum director was to entertain visiting firemen [ph] for the value that they would be to you in a professional way, as well as to show as much American hospitality as expected, and this can't be done unless you're within easy driving distance of your museum, which your guests are bound to be.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How much time is there in travel, between—

PERRY RATHBONE: Well none at all. In St. Louis it was a matter of five minutes between my house on Windermere [ph] Place and the museum at Forest Park, and the situation in Boston was similar to that. It really was ten or eleven minutes at most, along Storrow Drive, from Coolidge Hill, to the Museum of Fine Arts. So that suited me. Furthermore, Cambridge, having been the part of Boston I knew best in my college years, seemed more like home to me than Brookline would have seemed, or some other nearby place. So I looked at houses in Brookline but Cambridge was ultimately the answer, and because the Rockwoods wanted the kind of family in that neighborhood, rather close-knit neighborhood of Coolidge Hill—they wanted neighbors who would be congenial with the neighbors that were there—they were willing to make quite a sacrifice in the price, which I must say was immensely decent of them. So we found ourselves, oddly enough, living with neighbors on each side of us, whose name was John Coolidge, but neither of whom was the John Coolidge who became the director of the Fogg Museum. One was a Dr. John Coolidge, who you could guess was a psychiatrist, because almost everybody in Cambridge lives next door to a psychiatrist, no matter where they live.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And the other one was involved with International Shoe Machinery, John W. Coolidge. Both of them extremely nice neighbors, so we were very fortunate that way. And the schools were very nearby and Peter could walk down the hill, to Browne and Nichols School. He was then about—what was he—nine, and the two girls went to Buckingham, which was also a little walk but not much of one, and we entertained constantly there. The kind of visiting firemen that I referred to, and it often involved the staff and our trustees, and really created a kind of collegial feeling for the museum that had not existed before in the memory of man, virtually, because my predecessor, Harold Edgell, while a very attractive and charming man himself, was—felt no obligation or no desire to be sociable with his staff or his trustees at all. Now Paul Sachs, who had been, you know, at Harvard since, I think 1918 or something, told me that he had never been in Harold Edgell's house, and this is really astonishing. And I remember he was admonishing me, he said, "Now see as much of your trustees as you can and do have them at home for dinner," and so on, he said that is a very important thing for you to remember.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did your wife like all this entertaining, was she interested in that?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Yes she was, as long as she had my backup, because she's basically a rather shy person and wouldn't have dreamt of doing these things on her own or being a sort of hostess you might say, on her own, as her rather remarkable and somewhat formidable aunt had been in Washington, who loved that kind of thing, having a circle of friends and constant dinner parties, and she was quite the opposite. Because I'm rather gregarious myself and like people and like, especially like strangers and foreigners, she fell into the role very

happily and she was a wonderful hostess and a marvelous, became a marvelous cook really. And she spent many hours in the Coolidge Hill kitchen on behalf of the Museum of Fine Arts, I can tell you, because we, the first dinner party we gave, was in honor of Kathryn Buhler, who had been an assistant in the Decorative Arts Department for many years and was a great specialist in American silver, and we had a caterer do that dinner. I think we had something like 14 for dinner, and I got a bill for \$140 plus the food, \$10 a piece, and I was really horrified with what it cost to have a caterer come and do the whole thing, and that was the only time I ever entertained with an outside caterer. So, Rettles took up the role of cook, but we also had a marvelous pair who came to serve for us, a man and his wife, an Englishman and his wife, who had the wonderful name of Swinerton [ph] and was really born to his role and was perfectly trained as a footman at Ham House outside London, where things were done in the grandest style, and he was so distinguished looking that our guests often took him for, often took him for another guest, and greeted him warmly, when he was trying to serve them a martini.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, marvelous.

PERRY RATHBONE: And Mrs. Swinerton [ph] did everything in the kitchen, and sometimes you really needed another waitress, if you were going to have 18 or something. "No," she said, "We would much rather do it all ourselves," and that's what they did, and in those days it cost \$20 for two superb people to come and serve dinner.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: They were with us for years and people would ask us where did they come from, how did you—I forget where they came from but they stayed with us until they were, you know, right up to retirement years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: Anyway, that was, that was the scene, and then the house was big enough so that we could entertain quite, quite happily, and it had enough art in it because of my own countless magpie habits, you know, of accumulation, so that it was not uninteresting. And in the summertime, the garden, which was very attractively designed by the architect who had built the house for the Rockwoods, was a very—another kind of reception room.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now you've always collected works of art, from college.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes, always.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um, but never with any particular pattern.

PERRY RATHBONE: No. No, just it was really what I could afford, and, and I just happened to have a very broad taste, an encompassing taste. I like Oriental art and western art and old art and modern art and American art, everything I could afford, I bought, and I hung on to all of it. I find it almost like having a divorce, to sell any of it. So I think I've only sold—one thing I traded in, which was a foolish measure, a portfolio of Matisse lithographs, which the Valentiners had given to me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh right, you've mentioned that, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: I think I mentioned that, and that was a foolish measure. And the other thing was a little painting by Darrel Austin that I didn't want to keep. Everything else, except for what few things I've given away, I still have. My college roommate was here this last weekend, having been at the *Harvard Lampoon* shenanigans with me. He stopped here, and he was appalled at my lack of—well, not my lack of system in acquiring things, but my lack of having made any provision for them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Either by way of insurance or by way of a will or anything like that. And I can't take them as seriously as he does because I think of them only for what they cost me, not what they've become worth.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, at some point one really has to do it because things change you know.

PERRY RATHBONE: Things change, you see, and you could be, you could be stricken tomorrow, and you'll leave the most ghastly mess on your family's hands and a great big bill, if you haven't taken measures to set things straight.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right, absolutely.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, let's—

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did you do when you finally became established in Cambridge, moved to Boston, set up your office. I mean here was a whole new group of people and a collection of buildings and grounds.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Well, let me say first of all what I did. I was there alone because my family couldn't join me until after the children's school was out.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: You see they couldn't come in May and they didn't—they couldn't come until July and meantime, I hoped to have a place for them to come to. And in that I succeeded, because we did buy the Coolidge Hill house in time for them to move into it and I think we moved on the 3rd or 4th of July. In the meantime, I was most cordially invited to stay at Fenway Court, by George and Margaret Stout, who were old friends from, you know, from the beginning of my museum years and were just the soul of hospitality and kindness. And they said of course, you've got to stay right here, it's only a step to the museum, and you're not going to stay in any hotel, certainly not, you're going to stay right here. We have a guest room and you're just one of the family. Come and go as you please and there's no key to give you because there is no key to Fenway Court. No, indeed, this house was designed so that there would always be someone inside it to open the door, and Mrs. Gardner herself had no key to the house, and certainly we do not have.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic!

PERRY RATHBONE: Well it is sort of. I've never been in a house that had no key to it before, but it's perfectly true, on the street, on alongside, which is now called Palace Road. It used to be called Worthington Street, I think. They just knocked or rang and the porter came and opened up. So there I lived, on the top floor of that house, which was, as you know built by Mrs. Gardner, as her own—well, for her own kind of retirement apartment. It's a very, very spacious apartment indeed, but built around that courtyard. So, getting from my bedroom, which was on one side of the courtyard, around to the room where breakfast was served on the other. It was like walking around the block but still being in the same house. [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's a workout in the morning.

PERRY RATHBONE: Exactly. [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, marvelous.

PERRY RATHBONE: But that was wonderful you see, and the Stouts were being very kind, and having lived in Boston and Worcester, where he had been director before he came to Fenway Court, were very well acquainted. They introduced me to lots of people and made me feel at home immediately. But I remember, one thing that amuses me very much, Paul. I remember sitting there, in one of the numerous sitting rooms, and of course in a bay window, being in Boston, and overlooking the Back Bay Fens, which is a park, and seeing the Museum of Fine Arts and the rooftops of the museum, you know in full panoramic view, and just below the museum, on Huntington Avenue, there was an absolute fortress of a warehouse, the Boston Storage Warehouse. It's since disappeared because Northeastern University has had it torn down and expanded their own dormitories and whatnot there, but in those days this formidable building stood there and it was crowned with an immense sign, which said "Boston Storage Warehouse." From where I sat in the Stout's window and looked across, this warehouse sign looked as if it stood right on top of the Boston Museum, and I sat there musing and realizing what my problem was. My problem really was to change that museum into a lively, vital, inviting, irresistible place, from it being literally a Boston Storage Warehouse, because that's what it was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Tight and gray.

PERRY RATHBONE: Tight and gray and shall I say neglected, airless, dim, forbidding, and filled with treasure.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yeah, you just can't believe it when you go in for the first time.

PERRY RATHBONE: You really cannot. And I realized that of course, it was one of the great museums of the world, but it was a slumbering giant, and I thought well that's your job, Rathbone, to wake it up and make it perform. And I'll never forget the sight of that sign, you know, and that's what happened in the ensuing 17 years, to capsule events. It was a great challenge and my first sensation, Paul, was the need for patience. It took so long to get that enormous mechanism moving, I didn't think I could stick it out. And I came to realize what a virtue patience is. It is one of the seven virtues isn't it, and I never thought of it as anything but a passive virtue until I had this experience and I came to realize it's an active one.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Active patience.

PERRY RATHBONE: Active patience. Really, you can't imagine the frustrations.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, you know one thing of many dozen that interests me is what did you do, because you were now, you know somewhat older, you've been in St. Louis, and you were going to a museum which was older, larger, had a staff of people who are quite renowned in their field. How do you start? How do you walk in, begin?

PERRY RATHBONE: That's a good question.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Here I am, folks?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well in a way there's no rulebook, and I've always maintained that one of the principal, one of the principal necessities of running a museum is common sense, and I think I have a fair reserve of common sense. First of all, let me say that my predecessor, Howard Edgell, this genial man, this charming man. Genial, I'm not so sure, but he certainly had an enormous amount of personal charm, that really, I think knew nothing about running a museum, never had any feeling for it. He had been a professor almost all his mature days, since his student years in, in Rome and ah, Florence. He was in love with Italian painting, it's true, but he really was a scholar up to a point and a teacher, and he was a brilliant lecturer. A little bit superficial you understand but most entertaining, and he would say, to anyone who was listening, "You know, I really don't have to run the Boston Museum because I have the best staff in the world. I have, without question the best staff, and they just run the place." Well, and that was literally true, because it was known. Everybody told me who didn't know it already, that he was there and he left weekends, often Thursdays and always Fridays, and went off to a shooting preserve in New Hampshire, in a place called Newport, New Hampshire, where he owned thousands of acres with his wife, who was also a very good horse woman and apparently a good shot, and he loved shooting game birds and he loved fishing and chasing bees. He even wrote a book about the wild bee's habits and all that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And he had some little pied-a-terre here in New York and would spend as much time away from his office as possible. And during office hours, he had his spaniels under his desk, you know, and he would go around—

PAUL CUMMINGS: That sounds like the lord of the manor paying a visit or something.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, it was like that, and these tales that came out when I arrived there, you would hardly believe. He would come, have these rather abbreviated hours, and then he would walk around the museum, to the various curatorial offices, tell a few jokes in a very charming way, because he was very good at telling stories, loved that kind of humor, and then ask his curators if they had any letters that he could answer. Can you imagine? I got to the point where I just could really never keep up with my correspondence the way I wanted to, but Howard Edgell would have to go and ask people if they had any letters that he could answer.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How strange, how strange.

PERRY RATHBONE: And I know—indeed.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You had the curators carved out their own fiefdoms then?

PERRY RATHBONE: Precisely. It was called a community of hill towns, each with its own fortifications. The Asiatic Department fortified over there in the west end and the Classical Department in the east end, and the Print Department on the north end and the Textile Department on the lower floor, on the east end, and the Painting Department, of course under W.G. Constable, that was his own fief. It was just like that and this was, one of his principal activities was to do that. Then, worried about the attendance, which God knows anybody wasn't too worried about in Boston in those days, he and William Dooley, who was the press relations man, and also pinch hitting as head of the Education Department. He was an *ex-Transcript* reporter, who had come out of Harvard and studied some fine arts, and when the *Transcript* folded, he found a job there at the museum. He was a very genial chap, Bill Dooley, but not what you would call exactly inspired, but he and Howard Edgell would spend some time by the front door, where there were electronic counters that clocked the attendance, and stand there in front of the electronic counters and wave their arms back and forth, and with each wave of which—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —it was one more person.

PERRY RATHBONE: One more person. But this is literally true, you can believe it. But I was told this by everybody on the staff so I know it's a fact. Isn't it incredible? This is—let's see, Edgell died 1954. Then, another unbelievable thing was what happened on Tuesday evenings. McLachlan [ph], who had been the captain of the guard for many years and was a very genial Irishman and one of those people you couldn't dislike for any reason, was also very much pals with the director and was respected by everybody, he and the rest of the guards didn't like this idea of Tuesday evenings at all. They didn't think it was a hell of an innovation, and so they did everything they could to discourage its continuance, and they would turn in these attendance figures

that were so, so miniscule, that it hardly seemed justified. And I learned, after I had been there for a while, that the Educational Department, which gave the lectures in the evening, would literally count the people in their lectures, and they would find there were more people in their lectures than had been admitted to the entire museum, according to the misrepresentation of the attendance figures. Now this is the kind of thing that was going on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But what—did the trustees know about this? Did they condone it?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, no, I don't think the trustees—well, of course the trustees knew very well that a change was necessary and Richard Payne, I should have understood from what he said to me in that interview that I described. He did say, you know, "Our director is getting rather old and I think there's a need for change." And I think I told you about the social events there didn't I, when he said, "I hope we don't have any more, more parties," didn't I?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, what was that?

PERRY RATHBONE: That's another one of those typical Boston things. Richard Payne, a remarkable man, a man of few words but well chosen, well he used to have a twinkle in his eye and he had a very merry face. He said well, he said, "Whatever happens at the Boston Museum, I hope we don't have any more of those parties where no one comes except some old ladies in funny hats." [Laughs.] And that's literally what happened, that's all that came. And he'd have afternoon tea parties in what was left of Back Bay Brahmin, Brahmin land, would come, and nobody else, and certainly almost no one under 50, not at all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: So, the trustees knew that change was needed and they were all for me, in whatever way I could achieve it, and they didn't give me any rules. I had good advice from people like Paul Sachs, who was a practical man and up-to-date and alert and aware. Well one of the things they did very nicely, I must say, we were welcomed with great warmth. One thing happened which was a nice memory, and that was that the Copley Society, which is the oldest art society in Boston, because of getting a new director who was only 44, was such a—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Startling.

PERRY RATHBONE: Startling. Something had to be done. They gave a great dinner at the Harvard Club, with a dais for the head table and there we were, all the nabobs of the hour and at the time, I remember W.G. Constable was up there, of course has since died, President Lowell, Ralph Lowell, was there, and George Stout of the Gardner Museum, and I forget who the others were. I had to say a few words, which I did, and George Stout spoke about me in a way that I shall never forget, because it was so, well it was so kind of Mark Twain in its perfect simplicity and frankness, and it was very touching. Anyway, it showed great confidence around the fact that people liked me as a person as well as an art director and so on, and I felt very good about that, but I didn't know exactly what I was going to do about the Copley Society, because it's the most conservative band in the United States, without any doubt, especially in 1955, when they mentioned wanting to have a hand in things if they could. Then the trustees gave a great reception at the museum, to meet Rattles and me, and that was held—we received in the evening. Yes, it was black tie of course. We received in the evening, in the big tapestry hall and so many people turned out and the thing was run in such a peculiar and archaic way, that the line—because Boston well, even during right up to the end, my last years at the museum, we had a receiving line.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: The line ran right down the front stairs and practically out the door.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes! Everyone in Boston was cued up and in their best clothes, and there's some wonderful candid photographs of that evening because *LIFE* magazine, at this time, was quite excited by the musical chairs that were going on; Francis Taylor leaving the Metropolitan and I going there, and Worcester, and the National Gallery and I forget, all the museums that were involved in this sudden—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —switch, yeah, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Switch, precisely. They thought it would make a great story so they were in force, making wonderful candid photographs of this Boston crowd. There's a marvelous picture of Maxim Karolik greeting Rattles and me for the first time, as the director. I had met him before but never seen very much of him. I certainly did after that. Um, and then there were pictures of me in front of the museum, which are going to be part of this great thing, and then somebody who was involved, one of the directors involved, suddenly said no,

he didn't want any publicity and gave no permission, so that knocked the whole thing out. Nevertheless, we have some nice photographs of the event.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You could have run for governor the next cycle. [Laughs.]

PERRY RATHBONE: Exactly. Well, then, then there was a wonderful dinner given for the staff at the Harvard Club, by Ralph Lowell, in advance of my coming, so that I would know them all when I arrived. Very thoughtful and a very gentlemanly thing to have done, and that was quite amusing because a great friend of mine, who was on the staff then, Hanns Swarzenski, with whom I stayed, with him and his wife, and I think, I think Ed Hipkiss was there, I'm not sure—who was soon to die—and of course Dows Dunham in the Egyptian Department and Kojiro Tomita, the aging Japanese in the Asiatic Department. W.G. Constable, of course, the curator of the Painting Department, and Henry Rossiter, the print curator, and the only lady in the midst, in our midst, of course was the formidable and redoubtable Gertrude Townsend, Curator of Textiles. So, that made a very funny scene. There were all these men in the Harvard Club, with Gertrude Townsend. It really was a riot. And several of them got terribly drunk, I remember, really terribly, terribly drunk, but they were all really so happy to see me, because they felt well, you know things, they couldn't slide backwards anymore and some good is bound to come from this guy even if we don't know him very well. And amongst the big, big boosters, supporters, were two men. One was Ed Humphrey, who was the treasurer of the museum, had been there since 1922 or something.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh my gosh.

PERRY RATHBONE: And the other one was one of the trustees, who was—Robert Baldwin, who was the trustee treasurer of the museum, an extremely nice man, a banker in Boston and just a very conscientious servant of the museum, who was really in a sense, my faculty advisor through all those first months.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. In a way, he was the one I turned to most often, when I needed to ask a question about policy or finance or whatever.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Procedures.

PERRY RATHBONE: Procedures and firing and hiring, and relationship of the superintendent to the treasurer and the treasurer to the director, and the trustees, and all that kind of thing. And of course people were so, as you say there were all these fiefdoms in full operation. It wasn't easy to break them all down. I remember, one of my first tussles had to do with Ms. Townsend, a minor affair but it shows. We had just received, the museum had just received, as a gift of the Hearst Foundation, a magnificent, great Brussels tapestry in almost perfect preservation, with all its colors still there and all that, and it was to be hung up in honor of its acquisition, in the tapestry hall, where it belonged, and Mrs. Hearst was going to come and see it, and some other member of the foundation. Gertrude Townsend said hang it in the tapestry hall, and I said, "Well of course Ms. Townsend, it's going to be hung in the center of that wall and I think we should designate it, get some kind of a garland to surround it, so there will be no mistake about it being honored and so on." She didn't want to do that at all, so—what is the word—pedantic in a way, and so ultra-scholarly in her approach to everything, that she wanted it hung in chronological sequence, with the other three tapestries on the wall or something, and I said, "Well, Ms. Townsend, it's not going to take very much imagination for anyone to see that this tapestry was made before that one. I don't think you have to go one, two, three."

PAUL CUMMINGS: In a row.

PERRY RATHBONE: In a row. It obviously must be the center. Well, I had to, I really had to debate that with her for a long time before she finally gave in, but it was the first, really the first example, of the director interfering with curatorial affairs and directing the museum and saying well this is what I think is best for the museum, not just to satisfy your mental attitude. This is what I think is the proper way to do things from the point of view of the public and this public institution, like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: So it was—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —the beginning.

PERRY RATHBONE: The beginning. And it wasn't long after that, that we put on this splendid show of silver, in honor of Kathryn Buhler, that I mentioned before, and Carl Zahn, who was one of the first persons I engaged as a designer, because there was no designer, no typographer, nothing like that. I said, "Well, Carl, we really need to have the cases to lay out this exhibition, which I'm going to leave to you, and I think you can get some of those



recently made cases from the Asiatic Department, and some from here, and get them all together, so there's a uniformity," and so on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And Mrs. Buhler, who certainly was—belonged to the old establishment, you know the kind of just curatorial point of view and position, she went around to—[inaudible]—and she said, speaking to Carl Zahn, "Do you mean to say you're going to let that young whippersnapper tell you what to do with your cases?" This is what she said, ignoring the fact that it was the director's request that Zahn do that. It was really boiled down to being one department against another, or both against the administration.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah. How did you select Zahn?

PERRY RATHBONE: I did that in a very deliberate way. I thought the first thing that was necessary, that the museum should represent itself in as distinguished a typographic style as possible, I always believed that, and designed for St. Louis. I turned to my classmate, Jim Plaut, who was directing the Institute of Contemporary Art at the time, or had he just resigned? I guess he had just resigned, but he had been, and I knew he was in touch with all the best designers, and he said, "Well there's no doubt at all, Carl Zahn, who has done our work here, a young man, Harvard, the Cooper Union, I think you couldn't do better." And I wanted a logo, which the museum had not had since three circles were invented back in 1876, but they had since become the Ballantine Ale three circles. [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Could have gotten a Ballantine trustee.

PERRY RATHBONE: We could have, I hadn't thought of that. We should have gotten something out of it. You know, one circle was architecture, one was industry and one was art or something, one of those things.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh right, oh heavens.

PERRY RATHBONE: So we needed a new emblem in the worst way and it's one of the hardest things in the world to design, as you're aware, Paul, but it wasn't beyond Carl's powers, and he soon, as his first assignment on a contract basis, delivered the logo that we still use, MFA and the kind of radiant, multi-pointed star. And then I asked him if he wouldn't join the staff part-time, beginning the first of January. There was so much to do and we'd had—we put out a big exhibition of Sargent, that had been designed up in Vermont, and the catalogue only came at the last minute, because they weren't very attentive to the production problems. And Carl accepted, with great pleasure, and that was the beginning, in my opinion, of the change that gradually overtook the museum and he was wonderful all the way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How long was it before you felt that you could see a manifestation of your own ideas and activities?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, it seemed a matter of years, you know? It seemed years, Paul, but impatient though it was, I simply had to see some result of my efforts and effect of my ideas upon the museum. I just had to in order to satisfy my belief that it could happen.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: The first show that was put on while I was there, and I don't want to be too detailed, but if it's interesting I will be.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes, absolutely.

PERRY RATHBONE: Is it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: The first show that I had anything to do with was a show that was put together more or less by *LIFE* magazine, or for *LIFE* magazine, or *TIME* magazine rather, called *Sport in Art*, and it was a picture show. It was 90 percent oil paintings, I suppose, and 10 percent watercolors, something like that, and because that was the nature of the show, it fell to the Painting Department, namely W.G. Constable, to install it. I must say frankly, I have never seen anything so appalling as the way that exhibition was arranged, because the same kind of rigid theoretical attitude prevailed. All the pictures involving rowing must be here, all the pictures about fishing must be there, and baseball there and football here, and tennis, so that no matter how disparate in style the scale, the anything, they were all crowded into these alcoves uncomfortably and it was a perfect mess. You know, instead of having things that were comfortable together or with the same period made some sense. They had this rigid categorical approach. Well, I thought that cannot happen again, because it's a reflection upon me and it's bad for the museum, it's bad for art, it's bad for everything. But, I had my hour, because just at this

time, as luck would have it, I was approached by some outfit, I can't remember exactly who they were, but they came and said would it be—you know that Tenley Albright was the international skating champion of the world at this time, having won the Olympics, came from Brookline and either these people made the ice rink in the museum, or some friend of Tenley's, because she was very much in the news those days, and the idea of sport in the museum, was a new one, and here was a prima donna—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —right there.

PERRY RATHBONE: Supporting us, right there. The thing all came together so that pretty soon, I was talking to these people who were prepared to make an ice rink in the rotunda of the museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: Imagine. And there was Tenley Albright, with whom I was soon in touch, perfectly willing to come and skate for our first nighters in the rotunda of the museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, and I must say, you know she skated like a bird, she was superb, a real artist, a dancer on the ice.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did that do to Boston?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I can tell you, then somebody else—then of course we needed money to pay for the ice, and I think I approached Stacy Holmes at Filene's and said, "Do you think, by making this in some way, a Filene's something or other, you could pay for making the ice, which cost about \$2,500," as I recall, and he said, "I think so, we can send up some winter fashion models to stand around, you know, before or after the on track or something," and I said then you could pick up the tag for the ice, sure he would. So we invited our guests and of course of some them were actually ecstatic, some of them were speechless, and I think old Billy Aldrich said that he was going to resign as a trustee or something. Do you know who he was, the architect?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, William Aldrich.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, he stormed and fumed. He didn't storm and fume at me directly but it came back to me through somebody at the Odd Volumes Club or something. And then someone sent me a telegram from Gloucester, saying something like the most cathartic and, and—oh, I can't remember exactly. The idea of being the—breaking the ice this way is what the museum has been praying for, I mean it was the greatest thing that could happen. And it really did because it, you know, made a big story in the papers and it showed that the museum was alive and open to new ideas and all the rest of it. It ceased to be the very—this absolute stronghold of privileged, Brahmin Boston, which it really was. In spite of all its virtues, it was that and that needed to be cracked.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well they weren't really supporting it that much either, were they?

PERRY RATHBONE: No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And it was tapering off as time went on.

PERRY RATHBONE: That's another detail that maybe is significant. Yes it is, because the thing that Harold Edgell did constantly and rather um—how should I say it? Rather as a kind of hollow exercise, was signing handwritten type—hand-typed letters, one after the other, addressed to what were called the subscribers to the museum, or hoped for, hoped to be subscribers. And these letters were typed up by the secretary there, imagine, every one of them on engraved stationery, the most expensive stationery with these three rings engraved up in the left hand, dear so and so, we know that the museum would very much welcome your subscription this year, and last year we had so many subscribers and this year we need so many more, and each one was signed like this. I did that for about six months, there was literally a pile on my desk every week, like this. Yeah. And I just had to keep on doing it, knowing it was the wrong thing to do, to write things, and the result of this colossal effort and very expensive typing—each one of those letters must have cost, in time and material, two or three dollars.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, easily.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. There were 2,200 subscribers.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That every year got a letter like that?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, and quite a few others got one that never replied, you see, never subscribed. And I discovered, from making an analysis of these subscribers, that 500, roughly 500, were subscribing five dollars or

less per annum. There was no, there was no minimum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, so they could send a dollar in.

PERRY RATHBONE: They could send a dollar and you would get, in return for the dollar, you got a very nicely made little calendar, desk calendar, put out by the museum, which sold for 25 cents or 30 cents or something like that, at the sales desk. That was your present and then whenever they had one of these old lady's teas, you would get an invitation to that. You just can't believe it. So that's where we started, yes, with you see, less than 1,500 people who were paying \$10 or more per annum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They were what, annual members.

PERRY RATHBONE: Annual members, and their names were all published, every single year, in the museum annual report, for these you know, minimal sums.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, incredible.

PERRY RATHBONE: That's what—all that had to be changed, and we gradually did. We began that vital change in the museum by establishing a Ladies' Committee, a women's committee, but in Boston, such committees are known as ladies' committees. And it was the best fortune that the year before I came to Boston, Mrs. Roger Hallowell, Frances Weeks Hallowell, had been elected the first lady trustee of the museum. It was a big step forward.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: From 1870?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes, certainly since 1870 and she—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Incredible.

PERRY RATHBONE: It's incredible. And she and Mrs. Bliss [ph] who was very active and dropped out after a while, like at almost the same time, but after the first trustees meeting that I attended, I'll never forget, she came up to me. No, I came up to her and I said Frances, "I established a women's committee of the Friends of the Museum in St. Louis and it made all the difference in the world. Would you be willing to head up the committee or help organize a similar committee here in Boston?" And she said, with characteristic enthusiasm she said, "Would I?" She said, "I can't wait!" and I said all right, we'll have a meeting this week and we'll talk about the fundamentals right here and now. She said, "Great!" Like that. And, and that was the beginning of the change in our membership, which grew to—oh yes, let me say that those uh, those 2,200 contributed \$44,000 a year, for the support of that museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Heavens.

PERRY RATHBONE: Forty-four thousand dollars. And we built that membership up to nearly 15,000, contributing around \$500,000 a year.

PAUL CUMMINGS: There's no relationship.

PERRY RATHBONE: No. In a matter of 17 years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. It never could have been done without the woman power and without a leader like Franny Hallowell, who has since become Mrs. James Lawrence. But that's what we did and the trustees were really, they were very good about all that. They were looking for—they were looking for new ideas and new approaches, and they enjoined me repeatedly that what this museum needs is to broaden the base of its support, and by that also, the base of its meaning. And that was the principal goal of my years, to do that, in addition to enriching its artistic content and making it as significant a great museum as I could.

But to go back to one of your earlier questions, Paul, you know you asked me about the sort of old guard, who were so entrenched there, and I was entirely aware of that and I know that I was looked upon with some suspicion, because I had been a popularizer of the museum in St. Louis, and I think any kind of a popularizer was looked upon askance in Boston.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Not serious or something.

PERRY RATHBONE: Not serious or, or something like that, or maybe he's—

PAUL CUMMINGS: A numbers game player or one of those things you know.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, or questionable taste or you know, could he be a gentleman? Some—I don't know what the reserves were, but in a way, on the part of some of them, it was a question of you know, just showing them. But I never had any friction with my staff at all. I just followed my own principle, believing the best of everybody until anything other was proven, and proceeding along those lines and treating everyone with perfect fairness, as perfect as one can.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How long—did you have the same trustees for a long time or were they changing gradually over the—?

PERRY RATHBONE: No, because you were elected for life.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, so a trustee was a trustee.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, and if I could tell you, the age of some of the trustees when I went there, Henry Shattuck was, he must have been very close to 80 then, and old William Emerson, oh yes, oh my goodness. Heavens yes, they were all old men except for Franny Hallowell and John Coolidge, he wasn't old then, and Nelson Aldrich wasn't old then, but all the others were elderly; Paul Sachs, Edward Forbes, every one of them, and there's no provision for rotating off the board or anything, they were there for life.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So once they were there, they were there if they lived to be a hundred.

PERRY RATHBONE: That's right, and there were quite a number you see, who were appointed and not elected.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What's the difference then?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, there were three founding organizations. The museum was really the child of three parents; the old Boston Athenæum, in a way the most important parent, because it had had a picture gallery since about 1827 or something, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University. And those three institutions, by virtue of their sponsorship of the museum back in the—in 1870, were entitled to nominate each, three trustees.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes and as I remember it, they had to be renewed every year, I believe they were, and they usually were just the same three. To be sure, Harvard did change its trustee appointees a couple of times, because well, Frank Couple [ph], for example, who was the trustee for a while, moved up to New York and so he was no longer available, and so on. But, this representation, there were nine therefore you see, plus the trustee of the Lowell Institute, there's one trustee of the Lowell Institute, which is the Lowell family.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: It was a lectureship program that was started back in the 1830s, which Boston is always mad about lectures as you know. And so that's where Ralph Lowell came from, he was an automatic trustee, nine appointees, and then there were several ex-officios who were no good to us whatever; the mayor of Boston, who never came, the chairman of the board of trustees of the [Boston] Public Library, who rarely came, the superintendent of schools, whom I never saw, and state commissioner of education. So it didn't leave very many to be elected and therefore, something had to change so that more responsibility would be assumed by the trustees than had been the case.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did that—were you able to do that?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, we managed to do that about 1967 or '68, we managed to get the three parent institutions, to accept our idea that one appointee per institution was enough. And sometimes, I had occasion to think that was a mistake, because those three men from each of those institutions, you can be sure would be disinterested persons.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

PERRY RATHBONE: You see? They would be disinterested and they would be representing three intellectual institutions, where the intellectual side of things was highly respected and understood, and there would be no place for the personal aggrandizement.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So somebody who is an individual representing himself as a trustee, could—

PERRY RATHBONE: He, he can very well be swamped you see, by a phalanx like that. We'll come to that later on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh that's fantastic, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. But this was, this was the situation as—I hope it paints a picture for you.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Okay.

[END OF TRACK.]

## **February 24, 1976**

PAUL CUMMINGS: This is side ten. This is the 24th of February, 1976. Paul Cummings, talking to Perry Rathbone. Back to the reception, or prior to.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Well, prior to the reception, we were entertained at dinner in the museum, in the Trustees Room, it was a dinner for all the trustees, and the new, newly appointed director and his wife. And there we assembled in the former director's office, the late Harold Edgell's office, and—I wonder, I suppose we had a drink there, I forget—and then we went into the adjacent Trustees Room, which was really quite a charming sight, because they had hung the walls with some paintings from the painting stores, it made it very attractive. And there were a dozen round tables with little gold ballroom chairs and flowers and so on, it was all very pretty and very festive and really, a very delightful evening all together, because socially, nobody is more agreeable, I think, than a Bostonian. It really is true and it really was a room full of very charming ladies and gentlemen, that's what it was. The old school was there in force.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was almost the end of the old school wasn't it?

PERRY RATHBONE: Almost the end of the old school. Well, they were there for quite a long time thereafter but I remember, I'm quite sure I sat next to Mrs. Lowell, I'm certain, the wife of the president, and I think on my other side was Mrs. Roger Hallowell, who has since become Mrs. James Lawrence. So I was well placed and maybe at my table was the old grand dame of the museum, the old grand ma of the museum, who was Mrs. Edward Jackson Holmes. She was the widow of Edward Jackson Holmes, who had been both president and director of the museum, and who was a grand—was a grandson of the *Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, Oliver Wendell Holmes.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oliver Wendell Holmes, yes, and they—and a nephew of the chief justice and a collector, especially of Persian art, a patron of Arthur Upham Pope and a great and generous friend of the museum. He and his—he had died some years before but his wife was an absolute darling, a lady of about 80, and sort of Mrs. Santa Claus.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, just radiating their good humor and kindness and gentility and goodness. And she was everybody's darling and loved everybody in the museum as if they were her own family. And one of the first occasions of my directorship was a birthday party for Mrs. Holmes, in the Asiatic Department. She was a particular favorite there because she and her husband were devoted to Asiatic art and they had made a particular pet of Kojiro Tomita, the Japanese curator, and his wife. So it was appropriate that the birthday party be held there and the entire staff was there, which then numbered, I would say about 75 or 80 people, something like that, and, in the midst of this throng, there was a birthday cake the likes of which I've never seen before or since. It was a towering birthday cake made in the form of a Japanese towered house, with verandas all around it, and roofs.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yeah. Oh my gosh.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, an absolutely fabulous, elaborate thing. Where it came from, who made it, I never, never found out. Not that I wasn't interested, but I was so overwhelmed by all the strangers around me, I had not met any of the staff, except as a candidate or as a director, as an appointed director, and there they were all of a sudden, all the dozens.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was that party soon after your—

PERRY RATHBONE: Soon after the reception. I would say it—I know her birthday was in May, so it must have been within a week or two.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, it was right away almost.

PERRY RATHBONE: Right after it, and I had no way of catching up with who all those people were and suddenly there they were, and I was introduced to one after the other after the other and had to smile and say how do you do a hundred times.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you do in a circumstance like that, when you're given a mass of people?

PERRY RATHBONE: I don't know. All you do is grin, as far as I can see, and radiate as much good humor as you can. And I remember well, at that reception, going back to that for a moment, as I said when we were in line, as I remember, something like—well it's hard to believe, but something like four hours receiving all these people.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because the line went way out the door and it was one after another.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And somebody came up to me, I forget now who it was, and said, "Why don't you—why don't you sit down and take a load off your face." [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Inaudible] in Boston.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, I must say your face feels it more than your feet, because you have this perpetual grin you know, and you try to say something intelligent and appropriate to each person.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well you had mentioned that the museum had developed into sort of small fiefdoms of one department or another, which is what you had to deal with. How did you do that? I mean it must have taken some persuasion or insight or tact.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Well in the first place, I think—

PAUL CUMMINGS: I think some of the curators had been there for years.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, indeed they had, and I don't know exactly how, I suppose it was more by intuition than by any constructed program, I think it was just the fact that I observed the museum as a museum, as a total entity and not as a collection of fiefdoms, and I treated everybody equally, and talked about the good of the museum, not the good of this department and that department. And I think it was through this attitude of mine more than anything else that the message arrived that I was not interested in this collection of states. Another way I think I broke it down and dissolved this attitude was by means of the staff dining table.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, that's a curious thing. In the basement of the museum was the restaurant and in a room just off the restaurant there was the staff dining room, and there was only one large table around which we all sat at lunchtime.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh my heavens.

PERRY RATHBONE: But not at any given hour, the staff came and went, but it was for any member of the staff.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it would be a changing table.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, and you saw everyone. And I remember the first time I went there, Dows Dunham, who was the senior of all curators then, was he the longest? I think he had been in office longest. Anyway, he pointed to the chair at the head of the table and he said, "That is the director's chair and that's where Howard Edgell always sat and that's where you are expected to sit," as if to preside these lunches you see? And um, the staff came in increasing numbers to those lunches, which was very nice, because they constituted a kind of informal staff meeting. We often discussed museum business and museum attitudes and museum trustees, museum exhibitions, programs and all the rest and that was very agreeable. The only person who was excluded, you know the persons who were excluded, were the women, because it was a tradition in the staff dining room where it was a men's dining room.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, wow.

PERRY RATHBONE: And so Ms. Townsend, who was the only female curator, was excluded, and so was Ms. Hazel Palmer, who was a kind of pro tem curator of the Classical Department. And this attitude was staunchly defended by Henry Rossiter, who was also very senior and much respected, but also felt that there was a place for men and there was a place for women and the men all felt that they could speak more freely at the table.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And be relaxed in a kind of men's clubby atmosphere, and we thought that it was perfectly reasonable for Ms. Townsend to have her lunch with the visitors of the museum, and Ms. Hazel Palmer, and Ms. Eleanor Sayre, who was assistant curator of prints at the time, and the other ladies on the staff. And of course I went along with this because I wasn't there to turn everything around as soon as I arrived and I must say it was quite agreeable. But everybody was there who wanted to come and some never came, like Bill Dooley. I think I mentioned him didn't I, William Dooley?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, I don't think so.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well he was the head of the Educational Department of the museum and also public relations.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes, briefly you mentioned him.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, I think I did. He didn't come to those meetings, to those lunches, but rather went to the Harvard Club, the nearby Harvard Club on Commonwealth Avenue, because you could get a martini there, whereas our restaurant was dry, very dry, and Bill preferred the other way. So we made the best we could with just cold water and coffee, you know, and we had an absolute, absolute terror of a restaurant manager. Ms. Holmes was her name, just like the old director's name, but no connection, who was such a tightwad, that she served miniscule portions to everybody's annoyance, and the food wasn't very good at that, and in order to use up leftovers, she even stooped to making what's known as a mashed potato sandwich and a cold baked bean sandwich.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh my goodness.

PERRY RATHBONE: Now that's about the nadir of New England cooking, I'd say. Well, I used to hear these complaints all the time and I saw that it was—that I was afraid she would have to be retired before she reached her normal retirement, because the people couldn't take it much longer.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did the women ever get into the dining room?

PERRY RATHBONE: No, not into the staff dining room.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, you mean before I left?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, because we finally built a new dining room.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, so you began a new tradition.

PERRY RATHBONE: A new restaurant yes, and there we let down the bars, you see, and the ladies were invited along with the men, and we continued to have a very lively and agreeable staff table.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did it make any difference once they appeared?

PERRY RATHBONE: No, not really. I thought it was much more fun. But you know, one has to admit that one makes less effort and one is less polite amongst your own sex, than you are in mixed company, and I think it was the idea of giving up that relaxation that was the reason for what resistance there was. What was made pretty plain to me as the youngish man coming there, by the older ones, that this was not to be changed. It had always been like this and this is the way it's going to remain.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'm curious about one thing, which is your experience in St. Louis. Did it in any way practically prepare you for what happened at Boston, or was Boston such a shift in terms of people and museum staff and everything?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well that's a good question, Paul. Of course I was intimidated by the prospect, just as I was intimidated by the prospect of becoming director of the St. Louis Museum, as I think I told you about my sleepless night in the sleeper and all that. Yes, I was somewhat in awe of the professional staff at the museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean because they had real celebrities among the curators.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, and most of them I had never met. I had met Henry Rossiter and I of course knew

Hanns Swarzenski, I knew him best, and I think those—and of course I knew Howard Edgell as a teacher and as a colleague amongst the museum profession, and I knew W.G. Constable, of course, because everybody my age sooner or later met W.G., who was very, very hospitable to the younger generation, very kind and helpful to them, but I think that was it. And so of course I was a little nervous about meeting all these people, but I think as I explained—does that answer—am I answering your question?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, it's just you know after you've been there a while, was there—did your experience really serve or it began to be a new adventure in a way?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes, it did in respect—yes. What really stood me in very good stead was the fact that I had to deal with virtually every phase of art, because there was no—there was only one curator in the St. Louis Museum and I was—although the staff was fairly numerous with a large Education Department and all that, I had to deal with Persian art one day and Chinese the next, and modern and American, and German painting and Italian sculpture, and you know, manuscripts and prints and everything, so that I knew I had a broad spectrum of knowledge and acquaintanceship, and I knew most of the sources of that art, whether it was in Europe or in this country, the dealers and so on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: So that was—that prepared me in, I think an important way, for Boston. Yeah. Then the thing that both museums needed when I went to them, was a general awakening. Both of them were slumberous, if not even as people said, moribund. I think St. Louis was less moribund than Boston, but the public relations job, the job to do with the public, was similar in both instances, to show people that the museum was really alive and interested in their needs and was willing to reach out and bring people into the sphere and influence of the museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now that must have had, you know, implied or implicit in that, a different attitude on your part, in Boston and St. Louis, because Boston is older; it had a much more rich cultural tradition.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The museum had a greater variety in its collection so you could do more, I would think. So what, what did you do? You told the story of the tapestry coming from the Hearst and how let's not necessarily put it chronologically.

PERRY RATHBONE: You remember that, yes, exactly, to break down the pedantry, yes. Well, one thing, as I say, the opportunity soon arose, and I think I discussed it at our last meeting, to dramatize the exhibitions and make everybody aware of the fact that something was going on in the museum, because the quiet little notices in the paper attracted very few visitors, and the curious concatenation of the *Sport and Art* exhibition and um, what was her name?

PAUL CUMMINGS: The skater?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. You remember. Albright, Tenley Albright, and her Olympic medal, and the ice-making crew that came along, was one of those things that sort of broke the spell and made people realize that the place was really alive and not just a stuffy old institution full of great treasure.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now how did Boston take to this? Did they wait and see for a while, were they enthusiastic to stir things up?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Well I'll tell you one of the ways, one of the best ways, the most effective ways of reaching out, was through the newly founded Ladies' Committee because this—I seem to dwell on that a bit, because it's an important aspect of my years there. The Ladies Committee, the formulation of the Ladies Committee was very much thanks to the political sages of Mrs. Hallowell, Frances Weeks, who had inherited a certain political sort of acumen and know-how and had been active in Republican politics in Massachusetts, which of course is a minority, it's sort of a minority body, shall we say, and therefore had to work very hard in order to keep herself going. And she had learned, from her political experience, the importance of forming a committee and two or three things. One, to insist upon ethnicity, to use a now overworked word, and geographical distribution, and turnover.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And therefore, the Ladies' Committee was very soundly established on those principles. Every effort was made, to bring into that Ladies' Committee—which numbered about 60 when it got into full swing—every ethnic group, whether they were Greek or Italian or Brahmin or ultimately black, Hungarian, Chinese, every sort of—every ethnic group was considered and the best person in that group, the most



representative, intelligent and educated woman that we could find in those groups was invited to join. Yes, that was very important.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That must have made a tremendous difference.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, it did you see and it made—then that, plus the geographic distribution, because you know that Greater Boston is a mosaic of sort of—what shall we call it—daughters surrounding a mother, and, and every effort was made to see that Cohasset was represented and so was Hamilton, on the north shore, Cohasset to the south and Wellesley to the west and Milton to the east and so on, so that there was this spreading community feeling that the museum was no longer just a Back Bay institution, but it belonged to all of Boston. And then, so that it didn't become—so that it didn't become entrenched, which is what often happens with those committees.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So easily.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, so easily, and it was understood from the very beginning that there would be a rotation whereby the original members, I believe it was a three-year stint that each one of those ladies served, that would be rotated off and would be replaced by others, from—representing the same pattern.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see, I see.

PERRY RATHBONE: So soon, you see, the Ladies' Committee, these 60 women scattered all around Boston, and belonged to every—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —other organization.

PERRY RATHBONE: Every other organization and every ethnic level, recognizing there was nothing snobbish about it at all, but all we were looking for was excellence and devotion. We were soon talking about the museum in their communities and they were hitting their suburban friends over the head to join, you see, and they were all asked to find as many new members as possible, that was the first big drive. So that soon, instead of those 2,000 people who were so-called subscribers when I arrived—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who got that fancy letter every year.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, they got their fancy letter every year. Pretty soon, within the first year we doubled it and then tripled it and so on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: And this meant that the publications of the museum, which were part of the privilege of being a member, were being received in greater numbers and more places and more homes and more families and so on, and this is really how Boston began to realize that their museum was not just the preserve of a privileged few, and began to take a deep and devoted interest in it. And then, as it developed over the years, the Ladies' Committee became the most sought after membership of any committee in all of Boston, because it was so much fun and they could see the results of their efforts and involve family and children and husbands and it was just irresistible, so that the waiting list had gotten pretty long.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did they find people or pick people?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, usually—of course as I say Mrs. Hallowell was marvelous to be in there, because she had a wide acquaintance anyhow, but each one of those people who followed her in the chairmanship—and I think she was chairman, as I remember, the chairman is chairman for two years and then is rotated off. Each chairman, incoming chairman, would have another group of friends, contacts, depending on where they came from or where they had been to college or school or whatever, and it was through those personal contacts that this thing grew. And to this day they, they believe that the most effective way of increasing membership is through personal contact and not through the buckshot approach, which was often proposed by professional fundraisers and others, who thought we ought to do it on a—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Big mass mailings or whatever.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, and do it by computer. Find out everybody who is in the income bracket of \$10,000 to \$50,000, and is white and has at least two years in college, you know push all those buttons and out comes a lot of names, and then you send out a buckshot mailing. This never, never ever did so well as the personal contact method, followed up by phone calls sometimes, little notes, and these women, or ladies as we call them in Boston, never shirked the responsibility and the hard work of doing those very things. Then in the meantime, what they did Paul, was to humanize the museum, that was the other thing that I was determined to do. Not only to ventilate it and clean it, but to humanize it and make it irresistible to people.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In terms of what, by doing what to it?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, in the first place, you know a great deal has to do with an entrance to wherever you're going, you go in and you feel something right away. This meant illuminating the entrances in such a way and cleaning them and making them attractive. And the ladies took it upon themselves, because many of them were gifted and experienced gardeners and horticulturists, took it upon themselves to see that the main stairs of the building, especially the Huntington stairs, the ones that were recently almost destroyed by wrong thinking members on the Board of Trustees, made those stairs beautiful with flowers and plants, usually in connection with a lone exhibition, something that was appropriate to the occasion.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, terrific.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, using their own imaginations you see, and taking great pains.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So they could really do things in the building.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And doing work that we never could have paid, we never could have paid for. We couldn't have paid anybody to design it, much less execute it, but they would come in with great branches of this and trees of that. I remember when we had the great show from Taiwan, the great Chinese painting exhibition, Mrs. Hallowell was in charge of the decorations accompanying that show, and she created two immense dragons of evergreen, that came cascading down the stairs on either side, made of wire, filled with evergreens. Well it was absolutely sensational and it gave an excitement you see, to this big, somewhat cold building, this kind of personal effort and personal touch. And then the fact that they were there, you know they—their presence began to be felt. So that was—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was that committee always a number of 60?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were there—it never got larger than that?

PERRY RATHBONE: No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And after your three years you were off.

PERRY RATHBONE: You were off.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Could they come back again?

PERRY RATHBONE: They could come back again. I forget exactly, the rules of the game, whether they had to be off for three years before they qualified to come back, they could. And, and then others um—yes, we formed a kind of elite group whose—it was rather interesting. Those who had been on the committee and done all the kind of hard work—

PAUL CUMMINGS: You don't want to lose those people.

PERRY RATHBONE: You don't want to lose them, precisely. This is what was recognized, that here was this special, special support for the museum, how to make use of them. It was devised, a scheme was devised whereby they would be put to even harder work—[they laugh]—and this thing they embraced you see, which meant that they then would qualify as educational aides, as we called them, coining a new name as far as I know. Instead of docents, we called them educational aides, and they, having done their stint on the Ladies' Committee, qualified for a course which was given by the curators of the staff in the Egyptian Department, in the Asiatic Department, in the Painting Department, the Print Department, et cetera, so that they actually had to pass an examination before they could teach in the museum, teach the general public or children. But this—they could only arrive at this exalted state by having done their stint as Ladies Committee.

PAUL CUMMINGS: On the committee. Of course they could go on forever once they got—

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, absolutely, once they were trained. And then you see the chairman was always somebody who had remarkable executive ability and personality and also the blessed time to devote to it. But we had a remarkable series of women who were chairmen of that committee.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You said they also raised a great deal of money over the years.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well they raised a great deal of money—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —by increasing the membership.

PERRY RATHBONE: By increasing the membership, yeah. I wouldn't say that they raised a great deal of money but they did do a big piece of work in the campaign. They didn't bring in large sums, which was the kind of thing that I did by going to foundations and going to individuals and so on, but they were very, very present in all those things. But then, then Paul—go ahead.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'm curious about one other thing. Were they ever sources of works of art for the museum, or fairly skimpy?

PERRY RATHBONE: Not—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Not much.

PERRY RATHBONE: Not much. I suppose things did come through their activity, but not that I—not anything that stands out in my recollection, no, no.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No. It seems there is a breed of individual who works on committees and supports in that way, rather than giving large sums of money or works of art or things like that.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, that's true and these women were the others. They were not necessarily rich. They were women of every income bracket really, but out of them, out of this group came all kinds of talent, and one of them was the—Mrs. Couton [ph] she was Polish, a Polish woman, a charming person, who had managed to get out of Nazi-dominated Poland and come to Boston and work for Helena Rubinstein. She first came to me and told me that maybe Helena Rubenstein could be got involved with the museum and all that. It didn't work out that way but I met her through this connection and she was the one who first came to me and said, "You know, I think we, we could probably organize a tour, a European tour for the members of the museum, as a new benefit." And I want to tell you something, and you won't believe it, but this was the first tour by any American institution, except for maybe the Harvard Club or something, any American museum certainly, and this must have been about 20 years ago. You won't believe it but that's the, that's the fact.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That must have been soon after you were there.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well it was in the 60s. I was there, I had been there five years, maybe '61, or something like that. I said, "Well, I'm all for it, let's look into it." Well, I had to talk to the treasurer of the museum, the trustee treasurer, to see if we thought that we were encroaching upon commercial travel companies and all this other thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And gradually, the trustees got used to the idea, but it was a brand new idea and they were very, very skeptical, you know my God, we've been taking in the money here, you know, and promoting the tour and let me see, are we getting—

PAUL CUMMINGS: To other institutions, other countries.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well other countries, we set up the first tour to Spain and Italy and they were very circumspect because they thought that we might be abusing our tax free status and that—this sort of thing and, well, we managed to get that all cleared up and then after two or three subsequent tours, it was all just taken as a matter of course. A tour was offered every year, and then two a year, and I don't know, they seem to offer one every few months these days, but this is where it began. And it was through that Ladies' Committee coming to me and saying—and I having an open mind. I hadn't thought of it myself but as soon as I heard about it I said, "Yes, let's just see how many people we attract." And I think that we took, I think there were about 25 or something on that first tour and I think we took, I can't remember precisely, but only \$100 or something.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh for the cost.

PERRY RATHBONE: For the cost of the museum, you know, which is ridiculous nowadays, it's a minimum of \$500. Anyhow, that was a success and it led to others and Mrs. Couton [ph] has been, until her husband was taken seriously ill, has been the organizing force and always went on those tours. She liked to travel and she knew quite a number of languages as the Poles must know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic, yeah, yeah. Did you go on many of those?

PERRY RATHBONE: I only went, I went on the Russian tour part of the time, just to go to the major cities of Leningrad and Moscow, only for 10 days, because I couldn't spend longer. It was a 30-day tour, it was a long thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh my heavens.

PERRY RATHBONE: We went all the way to Samarkand and you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: A 30-day tour?

PERRY RATHBONE: A 30-day tour, yes, absolutely. Yes, think of it. The only other one, the only complete one I went on was with my wife, to Egypt, and that was in 1970, I think. We went, yes, up the Nile, all the way to Abu Simbel.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How long was that then?

PERRY RATHBONE: That was three weeks.

PAUL CUMMINGS: My heavens, so they really got the tour.

PERRY RATHBONE: Really got the tour, and that was an enormous success, it was marvelous.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did they do, visit museums and sites and everything?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes, and then we had a very good guide and we made contact with some of the museum personnel there that we had known through our own—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —correspondence.

PERRY RATHBONE: Correspondence and our own connections of our Egyptian Department and so on. Oh, that was a great success, cruising on the Nile. [They laugh.] Yeah. We sent our people everywhere, Paul, and it brought money and it brought kind of comradeship. These tours would meet before the tour, for lectures from the staff. So it became really an educational thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And they'd know what they were looking at before they got there.

PERRY RATHBONE: Right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Had some background.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And then when it was all over, everybody having his own camera, they would come together two or three times.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do the slides.

PERRY RATHBONE: Do the slides and coffee and cake, you know, like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

PERRY RATHBONE: But these were all very, very humanizing things.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Don't you think it's important though, for institutions, particularly when your membership had gotten so large, to have activities where those members who wanted to could meet other people?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean there's something about members of an organization, where they do want to meet each other for some reason.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. They have something in common, something vital in common and they like to discuss it. Yes. And all sorts of, well, there are all sorts of come-ons you see. We had events in the evening and, and then we got involved with wonderful events in the museum. We had concerts for those with members' privileges. We introduced movies. My God, the museum had never had any movies before.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, well that's become big business now.

PERRY RATHBONE: It's become big business, absolutely.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Every museum, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And although we did all this with a miserable little auditorium, which was the most uncomfortable auditorium in America without any question, a kind of a pinched, narrow room with awful seats and very bad ventilation and everything wrong with it, but we somehow managed to make do. Then you see, we began to have many more loan exhibitions. The museum had been rather, well, indifferent to important loan

exhibitions and Harold Edgell really didn't have anything of a showman in him. He didn't take the same pleasure in it that I did or had the same feeling for it. He'd been too long in the academic world, I think, and not long enough in the public world.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yeah, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: You see? And I'd been in the public world since I was 26, and had a real feeling for it and developed it more and more. So, we emphasized loan exhibitions and they got more and more important, and we were able to do a lot with those shows that hadn't been done before, thanks to the Ladies' Committee, because they would be right there to assist with all of the attendant activities.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Would you do dinner parties and all that?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, we built up to that. First we started just with receptions, and then I soon learned that in Boston, people expected, as I may have said before, to be received. Well, this old custom seems to have been dropped in many other places but in Boston it went on, and so there was Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Lowell, in the sense Mr. and Mrs. Boston, and then there was always my wife and I, and our guest of honor and his wife, or two or three, whoever they were, and we always stood there in line after—we usually had a dinner party at home, and took our guests there, and received for, well, I found that really, 45 minutes was just about all you could take. How we did it for four hours that first time I don't know, but it's just you're that much younger I guess. But 45 minutes of you just saying, "How do you do, this is my wife and Mr. and Mrs. Lowell," and it's pretty trying. But people would line up and stand in line, you know, the longest time, just to do that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Fascinating.

PERRY RATHBONE: Fascinating. And then we would meet the French Ambassador and Madame Alphand, happened to be our guest of honor, or Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Wyeth, or whoever they were, and we always had somebody there. So, coming to the museum for a members' night, for an opening, was really a very attractive social event.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They knew they would meet the stars.

PERRY RATHBONE: They knew they would meet the stars and they began to feel more at home, as if the museum belonged more to them, and it was a place for the ladies to display their clothes. There's nothing like it, you know there are very few big halls anymore and nobody has balls any more to speak of, where you can dress up and meet your friends. And it became very popular with younger people, and we did all this of course for nothing, to begin with, for no additional charge.

PAUL CUMMINGS: As just part of the membership benefit.

PERRY RATHBONE: The membership benefit. I think the highest—the greatest number of people came to the opening of the Chrysler exhibition, the exhibition of Chrysler's collection, his modern pictures, and I think something like over 3,000 people, and then we saw that we simply had—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Something had to—

PERRY RATHBONE: Something had to be done. Of course, you know the punch would run out or all the cookies would disappear and all that. Then after that, we put on one of those Van Gogh exhibitions and felt for the first time, the privilege of meeting not, not the engineer of Van Gogh, because unfortunately he couldn't come, but he sent his son, yeah, who at least was the grandnephew of the great artist, and his wife, and so we were able to say you can meet Mr. and Mrs. Van Gogh and so on, and asked people to pay five dollars, members to pay five dollars. Well, we had plenty of people.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Ate it up right way.

PERRY RATHBONE: Ate it up, there they were. And so ever since that time, except on rare occasions, there's been a charge to members for that privilege of an evening at the museum. But we made great effort, Paul. For example, when we had a beautiful Modigliani show, which we organized with the Los Angeles County Museum, we got a hold of a rather sensitive film, biographical film of Modigliani, a French film. Do you remember it? What was the name? Lili Palmer and a very gifted French actor who played the part of Modigliani, and ran the film.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, Gerard Philipe.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, Gerard Philipe, exactly, the late Gerard Philipe. And ran the film, you see, along with the show, every day, several performances a day, and this kind of thing, where people take another look at the museum. This kind of thing that—which had a lot to do with public relations and a feeling for the public and for people. And of course, the more people you brought to the museum by these means, the more—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, the word got out.

PERRY RATHBONE: The word got out and the more demand there was for a decent restaurant, because the old one was overtaxed and underground, you know it was a basement restaurant with exposed pipes and ugly furniture and you know, a hopeless place. And, the sales desk was hopelessly outmoded and Betty Riegle [ph], who as I said was one of my first recruits, was very impatient to have a sales desk worthy of her talents and her energies and imagination and knowhow. When I went there, I found that the sales desk, which was an old established institution at the museum, was operated on a sort of half-time basis, by a chap called Paul Stone, who had been a student at the museum school, knew nothing at all about retailing, but he was a nice young man and Harold Edgell thought, well, why not give him a job, he needs a job, you know, and he was almost never there. He was being paid but was almost never there, and things were most stagnant and uninviting little corner you could imagine, the Huntington desk, where the policy was to sell nothing but publications on the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts. And there was a whole series of sepia postcards that had been there since 1912, you know?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Waiting for somebody to buy them.

PERRY RATHBONE: Waiting for somebody to buy that little shot of a teapot, you know? And then these rather dull publications, not that the text was dull, but they're so badly presented. They had no typography. There they were, in a rather faded case with a faded lining, and the only thing that you remember is kind of a clock on the wall, just kind of a clock, a school clock up there, and no Paul Stone, and a couple of unfortunate women who were trying to run the thing. Well, it was really hopeless. Then along came Betty and I said, "Well, I think we, we better shift our policy here and bring in first class publications at popular prices, that people that are interested in this museum will find relevant," and so we did and the trustees didn't object at all. But it had been such a hard and fast, almost holy rule that nothing would be sold there, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It still is a rule in many museums.

PERRY RATHBONE: I guess it is.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. It's difficult.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, yes, I suppose like the Frick, but not the Metropolitan certainly, not the Museum of Modern Art. But it's a shame, because you come to a place and you're stimulated by what you see and you see a lot of Japanese prints, and then you go to buy something and there's not one thing that the museum ever brought out on the subject of Japanese prints. So, of course there should be something there, as long as it—as long as it was authentic, that's all I required, and Betty was a very good judge of what was good and if she was in doubt, she went right to one of the curators and said, "Is this really worthy?" And she got a yes or no and bought the right quantity and within what, within five years I guess it was—I guess it took five years before we undertook to expand the sales desk, which was a big undertaking because the museum was built like a fortress.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, absolutely, and the drilling to get those walls down and replace them with lally columns, so we could expand the space and still support the second floor, you know that kind of thing. And Nat Saltonstall, who was then a trustee, was a very, very gifted architect and imaginative architect, drew the designs for the new sales desk. So that was a great success and made people feel at home immediately. They came in and saw a brightly lighted, nicely designed place where you could buy books and popular items at popular prices.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Relevant things, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yeah. But it required sacrificing the first Egyptian gallery, a study gallery, as I remember a study gallery. All the first floor was supposed to be study rooms, it's a rather studious kind of place. You had to take over that room, which was filled with prehistoric Egyptian things, which were pretty archaeological for—

PAUL CUMMINGS: You had lines of people that were disappointed every day. [Laughs.]

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes of course they were and so it was no great sacrifice and those things, we managed to telescope into smaller display spaces and that was no great thing but still, having to persuade the curators involved that there was going to be a change in their territory was a little bit, you know, for a young man coming in from the middle west.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's right because you were then considered a Midwesterner.

PERRY RATHBONE: I suppose I was, yes, they thought of me as a middle westerner.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, St. Louis.

PERRY RATHBONE: St. Louis. But I had gone to Harvard so that helped some. Anyway, those things we did accomplish and it was a great, great satisfaction, and Betty is still there, and Paul Stone, heaven knows what happened to him.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But how did things go? I mean, you must have come in and there was some current exhibition program that the museum had planned a year or two or more ahead.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were there very many things? Did you have a blank calendar?

PERRY RATHBONE: Not quite. We had the *Sport and Art* show, that had been engaged, as I explained, and we had—what was the other one that I spoke to you about? Well, we had the independent artists show and that was something. I don't know whether you've seen an independent artists show or not.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, what do you mean by that there?

PERRY RATHBONE: It means an unjuried show, wherein everything is hung which is submitted [inaudible]. And that's what we had and this had been established, I think under Henry Rossiter's interim directorship as acting director.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So that was like your annual, biannual local exhibition.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. Yes. The museum wanted to escape the responsibility of being a judge of artists' work, for good reason, and yet they also wanted to feel that they were involved with modern art and contemporary art. So, here came this thing. Well, I'd never seen anything so execrable in a museum, really. It was simply abhorrent. The pictures were hung right up to the ceiling and down to the floor, you know just covered with all these pictures that were simply—never should have seen the light of day for the most part, or supposed to be in a museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, all of them.

PERRY RATHBONE: It was just an embarrassment. The entire time I was there, it was an embarrassment to me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But that stopped though didn't it?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes that stopped. I thought well, no, we can't do this any more.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You didn't have thousands of artists rise up and picket and ran a parade?

PERRY RATHBONE: No. There were some artists' societies in Boston where a lot of artists found an outlet, like the Copley Society and the Boston Watercolor Society and so on, and there was the Institute of Contemporary Art, and there wasn't so many years before MIT developed a gallery and the Brandeis had a gallery and then the Fogg Museum of Modern Art. And I thought the Boston Museum, being the greatest museum in New England, which could bring exhibitions that no other museum in New England could possibly bring to that whole region, that we ought to concentrate on that kind of showing, being in a sense the Metropolitan Museum of New England. The Metropolitan didn't have exhibitions of local artists and I thought there was enough.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Can you imagine?

PERRY RATHBONE: No. Imagine? Yeah, you know, absolutely. So I thought no, we have too great a responsibility, an enormous inherited responsibility to deal with everything else except local art, and I felt there were enough agencies for local art and so we discontinued the independent artists' show. We continued having an annual show of the Boston Watercolor Society, which drew watercolors from all across the country but with a concentration of New England artists, and we also did an annual print show of Boston—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —printmakers, yes, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Printmakers, yeah. And let it go at that, and they also attracted a mild amount of interest and the members of the society always came and had their little party when it opened and that sort of thing, but they were not very important exhibitions I have to say. But we began to concentrate more and more on important shows, and teamed up with other museums in doing it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now that was almost one of the early years of the museum's coordinating an exhibition to share.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, I guess it was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean there was very little of that pre-1950, that I can think of.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well the first one I had to do was in St. Louis, with the Max Beckmann exhibition, and that was organized with the Los Angeles County Museum, Detroit, well Detroit wasn't actually supposed to be but was, Minneapolis, St. Louis, and I forget who the other were, there were four or five, to make it all possible, because of the expense.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: But we soon began to look for partners and, oh, the first show, the very first show—to go back to that for a minute, Paul. The very first show was Sargent, because Sargent's birthday was approaching. He was born in 1856 and soon it would be 1956.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The centennial, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And I thought that this would be very appropriate for Boston to do, that I could not—nobody else was going to do it. Sargent was really not headlines in 1955.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The heyday of Abstract Expressionism.

PERRY RATHBONE: Exactly, exactly. And he was, really was, he was a dead issue if there ever was one. He had been much celebrated in 1925, at the time of his death, and the museum would have a big show, what a great artist he was. I didn't think we should attempt any such thing, but because he was so intimately associated with Boston all his life, although he was born in Florence, as you know, of parents who come from Philadelphia by way of New England, Marblehead Sargent background, he somehow, through Mrs. Gardner's interest and friendship, and others, Mrs. Montgomery Sears and so on, he'd come to Boston time and time again and was better known there perhaps than anywhere, better than in London perhaps. And then this kind of London-Boston tie was an intimate one, and so I thought let's do an exhibition showing the Boston side of Sargent's long activity, and so we called it *Sargent's Boston*. Since then, this idea has caught on all sorts of things. Our most recent one is *Bingham's Missouri*, I find, but this was an original title at the time and it gave a certain twist to the show, a local—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —focus.

PERRY RATHBONE: Focus and color. And it brought into the light a lot of people who still remembered him, and as Charlie Cunningham said to me at the opening, he said, "I never saw so many second- or third-generation Sargents in one gallery before." Because they all turned out, you see, to see their forbears or their grandfathers on the walls, and sometimes their mothers and fathers.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, marvelous.

PERRY RATHBONE: And, and—this is a very amusing story that I thought ought to be in this archive. It had to do with my problem in respect to W.G. Constable, who was curator of paintings and who, as I said, was very beneficent, especially to young people, but he had his foibles too, and one of them was that he had really no sense of arranging works of art, I'm afraid, either for backgrounds or relationship from painting to painting, it really was close to a disaster. And since the Sargent exhibition was 95 percent paintings, it fell to him to arrange it, and I gave him the ideas that I had in my head about how it should be done, namely that it shouldn't be just a straight show of paintings, but that we should add a few things to suggest the period in which they were painted. And I scouted around and found some Louis XVI reproduction furniture of the 90s, in an attic of Fenway Court, and a few potted palms. I even found a pair of great Japanese blue and white vases.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, marvelous.

PERRY RATHBONE: Monumental ones, to stand on either side of the famous painting of the Boit sisters and so on, and I said just arrange it with the pictures, so you have a little relief. Well, the result was so appalling, you can't imagine how terrible it was, and the show was about to open. And I was—it was almost as embarrassing to me as the independent artists exhibition had been. I said to Hanns Swarzenski, who was very good, on the other hand, with arranging. He had very good sense for arrangement, and I did myself. So once Friday evening, or Saturday evening, Friday evening I guess it was, after the museum was closed, I said to Hanns, "I think we ought to go into that gallery and arrange it the way it should be, and then I'll make my peace with W.G. somehow afterwards." But I just can't, I just can't go ahead with this. After all, I had too much in my mind's eye to allow it to stand. So, Hanns was always game for such a thing, and there we spent about three hours, rearranging the whole thing, and out came something really quite stunning. But then I had to explain things to W.G. Well as it happened, my cousin, my late cousin, Donald Oenslager, had been visiting his sister in Providence, Mrs. Malcolm



Chase, and had come up with her on the Sunday, because he knew that the show was about to open and he wanted to see it. And I said, "Well come, just come in on Sunday afternoon, I'll meet you there and show you everything." So I did, and I also pointed out to Don, what I was doing with the arrangement and so on, and then this gave me the excuse that I'd been praying for and hadn't arrived at. I told W.G. the next week, that my cousin, Donald Oenslager, the noted estate designer, had just come up from Providence, just by chance [inaudible], and he was full of wonderful ideas about how it should be arranged. [Paul laughs.] Sort of the whitest lie, and I said, "I think that you'll find it so irresistible, that you'll want to follow his ideas." [Laughs.] And he said, "Oh yes of course, it's splendid, absolutely, leave it just like that, don't change a pin." So that's how the first show that I was responsible for came off. But I had to do it in this diplomatic way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Subtlety.

PERRY RATHBONE: It was subtlety. You asked how I got along with the staff and this is one way. I had to let him think that it was somebody else, and he died the other day and he doesn't know to this day, that it wasn't Donald Oenslager. But that was a blessing wasn't it, that was a blessing, because he was very, very proud, and very touchy about such matters. You know, he had this sort of hill town fiefdom attitude, as they all did, and they didn't want any encroachment from the director, much less any other curator. Because I've told you what Edgell said, "Why do I need to direct the museum, I have the best curatorial staff in the world and they just run it," they run things fine, their own department. And then Humphrey, the treasurer, in between trying to keep track of things. But that's the way that happened. And another ancillary story that I think will amuse you, has to do with those vases. I had wanted the very vases themselves, needless to say, because they are spectacular, and I learned, from asking around, that they were right there in Boston, in Brookline in fact. I didn't tell you this story.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, no.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, the family name was Boit, as the painting framed, Sargent, and these were his daughters, and I found that his son lived in Brookline, and I approached the family and asked if by any chance those vases were still there. They said, "Yes, we have them right here in the house in Brookline," and I said, "Well, could we by any chance borrow them?" "Well I don't think so. I'm sorry; I don't believe so. I just have to ask my wife," or something, and then word came back finally, "No, we're very sorry, we can't lend those, we'd like to but we can't." And she said or he said you know, "We took them to Paris, every, every winter." I said, "Would you please repeat that." "We took them to Paris every winter, we have, we have an apartment in Paris, where that famous painting was painted, you know."

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right. [Laughs.]

PERRY RATHBONE: In their apartment, with those, those Japanese paintings—"Yes," he said, "We did, and I think, I think they crossed the ocean 17 times." I couldn't believe it. "Yes," he said, "We were very attached to those vases and so it's nothing to move them," he said, "But I must explain something." He said, "Ever since they came back here to stay, we have—and since our daughters were born, we have been using those vases for kind of keepsakes, as a kind of depository for all sorts of things that will be given to the first daughter to be married, whether it's a block of stock or whether it's a gold ring, or whether it's some bibelot or souvenir that we think is worth saving."

PAUL CUMMINGS: A hope chest.

PERRY RATHBONE: Like hope chests, yes. And he said, "We think it would be a great mistake to disturb them or to run the risk of having them, having the contents disturbed." I said, "Well, we would seal them, we would send our laboratory technician there and have them sealed and so there would be no possibility of that," and so on, and nothing would avail. So, that was that, but I remember well, in an antique shop on the outskirts of St. Louis, run by a formidable character called Zern, who happened to have good things as well as very bad, he had two vases of nearly the same size, and I thought well, I'm not going to be defeated by the Boits. I'll see if old Zern will lend those to the Boston Museum for the show, and sure enough, he was so flattered, to be invited by the Boston Museum, to lend those things and for this particular purpose, that he had them packed up and sent forthwith, and there they were installed on either side of this picture. And Hanns Swarzenski had a piece of Chinese rug. You may remember, in the foreground of that painting, on which the youngest child is sitting, there is a Chinese rug, very pretty, blue and buff, and that's—Hanns had a lovely piece that they, but because it didn't fit the room or something, and that, with these vases, it was just a marvelous thing, suggesting the whole atmosphere of this picture.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's marvelous, absolutely marvelous.

PERRY RATHBONE: So anyhow, that was the, that was—Paul Sachs said to me, I shall never forget it, he said, "You know, that was the wisest decision, to do that show, because I know that you expected to deal with modern art," he said, "I know," and he said, "To start off your career in Boston with that show, which the old guard can't help but like," he said, "It will make it a lot easier for you in the future."

PAUL CUMMINGS: They would feel you understood them.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. He said that was very astute and adroit, that was a great uh, that was a great coup, he said.

PAUL CUMMINGS: On that note, I think we'll have to—

[END OF TRACK.]

### **March 31, 1976**

PAUL CUMMINGS: This is side 11. It's the 31st of March, 1976. Paul Cummings, talking to Perry Rathbone. One of the things I think it would be good if we could talk about, to move in through the 1950s and Boston, is you had briefly said you had very quickly come to know a number of the collectors in the Boston area who were interested in the museum, people like the Karoliks and various others ones, and I wonder if we could pursue collectors as a group for a little bit. Who were the people you got to know or were people who supported the museum and continued, or were there new people you found?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, actually, collecting was at a low end in Boston when I went there. It had been, it had been very considerable as we all know, and the museum had profited, and the last big bequest had come from John T. Spaulding, and we all know about that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: The collectors don't spring to mind when I talk of that time, except [inaudible] those well known, like Paul Sachs, Edward Forbes, the late governor, when Governor Fuller, when he was still living. He had ceased to collect but he had been a collector, and I began to think of him, since he was heading toward that age. I was getting to cast my covetous eyes upon his collection with respect to the museum. The other person who really was active and did all he could to stimulate collecting and so on, was Nathaniel Saltonstall, who was one of the founders of the Institute of Contemporary Art, and a great believer in American art and American artists, and confined his collecting to those men and largely to Bostonian and New England artists. But collectors, there were few, there were few. I made contact with the Fullers only after W.G. Constable had retired from the museum, that's a couple of years later on, and um, accomplished quite a lot by doing so. But I'm trying to think, collectors, there was Ben Rowland in Cambridge, Benjamin Rowland, who was a professor at Harvard and an old friend of mine from Harvard graduate days, who was a collector of things that were very personal with him. He had collected a few icons, because he had a great love of Russian and Greek medieval art. He had collected a certain amount of Oriental art, which became his principal study, and antiquities. He was especially given to small bronzes, antique and Renaissance bronzes, and added one or two or three of those every year and very often, in the ensuing years, would call me up asked me to come by and have tea or a drink at his house in Cambridge and look at his recent acquisitions. He was an unconventional buyer who often sought out unexpected sources for his purchases, but he was a studious and consistent, and very, very interesting collector. Fred Deknatel, another Harvard man, was keen about the other end of the spectrum, he collected modern art.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who was he again?

PERRY RATHBONE: Deknatel, who was on the staff at Harvard, with the Fine Arts Department for a long time. He was there as a young man when I left Harvard and he died only about two or three years ago. But he had a real flair for the French art especially, the end of the 19th, early 20th century, and had a few fine examples at his house. And so did Charles Coon [ph], he was on the staff. All those Harvard men, I felt were somewhat inspired by Paul Sachs and Edward Forbes as collectors, but they were—none of them men of immense means, like John Spaulding or Governor Fuller, who could buy very expensive art, but they bought a lot of very interesting things. I'm just trying to think, is there any other?

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was Sachs like in those days? I mean you were back in his territory in a way.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Well, he was a marvelous encouragement. Paul Sachs was very keen about my coming to Boston, as he was about my going to St. Louis when I left Detroit, and uh, being a member of the Board of Trustees, I'm sure he was instrumental in the selection. I don't know that he was a member of Richard Payne's committee, I don't really remember who those men were, but he would certainly have endorsed my candidacy and encouraged me in every way. And I think I may have told you before, Paul, he said to me, a number of wise things that I haven't forgotten. He had a way of expressing himself in an almost aphoristic style. He said, you know, this is a big job you're taking on and it will take you five years before you feel you have your fingers on the edge of it. Maybe I told you that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative], right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And this was certainly true. In these days, I'm thinking about my successor, whenever he may be chosen, and thinking how long it will take him really, to have a grasp of that highly complex situation. So I was prepared, from this graphic remark, to exercise a lot of patience in those early years and recognize that I wouldn't have very much to show for quite a long time. Well, he was very helpful that way and he also had a way in meetings, and recognizing what a museum director's problems were, and sympathizing, and also taking a decisive position to help him accomplish what was expected of him. That's the way he was and very enthusiastic. If he really liked you and believed in you, there was no end of enthusiasm that he would express.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was he a source ever for you, in terms of either collectors you wanted to meet, or patrons or scholars, or things like that or was it—

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, not so much.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —more of a personal relationship?

PERRY RATHBONE: More of a personal relationship. It's a good question because it brings up the problem that is always present at the Boston Museum, and that is the proximity of the Fogg Museum, and the fact that there's always been some interlocking there and there's been a habit of wearing two hats.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And a little competition.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, a little competition. It was easy to see, it was only natural, it's only human, that you favor the institution to which you were closest. In Paul Sachs's case, he was closer to the Fogg because he was the director, whereas at the Boston Museum he was a trustee and member of the visiting committee and so on. But he, for example, had forwarded the idea to Boston Museum, that the two museums should complement each other, and as time went by and I saw more of the Boston Museum and its public, I recognized that this wasn't true at all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They were very separate entities.

PERRY RATHBONE: Very separate entities. In theory it looks just—fits like a glove, but as has often been the case with theories, they're very good on paper, but once you try to practice the theories, they simply don't work. And I found that the Boston public didn't go to the Fogg Museum at all, except a very small percentage, and neither did the Fogg public see very much of the Boston Museum, but because of this theory, Paul Sachs had persuaded the trustees in Boston to lay off buying drawings, which meant that the Fogg Museum could expand its collection, really at the expense of opportunities that are offered also to the Boston Museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right. Hmm.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, and that's rather too bad, because many opportunities were missed. And I found that we had a lot to catch up. We did our best to try and enrich the drawing collection in Boston without regard to the Fogg from that time on, but I can see how that happened. When money was short in both places, as compared with New York and Chicago and some other richer centers, you could see how such a theory would be attractive.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was it difficult, you know after you had been there for a couple years of so, when an important painting or sculpture, decorative art object came up, was it hard to find the money for that or were there, were there funds?

PERRY RATHBONE: No. Well, there were funds and they seemed big compared to St. Louis, to be sure, to me. There were funds but they were nothing compared to what Toledo or Cleveland and the Metropolitan and Chicago had had for years. The wonder of the Boston Collection is that it is so rich with relatively so little money, because, unlike those other institutions, which in many cases have been helped by their constituencies, by their municipalities, either with a gift of land, if not with an annual subsidy, the Boston Museum got nothing from anybody but from their trustees and what friends they could find. The land, on which the museum stands even was bought, although it seems to be public land, it was bought by the trustees, adjacent to what was becoming public land. You see? So there was money but there was no vast quantity of money, and I can tell you that the highest amount of money, until we bought the Raphael, the highest amount of money that was ever spent was for the triptych of St. Hippolytus for one work of art, and that was \$390,000. That's not very much, you know these days.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, true.

PERRY RATHBONE: But figure, the fabulous collection of that museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well did it grow by requests then generally, or gifts over the years?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, and also by the fact that the Bostonians seem to have gotten there sooner, and with

more knowledge. I think it reflected the intellectual climate of Boston, not so much the mercantile climate of New York, where vast fortunes were piled up early and Morgan fortunately, could buy anything, and the Harfords [ph] of course could buy anything. There were no really such fortunes in Boston as those, but there was the, there was the scholarly condition of Harvard and the atmosphere that Harvard itself radiated, that I think penetrated the community and it was this that excited people to subscribe money for Boston's excavations in Egypt, for example, which brought forth fabulous uh, fabulous works of arts, wonders, that no museum could match then or today. And the same was true, you see, of the Asiatic Department, where the way founded by Ernest Fenollosa, who was a young philosophy scholar who went to Japan, and you know the story, in the 1870s, and he was led there by another scholarly character who was a zoologist.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I didn't know that.

PERRY RATHBONE: He went there because um, ah, Edward Sylvester Morse, in 1876, had gone out to Japan in quest of certain brachiopods, which ah, the fossil remains of which, he understood were to be found in that country, and he went out there as a kind of pioneer, and he became fascinated by what he saw. And being an American savant, the Japanese, taking account of the western world, decided they needed somebody to come to the new University of Tokyo, to teach Hegelian philosophy, which the vogue was for Hegel at this time, which the Japanese soon cottoned on to, and, and Morse wrote back to Harvard and said, "Send a man." And here was Fenollosa, who had concentrated in philosophy and in Hegel and was delighted at the idea and off he went. He'd been in the museum school for one year, the new Boston Museum School, and learned something about drawing, a little bit about art. He had no formal art historical practice at all. He went out to Japan and that basically is the reason the Asiatic Collection in the Boston Museum is so great. Not money but brains and getting there first. And that's true of the classical Collection too, where Edward Perry Warren, who was the son of a rich man to be sure, but he was really a scholar and put himself at the service of the museum, in developing a collection of classical art which as we know perfectly well is brilliant. So these are the reasons for the distinction of the Boston Museum, rather than the money itself, but now we're getting a little bit off the track here.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fine.

PERRY RATHBONE: It's interesting.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah. To go back to—you must have known the Karoliks, right?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I never met her. She had died when I went to Boston, but of course I'd met him. I'd met him before, I'd met him in Williamsburg, because he turned up in places where American art and culture were discussed, and annual meetings, lectures where I had lectured, that's where I met Karolik. And of course, I met him, I don't want to say the first day I was there, but I guess the second, and then I saw him almost every day thereafter until he died. [They laugh.] Yeah. Well he was, of course, a great collector, speaking of Boston collectors, I should have mentioned him first I suppose. But he was, the museum really was his home, it really literally was his home after his wife died and he didn't have a very highly developed social life.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How does that happen? I notice that even in New York and various museums, there are people who gravitate to them and just like birds, they come and sit there on the window ledge, you know day after day, year after year.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well it's true, I've observed that elsewhere, in St. Louis especially, where one or two trustees made the museum virtually their home. When one of our trustees had to retire out there, he just asked if he could have a corner in the museum, and a desk and a lamp, so he could be there every day. Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fascinating.

PERRY RATHBONE: We obliged him of course. Karolik was much the same. He never had a desk or a lamp or a telephone, but he had the run of the place so to speak and he popped in and out all the time, and was a friendly greeting, a nod of his head and looking very satisfied and often with a joke.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But what would they do all the time, I mean what was his interest in spending that much time there?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well it's curious, I don't know, it really was a human contact to be found in the museum, and the results of his own passions and his own labor, the Karolik collections. And I suppose, when I was visiting my office, if he were wandering about the museum, he might easily pick up someone who showed an interest in a highboy or a lowboy, or a desk or a mirror or something, and sound off.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Be a docent.

PERRY RATHBONE: Be a docent. It could be, I don't know, but I do know that he made a tour of the offices and always lunched at the staff lunch table in the restaurant, where I saw him daily. Well, I wouldn't say daily. He often stayed in Newport on Mondays during the warm season, and he'd come to the museum all day, every day, until Friday at two o'clock, and then he would leave for Symphony Hall and hear the orchestra. He was of course passionate about music and that was his routine. He had a chauffeur and a comfortable large car, and traveled back to Newport every weekend and lived in that big, handsome house on Ocean Boulevard and I guess Bellevue Avenue.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Bellevue Avenue.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And that was his strict routine. There's lots to be said about him, you know, I can expatiate on him if you want me to, but it isn't the time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know one could at some point, you know now or later, whatever. What did you, what did you do, because your first show was the Sargent, right?

PERRY RATHBONE: Right, the first one that I organized.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That you organized.

PERRY RATHBONE: The other one, the *Sport and Art* was a Cann [ph] show.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now what, what did you plan, I mean how did you decide to plan the exhibitions of your own that appeared after Sargent?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, first of all everybody in Boston, and the trustees too, recognized that the museum ought to have more exhibitions than had been the case, and they hadn't had before, simply because I think it didn't interest Harold Edgell very much, as I think I tried to describe to you, what his virtues were and what his feelings were, and he simply was not a museum man and not a man who was inspired by public response at all. He was inspired by being associated with a group of notable *savants*, yes, and in that he took great pride. And, he took pride in acquisitions, especially if they fell into his field of Italian Renaissance painting, but the loan exhibition program had fallen to a low ebb, and the curators, I think had become rather indifferent. So, I found it necessary of course to stimulate the museum program in this respect and I realize it needed more money and it needed more space. We soon got the space, because the Karolik Second Collection was going to vacate the space assigned to it for five whole years; it's kind of initial, inaugural space was running out, I mean the time was running out.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: So within six months—I think that space, six months to a year, I guess it was a year—we'd have that space for exhibitions and then could stage big things. I told you about the independent exhibition, which I thought we ought to discontinue.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Not very much.

PERRY RATHBONE: Didn't I?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

PERRY RATHBONE: That was already scheduled when I went there, and that was the show—well, the independent exhibition was a show open to every artist for miles around.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh that, yes, yes.

PERRY RATHBONE: You know and we covered the walls with works of every kind.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Every quality.

PERRY RATHBONE: Every quality, oh yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well that had been a tradition though wasn't there?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, not for such a long time. I think it was an effort on the part of the museum to appease the artists of Boston and wean them, to show them that they were not indifferent and so on. And then there was a big show of art by parochial school children, which I think was an effort to ingratiate the Irish Catholic

population of Boston. But neither of them really accomplished much because my observation was that the nuns and those parochial children came to see that show but they never came again. You know, you were very conscious of nuns suddenly, in a museum, and then they all disappeared. And the independent show was, well, it was a calamity. It didn't add up to, it didn't prove anything, except how much bad art was—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —being ground out.

PERRY RATHBONE: Being ground out, misguided, sold, and that's not what a museum is for. And I, thereby came to the conclusion that this contemporary, the contemporary thing really should be left to other institutions in and around Boston, of which there were many, and let the museum put on the major big shows that only the Boston Museum could give, in all New England. That's the way I saw it. New York had several institutions that could stage major shows but Boston and New England really had only one.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That true, because the other states around don't have large museums.

PERRY RATHBONE: Big museums, no, they're all really quite modest. And so another gross neglect, had been the whole field of modern art. Everybody knew that and I was very conscious of it because I'd been very much involved with modern art in St. Louis, and you know how much it meant to our generation, people my age and all that. And I also found that the last major exhibition, except for shows at the Institute of Contemporary Art, which—I'd better revise that, no. The last time there was a general exhibition of modern art in Boston, was in 1914 or 1913, the *Armory Show*, went from New York to Boston.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: It went to Chicago, it went to Boston. So we were able to say, when we organized our big show, that this was the first time there had been a comprehensive exhibition of modern art.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really, that long?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. There had been nothing in between, nothing, I mean you can hardly believe it but that's true. So we staged an exhibition called *European Masters of the 20th Century*, I believe we called the show. We limited it to European because it just—to try and involve the Americans at the same time would have been too big and cumbersome, unwieldy. And because European art hadn't been seen in any large—in any general way, we thought why not? That was an early exhibition, I forget the date, but about '57, I think.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, you also got involved with the ICA and the Boston Arts Festival, and all of the other activities. Were those mainly consulting things?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I was on the board. I was elected to the board of the Institute of Contemporary Art, and put on the advisory board of the Boston Arts Festival, or maybe I was the trustee of that too. And this required a meeting with the organization committees, and deciding on the theme for the exhibition or for the festival, whatever it was. With the Institute of Contemporary Art, it was often a question of trying to decide where they were going to—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —live.

PERRY RATHBONE: Live.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It moves around all the time.

PERRY RATHBONE: We moved, I don't now, eight times or something like that, and their lease would run out or the property wasn't adequate, or something, and of course the money never was adequate and that was the principal trouble with the institute. I think it had very good direction much of its life but it never had enough money. And maybe the institute was a little bit too close to New York and trying to do the same thing. The idea was a kind of Boston chapter of the Museum of Modern Art.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well originally, in the '40s, they had that kind of relationship.

PERRY RATHBONE: That's right, 1936.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Thirty-six, yes.

PERRY RATHBONE: And it was founded as a kind of protest measure against the Boston Museum which simply had turned its back on modern art, because as I may have said before, one of Harold Edgell's, I think, serious shortcomings was his lack of any belief or faith in the art of the 20th century. He said to his students at Harvard, and I remember hearing him say so, so far as he was concerned, gentlemen, art came to an end with Cézanne, so I will conclude my course with this great master. And this policy was quite evident, in evidence, at the Boston

Museum, because he was indifferent, except, oddly enough, in the field of watercolors, was rather themed or repetitive, typical kind of uh, Leymen watercolor painters, do you know what I mean?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Well, there always had been—had a taste for watercolors in Boston.

PERRY RATHBONE: It's quite true, and the more modern practitioners, those following after John Whorf and so on, were always painting red barns in the snow, you know, and bridges.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Nice technique but a little tired ideas.

PERRY RATHBONE: That's right, you know, I mean not the vigor of a—the great vigor of a Homer, for example. [Inaudible.] So, Harold Edgell would go on his own to Newbury Street, I was told, and buy these watercolors and pay with them with the Hayden Fund or the Fleishman, not the Fleishman Fund, the Schubert Fund, for American painting, but they were—said a lot of things, and meanwhile the great practitioners of the art, like Prendergast, like Morris Graves, like Mark Tobey, like Burchfield.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Something happened.

PERRY RATHBONE: These people weren't represented hardly at all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They don't have any Hoppers up there for example.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, Hoppers, the Hoppers we had were marvelous but they all came from John Spaulding. I think there were nine or ten in his bequest. But this was a curious condition here and people resented it, and W.G. Constable was the curator of paintings then and people would look to him to carry the torch. And he would blame the museum's lack of activity on Edgell, and then if Edgell were approached and say why doesn't uh, why isn't the museum doing something; well, the painting responsibility is up to my curator. So they had this thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The bouncing ball.

PERRY RATHBONE: The bouncing ball. And so, I thought one of the first things we must do is to demonstrate the museum's concern for the 20th century by collecting it and by exhibiting it in important shows. This was one of the underlying principles of the new exhibition program, and that carried through well, from the time of my retirement.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, how did your staff take to all of this livening up?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, by and large they took very well to it. Some of them were so pocketed in their departments, like Dows Dunham. He never pretended to have any opinions. He'd say, "Well now don't ask me, I don't know anything about art." He said, "I only know about Egyptian archaeology." And it sometimes concerns art, but it really is you know, Egyptian archeology. He said, "Don't ask me." But he was perfectly tolerant. Sometimes he'd say he didn't understand but in general, they all liked the new program, no question at all. They made wry comments, some of them of course, you know, that's to be expected.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Of course, of course.

PERRY RATHBONE: And some of them would be baffled, and some would—but there was never any resentment that I was conscious of, about the new program.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What about your curators, because some of them had been there forever, so there must have been some changes, though not very many?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, you see, there were and the museum was in something of a bind there, because there was no mandatory retirement age.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really?

PERRY RATHBONE: No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You could just go on forever.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well just about. And neither was there any um, really effective or a wide, universal pension plan. So those people who have not involved themselves with what pension plan there was when it was established, had only their continuing salaries to rely upon.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, so there were a lot of economic problems.

PERRY RATHBONE: A lot of economic problems, and so many of them just kept on, like Kojiro Tomita. I think he was 72 or 73 when he finally retired. W.G. Constable was about 73 when he retired. Henry Rossiter was 82, I think, when he retired. Ms. Townsend did retire at the age of 65. She was curator of textiles and one reason there was that her very able assistant was Adolph Cavallo, whom I recommended for appointment after I went to Boston, told me quite frankly once one night that he patiently could wait for that time to assume control of the department, if he only knew when it would happen. Then, if he saw a light at the end of the tunnel he could stick it out, but if he couldn't. And so I had to go Ms. Townsend and tell her that it was necessary to have—to know what her cutoff date would be, and she finally just sort of crystallized her thoughts and she decided when she'd retire. I think it was 65 or 66. But as I say, they were a long time getting used to the idea of retirement. Some of them you see, like Henry Rossiter, although he retired at the age of 82, remained very youthful in his mind and in his activity and his productivity was immense. He was involved with the Karolik third, the third collection, the so-called third leg of the trilogy, and that was a good excuse for him to stay, while that—until that was wound up. But then there were other good reasons for him to stay after that. By that time some money had come for the Print Department, the Bullard Fund, which was generous enough to permit him to take a slice and go to London, where he knew—by watchful waiting in the spring of every year, as the sales were being made up—he would come home with some treasures, and he did. That was uh—Cornelius Vermeule was the first appointment that I made, because when I went, the Boston Classical Department had no curator. George Chase, in his retirement from Harvard, had taken hold of the department. You see, instead of really looking for a young scholar and new blood, they had simply taken the least resistant path. Edgell had, as far as I can see, and appointed George Chase, who was an excellent man, but he was already 65 or something, and he had retired and I think even died by the time I went to Boston, and a Ms. Hazel Palmer was the doyenne of the department, but she was not someone really to lead a very important department, I could easily see that. And uh, I, with the help of George Hofmann, who guided me, making recommendations, I recommended Cornelius Vermeule, and he was young, quite young, he was only 32 or something like that, and he's been a wonderful curator ever since. But he was number one and then one by one, they all became my appointees.

The next one was Bill Smith, in the Egyptian Department, because Dows Dunham was then 65, and he wanted to quit his administrative responsibilities at 65 and devote himself entirely to his, to publishing his—the excavations by the Nile, and he's still doing it to this day. He's 86 or something. Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, like a whole other career, just publishing.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes, for more than 20 years he's been doing that. And Bill Smith became the curator and then died an untimely death about six or seven years ago. Yeah. So with these new people, I could then more readily build them up to my idea of rebuilding the whole museum from within, because, as I've had occasion to say, when I went to Boston, quite objectively and also quite charitably, there was not a single gallery in that whole vast building—and I think there were 176 galleries—not one that measured up to what I, to my ideas of what a museum gallery and display should be, not one. So it was an enormous, enormous task to face.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It will take five years, right?

PERRY RATHBONE: It will take five years, even to know which way to turn. But we accomplished a very great deal of that and it took the young blood that came along to share my enthusiasm for this very thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where would you start? I mean, walking through that building and seeing that many galleries, how did you say, you know, here rather than there, or five places simultaneously?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I think the very first thing I did was to clear out a gallery on the first floor, that is the, you know the—[inaudible]—on the Fenway side, and make a space for contemporary art. And we borrowed quite a number of paintings and sculptures from collectors as far away as Pittsburgh. From David Thompson, we borrowed a Miró. Miró had never been seen in the museum before, for example, and a Beckmann, a Beckmann triptych from Los Angeles, or Santa Barbara rather. And I think there was a number one space which required, you know, painting and decent things at the windows and new lights and so on. And then, where did we go from there? In the Decorative Arts Department, which was in sad array or disarray, I had a willing accomplice in Hanns Swarzenski, who became the curator of decorative arts within a year of my appointment. He was very keen to revivify that whole complex department and beautify it, relight it and re-case it and relabel it and re-everything.

PAUL CUMMINGS: None of that interested Edgell really.

PERRY RATHBONE: No, I don't think the minutia—

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean the installation display was all—

PERRY RATHBONE: No. There's no sign at all at his ever being at all interested in such things, except in again, a sort of abstract way, a rather mechanical way. There was a man by the name of William Thompson, 25 or 30



years ago, who was doing a lot of experimental lighting for museums and he published a few article in *Museum News* or *American Art Journal* or something, and he was a Boston man, he knew a lot about light, and felt that he could provide a space with every possible type of light; warm, incandescent and cold fluorescent and something to illuminate objects on the floor and others on a wall. So Harold Edgell, at great expense I have heard, engaged him to create a room for recent acquisitions, where all of this flexibility would be in play and that was, I think, about the extent of Harold Edgell's involvement with display installation. It's unbelievable but it's true.

Most of the lights I have occasion to replace have been in the ceiling of the museum. They had to take out a lot of the old incandescent, sort of soup bowl fixtures, and replaced them with—which threw the light on the ceiling—with fluorescent lights, a very ugly—[inaudible]—kind of thing, which also threw light on the ceiling, sort of stripes, or a corridor. Well as I say Paul, there was nothing really right about any area really, and it was awfully dirty. You can't believe how soiled the whole place was, and therefore lifeless and stale and stagnant. And I would get an appropriation from the trustees each year, to go about this renovation program, which they all applauded and liked, but so far as being able to map it out in a big way, with a lot of money, this was impossible, because there was no habit of giving them money, of giving the museum any large money, there just wasn't. It came like manna from heaven. Suddenly, there would be a request from someone that we've heard of, and if the money were not restricted, well, it could be used this way or that. But I don't think I talked to you about the roof or did I, regarding the roof?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, what was that?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, as I told you, one of the—the virtue of patience, becoming an active virtue, I described that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, one of the things that required the greatest exercise of patience was to rebuild, really virtually rebuilding the roof of the museum, because when I went there, yes, I found the conditions, especially in the Evans Wing on the Fenway, the great wing that shelters the painting galleries, was leaking like a sieve, in every kind of container and catch basin had been put into use, whether they were paint buckets or wash basins or eaves troughs running here there, had been installed in that area above the skylights, to catch the rainwater as it came through, and it was obvious that something had to be done.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Just incredible.

PERRY RATHBONE: Absolutely incredible. And I was introduced to the problem of that roof before I got there, because Mr. McClanathan, Richard McClanathan, had tried to persuade the trustees, in his capacity as secretary to the trustees, secretary of the museum, that they should roof over the skylights and just depend on artificial light. And I, being a great believer in daylight and all of its virtues, although recognizing its many problems, telegraphed the trustees before a meeting and said, "Please, don't reach any decision regarding the skylights until I'm there to discuss it with you," and they very, very obligingly held off, so that I was able to rescue the fate of those skylights, but it did mean rebuilding them. And we worked out a scheme with the best roofer in New England, by using plastic material for the roof for the first time, instead of heavy plate glass, you know what that's like and what kind of a structure that heavy plate glass requires.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Especially when those gale winds blow in September, and this Henry Rossiter, who was the acting director before me said, he said it really would worry you to be up there in those galleries during one of those high winds. The whole thing shook so that it was alarming. And so the plastic thing seemed to be the answer. It was much lighter weight, it's a very efficient transmitter of light, and plastic domes had then been invented, they were quite new on the market, seemed to be the answer for the flat of the roof, and then corrugated plastic panes for the slopes. And so for well, I think it must have been a matter of at least five years that that roof and then other roofs on the older part of the building, were being reconstructed. And we spent \$1 million, \$1 million, where it didn't show. This is what required patience.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, that's the hardest problem.

PERRY RATHBONE: Why yes, where it didn't show. Yes. Anyhow, that was quite an ordeal, and so we had to go slowly with the renovations, but in the meantime, the museum was beginning to take in more money from our membership development and getting people into the habit of giving to the museum, and so on. But I remember distinctly that we didn't—we were not able to do anything in the major painting galleries, in the big galleries of the Evans Wing, until 1960, because I remember it was in November of 1960, when we opened the Prendergast show, Maurice Prendergast show, that was—those galleries were ready to be seen for the first time, or one gallery, the first, only one at a time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, incredible.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, incredible.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you know, what was it like, coming to, you know this museum to really be the janitor almost, you know painting, fixing, renovations, all that.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well it really was, and I don't know how many hours I would spend with the treasurer, the Trustee Treasurer of the Museum, Robert Baldwin, a most conscientious and helpful man, the superintendent of the building and myself, up in the skylight region making major decisions about how that problem should be handled, that kind of thing, and conferences with them in my office and so on. I don't know how we did it and at the same time organized exhibitions and write catalogue introductions, and hire new personnel.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I get the feeling, from what you've said in many of these tapes, that you respond very rapidly to the public response to what happens at the museum, I mean that seems to be a catalyst for you.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, I think that's a good point, that's a very good observation.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What, what happened the first few years in Boston, I mean how did the press and the society and the average people take to all of this?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, the press was very, was very interested. They were, they were looking for something to happen at the museum. Really, the town was ready. The town really was ready for a change, Howard was ready for a change at the museum, the trustees were. I think only the oldest curators were quite satisfied with the way things were and so that the press was very, very friendly and very interested, and how did we—well, I remember there were some raised eyebrows over Tenley Albright skating in the rotundas, as if this were an unseemly activity.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Display of female form in Boston.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, absolutely, and one or two repercussions came back to me. Some trustee was heard to say well if I think if something like that happens again I'm going to retire, and so on. But nobody ever came to me with any, any threats. Everybody took such things in good part and said well, the museum needs a good shaking up, it really is so dusty, musty and stale at the museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were you given any idea that that was part of possibly what was expected of you when you went there, to shake it up?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. I remember, I mean I told you a very significant remark that Richard Payne made to me in that clever interview, where I didn't realize what he was talking about, but he said to me in that interview, and I suppose I should have caught on but I didn't. He said, you know our director is now about 69—Harold Edgell was approaching 70—and he's not very well and I think that we will have to do something. When we have a new director, we have to do something about the membership in the museum because it's very small, and he said, "I hope when we have a new director to get on a new footing there, that we won't have any more parties where no one shows up but old ladies in funny hats.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. [Laughs.]

PERRY RATHBONE: Did I not tell you that? So I did. Anyway, it gives you a picture.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was the indication.

PERRY RATHBONE: That was the indication, that they want—they were really eager for a change, and that gave me courage to make the changes that I did, but it seemed to me that they came very, very slowly. Um, well I don't think—I really never did meet very much—no, I can't say I met very much opposition there along the line. More, more encouragement, yeah, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were you able to fan out interests beyond the city and beyond Cambridge, into the state, into the New England area?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, that was a great thing we did, Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, especially into the radius of about 50 miles of Boston, and this was accomplished by the establishment of the Ladies' Committee.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, which you've talked about.

PERRY RATHBONE: We've talked about. And the political foundation of that, that it was—that it represented a demographic.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, the whole spectrum.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, a concept and an ethnographic point too, a combination, and the fact that they—that there was a change of personnel, so that this attracted more and more people, from this large sweep of territory and community, into the life of the museum, and so it wasn't long before people in rather distant places like Cohasset would be coming in with a busload, or some people would be coming from Hamilton or Manchester or Lawrence or somewhere, which communities that previously paid relatively little attention to the museum. That was accomplished really that way, more than any other way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it's the personal contact, even in such a large area, that pays off.

PERRY RATHBONE: Absolutely, it made a great difference. And by the same token, as soon as there were people living in those places who became intimately associated with the museum, sooner or later the local newspapers, and each one of those communities has its own, would find the museum an interesting topic and would pick up stories about this exhibition and that renovation, and so on. So there was a clipping file began to grow to alarming dimensions and then Paul, we had to increase the staff in order to maintain the public that we were going after. I finally found out I couldn't handle it all. The public relations officer, one man, who was also the curator of education.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, it was too much.

PERRY RATHBONE: I mean really. Yes, he couldn't possibly, and so we had to find somebody to do the public relations. I think—[inaudible]—came to the museum at that time, and Dooley was able to devote himself entirely to the Education Department.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now did that then develop all of the school bus tours and groups that everybody uses?

PERRY RATHBONE: I won't say that they began with this change under my administration, because actually, school buses were coming to the museum oh, heavens way back before the First World War, and the whole idea of docentry is said to have been born in the Boston Museum, or the word invented in this seat of learning, in its Latin, proper Latin root, this ugly word of docent involved, I think David McCord, who was Boston's poet, and did a very amusing thing about a decent docent doesn't doze, or something.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. [Laughs.]

PERRY RATHBONE: David McCord. But that's all very local Boston lore. So it wasn't a new thing but it was put on a very different footing and at the same time the museum, my idea was to make the museum irresistible to people, by its program, by its visual attractiveness, by its atmosphere of friendliness and warmth, and there were various ways of achieving that, you know, a certain amount of plant life which the Ladies Committee soon took hold of and did wonders with, and then I felt it very necessary to have a lively and really helpful sales desk.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: I think I discussed that last time didn't I?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Slightly, slightly, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: I think I told you about the man I found there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes, where it was all in a corner and never there.

PERRY RATHBONE: Never there. This was the kind of unbelievable thing and Mr. McClanathan, I told you about him, Richard McClanathan.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did he do there actually?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, he went to the museum, in the Painting Department. He had been a senior fellow at Harvard, which was a high recommendation in those days and was assistant to Constable, until that didn't seem to work very well. Meantime, he was the old secretary of the museum, which is a, you know, major position at the Museum of Fine Arts, as it is at the Metropolitan, retired, Ashton Sanborn retired, and there was McClanathan who said, well, he could do that. So it was very easy just to say all right do it, then you don't have to look for anybody. Then he also became let's see, he also became—oh yes, when Hipkiss died, who was the curator of decorative arts. McClanathan, I think had been transferred to that department from the Painting Department

and said, "Well I can do that," so they made him curator of decorative arts. So he had three jobs by that time, three full-time jobs, and then along came WGBH, the, the much touted and very successful television educational station, of which Ralph Lowell, the president of the museum, he was also the head, because it was a creature of the Lowell Institute, of which he was ex-officio constituent of the family, head of. So it was an easy tie-in there and it wasn't long before the museum had installed \$80,000 worth of television equipment and programs, beamed directly from the galleries, and they said, "Now who are we going to get to coordinate all this activity?" And Rich McClanathan said, "Well me of course, I suppose." Anyway, when I went there, he was holding four jobs.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Oh that's fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well you can't believe it. This is only 1955, not 1905.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's amazing.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. Anyway, so by building the staff very judiciously, we were getting a fine working organization and Betty Riegle [ph], who I told you about, was one of my first recruits.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: She was properly ambitious, imaginative at the sales desk and making space for it, which we did. We had to make that one of the irresistible attractions in the museum, and then we had to fire the manager of the restaurant so we'd have decent food.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes, you talked about that.

PERRY RATHBONE: We got a hold of the best—we got the best woman in Boston to run that restaurant, who was a fabulous worker and a super pastry cook, and cared like mad, Ms. Gates, and she just became everybody's friend, and then she was there and remade the restaurant, gave it a new reputation and everything. I don't know, about ten years ago, she was carried off by cancer. But that was another aspect of making the museum this great, irresistible public advantage.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do you think all of that affects the growth of the museum, other than just in turn of larger figures at the gate every year.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I'll tell you how it does. A museum's reputation, a museum's influence can't always be seen or measured, but I know perfectly well, from gearing up the museum as we did, that—just to take one thing alone; the publications program became a far greater thing than it had ever been before. They were, the staff were encouraged to create, to write, and encouraged to make exhibitions which would produce the publications, and if you saw the five-foot shelf of books that came out of this period of productivity you'd be very impressed. And these books are everywhere.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: You know not just across this country, but in the libraries of the world. And this is the kind of influence that a museum can have and can have with lasting effect.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You hired a rather famous graphic designer or somebody who became famous.

PERRY RATHBONE: Karl Zahn.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: That's right. He was one of the first people I approached to help—to begin to change the museum's image, and I think I may have said before, I felt the need for an updated logo, and asked him if he'd do it. No sooner had he done that than I said well Karl you know, had come to us half-time and within a year full-time, and then I had a little rub with Walter Whitehill, because Walter Whitehill, he's a fine fellow and also a very productive man and has very good taste and so on, but one has to admit, he really is very conservative, and he thought that he had the key to publication design in a person of Rudolph Ruzicka, and Anfinson [ph] of the Portland Press, and I turned to him for advice and accepted it, but when I got a hold of Zahn, Zahn had his own ideas of who can do the best job and what the design should be and so on, and Walter Whitehill was quite tart of his criticism of Zahn's activity, but I had to weather that one and we rode out the storm and Walter finally came around to recognizing Zahn's exceptional gift, and that pleased me very much, because Karl really proved himself against fairly significant odds. But I think his contribution is very important in changing the whole feeling about the museum, making the publications attractive to the average buyer. And then to discontinue that fuddy-duddy old *Bulletin*.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes.

PERRY RATHBONE: Do you remember the old *Bulletin*?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Every museum had one of those it seemed, at one point.

PERRY RATHBONE: But the worst one, the ugliest one, certainly was Boston's, without any question, and when that thing was started, because it's the oldest book in the United States, characteristically Bostonian, you know where people know how to read letters there, so of course they got the *Bulletin*. They had bought a font, a type, very odd-looking, I must say, which was held by Metcalf, the printer at Boston, and they never sought to change it because some other font had been used. They made that investment way back in 1903, how could they, in 1953, think of changing, you know?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. They're just getting good usage.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And so it was that kind of, sort of hidebound thing was perilous, still present.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: And I just asked Karl, after he'd been there for a few months, I said, "For heaven's sake, do go to work on the *Bulletin*, let's change that." But we'd keep the old odd form, because there's a certain advantage to having things a little bit eccentric, but then after several years went by and he had been in that straightjacket, he said, "You know Perry, it's so difficult to make a decent layout with this shaped page, that I really implore you to make a change," and I said, "With all the librarians in the world probably could kick you in the shins for doing it because they've got things shelved and everything." He said, "Well never mind the librarians, let's think of ourselves," and then we changed it to a squarer format, which eased things a very great deal and really brought a change. Of course in the meantime we have decent typeface and lovely illustrations carefully edited.

PAUL CUMMINGS: All the other pieces.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah.

[END OF TRACK.]

### **May 4, 1976**

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's on. Side 12, and it's the 4th of May, 1976. Paul Cummings, talking to Perry Rathbone. I think if we could go back over a couple of topics here.

PERRY RATHBONE: Sure.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Which would be some of the exhibitions that were done at the museum, and I think the ones of great interest would be the ones which were—

PERRY RATHBONE: —organized.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Organized there particularly, or a particular interest in Boston. There were a number of kind of primitive art exhibitions; one in '58, *Art of Ancient Peru*, and '61, *Gold of Ancient Americas*, in '68. How did all of this activity affect Boston, because the exhibitions before this had been sort of helter-skelter. You organized exhibitions. You also had a fair number of American Federation of Art exhibitions.

PERRY RATHBONE: Right, we did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And museums with exhibitions, rather, with other museums. So, what—you generated a great deal of work for yourselves.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, well you're quite right, we did. Let me preface that by saying that the museum as it was constituted when I went there, had no Department of Primitive Art. It had a few examples of pre-Columbian gold that it had come by some chance or other but there was no program, there was no curatorial department. It was one of those things that fell between two stools. Nobody quite knew who was responsible for what is called primitive art or tribal art or aboriginal, whatever it was called, but the great interest was—I could easily recognize, and since tribal art had—since the Boston Museum was finally come to be recognized as an art form and not just as anthropological data. It seemed that we were the institution to deal with it. No other institution roundabout was as capable even as we were, to deal with it. Fortunately, early—fortunately, on my board of trustees was William Clafin, who was close to the Peabody Museum at Harvard. And also, I soon made friends with the director of the Peabody Museum, "Joe" [J.O.] Brew, as his uh—as he was called, and Joe Brew repeatedly

said any time you want to borrow from our great museum over here in Cambridge for exhibitions at the Boston Museum, feel free, because we have no means of showing things appropriately here; it's not part of our program. And I was very encouraged by that and William Claflin was very keen about making this liaison too. So, I lost no time in doing that, and out of that alliance resulted a number of really quite brilliant shows. I must revamp what I said about nothing but gold being in the museum of a so-called primitive or tribal kind. There was one of the most remarkable collections, there still is, of Paracas textiles anywhere outside of the Louvre.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes, right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And these had not been seen, you know, for generations, and have been brought to the museum as early as 1912, through the influence of Dr. Denman W. Ross, and his enthusiasm for aspects of design in every part of the world. And it leaked out to me sooner or later that those things might really have come from the museum in Lima, having been um—what is the proper word?

PAUL CUMMINGS: The accession.

PERRY RATHBONE: Pilfer, would you say pilfered, appropriated or—it went by the director, who had left Peru, and appeared in North America with this fabulous array of textiles, and of course the museum innocently bought them, not knowing where they came from. But anyway, that's why the museum has such a great collection, but they had never been seen in context with other Peruvian textiles and that was what had inspired the beautiful Peruvian show we had. But the first one we had, I believe, Paul, was one which we called *Masterpieces of Primitive Art*.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, '58.

PERRY RATHBONE: Was it in '58?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And there we engaged the help of Bob Gardner, Robert G. Gardner, who was on the staff of the Peabody Museum, an anthropologist, who was very helpful, the cooperation of J.O. Brew, and as I remember, the works in that collection were drawn entirely from the Peabody Museum, plus there were some textiles from the Boston Museum Collection. And that was an eye-opener for the Boston audience and it attracted a great deal of attention, and this was the first of a series of shows which we promised the public, based upon this theme. At the same time, we arranged for the Peabody Museum to lend to us, for semi-permanent display, aspects from their collection, and as I remember, the first permanent show that we organized from the Peabody was *Masterpieces in Primitive Art*, and that in time gave way to a show, *South Pacific Art* and *Negro Art* and so on. Everything.

And we also produced catalogues; not elaborate and costly catalogues but informative ones, and a decent record of what we were doing. I just remember that this whole program was greeted enthusiastically by the Boston Museum public, but at the same time, with all the other overhead in the museum, I didn't see how we could establish a separate department at that time. But in brief, that is how it came about.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was there money to support these programs or did you have to go out and raise it for the exhibitions?

PERRY RATHBONE: We, we—that's a good question. Today, you see one can always turn to the Federal Government for money, for any project. At that time, there was not even a state art council to turn to, and we would simply have to take the money out of our budget, which came from endowment, and also from our increasing membership.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh right, right, the Ladies' Committee and all those things.

PERRY RATHBONE: The Ladies' Committee and membership returns, and people began to give on an annual basis, though there wasn't as yet an annual appeal. Nevertheless, people would send in generous membership contributions and our membership was doubling and quadrupling, and I suppose by this time we had 8[000] or 9000 members and were able to do more.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: That's where the funding came from. It never came—we never went to any foundation for that sort of thing. The museum had really virtually never had any money from any charitable source.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Never.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were there ever individual funds?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, there were individual funds.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Sometimes.

PERRY RATHBONE: Which were for the general purposes of the museum. And each year, the museum would reap a certain number of bequests, often, I should say more often than not, from perfect unknowns.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why does that happen? That's fascinating, because all the major museums have that experience.

PERRY RATHBONE: Do they really? All the major ones, all the major, older ones.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes. The Met, Chicago, Cleveland, places like that. Why is that do you think?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, um—

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean what prompts somebody out of nowhere, to leave something to an institution like that do you think?

PERRY RATHBONE: I can give you one very Bostonian example, if that would be of interest.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PERRY RATHBONE: It had to do with the late Katherine Dana Mercer [ph] of Doylestown, Pennsylvania, born Katherine Dana of Boston, from an old Boston line, a woman who, at the age of 20 or very early in her 20s, married a Pennsylvanian by the name of Mercer and went to live in Doylestown. She, owing to her inheritance, and the fact that a great deal of her inheritance was in oil wells in Texas, she died a very rich woman, and she was known to be a rich person by people in Philadelphia. And she had been considerably courted by people at the museum, like—[inaudible]—others there, hoping that they would inherit, when she died. No, say within a couple years of her death, I was told by a trustee of the Old Colony Trust Company, the trust officer, Oliver, Oliver Wolcott, he said, "You know one day you're going to wake up very happy, Perry; there will be a very nice bequest that will help the museum to no end." I said, "Well that's interesting, relief, nice news," and all that. He said, "But nobody around knows about it but I do and I'm glad to tell you." I learned afterwards, that not one of my trustees, and we were then about, about 30, had ever heard of this person or this bequest. When it came, it was to be administered to the Old Colony Trust, and it was divided between the Arnold Arboretum, the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Museum of Fine Arts. Her entire residuary estate, which amount to about \$20 million, and in other words, we were inheriting about \$7 million that nobody on the board of trustees had ever heard of, and that began to bring us a couple of hundred thousand dollars a year, which was a godsend.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you got the income from the bequest.

PERRY RATHBONE: We got the income, not the capital. That was in the trust of Old Colony. They administered it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: My heavens.

PERRY RATHBONE: Um, when I inquired into the will, I learned that she had said she was leaving this residuary bequest to those institutions, because those were the three institutions most admired and enjoyed by her father. In other words, she was being a very dutiful daughter unto death, in Pennsylvania, far away, having left Boston at the age of 20, and the Philadelphia Museum received \$100,000, after all the courtship that had been paid to her and so on. So there's, there's one answer to your question, that's the only one, rather neat and specific one. We also inherited her portrait as a young woman, by Zorn, a very handsome and dashing portrait.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Marvelous.

PERRY RATHBONE: An attractive young woman. But uh—

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's a phenomenal piece of income every year isn't it?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, absolutely wonderful, wonderful. So the other bequests, and they still come, and often, as I say, a total surprise. Uh, the people who I suppose feel that the museum may be like a church or something, is not going to run away.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It goes on, yes, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And also it symbolizes the ideal of beauty, of uplift, something for everybody,

education. It's like mother, it can't be wrong, at least most of the time. Anyway, I don't know, I don't know what other motivations there are, but the Museum of Fine Arts of course has a great prestige and a great dignity and purpose. It looks, as Forsyth Wickes said to me, when he was too old to come to the museum and see it, but he left us his collection. I said to him, "I wish you would come." No, he said, "I can't come, but tell me a little bit about your museum." He said, "Does it have columns?" And I said, "Mr. Wickes, it certainly has columns. If that's a matter of any concern, there are 22 enormous ionic columns on the Fen side of the building and I don't think you want any more than that." Well, he said, "That's the way a museum ought to be."

PAUL CUMMINGS: He was the Newport person wasn't he?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, Newport, New York, and he left his whole collection, but that comes much later.

PAUL CUMMINGS: All right, that's later.

PERRY RATHBONE: But anyhow these bequests would continue to come, sometimes only \$50,000, you know, and sometimes more, \$750,000 or something, and without any effort on the part of the trustees, this manna would drop into their laps, and before inflation set in and before we raised our sights any higher, to doing a more vigorous and expansive and dynamic job with the museum. It was enough to keep the doors open and the salaries paid and the floors swept and the floors waxed and all that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I was up there a few weeks ago and realized it's \$2.50 admission now?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. And I was told only for—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Kind of extraordinary.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, it is, and I was told only a couple of days ago that the place is really quite badly kept too, that things look shabby and not up to the nines.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's very—that day it was the middle of the week and it looked rather empty, and I'm sure that \$2.50 doesn't bring them in.

PERRY RATHBONE: No, it scares them off and Paul, they all descend upon the museum on Sunday morning, when it's free, the place is jammed. Sunday morning, I may have told you, was my own idea, because it was against the law in Massachusetts, to open at this hour during church time, but having come from St. Louis, where the museum was always open at 10 in the morning on Sundays, and it was much enjoyed by those pagan St. Louisans.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Art lovers.

PERRY RATHBONE: Art lovers. I thought, why shouldn't we give the same privilege to the Bostonians. And if we asked for the law, it will say no, but if we don't ask and just open it, how can anybody really object to this harmless and uplifting pastime on a Sunday morning. And the idea was to make it an attractive family place to come on Sunday and have lunch there, and help support the very good restaurant and so on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: There were never any complaints about that.

PERRY RATHBONE: Never.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It just, you just opened.

PERRY RATHBONE: We just opened and we never asked about the law or anything and it still operates. [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's marvelous.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, I think so.

PAUL CUMMINGS: There were some other exhibitions which, which are rather interesting, Walter Chrysler had a show there. Um, was that your doing?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, yes. Um, a colleague of mine, who was, until recently, the director of the museum in Dayton, Ohio. I don't know whether you know Tom Colt or not, but maybe you do.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I know of him, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Tom Colt, at some point in his career, made a very good friend of Walt Chrysler, and was



quite sure that Walter Chrysler, with his warehouse full of Old Masters, and modern masters too, was a man to cultivate for future benefactions. He also was capable of putting together very remarkable exhibitions, and he didn't mind the publicity that accrued to him as a result, and here was an opportunity to show a lot of things with a possible, you know, jar of gold at the end of the rainbow. Walter Chrysler, meantime, was increasingly interested in New England and had settled himself in Cape Cod, Provincetown, where he had opened a museum which is now defunct and moved off. But he seemed to be a good neighbor who was interested in the same thing. His modern art would have filled lots of gaps in our collection and I knew he had many good things, having gone to the warehouse repeatedly with Tom Colt and others, and reviewed the things that he would put into the show. And so, we staged the *Walter Chrysler Exhibition* and this was an immense attraction. The name of course helps.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Um, and I remember the opening—perhaps I have mentioned this before. The opening of the *Walter Chrysler Exhibition*, which he attended with his wife as guest of honor, we had the largest number ever turn out for an opening.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Three thousand people turned out in black ties to say how do you do and look at the masterpieces on view.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: Fantastic. And it was after that, that we had to limit our openings by charging an admission, to keep down the freeloaders, the people who just came and drank whatever refreshment we offered.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did that make much difference?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. It brought it right back to normal, manageable proportions, so that 1,500 people would come, or 2,000 at the most.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And you made a little money. It paid for itself.

PERRY RATHBONE: We made some money. Yes, it paid for itself, exactly. But that was the highwater mark of our membership promotion. Um, the exhibition was full of perfectly marvelous things that are now in various museum collections. There's the great Matisse we hung over the stairs, of *La Danse*, which is now in the Museum of Modern Art, and they've since acquired the Picasso, *The Charnel House*, which is the closest thing to *Guernica* in style and more or less in message.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And there were great Bonnard and Vuillards and Maillols and all kinds of things. And there were a large group of Old Masters and there were some very optimistic identifications and attributions, which in a way, were harmful, because there was a Rembrandt of Sampson—what is that, Sampson and his father-in-law. An early Rembrandt subject, which exists another time. And uh, there was a Titian, a debatable Titian, and things like that, which rather put an awkward complexion on the exhibition. What it did was to obscure the brilliance of the Baroque paintings that were there, which were perfectly unfamiliar to the Boston audience, and at that time, were unfamiliar to any American audience, but that were marvelous and were characteristic of the rather, well, eccentric and maverick activity of Walter Chrysler.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why do you think those were good pictures and the other ones weren't, the Dutch ones?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, because he wasn't going to pay a big sum of money for anything if he could help it, and Rembrandt has always commanded fat sums, whereas Guido Reni, you know was a forgotten number, but he wasn't the only. There was Preti for example, and Creti, and other masters who had never even been heard of in Boston. Maybe McCoomb [ph], who taught Baroque painting at Harvard, had pronounced these names, but they were perfectly unknown.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Nobody had seen them.

PERRY RATHBONE: Nobody had seen them, and they didn't mean anything to them, so people who came to admire Rembrandt and Titian were disappointed, but they didn't stop to see what brilliant examples of Italian Baroque there were there, and Spanish Baroque too.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now did he select the exhibition or did you do that, or a curator?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, there were certain things that he rather insisted upon, but aside from that, the exhibition traveled, you may remember.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And Tom Colt and I went and sat in that bleak and chilly warehouse by the hour, while things were brought out, we'd say yes, no, maybe, put it aside for reconsideration and so on. That's the way it was done, was a kind of group think or committee decision that was made.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: But there were certain things that he wanted very badly to have in the exhibition and since he was providing it all, it was very hard to say, "Well, we'll have this but not that." But there certainly was nothing in the exhibition which was fraudulent, which was a forgery, as later was the case when he sent an exhibition, long after, it went to Canada.

PAUL CUMMINGS: To Canada, yes, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: It wasn't the same exhibition at all. But he was capable of making any number of exhibitions, he held so much art, it was amazing. And I remember afterwards, there were some sculptures he lent too, a Gauguin sculpture, amongst other things. Oh yes, and of course the great Lehmbruck of the monument in Duisburg, the man bent over, the war monument.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Which is now in some museum, actually I forget which one now. He was willing to leave with the Boston Museum when the show was over and we very much needed things like that, to try and flesh out our weaknesses. So for many reasons it was a great boom to us, but people loved to gossip and talk down Walter Chrysler, for more or less obvious reasons. He was always dabbling in the market, and he himself was, in a way, not the most, how shall I say? Uh, well, beguiling and inspiring person. But he was a neighbor and he had made important gifts to the Museum of Modern Art, as you know, not without a string attached, "This painting, Picasso I'm giving must be illustrated in color," and that sort of thing. But he was nobody just to brush aside, and the show was a great success and we sold many, many catalogues, which I think is still—I'm not sure they're still available at the museum, but you could look it up and see what was there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Terrific. There's a couple other ones. You did a W.G. Russell Allen, you gave a great collection of prints. How did he come to the Boston Museum? Was that—was he involved?

PERRY RATHBONE: I'll tell you how he came to the Boston Museum. He was an old Bostonian, a bachelor who, I think entirely on his own, had developed a passion for prints. And he was an inveterate and incurable, obsessive collector, and he was a man who, for a long time was secretary of the American Association of Museums.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's right. Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And it was at those meetings, in my early days as director, that I met him, and found him a very, very sympathetic man. And he became, almost inevitably, through his interest in prints, a close, close friend of Paul Sachs. And Paul Sachs was elected to the board of trustees of the museum, I think in 1932, and about 1936, I think it was, W.G. Russell Allen was elected, and that was a great thing for the museum, because he was a connoisseur trustee, and a generous-hearted man who was non-administrative in his concerns. He was interested in the collections, in quality, and in building the artist content of the museum, and it was—I was simply delighted that he was there when I went to the museum. But sadly, he died the first summer that I was there, but it was found that he had left the great bulk of his collection to the museum, and it was a vast enrichment. It was far bigger extent and variety than I had any idea, and I didn't know him long enough as a friend and trustee in Boston, to ever have visited his bachelors quarters, but I'm told it was absolutely loaded with prints, you know, laden to the point of breaking, bursting.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Stacked up.

PERRY RATHBONE: Stacked up, yes, yeah, a typical sort of bachelor's habitation. So that was a great loss, that he left us so early, but his collection, especially in 19th-century and 20th-century prints, which we were very weak, where the museum had deliberately laid off collecting, because he was so active there himself, with great reward. I do remember now that Henry Rossiter also had backed him as a trustee, and there it seemed it required that kind of backing, because a man who was without any official position in Boston and not particularly prominent in any other way, socially or in any other way, was not so easily found, did not so easily find his way to the board of trustees. You had to be the president of this or the head of that foundation, or an old family banking, or something.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was he a businessman or just some, you know?

PERRY RATHBONE: He inherited, he inherited quite a lot of money, though I can't tell you from what source, I don't know, but it was—Henry Rossiter indicated to me that it was quite a struggle for him to get W.G. Russell Allen elected a trustee, but he was behind it and so was Paul Sachs, because they were all in love with prints together and Allen spent a lot of time in the print room, naturally. Well it was a lucky thing that it worked that way. Then, he also left—he changed his will towards the end of his life and left quite a lot of prints to his niece, who was an old friend of mine, Lydia Evans was her name. Well, she was a graduate when I was at Harvard, and I'd known her since those days, and um, I think he did that, recognizing that over a period of time, she could own those things and then give them to the museum at an appreciated value, which would be helpful to her in settling her tax problems.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And that is exactly what she has done, very generously and very much in keeping with her uncle's wishes. And so marvelous prints from year to year, come from Lydia Evans, who is now Mrs. Christopher Tunnard of New Haven, she married a professor there. Yeah. And her mother, Mrs. Evans, who was a very dear, old Boston lady, was a charming hostess. I remember often going to their house in the Back Bay for lunch or dinner, and we sort of kept Russell Allen's image alive through that connection. Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You did another private collection in '58, which was the Niarchos, which got an awful lot of publicity all around.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, that's a good story, that's a very Boston story too. It just shows you how alert you have to be as a museum director, to take advantage of the [inaudible] chance. The Niarchos, well we all knew about the transaction whereby he bought the whole collection of Edward G. Robinson, and then sold a few things that didn't interest him to Knoedler's and all of a sudden, Knoedler's announced that they were going to show the Niarchos collection there, and I immediately recognized what a drawing card that would be and what a refreshing experience it would be, and all the rest, and how we might even make a friend of Niarchos by paying a little attention. And I appealed to Knoedler and while they were sympathetic, I didn't get anywhere. And then I remember hearing that Harry Brooks was pretty close to Niarchos and I should talk to him. And I talked to Harry Brooks and I could see right away, that he was very—being very exclusive and very protective, and didn't want any other museum to be involved, or any museum except Knoedler's Gallery, to be involved. This was going to be a one-man, Knoedler's exclusive. And that really rather irritated me, you know? I didn't think it was fair to Niarchos and I forget what other good reason I had for wanting the exhibition in Boston, but maybe it's because of our Greek population there, or something like that. It must have been that was in my mind. And so, as you know, it is a very big Greek community. So I turned to Frances Hollowell, who was the organizer of our Ladies' Committee, and I said, "What do you think? Do you think that Tom Pappas—" who I knew was a good friend of hers as a fellow Republican and a big, the biggest Bostonian Greek there was, "Do you think Tom Pappas could help us?" She said, "Well, I just can't wait to ask him, I'll do it," and went off. She went to his office and told him the story, told him about my difficulty. I had gone to the New York—I had gone to the opening at Knoedler's.

PAUL CUMMINGS: At Knoedler's, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Specifically, in order to meet Niarchos and I did, and I remember being surprised at how short he was. And I remember seeing Harry Brooks there, and I remember the brushoff that Brooks gave me, I remember all that. So I went to her and she said, "Wait, I'll go see Tom," and she did. She told the story and while she sat there, Tom Pappas picked up the telephone, put in a number, and then spoke in Greek, which she didn't understand a word of, of course, and he said, "I'll have an answer for you probably tomorrow." Word came back the next day, Boston can have the exhibition. That's all it took, was Greek to Greek.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And, and of course that was occasion worth rejoicing. Sure, that's how it was done, it was just that kind of politicking and that kind of personal contact that brought that show to Boston. Otherwise, it would have died right at Knoedler's, never to be seen again. Well, it was a wild success. I forget what the figures were now but it was one of those things that we needed to attract friends and new members.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And lots of new people.

PERRY RATHBONE: Lots of new people, and get the Greek community interested, and we'd have a proper opening and the right people there to be met, and Tom Pappas, of course, had some brothers and sisters who were quite willing to be made out and promote themselves socially. They were invited and enjoyed it all very much and it was just one of those great big successes and it extended the museum more deeply into the knowing Greek community.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think when people like that come for one specific instance, that they come back, that they really—some become interested and stick, or is it kind of a one shot, or it is hard to tell?

PERRY RATHBONE: No, it's hard to tell but you—I have found that you pick up people as members on an occasion like that, which touches them sentimentally or emotionally, or for some reason of allegiance, and then they find it very difficult to discontinue, because once having committed themselves, they feel it's a little bit disloyal to sign off, especially if they can afford to go on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Or they find something else that's interesting.

PERRY RATHBONE: Or they find something else that's interesting, or they find the museum is continuously worthy, and it's that introduction that makes such a difference. So I felt those things were very important in revitalizing the museum and spreading its base of support in the community, that any opportunity that would bring in a new contingent was justified. Plus the fact that the collection was brilliant, as we all know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes, I remember it at Knoedler's.

PERRY RATHBONE: You remember it, well, marvelous, a marvelous exhibition. And after that, I remember amongst the Greeks who came were the Goulandris family, and later on, when we decided that the French period rooms that had been installed in the museum in the 1920s were not authentic, that is that they had been cut down to fit apartment-size rooms, we decided that they were not something to hang on to but still made very nice apartment house backgrounds, and it was Dolly Goulandris who bought the principal period rooms that we had to sell. So—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —something else came of it. [Laughs.]

PERRY RATHBONE: Something else came of it. Right, exactly. Well, that was the story there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I think another interesting exhibition was the Fuller.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yeah, the Fuller, yes. Well there—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because that's a more complicated—

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. But it also required a great deal of application on the part of the director. These are all good examples about—of what a museum director is expected to do and must do in order to serve his museum properly. You can't—there was, my predecessor, he'd leave it up to the curators.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who is hunting four days out of the week.

PERRY RATHBONE: Hunting four days, you can't do that. Well, they have their own special fish to fry, you have to have your eye on the main chance, just the way Tom Hoby [ph] was a very good example here. You have to be aggressive and, and so on. Well, there, the Fuller Collection was well known of course. When I went to Boston, I asked about the Fuller Collection and W.G. Constable, who was then Curator of Paintings, said to me, you don't have to worry about the Fuller Collection, it's all coming here. It's just a question—but he said, "I don't think there's any point in your meeting Governor Fuller because all he wants to talk about is baseball, and if you aren't good at that, perhaps it's just as well you don't bother," or words to that effect. Well, it happens that I'm really not very—I'm not very schooled in baseball scores and World Series records and things like that, so I thought well, I guess I won't attempt that, at least not right now, I have enough other things to do. Then I learned that Governor Fuller was ill, and then I learned that he was too ill to visit anyway and I thought, well, I guess this had to do with waiting until the right time comes. So after that, after he died, I went to call on Mrs. Fuller, who turned out to be a very, very nice person, and I went in a way, to pay my respects to her and express my solemn [inaudible] her late husband, that I was there only too short a time, and the rest of it, but also, of course I had in my mind, the um—inheriting the collection. And I soon learned that this wasn't the case at all, that the Fuller pictures were not committed to the museum, nor was there any formal or informal understanding. It was very important for me to know that. So I saw that I had another, I had another task to accomplish, to capture as many of those paintings for the museum as possible, because most of them were of considerable interest.

So I went there repeatedly and lunched with Mrs. Fuller, went up to Rye, where some of the pictures were kept, Rye, New Hampshire, on the coast, and pointed out that it would be appropriate, since he had been a trustee of the museum for a long, long time, not a very active one to be sure, but he had been a trustee of the museum, to stage a memorial exhibition of the governor, to show the Fuller Collection as it existed, in honor or in memory of the late governor. That appealed to her and it appealed to her family, and so we organized the exhibition and I did my research on Governor Fuller, and wrote an essay about him as a collector, as an introduction to the catalogue, and I learned that he had had an idea that was very appealing to me, namely that art should not be something to be experienced in a museum only, but is made for daily life, for the casual moment in one's daily

comings and goings, and had put this idea into effect in his Cadillac showroom, because he was, as you know, a very successful and prosperous dealer in automobiles, having graduated from bicycles, as a bicycle dealer, to automobiles, had come from a rather poor family in, I think Massachusetts, but it may have been New Hampshire, I'm not quite sure now, and had actually bought tapestries to hang behind his automobiles in Commonwealth Avenue.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, marvelous.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, and had shown paintings from his collection, took them out of the house and showed them there, alongside his shiny, beautiful vehicles. And it got people who were interested only in motors, to have a look at Gainsborough, shall we say. Yeah, or Obican, which appealed to me very much indeed. I thought it was an enterprising, imaginative, dynamic thing to do and I regretted then that I hadn't known him myself to talk about these ideas. Anyway, I was able to weave all that into the story of his life as a collector and by that time, as you know, we had Carl Zahn with us, so that you could publish a catalogue and not be ashamed of it, you know, so it looked as good as it was, and showed the entire sweep of his collection, which came right down to, well let's see, I suppose Mary Lawrence [ph] was perhaps the—Sargent and Mary Lawrence [ph].

PAUL CUMMINGS: The turn of the century.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, and well, up to the 1920s, and, and he was mad about Sargent. Of course the *pièce de résistance* was the one from Rembrandt, *Man in a Fur-Lined Coat*, which is the one picture the family, in their foundation, retains. But some years later, when Mrs. Fuller died, the collection then was of course to be disbursed, because they gave up the big house on Beacon Street. The children didn't want the Old Masters really anyway, with a few exceptions. And then it was that one felt for the first time, at least I did, the pinch of the National Gallery in Washington.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes.

PERRY RATHBONE: You see? Because Johnny Walker was also a very enterprising museum director and as David Finley had been, and wanted to magnetize whatever he could from all over the country and he thought the USA was his problem, not just a state.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Washington.

PERRY RATHBONE: Or D.C., or something. And he had managed to get hold of the Fullers and play upon their sympathies with Washington because before Alvan Fuller became governor, he had served in Congress, he had been a congressman. So the fact that he had been a congressman in Washington was a bit of a tie that John could make use of, and he got in there and managed to take a beautiful small Turner, a rather splashy and stunning big Reynolds, and certainly the best—well, a very good Gainsborough, three pictures, which went to the National Gallery, and all the rest, except a few which the family wanted came to the museum as a result of these efforts. So that was uh, that's what I hoped would happen, but it wasn't—I just refused to take what I'd been told as a matter of fact.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: You know, well, just sit back and relax, the pictures will all come to you.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It doesn't happen.

PERRY RATHBONE: It doesn't happen and without those efforts, Paul, I am sure they would have gone to Christie's for sale, just as the Franz Hals copies by Sargent, and copies of Sargent after Velasquez, and Augustus John, and a couple of other things, which we really didn't want, went to—we sold at auction. That's in a nutshell, the Fuller story. Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did—you know what, what would you do as a director, in the early years when you were in Boston, to find out who had things? Was it hearsay, was it research? Would you look through old catalogues to see who lent things, was it just things you picked up in the social rounds or the clubs?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, I suppose there was some—

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean it's such a tentative—how do you find out there's a bachelor with a print collection, except that he happened to be at the museum.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. Well, I think my trustees were pretty well informed. Paul Sachs was and so was Edward Forbes, both of them trustees at the time. I, let's see, I became a member of the Odd Volumes Club very early in my years there, which is a club of bibliophiles and collector types, a men's club, and I think in places like that, just the table conversation, you would hear of this, that and the other.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's a more active club than the Grolier's though, isn't it?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yeah, they've—yes, the Odd Volumes has lunch every Saturday and a meeting once a month, a dinner meeting once a month, which they call supper.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: [Laughs.] Yes, and Walter Whitehill was a trustee and he's very well informed, I suppose. And the general, the kind of the museum becoming a more welcoming place, people weren't hesitant to come in and tell you this and that, but sometimes you'd come up against a stone wall, as I did in the case of what remained of Mrs. Montgomery Sears Collection, and was collected by her mother, Mrs. Cameron Bradley. I think I may have touched on that. Did I?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, no.

PERRY RATHBONE: In respect to Prendergast and so on? That was rather um, yes that was a little frustrating. I came to know about that collection not so long after I went to Boston, but I was never able to do anything about it, because I was just about six months or a year too late. Mrs. Montgomery Sears, you do know about her?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right, oh yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: As a kind of rival of Mrs. Gardner in a sense. And she was also a protégé of Mary Cassatt.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Or at least a friend, and was influenced. Therefore, she felt herself to be in good hands, just as Mrs. Gardner felt herself to be in good hands with Garrison [ph] looking over her shoulder. Mary Cassatt did very well by Mrs. Montgomery Sears, I can tell you. You know, the wonderful Manet which is in the museum, is there for that reason, the *Street Singer*, but she had some fine Cassatts of her own and, oh, a beautiful Degas. I can't name them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: A lot of things.

PERRY RATHBONE: A lot of wonderful things. She died. I never met her. She was painted by Sargent, and her daughter, Mrs. Cameron Bradley, inherited most of everything. Maybe she was the only child, I forget. Anyway, she was somebody addicted to horses and living in the country, and at the time of her mother's death, she apparently had approached the museum—that is George Edgell—and said, "We have this beautiful Manet pastel that we think the museum would like to have, would you be interested?" Whether it was for sale or as a gift, I don't know, but probably for sale, and he said, "No, not at all, we already have a Manet pastel." You know, it's like saying you have a book.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: In my opinion. We already have one and therefore. That turned them off terribly. I think they rather wanted it to stay in Boston, where it had been for so long. At this time I was at the St. Louis Museum, stimulating collectors to buy works of art, and that Manet pastel I referred to came to Knoedler's and we were dealing with Knoedler's all the time, and that was offered, through Bill Davidson, for us to buy.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, we didn't have the \$25,000 it cost, but I appealed to John Olin, of Olin Industries, who lived across the river, in Alton, and John Olin, bless his heart, bought that marvelous Manet pastel, but a superb Manet pastel, *Woman in a Black Bonnet*. It's one of those beautiful things of the 1870s and now it's been bequeathed to the St. Louis Museum, this is just what I hoped would happen. It could have perfectly well been in the Boston Museum, if George Edgell had been a little bit more aggressive or a little bit more acquisitive.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Interested.

PERRY RATHBONE: Interested, exactly. Well, this had made a bridge you see, an effective bridge, with Knoedler's. They sold the pastel, they must have sold it handsomely, and Bill Davison and others at Knoedler's, I think Roland Balay was a friend and they did the right things about Mrs. Bradley. So there was a constant stream of things coming—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —from Boston.

PERRY RATHBONE: From Boston, to New York. And when I learned about this Manet story, I tried very hard to reach Mrs. Bradley, but well, she would say, "Oh, don't come out right now because the driveway. You know, we

live at Wolf Pen Farm in Southborough and the driveway is often muddy in the winter, why don't you wait until spring," and put me off like that time and again. And when we were organizing the Prendergast exhibition, I said well, "I'd like to see what Prendergasts you have, because I know your mother had not less than 10 watercolors." "Well maybe if you come later on," and so forth. I never, never was able to go there. Meantime, I began to realize that the Prendergasts had trickled their way to New York too, and were scattered hither and yon. But she, Mrs. Bradley, or Mrs. Sears, had been a patron of Prendergast, and had sent him on his, I believe it was his second trip to Europe, paid his trip to Europe, and these early watercolors, I suppose were in a way, kind of payment for that. I don't know for a fact, but she was one of the few people in Boston who really took a serious interest in him and helped to support him in his work. But that was one collector with whom I had no success at all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Collectors are very funny.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes they are, they are.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They're singularly curious people I think.

PERRY RATHBONE: They are, they are. I've enjoyed my association with them immensely, wherever I was, but that one, of which I yearned to be closer to, I failed totally.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were there any people that you met in Boston who you stimulated into collecting, or expanding collections or redefining their collections?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, not in the same way I did in St. Louis, to be sure.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why was that would you say?

PERRY RATHBONE: Why was that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's interesting.

PERRY RATHBONE: I think one reason is that the job was so much more demanding in Boston, it took so much more of my time, dealing with more trustees and more staff.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's a bigger institution.

PERRY RATHBONE: A bigger institution. Um, it just didn't give me the time, you know, to go to somebody late in the afternoon and have a drink or tea or something.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Talk and—

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, or go in the evening, and so I did advise William Coolidge in a couple of purchases that he made, but he never seemed to be—I always took the initiative in that and he didn't come to me after and say, well why don't you find something else for me. I don't know he—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Never really?

PERRY RATHBONE: No. Not the way they did in St. Louis. But neither is there quite the same kind of cohesive community feeling about the museum there, in Boston.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's more scattered.

PERRY RATHBONE: It's more scattered. It's such a—I mean, geographically, it's so much more complex, and there's so many more institutions to be associated with and attached to. I can't quite tell you. Then of course there's the Fogg Museum, who were doing their best to stimulate people to collect for them, and for them, they'd been doing that for a long time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right. What about—you belonged to a number of clubs there.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: One always gets a feeling you were very active in all of their adventures and activities.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well that's true.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were there people you met through them, that were useful, helpful, or was it kind of a relaxation and other interests for you?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well it was a way, really Paul, it was a way of becoming known in the community, by a lot of people who were leaders in the community. These are both men's clubs, the ones that I saw most of, the Odd Volumes and the Tavern Club, and they were unlike the Harvard Club, which was full of people who went to Harvard and didn't have necessarily, any other Boston connection. The other places, the other two clubs, were very Boston oriented, and it was a way of seeing those people and knowing them, and allowing them to know you, that certainly helped the museum to grow and make people understand what was going on. Because I often was called upon to talk about some activity at the museum, I did that often at the Tavern.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. The habit there, on the regular Monday evenings, is to ask—the chairman of the evening asks somebody who is there in the afternoon, to say a word about the current exhibition of the *Age of Rembrandt*.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, so you get up and talk for ten minutes or something.

PERRY RATHBONE: That's right, yeah. And I suppose I was heard by people who ultimately would say, well we've got something we'd like to give to the museum, and just come out to the house some time and we'll talk it over. You know? The museum received so many gifts, you can't imagine, Paul you can't imagine. I was just overcome by the amount of gifts the museum received.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Compared with St. Louis, it was always a kind of red-letter day when the St. Louis Museum received a gift, but Boston, that old community is so laden.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They kind of take a picture out of the closet and it's marvelous.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, or a silver tankard, you know, or a della Robbia or a Leduc, or a Rembrandt print, or a series of Hogarths. It was just fabulous. Or, you know, or a Manet, like the Manet that Mrs. Danielson gave us, a \$2 million picture, just like that. But nevertheless, it takes knowing someone to accomplish these things.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right, to set up the bridgework.

PERRY RATHBONE: To set up a bridgework, so that it's an agreeable experience and everybody understands, and the right appreciation is shown, and so on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What about the Century which you belong to for a long time?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I can't say that had very much to do with my Boston life and connections. It was a very agreeable places for me to go when I was in New York, and I often went there, not to sleep because you can't, there are no bedrooms there, but there is a bathroom and a tub, and I managed—had a tub and changed my clothes there, before going out to dinner. And in the old days, when we would come down from Boston in the night train, sometimes Hanns Swarzenski and I would come to New York at the same time. I would take him to the Century for breakfast in those days and until very recently, breakfast was served there, which was very luxurious to go there and have breakfast in that nice dining room, you know relax and so on, have a place to wash your face and hang your hat so to speak, make your phone calls. Um, but of course I met my colleagues in the museum and art world there, who were fellow members, and I often, I saw a great deal of my cousin, my late cousin, Donald Oenslager.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh right, he was very active there.

PERRY RATHBONE: He was very active. He was there for lunch virtually every day, so I almost never came to New York without lunching with him there at least once. So that's what the Century was to me. Sometimes, Leslie Cheek, for example, who was an enterprising soul in Richmond, would say, "Oh, a regular monthly meeting at the Century on the 2nd of March this year, I'm having a table, will you join us? Sheldon Keck is going to be there and somebody from the Met," and so on. So it was a way of meeting one's colleagues in a social and very pleasant way, but I can't say that it had any—no direct effect upon my activities in Boston, no.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How has it changed since you've come to New York?

PERRY RATHBONE: The Century?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I see much more of it, because they put me on the—well, they made me chairman of the Exhibition Committee, which I really shouldn't undertake to do, because I'm too busy, but I guess Russell



Lyons, I suppose, thought it was just a natural thing. But you know, like everything else, it takes time. And I like it, I love exhibitions, and everything pertaining to it. I only wish I had the time to do it better. But I'm there quite often, and I went to the Digressionist's evening the other night, which is a group of Centurions who cultivate something other than their calling. That is if you, you know, if you're a businessman and know how to make a sculpture, or a portrait, or if you're a doctor and can play the piano, that kind of thing, and then you perform. Yes. And then you win a prize, that is you get your name inscribed on a silver bowl if you win, that kind of thing. Yeah, it was fun.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Lots of fun.

PERRY RATHBONE: Sure, lots of fun, yeah. Now look here, it's a quarter to four.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. [Audio break.] Let's see, are there other clubs that you belonged to that have amused you over the years?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well the Harvard Club, I belonged to that, in Boston. It really is a convenience, because it's the nearest one to the museum and it was a very agreeable place, before we had a new restaurant at the museum, to lunch with somebody you wanted to talk with confidentially, ah, which wasn't so easy in the museum restaurant and there was no decent restaurant near the museum. So I went there quite often to have lunch with a trustee or a member of the staff or somebody from out of town or if we had some splendid guest. I remember we had a couple of Russians there, we had the Minister of Culture come one day, and I got Maxim Karolik, of course, is our nearest Russian, and had a little party for the Russian culture minister and Maxim Karolik there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How, how did he like that?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, he liked it very much. Of course, Maxim had to translate everything that was said. Oh yes, he was very taken by that and anybody would be impressed by what is called Harvard Hall there, that 50-foot ceiling room, you know, that great dining hall, and the whole atmosphere of Harvard Club is very agreeable. I remember one thing that that cultural ambassador said, culture minister said, as we walked through a room of American furniture, the Karolik Collection of furniture. On the walls, there were a number of embroidered hatchments in frames that are hung on their corners, you know?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Uh, oh there must be half a dozen displayed in the Furniture Gallery, the coats of arms of the early families of New England. He asked what those were and I said, "Well, those are the handiwork mainly of New England ladies in the 18th century. They embroidered the arms of their family," and so on, and he said, "Well, what do they do today," their equivalent, "What do they do today?" I thought quickly and I said well, "Today they give lectures to school children here in the Museum of Fine Arts." He said, "That's progress!" [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, marvelous.

[END OF TRACK.]

## **June 2, 1976**

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's side 13, the 2nd of June, 1976. Paul Cummings, talking to Perry Rathbone, in his apartment in New York City. One is, in 1962, a Karolik watercolors and drawing project. Had they been involved with the museum for a long time?

PERRY RATHBONE: The Karoliks?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Or how was, how did?

PERRY RATHBONE: We haven't talked about him at all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

PERRY RATHBONE: Not at all?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, no, not a bit. I mean, since it's such a major section, I thought we should give him a look.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Well, of course, it's a very interesting case, the case of Maxim Karolik. You know a little bit about his personal history, which has a lot to do with what he was doing later. He was born in Russia.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, he came from Russia, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And had a voice, which was trained, and quite a sweet and beautiful tenor voice, which I am afraid aged rather early. It never perhaps was great, but it was very attractive, and he had a very attractive personality. He sort of radiated his own nature and communicated readily, and was quite a concert success in Europe. I remember Jan Cox, who was head of the Painting Department at the museum school, telling me that there's a boy—his mother took him to a concert at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, where he grew up, and in later years, he was amazed to look back and say for heaven's sake, that was Maxim Karolik who bounded out on the stage in his Russian blouse and his extravagant gestures, and sang a concert. Because of course, he came to know him, or at least be acquainted with him, in Boston.

Well anyway, Karolik came to this country in the 1920s, about let's say '25, I think, and Ms. Martha Codman of Boston, originally of Salem and Boston, and her mother, were very fond of music and had their winter home in Washington, rather than in Boston, their summer home in Newport. And Maxim Karolik, I suppose through concert agents, booked him to sing at the Codman house in Washington—it was a musicale—and Martha Codman became fairly infatuated with Maxim Karolik, this handsome young Russian immigrant who sang so charmingly, and this mutual attraction blossomed into matrimony. She at the time, I believe was 72 and he was 34, so there was a fair age gap there. Anyway, it turned out to be a very happy marriage and he never was a philanderer on the side, according to all accounts, and made her very happy, because he was a good companion and full of good spirits and a very outgoing, ebullient kind of a character, and he came up sooner or later, to Boston, from Newport, where their summer house was, and I suppose she probably showed him the beautiful furniture which she had given the museum back in 1922; furniture that had been ordered by her forbearer, Elias Haskett Derby of Salem, the richest man of Salem and one of the most pretentious. And Karolik was absolutely stunned, because he had a primitive notion of what the U.S. was like at the turn of the 18th, to the 19th century. He couldn't believe the refinement and beauty, of these family possessions. But this inspired him to form a collection of American furniture of similar quality but of an earlier period and slightly, slightly later, but mainly 18th century. And he knew that he could do that with his wife's bank account, because she was reputed to have a fortune of about \$6 million, or something like that, all be told. She was the last of her line and, what was he to do with this money but to spend it really. They weren't going to have any children obviously, unless they adopted some and they didn't do that.

And so, I remember the treasurer at the museum, Robert Baldwin, that is the trustee treasurer, telling me, that Maxim Karolik approached him and said he had this idea of enriching the Boston Museum's Collection in American furniture, but he needed some capital to work with. And apparently, he didn't want to ask the money from his wife at that particular moment. I don't know exactly what was in his mind. I only know that the trustees agreed to what he asked for and he made it—he borrowed \$100,000 at 2 percent interest, which shows you the idea of the value of money, and set about buying the finest things he could find, whether they were great highboys or whether they were, they were tables or splendid Chippendale chairs or Queen Anne something else. And he looked for rarity and he looked for tradition, and quality, and succeeded in putting together a fabulous collection of American furniture, when you could still do it for reasonable sums of money.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Now, you can buy one piece for that.

PERRY RATHBONE: Exactly. So he showed great vision there and he was susceptible of inspiration, and also of acting upon his inspiration. And, one of the—his concept was a very interesting one; namely, that he would not really buy anything on his own. He would only buy it in conjunction with a curator at the museum, in conjunction with him, so that he would have purely professional expertise from the start. And um, Edwin Hipkiss, at this time, was the curator of Decorative Arts at the museum and American furniture fell into his purview and he guided him and counseled him in everything he bought, and also created the catalogue of Karolik Collection Furniture, which is a splendid volume, and there weren't so many catalogues or compendia of American furniture of a scholarly kind at that date. I believe it was in 1936, that he made the gift of the first Karolik Collection. Whether he thought at the time, there would be further Karolik collections, I don't know, but his wife was still alive at the time that he made this gift, and there was a great deal of publicity about it and the name of Karolik suddenly was in lights. And then he invented the name of the M. and M. Karolik Collection, I don't know why. Her name was Martha and his was Maxim, and I guess the music or the rhythm or the sight of M. and M. Karolik appealed to him, I don't know, but the name of Codman was effectively submerged by this label, M. and M. Karolik, and he insisted upon incorporating into that collection, the furniture, which was really splendid, unexampled furniture, that she'd given the museum many years before, so it had a splendid nucleus of museum material already. Anyway, the catalogue of course is out of print unless we reprint it, and so on.

Then, the success of this perhaps was, that inspired him, then I suppose also, his own observation, to set out on a second collection of American painting, which he felt was underappreciated and underrepresented in the Boston Museum and elsewhere for that matter. And generally speaking, there's no doubt that this was true and time has proven it to be so. And uh—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think that was his own idea, or somebody at the museum?

PERRY RATHBONE: No, I think it was his own idea, but once again, in fulfilling this idea, he depended upon the curatorial expertise of the museum, of the Painting Department in this case, and there at the time was W.G. Constable, and Mrs. Haven Parker, Barbara Neville Parker was her name. She was assistant and specialist in American painting, so it was of great importance to him that she should be there. But he already made this liaison, or contact with the Painting Department, in collecting the furniture, because he felt that in showing the furniture, there ought to be some pictorial embellishment for the walls, and he had bought several Copleys and Stewarts. As a matter of fact, there were a pair of Stewarts that had come down in the family of Martha Codman, and they were added to the collection, the first collection. So, but I understood that buying the Copleys that he did, he naturally called upon Barbara Parker, because she had just finished a book, she and a colleague had just finished a book on Copley. So there was already this bridge. But he wasn't interested in 18th-century American painting in the Second Karolik Collection, because he thought there was pretty good representation in Boston, there certainly was, but just the 19th century. And he conceived the idea that there was a lack of appreciation of the art of this country from the time of Gilbert Stuart, until the time of Homer, let's say roughly between 1815 and 1865 or something like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And, in a sense this was true, but not quite as sweeping a sense as he would like to have believed it. After all, the few masters in those years are all that you've been brought up on and are familiar with, but there are others who were almost totally unknown. The two that spring first to my mind, that are really important, are Fitz Hugh Lane and Martin Johnson Heade, who were pretty obscure, and thanks to his ferreting out little known artists amongst the various dealers here in New York and in Boston, these artists came more and more to the fore, and he got more and more excited about them and added multiple examples of each of them. And then he also bought a number of primitives, which were, to be sure, the first primitives to enter the Boston Museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really?

PERRY RATHBONE: As far as I know. I never saw any there, and I think that his were the first ones to be added to the collection. At any rate, again, it was understood that the museum would foot the bill for publishing the catalogue, as was the case with the furniture. This was a requirement, but at the same time, nothing was bought that didn't have the approval of the department.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it built itself pretty well and where it was going to go.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes, it did and it was, I think, an excellent concept.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Was he open to suggestion, do you think? If somebody said, well, we need things by so and so, and so and so?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Yes, he was. I know that was true of the third, the third collection, which was formed during my directorship. The other two had already been accomplished when I went to Boston, so I wasn't as close to the operation as I was to the third one. But yes, Henry Rossiter often made suggestions to him, often, and he was very open-minded about things. He says, "Well you are the experts," you know, that was his attitude, and, "If you think we should have it, we shall have it."

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you think it is about a collector who will support that kind of idea? I mean, what is he deriving from someone else's—

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, not the kind of pleasure that I would, because mine is the pleasure of my own response, resulting in an acquisition.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Whereas he was more, as I understand it, more concerned with an idea. He was proving something, namely that a Russian immigrant could see virtues that were neglected amongst his adopted people.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So that anybody who fed the idea was doing what he wanted really.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yeah, I would say that was it. It was more conceptual and yet, he loved to go about to the dealers and look at things, because he was a gregarious kind of man. He liked to meet people and he liked to talk and be active. He after all, wasn't employed. He was just living on the fortune of the Codmans and he could take the time easily. But it gave him something to do and it was, it really was a great service to the museum, and it couldn't be done again, as you've already observed, without vast sums of money.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did he come to do the watercolors and drawings?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I think, while he was involved with the paintings, he was probably offered a certain number of watercolors, and he liked to compartment things and not deviate from the original plan and not overflow the borders.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see, so they wouldn't fit.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. He said, well I'm only interested in oil paintings, and I suppose this is what suggested to him, the thought that a third collection could have been made, of works on paper, drawings, watercolors, pastels, and so on. And so that was begun in association with still a third department of the museum, the Department of Prints, now called the Department of Prints and Drawings. Henry Rossiter was the guiding genius of that collection and he worked like a nailer, to complete the catalogue at the time the exhibition was to be unveiled, and he was dealing with so much little-known material and picking out the life accounts of the artist consortium was a prodigious undertaking. He used to call it the obituaries, he was an obituary writer. He used to call them "bituries," I'm going to go back to my "bituries" now, I have no time for anything else, he said, "I'm going to get this off my back and see it through," and he was marvelous in his application to this thing, and out came two more volumes, which are I suppose on every American artist expert's shelf. Full of unknown information hitherto uncirculated and certainly they were very hard to get at, but this was Karolik's contribution to the museum and he, as I say he likes to compartment things. And then the third exhibition or collection was finished, he talked about the completion of the *trilogy*, one, two, three.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: You see? And then it's over, yes. But there were many things that he collected after the trilogy was completed, that were largely stored in the Boston Museum, principally paintings.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did he keep things in his house ever, did he live with any of this or was it?

PERRY RATHBONE: No, it was very peculiar. I actually never went to his house during his lifetime. It was in Newport actually, that's where he lived. He spent the week at the Ritz Hotel, the Ritz Carlton in Boston, where he had a room only, and he dined there, lunched there. I remember lunching with him once there, and I've lunched with him at the Harvard Club, and we lunched at the museum almost every day, as I'll tell you in a minute. But he came back and forth with a chauffeured car from Newport every week, and when I saw the house in Newport, I was amazed to find virtually nothing there that related.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. It was just the house of his wife and virtually unchanged. Very surprising. The whole thing was a kind of museum-oriented and museum-centered activity, and his associates at the museum he was close to all the time, and they would be the curator involved, or curators, and the director. Not the trustees. He occasionally would see a trustee in the corridor, going to a meeting, and they would exchange greetings, but he was never involved with any of the trustees.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No. Fascinating.

PERRY RATHBONE: Meantime, Mrs. Karolik died, at an extreme old age, she was 90-odd, and so they'd had a long life together in spite of, in spite of the—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —age difference and everything.

PERRY RATHBONE: The head start she had. And I never, unfortunately, I never knew her, I never met her, but she was always spoken of as a very benign and charming old lady. Some very funny stories, of course, would come out of this Karolik association. He was—had a very good sense of humor and and generated stories, and then repeated his own witticisms, adlib and really, ad nauseam, to tell you the truth. But one of the funniest stories had to do with one of the more spectacular pieces of furniture in the first collection, and this was a Derby piece which had descended through the Curtis family in Boston. It was ascribed to McIntyre, a marvelous chest upon chest, with the sculptured ornaments at the top of seasons of virtue or something, and made of the most superbly selected mahogany, and really an exemplified piece. And the Curtis family had lived since the 1860s on top of Beacon Hill, and there were nine, nine Curtises.

PAUL CUMMINGS: My heavens, all in a row.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, and I think only one of them was ever married, and Karolik got wind of this remarkable piece of furniture, which was there in their house, and made overtures and wanted very much to buy it, and at last, he gained entrance to the house and saw it and then of course, they decided that they would sell it, but

before doing so, they said that they weren't the least bit interested in selling this family treasure. They'd had it always and well, it had their hats, should we say, and their old trunks and other things that Bostonians hang on to, and they said if we sold it to Mr. Karolik, where would we dry our pears? This piece had many drawers and the Curtises, for years, had dried their pears from their estate up in Manchester, in the drawers of this splendid piece.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Marvelous.

PERRY RATHBONE: And they were quite alarmed at the idea of having to dry them elsewhere. [They laugh.] So, they hesitated a long time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The grandest drying rack of the generation.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes, exactly. Today, the piece would sell for about probably close to a half a million dollars, and this is what they dry their pears in. [They laugh.] And so the great question was how much they should get for it because after all, they had never bought it, they had just always had it. How much is it worth? So the nine Curtises put their heads together—and this story was told to me by Ms. Harriot, not Harriet, Ms. Harriot, Curtis, in my office, she wanted me to know this exactly. This is the story she told me. She said, "We all got together and we decided that each of us, each of us in our own way, could use about \$2,000." So, she said, "Let's predict two times nine is \$18,000, so that's what we'll ask Mr. Karolik," and they thought that was fine. Well, so she said, "One day he came and we told him that our price was \$18,000," and he said, "Very well, I'll be glad to send you a check and the chest should be delivered to the museum," and so on. And then Ms. Harriot Curtis said but you know, I heard afterwards, what she said, I mean Mrs. Karolik, do you know what she said? She said, "It's a good thing there are no more of them." [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: It couldn't be more Bostonian, this whole story.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's just perfect.

PERRY RATHBONE: Isn't it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: But I mean that was an incredible bargain.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, unbelievable. Of course, this was about 1932, the Depression, you know, was pretty severe, and of course great prices for American furniture hadn't yet proceeded.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Started, yeah, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: It was a lot of money. And \$18,000 then would have been \$18,000 gold dollars, after all, you know not a depressed thing to have. Anyhow.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was real money.

PERRY RATHBONE: Real money, real money. Uh, the story about a couple of paintings that are now called Karolik Collection, but actually were acquired after the Karolik Collection paintings was completed, and because these were both acquired in my time, were rather interesting. I don't believe I've told you this have I?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Which picture?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, it's that wonderful picture of the Moore family.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

PERRY RATHBONE: It's by a Erastus Salisbury Field and it represents Dr. Moore, his wife and four children, a family group, a painting about six feet high and eight feet wide. One day, I had a letter from two ladies living near Ware, Massachusetts, which is not so far to the west of Boston, saying that they were going upstate after living all their lives and for generations there, and were moving to Florida. They had one painting that they would dearly like to see in the Boston Museum, that they didn't feel they could take with them and had belonged in that region, and would like nothing more than to have it at the museum, is it possible? They sent me a snapshot of it and I thought it was marvelous. Of course, I said, I encouraged them right away and said, "Well, we certainly would welcome it at the museum." And they also said they couldn't afford to give it; they would like to have done but they couldn't afford to give it, could the museum offer them something. And I thought this is just a perfect dish for Karolik, absolutely perfect, let him pick up the ball, go out to Ware and perform. He was thrilled, absolutely thrilled at the prospect, and I said, "Well I'm sure somebody will get it and it will be a great honor." So he hired a truck, which was very astute. He hired a paneled truck and got someone to drive him right

out to Ware, to the house of these two ladies, and saw the painting and of course fell for it head over heels, and bought it then and there, for \$2,500.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh my heavens.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, \$2,500, and they were so thrilled to sell it and to know that it was coming to the museum, and with the money, and they were so charmed by Karolik, that they threw in the Hitchcock chairs, the pair of Hitchcock chairs which appear in the painting. Yes. And the mirror, was a mahogany and gold mirror, and the dental tools that belonged to this Dr. Moore, who was a doctor, well, a so-called doctor of dentistry and a so-called religious philosopher, because when he wasn't pulling teeth and filling them and so on—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —he was filling—

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, I suppose he was nourishing the souls, yes, a doctor something Moore.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: Fantastic and when we displayed this picture for the first time, had it stretched and cleaned and framed and everything, because it was not framed at this time, we put on view, the dental tools, which were quite impressive. There was a fine, fitted wooden box with all these most shocking looking instruments, terrifying instruments, that had been used in the 1830s and '40s, when he traveled about the country. Because the picture was painted about, about 1840, yeah, and as you know Field has now become an established name in American art history.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: So he was capable of that kind of thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What a bargain, I mean with the chairs and the whole—

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, I think it's probably today, \$50,000 wouldn't buy it, maybe more, maybe a hundred.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Even the chairs would be \$2,500.

PERRY RATHBONE: Even the chairs yes, and this was about 1960, I'd say.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That is fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: Sixty or '64, something like that. Well if that weren't enough, a couple of years later, I had a similar letter from a couple of old ladies living in New Hampshire, and you know these things were perfectly unknown, this Field painting and this other one. Another family group, even larger, and of about the same date, but by a very different painter, whose name was Derby. And, they sent again, a snapshot sort of taken at an angle, so it was rather hard to judge, but from what I could see, it looked pretty darn good. So once more, I said to Karolik, "Here's another opportunity. These people again can't give, and you did so well bargaining for the Field, I'm going to put you onto this one, how do you like that idea?" He was delighted, of course. I don't think he took a truck out to New Hampshire, I forget now, but he went up to New Hampshire without any delay, he had his chauffeured car, so it was easy for him to do it, and he went up there and closed the deal with these people. And if I'm not mistaken, it was about the same, the same sum, maybe it was \$3,000, but nothing compared to what it's real value is. And here is the family of—what was his name? I forget now. I'll show you a picture of these things, I think I can, yes, in the catalogue of American paintings, the collection. A man who once ran for governor of New Hampshire, on the antislavery ticket. I think he ran—no, I think he was an antislavery, naturally being a New Englander, he hated slavery and perhaps he wouldn't run because the Democrats didn't want him, or something like that, I forget exactly.

Anyway, he was a man of considerable stature and position at—I think he lived in New Boston, New Hampshire, and his family surrounds him, his very prim wife and her beautiful black bombazine and her odd—her house cap, and the children. And a Bible was laid out on his lap and his wife has her Bible on the center table, and each of the children have theirs, and it really was sort of a Sunday afternoon in their household. It's a marvelous painting. The boy who painted it, I believe, was living in the family, and had sort of a foster relationship, and was 16 years old when he painted it, it was miraculous. And then he went on in later life, continued to be a painter, settled in Utica, New York, and painted really very conventional, not very interesting portraits. But this document of American life in the 1840s is a masterpiece.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Terrific. What do you think that this activity as a kind of unpaid collector for the museum—gave him something to do and things to talk about?

PERRY RATHBONE: It gave him a place to go. He had, after all, he had Martha to take care of when she was

alive, but after she had died, he had no place to go, and Newport had nothing to offer him all through the week. So he motored up to Boston every Monday, arrived midmorning, about two hours' drive you know, and then he made the rounds of the various offices. Wherever he was most welcomed, he would pop in and say oh, "hello, hello," you know, "how are you, how are you." And he'd crack a few jokes, you know, tell his stories, often for the fifth or sixth time, and then he'd come and call on me, I won't say every day but it seemed like every day, and then we would meet at the lunch table, because there was a staff room where we lunched together daily, and he was there. He was there right up until two o'clock Friday afternoon, when the symphony played.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, and then he'd go.

PERRY RATHBONE: Then he went to the symphony concert every Friday, just like clockwork, and after the symphony, he got into his car and was driven back to Newport. And this went around like he never went anywhere else. He came to New York of course occasionally, but he never traveled anywhere that I can remember, never went abroad.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Fascinating.

PERRY RATHBONE: It is.

PAUL CUMMINGS: A strange way of living.

PERRY RATHBONE: A strange way of living, and he would lunch of course, at the Ritz quite often, when he wasn't lunching with us. He maybe lunched there on Mondays, when the museum wasn't yet open to the public—he didn't come in those hours so much—and would make fun of the people he saw there. He was always talking about the Boston ladies, and made it all appear that he was a great Lothario, whether he was or not, I won't question, but he always made it seem that way, a great wag and so on. And he used to say very funny things about Boston life. For example, one of his favorite comments was about the aging women. He said, for example, "When the waist is busted, the bust is wasted." [They laugh.] And he'd laugh like a fiend and tell it to the next group, "As I was saying, the last time I saw so and so, I have observed, in my life in Boston especially, when the waist is busted, the bust is wasted," which is quite good for a man for whom English was not his native tongue.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, I can't remember his other witticisms.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Would he talk about his acquisitions, I mean, would he get involved with their history and who the people were?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: All that kind of thing?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes. Well, only in sort of expletives, not in a scholarly way or you know, not showing any refined study of the subject, no, but he would like to stand in front of something he had just acquired, and get your attention and then gesture towards it and say, "Who can deny, it is a work of art?" This was very dramatically delivered you see, "*It's a masterpiece. It is a masterpiece!*"

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think he liked art, or was it only an activity for him?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I think he respected it, I think that was it, he respected it. He loved music, there's no question that was a real love, but his reactions to art were what we can only describe as somewhat primitive.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But it's amazing, he spent all that time involved with it.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes it is, but I wouldn't say that he was a great art lover, because he never seemed to have much to say about anything that he wasn't involved with. You know, he wasn't somebody who wanted to discuss El Greco or Gauguin.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh I see, so it was his own activity that really interested him, and that was, that was it.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And he also felt that he was doing something not for the museum, not for the trustees, not for the director, nobody like that, for the American people, through the museum, that is only through the museum. I do not give these to the museum, I give them to the American people, through the museum. This is so he didn't feel the—you know, had any, shall I say that he was in any way indebted to the museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. But he had no social life out of this particularly, or was it just going around and seeing

dealers?

PERRY RATHBONE: That's right. I don't—occasionally he came, he dined with us. Sometimes, when we had a party and had appropriate guests who would be interested, but he wasn't what you call a diner out. He was a little bit too much of a monologist, you know he would—he had his own subject and his own jokes, but he was not someone who would become deeply involved in discussing other people's affairs or problems or interests.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He wasn't really a conversationalist.

PERRY RATHBONE: No, I shouldn't say so, but he was stimulating, and he was very good at attracting attention to himself, and he was entertaining up to a point.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's that theatrical background maybe.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, but there was just a little bit—there was just too much of it, especially for the director, there was no question. But um—

PAUL CUMMINGS: But that's one of the problems with being a director. I mean after all, here was a man who was an important benefactor.

PERRY RATHBONE: Right, and you couldn't very well pawn him off, you know. You had to be courteous and interested and attentive and the rest.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because those collections have become increasingly fabulous as time goes on.

PERRY RATHBONE: He subjected us all to his music, on one famous occasion. He was quite convinced that dramatic rendition of operatic music was the only one and he spoke about Tomaino [ph] and Caruso, and Karolik; they all had the same understanding and the greatness of operatic music. Bel canto is dead, was his line, bel canto is dead, it's out, but he was saying it just at the wrong moment. It was just beginning to be revived when he was saying it was dead. And his point was that the only way to sing operatic music was in a theatrical way, and he wanted to demonstrate this to us and uh—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh my goodness.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And so he had what he—he put on a little concert for special guests in the museum one evening, with a slight collation afterwards, and the guests were the trustees and some members of the staff and their wives, and he performed in the lecture hall, but he didn't sing himself. What he did was to subject us all to a series of tape recordings, he called it his tape party, not a tea party but a tape party, and he stood on the platform, he stood on the platform and explained the difference between bel canto and dramatic renderings, and then he would turn on a turntable, a record, and you would hear Caruso sing, or Tomaino, and then you would hear Karolik. So he was putting himself against the immortals.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Would he sing or had he recorded his own voice?

PERRY RATHBONE: He recorded his own, yes. His own rendering of various operatic arias, yes. Yeah, and we were all supposed to learn a deep lesson from this. [They laugh.] About the same time, he had actually made recordings of Russian songs, which he sang and I think there were three or four records in albums. And he had, I don't know how many, 500 albums, made, with his recordings, and hoped somehow to sell them. They were all very professionally done. They were recorded in a studio in Boston and all that, but they just didn't move. We tried everything possible, to sell them at the sales desk, to sell them at a discount and sell them by notifying our

PAUL CUMMINGS: Every way, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, our members in the mail. Finally, I think we basically had to give them away to a thrift shop or something, I don't know how many albums. But he wanted, he wanted still to, you know, continue with his musical career, but he was way over the years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: If you don't keep it up, it disappears.

PERRY RATHBONE: Absolutely. But there are many things to be said in admiration of Maxim Karolik. The thing that touched me very much was after he had died, and I had the responsibility of deciding what to do with the contents of the house in Newport, because he left—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really?

PERRY RATHBONE: —the house—yes—and the contents, to the museum, to do with it as they pleased. And so I



went down there several times and took various members of the staff, to study the situation and decide what to do about this, that and the other, but as far as I could observe, that house and his lovely furniture and so on, was just about the way she had left it, and there were none of his collections on exhibition in the rooms at all. There was a portrait, one picture I remember, was a portrait of her—of Martha Codman's mother as a bride, a big full-length bride.

PAUL CUMMINGS: My heavens, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And, and this was the amazing thing. She was a bride in 1856, and this was his mother-in-law, who was a bride in 1856. There it was well, 19-, what was it 1965 or something. And I thought the only thing to do with that was to offer it to the Salem uh, Essex Institute of Salem, because the family had come from Salem. And the third floor of that big house in Newport, which was designed by her cousin, Ogden Codman, had been built about 1905, a very handsome neo-Georgian house. The third floor was a full attic. I suppose, originally, some of them were servants' rooms, but most of the rooms on that floor had been used for storage. They were filled with Codman everything. There was furniture and there were clothes trunks and there were boxes and there were books and there were letters, and I can't tell you.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Tons, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, all beautifully kept, all beautifully stored in the most orderly way. She had been dead for years, as I have explained. He had never touched anything, you know almost as if it were untouchable to him, to poke around amongst the Codman possessions.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It just was there.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, it was just there, and he said, well that's—she left it there and that's what I will do, untouched. It was a fascinating exercise, to go through the house, fascinating, of what to do with it all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What happened to it all?

PERRY RATHBONE: And as if that weren't enough, in the garden, there was a repetition of a famous garden house that was built by Derby, in Salem, Elias Hasket Derby, designed by McIntyre, a two-story garden house. The second floor, from what I understand, is for taking tea in the garden. Well, I went into that building for the first time and only time, went up to the second floor and there were more trunks, stagecoach trunks, that's the word, and boxes of this dimension. There must have been six or seven. One of them was filled with games, 19th-century games, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Extraordinary.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And others with children's books, going back to the early 19th century, you know, 1805, '10, little children's books.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, those little tiny books.

PERRY RATHBONE: With woodcuts, you know? And little—and toys, dolls. It was really too charming for words. You could have spent a year in that second floor of the garden house if you like such things, just looking at the intimate things, that give you a sense of the—

PAUL CUMMINGS: The people and the time.

PERRY RATHBONE: —people and time, anything, because all that kind of ephemera disappeared. And all these charming little personal things were there, and immaculately kept. And very nice jewelry, now not great but nice gold thises and thats, lorgnettes and, well, I didn't know what to do with it all, but I thought it would be improper to have a public auction of such very personal things. I just sort of, I thought that was the wrong way to do it, and so I proposed to the trustees that we bring all those things to the museum, bring down the Salem Historical Society, the Essex Institute and Salem Historical Society personnel, to look at everything and to take everything that they thought was of interest; the costumes of 1850 and '60—

PAUL CUMMINGS: And a hundred years' worth of clothes?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, oh yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Incredible.

PERRY RATHBONE: There were men's white summer waistcoats of about 1810 or 1790. There was a watch, there was an 18th-century watch, which her Puritan ancestor had used, according to the little label that was in the box with it, to time his sermons on the pulpit.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh my heavens.

PERRY RATHBONE: It was a time capsule.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What a strange experience.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, it was, but perfectly fascinating, and I like all that kind of thing very much, and so it was fun. I just never had enough time to look at it all with the kind of care that I would have enjoyed having, but what to do with it. We brought it all up there and Salem, they took so little. They said, "We can't take another costume; we haven't a place to hang another costume, so we can't take that. We will take the watch and we'll take the portrait of Mrs. Codman," and we'll take oh, I forget what, family papers or something, and that's all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Didn't solve much of the problem.

PERRY RATHBONE: No. So then I said, well, this is, I think what we should do, is to arrange a private sale here in the museum, for the staff of the museum, for the trustees, and for the members of the Ladies' Committee, that's all, and we will—I'll ask the Ladies Committee to come in as a team, sort these things out, the scarves and the shawls and the old handkerchiefs and the watches and the gold chains, and the games and the thises and thats, the lace and everything, and just put whatever kind of price on everything that they think is appropriate, and we'll have a private kind of sale. And as the day goes on, we'll have two days or three, you could put your price on something, and then as things didn't sell, the price would be lowered, so to make sure that everything would disappear. And it did, it was a great success, everybody bought something and, well, it really was—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Astounding.

PERRY RATHBONE: I have a little leather box like that, a charming green leather box, with all its original brass nails and everything, with a nice sort of paper, fancy paper lining. What would you do with it though? I bought that for, I don't know, \$10 or something of the kind, you know?

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's incredible.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, incredible.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But everything went.

PERRY RATHBONE: Everything, every single thing went, and I bought a couple of costumes for my daughters. As you know, kids, they like to have something to dress up in, and they were young then and you know, the costumes happened to be small. These were lovely, beautiful ball dresses and things worn in Boston about 1850. The Boston Museum Collection is so big and rich; they didn't want them, nor did the historical Societies. Then I remember something else very funny about this. When I was there, the first time I guess, exploring the house, I opened a door of a closet off a dressing room on the first floor, and I pulled out a little box like that and opened it, and it was packed with letters. And I began looking through the letters and I found, oh, there was a letter from, well, I forget whether it was Longfellow. Something like that. And then regretting—they weren't important—but regretting that they couldn't come to dinner or they hoped to see you next week or something like that. But the whole thing was filled with that kind of communication from old Boston names and families, still there. Then I poked a little bit farther and came upon this horrendous sculpture of Maxim Karolik, by Tony de Weldon, do you know who I mean? There's an academic sculptor called de Weldon, who did the Marine Monument in Washington, based upon a photograph of *Raising the Flag at Okinawa* [ph].

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh right, right, Iwo Jima.

PERRY RATHBONE: Or Iwo Jima, Iwo Jima. Yeah, that's right, Iwo Jima. And he had made a sculpture of Maxim Karolik in his Russian tunic, his mouth wide open, his arm upstretched like this.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Singing.

PERRY RATHBONE: In full song yes, yes. [They laugh.] To the waist, to the waist.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh my heavens.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, and I pulled this out from the closet, I couldn't believe my eyes. I'd never seen it or heard of it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No wonder.

PERRY RATHBONE: No wonder. And I thought what are we going to do with that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh goodness.

PERRY RATHBONE: And when I got to the attic, didn't I find, I think it was two more examples in plaster. And I turned to our lawyer, who is a very engaging, nice man, by the name of Meyer, and I said, "What are we going to do with that?" He said, "Well, you know, some years ago, Maxim Karolik sent quite a large sum of money to build an orphanage in, I believe it was Odessa, where he came from, or near Odessa," and he said, "I think the place for that bronze is right in that orphanage in Russia."

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's a perfect Russian image.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And so he said, "I shall write and find out," and I said, "Well, that's a great idea, Henry. I can't tell you how pleased I am, of that idea." Because it is not something to show as a work of art in a museum, and, it is—you can't sell it either, that would be inappropriate.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. You couldn't sell it.

PERRY RATHBONE: You couldn't sell it, you wouldn't want to, I mean there's something wrong about that, at least at this time, so close to the death of the benefactor. He wrote to Russia and never had an answer. And then I went off for the summer, went on my holiday, and when I came back, I had many other things on my mind, but I had occasion two or three months later to go up into the storage of the Boston Museum, in the Decorative Arts storage, looking for something, I forget what, and all of a sudden, there was Maxim Karolik sitting on the floor there, still in full song. There it is. I don't know what happened to the plasters.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What happened to the house and everything else?

PERRY RATHBONE: The house, we sold the house, after we had emptied it. We had an auction sale. We got—[inaudible]—to go up there and sell the furniture and other things that the museum simply did not want, and there were quite a number of things that were just duplications and so on. And there were many books, which all those things were sold, on the place, on the premises, and then we sold the house and the house was bought by one of the Pickens sisters. Do you remember the Pickens sisters, who used to sing close harmony?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. What is her name? I forget.

PAUL CUMMINGS: One of them went into politics a couple of years ago.

PERRY RATHBONE: I think so. She comes from Georgia, and she still owns it and loves it. It's a handsome house that's on Bellevue Avenue. It's right next to the business quarter of Newport, that part.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, by the Art Association or the other way?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, no, where the casino is, you know where the casino is?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And the casino is surrounded by commercial thises and thats, you remember, and as you move down Bellevue Avenue, it's the very first house on the left side, behind a high fence. There's a very, very deep lot, at the back of which there was a retainer's house, and the retainer lived there for some time. I remember, taking out of that house, well, not taking out, but deciding to sell two immense sets of export porcelain, Chinese export porcelain.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that was a big thing up there too.

PERRY RATHBONE: That was a big thing. He had collected it and I suppose the Codmans, being who they were, and Salem could hardly avoided having export [inaudible] let alone, you know?

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's amazing.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. He told a wonderful story. [Inaudible.] I like this story, it shows his humor.

PAUL CUMMINGS: We've only got about four minutes, three or four minutes, so.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, good. You know, when he first came to Boston, he was introduced to a man by the name of Vernon Briggs, and Vernon Briggs began to talk to Karolik right away, about the fact that his wife was a Cabot. He said, "You know, Mr. Karolik, my wife was a Cabot, do you know about the Cabots?" He said to Maxim, "You know about the Cabots and the Lodges and they only speak to God and to one another," and all that. He

wanted Karolik to be thoroughly impressed with his wife's ancestry and Karolik said, "Oh yes," he said, "I've heard all about the Cabots and the Lodges, and they speak of it in Minnesota." He said, but he said you see, "My wife is a Codman and they speak to nobody." [They laugh.] The other thing he was found to say, he says, "So and so said his ancestors came in the *Mayflower*. Well, I say Karolik arrived in the *Majestic*." [Laughs.] Then he said he was once chided on the steps of the Somerset Club, where he was taken to lunch by somebody, because Karolik was wearing a sort of short, broad-cut coat, with a mink collar, and this proper Bostonian host of his said, "You know Mr. Karolik, here in Boston, gentlemen don't wear fur." "Oh," said Karolik, "I am not a gentleman, I am a tenor." [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: He had a sense of humor about it, didn't he?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes he had, he really had, and you can forgive him everything for his sense of humor. And he liked the fact of himself being placed alongside these proper Bostonians, and he knew that there would be a certain [inaudible] there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did they take to him, or didn't they ever?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, they chuckled about him and laughed about him, but he never really became part of the, you know, inner, inner circle, I'd say, and never became a trustee or anything like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think he wanted to?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, he would certainly deny wanting to.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean he'd certainly given the museum an enormous amount—

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, but I think the trustees found—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —of time, effort and works.

PERRY RATHBONE: —that he would spend most of his time attracting attention to himself.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Singing at the trustees' meetings.

PERRY RATHBONE: That's right. Yeah. [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Anyway, that's terrific, why don't we stop on that.

PERRY RATHBONE: All right.

[END OF TRACK.]

### **August 11, 1976**

PAUL CUMMINGS: Side 16, the 11th of August, 1976. Paul Cummings, talking to Perry Rathbone. In one year, you did a large exhibition of a hundred European master works, drawings, and I think John Rewald did the foreword to that catalog.

PERRY RATHBONE: Now, is the hundred—is this the *European Masters of Our Time*?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: *European Masters of Our Time*, was Rewald, that show was a way of declaring, quite clearly, the concern of the Museum of Fine Arts, henceforth, with the art of our time, because it had been really very much neglected, and the museum had been very much criticized for its indifference. And I may have told you that it was owing to the difference that existed between the director and the curator of paintings, that is between G.H. Edgell, the director, and W.G. Constable, the curator of paintings. Edgell was quite convinced that important, or what you might call significant art, ceased with Cézanne, and after that it was just a kind of wild jumble that was sort of meaningless, and was not interested in acquiring 20th-century art for the Boston Museum, and W.G. Constable, who had taken an interest in modern art in England at any rate, somehow didn't carry on the way Philip Hendy had done when he was, for two or two and a half years, curator of paintings. He was very determined about contemporary art, and I may have told you about some of those efforts, about the Matisse for example.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, which was that?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, that's rather significant and a rather crucial case, that I think is worth recording. Um,

he grew up of course, under the influence of Roger Fry's ideas and the new Burlington Art Gallery and their program, and saw at once the lack of modern art in the Boston Museum, and amongst the pictures, which he recommended to the trustees early in his days there, was a 1902 Matisse called *Carmelina*, a brilliant early work by Matisse, but something of a shocker, certainly for Boston in 1932, because it represented a studio model, whose name was Carmelina, seated with her legs spread apart, on a kind of table, a rather high table.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes, yes, yes.

PERRY RATHBONE: A dark-haired lass, and a very bold and forthright kind of picture in which a mirror figure is reflecting the head of Matisse at his easel. At any rate, it was an early kind of a pre-Fauv, Fauv work, brilliant in color and superbly executed, and the trustees were of course horrified that this—that the new curator of paintings would recommend such a picture for their sedate and well behaved museum. And the treasurer at that time was a rather dictatorial character by the name of um—oh, what was his name? William Crowninshield Endicott.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Old Boston.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, that old Boston all the way, and he was so scandalized by this picture, that he twice refused to sign the check in payment. But Hendy was not asking for museum funds. He actually raised the money amongst his friends and supporters there, raised the money to buy it. It was \$5,000 incidentally, and so really, Endicott had nothing to say about it, but he showed his displeasure and his disgust with this picture by holding up the check, but later it was paid. But then he said, at that time, that he would forbid his ward, whoever she was, his niece or some debutante-aged girl of Boston, ever to enter the gallery where it was exhibited, because he thought it was such an outrage.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Terrible.

PERRY RATHBONE: I suppose yes, because it was so—or I suppose he would say disrespectful to womankind, or something like that. Anyhow, that was the real *cause celebre*, but it didn't daunt Hendy, and he also bought a beautiful Braque still life, a small, rectangular still life of about 1922, for a small sum of money. But what he spent money on primarily, oh, he bought a rather big Caserotti, who is a little bit forgotten today but was a rather coming Italian in those days, and quite a number of young English artists, quite naturally, like Paul Nash. Then he added a few Sickerts and things like that, that he had special sympathy for. But that, then the modern program came more or less to a halt, because W.G. Constable would blame Edgell for not taking an interest and Edgell would blame Constable for not fulfilling his duties as curator of painting. So the thing fell between two stones and in protest against this sort of loggerhead situation at the Boston Museum, the Institute of Contemporary Art was founded, in those days called the Boston Museum of Modern Art.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: It was, in a sense, to be an extension of the New York Museum of Modern Art.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, and some curious affiliation.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And to begin with, it did have some tie, which I can't quite describe. But anyway, at any rate, it was the, in a way, the child of Nathaniel Saltonstall, who was a young Boston collector with very liberal attitudes and understandings about art, and a few others, the Metcalfs for example, in support of the idea. Mrs. Metcalf was the daughter of Robert Payne, who was one of the most brilliant collectors in Boston, and her husband, Tom Metcalf, was very keen about 20th-century art, and they supported it, and Nat supported it with what money he could contribute and what his mother contributed, and Jim Plaut, my classmate, James S. Plaut, became the first director. And they began to compensate for the museum's omissions. But that's how that came about, it was really a deliberate challenge to the museum, to get on the ball and recognize the 20th century.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you find the ICA when you were in Boston though, because they have a history of subtle up and downs.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well it certainly was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Sometimes it was brilliant and other times they were a disaster parked in a warehouse or something.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, no, they've had the most checkered career of any museum in this country. Well, it wasn't long after I went to Boston that Jim Plaut, who had been the director of the Institute for 20 years, so that must have been '56, you see, the year after I went there. It was '36, '46, '56, yes—he resigned. He thought he had done it long enough and it was time for somebody else to come in. Meantime, the focus of their activities had shifted so much, from what you might call pure art or high art or art art, to industrial art. They felt that, or

Jim felt that there was much to be accomplished in that realm, and it was very tempting to turn that way because there was money to be had from things like Corning Glass, which was producing an art product, and they also had money to spend for promoting contemporary crafts and so on. So the focus became different toward the end of Jim's tenure. He was succeeded by Tom Messer, who had been a Harvard man and had been in, I think it was Phoenix.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Roswell, New Mexico.

PERRY RATHBONE: Was it? Roswell, New Mexico, that's right, Roswell, New Mexico, and he had done very well there and without much of a stage on which to perform. But he had attracted considerable notice for what he had done and he was a very likely candidate, and I think a very successful director of the Institute, but he was not so interested in the industrial design aspect of things as he was in what we called art art, and shifted the focus and at the same time did his best to bring in the local artists, to relate them in some way to the whole program.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because the only thing the museum had, the Boston Museum, was that annual or something every so often. Wasn't there a regional that went on and off?

PERRY RATHBONE: There was the independent artists exhibition.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's it, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And I saw that once, the first year I was there, and I was so appalled by the whole performance, that I didn't think it was forwarding anything. It was only confusing people and disgusting others. It assaulted my eyes and sensibilities essentially, that I didn't see how I could be responsible for perpetuating it. Henry Rossiter, my predecessor as acting director, had staged the last one, and he sort of threw up his hands and said, "Well, I don't care what you do with the damn thing, but I think something needs to be done." And so I just said, "Well, I think this—if the Independent Artists Association is interested in holding this exhibition, I think they can hold it elsewhere, and we'll commence a program that will be more constructive and I think that since we are the only museum in New England which is capable of handling big international exhibitions, I think we should concentrate on that and allow the independent artists and other artists of New England and Boston to show elsewhere." Um, and so instead of holding local exhibitions, we did allow the Boston Watercolor Society to have a show once a year, which was a kind of minor affair, but they invited watercolorists from elsewhere in the country.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know what intrigues me, and you've mentioned this numerous times about the Boston Museum being the large major museum in New England. Did you get support that went, say all the way up Maine and west, or was that—was it hard to tell?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, that's a good question. No. We thought that that would ultimately constitute our scope of influence and support, all of New England, but we never really counted on it much from there. We did attract quite a large number of members from out of town, but not the distant states, no.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Not too far. You needed a New England women's committee or something.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, we would have needed that. And then you see, the difficulty there, quite clearly Paul, is that you soon encroach upon the local museums, that are very good and important, like Worcester and Providence, and that only creates enmity and dissatisfaction. And so we didn't actively cultivate people beyond our own sort of 50-mile limit, kind of a radius of 50 miles around Boston was more or less our sphere.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you still had a large population.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, and a very—and a rather special one, because you know, the degree of higher education in that particular part of the country is pretty high, and sympathy for the arts and for culture, so we did very well with our membership in that field alone. But meantime, we cast a wider net for higher category members, for life members and so on, in other parts of the country, maintaining that lots of people, well, they were dependent upon the expertise of the Boston Museum and its scholarly program and its publications and so on, and we couldn't expect Boston alone to support that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: To support that, yeah, yeah. How did that work? I mean, were you able to attract people from the west or the Midwest or New York places like that?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, a lot of people were sort of indebted to me, you know, in the years I've been involved, in Detroit or St. Louis or New York or somewhere, and I didn't hesitate to send them this kind of message that, after all, this is a very worthy cause, and the museum is really much bigger and more important than the size of Boston would normally justify. And just as the Museum of Modern Art was supported by people from all over

America, I thought for art expertise in the Egyptian field, the Oriental certainly, Classical and the Print Department, and so on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Inaudible.]

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, that we were deserving of that and many people, I can't tell you how many offhand, became thousand-dollar life members and so on, in our initial efforts. I don't know whether we discussed the membership very much.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, on and off we have. It was very small and then you built, built it up.

PERRY RATHBONE: I don't know what I told you about my analysis of the membership when I went there or not, but it was so quaint, that you can't believe it was only 25 years ago, I discovered that there were 2,200 so-called subscribers. Did I talk about this?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh right yes, who got the individual letter.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, all that. I did. And 500 of them were paying five dollars a year, which of course it cost about \$10 to retain them on the rolls. Well, that's what we corrected by one means after another, and very much with the help of the Ladies' Committee and the know-how.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think it's advantageous for a museum to have a large membership, or does it reach a point beyond which it just gets difficult to handle?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, that's a good question. I think the Museum of Modern Art, I suppose has had more experience with membership than any other organization in this country, and when they began to give catalogues with their subscriptions, they were really inviting a kind of financial problem in time, because those publications became more and more expensive, the mailing of them did, and the bookkeeping of them did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, it decreased the number you'd get over the years.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, they had to do that, and so maybe there is a point beyond which there's no profit, you know? There may be—I don't know if that's ever been figured out or not, but I think there is such a thing as a membership becoming too big. What we did, therefore, once we got our membership up to a respectable number—it was close to 15,000 at the time that I retired—was to redouble our efforts to attract more life members, yes, and we raised the life membership from \$1,000 to \$5,000, and went back to lots of people who had been life members for \$1,000 and extracted another four, you know, or arranged for them to become life members over a period of years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Three or four years or so.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, and after five payments or whatever, you would be a lifer. And this way, we really increased the museum's resources very, very considerably, and I found that really, as is so often the case in this country, it's a question of simply asking people and not being shy about asking. And it's surprising how many people respond if they feel that—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's a direct question though.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, it's just a direct question, but they recognize the worth of the institution if they like its program and they like its atmosphere and they like what it means to the young and to schools.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, the thing that I've begun to observe in the last few years since I now work in a different way, is that what I seem to see, I don't know if it's your experience, is that people who are generous supporters of institutions, frequently support particular people, a director, a curator, while they're at the museum, or the activity of that person or they're socially connected, there's some personal relationship. Did you notice that? Did you notice that it's a fairly consistent pattern?

PERRY RATHBONE: Absolutely. As I said in the problems with finding a new director for the Boston Museum, I said to the committee, what you're looking for is a man who will, within a reasonable time, personify the institution, because people do give to people. They don't feel like giving to just an anonymous—

PAUL CUMMINGS: An abstraction.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, anonymous and personal establishment. They like to feel the personal element in giving and that's why it's important that they feel a presence. They like Derek Bok at Harvard, so they write a check for \$10,000, or they like Seiji Ozawa and the Boston Symphony Orchestra is flourishing under him, therefore they write a check. If they like the Boston Museum with Perry Rathbone there, because it seems to thrive and people

like it. They like him; the staff gets along, they do. But if there's any sour note—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —the checks stop right away.

PERRY RATHBONE: Absolutely, it's really true. I remember, there's a phrase that has stuck in my head. I don't know who coined it, but it's a very true, it's a very true statement, that an institution is the length and shadow of a man and it's that, what you think of when you're responding.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you know, all of which leads me into one of these other general question I have, and that is, since you have had directorship of two substantial institutions, how would you define or describe, as you see it and have executed it, the directorship of a museum, and what does a director do besides, you know, the normal? The concept of a director, I guess is really what I'm driving at.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I suppose what the director—the most important thing the director does is to think and to lead. I think those are the most important things that a director can do, to think ahead about his museum in relation to the community, his museum in relation to the nation, and to the world and to culture in general, and to think how his museum can contribute to that general human effort. And then more specifically, when opportunities arise, to recognize that they fit into his concept of the role of the museum. I think in other words, that kind of constant thought in a broad framework of reference is the most important thing that a director can do, and I think that—I don't know whether that answers your question or not, Paul.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, did your idea of what a museum director did change over the years, during the course of being one?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes it did. It became, from its being a rather private, what one thought was a kind of private activity, a private concern, it became a much more public one, a much more far reaching one than I was conscious of when I first became involved. You know, when you are in a university, you are in a certain cloistered atmosphere, no matter how much your professors tell you that you aren't or that pretty soon you're going to be out in the world, your experience has been a cloistered one. And you think of continuing your activity in an atmosphere of that kind.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It changes a little bit.

PERRY RATHBONE: But very soon you find you're not in that atmosphere at all, and this is what begins to change your own attitude about your responsibilities and your institution, and this is when you begin to think. And you want your institution just the way you want your child to flourish, and you do everything you can to achieve that end and make it mean more to more people, is really the program I found, to make the institution more meaningful to more people. Uh, and I found both the institutions I went to really quite moribund and quite apart from the—to the mainstream of life in those communities, and that's what I found myself changing and found it a thrilling and very satisfying occupation. And the response that comes from your efforts is what continues to inspire you, sure. So that's it. I don't know, you asked me a double question maybe.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well it is, because part of it is the retrospective and the other one, the historical development, and it's uh—

PERRY RATHBONE: You said, what are the most important things a museum director does?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, what would you say the most, really is the thinking and the planning and the concept.

PERRY RATHBONE: That's right, that's right, and I think, as I say, becoming somebody who is conveniently called mister museum, that you don't go anywhere, you don't move about, either professionally or socially or in any way, that people don't, upon seeing you, start thinking museum and talking it, and thereby the museum becomes more and more felt, because they know that you're the man with the answers, the thoughts, the ideas, the projections into the future and so on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you do about new ideas or new projects, in terms of outside sources? I mean one person can't generate everything in an institution that size. Is it your curators, do people send, you know, other museum directors write and say we want to do an exhibition are you interested, do you want to share?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I don't know. The only answer to that is with my own experience, is you keep an open mind. And um, I remember very well when Jim Brown, who was the museum director until very recently, was director of the Corning Glass Museum in Corning, New York, and was asked to join the Corning Glass Company, in an administrative capacity, and leave off as museum director. And to that end, the Corning Glass Company sent him to Harvard Business School for a 10-week refresher course in administrative practice and philosophy and so on. And I remember he came to us for Thanksgiving dinner in Cambridge and I asked him what he'd learned in those 10 weeks—he was about to leave—and he said, "Well I think I can sum it up by saying that we



were taught at Harvard Business School, that a good administrator says why not." And I said, "Well that's very interesting." That's been my natural instinct in dealing with my staff and the public for quite a long time and I very much believe in that. So, in other words, you want to accept the ideas of people who are concerned and intelligent people around you, whether they're on your staff or in your community, and you just say, "Well why not, let's give that a try," or "Let's study it a little bit more and see if we can't get something good out of that." And so I think that's the way you handle things like that. I think one of the most important ingredients tied to a museum director is a sense of practicality and common sense, that's all, and an open mind.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But how does one teach that? I mean, if you were going to do a series of lectures at Harvard, say to young museum directors, what do you say to them?

PERRY RATHBONE: How I inculcate that view?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. I mean common sense is very difficult to explain to people who might not have it.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, maybe you can't teach common sense, I suppose you can't. I don't know, Paul, how do you get that across?

PAUL CUMMINGS: What would you say to somebody who aspired to be, you know, a class of potential museum directors at the Institute of Fine Arts or someplace?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean it's a problem that comes up frequently.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Well, first of all, I think the basic thing I would have to say to that class is you've got to be an expert in art. This is not accepted in every corner, you know, tacitly, and I think that this is absolutely essential. And I think that the knowledge of art, the feeling you have of art, or your knowledge you have of art, is that thing which basically guides many, many decisions that you have to make.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, in the first place, your knowledge of art has given you a sense of relative quality and merit, and this is essential. Is this program worth following because the art involved is of sufficient importance and justified or not. If you didn't have a critical knowledge of art, you wouldn't be in a position to judge that. And I sometimes, when this question has arisen, sometimes amongst my trustees and a search committee for a new director and so on, I have likened the position of the director to the director of a hospital, and said that I don't think I would have great confidence in a hospital which was headed by a businessman and not by a man who was trained in medicine, because I think it takes that kind of training to make the judgments that are inevitable. So that would be number one, I think for those practical reasons, and because it also gives you a kind of standing in the community. If you're an expert at anything, it gives you a standing, and it gives you the kind of confidence you need, that you can answer the normal questions about art that arises every day, except the one, what is art. When it comes to that one, you don't have—you say, "Well, I don't know any more about that than the next one, don't ask me that one, but anything else, I'll make a stab at."

PAUL CUMMINGS: Names, dates, places, et cetera.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, that's right, exactly. So that would be number one. And then I think a democratic spirit is very important, in this country anyway. I don't think I need to speak for museums outside America, but in this country, in this day and age of widespread education and a general democratization of everything, that there's no room for a snobbish attitude on the part of the museum director. He's really got to love his brother and welcome the unwashed and, but genuinely. This wasn't the case at all for a long time, as you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, until 20 or so years ago.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes. And in a sense my predecessor in St. Louis, who was the president, I've talked about before, Louis LaBeaume. He was a kind of public-be-damned sort of presence.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's my museum.

PERRY RATHBONE: My museum and I know better and don't tell me, and I don't care if you illiterates come here or not, this museum isn't for you anyway. This is the attitude and I think it can be summed up in my own experience at Harvard. Um, I don't know whether I touched on this before or not, but in those days, in the 1930s, the president of the—the director of the Boston Museum, before Harold Edgell, was Edward Jackson Holmes, and Edward Jackson Holmes actually was, I've learned since, was a most benign and kindly individual, but he also was a Brahmin to his fingertips. He was a grandson of Oliver Wendell Holmes, he couldn't have been better born or better placed in Boston society. He was a man of independent means. The idea of an undergraduate or any of

my associates at Harvard ever seeing the director of the Boston Museum, much less ever meeting him, was just beyond our wildest thoughts. You thought of the director of the Boston Museum as being a kind of mahatma, sitting on a cloud somewhere, absolutely unapproachable and untouchable. There was just this aura about the office of director of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston that was, you know, was hands off and keep your distance. I never talked to anybody who had ever met him.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In those days, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: No. And yet when I was there, you know, it was, I don't know, everybody seemed to know who I was and know me, and nobody felt the least bit standoffish or shy about approaching me, and that change, as you just pointed out, it came about in those last 20 or 30 years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, that obviously indicates a whole social change in that generation.

PERRY RATHBONE: It does indeed.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think also, that the idea of the museum has changed in the last number of decades, and what the museum before World War II, and say the museum since, which I mean they've opened themselves up to a greater public and expanded their buildings, and certainly published many more books and catalogues with more material. I mean, there seems to be an enormous shift in the institution, its relationship to its city, its scholarship.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yeah. Yes, it's changed a great deal, it's changed a great deal, and I think by and large for the better. Um, I think sometimes, the traditional role of scholarship in a museum, a museum as a source of knowledge and of continuing knowledge as a result of research and study, has been slighted. In the popularization which has taken place, beginning as I see it, with the popularization of the Museum of Modern Art—I think that really was the breakthrough, the whole fresh attitude of the Museum of Modern Art dealing with the art of our time, where there wasn't the same kind of traditional reverence for what they were dealing with.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well it's true, after a few years, they would consciously play to the public through their press releases, you know, one thing or another.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yeah, and the kind of widespread membership and its influence on all of us in my generation. That was followed by the profound attitude of Francis Henry Taylor, who was going to turn the cavern measurements to man [ph] into a stately pleasure dome, you remember his words, that's what he was going to do to the Metropolitan Museum. And it really began on a big scale with him I think, because he had a kind of animus toward the closet scholar, partly because many of them were German and he was very anti-German. And for maybe some other personal prejudices. But in the last analysis, he was inspired by something more than mere prejudice; he was inspired by the idea of the museum becoming a kind of university for the common man, a place capable of teaching at almost every level and with the most graphic means. And he began to revolutionize all sorts of things.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you ever know him?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, sure.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I often wonder what kind of a character he was as an individual.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh he was a wonderful character. He was a very hearty, highly sophisticated, witty and somewhat showoff type, who loved to match wits with those who consider themselves superior, you know? And he was also kind of—he also liked to prick balloons and deflate reputations and so on. He was irritated by the pretensions of certain aspects of modern art and artists, and I think made a big mistake in trying to deflate some of them. I don't know, he was a powerful influence, someone very widely respected amongst my profession. He made some serious blunders in that. For example, a book called *Babel's Tower*, which he aired all of his complaints about scholarship and modern art, but I think the good he did will far outweigh the embarrassments he created for himself, shall I say.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was he embarrassed ever or was it some part of—

PERRY RATHBONE: Others were embarrassed for him, let's put it that way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Don't you think often, it's useful when somebody comes along and says, you know, scholarship is getting so pompous or it's getting so out of line?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, I suppose so, but—yes, but you've got to be on much firmer ground than Francis was. Did you ever read *Babel's Tower*?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No. I've read something else.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, you might read it sometime, it's very readable, because he wrote in an easy, kind of somewhat colloquial style. But it responded to in the most devastating columns, by Meyer Shapiro, in the *Art Bulletin*, that just makes you wince for Francis Taylor. And they said at the time, that that copy of the *Art Bulletin* quickly disappeared from the Metropolitan Museum Library. Whether that's true or not, I don't know, but it could be, but it will amuse you sometime, when you have a spare moment at the Whitney, to read both those things, you'd find in our bulletin. I think the thing was published around 19-, around 1946 or '47, or something like that, yeah. But u, he—as I say, I think that the scholarship, which is very important to museums, has not been sufficiently fulfilled by some of them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But how do you aid scholarship in a museum? I know that—

PERRY RATHBONE: How do you aid it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. If I go to the museum for a day, the phone rings, there are endless letters, there's all kinds of trivia, you know, and within two weeks or a month, you can even get to look at a picture.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I'll tell you, the only way you can do it is to get yourself out of circulation for the time required. And I remember distinctly, that's what Richard Randall did on my staff, when he wrote his excellent catalogue of the American furniture collection of the Boston Museum. Not the Karolik furniture, that was separately published and before, but all the rest of the prints from that museum had never been catalogued, never been published. He simply absented himself from all the curatorial duties which would normally fall to him, he was Hanns Swarzenski's assistant, when it didn't go down to Hanns every day. He was looking for an assistant to do this.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He wasn't.

PERRY RATHBONE: But, but Dick Randall, by making himself at least that disagreeable, and maybe that's the answer, you just make yourself disagreeable.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He's not there.

PERRY RATHBONE: And inaccessible, and do it, and write it, and it's a real contribution. And I remember the same thing happened to Jules Prown when he was writing his definitive copy [ph]. I remember trying to reach him about some matter that we got in copy, and I made two or three telephone calls and he never would answer, wouldn't pick up a cluster of phone calls, and ring back on a certain day of the week, when he was off in some hut or somewhere, apart from, from humankind, and that's how he got his work done. So by not seeing the public, shall we say, and not answering the phone, you get it done. But there, I think that's the one danger in responding to popular demand, because that's what has happened. The museum first—in my generation, museum directors went out like missionaries really, to stir up interest and attract attention and support, and get people to enjoy art as part of their lives. And now, the public has been so thoroughly indoctrinated with this idea that the museums have over-succeeded, shall we say.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So they have to do the next step in a sense.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. You go to the Metropolitan Museum on a Sunday and you see it's a defeat, it defeats itself, as far as I'm concerned.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's beyond belief, I mean 80,000 people on a good afternoon.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And I can tell you this, it will surprise you, you're so much younger than I am, you don't remember the quaint conditions under which I grew up, but the Metropolitan Museum, when I was a boy, had two paydays a week, I remember 25 cents on two days; Tuesdays and Thursdays, or something. And even as long ago as that, because I haunted the Metropolitan as a boy, as a youth, I would choose to go on the 25 cent day because there wouldn't be anybody around, and, and art requires a certain quietude in order to pick up its message. You can't, you can't get it—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —in the subway.

PERRY RATHBONE: You can't get it in the subway and you can't get it with cars around you, any more than you can get a concert, if everybody's talking.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And so in a way, the museum has over-succeeded in our country.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But don't you think they've also gotten into the numbers games of grants and government support and one thing well, we had \$50,000 for that show, now we'll expect \$75,000 for the next one.

PERRY RATHBONE: That's the case, because well, as it often boils down to finance. In order to justify grants and tax support, you've got to deal in numbers; it's got to be quantitative, rather than a qualitative thing, because the qualitative thing isn't understood. The numbers can't be defined, you know?

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do you see the museum having changed as an institution in terms of its own growth over these years, that you watched, in terms of collecting, in terms of staff?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The evolution of the institution.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well I would say, from a kind of static institution, which is what museums were, and what is meant still by people who say, oh well, you know that place is just a museum, I think that term is going to disappear, or that reference of the museum being a kind of static, a kind of dead place, is going to disappear. In other words, from the static, they've become very dynamic, in a word, that is what is taking place and it's the public now, which I see keeps that dynamo going. The museum itself, you know it was self-generating thanks to the tutelage of my generation, but now it's the public that keeps that thing going. They keep demanding more, and one reason they demand more, Paul, in our country anyway is that—

[END OF TRACK.]

### **August 18, 1976**

PAUL CUMMINGS: This is side 17. It's the 18th of August, 1976, Paul Cummings, talking to Perry Rathbone, 40 East 78th Street. Is that a little bit on a couple of other topics, and one is a topic you've touched on before in numerous ways, and that is the problem of trustees, and you've certainly dealt with a number of small armies of trustees over the years.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, I have.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You talked, actually quite a bit about St. Louis, and somewhat about Boston, but in Boston, was the problem of finding trustees yours, or was that the other trustees? Were there many changes while you were there? What was the general sense?

PERRY RATHBONE: In the first place, perhaps I should explain that according to the bylaws of the Boston Museum at that time, bylaws that had been in effect for many, many years, the director became a trustee. Did I explain that before?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No. Was that an advantage though?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I think a museum board of trustees the size of Boston was essential, in my opinion. According to the bylaws at that time, at the next meeting after a director has been appointed, he shall, by reason of a vote cast by the secretary, or [inaudible] of a legalistic phase, we elected a trustee, presumably for the duration of his—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —tenure, right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well no tenure, the duration of his service as the director. And I think that this provision went back to the time of Edward Robinson, who was director of the Boston Museum in the first years of the 20th century, and who left Boston to become director of the Metropolitan Museum, because he felt that there had been trustee interference. At any rate, he didn't feel that he was exercising all of the prerogatives of the director. There were some considerable differences at that time and when he was invited to the Metropolitan, he seems to have been quite happy to accept and to leave Boston. And I believe it was at that time that it was decided that the director should have a vote along with the other trustees, in other words, the elected trustees. And I think it is only right in an institution of that dimension, where so much responsibility falls upon the director, that he should be meeting with his peers and not as a hired hand, when it comes to making policy and making the other decisions that fall to a board of trustees to make.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But doesn't that provide some problems, or situations with problems?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well the only problem it might pose, I think, Paul, is that it might alienate the director from the staff, from the administrative and curatorial staff, who do not have such privilege and such a vote, but neither do those people have the same burden of responsibility that a director has, and I never found that the fact that I was a trustee all the years I was there, in any way affected my relationship to the staff. I don't see

what other disadvantage it has.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, there might have been trustee cliques and various things like that, that might have been difficult. It didn't inhibit their discussion in any way.

PERRY RATHBONE: No, it never—no, it never inhibited their discussion, in my case, but it meant that the director was bound to be party to whatever took place at the board of trustees, and he always therefore, had access to the minutes of the meetings of the board of trustees and could see what policies, could review the policies that had been developed and passed on. It put him in a position that I think was advantageous to the director, and I really, if I were asked, I would recommend that any candidate for, as my successor, insist that he be a trustee. I know that the Metropolitan Museum followed the same practice. I don't know about the early history of the Met, but I know that Francis Taylor and James Rorimer and Thomas Hoving today, are all—have all been trustees of the museum. I was not a trustee of the St. Louis Museum and there was no provision for such at the time, but there one was dealing with only nine, a board of only nine members, for one thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because Boston has dozens or something, right?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, well yes, let's see, it adds up to about 36 today, I think, and that's quite a lot.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What would you do in terms of new trustees? Were they self-generating?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, they were self-generating there, and they still are, with several important exceptions. I don't know whether you're familiar with the setup of the Boston Museum trustees or not, but for many years, from the founding as a matter of fact, nine trustees were appointed for those three institutions.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh right, yes you mentioned that, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: The three kind of founding institutions. That seemed, in my time, as we came closer and closer to the realization that money was, new money was essential to the successful operation of the museum in the future. To have that many trustees who were wearing another hat when they arrived, was to the disadvantage of the museum. This was a concept that was gradually accepted by the trustees. They had inherited the idea of these nine, and it was somehow sacrosanct in the minds of some conservatives like Walter Whitehill, for example, who represented the Atheneum, and I suppose others. But when it was recognized that there was a need for new blood and people who were devoted to the museum, first, last, and most importantly, and not to two or three others, it was gradually recognized and voted finally, that those trustees should be reduced to three; one from each of those institutions, appointed by those institutions independent of the board of the museum. And I, as in the case of most matters pertaining to trustees, there are good and bad aspects.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: While the old situation prevailed, there was a kind of preventive body of men who were, I would say, very objective and disinterested, and could see things from their own points of view and not become involved so readily with the fear in any body of trustees, [inaudible] have cliques developing around an ambitious person. Um, and this objectivity was somewhat surrendered when the trustees reduced the number from nine to three, and the objectivity of appointing someone was lost too, and the way was open for an ambitious person, who had some control of the nominating committee, to get into that board of trustees those people who he wanted for his own ends.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Did that happen at any time?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, yeah, there were certain clear signs, yes. And so as usual, the problem of trustees is a vex point.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It always intrigues me why a person wants to be a trustee of an institution like that, where they do have real responsibilities.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, there are several motives. The purest one is that of being devoted to art, who really loves art the way some people love music. But I'm afraid that it is not always the purest motivation that is served by this process. It um, an institution of such importance and dignity and significance as the Boston Museum, to have one's name attached to it is really a passport to, shall we say, higher things or better circles. It's quite a feather to wear in one's cap and it's a very quick identification. You say, "Well, I've been a trustee at the Boston Museum for 10 years," well immediately you're somebody.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: So it's either this love of art or love of recognition, love of station, that leads people to say yes when they're invited. The burdens of being a trustee, I think were diminished very considerably over the

long sleepy years of the museum. They weren't expected to do anything but show up at three, which was usually reduced to two annual meetings a year. One meeting fell in July and everybody knew who was normally there, so that was—that meeting was—I forget just the term—but it was postponed or set aside. At any rate, in principle it was held but it didn't actually happen, so there were two meetings a year when the trustees all came together, and they listened to reports from the committee on the museum, which was the actual functioning, the everyday functioning board. And the reports were reports from the trustees of various funds that were used by the museum or the treasurer's report was read and the director always gave a report on the state of the museum, with its recent accomplishments and its projects for the next year and so on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, were people approached because they could provide substantial amounts of money themselves, or they had entrée to other funds? Because I know recently, all the museums have been madly looking for dollars everywhere.

PERRY RATHBONE: Right. Well one, one—yes. One should expect money from trustees if they have it, and if not, they ought to provide original thought. And I think this has all been encapsulated by somebody, what was it? I can't think at the moment, just what that, what that capsule requirement of a trustee is, but of course the trustees of the museum are always hungry for money and that's one way of gathering it, to make someone a trustee. It shouldn't be, no it should not be, but I'm afraid it is and always will be.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why do you say it shouldn't be? It allows them too much influence if they can write a check?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Yes, and often, if they just have the money to get themselves there, then they may also have other ambitions or they're taking the place of someone who would have much better ideas about what makes a museum effective or viable or whatever. And one hates to see that its so many people with money who get recognition, whereas, whereas distinctions of character and brainpower ought to have those, ought to have that recognition. But I—what I needed to look for when I went there, was for people who were much younger than the average board member, because however youthful an old man's mind may be, they belong to a different generation; their outlook is necessarily different. And it was quite evident, quite obvious, that the Boston Museum needed to change its complexion, and one way of accomplishing that was to bring people in whose minds were open and then who already had different ideas of what a museum might be.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But how do you do that? I mean you just can't call somebody up and say well, you've been around or interested, and how would you like to be a trustee, could you?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, you mean how do you go about approaching someone.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, I mean if you've decided in your mind that here is a likely candidate, what, what would you do, what did you do?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well that's not so hard. It's up to the president of the museum or the chairman of the nominating committee, to approach that person, usually by telephone, and say I happen to sit in the last meeting of our committee, that we have several vacancies on the board of trustees, and a number of candidates were discussed and your name was at the top of the list, so to speak, and I know that our president would be delighted to offer you an invitation to join the board if he were sure that you would accept. But he doesn't want to do that unless you would say yes, for obvious reasons.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: So do think it over and let me know next week, something like that. And you get an answer yes or no, and there would be no embarrassment. You got the word on the telephone, there will be some meeting or let's have lunch together, I have something to tell you, this sort of thing. And then that person would say, "Well let me know what the responsibilities are. Am I expected to send a check you know, for \$50,000 a year or what is expected of me?"

PAUL CUMMINGS: Absolutely.

PERRY RATHBONE: You see? And so that's all spelled out in a very gentlemanly way and if this candidate says yes, he's elected. Well that's really the way it's done. But I was often asked to propose candidates and I often did, and numerous of my candidates became trustees. I was more inclined to know who young people were, and it's easy enough to find out whether someone has the wherewithal to make things go and has the interest. And so I proposed both men and women.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was that a help to you, as more of your candidates became members?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, very much.

PAUL CUMMINGS: There was, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes, there really was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So there was a personal loyalty that went directly through the whole structure.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes, yeah, that's quite true, and they would help to see things the way I did as director and uh, would take a responsible interest and turn up at meetings and so on, and give money. And I could name the names of those who were my candidates. I must say that I was very, very pleased with them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who were they? Who were they?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, one of the early ones was John Gillett, who was a student of fine arts at Harvard and had become an accomplished Islamicist and studied the language and so on, and he was interested in the Asiatic Department already and he was happy to become a trustee, as long as he thought he wasn't going to be a rubber stamp trustee.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: I was able to thrash this out with him and persuade him, and he was one. Another one was Langdon Clay, who was an investment analyst with an important firm in Boston. I met him through my cousin, who married his brother. He came from the south. He was a man of about 35 or something and had an interest in fine arts and ultimately developed a very keen interest in pre-Columbian art. He was also very prosperous. He had inherited some money, but he also was very, very gifted at his calling, and he became a trustee. Another one was Jephtha Wade, who was a young lawyer, who was the grandson of a famous collector and patron of the Cleveland Museum, Jephtha Wade.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: One of the men who made the Cleveland Museum so rich, and when he—he happened to be the cousin of Miss Martha Love of St. Louis, who became a trustee of the St. Louis Museum, an intimate friend of my wife before we married, so she gave us an introduction to him and I soon saw that he would be good trustee material, and he was on the board. And then, Mrs. Hilles, Susan Morse Hilles, I met through Charles Cunningham, when I visited Harvard, or um, Hartford once, and I learned about her great benefactions to the Museum of Modern Art and to Hartford. And we were still getting started with our campaign to increase the membership and attract life members and that sort of thing, and I knew that she had—she was a collector, but she had also lived in Cambridge and in Lynn, Massachusetts, where her father was the rector of an episcopal parish, and the husband of a very rich wife it turned out. I knew that Susan had a lot of money to use, and liked giving it to museums, and the Museum of Fine Arts needed money, and she liked the idea of being a trustee very much, and was immensely generous in fact. And then Stephen Paine, who was a young collector, a broker in Boston, although a tragic invalid, a polio victim, but a very active collector of modern art. And young Charles Cunningham, the son of my own friend, co-director, fellow director. These were all my candidates and they all became trustees. But the problem with trustees, as I say, is not one—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's an unending relationship.

PERRY RATHBONE: Unending relationship, yes, because the position of the director is bound to be awkward in respect to a powerful body like that, who are not involved with the day-to-day operating of the museum and should not be, in my opinion.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, oh absolutely, because otherwise it's—

PERRY RATHBONE: —it's just, you know, it's a disaster. He stands between this all powerful body, who are groping to understand the museum and really can't learn to understand the museum too well, meeting as infrequently as they must do, and then this staff of temperamental and brilliant, productive people on the other side of the director. The director is at that point between the—the narrow point of the hourglass, some are very graphically placed [inaudible], and interpreting staff to the trustees and the trustees to the staff, is not easily done. But the—in my case, what was very important to me, was to have a trustee, an important key trustee, who was also close to me as director and a confidant of mine, and where it most matters, mainly where money is concerned. Someone who is respected for his understanding of money and someone who is known for his ideas, conservatism, his intelligence and his humanity, and I very happily had that person when I went to Boston. Then, when that trustee retired, having been—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who was that trustee?

PERRY RATHBONE: That was Robert Baldwin.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: He was a trustee for 20 years and he thought 20 years was enough. He had been a banker of Second Bank, State Street, all those years, which handled the museum's accounts and so on, and he was of immense value to me. Then his place was taken by someone who would seem to be very appropriate, namely Jack Gardner, who was also a very good friend of mine, but who never assumed the same kind of engaged interest, understanding, deep responsibility, the whole meaning of the office; not just the fact that he can make—get to the bottom line on time, but who would engage his mind and his sense and sensibility about things, and who the director can lean upon when it came to important decisions. That person, as a trustee, was absolutely crucial in my case, and I think it's very important to Tom Hoving's case, which is perhaps the only really similar situation.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Kind of with Dylan, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, Dylan is the president but the treasurer is Robert Herrick. He's not the trustee treasurer, he's the paid treasurer, but whoever it is, Dylan, maybe Dylan deals with Robert Herrick in that way, so that there's somebody who is very close to the director, to whom the director can turn confidentially at any point.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you finally develop a replacement?

PERRY RATHBONE: No. Jack Gardner is still the treasurer and, in a way, I think—I don't know, I think maybe the former incumbent of the presidency didn't mind having somebody as weak as Jack Gardner there, because he was stronger by virtue of what was happening—someone there who wasn't ambitious and wasn't—not that he wasn't ambitious, but who was highly respected for his opinion and who would back up the director. To have someone back up the director with conviction, you know, is important.

PAUL CUMMINGS: To shift a minute, you made a number of curatorial appointments over the years. What did you look for in somebody that you were going to appoint as a curator, you know, scholarship and the obvious things, but what were, you know, what were those intangible qualities that one decides upon?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I'll tell you, I didn't want any pets, I think avoiding pets is important, especially as museums are developed in our time. You can't have somebody who is going to spend all his time nitpicking, but who sees things in a big way, in a broad way. Whether it's developing his own collection, whether it's the publications he's responsible for, whatever, but to have somebody who is there just to nitpick and not to exercise his imagination in his role, I think this needs to be avoided. So uh, I was looking for people who were the appropriate age, which I thought the appropriate age was less than 50 and preferably less than 40, or even younger. That was one thing. Those who had proven themselves elsewhere of course, and who were already recognized scholars or had great potential. And uh—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It sounds like corporate rating practices.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well it does rather, it does yes, I see what you mean. But some of the curators I appointed were already there; others came from quite other places. But I had to find an incumbent for every single position, except—well no, for every one, even including the Decorative Arts Department, where a curator had been appointed not long before I came to Boston, but who really turned out to be the wrong person for that spot. And so it meant that, sooner or later, every one had to be filled. I think every curator but one was at least 60, if not 65.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really, so you came at a real transition.

PERRY RATHBONE: I came at a very crucial moment, yes, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do you think your appointments have worked out over the years?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I think they've done very well. One or two have been a disappointment but Eleanor Sayre was one of my—who is still there, was one of the best appointments I made, I think. She's a wonderful curator of prints and drawings. I think Jan Fontein is first rate as curator of the Asiatic Department, very different and close to Phil. I think that Kelly Simpson is a very active appointment, even though he's there only part-time. He really accomplishes more in half-time, than Bill Smith did in full-time, but that's because Bill was a very, very plodding person.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you've talked about that.

PERRY RATHBONE: We did. He was my first appointment actually, because Dows Dunham, his predecessor, retired within six months of my arrival. He reached the age of 65 and then he did a very, very characteristic and



in a way, very Bostonian thing that I think should be in the record. Namely, he came to me, when he retired from the curatorship, and said he had paid into the museum pension fund. Did I tell you all this?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

PERRY RATHBONE: All the years that the pension fund was in operation. And the accumulated sum was \$35,000, which he had the choice, at that time, of withdrawing for himself, or leaving it interest and making some use of it for his heirs or what have you. And he said since he had an independent income, that he had decided to withdraw the \$35,000 and give it to the museum, for the benefit of the publication program of the Egyptian Department, which I thought was a very generous, altruistic, genuinely altruistic thing to do, and he did. Anyway, he was followed by his protégé, who was William Stevenson Smith, a brilliant Egyptologist, very widely respected, but still wearing something of the mantle of the old museum attitude. He was a little bit startled by the speed of which things moved, [inaudible] and he was perfectly sympathetic and nice about it all. He always seemed to be plodding along a few leagues behind everybody else, rather resistant to any change, but not in any ugly or hostile way but just—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —that was his personality and his way.

PERRY RATHBONE: That was his personality, yes, and he was rather fixed in his ways.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, you talked briefly before about scholarship and discussing the curators again brings it up. How much scholarship can a museum produce? Curatorial staff really seems never to have the time that academics do, to ponder over things and uh, worry about footnotes and one thing and the other.

PERRY RATHBONE: No, they don't. You're quite right, and it's interesting, to see how often even museum exhibitions are researched and written about.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So quickly.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, but by university scholars rather than museum scholars, because there certainly isn't time for administrative responsibilities, and the very time consuming activity of making acquisitions; acquisitions that have to be carefully researched before they are recommended for purchase and so on. It takes an awful lot of time. So, what the museum curator does not accomplish in respect to bookwork, to the same extent as they all believe you should, he accomplishes so far as developing his connoisseurship, his concern.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So in a way, his acquisitions are a reflection of his own activity, rather than books, say.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Yes, exactly. If you take someone like Edward Perry Warren, who never was really, never a member of the staff, or formally a member of the staff, he in a sense was. Not that he wrote anything to speak of, but he became a very great connoisseur of classical art in every field, whether it was gems or it was bronzes or whether it was collages or sculpture or anything. But I do think it's a pity that museum people, with the sensitive trained eye and their flair and connoisseurship, can't devote more time to writing about American museums.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you think develops connoisseurship? I mean some people seem to be able to study for 50 years and are still looking at the same thing confusedly, and others seem to look at a book and 27 paintings and instantaneously can, can do it.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. I don't know, it's very hard to put your finger on that to give you an answer, Paul.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean ultimately it's almost the lifeblood of what the institution is.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes it's true, it's true. It's a little bit like, what is it, I guess some people have taste and other people no taste. They may have exactly the same book education, the same IQ, and intellectual curiosity and everything else, but I don't know what it is, but it is really a discrimination of the eye on top of a solid bed of knowledge, factual knowledge and experience. And I don't know, I certainly can see, time after time, that some curators had this flair to a far greater extent than others on my staff, and when it came to that, and I knew that aesthetic judgment was called for, I would not hesitate to express myself, and quite often would reject, or talk them out of. I wouldn't reject out of hand or automatically.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Ask them questions about why this and what's that.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, and just say, "Well I really think that we can do better," and cajole them out of it without offending them, but prevent them from making acquisitions which I felt didn't measure up to the aesthetic standards of the museum. And I succeeded in that most of the time, but it's important that the person who make the final judgment is really the director, because he recommends to the trustees and if he doesn't recommend it, the trustees, they wouldn't think of moving, if they're well behaved.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you have an acquisitions committee, or was it the full board?

PERRY RATHBONE: No, we had this committee which we inherited from time immemorial, called the Committee on the Museum, meaning the Committee on the Museum's acquisitions and other affairs, whether they were exhibitions or publications or whatever else that concerned the museum itself and not the outside world, so to speak, and not uh—the committee that belonged to was, I suppose, the Executive Committee, other than the board of trustees. But it was so set up that this was not a fixed body, but three members of it were rotated off each year and three others were added, the names coming from the Nominating Committee. They were chosen by the Nominating Committee, to succeed those three who retired, so everybody, sooner or later—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —was on it.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, that is in theory. Sometimes, some trustees felt that they'd been bypassed and they'd like to be on the committee.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How many years would they serve generally?

PERRY RATHBONE: Uh, I think it was three years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So, with nine members.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, this is not—that is not nine, this is Boston Museum, where there were, you know, of 32.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean on that committee though.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, nine on the committee, yes that's right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, so it would be about three years.

PERRY RATHBONE: That's right, Mm-hmm [affirmative], yeah, and that really worked very well. It gave everybody an opportunity. But the ex-officio members of the board of trustees are almost never on that committee, you know, the mayor.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well they never do much anyway.

PERRY RATHBONE: They don't do much anyway. They're more or less for window dressing or to advance the quasi-public character of the museum from the beginning.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, I want to just talk about other things that you were doing outside the museum, since we're doing this piecemeal. Say oh, institutions like Rhode Island School, New England Conservatory of Music, were these interests of yours, was it part of being involved with Boston? How did several of those come about?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, the New England Conservatory of Music was one of the first trusteeships I accepted. It was largely through George Stout, who was director of the Gardner Museum, was a trustee, and he proposed to me, because he knew I was fond of the museum. And it was public spirited and whatnot, and the Conservatory was a neighbor of the museum and it also made sense in view of the fact that the museum possesses a remarkable collection of playable ancient instruments. And for me to be associated with an institution where musicians were trained, created a bridge there that was—came to be very useful.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In practical ways?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And during my day, early in my days at the Boston Museum, an organization was formed for the use of these instruments, called the Camerata, and the musicians who played them often came from the faculty or the student body of the New England Conservatory, and we used the instruments in the *Leslie Lindsey Mason Collection*, which the museum had acquired many years ago as a gift in memory of this young lady, who went down in the *Lusitania*, and I think this is what put it into George Stout's mind and the trustees of the conservatory liked the idea and I had been very loyal and I think useful trustee there, still am a trustee and help them raise money, make policy and so on. But that's how that came about. Also, as I say it's a cultural neighbor of the Museum of Fine Arts, there is this liaison.

The Rhode Island School of Design, well, they were looking for—they were interested in and they were impressed by what had happened to the museum in Boston in my time, and the museum, or the Rhode Island

School of Design, has always been a bit of a stepchild to the school, as you may know, and there are bound to be trustees amongst the others who were more sympathetic to the museum or more deeply interested in the museum than they were in the school. And in order to support that aspect of the Rhode Island School of Design, I suppose I looked like a likely candidate to forward the interests of the museum; how to make it more popular and how to hone its acquisition policies successfully and organize exhibitions and all the other things that go with a museum. And while I was a trustee, there was a special committee appointed, on which I served, to try and make the rest of the trustees understand how important it was to develop the Rhode Island School of Design Museum into an institution of much broader scope, and not to make it autonomous, that would be impossible, but to make it in a sense, Rhode Island's museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, which it's almost become now really.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes it has, but you see, it still doesn't have a sufficiently free hand, to go out and raise its own money for example.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh I see.

PERRY RATHBONE: And uh, have any control over its own funds.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because they do very interesting exhibitions, the collection has grown a lot.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, but it would flourish far more if it weren't so hedged, by the greater, how shall I say? The budgetary preponderance of the school makes the museum operation look very small, and trustees would have to look at the thing that way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see.

PERRY RATHBONE: You see? And I know it's a constant irritation to the director there, not to have greater freedom and to have—the museum not to have more recognition amongst the trustees and so on. And this hasn't really come about in the way I believe it should, and I know—you know, in the troubled '60s, when students everywhere became rather unpopular with the more conservative, and certainly moneyed segment of any community, there were potential givers to the school who would refuse, because the students behaved in such [inaudible].

PAUL CUMMINGS: They won't appreciate it, why should I support them?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, and that they were in the middle of the city with their dirty selves and disheveled hair, their tattered clothes, and sit around Bedford [ph] Street and you know, detract from the landscape.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: I'm not going to support that. This was, this attitude of course developed, and to the detriment of the museum. I think that I was there to—well, also, the other reason, quite obvious reason was, the Boston Museum has a school of its own, as you know, and like all schools has its very serious problems. We had solved some of them and my experience in helping to solve those problems, I think had some benefit. So I was a trustee until just last year.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were there any conflicts that arose with your involvement with these other organizations or not necessarily?

PERRY RATHBONE: No. No, not really, no. No, not at all. I know that since I left the museum more than a year or so ago, under Rueppel, under Merrill Rueppel, the Camerata was developed into a marvelous series of concerts at the museum. A lack of communication developed and a lack of sympathy arose, and they just pulled out.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Which I think is a great pity, because those concerts grew into very successful and popular, a popular part of the Boston Museum program, and it made the best possible use of that wonderful connection.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right. What about the American Federation of Arts, which it seems everybody eventually is a trustee of. [They laugh.]

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, yes it does, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was that again one of those things where it was mainly ideas and information?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, I think so, and also, I think like everything, an organization like that, they are looking for names that have a certain significance and prestige, and the director of the Boston Museum was bound to have that. It gives a kind of, you know, solidity and reference for the federation that was helpful, and we had so often booked federation shows and recognized the great service the federation rendered. And I suppose they thought that if we thought that much of the federation, perhaps the ideas I might offer would be useful, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What about the Museum Association, because you were president of that for—

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, the art museum directors.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, the museum directors.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, the Museum Directors Association. Oh well that was certainly the most valuable organization that I've belonged to, from our point of view, a selfish point of view.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, in so many ways, it's almost impossible to enumerate, Paul, because there, in those, what were allegedly annual, now are biannual, now are twice annual, meetings, every aspect of the museum conduct was threshed out. And very much of the museum administration, the general guidance of the museums of this country, is a direct result of those conferences over the years. Policies about all kinds of boring things like insurance, you know, but essential things like employment practices and holidays, vacations and sick leave.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The nitty-gritty of daily operations.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, all that kind of thing. And it just became terribly important. And then there were the problems of loan exhibitions and the duration of shows, problems with packing and insurance, and so on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How was it as a device, to know other directors?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, marvelous, absolutely the best. And it's like anything else in life, the personal factor is so important. If you know to whom you're addressing a letter or talking on the telephone, if you know that person first hand, it makes a vast difference, instead of just reading his letters and telegrams.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's more efficient.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, and you understand the person you're dealing with and you can always anticipate his reactions. This is where you also pick up possible partners and join them in takings, exhibitions or seminars or whatever. And in more recent years, as our bureaucratic government has reached out and controls us more and more, the museums have had to be ready to deal with those changes, and that readiness very often comes as a result of those conferences. And then the vexed problem of taxes and tax deductions, have been tackled by the association. In fact, the second time I was president, it was—I may have told you this already, was when the crisis of the income tax—what's it called, oh gosh—income tax reform bill, was under discussion in Congress, and I, as the president, had to be spokesman for the Association before the Senate Finance Committee, to defend our belief in the privilege of deducting the appreciated value of gifts.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Not their purchase value but their cost value. And that prevailed and remained unchanged. Of course, but it required the gathering of forces and required special meetings amongst committees of the Association, in which we determined what our course would be and what our arguments would be, and it required my going there to be the spokesman, and finding the kind of congressional support we needed. And uh, but it couldn't have been accomplished without that Association and without that Association to take up the cudgels and protect our interests that this tax provision could very well have done.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How were the Senators, I mean was it a difficult committee?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, it was—Senator Long was the chairman and he was well versed in these matters, and you may remember that this chap got into trouble with the belly dancer, a problem with a belly dancer from Arkansas.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: He was the leader of the income tax reform and I didn't have to come up against him, he wasn't on the committee, the Senate committee, because he's a representative? I think so. But it was very important to find a sympathetic politician, so I turned to Leverett Saltonstall, whom I knew personally, and was a longtime Republican, as you know, and asked him if he would recommend someone to me, since I was going to

Washington on this mission.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And he said, "Well, since I retired from the Senate, I promised I would not write any letters of recommendation to anybody in my name, I'm afraid I can't. I'm afraid I can't reverse that policy, but I can give you one important bit of advice, and that is, if you look up my old friend, Wallace Bennett, who is the senator from Utah, and he and I are very close friends and our wives were even closer friends perhaps, in all my Washington years, and I think he would turn an ear to your problem." So, I was very happy and I lost no time when I got to Washington, and we made an appointment, and I found that I really hit the bull's-eye with Wallace Bennett. One thing I'll never forget is the fact that while I called on numerous captains of industry in my fundraising and for other reasons for the museum, and I found some of the portfolio and two telephones and nothing else. You know, my desk always looked like a cyclone as it was. Wallace Bennett's desk had nothing on it whatever, nothing, not even a telephone, and that was new to me. I was quite impressed by that sight and I thought well, this man has nothing to distract him while I have to tell him my story. [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. And I told him exactly what was on my mind and he said that he was of course a Mormon, coming from Utah, and he said, "Well now, does your interest extend to historical societies as well as to museums?" And I said, "Yes, those really are museums too, and they often are dealing with works of art."

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, sure. Furniture, decorative arts, all kinds of things.

PERRY RATHBONE: All kinds of things. And he said, "Yes, I would like to point out a little problem that has faced us in Salt Lake City. Someone—we had preserved Brigham Young's house there," he went on to say, "And someone wanted to give that museum Brigham Young's stovepipe hat, now how much would that be worth?" You see? And I said, "Well, I don't know what it's worth, but I know it's worth more than a stovepipe hat that had no personal association." And I said, "Such a thing could come from a person of no means, as well as someone of big means, which is where art usually comes from, and that person should have the same privilege or tax deductions." He said, "Yes, precisely, I feel that very strongly," but he said, "I'll tell you, Rathbone, I would be grateful to have, in my pocket, the two most important questions that I can ask you when the committee meets, so that those matters will come clearly into the open and they will show concern on the part of the committee. So if you will give me those questions, you can count on the fact that I shall have them in my pocket when we meet," and I gave him the questions and he had them in his pocket and he asked those questions and really, I think it was thanks to Wallace Bennett.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What were the questions? I mean after all that.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. One of them was very important. He said, "Should works of art no longer be entitled to be given at their appreciated current value, but at the price bought? What would happen? What would happen to them?" I said, "Well, I'm afraid I can answer that very simply by saying that increasingly, the art market is a two-way street, and for a long, long time, it was a question of westward flow, from Europe to America. But since the war, that has very considerably changed and we find that in the reconstruction of Germany, there are very avid buyers of works of art. Just for example, the London market has become the hottest exchange for works of art and that's not the way it used to be at all." And I said, "Owners of works of art that have been so appreciated would have no choice. They couldn't afford to give them as they do now, if the value of the dollar has changed for one thing but nothing else, but the value of the art has changed. They would simply put them into the market and the chances are, they'd go right back to Europe where they came from."

PAUL CUMMINGS: And you never see them again.

PERRY RATHBONE: Hmm?

PAUL CUMMINGS: You may never see them again.

PERRY RATHBONE: You'll never see them again. I said, "That is not to the advantage of the cultural life of the United States. That's the way I see it from a director's point of view." And then Long, he asked me a few questions on that, along those lines. Well it certainly—

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was the other, the other one?

PERRY RATHBONE: I'm trying to think what the other question was. I really can't think now, what it was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was it a tough committee though, from your point of view?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well yes it was, yes it was. There were those there who were determined to see these—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Stop the rich from getting richer.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, that's right, and they wanted to deny the rich the privileges they enjoyed. But the thing that really disturbed me most in that whole investigation was visiting, along with a couple other of my directors and fellow directors of the Association, visiting the staff, the staffers who back up our legislative activity. And there I found very genuine hostility toward this privilege of deducting the appreciated value. Of course it had been abused, we all know that, and terribly abused, but I thought we're really dealing here with people whom we haven't elected, they are simply employed.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, they're the civil servants who come and stay forever, while everybody else comes and goes.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, and they have their own ideas which affects the ideas of their employers very often, and I thought that rather alarming. I didn't like that at all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, they often say in Washington, if you legislate and the civil servants don't like it, forget it.

PERRY RATHBONE: You've heard that before.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes, all the time.

PERRY RATHBONE: There you are, there you are. I remember meeting a chap called Arnold, in the House Senate Office Building—let's go off a second. [Audio break.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What about ICOM, because you were involved with that. International—

PERRY RATHBONE: —Council of Museums?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Council of Museums, right. Was that useful or was that sort of too removed?

PERRY RATHBONE: I must say, Paul, I didn't find it—I didn't find it terribly constructive. I think in its intention, it was very, very good, but the meetings that we had with ICOM, that is the other members of the United States committee, were usually procedural. And so if I was discussing problems of an international nature that came to the museum, this was usually left to whoever was chosen to delegate to me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, at the big annual meeting.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, at the annual meeting held in Europe, usually held in Europe. And I thought that what we were doing was constructive to that end, but it wasn't, to me, a very interesting activity.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where does the Legion of Honor come in all of this, what was that?

PERRY RATHBONE: That came in 1966, during I might point out, the de Gaulle period, you know, when de Gaulle came to power, he decided there were far too many awards were being made in the Legion of Honor, and they addressed it. So I was quite pleased when it happened to me. Well, it had—I think it was primarily due to my activity in well, really proposing the *Courbet Exhibition*, which we did jointly with the Philadelphia Museum, and those turned out to be a great success. And other aspects of museum programming, you are often dealing with the French, and promoting French culture and understanding of French art, and it was recognition of that, that led to it. I know I was told by one of the French counselors, is through the council that these things are recorded, that one of the things he had hoped to do before he retired, was to see that I was awarded the Légion d'honneur.

PAUL CUMMINGS: This was the Boston council.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, the Boston. And this must have been about 1964, and I said, "Well that's very kind of you, but I had no idea you had this in mind." "Oh yes," he said, "Very much so, and I hope that my successor will see that it happens." And it was Jacques Massonnet [ph], was his successor, who did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were they useful to you, the council officials, in doing things internationally?

PERRY RATHBONE: Very, very. The last time I made an effort through the council was when the Mona Lisa came to the Metropolitan and the National Gallery, and I thought well, if it can get that far, it ought to come to Boston, which you know, with its culture and tradition and its masses of students. I mustered all my arguments and took it up with the council and he carried it as far as he could, what's his name?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Malraux.

PERRY RATHBONE: Malraux was so criticized, anyway, for lending it to two museums.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But three would have been beyond.

PERRY RATHBONE: I think he probably would have been assassinated or something. Anyway, no, the French council and the English council, the British Council, were always very, very helpful, and they were especially distinguished men who came to Boston. It was considered a priority assignment. We always had very happy relations with both of those.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How have you found having the red ribbon in Europe? Do you get reactions there, or here?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, yeah, everywhere, everywhere. What surprises me is the number of people who ask me what it is. They don't know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Maybe that's because they're rare, I like to think, but I don't know actually. Americans were quite a lot decorated during the war.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, but not so much since.

PERRY RATHBONE: No, not so much since, not as in the South Pacific, where it has nothing to do with art. I think the committee should really be [inaudible].

[END OF TRACK.]

### **August 31, 1976**

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's side 18. It's the 31st of August, 1976, Paul Cummings talking to Perry Rathbone. Still, a few general questions, and one I think has to do with the acquisitions, of which there were many, and in great diversity.

PERRY RATHBONE: Right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you now, at this point—

PERRY RATHBONE: You know that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, right. Would be your favorite kind of pieces, in terms of things you got in Boston. Would it be what was in the exhibition *The Rathbone Years* or are there other things, or some of those special favorites or accomplishments?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, yes, *The Rathbone Years* represents pretty much my own tastes and enthusiasms. I suppose an inevitable interest of mine has been American art, and I was very pleased to be able to enrich the Boston collections in that direction whenever we could, and *The Rathbone Years* shows, quite a number of, I think wonderful, American acquisitions. Um, of course the modern pictures also excited me very much, because it was an interest of mine from early years and there again, the Boston Museum was sadly neglected in that direction, and I took special pleasure in filling in these obvious gaps. And it also attracted a new audience. A lot of younger people became interested in the museum because they inevitably are the ones who take the greatest interest in contemporary art. So I think acquisitions like—[inaudible]—for example, which was a masterpiece by this artist.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And early on, I mean you got that fairly—

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh quite early, yes, I think about '57, or something like that. And acquiring Boston's first Picasso.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. It gave me deep satisfaction, and in fact we acquired two Picassos while I was there, two paintings, and some drawings and prints. There were some prints there already but that was all. I also enjoyed making acquisitions that were—that had some specific relationship to Boston. For example, a portrait of the Gibbs boy was painted in Boston in 1670.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes, right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: That was a deep satisfaction, because it's the kind of rarity that one expects to find at the Boston Museum, and should find, you know? And then a beautiful work by Fitz Hugh Lane, of Boston Harbor at Twilight, another example. Samuel Sewall's portrait by Smibert, heaven knows there are 15 Smiberts or something in the collection, but most of them are of people of not any great significance, but Samuel Sewall, Judge Sewall—he was famous for his diary and other things—was special. And this extended also to the field of decorative arts, like the great secretary, which was one of the finest pieces of Boston furniture the museum possesses. On occasion, some very rare, wonderful pieces of Boston silver would become available. I speak with great warmth about that acquisition and persuading the trustees, that this is what they should do. It was that kind of thing, I suppose Paul, that gave me the, the deepest satisfaction. Well, I happen to have a great love for classical art too, so having the excellent curator that I had during my years there, Cornelius Vermeule, we made some brilliant acquisitions, especially Greek vases. Um, I also was going to say, because it's such an easy, easy answer to give you, was acquiring the *Forsyth Wickes Collection*. Did we talk about that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: A little bit.

PERRY RATHBONE: A little bit.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, that was a kind of bonanza, a sort of museum director's dream, and I was perfectly conscious of Forsyth Wickes and very awed by the name, because occasionally, I'd see something in an exhibition led by Forsyth Wickes, on the French 18th century, and it was always of the highest quality. And I had no connection with him at all. He was a New Yorker and he was a Yale man, and our paths had never crossed, but there was something about—he himself somehow reflected the works of art he owned.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But he, he lived where again?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, he lived in New York most of his life. He came from Newburgh, New York and lived there most of his life. He lived in France a long time, but in his last years, he retired to Newport.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's right.

PERRY RATHBONE: He lived there. I had no connections with Newport, but an older friend of ours in Boston, remember Ms. Codman? Did I tell you about her, Mrs. Charles Codman? She came from New York. She was a New York girlfriend of Forsyth Wickes, when they were both young and [inaudible] clients. And she thought I should meet him, and she was quite right. She took a great interest in my program at the museum and liked to see it flourish and liked to see it succeed, and she thought, well here is Forsyth Wickes, with his wonderful collection, sitting down there in Newport. She said, "I will—I know him so well and Marian, his wife, and I know they would love to have you come down some time, so let's pick a day and we'll go." Meantime, she had a dinner party and sat—seated me next to Forsyth Wickes' daughter, who lived in Boston, on the north shore, and so we started talking about the mutual subject of her father, very, very easily, and she had taken a liking to me and told me more about her father and how to go there on my own if I wanted to, extended her invitation. But in the meantime, Mrs. Codman had arranged for us to go down there for lunch. So off we went, my wife and I and Theodore Codman, and I was perfectly enchanted with the house, the first glimpse of that house. It was most inviting.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He didn't have all those huge cottages did he?

PERRY RATHBONE: No, it wasn't such a big house, it was a house of the 1840s, reasonable size, a stone house, the first floor of which he had completely remade, to make it appropriate to French 18th century, and not American Victorian.

PAUL CUMMINGS: My heavens.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Having taken out window moldings and doors. But it had been very well done by a New York designer and he had furnished it with the utmost taste. And of course, it took a long time just to begin to see the wonderful drawings and excellent furniture and superb porcelains in the rooms on the first floor, and then up the stairs and into the rooms.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was this the family collection or his collection, that he assembled?

PERRY RATHBONE: It was his own, really his own personal collection, of which his wife took only a passing interest, and his collection was in his own house, and Mrs. Wickes lived next door.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really?



PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes, she lived next door, in her—in the house she had inherited from her father. She was also a New Yorker, whose maiden name was Haven, and the Havens have a house, built in the '80s I suppose, and that's where she spent the summers, and he was just across the lawn in his house. And she came to lunch in his house wearing a hat, I remember, some fancy matching hat, and she was totally filled with doubt, I could tell from the beginning, so would be rather inclined to disagree, rather than agree, and a highly critical person. A lot of character, but a little bit too prickly for my personal taste. But he was just the salt of the earth and kind and gentle, and deeply involved with what he'd collected, and really in love with it. The sad thing was that he was almost blind by the time I met him. He could see vaguely but not sharply, and as soon as I saw the house and the collection, of course my inquisitive sense took possession of me. You know the way museum directors behave. And I said, uh, as we were leaving, after lunch, or late in the afternoon, he said, "I do hope that you will come back and have enough time here really to see the collection, Mr. Rathbone." I said, "Well, nothing would please me more. I would welcome the opportunity and whenever is convenient for you." He said, "Any time at all, I'm here all the time, any time." I thought that was quite an invitation, and so I lost no time to return, about two weeks later, and spent most of the day with him. And then he said—I said to him, pursuing my director's weakness further, I said, "You know, Mr. Wickes, I can't help but look at your collection without thinking what a wonderful edition it would make to the Boston Museum." [Audio break.]

I said [inaudible], "And I can tell you, it would be most appropriate because the museum is really very weak in this great period, and it would complement what was there." And he said, well, he said, "You know, you've taken a great load off my mind. I would very much like to do that." I couldn't believe my ears, you know, it doesn't happen that easily, you know? We're usually waiting—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Several years later.

PERRY RATHBONE: Several years later, exactly. Well, I said, "That's thrilling news, do you really mean that?" "Oh, yes of course I mean that," and he said, "And I should like you to come back as soon as you can and we'll discuss it further. I have some ideas that I'd like to express to you and I would enjoy your coming back." Well, I said, "I will."

PAUL CUMMINGS: I will.

PERRY RATHBONE: I will. This was about May. We went first in April, May. I said, "I'll come again before I go abroad," and I did, in June, and spent the weekend there. He proved to be more delightful every time I saw him. He loved talking about his experiences and wonderful collector stories, et cetera. And so he said he had formed ideas about how the things he possessed should be seen. They should be seen in relationship to one another, more or less as they would have been used in actual life in the 18th century, not categorized as over here and there, and the paintings and pastels there and the drawings. And he had such a good sense of mingling things in an artistic and meaningful way. He said, "I should like to see the collection installed in your museum along these lines, do you think that would be possible?" I said, "Of course, anything is possible and I'll be glad to work out those details with you." He said, "That will give me great pleasure. I can't [inaudible] any more life, I can't drink anything and I'm on a very strict diet." And I had lunch there and had the richest food myself, and he eats something out of a bowl, some porridge or other.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh dear.

PERRY RATHBONE: And so he said, "Furthermore, I would like your trustees to see this collection and to get their reaction to it, so that I'm sure that—"

PAUL CUMMINGS: Quite practical.

PERRY RATHBONE: Very practical, that they know what they would be getting, and "Do you think you can arrange that?" He said, "I'm going to be going to France, you know, before the end of June, but I would like them to come as soon as possible." So I said, "All right, I'll be glad to arrange that" and did invite the so-called Committee on the Museum. In his absence, he kept his staff there and I think we were about 15, including my wife, Rettles, and Mrs. Lowell, and I think there were one or two lady trustees. So it was a mixed party but mostly men. We had a delightful lunch in his house and he arranged for delicious things, and they all decided it was worthy of the Boston Museum and so on. And things went along beautifully. I went down again in the autumn and spent another weekend, and then, towards Christmastime, he was taken ill and went to the hospital and never recovered. So then about six months of my having met him, he died. Meantime, I had asked him about—he said, "You know, I have had many museum people interested in my collection." I said, "Well, I'm not at all surprised." Oh yes, he said, "James J. Rorimer, he's been here repeatedly, he'd like it for the Metropolitan. And then my old friend Charles Cunningham, in Hartford, he would like it for Hartford, and I suppose the biggest offer I've had came from Chicago, with Bill Blair, who was at Yale with me. He would like it very much for Chicago and they even have offered to reproduce this house alongside the Art Institute." Can you imagine?

PAUL CUMMINGS: How astounding.

PERRY RATHBONE: Astounding, yes. He said, "Complete with a rose garden." And I said, "No!" "Yes," he said, "That's what they would do," but he said, "I'll tell you something, Mr. Rathbone, I wouldn't have my collection in Chicago. I wouldn't have my fine things accessible to all of the riffraff and full of gangsters and murder, and that Lake Michigan is really filthy. No, no, that is no place for my collection." Well, I was delighted with his prejudice against Chicago, heaven knows, because the competition was pretty keen.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, I mean a rose garden on top of it.

PERRY RATHBONE: A garden on top of it. And I said, "Well, I can understand the way you feel." I said, "I would like sometime to have you come see the Boston Museum." He said, "You know, I've never been to the Boston Museum." I said, "That really is amazing, you're living only two hours away from the museum." "I know," he said, "It's true, but I've never been in it." I said, "Well, I can tell you something, Mr. Wickes, when we came down here in that delightful luncheon with you as our absent host, Ralph Lowell, our present,"—who was then about 70 years old—"had never before been in Newport." That's just as astonishing isn't it? Well, he always went to Nahant in the summer, where else? You can even, you can see Nahant from the center of Boston if I'm high enough and that's far enough for a Bostonian to go. They don't think of going to Newport, that's a place for New Yorkers. [They laugh.] Let's see. Well, that made—we had quite a few laughs out of this, as you can see, and then he said, well, you know, "The Boston Museum would suit me just fine," he said, "Because everybody I've ever known from Boston was very polite, the Bostonians are very polite people." And he said, "Tell me a little bit about your museum." He said, "You see, I'm too blind to go there today, it wouldn't mean enough, and so I'll just have to have you tell me." So I told him what I could and he said, "Let me ask you this." He said, "Does it have columns, is there any columns on the building?" I thought, well this is the older generation speaking. I said, "Well, on that point, I can assure you and reassure you, there are 22 columns on the Fenway side of the building, massive, monumental, imposing columns, ionic columns." Well, he said, "That sounds like the place for my collection." So, that was, in a nutshell, that was our experience.

And then he, as I said, didn't recover and died, but he had not—he told me that he had left the things in his will if he should die suddenly, he had left it up to his wife and one of his daughters and one of his daughters' husbands, to act as a kind of committee to see to the disposal of his collection as he would wish it to be done. And so, we relied, we had to rely on this family committee, because his will had not been changed. And so it was from that point onward that we worked with Mrs. Wickes and Mrs. Brewer, Ann Brewer, and Bill Brewer, her husband, and they were very particular. They wanted to be sure that we were going to set up the collection in the Boston Museum the way Wickes would have wanted it, and it was really tough going because I couldn't readily find a person capable of making imaginative perspectives of interiors, the way we had set things up, more or less following the pattern of the house, taking over some of the ideas of the woodwork in the house, the floors, incorporating some of it. He had two very nice parquets that we moved to the museum at this time. But he did, in his will, he did leave the house to the museum, the house and the property, to be sold for the benefit of the Boston Museum. He didn't leave any money, but he said he was quite sure that his family, from time to time, would like to enrich the collection with gifts.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where did his money come from?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, that's a good question. He came, as I say, from Newberry, he was an old family, from Newberry, New York, on the Hudson. He went to Yale, and practiced law in New York and early in his practice, his firm became the general counsel for Shell Oil, and because he had gone to school in France as a boy and knew French, he was an obvious person to represent this firm in Europe, and especially in Paris. And he became, by virtue of this exposure as a boy, to French culture, he became a total Francophile and was delighted to live in France, and when he acquired a house in Paris, he knew he was going to live there for some years with his wife and his growing children, he decided he had to furnish it and it occurred to him, or some friend of his—I think some museum people in France—encouraged him to furnish it with French antique this and that. That's how he started, buying this table, that desk, and that's what got him—from that interest, his taste expanded. He obviously was born with a good eye. And I think he told me that his mother had been rather a tutor, so far as teaching what he was interested in, horses and things like that. So as his wealth grew from his legal activities, he spent it on works of art, and he would like to show us. He made many friends amongst the French museum people, became the commandant of the—[inaudible]. He uh, was a trustee of the—[inaudible]—Museum, an officer of the—[inaudible].

PAUL CUMMINGS: So he really was very involved with his French life.

PERRY RATHBONE: Deeply, deeply, and here he became the president of the board of trustees in the Visay [ph] here in New York and the Institute of France. He was involved in all that, and really lived the life of a dedicated Francophile collector. And then he acquired a lovely property in Normandy, overlooking the Seine, a place called Guyol [ph], a village called Guyol [ph]. It's a 16th-century French house, which he also filled with other things that he fancied. And I went there, yes, that summer when we were both abroad, I went there, drove out there with John Goulet, for lunch I remember. John was always a little bit late doing everything, and I, we were about

an hour overdue. I don't think I'd driven so fast ever in my life, as John drove, on those roads, dear God, 90 miles an hour, so that we wouldn't put Mrs. Wickes in a bad humor.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, dear.

PERRY RATHBONE: She didn't like being kept waiting for anything. It was an experience. But then came, as I say, the problem with satisfying the family.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And we finally did. I remember going down to Newport with this portfolio of renderings that were done by a New York chap, and they liked the idea very much indeed, and then came the transfer of the objects up to Boston, and then the rebuilding. We had to add a wing to the museum. We had to fill in a wing that was left unfinished in 1928. The museum had not been expanded at all since that date, so this was the first expansion, and the trustees had to agree to create this space for this collection.

PAUL CUMMINGS: My heavens, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: And with the knowledge that \$80,000, which is what the house was sold for, about \$80,000, that would come to the museum for—to help with installation. It was used that way. Then, Mrs. Wickes was getting older and more and more difficult to please as time went by, and when the rooms were entirely ready and before we opened it, I asked her to come and see. She was then in a wheelchair and Mrs. Brewer and I, we went through all the rooms and she looked at everything with a very sharp eye and didn't say a word, and as we left the Wickes rooms, I said to Mrs. Wickes, "I'd love to have your comment," and she turned to me and she said, "One hundred percent." [They laughs] And I must say, coming from her, that was a very high compliment. I love the way she expressed it, "One hundred percent," she said, and I really felt very pleased after that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: A woman of few words.

PERRY RATHBONE: A woman of few words, but what she said she meant.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, wow.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That must have been a rather exhausting little tour.

PERRY RATHBONE: It was, it made me very nervous. Anyway, that's the story, and then we opened it with great aplomb and I thought the museum deserved the attention of a lot of people, discerning people who knew about the French 18th century. So we had a very special dinner party and we had some rather special guests, people like Paul Mellon and Charles and Jane—[inaudible]—and Francis Watson, who came for us and gave the after dinner speech, and the Duke and Duchess of Bedford, and Paul and Muriel—[inaudible]—from London, and the—Herve Alphand, the French Ambassador. Yes, it was that kind of—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Very grand.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, it was very. It was the grandest party the museum has ever known.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did Boston appreciate, approve?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, and we were very, very selective about who we invited. Of course, it was full of trustees and then some special guests from Boston who had particular reason to be there, because they were collectors or patrons of the museum, or something. Oh, I remember old Harry Dupont came, I think probably the last party he ever attended. He came all the way up from Wilmington, and it was—the museum needed this kind of promotion and this kind of attention, you know, because that kind of thing generates further interest.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How would those people be attracted, I mean because you knew them, because they liked the idea or the project, or it was a very special situation?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, Paul, most everybody knew who Forsyth Wickes was, in this particular group, they all knew him. He was sort of a household word. Some of them had known him personally, but all of them knew he was a distinguished collector and was a Francophile, and so it was on the basis of that, that we built the guest list. Yeah. And it really was a great success and we—adjacent to the Wickes suite of rooms was also a new space, which we were devoting to the collection, the name was *Silver*, in the Boston Museum, with new cases and so on. And it was in that room that our fancy dinner was served, and then we went from the dinner, right into the Wickes galleries.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, terrific.

PERRY RATHBONE: So it was, yeah that was, that was very fun, and of course we got the kind of publicity out of it that we needed, and it was an immense enrichment for the museum in dollars, in the collection. At that time, it was somewhere between four and six million dollars, and you know, the Museum of Fine Arts doesn't have that kind of money to spend. We never could have had a collection of that sort, never.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And now it would be worth even more.

PERRY RATHBONE: Now it would be worth even more, and I knew the beautiful Watteau drawing, for example. It was this wonderful desk, this one from Wickes. This is a wonderful—[inaudible]—and the superb Watteau.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The Watteau, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Marvelous. That's all we put in here, because it was—well, you know this is Wickes too, the beautiful Myson [ph] pieces. But that was—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —a lot.

PERRY RATHBONE: That was a lot, a lot. That was a great deal, the kind of thing that a museum director dreams about, you know, and often slips through one's fingers, or has some unfortunate turning. And the Boston Museum really had never cultivated people the way other museums have, to agree to give them a gift.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why was that?

PERRY RATHBONE: I don't know, a kind of indifference or something.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They just thought they were Boston, therefore, they should have it.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, and I think the directors—you see, I was in a sense, the first modern director the museum had had, and who had this kind of ambition, who was very keen of the competition amongst American museums. I was always looking with envy at the Metropolitan Museum and what they did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Scooping things up.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, and I envied the Cleveland Museum and the money they had to spend, the National Gallery, snatching up works of art, you know the way it was. So it really was a kind of milestone in the museum's development.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, one of the other things that I wanted to touch upon a bit here is throughout this whole tape, is an enormous picture of a social life which seems to go on at least 36 hours a day on your part. How did you do all of this, you know in terms of being there and going to Europe and running to New York, and hither and yon, and you know, one thinks you ought to have a staff of 12 people. [Laughs.]

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, that's a good question, I've often been asked that question, Paul, and I don't know the answer, except I do have a lot of energy. I don't tire easily and I think also, if you're really inspired with what you're doing and you have people around you who also sort of feed and nourish that inspiration with what they do themselves, as an extension of your own program, you find that your motor runs quite easily. And as I say, I think the competition that one felt in this country, at least I felt in this country, spurred me to these ends, and then I also, I like people very much and it wasn't any strain for me to meet a lot of people and be cordial and share their enthusiasm and that sort of thing. And then I had a wife too, who made it possible, because Rattles was simply marvelous about entertaining people, having them at home, having dinner parties before museum openings, in which she would do virtually all the cooking. And then the staff would arrive to serve and so on, but she did 90 percent of the cooking, saved the museum endless sums of money. I remember the first time we entertained a crowd at home, we got a caterer to come.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, you've talked about that.

PERRY RATHBONE: I don't know [inaudible] this is really too much, the museum simply can't come up with that expense.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you know what? The thing I suppose that's the following question is what's the sense of accomplishment or reward that you get when, for example, something like the *Wickes Collection* is accepted, installed, opened?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I'll tell you, in a way, Paul, I think when you've been associated with the museum for quite a long time, you get the feeling that it's almost an extension of your own house and household, and the

acquisitions you make for the museum seem to be almost as good as being your own, but you don't have to worry about maintaining them or keeping them secure. And I think it's this satisfaction, because the works of art, whether they're owned publicly by the museum or privately by a collection, are an extension of one's own personality. Don't you feel that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, absolutely.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And I think that this is the satisfaction you feel. Well, if you want to know about what I've been doing, all you have to do is look at the museum and it isn't everybody who has that kind of gratification in life, to have what you have accomplished so evident, so visible. That, plus just having those things near at hand. I was in the museum yesterday and I must say, that's one of the things I really miss, is not being in the museum every day.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean the building itself, and seeing it and looking.

PERRY RATHBONE: Seeing works of art as you pass through it, you know. You know, they arrest your eye and they do something to you that nothing else does, and to be in a building that big, that full with wonderful things is a great stimulation. I think that's my answer to that question.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I guess then the other side of it is, are there things that you went after for the museum that got away?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: There must have been.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, oh my God.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Lots of fish in the ocean, as they say.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yeah, and the thing is, you never forget those things that got away, you just don't, and if it is that you were outbid, or some trustee threw a roadblock. Things even for St. Louis, for example, the best Modigliani in this country, I sent a bid from St. Louis for, you know the reclining nude, in the Museum of Modern Art.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, that. That got away. We bid \$8,000, that sounds absurd today. I got my trustees to say \$8,000, now don't forget, she's perfectly nude and there are no nudes like that in the St. Louis Museum any more than there were in Boston, and they said, "Well, that's quite all right, we'll follow your recommendation and bid \$8,000." It went to the Museum of Modern Art for \$12,000. Then I remember the other thing that we almost bought is that great Matisse of Pierre Matisse at the piano.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes, yes.

PERRY RATHBONE: You know that marvelous painting of 1914 that what's his name had, Valentine Dudensing. Yeah. Was it 1914, what is the date? I know it was—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's that early; it's early.

PERRY RATHBONE: A little earlier. It was \$14,000, that's what it was. I'll never forget that. Oh, there are plenty of things that got away, yeah, yeah. I became an ace of recommending, often did, and there wasn't any money, it was so often the case.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was it difficult to raise actual money when you wanted to buy things in Boston?

PERRY RATHBONE: In Boston?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, yes it was. I'll tell you why. Because the museum had never had a campaign; they never had raised any money at all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It just flowed in whenever and whatever happened, happened.

PERRY RATHBONE: It just came like manna from heaven. It just fell into the trustees' laps, and I can't tell you how indifferent they seemed to be, what to me was absolutely amazing if a bequest came, you know of

\$200,000 or something like that, left by Ms. Mary Jane Woodend [ph] or something.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And they said that's fine, put it in the books and then, next.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. Yeah, next. Just for example, during my years there—and really not in name until towards the end, I was the curator of paintings, after Constable retired—and during those years, a Mrs. Russell Baker would come and see me, and she was a very interesting, very spry, typical old, Boston old lady, white hair, very bright and very outspoken. And she said you know, I'm so mad at those hospitals up there. They want to put those two hospitals together and I don't approve of that. I wanted to leave my money to that Children's Hospital and now they're going to tie it up with that bigger memorial one and I don't approve of that. She said I'm going to just—if they go on with this plan, I'm just going to pull that out of my will and I'm going to turn it over to the museum. I said, "Well, Mrs. Baker, that's music to my ears, that sounds wonderful, but I hope you don't die." Oh, she said, "No I like to come here, I'll stay around a long time," and like that. She said, "Well, how do you think we should spend it?" And I said, "Well I think what we wanted to do is what colleges have done for a long time and so have museums in recent times, namely to endow a curatorship and have it named for you or your husband," or whatever. Well, she said, "Now that's, that's an idea." I said, "Why don't you go and talk to Mr. James Griswold," who was our development officer, a position he created when we commenced our campaign at the centennial. And he will tell you what it would cost, and he has all the figures. And you know she did that. Then, after I had retired from the museum, about a year or a year and a half ago, Griswold, who had also just retired, wrote to me and said, "Mrs. Baker, as you probably know has died." I knew she had died. "But you will be happy to know that she left the museum \$750,000, to endow a curatorship for painting." Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Hmm. So it takes time and everything else, ideas.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, but that's very kind. And then this man Bailey, the money we had to buy the Raphael with, came from a man who had died in 1923, Vermont. His name was Charles Bailey. Nobody in Boston knew anything about Mr. Bailey, nothing, but they knew that this Bailey Fund, the museum had been notified way back in the '20s that one day, after a couple of legatees had been paid off, after the legatees had died, they were—

PAUL CUMMINGS: They got the income.

PERRY RATHBONE: They got a minor income until they were to die. Then, this—all this money had come to the museum, for the Painting Department. Well, of course you know, this made me crazy, not knowing who they were, not being able to send anybody to shoot them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Or do anything, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: You know? Or poison them, anything. [They laugh.] I just knew they lived out there somewhere, you know, and we needed money so badly. I kept telling the trustees, you know the Chrysler payment [ph] is going up so fast, that by the time the Bailey Fund comes to us, they—it won't amount to anything. We really must act right now and we must do everything we can to get that money.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you know how much it was?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I had heard there were several million, and what had happened was, he had left his money to accumulate at interest, or to be invested and so on, until these two should die. Well, well this was needling for me, Jack Gardner, our treasure, trustee treasurer, did go up to Vermont, and he looked up these legatees and paid them off, and said, "Look here, your life expectancy is less than some of the actuaries, let's figure this out. Well you take, whatever it was, I don't know how much, \$10,000, and the other one \$10,000, and we'll also pay off the cemetery, which is another legatee, and release this money. We'll of course, set this instrument aside." And because the legatees agreed to this proposal, the courts in Vermont were very jealous of money going to Massachusetts.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Sure, and so much.

PERRY RATHBONE: So much. And I'd heard that this had happened in Massachusetts cases, Harvard often found themselves up against this kind of financial puzzle.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —setup.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, and had managed within the state of Massachusetts, but this idea of Vermont letting go, but they did and so here came the Bailey Fund. I think it amounted to \$6 million, \$6 million.

PAUL CUMMINGS: My heavens.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. So all of a sudden there was money. And then, on top of that, as I said, it was Russell

Baker and then of course people like Karolik, you can expect something from him, but there was a Mrs. Zoe Oliver Sherman, who had left some pictures to the museum, years before, very nice, rather choice pictures, early Italian paintings. Nobody knew anything about the Sherman Fund. I used to hear—[inaudible]—at meetings, say, "Well someday, a couple of little debutantes are going to disappear, and then we'll be in for some money," but I never knew what he was talking about. His bank apparently knew something. But anyway, after I left the museum, suddenly this Zoe Oliver Sherman Fund material—that is another \$3 million or something, for the Painting Department.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you like being your own curator of paintings for that time?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well of course I loved that, I loved that more than anything. The only thing I resented was I didn't have time to research and write about everything, but so far as building the collection and seeking works of art that we could afford to buy and filling in gaps and so on, I loved that. I think, I really think that a museum director's greatest satisfaction is in making acquisitions, I really do and it certainly was mine. But we had to work awfully hard, because this money that I've been talking about just now, didn't exist, it simply didn't exist.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Whatever finally happened with the Raphael and all of that, because I never did—

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, that's a long story.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —find out ever.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, sadly, that little painting, that little eight by 10 painting, last seen, was kicking around the Restauero, the Instituto Restauero in Rome, where Siviero had deposited it, you know, where it is not doing anyone any good and was being rather carelessly handled. That was the report that came to me from Dr. Stephens [ph] in Boston, whose friend was in the Restauero room and saw it there, and after all that fuss, you know, by the Italians, who no more needed that picture than they needed another Canaletto or something—there it is, doing nobody any good. Whereas in this country, it's a little emblem of the Italian Renaissance that would mean a great deal to countless thousands of people over the years. Not neglecting the Italo-Americans who will take a special pride in the emblems of their culture in this country, and why shouldn't they have a few? After all, isn't this country really an extension of Europe?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. In many ways.

PERRY RATHBONE: In many ways. Museums are as full of European cultural artifacts as we can stuff them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Even more than some European museums.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, not really, Europe is so significant, really it is. And here's a picture that was absolutely unknown.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How was it found again, in the, you know?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, it was—it belonged to a family in Genoa, by the name of um—what's the name? I suppose this is a Freudian blank. I'll think of it in a little bit. At any rate, it had—it was absolutely unknown and it was discovered by Hanns Swarzenski, and by him, thanks to a colleague, a German colleague in the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum in Berlin, what used to be the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, who had made wonderful acquisitions for the Berlin Museum since the war and Peter Metz, a marvelous man—[inaudible]—especially in the field of sculpture. So Metz, who was retired, said, "All right now, as a special favor to you, whom I love very much, I will tell you the name of this fellow and you go and you will find some marvelous things there," and his name was [inaudible]. So Hans went there and sure enough, there was some remarkable things. We bought several brilliant works from him, not paintings but other things, and I think this was the second visit. He showed him this little picture and told him the story of it, and it came, as far as he knew—[inaudible] was an old man, had been a picture dealer and an interior, not exactly interior decorator, but a dealer in decorative objects, splendid old fabrics and things like that, that were much used for filling out palatial rooms, you know. He had yards and yards of cut velvet and Genoese this and Venetian that, you know, and fine furniture. And so Hanns came home with a photograph of this little painting, this little Raphael, and of course I was thrilled and all the curators were, we were all enchanted. So it was really a question of negotiating with—[inaudible]—but the flaw was, nobody in Italy was ever paid off when it was taken out. You see that's the way you get anything out of it, is by paying someone.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Commissions.

PERRY RATHBONE: Commissions. And then nothing is ever said, not a word about it, and anybody who knows anything about—I don't know how many people paid off the Metropolitan—[inaudible]—vase, but you can make sure. Somebody wasn't paid enough and that's how the whole thing came out. Yeah, no one was paid off, and

then Hanns bringing it into this country, had it in his briefcase, and because the previous year, he'd brought in a marvelous 12th-century Sicilian elephant, a beautiful one, probably the finest one that exists, that he got from a German count. Ah, because it was at a certain price bracket, it then requires a so-called "long form" of declaration, and the long form requires also, that you leave the object at the customs house and have it pass through by a customs broker. It cannot be done by the carrier. Don't ask me why but it can't be. So, Hanns was required to leave this thing there and while it was in the customs house, it suffered damage, it got chipped. It was a perfectly preserved thing. So, bringing in the little Raphael, he said, "I don't want to risk that," and he simply verbally declared it, just said, "Well, I have this little picture here, it's not of any great value, you know, could I just carry it in my briefcase for safety," you know, and didn't leave it there and didn't put it on his declaration. That was the fatal flaw. If he hadn't, it would still be in the Boston Museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's incredible, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: But when the federal ah, what was his name? Cidero [ph], who was a more or less self-appointed recoverer of Italian works of art, which were taken by GIs primarily, and German soldiers and such, in the war. When he uh, how, how did—well, he heard about it because of the publicity in this country, and because it came—yes, the name of the family, I suppose we never should have mentioned, and I'm trying to think of the name right now. And he knew that that family had owned some pictures, or something like that, so he decided to find out. I think he got this picture going there, and that was through his sleuthing, that he was able to relate the fact that he knew this family had owned some pictures and this painting. And how he persuaded the Boston Customs, how he persuaded the Boston Customs, to insist that the museum surrender the picture to customs, if—no—yeah, how he persuaded customs to give it up to the museum, if the museum would turn it over to him, I don't know, I really don't know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's amazing, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: He had something on somebody in the Boston Customs, somehow, and anyhow, that was the disaster and the trustees, instead of being sort of grownups, big boys and sophisticated about it as the Metropolitan would have certainly did, who had gotten the right kind of lawyer, to make the right representations in Washington, with the Italian Ambassador or something.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Instead three trustees went to Washington; William Coolidge, Edwin Callum [ph] and Killian, who was the former chancellor at MIT, and as the receivers. There was then the Secretary of the Treasury, had said, to the man who wrote that book called *The Plundered Past*.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes.

PERRY RATHBONE: He said to them, he said that those trustees came here from Boston and they seem very eager to get rid of this little picture, I don't understand that. That's what he said.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, fantastic. And I think someday, through the proper kind of diplomatic negotiation, the picture will come back to this country, and once Siviero [ph] is out of the way, because he's an absolute fanatic. But he was brought to Boston, he was brought into Boston while I was way off in the GNC.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But who employs him?

PERRY RATHBONE: Who appoints him?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well he sort of appoints himself and gets some kind of a title, some kind of a tag, that puts him in touch with the Interpol.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh I see, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: And you know the Italian Customs are part of the Italian Police Department, did you know that? See, and that is a national police department, unlike this country, since Italy after all is utterly small, they have a national police force, whereas we have only a—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —local one.

PERRY RATHBONE: A local one. And the customs officers are part of that national police force, and he had some ins with the national police force. He'd been a police captain or something himself as a young man, that was one



of his things.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He found himself something good to do.

PERRY RATHBONE: He found himself something good to do, exactly, and he was invited to Boston while I was away. The president of the museum, George Seybolt at the time, wanted to make as big a thing of this as he could.

PAUL CUMMINGS: For what purpose do you think?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, he wanted it to reflect disadvantageously upon me, that was his motivation. For example, when he was in London, and this is an interesting point so you kind of see the sort of person he is. He was in London at the time the *London Sunday Times*, not the regular *Times*, the *Sunday Times*, which is a rather sensational paper as you know, came out with a front page story, having sent a reporter to Rome to interview Siviero [ph]. So here was a front-page story about the Boston Museum and a Raphael. He bought 35 copies of that paper and had them sent to Boston, and sent to every single trustee, to make the whole case look as sensationally bad as it possibly could.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, that's what he did. It was very, very deliberate.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And then everything fell apart after that.

PERRY RATHBONE: And of course, he knew all about the negotiations. He knew all about the negotiations and told the trustees that he didn't know anything about it. That's—this is all contained in a white paper which I, Hanns Swarzenski and I prepared for the trustees, which was read to the trustees, not in a regular session; it was after the German meeting. It was read by John Dulette [ph], who was also involved in the negotiations with Hanns Swarzenski and me, and he was enough of a man to make darn sure that all the facts were known by all the trustees. And so much to the discomfiture of President Seybolt, he read out this white paper which was deposited in the museum. But that was very interesting, and you know the customs managed to get out a subpoena and I had to go to the grand jury, with Hanns Swarzenski.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Oh yeah, that's true, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: We had to go to the grand jury, and I took the Fifth Amendment a number of times, under my counsel's instructions, and Hanns had counsel's instructions too, to do the same thing, but you know, he simply couldn't. He simply, when they put questions to him, because what they tried to do was to prove conspiracy between him and me and Dulette [ph], and they put questions to him saying, "Did Perry Rathbone tell you to bring that picture into the United States," just to be clear, this sort of thing. Instead of saying I invoke the Fifth Amendment, he said, "No, he certainly did not." You know? Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, it's very difficult, what happens to people on a stand, you know.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, it is, yes, exactly. And he did that to his own disadvantage really. And Seybolt also was served a summons, because he had outraged this man from the Boston Customs Office when he came demanding to know more about this picture, and he said, "What do you mean, demanding to know more about this picture? You come into my office and say that to one of my secretaries, she'll put down just what you're saying to me." He outraged, he outraged the Boston Customs, which is one of the reasons they became so— [crosstalk.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right. Nothing like civil servants.

PERRY RATHBONE: Nothing like civil servants, to be questioned in their duty. Well, I'll tell you, this is a long story, but it's not an uninteresting one. Um, another upshot about [inaudible] Seybolt was also served a summons. In his business, he had to be out of the country several times a year and sometimes in Europe and sometimes in Venezuela. But he, because he had a very good lawyer too, learned that he was going to be [inaudible], or he could be or something, he stayed out of the country longer than he ever had before and managed to avoid, because these things have a statute of limitations attached.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And he managed to avoid that humiliation, and to, if you want to call it, [inaudible] and he requested the business. But he was very shrewd about all that. He knew how to dodge when there was trouble [inaudible]. But let me also say that customs had gone on to—I knew nothing about this trouble with Boston. When it happened, Rudman [ph] came to the museum, because I was in Japan with Rettles. We were there on museum business, it was the Centennial Exhibition of the Boston Museum in Japan. We came home in

December, by way of Honolulu, and there in Honolulu, we were given the most unbelievable examination with customs. We were taken into a side room with a strong light, and had to open every bloody thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. And I had a great big present that was given to me by—[inaudible]—it was, you know, one of those Hina [ph] dolls of the empress, and it's in a case and everything. And the alarming thing was they demanded our passports. American Customs in Honolulu took Rettles' passport and my passport, and that hadn't happened before anywhere, except in Russia. I mean, it was—what does it mean? I said, "Is this just a spot check or something?" "Yes," he said, "That's what it is," and I said, "Well, when do I get—where's my—" he said, "You'll get your passport, you can pick it up in Boston when you get back." I never, you know, I came through customs just three weeks ago, from London, through Boston, and, when I handed him my declaration, they, these days, type your name on a telex and they watch the telex, and up came my name, and something about a Raphael painting, and up came John Dulette's [ph] name, and—[inaudible]. And the first thing I knew, I was going to be put aside again, in another special room when a customs officer, a senior customs officer, and he said, "Mr. Rathbone, I know who you are, and I think this is simply ridiculous. What's going on here doesn't make any sense at all." The idea that this is—I said, "Well, it looks to me, like harassment." "Yes," he said, "That's what it is and it doesn't make any sense." He said, "Just a minute." And then he called another senior, Mr. Flavin [ph], another customs officer. Well, he said, "Of course we know who you are and you know, Ms. Sayre of your staff just came through here about two weeks ago, and she had with her, some works of art that belonged to her, that she had acquired in Europe, and something else that belonged to the museum, and she didn't want to leave them here, and we made things all right with Ms. Sayre," you know, and he said, "This has just gone too far; let me give you the name and address of a bureau in Washington and I would advise you to write to that bureau and say that you think that this is serving no useful purpose."

PAUL CUMMINGS: So that's the next chapter.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well of course I've done that but I haven't had an answer. I've had an acknowledgement of the letter but no answer. But it's interesting how—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, it can go on for a long time.

PERRY RATHBONE: Apparently. Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's true.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, Paul, that's maybe enough, it's after three again.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, let's—

[END OF TRACK.]

## **September 9, 1976**

PAUL CUMMINGS: This is the 9th of September, 1976, and it's Paul Cummings, talking to Perry Rathbone, side 19. There were other things you wanted to say possibly about Boston and Merrill Rueppel and whatever is now going on.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes. I, yes, I—show me where we start there. We probably covered the centennial and all that that implied.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well that was Japan wasn't it?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, Japan was involved, but the whole concept of centennial, and the fund—and the fundraising, the Boston Museum's first effort at public fundraising, I don't think we touched on that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, we should say something. No we didn't, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: I think we should. It was just—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. That was public fundraising?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, well for our centennial campaign, and raising millions, who had never—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right,

PERRY RATHBONE: I think, because that's all part of the story that ends up with Rueppel and so on, about 1965,

recognizing that our centennial would be on hand by 1970, we began seriously, to lay pipe for that event. And everyone agreed, all the board of trustees agreed that the museum was in very serious need of important capital funds for expansion of the building and for improvement all along the line, and for an increased endowment to raise salaries and services and so on. The museum really was running out of this traditional source of money, and that was recognized. And the trustees of the museum were not used to raising money, certainly not for the Museum of Fine Arts. Maybe for some other activities that they were involved with, but the museum had never raised any money in a public campaign.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's really just amazing, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well it is amazing and I was able to say that it was the only great museum in the world that was entirely supported by private funds, until very late in the game. And we began to feel a need to charge admission, but before we could do that, we also had to recognize that charging admission would mean charging basically school children, which we didn't want to do. At any rate, with that kind of leverage, we were able, finally, with a certain amount of lobbying and courting the officials of state and the city, to get \$100,000 a year from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to defray the costs, or help to defray the costs, of child education at the museum, if we admitted children under 16 for nothing. So that was the beginning of any kind of public money to support the museum, and that was about 1967, I should guess. Anyway, meantime, the problem with raising millions for the museum faced us and how to go about that. Well the only way to do it of course was in a public campaign, and if you looked around, you'll find out who was doing it and how.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: But we recognized that we had to have a fundraiser, and that was my responsibility as director, to find the fundraiser, and having found the fundraiser, which is not an easy job either—

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do you do that?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, you begin asking people in your community who had experience with such people, what they thought, and then you interview those people and you make up your mind from the kind of response to your problem, that they give you, whether they would suit or not, and we went through two or three or those and found one suitable. When we finally landed on one, he was called Ketchum [ph], which I thought was a very good name for a fundraiser, [they laugh], Ketchum, and they were not bad, but they all turned out to be really, a kind of unnecessary thing. They really force you to do what you ought to do, without being forced and without paying to be forced, but that's what it amounts to. You pay someone a fortune to do a job.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: They don't really raise the money at all. All they do is set a timetable and set up an office for the receipt of funds as they come in, so that they are properly and quickly acknowledged and put in the right box and all that kind of thing, but they don't do any fundraising. When you talk about having a fundraiser, as I say, that's what a fundraiser is.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They really don't get on the phone and say, "Hey Charlie, I want to come and see you about \$200,000?"

PERRY RATHBONE: Not at all, not the ones that I happened to deal with anyway. Well, once that was agreed upon, then we had to find someone to be the chairman of the campaign. That's very important, that there should be a chairman, to whom all problems ultimately refer, and who becomes a leader of the effort and is willing to get up and be counted as the leader, and make speeches here and there, and appear at the right functions and do a certain amount of thinking about it and all the rest. Well, since my trustees were so unused to this and I, to my great disappointment, found it impossible to get any one of them to agree to be the chairman of that fund campaign, and that's rather hard to believe but it's true. I implored—there were some that were perfectly obviously candidates, Jack Gardner being the most obvious one, being the right age and the right connection and everything. No, he was too busy.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Good solid image and the whole public—yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: The whole thing. It isn't that arduous either, because you quickly enlist a lot of help, and a lot of people do the footwork and you do the front work, you know. But Jack turned that down and I went all around town, trying to find the right kind of a proper Bostonian who would be recognized and respected and wouldn't have to be explained and so on, would know—[crosstalk.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right. What was the problem?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, they're all busy with this hospital or that school or Harvard University, and I soon

learned what a difficult place it is to raise money, because the competition is keener there per capita, I think, than anywhere in this country, owing to the great number of—[inaudible]—institutions around and in Boston.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They've been accumulating for so long.

PERRY RATHBONE: Accumulating for so long, because of this intellectual concern and preoccupation and so on, there are many, many institutions. You know how many schools there are, and you wouldn't believe that Harvard skims as much off of the Boston belt as it does, since Harvard really is a national, if not an international, institution.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, but it was their local school for centuries.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, exactly, and this sort of pride and concern continues, and the old Harvard—[inaudible]. And the museum had never asked for anything, so there wasn't much place in anybody's budget for the Museum of Fine Arts.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: There just wasn't.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Never had a new idea to sell.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, there was no habit of giving at all. In the meantime, the Museum of Science had been born and Bradford Washburn, the director of that museum, was very, very aggressive, about raising the necessary money to make that thing go, and lots of people, especially those involved with business and scientific business and so on, leaning into their genes for the Museum of Science but not the Museum of Fine Arts.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Corporations, too, because they had scientific resolve.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. They have a stake in what the museum was teaching really, and advertising and devoted—

PAUL CUMMINGS: And they have a big electronics industry up in that area, in Marlborough.

PERRY RATHBONE: That's right, exactly, and it was easier to get an electronics company or something like it, to put up the money for an exhibit, and so on. We had no such background and none of my trustees were willing, so I had to scout for someone and some years before, maybe four or five, the trustees had finally allowed us to solicit business for contributions to the museum. Before that, they were opposed to our seeking anything but private support.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean you couldn't go to a company?

PERRY RATHBONE: No, no.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And say \$50,000 or something?

PERRY RATHBONE: No, not at all. They thought that if companies were asked and they looked to see what the Museum of Fine Arts' capital was and what our income was, they'd say nothing doing, and it would be kind of an embarrassment to the trustees. So they didn't want us to do that, and forbade us to do so, when we began our membership fundraising, after I went there, on an annual basis.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's incredible.

PERRY RATHBONE: Very interesting, very, but it shows how deeply conservative and hidebound Boston was about such matters, and especially the museum. Well finally, we broke that down and said everybody's doing it and there's no reason why not, and with some new blood on the board, the old guard was more or less outvoted on that part and we did. And occasionally, we got uh—I remember the only company who, on their own, had ever given any money to the museum, ever, and on their own, was the Salada Tea Company.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

PERRY RATHBONE: It's not very Bostonian I know, but somehow, they had been moved to give \$500 a year, imagine? And they—

PAUL CUMMINGS: The first corporate patron.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, the first corporate patron, and they had done that for years. Then, the Salada Tea Company moved away and we didn't get the \$500 anymore, and so on. Well, amongst those who made a gift of \$500, after we began to solicit, was the Underwood, William Underwood Company, which makes canned ham, you know, the ham that comes, chopped ham, you know in the can? And the head of that firm was a man called George Seybolt, who was a newcomer to Boston. He came from New Jersey about 10 years earlier, or 15, and he was conspicuous for having joined the diocese, the Episcopalian Diocese campaign a couple of years earlier, under the leadership of William Coolidge. William Coolidge was a trustee of the museum, and an arch-Episcopalian, so that looked like a fairly good thing, especially with the \$500. And also, someone told me that he was a collector of American antiques, so he would qualify as a collector, as a successful businessman, a fundraiser, et cetera, and he had also been chairman of the Chamber of Commerce. Well, that was an avenue to business, which is what I thought we needed. So, in all those respects, he seemed to be the man and I went to him and asked him if he would consider being chairman, and he made a great reluctance to accept, but he really was needed so he did accept and he said, "Of course this doesn't—I don't get paid off as a trustee or anything like that, I mean I'm not counting on that. And I said, "No that's not for me to say. I'm only one of 32 trustees."

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Anyway, he said yes and I asked him to come to a meeting of the full board of trustees, so they could meet the man who was going to lead the campaign. And he sat there amongst us all. He's a rather imposing man, because he's so big of bulk, and has a way of dominating, and one of the other trustees, John Wilson, told me afterwards, he said, "I remember very well the first meeting that Seybolt came to. He looked around the table very meaningfully and said, once the charge had been described, of occasionally, \$13 million for the museum, he looked around and said, 'Well that is a job for a trustee isn't it?'" [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: And they all looked at you and smiled.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, they all looked at me and smiled. Well, within two or three months, he was elected a trustee, and then—[Paul laughs]—and then his rise began. First, we got through the campaign and he was very effective, because he always was there when it was necessary, and when we came to New York for big money, and I don't know how many foundations we visited. They never—we never knocked on the door of any foundation before, we never got a penny's worth from a foundation, Seybolt and I would do the kind of Mutt and Jeff act you know?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And I would talk about one aspect of the museum and he would talk about another, and we went about it time and again, and we got a lot from such sources, really, considering we'd never done it before. And we came off and we finally, we didn't meet our goal of \$13 million, but we got something like \$9 million, and were able to go ahead with our program of expanding the museum physically and improving salaries and the other things we had promised to do. We had a great kickoff of course, for the annual event, the kickoff, which was my job, and it really was a very effective thing, demonstrating to a lot of would be supporters, the greatness of the museum, that was the idea. With big, gorgeous, big slides and then running commentary, and soft music and lights.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Dinner. Was this a whole big dinner?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, it was a big afternoon reception, at the new Boston Sheraton Hotel and that made quite a loud impression on the press. Well, we went to visit the press beforehand, to see if we could get the kind of coverage we needed. It was all very well planned and I think well-executed. One of the big jobs was writing the brochure, and that was Diggory Venn, my assistant for that sort of thing, about who composed that. But that was, you know, that was an ordeal. Someone said, Paul, that a centennial is a fate worse than death, and I've never forgotten that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think it had some truth?

PERRY RATHBONE: It's nothing but the truth and I lived with this thing, you know, for—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —five years.

PERRY RATHBONE: Which doesn't happen. Yes, it doesn't happen for one year, this goes on for years. Um, well anyway, we—oh yes, and then I had to think up, what is the theme, what theme are we going to follow in the centennial year itself, 1970, and I, there I, I think I had a good idea, and it was met with partial success. I would say that the three great, great international distinctions of the museum are the Oriental collection, especially the Japanese, the Greek and Roman collections, especially the Greek, and the Egyptian. These are worldwide, world renowned, and I felt that if we could get each of the three great cultures, which was symbolized by these collections, to lend a great exhibition to the museum, we would be focusing upon the distinctions of the Museum

of Fine Arts in our American culture. And the only one that was a total success was with the Japanese, and they did send us a show that had never been done before. And that's—you know, there have been some brilliant Japanese exhibitions in this country. But I asked myself if there were such a thing as a Japanese art, that you could call Zen, that you could single out and say this is Zen art. And I asked this of Jan Fontein and his assistant, Money Hickman, who knows Japan intimately, and they said, "Well, we never thought of that before but maybe so. Let's think about it and we'll come back and let you know if we think it is a feasible thing." They did, within a month's time, said, "Yes, we really think, from our research and study, that a Zen show would be a feasible thing." And so we set to work on that score and the result was a brilliant exhibition, and the surprising thing was that the Japanese themselves have never had a Zen show.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

PERRY RATHBONE: No. And asked, what's—

PAUL CUMMINGS: With so many things that relate to it.

PERRY RATHBONE: So many things that relate to it, but never had they put on a show that demonstrated the influence of Zen philosophy upon the classic arts of Japan.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: Hard to believe, but they were wonderfully forthcoming. I went to Japan of course, and made all the necessary representations to the—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were they enthusiastic, or did it take a while for them to pick up?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, they became very enthusiastic. I spent some considerable time with the Bunkacho, which is the Cultural Ministry of Japan, and Dr. Hidemi Kon, was very, very forthcoming and gave his blessing, and the result was that we had introductions to all the monasteries that had precious Zen art in their possession, and whatever museums and private collections. We really had to pick because the Boston Museum has such a reputation, they would fall over backwards, you know, to oblige, and they did. But, they said, to our surprise, they said before the things leave Japan—and amongst them were certain, were a certain number of national treasures—could we show the exhibition in Tokyo, before it goes to America? Because we've never had a Zen show.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And of course we said yes to that and it also helped the prestige of the thing. But that's how it happened, and that was really, a great success, a distinguished show, and Jan Fontein and Money Hickman created a catalogue that's a wonder of its kind, there's no other publication really quite like it. Well that's what I had hoped, something like that would be turned in by the other cultures, and we came very close to it where Egypt was concerned. There again, we had a very eager young assistant in the Egyptian Department, namely Edward Terrace, and spent a lot of time in Egypt, lining up the loans, and I spent a lot of time in Egypt, persuading the cultural ministries and other officials; the director of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, and others concerned, about this loan. And the Egyptians were really harder to move than anybody else, because they were perfectly unused to exhibitions.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: The only exhibition they really had ever been involved with, was a small exhibition of Tutankhamun, which is completely forgotten today.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, years ago.

PERRY RATHBONE: Years ago. That happened through the Boston Museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In the '20s or something like that.

PERRY RATHBONE: No, no, it was in the '50s. It was about '58 or '59, something like that, and the Egyptians came to Boston and expected to send a second rate lot of stuff. They'd sent us photographs of what they proposed and we rejected the whole thing, whereupon their Minister of Culture came back to Boston and we had a dinner for him at the St. Botolph Club, and there, Dows Dunham, our Curator Emeritus in the Egyptian Department, and Bill Smith, and I, and one or two others, said at that table that this sort of thing would never go down well in America, the Americans would pay no attention and if it—let's be realistic about this, if it can't be Tutankhamun to begin with, you'd better forget it, because he's a household word in America. They went back to Egypt and put together that first Tutankhamun show, which was quite distinguished. Those at the opening went, everybody forgets these things too easy, but that's how it all started.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: So, with that as a background, this is long before the brilliant show in Paris, and then in London, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In Washington now, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: In Washington, oh yeah. And, if you can believe it, there were ultimately, as I remember it, 43 great works of Egyptian art, stretching from the Old Kingdom, down through significant times. There were 37 of those pieces were beautifully packed, superbly packed, with our help, the Boston Museum. We sent the head of our laboratory to Cairo, to supervise the packing according to scientific, to the scientific practices and principles. There they were, ready to be shipped to Boston, and suddenly the Egyptians withdrew and the whole thing never came about. The catalogue was printed. It was printed in England, where we had better terms than we could in this country, and oh, and here we were with, I forget how many catalogues for us, the Metropolitan, and the Los Angeles Museum, we three joined forces for this exhibition. Here we were, with this embarrassing number of publications and no exhibition, owing to the fact that there had been a serious air catastrophe, a terrible catastrophe, involving a Swiss plane, early in the days of such violence, when aircraft was taken, was the beginning of that terrible contagion, and the Egyptians were worried that the plane that was carrying these things to this country—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —gets hijacked or something, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Could be hijacked, yeah. And even though we had laid out a special security at the Athens Airport, where the plane from Cairo had to land and then we reloaded and everything had been taken care of. Scotland Yard was brought into the scene and they had made—they had advised us of what to do. You can't imagine the precautions, and in order to soften up the Egyptians in the prior, previous year, which was 1969, we assisted the Egyptians in putting on a show in Cairo, to celebrate the 1,000th anniversary of the founding of that city. They hadn't the faintest idea how to go about doing such a thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Really, not the faintest.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's amazing.

PERRY RATHBONE: And we sent our designer to Cairo, and his assistant, and there they labored for three weeks or a month, or I forget just the time, in order to stage this exhibition.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's incredible.

PERRY RATHBONE: Incredible. In order to ingratiate the Egyptians to such a point as siding with the loan agreement. Well, that was a very sad tale, that came to naught.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What happened to all the catalogues?

PERRY RATHBONE: The catalogues are still available. They can be bought in London, they can be bought at the Metropolitan Museum, the Boston Museum. And I think this forthcoming show of Tutankhamun will probably stimulate the sale of that catalogue, which was beautifully done. It was done by Edward Terrace and by Henry Fischer, who then was on the staff of the department. But, just before the Egyptians pulled out, the Metropolitan pulled out.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really?

PERRY RATHBONE: And that was a terrible shot. I was summoned to New York all of a sudden, to a meeting in Tom Hoving's office with Ed Terrace and Henry Fischer and—what was his name, Redford something, from the Los Angeles Museum—and there we sat while Tom got up and gave us the background of the situation there in New York that had led them to a decision to pull out of that exhibition. He said that only two weeks earlier, the main thing on our calendar was reserved for a concert by Oistrakh and Richter, the great Russian performers. And in the midst of this Russian, all Russian performance, members of the Jewish Defense League leapt up and started hurling stink bombs and other things, and shouting denunciations and whatnot, so that they had to empty the auditorium.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Wow, that's incredible.

PERRY RATHBONE: And he said, Tom said, in view of that, he said it never got into the papers, why I don't know, but it apparently never did. He said on the strength of that outrage, he feared for the safety of objects owned by Arabs in New York City at that time, and therefore—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yeah, because they were very active.

PERRY RATHBONE: They were very active in those days, and therefore, they would have to withdraw their support. Well that, you know, pulled the rug right out from under us in a most outrageous way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, but do you think he had a point in those days?

PERRY RATHBONE: No, I think it was highly exaggerated and—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —difficult.

PERRY RATHBONE: And I'm never quite sure it was just the way—knowing Tom now, as I do, I'm never quite sure, never quite sure. He didn't want to, in any way, to play second fiddle to Boston in the centennial—you may remember that we celebrated in the same year, since the Boston Museum is three months older than the Metropolitan.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Um, and he played down our reciprocal exhibition that we held as much as he could. He didn't—this is one of the major events. And this was a shared thing too, and I can't help, I can't help but think that he was looking for an excuse. And let it—thought, we'll let Los Angeles and Boston do it together and we'll bow out then. So, anyway that was what happened. The show was canceled and we were left holding the bag. The Greeks, who were much more used to lending, unfortunately, were under the domination of the late Marinatas [ph], who was the head of the Antiquities Department and a man of neurotic temperament, and a man who was so jealous of Greek culture and Greek art, that he doesn't approve being shared in the world, as far as I can make out.

PAUL CUMMINGS: If you want to see it, you have to go there and look at it.

PERRY RATHBONE: That idea. I thought at least, if not at last, we could have a token of a great example of Greek art sent to Boston, as the Greeks have done for the World's Fair, by sending one of the Acropolis makings [ph], you may remember. That at least would be a token of the pioneering role of that Boston Museum, in bringing great Greek art into the western hemisphere, because that's really what the story is, as I already told you, long before the Metropolitan was involved or the other museum. But he proved to be perfectly impossible, devious, delaying, anything but frank and honest in his dealings with me, and finally, we just had to give up the Greek idea entirely. Well that was the—that was going to be the main thrust of the centennial show and we termed all this, the place of the Boston Museum and the Boston community and the national community or the world community, that was the idea. We filled it in with important other things that were a great success, like the Wyeth Show and the Wyeth Show was always a controversial thing, as you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But still attracts many thousands of people.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, and I thought, I had this justification for it, if that's of interest to you, Paul. I had to think about these things very carefully and justify what we did and prepare others with a similar justification. I felt that in that year, we ought to have something that was, that was distinctly American, something, if possible, that was related to New England, and something that would be unmistakably popular and that hadn't been done before in Boston.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And Wyeth fitted those requirements perfectly. And there had been a show at the Fogg some years ago, of his drawings, but there had never been such a show as New York had.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The big survey.

PERRY RATHBONE: Chicago and the big survey, but there it was and people asked me time and again, when are we going to have a Wyeth exhibition here, over and over, because it's something that I knew New Englanders would respond to and did they ever. Of course, it was the biggest popular success in the Boston Museum's history.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. It attracted more visitors than any show in the 100 years of the museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's incredible.

PERRY RATHBONE: And of course it paid for itself over and over again, and a publication, a catalogue, we began to



run out of catalogues within three weeks or something like that and had to order a second edition. And I remember very well, this is interesting, about the economics of the case. We always wanted to make our catalogues as cheap as possible, to attract, to spread them as widely as possible, as a public service. But one of our new, newer trustees, looking at the thing with a different point of view, when he saw that we were running out of catalogues, and I turned to the trustees and said, "What do you think we should do?" And he said, "Well I think you ought to raise the price." Well, I suppose, I said, "It doesn't seem quite ethical to me." Well, he said, "Maybe if you look at it in a different way and justify that if you don't raise the price, they'll all be gone, and so that people who come into the exhibition later, who had to come to Boston from distant parts, will come and find no catalogues. So if you slow down the sale, they'll be served." Well that was, I thought pretty good logic, so we did raise it. We didn't quite double it, but I think we raised it from, oh, just around from \$4 to \$8, and it did slow down some, but still, we had to go into a second edition. And then, to go into a second edition was a bit of a risk too. We didn't want to stick our necks out too far, and so I turned to a man who had lent us, most generously from his collection, a man by the name of Joseph Levine.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: The movie magnate, who came from Boston, you may know. He came from Boston and the very reason he lent without question.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He had a huge collection.

PERRY RATHBONE: A huge collection. And he was so thrilled with the catalogue, he said he'd like uh, a supply of those, and when we went into the second edition, I said, "Well, Joe, how many would you like? We'll order yours along with the rest of the edition," and they got a special price. "Give me a thousand. I'll take a thousand copies, I'll send them to my friends for Christmas presents." And I thought that sounded like Joe Levine, you know, enormously rich and does things in a big way I suppose. So, of course we printed 1,000, and at \$6 a copy, that's \$6,000. George Seybolt also said, in an expansive way, oh, "Just give me a thousand, I can use them for anyone, company, and so on." Neither one ever—neither one ever came through with a payment. Seybolt never took his, because he thought he was getting his for a special price below the \$6, but this is his own idea, nobody else's, and Levine has not, to this day, paid the museum the \$6,000 that he owes them. And the reason he took umbrage, because on the return of his pictures, one of his paintings, he maintained was scratched, and this sent him into a fit because his prints were damaged. Well, he blamed the museum, and the registrar, the most conscientious, said no question about it, that there was not the slightest damage. The picture was restored by Andy Wyeth himself. It was is a tiny thing, like that, and had nothing to do with affecting the intrinsic value of his picture at all, but the chap who handled them, the Wyeth handler, I'm afraid, was a little bit cowardly about it and didn't want to own in fact, that it had happened in his charge. That's a rather miserable thing to have happen. It cost the museum \$6,000, because Levine, at least took that occasion to be irritated and he's never paid to this day. Well anyway, that's not the important thing about it. It was a great success, with the reproductions with everything.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Then we did another show that was very daring and just about as far from Wyeth as you could possibly get, and it had to do with the artists concerned with the elements, which was a movement that began in the '60s, as you remember.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, yes, developed those plowing exercises in the far west and that sort of thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, the earth people.

PERRY RATHBONE: The earth people. Well, all of my advisors and members of the staff and others on the outside, said well I think the museum ought to do something very modern, it ought to be the element in modernity. So we did a show called *Earth, Air, Fire, and Water*.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And all those things were going on at the museum, I mean, you really wouldn't believe the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, would put on this kind of a show. For example, in the biggest exhibition gallery, there was a kind of maze made up of plastic tubing, into which we deposited 100 eels, who swam. The idea was that they would swim up and down and roundabout, in this maze, to the entertainment of our visitors, and prove not just [inaudible] anyway.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They can swim.

PERRY RATHBONE: They can swim. Well, the sad thing about that was, of course we had to have lights playing on this maze of plastic, but the lights created such a heat, that the eels were brought to an absolute standstill; they didn't move, turned over on their bellies and looked as if they were dead. And it was only at night, when the night watchmen were going around and the lights were off, and they'd flash the light on the thing and they were swimming around like mad. [They laugh.] Oh yes, and we had gas balloons going up and down, the gas being heated by a fire below that would send the thing up or down. And we had, we had fire raging inside of cubes of ice. We had a whole room that was a kind of artificial garden, sprouted with artificial light. We had water dropping into a great circular basin, just creating one marvelous circle of water after the other, you know, diminishing or expanding rings of water.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did Boston take to all of this?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, they all came uh, they came in great numbers and all, and nobody really went up in smoke over it, although I guess some thought the museum might go up in smoke before it was over. I used to wonder myself. You know the artist Otto Piene?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

PERRY RATHBONE: His was the most spectacular exhibit of all, and that was set up in the rotunda. And this was—these were great big inflated tubes that sort of sprouted into points at the end, like some weird growth which would inflate and deflate over and over again, with—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —air pumps.

PERRY RATHBONE: Air pumps, exactly, they made a hell of a racket. But it was a most spectacular sight, when these things were swollen to their full size and pointing outwards. There was a red one and a white one and a black one or something. They were really spectacular. Well that was an antidote to the *Wyeth Exhibition* all right, you know, trying to please everybody. And then we did another show which I enjoyed very much indeed, and that, it was my proposal to Tom Hoving, since we were twin museums so to speak, the two oldest great museums in the western world really, on exchanging a hundred masterpieces of painting, and that we did. We sent a hundred of our greatest pictures here and a hundred of the Metropolitan pictures came to Boston, and it made a very nice occasion for each of us to have—to entertain the trustees of either museum, in each city. And a very nice sort of happy inter-museum relationship, which I thought was a very appropriate thing to do. And it was also an exhibition that didn't cost us anything, because—except the truckage. I—we couldn't have paid the insurance, the museum simply didn't have the money to pay the insurance.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That would have been staggering.

PERRY RATHBONE: Staggering. And so I persuaded the trustees that the insurance is just a question of money, but money is not going to restore those pictures if there is any loss, and if there's a damage, we can absorb that, we have the best laboratory. What's the point of paying an insurance company a lot of money, why not just take the greatest possible precaution, that's what really ensures safety, the preservation, is precaution. And so they agreed to that and went sent the pictures down in two vans, with an escort, with walkie-talkie intercommunication between the escort cars and the vans. They left Boston at four o'clock in the morning, no police escort, because we learned from the police that this attracts more attention, getting a police escort.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: They came, they came to New York. They got here in four hours, by eight o'clock the morning, before there was any traffic, came right up to the door of the Metropolitan and it was the easiest operation. That was a very nice show, Paul.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, I remember that here.

PERRY RATHBONE: Do you?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. And ah, we did a movie sequence to go with it, to integrate the museum and the city. You may remember that, which was quite a nice thing too, and it also provided us with an opportunity to publish a catalogue of 100 sort of favorite pictures, which made a nice, popular thing to sell afterwards.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, the *Masterworks*.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, 100 masterworks or 100 paintings, yeah, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So all of which was leading up to?

PERRY RATHBONE: All of which was leading up to the fact that once the centennial was over and George Seybolt was the president and he had presided at all these various assembly dinners that we had, a grand banquet on the 4th of February, at the museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He must have been very identified with the museum by that time.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh he was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean really.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, and working at it very hard. We had [inaudible] Crawford and--[inaudible]—to come and be our banquet speaker and he did brilliantly. He was a wonderfully wonderfully articulate and appropriate in his comments. It was just, just absolutely right. Oh, I forgot to mention the Back Bay show, which the whole thing began. Did you ever see that or hear about it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I've heard about that, yeah, right, the Boston—

PERRY RATHBONE: Which was in the cradle of the museum and of course the idea of having a museum and other cultural institutions in that new part of Boston was a city concept that was really extraordinary and, and deserved to be made more widely known. And so that was great fun, the Back Bay and the collectors who lived there and were early patrons of the museum and so on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's a social history exhibition.

PERRY RATHBONE: In a way a social history exhibition, exactly, exactly. Well anyway, to go back to the results of all this. Then, George Seybolt began—he first started by, he'd come into the museum. This is all rather intimate and amusing, to show how things can happen. He would say, you know, being the chairman of that fundraising, I should think there would be a place for a guy to hang his hat here, you know. So, yes sir, Mr. Seybolt, I didn't call him George. I hadn't called him George for a long time. Then he said you know, "Gee, you think I could have a telephone or something. I've got quite a few calls to make. After all, you know, I'm doing this on my own time, so I have some business to take care of too. It's easier if I can do it here." So in time, he had a telephone, a hook for his hat and he had a desk, but before he was finished, he had a suite with two secretaries, working all the time. Yes, it was absolutely extraordinary. And he'd come into the museum in those early days and he'd put his arm around me and he'd give me a great big squeeze and say, "You know, it makes me feel good to come in here, just, just good and God, it makes me feel great." And then he'd punch me on the other shoulder and say, "You know, I'm here because you're here, you're a great guy."

PAUL CUMMINGS: All of which gets a little sticky after a while.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, this is sticky and really quite unnecessary, you know, and I—and after a while, I observed, while he had asked me to call him George from the beginning and I didn't mind, I'm quite easy calling people by their first name. I was in his presence when Ralph Lowell, this very distinguished and dignified Bostonian who had been president for so long, and Bill Coolidge were there, and Bill Claflin. I remember Lowell saying call me, "Call me Ralph," and uh, "Call me Bill." And he persisted in calling them Mr. Lowell and Mr. Coolidge, and Mr. Claflin, and one day I said to him, "Why don't you do as those men asked you to do, call them George and Bill and Ralph, or call them Bill and Ralph?" He said, "I've got my time for that, I've got my own time for that." And I thought to myself, well this really is a very deliberate campaign. He has a goal in mind and he's going to get there. Meantime, he began to send me memoranda and other things that required my attention, almost daily, sending this and that. Please tell me this, let me have that, give me the names of this, and so on, and really, I couldn't keep up with it. It was like having another department all of a sudden, in the museum. I remember my secretary saying to me one day, he said, "You know, Mr. Seybolt expects you to answer all those inquiries, all those memoranda." I said, "Well, when I get around to it I will, but it really is a lot." And he's here a lot but he's not here all the time, so I can't just pick up the phone and answer him that way. Well, it was quite easy to see that from all the remarks he made, that he wanted to be the executive head of the museum, and he said to me one day he said, "You know, Douglas Dillon is the president of the Metropolitan Museum, he's not the president of the board of trustees. The president of the Metropolitan is the president of the museum, he is the chief executive head and that's what I want to be at this museum." And I said "Well, may I correct you, George, this used to be the case and I'm quite aware of that, but when Tom Hoving became director, he laid down a few requirements, and one of them was that he would be the chief executive officer of the Metropolitan Museum and the old title, of president of the museum was put aside. Well, Seybolt didn't like to hear that but I knew that for a fact, but it was—I tell you that because it's indicative of his ambition.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He was working behind the scenes.

PERRY RATHBONE: He was working behind the scenes and I tell you this too, because it is one of the serious problems where American museums are concerned. I began my museum career with such a man, as I think I

told you, a person named Louis LaBeaume, and I finished my museum career with another ambitious autocrat. And, oh, he made several other attacks. He took the occasion of—[inaudible]—resignation as a fault of mine, whereas it wasn't my fault at all—[inaudible]—didn't want to live in Boston any more. He felt that it wasn't the right milieu for him and his activities and his interests, which were as you know, theater and costume and fashion, and Boston was out. Well, he took occasion to criticize that and also, my appointment of, eventually the appointment of Kelly Simpson as half-time curator of the Egyptian Department, which has been a great success, doing it half-time. He accomplishes more in half-time than Bill Smith ever did full-time. But at any rate, he took the occasion to criticize these things whenever he could. Yeah.

And I don't know if there's any significant about—what was it I wanted to tell you? Oh yes, about this time, the American Federation of Arts, or the American Museum Association, decided that it was necessary to have a survey made of museums, and an accreditation program, because so many museums were making requests for grants and whatnot, and you couldn't tell whether they really were justified or if they were growing professional concerns or whether they weren't. And it seems rather foolish that the Boston Museum would have to undergo this kind of examination but standards have to be found somewhere and in due course, along came Harris Pryor and two other members of the committee, to examine the Boston Museum for accreditation.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: They had to talk to the director and they had to talk to a trustee. So I was of course glad to see them, a couple of them, or less, I forget, and then I turn to Seybolt and I said, "They're coming and what trustee would you like them to talk to, maybe a trustee who has been on the board a long time and give them some perspective would be appropriate." He said, "I'll take care of them." I said, "All right, if you want to do it. You're awfully busy, I know, George, but if you're not, of course." So, they made an appointment and they saw him, and he kept them for two hours or more, and I asked Harris afterwards, I said, "What was your impression anyway?" He'd been exposed to quite a few museum trustees by now I suppose. He said well, "Together we thought about it, let me say possessive, aggressive and intimidating, that's the way I'd size him up." And this is really what he wanted. And he took full advantage of the—as I think I told you, the Raphael affair. Of that, to pretend he didn't know anything about it, whereas he was informed from the start exactly, the whole story. And he and other trustees got together and decided that the only way that they could be happy would be if I were to go into early retirement. So I was told that's what they would like. Anyway, I said, "Naturally, if that's what you want, well you'll give me a pension and all that." Well, that meant the next move was to find a successor.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And that was an extraordinary exercise. I may have told you a little bit about that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: A little but not really into it.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, what I want—the other thing I want to say is not only the aggressive, or at least the opportunities that American museums offer to aggressive and bossy people like Seybolt and LaBeaume, but it also, in the case of Seybolt, who was a businessman, it can—when the chips are down and when the need for money is acute, museums will do what they wouldn't ordinarily do. Trustees, boards of trustees, will stoop to what they wouldn't normally do and they somehow persuaded themselves that once Seybolt got into the saddle, that having a businessman as a big influence on the board is what they needed. Well, I can tell you that that is a very serious mistake, because the businessman tries to impose his business practices upon an organization that isn't suited to those practices at all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, it's not necessarily a profit making institution, with dividends and all the other.

PERRY RATHBONE: Precisely, and it can't be a profit making institution and it isn't even in a sense, kind of a logical institution whose whole justification is profits, and whatever you do, if it improves the profits, it's justified. Well, there he was, in an increasing position of power and influence.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was he putting his own money into it?

PERRY RATHBONE: No, no, but at one point, I do remember reading, in one of the annual reports or something I came to read, that the William Underwood Company had given \$50,000 to the museum for some post-campaign improvement or other, in honor of his presidency. Ah, I guess it was at the time he retired. Anyway, what happened was that the trustees were persuaded that a professional, such as myself, was not necessarily the best thing for a museum; you don't have to have a museum professional run a museum, you can get—certainly not. You can get a retired businessman or a retired Marine colonel.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Executive ability of one sort or another.

PERRY RATHBONE: Really, yes, or somebody, an old admiral can do very well. What's the matter with a well-

known architect, and so on. The result was that the trustees were asked to submit names of all sorts of people who were not necessarily in the profession at all, and 136 names were garnered.

PAUL CUMMINGS: My heavens.

PERRY RATHBONE: Including, if you can believe it, I.M. Pei. Can you imagine I.M. Pei being solicited to take on the headache of running a museum when he's, you know, one of the most influential and best rewarded architects in the world.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's astounding, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I mean—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, it goes to show what imagination exists.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well doesn't it? Well, that's true. And then all of these 136 names, which were most of which were unknown to the rest of the—I mean no trustee knew them all, had to be researched so that they would know who they were talking about. Oh, I mean it. So, they engaged Soria Slive, Seymour Slive's wife, an adorable woman, a great friend of ours, she was taken on the staff, another salary to pay, to research all these names, to dig up all the facts, all the data about all these people. Sure.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's a book.

PERRY RATHBONE: A book. Oh, there was this great file and all the trustees were then invited to come in and study the file and compare notes, and this committee would meet and that committee would meet. Unbelievable. That, and they weren't getting very far, and finally, Jack Gardner said why don't you get a hold of a friend of mine, who is the head of a so-called headhunter office in New York, whose name is Blodgett. Did I tell you about that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

PERRY RATHBONE: And get him to come, because I think that to get an objective opinion, you'd like to have a man whose whole occupation is finding the right man for the right job. It could be useful. So, Blodgett appeared. I happen to have known Blodgett years ago, in St. Louis, when he became the head of production corporation. And he—I saw him on the plane the other day and he told me—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Small world isn't it?

PERRY RATHBONE: A small world. He said, "You know, I went to see Jack that day, before the meeting with the trustees," and he said—and I said to him, "Well what I'm going to do is just go into that meeting and say in the first place, I don't think that you have the right man as the president of the museum. I don't think that this business orientation that the museum seems to be so in love with is appropriate or proper to the institution, and that's number one." Oh, Jack said "Look, you can't say that because Seybolt will be there." Oh, all right, and he said, "Well you know what I mean, you can use that however you please, but I can't say that, I won't." At any rate this committee met and Blodgett came and the upshot of that meeting was in my opinion, what this museum needs as its director, is a man who knows a lot about art. Yeah. So I guess they decided that they'd have to plume their horns and forget about I.M. Pei and all that, whatnot. And so one day, I don't know how many people had been interviewed, but the staff had put theirs in and had said that they would very much prefer Rick Brown, above all others, because of his experience, because of his personality, because of his dynamic nature, for all the reasons that would be appropriate. Well, that's another story, about that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That seems to be coming around again from what I hear.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, well I've got to go into them again. You know, I had a meeting with the trustees in June, with the search committee, the new search committee. Anyway, Rick Brown didn't go down well with John Coolidge. Rick told me that John had some hate against him, I don't know what it is. He never did know what it was and I don't know what it is. At any rate, one day Merrill Rueppel of Dallas, Texas, either wrote to Seybolt, or telephoned, and made an appointment to come and see him. And Merrill, at that time, was secretary of the Association of Art Museum Directors, and at that time, the Ford Foundation was investigating certain aspects of museum employment having to do with tenure and I don't know, the usual problems, and Merrill was asked to make a survey and was doing that. And he came to Boston, presumably to inquire as to why the Boston Museum was looking outside the field of professional museum directors for a director. In his capacity as secretary of a professional association, he'd like to report, and also it might be some risk to his Ford Foundation mill. I'm not just sure about that but it's about like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: There was yeah, something.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. And if you ever interview Merrill, maybe you have already, you'll hear that this is really what brought him to Seybolt's door, and there's Seybolt in the museum every day with his two secretaries, next to the boardroom, you know? Sure. And he told him that he wondered why this was and well, they talked for a couple of hours it seems and when he left his office and came out later, Seybolt said, "You go back to Dallas, think it over and let me know. Call me up on Monday if you're interested and the job is yours." Unilaterally, this is what he said, and so off he went to Dallas and decided yes, this sounds like a good thing, and called up and said, "Sure, I accept." They—then the staff began to hear that Merrill Rueppel and some others were coming to meet the staff and have questions answered. And he came—and his name had come up already and they all just said that will never do. In the first place, he hasn't had the experience, he hasn't been—hasn't the kind of distinctions necessary for this job. And I remember Cornelius Vermeule saying, "Well where are his publications?" You know, there were a couple of introductions to some pamphlet like, exhibition catalogue, and that was all. And anyway, he wasn't going to go down with them at all, but he came on for this visit with all the curators, and they began asking him all sorts of questions that were much on their minds, about the relationship of trustees to the director and the director to the curators and the curators to the staff, and so on, and it got to the point where Rueppel began to feel a little irritated and he said, "It's rather academic, you asking me all these questions. I'm going to be your director." This is how the staff learned about it. Well, they were supposedly just going through the motions, I mean were supposedly having a serious investigatory interview, and he was already appointed.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And they were after the fact.

PERRY RATHBONE: They were after the fact. So they recognized that they were being deceived, that the staff was being deceived, and they didn't like that very well. Nevertheless Rueppel came. It was unbelievable.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did the other trustees do though?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, I don't—they were all intimidated. And Blodgett said to me the other day on the plane, he said, "Are there any trustees there now, who could stand up to George Seybolt?"

PAUL CUMMINGS: He knew, didn't he?

PERRY RATHBONE: He knew. Well, he had sat down with him, you know, at that meeting, Seybolt was at that meeting, and he got his number very quickly. At the same time, he's very gifted at this kind of thing, this kind of poker.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Seybolt?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes, very gifted, it's really a kind of poker.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Push that one out and pull this one in.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, absolutely, he knows how to work that. I remember watching him sometimes in meetings, and sometimes I'd look, I'd see him catch my eye and I thought, he's looking right at me wondering how he's going to take the next crack, you know? Really, like that, calculating.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. And so there they were suddenly, with this director they didn't want, but they, I must say, first of all, they showed great loyalty to me, all the curators. When this crisis came, they all went out to lunch together and I didn't know they were going to lunch together, but they went together and said, "What are we going to do, this is a very serious matter." The word was out that I was going to, that I was going to retire early. They all came back from that lunch, all trooped into my office and came back to say, in one voice, we don't want you to retire from this museum, we want you to stay right here. And they went past the office of my assistant, who was Heywood Cutting, who was quite a disloyal person, and said—he asked me afterwards, "What were those curators, why are they all coming with such a big smiles, what was on their mind anyway?" And I said well, "I'll tell you some day," you know. Later on, they asked to have a meeting at my house in Cambridge, with one of the trustees, who was also a lawyer, James Ames.

[END OF TRACK.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Side 20. Yes.

PERRY RATHBONE: So, they asked Ames to come one evening to my house, with all the curators, there were about seven or eight of them, and there they said the same thing. They wanted representation. They wanted to bring a message to all the trustees. They didn't want it to go—without George Seybolt, they wanted the message to go directly to the trustees, that they as the most important component of the staff of the museum, wanted

me to remain as director. And Ames took the whole message down and was very sympathetic, as he was to me anyway and said, "Fine, I can certainly prepare this at the weekly meeting," and so and so. Word came back that Seybolt said no meeting without me; if there's going to be a meeting, I'm going to be there, and he was. And, being the poker player he is and the kind of intimidating person he can be, the result was perfectly obvious. I would have—I mean, I wasn't even going to account for him, that's all. Then a long Rueppel chapter developed after that and he saw in him, as far as I can see, a man who he thought would be a sort of puppet to him and would be a reflection of his own ideas about how the museum should run as a business and all the rest of it. Well, the staff, as I started to say, was very, very decent about that, although he wasn't the man they wanted, but they didn't—they suspected that he wouldn't have the leadership they felt essential and so on. They gave him every opportunity to prove himself effective with a staff and with the community the first year and by the end of the first year, they were ready to assassinate him. He made an enemy of everybody, from the lowest to the highest in the museum, within one year, and not a friend. No matter it was the restaurant or the workshops, anywhere, and it was really because he was bending over backward to be a George Seybolt. As soon as Seybolt saw what was happening, he resigned, decided to resign from the presidency, and turned it over to John Coolidge, who had been his principal support in all this. So then John Coolidge had the uncomfortable position of being president at the time that the axe fell on Rueppel. Within one year, the axe fell, but before that happened, the trustees recognized that there was something wrong with the presidency of the museum. They saw that the presidency was really at fault.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's getting out of hand.

PERRY RATHBONE: Absolutely.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did he bring any interesting ideas to the museum in terms of management or finances or funding?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes he did, he brought one that's very hard to follow, one that he insisted upon, was cost accounting, and cost accounting which develops into something the staff very easily called funny money, has been a constant irritation. And it may be necessary, as a museum, as an organization gets to a certain size, in order to control the expenditure of funds, it may be necessary, but never was presented in a way sympathetically enough for the staff to swallow and really operate under. So much so that the cost accounting system made, just for the most egregious example, having a photograph made something like \$25 a negative, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Instead of four dollars. Yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes. It almost meant that no department wanted to go to the Photographic Department to have a negative made. And then they found that with whatever free funds they had to spend, they could call somebody in from the outside and have a photograph made for \$10 and did, and they do it to this day. So it—but I know, I understand the principle very well, of cost accounting, and I think up to a point it's a very good thing, an important thing, where there's so many budgets vying for one another for position or preferment—

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do, what do you think Seybolt got out of all of this, I mean the slow building up of his power and everything?

PERRY RATHBONE: He got power. He's power hungry. He's a power hungry man with no background, but having to build his own image and his own importance in the community, and I think Boston is perhaps a harder place to do that than say, Minneapolis or Milwaukee, I do, and he was absolutely determined that he became the head of everything he got into. Well, he goes to the Chamber of Commerce, the next thing you know he's the president. He got into the Boston Museum and soon to be president. He's, he got—he organized the presidents and directors of the major museums, the ten major museums, to come together to discuss mutual problems. Well, we do that anyway, you know, the Museum Directors Association does that every year, but by doing this, he put himself in touch.

PAUL CUMMINGS: A super little circle.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, and more intimately, with the more important ones. With Douglas Dylan, who became Doug pretty soon, overnight.

PAUL CUMMINGS: As opposed to Mr. Cabot.

PERRY RATHBONE: As opposed to Cabot, yes. And now, if you look at the record, you'll see that he is the chairman of the National Council on the Arts.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yes, sure. And then, one of the big things that happened when I was, for the second time, president of the Association of Art Museum Directors, it's when the crisis over the tax law, the reform tax law of 1969, was staring us in the face, and I had to go to Washington as spokesman for the association, and meet with the Senate Finance Committee. And when Seybolt heard that I had to do this and was going, he said, "Well, couldn't I come along? I might be helpful you know," I know Clay baby Pell, Claiborne Pell, and maybe he could help, and he was—Pell was sympathetic to the arts, you know. I said well, "Of course, if you could be helpful come along." But what happened was I sought the advice and guidance of Lev Saltanstell.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh right, yes, right, you've talked about that.

PERRY RATHBONE: He was a Senator for so long. I talked about that. And then more recently, I guess I told you what happened in this meeting, didn't I?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And I think I did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, yes.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, Senator Bennett and all that. But more recently, it's come back to me, Seybolt said well, "Of course, with the campaign, you see, I really raised the money and I took Perry down to Washington once and showed him the way around," and he deals in this kind of misrepresentation.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Shifting of, yeah, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yeah. And so characteristically, as I say, Rueppel had to be said farewell to.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why does Coolidge become so—

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I'll tell you what I think, because I think John Coolidge has yearned for power all his professional life and he never had very much. You know, he was director of the Fogg Museum and before that he was a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, but he never was in the big league, so to speak, making big decisions. But Seybolt saw that John Coolidge was somebody who could be influenced by power. He was—and Seybolt needed the academic garments of Coolidge and the Coolidge Brahmin association, very much indeed. So this is how that, in my opinion happened, I mean you wouldn't find this in any book.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He supported Coolidge's ambitions in a way.

PERRY RATHBONE: He supported Coolidge's ambitions and Coolidge gave him the kind of respectability that Seybolt sorely needed. That's how that—that's the way I see the combination. And you see the trustees who are really clear minded about this will say the very same things that I'm saying, and, and they're so disgusted.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It is, it—for some reason it never ceases to astound me that one individual who decides that they want to do something at an institution can, in so few years, take it over like that. I mean, I've seen it at numerous New York institutions, in other fields in museums. It's quite amazing.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, someone has said, of this county, and you may have heard this too, Paul. In this country, you can go to the top of anything if you're willing to do the dirty work, and Seybolt was willing to do the dirty work. He told me, at his big, capacious house in Dedham, in the room where he spent his evenings when he was alone, he showed me the deep chair in which he sat, with a dictate machine alongside. He said, "I sit there until four o'clock in the morning, dictating." And what does he dictate? I don't know how many copies of letters I got from him, letters, unnecessary letters to all sorts of people, thanking them for this and thanking them for that, congratulating them on this, on that, stuff he picks out of the newspaper, just to keep himself talked about.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Keep the name going.

PERRY RATHBONE: And the name going.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Publicity is what it's called.

PERRY RATHBONE: Publicity, publicity. And the rest of the trustees don't need that, didn't want it anyway. Their names were well enough known. They know the director of the—or the chancellor of MIT doesn't need to do that, for example, Walter Whitehill doesn't have to do that. And then the others don't care. But he cared and he does to this day. But John Coolidge, after the debacle of Rueppel, which is a very sad thing and I think the trustees ought to be ashamed to have put the man through the agony they did. Don't think he didn't inflict agony upon the staff, he certainly did, but it all goes back, really, to the trustees and principally, to Seybolt, or the kind of



leadership that he provided. Um, I got off track.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What's happened now since then?

PERRY RATHBONE: What's happened since then is not uninteresting. I—when Rueppel was leaving, I said to Jan Fontein, "I hope they have the good sense to make you acting director, because I think you really could hold the helm until they find a permanent director," and fortunately they did and he's the acting director to this day. But this is—he's been acting director now for a year and a quarter, you know, he became acting director in June a year ago, and they don't seem to have made any real progress yet. John Coolidge, you know resigned, after the debacle of Rueppel and that was, I think, a very decent thing for him to do. He said to me that it was just because he'd been there 20 years or 25 years, he thought that was enough, but I said to him, "Well John, that may be what you say but that's not what other people think." I mean his candidate failed.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah. And Seybolt should do the same thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He won't.

PERRY RATHBONE: No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He'll outlive them all.

PERRY RATHBONE: He'll leave them all hanging, like Nixon, yeah, keeping a low profile now I guess that's true, because his—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, but he's still a trustee though isn't he?

PERRY RATHBONE: He's still a trustee, yeah, and they haven't settled on the—on terms yet, that is the idea of a term trustee, where you're advised to retire after X number of years. One of the many committees that they were appointed, was reported to study that, but I have not heard what happened.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's very hard to institute. Nobody wants to go off.

PERRY RATHBONE: Nobody wants to go off, exactly, yeah, exactly. So. Well that's the way it stands and they still—they did as me to come, that is the search committee asked me to come last June and talk with them, which I was glad to do, and I said to them this, Paul. I said—I was asked first of all, "How does the museum seem to you right now, give us your idea, your reaction, your impression of the situation." And I said, "I don't like to have to start on a sour note, but since you asked me I really have no choice." I said, "I think that it's time the trustees looked at themselves and recognized that their image is seriously flawed." For example, I said to Ashton—[inaudible]—at the time of the Rueppel resignation, I said, "Ashton," without saying anything further, I said, "Well how do you see the situation from where you sit?" He said, "I think it looks very bad for the trustees," and I said, "I think you should know this, in a way, how the rest of the world sees the situation and do something about it." And I said, "If you want to know what to do, any curator at the museum will tell you exactly the same thing and I'm not here to name any names, but I think you might guess what I'm talking about." They haven't done anything as far as I know and nobody that I've talked to at the museum has been approached by any one of those people.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, nothing, it's still up in the air.

PERRY RATHBONE: What has happened is a great—Seybolt nourished a great distrust of professional staff at the museum and he went about saying this kind of, what do you call it, one liner: The museum is going to be people oriented from now on, not art oriented.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: You see? And what he's fighting against really, is the professionalism that surrounded him there and I think he was afraid of. As a businessman, he really was intimidated by these distinguished scholars that were the Boston Museum, should be the Boston Museum. I really think that was the problem and he tried to overcome that with his business side. So, he got them all together once for example, and gave them, showed them a film, a promotional film on how to put up chopped ham. That wasn't the kind of thing we needed to do for this museum, well you know. [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's amazing. Yeah, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Amazing. Sure.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Anyway, what—since you have to run pretty soon, we should continue this. You then came to New York, right, to Christie's?

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, yes. Well, I was asked—as soon as I retired, I was asked to do several things. One of them was to become director of the Seattle Museum, one was to become the director of the Sarasota Museum. Another one was to go to Washington University and be the head of the Department of Art and Archeology. Another one was, oh, what was the other thing? Oh yes, Tufts University, to join the Fletcher School of Diplomacy there, to help educate our fledgling diplomats in the cultural aspects of their posts, their future posts, so that they wouldn't go in as ignoramuses, you know, go into Holland and say—[inaudible]. Give them a little sophistication before they go. Another one was, that I took, was to, well it was a job—[inaudible]—David Rockefeller, because I'd been on the art committee for a long, long—from the beginning, and he wanted a survey made, both here in New York, at the—[inaudible]—and across Europe. And that, I was very happy to do, and then I was asked by the Seattle Museum to take a group of travelers up the Nile, as a special guide, and having been to Egypt three times before, I was very well prepared to do that, with the Egyptian Collection in the Boston Museum, and that I did. I did those things [inaudible] to say the same trip.

And then I was asked, while I was in Europe, if I would consider being the director of Christie's here in New York, because John Richardson had just said he was going to quit and go to Knoedler's, because they'd offered him a salary that he couldn't resist. And I thought it over very carefully and I said, "Well, only providing I can continue to live in Cambridge and be here during the week and Cambridge weekends, and this was entirely satisfactory with Christie's. So that's what I've been doing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do you find it, being on the other side in a sense now?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, I like it very much, Paul. I must say, it's so easy compared to running the museum. It's the most taxing—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh yes. It's the most taxing work in the world, really. That is a big municipal museum where you have to answer to the public and the press, your staff, the trustees.

PAUL CUMMINGS: One thing that always interests me and I guess I always ask it at the end, the termination of interviews is why did somebody want to become a museum director, I mean after the fact, rather than—?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, because we—because you have a love of art. I think that most of my colleagues, I would say 90 percent, the ones I've known in my years as director, are there because they are really fascinated with art, and have learned about it and want to do about it, and yet they are not artists themselves. They don't have the kind of creative talent that it takes to be an artist, and they don't necessarily like the life academe. I shouldn't—I wouldn't want to have stayed at the university, not for anything, not for anything.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's too engrained and tiny.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, it's awful, terrible, and of course you're in the world, and if you also like people, as I happen to do, I think the combination of liking art and people, and wanting to make people or offer people the same kind of enjoyment that you yourself get from art is what motivates you.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It makes the museum, obviously, sure.

PERRY RATHBONE: Sure. It's certainly what motivated me. I used to think I wanted to be an architect, of course I wanted to be an artist as a boy, and then I wanted to be an architect and I thought, you know, a landscape architect. And then it was because I was at Harvard and there was the only museum course given. It was my uncle and my cousin, Donald Oenslager, who said, "Well why don't you take Paul Sachs' course?" And I did and that was it, and I was—I could see that I was really born for this kind of thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you find that now that you've traveled a great deal more than before or less?

PERRY RATHBONE: Well, I travel a lot more now. I've been in Japan six times and I've been to, as I say, to Egypt four times. I've been to Persia and I've been to India, and yes, I travel more and with more freedom. But I—what did you ask me about what I did right after I quit the museum was, I was also involved with—the first year I was away from the museum, I became involved—yes. When I was already with the museum, I had proposed—I guess I knew I was leaving, yeah, in 1972, the last time, or '71, the last time I was in Japan, I proposed a Wyeth exhibition to the editor of the—[inaudible]—because he's very proud of the exhibitions that he's responsible for and he puts on fantastic shows, or responsible.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PERRY RATHBONE: And he liked the idea, but he'd never heard of Wyeth, and I said, "Well let me show you," so I sent him a catalogue of the Boston show and he had six months, he said, "I'm discussing this with my colleagues and my counselors and if they think well of it, we would certainly do it." The word came back saying, "We want to do it and we'll do it only if you will direct the show." I said that was wonderful, there was something very positive for me to do immediately when I left the museum and something I enjoyed doing, and it took me to Japan again, twice. I've been there four times at the time, and I've had that kind of rather easy experience since I left the museum. The museum was really kind of a yoke, it became a yoke, and I've heard some of my colleagues say, you know, this isn't what we got into the museum for, the life we're leading today is not why we entered the museum world in the first place. We entered it in order to be deeply involved with art every day, not with committees.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, administration, the finance.

PERRY RATHBONE: The finance.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Friends.

PERRY RATHBONE: Friends and fundraising and all that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But that's what keeps the institutions going.

PERRY RATHBONE: Well it's become like that, and both museums that I directed, I really started what amounts to the membership, which is an extremely important part of their financial picture today, their survival in a sense, broadening the base and improving the finances, that's what they asked me to do when I went to Boston and that's what I did. I popularized it and enriched it artistically in every way I could, and I've had a wonderful career and I've enjoyed it immensely, but those last couple of years with Seybolt as president were pretty miserable. Yeah, yeah, pretty miserable.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Very, very. He just built every day, he wanted one more brick.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh, absolutely, and I think he decided he was going to take a bead on me one day when I said to him, "You know why Francis Taylor left the Metropolitan Museum?" I wasn't saying it with any malice or forethought at all when I said to him you know, "He told me himself, he couldn't stand having Roland Redmond, the president, looking over his shoulder every day."

PAUL CUMMINGS: That gave him his clue. Yeah, yeah.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, sure. Now, there's Howard Johnson, who is the president and I might add this little au revoir, sort of interesting how these things happen. John Coolidge, as I say resigned, but before doing so, there was a meeting at the St. Botolph Club, which was attended by Seybolt and by Howard Johnson, and a nucleus of people who recognized there was something seriously wrong at the top, and they decided then and there they would have to ask John Coolidge to step down. And that was the disagreeable task of Howard Johnson, and he did, and then he was elected president. Not that he really sought it, he wasn't—that's one of the good things about his incumbency, I think, he didn't seek it, but he was a man sufficiently detached and not belonging to any clique of any sufficient prestige, to take the reins.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did Seybolt have much influence with him or is it hard to tell?

PERRY RATHBONE: No, I don't think he has, no I don't think he has, no, but he's still there, he's still there. Like Blodgett said, there's nobody who can stand up to him, so much so as to tell him it's time to leave. Characteristically, Paul, when he retired from the presidency, the first thing he did was to have a card printed, President Emeritus of the Museum of Fine Arts.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You're kidding?

PERRY RATHBONE: I mean it, certainly, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic.

PERRY RATHBONE: Yeah, sure.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He won't let go.

PERRY RATHBONE: Oh no, that's his ticket to Washington. Absolutely, because it was when he went with me, that was the first time and he hasn't stopped running to Washington since.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic. Anyway, is there anything that we can talk about that's short or do you feel

that this kind of does it for the moment?

PERRY RATHBONE: Those are all the weird tales that I can think of, you know? I wanted—I think it would be important for me to say again, if I haven't already, one of the things I felt an obligation to the Boston Museum to fulfill, namely, to expand its publication program. Did I say that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

PERRY RATHBONE: I guess we went into that, and with Carl Zahn as a marvelous designer.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, designer.

PERRY RATHBONE: But also, a man who understood production extremely well. We were able to fulfill that obligation I thought, because there was the staff, there was the facilities, the laboratory.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Scholarship.

PERRY RATHBONE: Scholarship. There was everything to do with great collections to inspire you and great collections to write about, and I'm very, very proud of the publications of the museum in my years as director, very.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Good, terrific, well that's a good—

[END OF INTERVIEW.]