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Oral history interview with Edith Gregor Halpert, 1962-1963

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Edith Gregor Halpert from 1962-1963. The interview was conducted at Halpert's home in New York, NY by Harlan Phillips for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

32 East 51st Street, New York City, Thursday, April 19, 1962.

MS. HALPERT: My idea about this is to do it only in relation to my art life, my life in the art world. What happened before is prologue. Who said that?

session

DR. PHILLIPS: "The past is prologue."

MS. HALPERT: It was just quoted recently. Our president said it, and then I came across it in something I wrote quoting the person who said it. The President quoted from the same guy, but I gave the guy credit.

The Odessa business -- there's nothing there really, and I don't see where the Archives would be interested in it.

DR. PHILLIPS: The point is that coming to these shores was largely an accident, and I believe that is important, for without that accident, everything else would have been different.

MS. HALPERT: We weren't driven out. My mother was a member of the Duma.

DR. PHILLIPS: I remember you saying the last time I was here, when we talked somewhat about Odessa that it was a rather vague memory at best.

MS. HALPERT: It wasn't a vague memory. When I saw the movie, *Potemkin*, I saw those steps, and I suddenly went to pieces. I remembered those steps so vividly. I hadn't until I saw them in the movie. Then I saw my mother and sister -- I had them out to Connecticut at the same time. I was very excited about what I had seen in the picture, and I said to them, "They didn't have Duke."

Mother said, "What is that?"

I said, "You know, that big sculpture of Duke."

I didn't know who the hell Dukewas.

My sister, Sonia, was five years older than I, and she had a much more vivid memory. I left Odessa when I was five and she was ten, so that she knew a good deal more. They both told me that I was utterly nuts, that there was no statue. I said, "As you walk up these steps from the waterfront" -- just marvelous steps -- "right at the head is Duke."

They said that no such thing existed, and I replied that Monya, who was my nurse, used to walk me down there. I was naughty practically all the time -- I was the worse little brat in the world -- and she would tell me that "Duke"would eat me up, and by God, when I landed in Odessa in 1958, I dropped my bags at the hotel, said that I would be right back. I didn't bother with my passport. The Hotel Odessa was right on the waterfront, and I ran like hell. I didn't even wait for my car, or anything, but I ran like hell to the steps, and there was "Duke" Duc de Richelieu. He was right there! It didn't appear in the movie, and my mother and sister both insisted that there was no such thing. I remembered him vividly, and I thumbed my nose at him. A few people stared at me, but I wasn't afraid of him anymore! I had been. He'd scared me to death.

But I remember a lot of things about Odessa, and it isn't because of old age -- you know, when you begin to recall, or senility brings that on, but there are a great many things I remembered. My mother was very astonished. She wanted to be an American, but I remembered the Odessa address, and nobody told me. That I didn't even mention to the family, but when I got to Odessa I kept looking for and I found it. It was right there. I was determined to find it. The thing that hurt was that as I stood there, I waited for something to happen -- you know, there was no nostalgia, no sentiment, -- just rubble.

It was there as part of the Museum of War, and they hadn't cleaned up any of the rubble except the water front, but the rest of the city is just rubble. I wasn't sure that I had found my home until I recognized the balcony where I had struck my head through the iron grill. The grills were all different shapes. All the grills there were different designs, and I recognized mine. I recognized the apartment, and I went to see it. I wasn't invited in, but I saw it.

I remembered many things. I remember seeing the Tsar and crying my head off. I never believed anybody after that. There was a professor who lived in the same building. It was very much like 277 Park Avenue -- you know, turn of the century stone building with a huge courtyard (with no cars in it) with two pools -- one for kids and one for adults. I still have the book inscribed to me by this professor. He took a great shine to me and taught me to read at the age of four, *Robinson Crusoe*. He also taught me numbers, and I could add four columns at the age of four. I was a little less than --.

DR. PHILLIPS: You said that your mother was a member of the Duma.

MS. HALPERT: Well, my father died when I was three and a half or so. He really loved me more than my mother. He didn't live too long, but I don't suggest that there is anything more in this than that it made me ever so much more self-reliant. I'm very grateful for all the hard knocks I had in my youth because it made a woman out of me. I've never been bitter about poverty, or anything, so that when I began to have things, I didn't act like Billy Rose who never got over the fact that he was a pauper. When I began getting things I appreciated them so much more.

DR. PHILLIPS: But you didn't come here initially as a pauper.

MS. HALPERT: No, we came here in style.

DR. PHILLIPS: This was the grand-tour-type trip, wasn't it?

MS. HALPERT: My father died, and when was the revolution?

DR. PHILLIPS: 1905.

MS. HALPERT: In 1905, we did not live in the Jewish section. My father was a grain broker, or was in the grain business. I don't know what he was. I've heard so many stories about what he was from my mother and from my family, that I don't know, but we lived in very good style. I had a nurse. My sister had a governess, and she was taken to school every day. We had a fourteen room apartment for just the three of us. My father left us well off, so my mother took my father's place as a member of the Duma. What she did there I don't know, except that she was always awfully dressed up, and I'd pick the right handkerchief to give her so that she would look pretty. We lived very comfortably.

I remember the bombardment because we lived very close to the waterfront. The reason I remembered how to find our house was that there was a street named after Dr. Richelieu. It was an avenue, and we lived between that avenue and something. This avenue was the street on which the royal procession passed by and also (and this must have been before the revolution). This was earlier in 1905, and this I remember very well because it's when I still trusted everyone. My professor used to read me fairy tales until I could read them myself. The prince was always on a white charger, and the princess had long golden hair -- right?

DR. PHILLIPS: Right.

MS. HALPERT: The Tsar wore a crown, and the procession -- well, I heard the music, and everybody decided to leave. My nurse finally left too. She said, "You be a good little girl and stay here and play."

Everybody left, and I was all alone. I could hear that music, and everybody had gone. I said to hell with it, and being a brat I snuck out -- you know, and some strange man picked me up and put me on his shoulders. I straddled his shoulders so I could see, and this was the time when the Tsar and his queen were in an open carriage. They did not wear crowns. The prince was in the next carriage with men who wore those long, feathered hats, and he was not on a white horse. And the princesses were wearing big hats in another carriage, and I began to cry, "Put me down!"

The stranger on whose shoulders I had been perched asked me why, and I replied, "That is not the Tsar!"

He replied, "But that is the Tsar!"

I was really heartbroken, and in the midst of all this pomp and circumstances he let me down, and I went back home and cried because the man had lied to me.

That evening -- you know, it became a big issue! First, I was bawled the hell out of for leaving the house. There

was a lot of kidnapping going on, and all that. Everybody bawled me out. I kept crying, but not because of that. They finally got my professor friend because I was really in a terrible state -- the man in the street had lied to me, my mother had lied to me, everybody said that it was the royal family.

My professor finally came, and he was so devoted to me -- he showed me off to his confreres all the time. He sat me down in the corner to have a chat, and he told me about the books, that these were fairy tales, and that what I had seen was reality. He explained it. He tried and tired, but I kept saying, "I will never believe anybody again."

He almost cried. I said, "That man lied to me!"

He said, "But it was the Tsar!"

I said, "Then the book is a lie!"

Really, that was one of the most traumatic experiences that I've ever had.

Well, I found *Duke*. They did not change the name of his street either. It's still there. I also remembered where I had my first banana (which cost three rubles) wrapped in foil with a ribbon, but that experience about the Tsar, I think, caused me more anguish than anything that has ever happened to me.

DR. PHILLIPS: How did you come to get your head stuck in the iron gate?

MS. HALPERT: I was just playing -- you know, to see whether I could make it. I got it in, but I couldn't get it out. There wasn't anything tragic. I picked up a frog and dropped it down a girl's back. I really was a nasty little kid.

DR. PHILLIPS: I guess you were.

MS. HALPERT: There were certain things that happened in those days that had a permanent effect for which I am grateful rather than angry. For instance, mother was very "unbright" about bringing up children, and that too, I think, conditioned me so that I could live alone in New York at the age of fifteen, sixteen, seventeen without getting into any complications. If anybody told me I was pretty, I would get sore as hell! It was a saving grace. Really, it was a very valuable experience for me because anything could have happened to me. The minute somebody said something to me that was pleasant, I was through with him.

This traces back to being in a prom or whatever, or walking -- different ages. People always stop a nurse with a kid, and chuck her under the chin, and everybody always remarked about my eyes. I had very blond hair and dark eye brows. I didn't paint them. I still have proof of that from Odessa, a picture of my sister and me which I never showed because my sister didn't want anybody to know that she was five years older, that I was the younger of the two. I always told my own age which used to burn her up, and I never did show that photograph. As a matter of fact, I had part of the picture rephotographed -- just one of me because I thought that it was cute, but now I can show the entire photograph which I have.

I remember that we had a mirror with, oh, probably cupids, or something probably in ghastly taste, and one day -- all these years people would stop and always somebody would say to the nurse, "What beautiful blue eyes she has!"

I began to think I was pretty hot stuff. This was still in Odessa, so I must have been four or five. I stood in front of this mirror, and I made the most fabulous discovery; that I could move my head this way and that and have my eyes remain still, and this to me was the most incredible idea you would imagine -- you know, everything else moved, my nose, my hair, eyes moved, but my eyes didn't. I could still keep my eyes fixed. I was so fascinated that I must have been standing in front of this mirror for an hour when mother said, "What are you doing?"

I didn't want to tell you about this discovery -- it was so private -- so I said, "I was looking at my eyes. Aren't my eyes pretty?"

She looked at me and said, "No!"

I said, "Everybody says they are."

She replied, "They lied to you!"

This was very bad -- you know, that a mother should ever do that to a child! No modern mother would think of it, and it really stymied me in a very fortunate way, so that if I went out with a boy, and he said, "Edith, you have such beautiful eyes!" I never saw him again. He was lying to me.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's a terrific lesson to have had -- you know, to have accumulated armor plate at the age of five.

MS. HALPERT: Instead of being bitter about it. I was saying that to somebody one time, saying, "I'm so tired of reading the newspapers where the kid murdered his mother because it was a broken marriage, or he lived in a "slum" -- all that, the excuses, the alibis that have been built up to a degree where it encourages a lot of other people to function that way. It can work in reverse as it did with me. I was a little bit unhappy about it because I really wanted to have pretty eyes, but after my mother said that they had lied to me I never believed I had pretty eyes until much, much later when I read Freud, or something, when I decided that maybe I did.

DR. PHILLIPS: You put that experience in its proper perspective.

MS. HALPERT: It saved me from unfortunate situations which I might have gotten because really, I didn't know from nothing. I was the most naive and the dopiest kid in the world. I wouldn't have known anything, but this experience protected me. All anybody had to do was tell me that I had pretty eyes, and that was the end of that guy.

DR. PHILLIPS: How were you on the boat over as a sailor?

MS. HALPERT: I don't remember the boat trip over at all except this fabulous experience I had. As I said previously, I was reading at the age of five, and again I will show anybody my passport with the right age because we did have birth certificates in Odessa. It was the Paris of Russia -- only I learned German instead of French. My governess was German, so I could speak German. I was in the upper bunk -- Sonia and I. I think all of us were in one cabin. I don't remember mother -- where she was, but I was in the upper bunk and I was reading Robinson Crusoe, and what do you call those little round windows?

DR. PHILLIPS: Portholes.

MS. HALPERT: The porthole -- something hit it, and it broke, and I was flooded with water, the bunk was flooded with water, and I was hysterical with joy because that was just where Robinson Crusoe got dunked. I came down out of the bunk with such joy!

I was a pet on the boat because I learned a lot of revolutionary songs. We went second class. We did not go first class from Rotterdam. I didn't know the difference, so I just went anywhere. I was taken over by everybody who was traveling first class, and I would come down with the most wonderful load of stuff. If they offered me anything like chocolate, I would always tell them that I needed three because I had a sister and a mother. That got to be funny. Sonia told me that. They also taught me a lot of revolutionary songs because there were a lot of Russians on the boat who were traveling somewhere from Rotterdam. I became the great pet of the boat, and I would sing these revolutionary songs.

DR. PHILLIPS: You really had a ball then during the crossing.

MS. HALPERT: I had the most wonderful time, and when we got off, my mother had a half brother living here in the United States who fixed her good. That was why we became so poor. He meant well. He invested the money for her, including Sonia's money and my money. My father left it to us. My mother's half brother took us out for a walk, and I don't know where it was. We moved right up to 112th Street between Madison and Park, one of those brownstones. Somehow on this walk we went to one of the 'Ls'. I don't know which one it was -- Sixth Avenue, or Third Avenue, or whatever.

We saw a Negro sweeping the stairs, a workman. With one hand he was sweeping the stairs, and in the other hand he had a banana. A banana to me was the symbol of the greatest wealth because on my birthday my rich uncle from Baku who had a home in Odessa -- he had the biggest caviar fisheries in the country -- was taking me out on my birthday, or a holiday, and he bought me a banana which was wrapped in green foil, or something, with a huge ribbon. It cost three rubles. I still remember that -- you know, I ate it a little piece at a time.

Well, to see a workman -- it wasn't because he was a Negro, but a workman -- with a broom, and eating a banana! That to me was -- you know, the symbol of America, the wealth of America. I was terribly impressed with that.

These associations kept coming back to me, and it certainly isn't uncommon for kids to have these associations, but all of them turned out good for me.

DR. PHILLIPS: How did you make your wants and wishes known? You hadn't had English of any kind, or at least you haven't indicated that you did.

MS. HALPERT: Not a word. We weren't prepared, and of course all the kids chased us and called us

"greenhorns"!

At the age of six you could go to school, and I went to school right away, and the teachers were cruel. The kids were vile.

DR. PHILLIPS: Really?

MS. HALPERT: I couldn't speak their language, and I still remember this one teacher who put a dunce cap on me and put me in the corner. She had said to me, "Give me that pointer."

I didn't know what the hell she was saying. "Give me that pointer!"

You know, they used a pointer for the blackboard -- this was before your day.

DR. PHILLIPS: I remember its use in connection with geography.

MS. HALPERT: Geography at the age of six? I didn't know what she was saying. She knew I didn't understand the language, so she put a dunce cap on me. The indignity of it! I stopped crying at the age of six. I never cried since, but that was injustice!

Then I got another teacher, later in the next grade, who was wonderful, and by this time I could understand. But then that first teacher had me sitting in the corner with a dunce cap on my head! With this new teacher I very quickly became "the white-haired kid." I started to draw evidently when I was a baby, because I always drew. The teacher told the class the story of Santa Claus, and she asked whether somebody would like to make a drawing on the blackboard. I did, so from there on, I had the most beautiful sailing. Everybody was wonderful to me at school.

I got into Wadleigh High School at the age of twelve -- Dr. Lee at that time was superintendent of schools, and oh boy! I was the pride of his life!

Somewhere I have a letter from a teacher, a Miss Niessen, who really developed the most tremendous interest in me. She had a much younger sister who was a retarded child, and she sort of adopted me as a symbol of the sister she wanted to have, or whatever, and she took me to every play. I saw practically every Shakespeare play and I saw Maeterlinck's *Bluebird.* Saturday she would take me to the theater, and she would make me write. That's all I had to do. I loved going, and I would write a review of the play for her. She was the science teacher, and she really was extraordinary. I tried to locate her about twenty years ago, and I couldn't.

This happened when I was at P.S. 159, and then when we moved to 105th Street -- we had a stationery store -- it was way out of the school district, and Miss Neissen came and pleaded with my mother, said that she would pay the carfare for me to go P.S. 159. Then Dr. Lee finally -- well, Miss Neissen got in touch with him, and I remained at that school. I was graduated from P.S. 159 instead of coming to my own district because they wouldn't let me go, but that woman was quite extraordinary.

Every once in a while Ralph Bunche, or somebody else, talks about a teacher -- well, this woman was incredible in her sensitivity. I got over that "greenhorn" thing pretty quickly. You know, at that age you learn the language.

I've mentioned the black eyebrows. That was the only unhappy experience I had. I had very blond hair, and I always had dark eye brows and dark eye lashes. My hair got dark after a while, so that by the time I was fifteen I had brownish hair, and then it got darker . Some of the kids didn't like me because I was called on in assembly to recite, to do all sorts of things. Some of the kids who didn't like me, started a rumor that they saw my mother -- in those days evidently they used a special kind of black polish for the stoves; the old stoves – she was painting my eye brows. It was a little queer having blond hair, blue eyes, and dark eye brows and lashes, but she said that she saw my mother painting my eye brows every morning, and gee, I felt -- well, there was always a sense of injustice that hurt in all those instances, but I really had a very good time at school basically.

I'll show you my science book. I'm so proud of my eighth grade science book I'll show it to you.

DR. PHILLIPS: I'd like you to tell me about the why of mathematics. Why were you so sharp in mathematics?

MS. HALPERT: Because my old professor taught me how to add, and then I could do four columns at a time. He would bring his professor friends up, and he'd come and get me and even then -- you know, since my mother never kissed me until I got married; then she pecked me on the cheek -- the idea of being kissed and also that no man should come near you were known to me, so, you know, if he touched me, it was naughty.

He would introduce me to these people, and they would put up columns of figures on paper. I would add four columns, and then I would recite. He taught me Goethe, and this was all at the age before six. He found me a

very apt pupil, and I was crazy mad about him! I liked his sister very much, but his devotion was something I didn't get from anybody after my father died because I was a brat.

DR. PHILLIPS: But this gave you a head start in mathematics.

MS. HALPERT: Oh yes. That's right, and that started me off in school. Then there was drawing, making Santa Claus and so on, on the blackboard, and from there on I was liked by the teachers, and I was a very good pupil.

I've got to show you that science book, that science notebook. I don't care whether you want to see it or not. I'm so proud of it. I just discovered it. Here it is -- grade 8-B. This I am not sending to the Archives. Look at my name. My mother finally got us to drop one syllable in our name. It was Fiviosioovitch, and she said that it was too long, and so we changed it to Fivisovitch. If you think I remember any of the stuff in this science notebook!

DR. PHILLIPS: You were a scholar too. You used these words in the eighth grade?

MS. HALPERT: You don't think I know what it means now, do you? Look at the illustrations! How modern can you get! I tried to read this when I discovered it, and I didn't understand a word.
DR. PHILLIPS: What is the significance of the "A" with the double checks?

MS. HALPERT: That means it was super-super! Hi!

I've got to tell you my favorite story about our store.

DR. PHILLIPS: We had reached the point where we had returned from your search for the science notebook from grade 8-B with the illustrations and content in words you now no longer remember.

MS. HALPERT: I really couldn't understand it. I really knew the stuff then. This is not taken from a book, but something I studied. Why do you forget these things, but completely! I got the highest scores at Wadleigh in Latin, and that I've used. I mean it's made it much easier for me to learn languages.

DR. PHILIPS: Someone said somewhere, and I think it was the Justice, that culture is the deposit of things forgotten.

MS. HALPERT: Well, there are certain things like that which I will never recapture, and I really knew what I was writing about. I really knew about refracted light. I don't know what the hell it is now, but all these things I knew at the time, and evidently these are things -- well, anything scientific I have a non-affinity with to a point where I don't even use it.

DR. PHILIPS: I have that same feeling.

MS. HALPERT: I have a resentment toward it, a subconscious resentment for dehumanizing a person. I don't know why. I just thought of it this minute, but there must be some reason because I can't operate anything.

DR. PHILLIPS: And yet this book is the consequence of a process through which you went through at the time and in which did well. You must have been a fairly good student.

MS. HALPERT: The one time I was promoted I cried. I almost killed myself. I skipped every grade, and for me to be promoted was a mistake. I was skipped the next day. They made an error, and at high school I had a three year course. They cut my course down.

Here is another cruelty of kids and the teacher that I will never forget. I went to Wadleigh, and by that time we were desperately poor. My mother had her half brother invest her money, and he did it absolutely honestly, but it was in the wrong thing, and she got completely cleaned out. She asked Sonia and me whether we would lend her our inheritance, and all that went.

We were just desperate, so she opened a stationery store, and she had absolutely no talent for business. I mean she was the most -- believe me, my business acumen did not come from my mother, and so somebody said that we could always open a stationery store. We were living at that time on Madison Avenue at about 107th Street in one of these brownstones. We had a floor there, and so from there we moved to 105th Street, and right opposite a public school, so I said to mother, "Well, we should get blank books, pencils" and so on. I did the window trimming.

My sister was the spoiled darling. She was taken to school by a governess, and she never did anything for herself. She was smart -- you know, people thought I was smart! Well, I was a dumb cluck because I always worked. She was helpless. She was helpless through two husbands who adored her and took care of her, covered her with jewels and furs. I loved her. We were very close friends, especially after my maturity, and well, anyhow, my mother decided to open this store, and she didn't know from nothing. I was the big business

woman, and this was a very funny experience.

At this particular moment, I can't remember this fellow's name, but he was one of the great mural painters of America, and she was Cushing's daughter. What was he? What's a high cleric?

DR. PHILLIPS: Cardinal Cushing?

MS. HALPERT: Yes. I think this other fellow's name was French, but I don't know. Maybe he had French's studio. I can't think of his name. We became very devoted, very good friends, and this was very much later -- after I had the gallery.

I had a man by the name of Gurry working for me. He was old family, rich, and so on, and he was the man who gave my husband the big job he had as head of the Detroit Art School, and when I opened the gallery to which Sam was violently opposed -- Sam was against my having a gallery. I was a big shot in business. I was earning so much money!

That year, he went to Detroit to run this school -- the first time he really earned money, and it was through friendship with me that Sam got the job there, and he did a beautiful job. Years passed, and Gurry got cleaned out -- the Depression years when everybody got cleaned out, so he came to work for me. I was cleaned out too.

Well, Cardinal Cushing was a terrible snob, and he always resented the fact that I was in reverse -- you know, that I never respected money or family, I respected people. So I would take him only to the chic things, and he was the chic-est looking thing in the whole world -- very elegant.

These people whose name I forget, a *Life* story cover guy and I can't remember his name, were down on 10th Street in French's old studio -- they had a big house there -- and I went to this party. Somewhere along the line I met an Italian Count who was a friend of theirs and who just fell overboard for me. He was the dirtiest, little Fascist -- spoke that way and also a snob. This became very funny, and Edmund Gurry thought it was just simply wonderful! Sam had died, and I was a widow, and he thought that this was the biggest match of the season! He was a real Count, and it got to be very funny.

There was this big part at this house, and I stayed after the party. They'd had two hundred people, or something, and I stayed. We went to dinner, and this Count was really working on me, and I wanted to break his neck all this time. He was just a real honest to God Fascist! I couldn't stand him! He was very handsome, very rich and so on, and Edmund was dying of glory -- you know, he would know somebody who was a Countess. He'd never gotten that high -- you know, all these people who want things for you -- they really want them for themselves. I stayed on, and this Count said, "You'll have dinner with me?"

I said, "We're all going to have dinner together."

He turned to me and said, "I hear you're such a brilliant business woman! How did you learn?"

I said, "I learned it from blowing up peanut bags."

Did you ever hear that one -- the peanut bag story?

Well, everybody stopped talking and listened. Edmund was getting ill. He was trying to stop me, and I said, "We had a stationery store right opposite a school on 105th Street."

He said, "What do you mean?"

I said, "Candy, ice cream cones, books -- everything, and outside there was a stand. All the stores in the neighborhood had stands of peanuts for the kids to buy on their way home, and we began to sell the largest number of peanuts in the entire territory. It was something I devised. For a penny, you put fourteen peanuts in the bag. That was the routine -- fourteen peanuts in one bag, not shelled, but fourteen peanuts, and I would blow the bag up, then twist it, and it looked like twenty-eight peanuts. We didn't say that it was twenty-eight peanuts, but it looked bigger than anybody else's bag because I blew it up."

Everybody laughed because they thought it was very funny, and of course Edmund said, "Edith has such illusions. She loves telling these stories about her youth. You know, it isn't true!"

I said, "The hell it isn't! It's one of the things I'm proudest of."

It was -- just as I did the windows. We did a tremendous business! We really did. I was going to school at the time. This was before my high school days. That's the time when they arranged for me to go to PS 159. I wouldn't take the carfare, so I walked from 105th to 119th Street each day, but I just thought the peanut bag looked prettier, and it did look bigger. I counted out fourteen peanuts, so that's when I started to acquire my

business acumen.

DR. PHILLIPS: Did your mother ever get any wiser in the ways of business?

MS. HALPERT: No, she never did. She just couldn't. She just wasn't brought up that way. She couldn't orient herself to that. She tried awfully hard. She wanted to be independent. My sister never contributed anything. She went to private school; that was her pattern. I went to public school. Well, by the time I was fifteen I was supporting my mother.

DR. PHILLIPS: The family's new "fortunes" were based on the candy store, the stationery store?

MS. HALPERT: There was no fortune here.

DR. PHILLIPS: Whatever fortune there was was based on the candy store. Fortunes was in quotes.

MS. HALPERT: We lived -- just about. We certainly didn't make much money, and that's when I started going to the Metropolitan Museum because there wasn't so much business on Saturday. After school was when the business was good -- when kids would come in and buy -- you know, for a penny, they'd spend an hour, half of this -- little chocolate dolls -- and half of that.

You know I never eat candy. The smell of chocolate, or anything in that family, makes me think of those voices where four kids would decide how to spend a penny -- eight jelly beans and six chocolate babies, or whatever they were.

DR. PHILLIPS: You worked in the store after school?

MS. HALPERT: I came home from school, and I was right there. I'd make ice cream cones, everything. Mother was very inept at everything. I didn't do any house work. That she couldn't get me to do. I was the business woman.

DR. PHILLIPS: What of the use of words and language. We've already indicated that you knew not one word of English when you arrived here.

MS. HALPERT: I was a most avid reader. When we lived on 112th Street, when we first came to this country and I was first learning English, there was a bookstore right opposite us. It was a brownstone, but he had sort of an outside stand, or something, a stall, and he had ten cent books. He had fancy books inside, and I must have been a cute kid -- you know, I was a funny little kid because I was very serious. I'd walk over there and look at the books, and after a while he would let me borrow books.

I'd read Balzac, lots of things, and when it came to sex, I didn't know what the hell was going on. It was only years later I figured it out, but I read very, very good books at the time. I was reading Dostoevski, Gogol -- all those authors before I was fourteen years old, and Shakespeare -- gee, I knew every sonnet, so that I got the language, that way. I didn't get it at home certainly.

DR. PHILLIPS: What was the attraction that writing had for you?

MS. HALPERT: I don't know. Well, the writing came later. It was after my sister got married, and it was after I was married. Oh, I wrote as a kid a little bit, but I was crazy about my sister's kids. She had two of them -- one right after the other, and they were crazy about me because I would make up the most fantastic, new stories. If the kid didn't wash his ears, I would make up a story about birds building nests in their ears, telling them how uncomfortable it was -- and my only problem was Howard would ask me, "Tell me about the birds," or "about the stork bringing the wrong child to the family," and so on. I made up all sorts of queer stories for them, but always with a moral, to make them brush their teeth, or wash their ears, or not scream at the parents.

Whenever, I'd come there, they always wanted me to tell them stories, so on Natalie's birthday, I decided that I would do a book for her, and I wrote something. I have a copy of it. It was also illustrated. I spent the whole summer working on that book typing it so the margin would be even on parchment and all that. I made a cover, and I painted all the illustrations and gave it to her for her sixth birthday, or something, but before that I'd been telling stories, and my sister would tell everybody what wonderful stories I had told.

I took this short story course at Columbia until this guy said, and I have that still with his criticism, that it wasn't very good, so I said, "To hell with it!" I stopped the course, but I continued to write short stories. I have a whole bunch of them somewhere. I don't know where, but I have them. It was no more than curiosity and delving into something.

DR. PHILLIPS: Summer times in high school you held jobs quite apart from the store.

MS. HALPERT: Completely! The first job I got -- don't tell me I can't remember it -- the L.B. Hat Company as a model.

DR. PHLLIPS: For hats?

MS. HALPERT: For baby bonnets. Oh, God! I could have put that in that letter!

DR. PHILLLIPS: Of course you could have, pioneer indeed!

MS. HALPERT: I was an old pioneer. I had sort of a baby face, but they couldn't get a baby to model hats. It was somewhere downtown, and after a while, you know, that wasn't enough. You know, they'd get one customer a day, except during the one day a week when they had more people, so I became what I called the "forewoman." I would hand out the ribbons, the straw to all the girls, and after a while I chose the right things for the right girls, and they all played up to me because they worked piece work. So I told the boss I wanted a raise from the five dollars because I was now the "forewoman," and I got it.

DR. PHILLIPS: You also did some work at home, didn't you?

MS. HALPERT: That I did before this. I made the teddy bear rompers.

DR. PHILLIPS: Was this your own idea?

MS. HALPERT: Completely. I read an ad, and I presumably got it from my mother. She didn't know how to sew. We had a sewing machine at home, and so I learned to use it, and I sewed rick rack braids on my collars. I made hundreds of them, and you know they wouldn't give it to a child, so I delivered them in the afternoon and would take another batch, and they were presumably made by my mother. I helped earn some money, and I would save a little money to buy a book, or other little things that I wanted.

Then I used to make money on puzzles. The newspapers used to run these things. I won a piano once, only I never got it because we couldn't afford the transportation, and I was very bitter about that. Then I used to get ten bucks, twenty-five dollars for solving some puzzle or other.

I was always manipulating because I never had to do any homework. I had lots of time. I played tennis. I used to do my homework in Central Park. Then I went to art school, and I got too busy to do anything else. I used to go to Central Park and paint, and Sundays we would go to Fort Lee to sketch and so on. I have a couple of those. I burned everything -- that was the most traumatic experience in my whole life!

DR. PHILLIPS: When you burned your work?

MS. HALPERT: When I really got -- boy! That was the most traumatic thing! Stanislavski wouldn't have done better. This is just before I got married. Leon Kroll had been my instructor until I got a job at Macy's, and I was still going to the Academy of Design while I worked at Macy's -- well, first at Bloomingdale which was a summer job.

That was one of the pre-sixteen year old jobs I held before I had working papers, and built up a big past -- you know, I was working only two months on the job, and I figured that by the time they caught up I'd be back at school. Well, the first job I got in New York was at Bloomingdale's as a comptometer operator. I saw this ad. It was like passementerie. It sounded wonderfully.

Dr. PHILLIPS: Nobody is going to understand that passing reference to passementerie unless you put that story in. They won't understand that passing reference for beans.

MS. HALPERT: I have to get a long glass of water.

Do you know the Kraushaar galleries?

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes.

MS. HALPERT: Well, Papa Kraushaar knew that story. Well, anyhow, one time I ran away from home. When my sister had her baby, my mother decided to go down to Kentucky. It was in the summer, and I went along. Will you have a drink?

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes.

MS. HALPERT: A long one or a short one?

DR. PHILLIPS: A long one will be just fine.

MS. HALPERT: Natalie is just fifteen years younger than I, so I was just fifteen years old. I was through with high school, and I was going to be an artist, so we went down to Kentucky. My brother-in-law did not like the idea of supporting his wife's mother and sister, and I was very "un-nice."

DR. PHILLIPS: You mean you were forward and frank.

MS. HALPERT: Yes, you know, and when his best friend came who was courting me -- and I was fifteen! I didn't know what the hell was going on, and when the maid was serving, she brought out this big bowl of strawberries, and she served this man first which was wrong. He took the whole bowl, looked around, and said, "Why isn't anybody eating?" I said something to him at the time, and he had talked to my mother. I didn't know anything about it, but he was an old man of about thirty, probably, or more, but in any event, I was getting awfully unhappy there because my brother-in-law made me feel that I was being fed.

There was an ad -- those ads I showed you before came from there -- in the Cincinnati paper, some store that was closing out, and they wanted sales people, temporary, so I applied. As I say, they couldn't catch up with me on a short period, and I got a job right away. I was in the yard goods department. I was getting about five or six bucks a week, and I became the crack sales woman because I was from New York -- you know, and would say, "Picque -- in New York every man's pajamas are made of picque!"

It probably scratched the hell out of him, but those were p.m.'s. -- you know, premium merchandise. If you sold a lot of that, you got a bonus, so I sold every dam hunk of premium merchandise. Well, the job was over in about two weeks, and I was recommended to this very big fancy store as something special. I said that I wouldn't be a sales woman, that was rather vulgar, and my family was terribly embarrassed.

I just walked across the bridge from Covington to Cincinnati -- it cost two cents each way -- so I said I was an artist, and they let me do these ghastly ads the rest of the summer. I was getting about eight dollars a week. This was really hot stuff! Well, I saved some money, and I decided that I didn't like it there. Oh, I was going to college there, to the art school in Cincinnati.

I saw [Frank] Duveneck's work, and that finished me. There was a sarcophagus of Duveneck, and all his paintings were there. Well, I didn't want to paint like Duveneck, so one day I said that I was running away from home. Mother being what she was said, "You don't have to run."

I packed, and she helped me pack. She let me go to New York all by myself without anybody in New York. She wanted to be with Sonia. Again, I was never resentful of that, so I came to New York and to some very distant relatives with whom I was to board.

I arrived in New York with eighteen dollars of my own money. Nobody gave me anything, and I had already paid my fare, so I lived there. I paid three dollars a week, and I had six weeks to go. I was still going to the Academy, and from 59th Street I really had to take the elevated and then a long walk.

In any event, I had to get a job, and I saw this job at Bloomingdale's. This was right across the street from where I was living, and it was for a comptometer operator. I didn't know what the hell it was, so I stood in line. There was a huge line, and the man walked around picking, saying, "You come in. You come in." I don't know how he picked us out, but he picked me. I was way at the end of the line, and he was picking a lot of girls from the line. I walked in, and I was hired. I realized that a comptometer was a machine.

I could sew rompers, but the girls were turning a crank and hitting some keys with their fingers. I got a whole bunch of sheets right away to tally, and these there the tally sheets for the previous day's business. Fortunately I got the art embroidery department which did not have, ever, more than four figures. You couldn't possibly spend more than nine bucks. Occasionally you'd spend ten dollars and four cents, so I never had more than four figures.

I looked at the sheets, and I looked around, and everybody was turning the handle of this machine and hitting the keys, so I had the sheet on the left side and I'd add up the columns with my left hand and with my right hand I was making the same motions as the other girls.

It was a big office, and this was up front. I was in the front row. All the new girls were up in the front row, facing this great glass exposure with the boss on the other side. I noticed that the girls would finish one sheet and put another one on top. I thought, "I'll beat that record," and I kept getting more and more sheets, and at the end of the day as I was leaving, the boss beckoned to me, and I got petrified and walked into his office and he said, "Just a moment."

He brought in the comptometer, and he said, "All right. I'll call off some figures, and you work this."

Well, it was no use -- you know. I said, "I don't know how to use this."

He said, "I know you don't. We counted your sheets. You did forty-eight sheets" -- the record for this department, for my little division, was thirty-something -- "You've tallied more sheets than anybody had ever tallied ever before for this section. How did you do it?"

I said, "It's very simple. It's mental arithmetic," so he gave me a sheet with five figures. I said, "That's too many. I can only do four."

So he gave me another sheet, covered up the total, folded it over and gave it to me. Well, he was a little startled. I said, "You're not going to fire me for lying, are you?"

He said, "I'll have to. I'll be the laughing stock. Everybody in that row and after lunch everybody else came from the other rows to watch you because you did not know what to do. You just turned the handle, but you didn't punch the figures."

I said, "Is that what you do?"

He said, "All right. You take the machine home. I'll take you home for dinner, and I'll show you how to use this."

"Oh, I can't go to your home, Mr." whatever his name was. "An employee never goes out with her boss."

This he told at Kraushaar's years later.

DR. PHILLIPS: Really?

MS. HALPERT: Oh, I wanted to die!

DR. PHILLIPS: I'll bet you did.

MS. HALPERT: What happened between him and me was one thing. Well, he finally called up his sister, and she talked to me and she said, "I'll be there, and it'll be perfectly correct. I'm his sister. I'll meet you downstairs."

I went. He took the goddamn machine with him. I had dinner. The sister was very nice. They were probably hysterical about me, but they were very pleasant. I had a very nice dinner. The people with whom I lived didn't have a telephone. I couldn't call them, so I said that I had to leave because they'd be worried about me. I said that I always went there to dinner, and then I went to school, and I was skipping school this evening, but I had to have a job. I told them that I was going to art school at night at the Academy. Well, he taught me how to use the machine. It's very simple. He said, "You can just make the gestures -- please."

I worked there for about two weeks, and then he said, "Do you have working papers?"

I said, "Oh, I'm seventeen years old."

He said, "Are you sure?"

I said, "Mm-mm.

He said, "You don't lie very well. You were very honest the first time. You don't have working papers."

I said, "I'll be sixteen very soon."

Well, in any event, he was a doll, and he put me in the art department. Those wastepaper baskets that followed my blouses were done at Bloomingdale's, and he told my boss there to let me go home early so I could go to art school earlier. He was really a doll. You know, people were awfully nice to me. That was the end of that career.

Then I went to Macy's. There I was in the foreign office where we translated foreign exchange into American money, and there's where I really met my fate. I was really sixteen then, and of course my references came through.

DR. PHILLIPS: Obviously.

MS. HALPERT: I had so many. My department store reference and my art reference in Cincinnati were sensational. That was all right, but I gave them a lot of others, and the Bloomingdale reference was good for Macy's. I had no trouble. I worked there, and that's where I wrote that poem about the department store because you had to toss a disc when you went in. They didn't have any time clock then. You just threw something in the chute like they have in the subway, and at quarter of nine those chutes were closed. If you came in after nine, you had to leave, and you lost a half day's work, so I wrote the poem.

We had a lunch room, and once a week I indulged myself by buying strawberry shortcake. I had milk and a

banana every day, I think, for lunch because that was most filling and cost very little. I was getting about six bucks. Of course I got promoted right away -- you know, after I had been there about two weeks, I told my boss who was a German that I was really an artist and that I was wasting my time on figures, so he said, "All right, see what you can do about translating the reports on fashions," so I made fashion drawings from the reports which were cables from abroad about what the latest thing was.

I was doing that, and I was really very happy at the job when I had this fancy lunch with strawberries. I hated the sweet stuff on top, the whipped cream. I wiped that off, and a huge roach crawled out of it, and I almost died I was so horrified. Then there were tin cups all chipped, chipped tin plates -- oh, the lunch room was revolting. I got very angry because this was my big blow, and I couldn't eat anything. In fact, I got pretty sick, so I decided that something had to be done about it, and where do you go? You go to the president.

All these experiences came back later like this guy with the comptometer going to a Lachaise exhibition at Kraushaar many years later, and he has to meet me there! He pulled up my big hat, and he said, "Is your first name Edith?"

I said it was, and so he told Kraushaar the whole story about the comptometer, and you don't go to the boss's apartment, and I felt like such a damn fool because Sam Halpert exhibited there, and Kraushaar knew me through visiting Sam's shows.

Well, I went to see the president at Macy's, Mr. Jesse Strauss. I knocked at the door. I had just read *Looking Backward* by Bellamy, and I was a socialist, but hot!

DR. PHILLIPS: That's a great combination!

MS. HALPERT: Management and labor business I was hot on, so I knocked on the door. He let me in, smiled, and he said, "Yes?"

I would have forgotten this, but twenty years later he told this story at Mrs. Liebman's house at dinner. He was my dinner partner, and I hadn't seen him all those years, and he told this story of how he learned all about socialism. I walked in and said, "You are the President of this company?!"

He said, "Yes."

I said, "You have all these Oriental rugs, a hand carved desk while your employees eat roaches?!"

DR. PHILLIPS: That must have gone over big!

MS. HALPERT: It certainly did. He said, "Sit down and tell me all about it."

As I say, I met some extraordinary people, and they didn't sock me in the jaw, or fire me, so I told him all about it. He went down to the dining room. He went into the kitchen, leading me by the hand, and he was absolutely horrified, so the dining room was closed and was thereafter replaced by the first modern dining room in America. We got a quarter a day to eat lunch out for a long time until that dining room was completely redone with real crockery and spoons. Everything was clean, and he had me come in to see him every Friday, a regular routine, to discuss Bellamy -- you know, the problem of management and labor and what could he do. I said, "The idea of dressing the girls in black!"

I wore navy blue. I wouldn't wear black, and I made my own clothes by that time. I would embroider my clothes with woolens, and I said, "My mother is superstitious."

My mother didn't even know what I was wearing. "She wouldn't let me wear black!"

I said that about the uniforms. And I talked about the imposition of that disc, roaches, uniforms, etc -- well, he made a great many changes in the store. Really, he was a wonderful, wonderful guy. Then he wanted to know where I lived. In between I lived at the YW, but at this time I was boarding.

I went back to Kentucky for a little vacation, or something, so I was in a boarding house of some kind. Jesse Strauss and Mrs. Strauss visited me there, and he didn't think that was a very nice place to live, so meanwhile he decided that I shouldn't work the whole day. He sent me to the Art Students League and paid my way afternoons. I worked mornings only in the art department, and gave him Friday instructions.

When he told this story at Mrs. Charles Liebman with all these fancy people at a very fancy dinner party and all those years had passed! He looked at my card and said, "Edith Halpert. What was your name before you were married?"

Of course, I saw his card, and I knew who he was. I said, "I can't recall -- it was so long ago."

He said, "Have you read Bellamy lately?"

Then he told this story about the roaches at the dinner table, and of course the idea -- I was a poor, little, working girl, and they were horrified! That class would be shocked, and Mrs. Liebman was never the same with me.

I worked under Bridgeman at the Art Students League by that time. I went afternoons which made all the difference in the world. Jesse Strauss offered me a scholarship to send me abroad for two years. They made the mistake of sending me a trunk of second hand clothes, and from there on the relationship changed but utterly -- the hand-me-downs of their daughter! I sent it right back! I was earning my own way, and I thought that by going to art school I'd do better work for Macy's. I didn't consider that charity, so when he was sending me abroad right after this clothes business I wrote Mrs. Strauss a very nice letter thanking her, but saying that I was not accustomed to such clothes, that I would be very uncomfortable because they weren't my class, or I didn't want to be out of my class -- something like that. This he told too.

DR. PHILLIPS: He just blabbed all over the lot!

MS. HALPERT: I played around with the idea of travel. By this time I had brought mother to New York. I was supporting her, and I earned -- gee, they had a suggestion box, and I won at least from twenty-five to a hundred dollars a month in the suggestion box. Jesse had nothing to do with that. I always had some ideas, and I won either the minimum, or the maximum, or somewhere in between every month so that helped subsidize me. I took very good care of mother. We lived very simply. We had a three room apartment, and mother could always go back and stay with Sonia.

That business about being sent abroad where I was doing nothing for Macy's. I really improved my work. I began to do some pretty good, lousy drawings for ads that were as good as a number of the other minor people, and I thought that I did get better, so I began to think about going abroad. I looked into the travel -- you know, he had a whole outline for me, school and so on, and it was being done in very good style. Well, I came to see him on my regular Friday, and I said, "No. I can't see going abroad as anything I deserve. This is charity."

He said, "Look at Otto Kahn. He sends all these people. Any talent should be rewarded," and he went on and on. Finally I said, "I think the real reason is that if I become a great artist, as I think I will, you will get the credit. I will owe it to you. I want to owe it to myself. Thank you. I won't go."

He was so kind to me that I had to resign, and I have the letter -- Natalie found that too. But I had to come back because he wanted to train me to be a buyer. He really was just absolutely wonderful, but I quit and went to Stern Brothers, also in the advertising department, and in two weeks I was running the department.

My boss took on another job in the mail order department, and I really worked very hard -- wrote the copy. It was really a pushover. They had a book a hundred years old, and you turned back to the year before, and if they had a white sale, you had a white sale on that day, and if they had a bag sale -- you know, the whole thing was outlined. Then I'd go around to the buyers, and they'd play up to me for space and so on.

Mr. Stern got interested in me. He called me in because I used the word "phenomenal value," and he asked me what "phenomenal" meant. I wrote all the copy, and my boss really was busy in his other department. There I made that toy drawing I showed you which I think is very nice. I used to make the drawings and write the copy. I didn't do the costumed drawings. I wasn't very good at that, so I did toys and furniture, and so on, and I stayed there a whole year and got married while I was there.

DR. PHILLIPS: What of Mr. Stern's interest?

MS. HALPERT: Mr. Stern asked me what "phenomenal" meant, and I told him. He said, "Don't you think that reducing a handbag from three dollars to a dollar ninety-eight is not phenomenal?"

I agreed with him. I said, "That was a misuse of the word."

He talked about fair trade practice and so on. He too had me come in. Thursday the copy had to be ready, and he never paid any attention to that department before, but it was on the same floor, so I would show him all the copy. They'd set it up. They had a printing press there, and they set up the whole copy. They sent whatever you call those things -- the whole page that they were going to send to the press. I've forgotten what it is called.

DR. PHILLIPS: A dummy?

MS. HALPERT: No. It is not a dummy. It's like a sheet, but it isn't. It's called something else. Well, I would show it to him before it went out, and then he'd okay it and say, "Send it in, and come back."

We'd have long, serious discussions. Then I told him I was getting married, marrying an artist. He said, "Don't

you think you'd like to go abroad before. You're awfully young to get married."

All this time I was two years older then I actually was -- always. I had to stick to my last. It was a tough job getting those two years knocked off because people knew me as two years older. I had to go with my passport after a while to prove my age. I knocked off two years somewhere en route. Then I added some years when I got another job. I think I added three years; I had a rough time. And everything was fine.

I was doing a toy ad, and my boss came down. He was a German. I had boats in the water, or something. He wanted me to have little submarines that we were advertising, and he wanted me to put German helmets floating, indicating that all these Germans had been killed. I got very violent on the subject -- coming as it did from a German. I quit my job. Mr. Stern came to see me and tried to get me back, said that he would fire the boss, and I said, "Oh, no, but I wouldn't do anything I didn't believe in!"

I didn't dare tell Sam that I had quit the job so I went out every day, and I answered ads. I pretended that I went to work, and I'd come back and cook the dinner and so on. Then I'd go to Columbia which wasn't very far away. We lived on 109th Street with the el turning right against our window -- right where it made the turn on 6th Avenue. I read a lot of ads, and there was a great need for help those days. This was 1918.

There was one ad -- "Wanted, Man, forty years of age as statistician," so I wrote a letter, saying I'm not a man and I'm not forty years of age, but that I was a brilliant statistician, and I got the job. This was when I was really in the pants business. It was Cohen Goldman, and they had been making uniforms, and they switched from uniforms. This is where I became an efficiency expert. I reorganized -- though I did not know that was what it was -- the entire store system. I have the score sheets -- all that material. I kept a sample of each job that I had, and I really established a terrific system, a control system that they'd never had. I would have stayed on forever because by that time I was getting twenty dollars, something like that, with a long vacation.

On my vacation I went off with my husband to a Lake George place and I met Mr. Fishman there who had one of the biggest women's coat places. I was sitting on the terrace with him, and he said, "Some people have all the luck!" We have so much trouble! We have to keep records for the union, and we have eight people, and the system is terrible. A friend of mine really has luck. He got a dumb girl there. They pay her twenty bucks a week, and she has reorganized that place. It's talked about as the most extraordinary organization," and he went on and on.

I asked him, "What would you pay a dumb girl like that?"

He said, "I'd pay her thirty."

I said, "I'm hired."

DR. PHILLIPS: That must have broken him up!

Well, I went back, and I resigned from Cohen Goldman because the guy called me a dumb girl. Mr. Cohen and everybody else carried on. I said, "You called me a dumb girl! You cheated me! I was worth much more."

I went to Fishman, and there I had a boss who really made it very difficult. He went to my husband and offered him a lot of money to divorce me. He didn't ask me whether it was all right with me. There was one beautiful instance. I had to work in his office because what I was doing was very private. All the model clothes were there, and I was very unconscious of anybody's interest -- absolutely. It would never occur to me because I was a married woman. After a while these models would tell me, "Rudifer is burning up for you. Look out!"

One day I came in, and this place is opposite -- what's that park in the twenties -- you know, where the Nazis was going to make the speech? It's right in the middle of the working district. In any event, we were up on top of one of the tall buildings. I came in one morning, and Rudifer called me over and grabbed my hand. I looked out the nearest window, and it was an awful jump. He unbuttoned his shirt, and he put my hand inside his shirt, and he said, "Feel!" He was wearing silk underwear -- that's all.

He also taught me something quite fantastic about artists at the time. This was in the summer. Sam wanted to paint. This is not against Sam. He was a wonderful guy. It was impossible for an artist to earn a living in those days, and so I was very happy to do what I was doing, but this summer we moved out to Lake Mahopac where Sam wanted to paint.

I had to travel four hours a day and I thought that was perfectly all right. It would never occur to me that it wasn't. He was an artist, and this was important! I had to run through the woods to make a train. In Lake Mahopac, you had to go to Golden Bridge, and the distance was a little over a mile. I was scared of the woods. It was dark when I left the house, but I'd run like hell. I was always afraid that a chipmunk, anything that looked like a mouse, would scare me to death. Then I left the office late because there was no train until late. I had to

take a subway, and so on.

I had no sun shine, or anything, because on Sundays I would pose for Sam. You know, those were six day weeks, and on Sunday I would pose for Sam, clean house, and so on. I didn't have any sun tan. I never saw the outdoors, and Rudifer said to me one day, "Why do you live out in the country?"

I said, "It's wonderful for painting."

He said, "You don't paint."

I said, "No. I don't paint any more now."

He said, "I want you to let me drive you out to your home. You call your husband and ask him whether it's all right."

I did so, and we drove out. This is when he talked to my husband. I was fixing dinner, or something, and he told Sam that it was very cruel to make me travel all that distance. I didn't know about it because Sam didn't tell me at all.

Two days later Rudifer said, "I want to take you for a ride, and you can take one of the girls along."

I got a model to come along. I made it clear to all those people that I was a married woman. He took me for a ride through Central Park. There was a lake. There were trees, and you know, there was very little difference between Lake Mahopac and Central Park, and it made a very deep impression on me. He said, "You know, artists are very selfish people. He makes you travel all that distance to get something he could get right here."

I bawled the hell out of him, but it did make an impression on me. He said, "You'll be for it, if you come in a minute before ten o'clock, and you'll leave at four-thirty from here on, and Saturday you don't work!"

It made a five day week. I said, "This is ridiculous!"

Mr. Fishman came in, the big chief. The other Fishman was the vice president, and Mr. Fishman said, "We decided that no Jewish help will work here Saturday any more. I don't work on Saturday."

Fishman didn't work on Saturday, and I didn't know that. I had very little contact with him, so I had very easy sailing from there on, but that about artists made a very deep impression that I've never been able to erase. I never held it against Sam -- never. I never told him that. Years later he told me the deal Rudifer had proposed to him, that he could be a rich artist, that he would give him so much money for a divorce, that if he really loved me, he wouldn't let me do this, but this would never occur to Sam.

I felt that a year was long enough for any job -- you know, you get stagnant. I'm doing this gallery business thirty-six years already.

DR. PHILLIPS: You made a decision somewhere along the line to stick with business. Was this because of your marriage?

MS. HALPERT: I have to tell you that traumatic thing that tells why I gave up art. I put an ad in the newspaper. I was treated beautifully there. A year had gone by. By that time Rudifer told me that he was in love with me, and so on, but that he wouldn't bother me that he just had to tell me. He wouldn't bother me. He just wanted to be able to love me. It was okay with me. I didn't care as long as he didn't make me feel his silk shirt again. The year was about up at the time, and I decided that I had to get another job, so I put an ad in the paper.

[William] Zorach has told this story at least a thousand times because I got very friendly with Zorach. I put down in the ad – "systematizer." I didn't call myself an efficiency expert. I bought the Leffingwell book, and reading that book I became an efficiency expert in three days. I advertised, and I got about fifteen answers, and one of them was S. W. Strauss and Company which was an investment bank forty-eight years without any loss to any investor. They should live so long! But up to that time, it was so, and that was 1921, when I was twenty-one years old. Again we lived in Lake Mahopac during the summer. I didn't discuss that experience with Sam at all -- Rudifer's ride in Central Park which was exactly like Lake Mahopac.

We lived there again, and I got a letter inviting me to come down. I came down to New York, and I was introduced to Mr. Roberts. My direct boss, was one of the best friends of one of my clients, and I saw him twenty years later, and all these stories were repeated. When one of my clients heard this story, he brought him in one day, and I recognized him.

Mr. Roberts, the first vice-president interviewed me, and I told him what I had done. I was a systematizer. I had reorganized the business in both places -- Cohen Goldman and then Fishman. S. W. Strauss was very

interested. They were around Wall Street then, and they were moving up to Forty-Sixth Street. I said, "I could handle that perfectly."

I drew the floor plans. I did that again later in Paris, but from Cohen Goldman on, I had rearranged all the offices. I had mobile desks, and stuff, and files that I had designed, and so on. They asked me how much I wanted, and I said, "Fifty dollars."

They almost swooned. This was 1921. They said that was utterly ridiculous and out of the question. I said I was very sorry. As I was walking out, I picked up a pamphlet. It was lying there for everybody -- *The ABC's for Investors*. Well, then I had all these other answers, and I knew that I could get a job in a minute, so I thought I could afford a week's vacation by this time. I decided that I would stay and go outdoors. I would answer the ads from time to time.

Riding home on the train I read this pamphlet with great interest -- you know, question and answer; "What is a mortgage?," "What is the first lien on property?" I never knew what the hell a mortgage was, believe me, so I read it with great interest, something to learn. I took it home with me.

Meanwhile, I had two other jobs ready, and I said that I wanted to make up my mind in a week. I had sort of a hunch. Three days later I got a telegram asking me to come down again, and I went down to S.W. Strauss. This time Mr. Strauss was there too, old man Strauss, and I took this booklet with me on the train, put it in my bag and for that job I bought a pair of shell rimmed glasses because I had to be twenty-five years of age for that job. For fifty bucks you had to be twenty-five years old, so I told them I was twenty-five years old, and Mr. Strauss said, "Do you know anything about banking?"

I said, "Ask me some questions."

He did, and I answered them all. He rubbed his hands. "You are not only hired, but I want you to work with me. You're the first woman I ever met who knew what a mortgage was, who knew about interest rates."

He was completely overwhelmed!

The guy who wrote that pamphlet became a vice president through me. He didn't know it, but I sure pushed him. I got the job. I made the blue prints and so on for the move uptown. I became the head of the correspondence department and the "systematizer."

I installed the first Dictaphone department in America and got sound proof ceilings so that there wouldn't be any reverberations with thirty girls chopping away at typewriters. This became the model. I was hired out to the Cadillac Company. I was written about. I was a cover girl then, too, on a business magazine. I designed these desks that all the cards are in -- that's mine for Shaw Walker. Shaw Walker offered me ten thousand dollars a year if I traveled at that time.

By the time I left S.W. Strauss I was getting over six thousand dollars a year. I had my name on the board, the only female executive in banks. There again, Mr. Strauss developed an affection for me. He lived at the Ambassador Hotel which they own, and he used to make a big speech twice a year, and I would write his speeches for him. I'd come up and typewrite for him at his home, and his wife would coo about it. Then he'd read it to her as though he had dictated it, and she would say, "Darling, this is brilliant!"

"Faith is the corner stone of success" -- yes, that was my line. I started one speech with that. Isn't it funny that I remember this stuff!

I was there five years, and I was dying to take Shaw Walker job, but Sam wouldn't permit me to travel -- you know, I had to be home all the time, and he was quite ill all those years. It wasn't until he died that we realized what had been wrong with him. I read another book, and I sent Sam to an analyst. He went to the analyst, Dr. Stern, who was one of the first Freudian analysts in America, and I knew all the artists who went there by the pictures he had hanging in his office.

He decided in 1925, that one of the great problems Sam had -- well, I thought I tried to be so understanding that we had a joint account. I had no money of my own, and I had Sam give me my week's allowance, but the analyst insisted that I had to give up the job, that I was emasculating Sam, and that we had to spend all the money that had been saved, that we had saved, and we really lived in style.

We had an apartment on 46th Street near Fifth Avenue right opposite Irving Berlin, and we lived very well. I had a maid, so that I didn't come home and cook. I lived right across the street from the job, and Mr. Strauss ordered the flower service for my house, and all the vice-presidents whenever I threw something their way -- you know, records and what not, so I was really living it up.

The only money that I did not contribute to the account was my bonuses, and then Mr. Strauss made me write him a note that I would keep that for myself and that was invested in Strauss bonds. I was not to give anything from that to anybody. It was an agreement, and I had about ten thousand bucks there. That's how I opened the gallery later.

Well, the analyst said that I had to give up the job, go abroad, go away, but in any event, spend all the money, come back, and Sam would be the man of the family. The analyst didn't figure out how Sam was going to support us. That hadn't come to him. We went to Europe and lived there for almost for a year. We took a whole house in Paris.

DR. PHILLIPS: You just went hog-wild for a year!

MS. HALPERT: I got kissed by Monet -- right here. I began to paint again, and I reorganized a department store. There was a big scene about that -- oh, Jesus, and we had little difficulties because in Paris everybody was overt about making passes. I couldn't help it. In Italy they pinch you, but in Paris -- well, we would sit at a cafe, and Sam always wanted to knock somebody down because he would make some remark. Sam was getting very annoyed, not that I encouraged it. We came back without a nickel.

DR. PHILLIPS: This was the grand cure.

MS. HALPERT: Sam wasn't one bit better. He heard noises all the time, and he really heard noises because he died of spinal meningitis. Sam was in Detroit, and when I got a telephone call I flew out right away. I got my doctor to come with me, but Sam had Lee Simpson who was the greatest specialist in the field, and there was nothing he didn't try if I would permit it, a brain operation. They did a spinal bit, but nothing was helping.

Of course, now they have various other cures, but at that time the disease was completely fatal. When they operated, they found that Sam had a rotted mastoid, and he did hear noises all his life, and he was going nuts with the noises. I mean he was always sitting off in the corner, a miserable guy, miserable all the time. Analysis was not for him any more than it was for George Gershwin when he had a brain tumor. He died of that, and he was being analyzed. I knew George very well.

DR. PHILLIPS: This was the early era of analysis.

MS. HALPERT: The man tried. It was nobody's fault, but all the years -- and long before I married Sam, he went to doctors in Germany. He had an Aunt in France, and he heard those noises. The diary I discovered which almost made me cry -- well, on our wedding morning, Sam was sitting and groaning, and he didn't even say "Hello" to me -- you know, the first morning, and I was very unhappy -- naturally.

DR. PHILLIPS: You had this long train of really chance experiences in the business world.

MS. HALPERT: But always bosses fell for me, and I don't mean sex-wise. Strauss really wanted to adopt me. He was a very rich man, and he always said that if only I was his daughter! Jessee Strauss was so devoted to me that when Robert Strauss, his son, became a big shot in Washington, through him I went right to General Johnson, the NRA.

I have that file, and the NRA file is fantastic! We worked things out for the art world. That whole Strauss family was utterly devoted to me. I always got in with the bosses. They always liked me, and I sure had quick promotions but the first time I get fifty dollar check, Sam had to show it to Zorach, and the whole art world knew that I actually got fifty dollars a week. That was for a very short time. I got about a hundred within a very short period. I was getting a minimum of about five thousand dollars, and I went up. Then we went to Ogunquit, and that's when I decided to open the gallery.

DR. PHILLIPS: We're just about at the end of this tape, and before we get there, there is one story I want you to put in here, and that's the early running away story involving passementerie.

MS. HALPERT: That's when I was a kid of twelve. This was a help wanted ad, and when I was running away from home my mother said that it would be a good idea for me to get a job because I had to pay for my food, my room, and so on, so I got the morning paper, and I read all the ads. I wasn't equipped to do anything, and I saw these two ads that attracted me. One was a basting puller which I thought would give me an opportunity to think poetry. I could write it down later because it was a very mechanical thing to do, but the job that really fascinated me was passementerie operator.

I didn't know what the word meant, but I saw "Edith Fiviosioovitch" -- you know, in neon lights -- "Passementerie Operator." It was such a beautiful word! For years I didn't know what it meant. I never went. I didn't apply for the job because mother sort of convinced me the next morning that it was just as well not to start out, that I should stay at home. That's where the passementerie came in. I was never a basting puller and never a

passementerie operator.

[END OF 1 OF 7 REEL B1r]

DR. PHILLIPS: Your story of your chance encounter with the comptometer is a joy.

MS. HALPERT: I didn't know how he picked us but gee, they needed about five or six girls, and there were about a hundred in line and they interviewed probably twenty ahead of me. We just moved along the line pointing this one and that one aid said, "Follow me."

I had to sit right in front of the boss yet.

DR. PHILLIPS: And you own your ability to do forty-eight sheets to the time before you were five.

MS. HALPERT: Yes, and I did forty-eight sheets. Yes, that came from Odessa. I did forty-eight sheets, and nobody had ever made that record, but can you imagine sitting there all day trying to figure out what in the hell I was doing because they'd collect the sheets every hour or so, and I had sheets ready, and they were correct.

He was going crazy all that day. He told that at Kraushaar's, and I could have killed him because that went right through the art world. Billy Zorach could tell a lot of stories because he used to just eat them up. I always had strange thing happen to me -- always.

32 East 51st Street, New York City, Monday, April 23, 1962.

[BEGINNING REEL 1 OF 7 SIDE A1r]

MS. HALPERT: You go inside Natalie. I'll be self-conscious.

DR. PHILLIPS: We were going to put in a story which you told me last time at the end of the evening after I had packed up the equipment, and it struck me then and no less so introspect as, in part certainly, a key to you.

MS. HALPERT: One of three keys.

DR. PHILLIPS: I don't know how many there are, and I wouldn't be caught trying to guess, but certainly in terms of what you told me last time, this is a key. It involves in part, the demands of a climate, an atmosphere, to which you aspired as best you could in terms of what you had by way of finances. You made some alterations in terms of novel design with respect to bloomers which were required, which was uniquely you.

MS. HALPERT: I did the same thing at Macy's -- I changed from black uniforms to blue.

DR. PHILLIPS: I think we ought to put this bloomer story in its context. This was high school.

MS. HALPERT: Yes, this was Wadleigh High School.

DR. PHILLIPS: And the girls there were . . .

MS. HALPERT: Well, Wadleigh High School was on the westside, and in reverse to the current trend the westside was the fancy part of town, and the eastside was like -- well, not like the eastside of downtown which was slums, but the eastside was not up to the westside -- completely in reverse to the present picture. In any event, since I was an offbeat kid, I read, drew, worked, and so on, and my interests were very unlike other girl's interests. I didn't play much, and I wasn't interested in boys, or anything like that. I was much too busy, so when I got to Wadleigh at an exceptionally young age -- if you've checked my record --

DR. PHILLIPS: You skipped quite a bit.

MS. HALPERT: I skipped every term, and I got there very early, and Dr. Lee, the then superintendent, decided that I was bright enough to do the high school in three years. He understood me to a degree, and I made it very clear, since there was a big discussion about my having moved from PS 119 area to 105th Street, that I had to be transferred like all the kids. Well, the principal -- everybody at the school carried on. I couldn't be transferred, so I had to stay in that school. He realized that I was very proud because my teachers offered to pay my fare every day. It was quite a walk. It was a good mile, and in the city that's a lot. I had to bring my lunch instead of going home. I wouldn't accept their offer, and I walked the distance all the time.

In any event, I got to high school, and after we had been registered -- you know, we went through the regular routine -- we went to our specific classes. They got the okay to call me "Miss Edith" because in high school you

had to be called by your surname. Well, nobody could pronounce Fiviosioovitch, and even when my mother cut it down to Fivisovitch, it was still impossible, so Dr. Lee gave the teachers permission to call me "Miss Edith." That was that.

We were all called to gym which was part of our curricula and which didn't interest me in the slightest degree, but I went willingly. The teacher and all the classes assembled in one gym, and the teacher specified that all of us had to get navy blue serge, box pleated bloomers at such and such a store, and she gave us the name of the organization where we could buy them. In much later life I realized that she probably had a cut, but in any event, we were all to go. She described the bloomers. Nobody wore them. This was the first day. They were box pleated, navy and serge, and they cost six dollars.

I felt that it would be at that time an imposition to ask my mother for six dollars, so I told her I needed bloomers. I asked her for a buck, or something, and I went out and I got some fabric. I can't remember what it was. It was navy blue, and I box pleated my own set of bloomers. I made my own bloomers. They were really quite smart, as I recall. I made some sort of yoke business because if you have box pleats starting somewhere at the waist line, you looked pregnant. I decided that I would make a flat top and then the box pleats. I didn't know what "pregnant" meant then, but I felt that it was a bad line.

I arrived at the appointed day. I think gym was Tuesday, or whatever, and I was wearing my beautiful bloomers. I stayed up nights to finish them, and I remember getting shoe laces to put in the sides instead of buttons and various things. I thought that the bloomers would be much more attractive to have little laces on each side for the yoke effect.

Well, I arrived. Everybody was called alphabetically, and I was called somewhere in between. Each girl had to appear, make out her card, and fill in information about herself, where she was born, nationality, religion and so on. I was going to say "sex," but they were all girls, and this teacher looked over everybody's costume. We all wore midi blouses, but I had always worn midi blouses. It was sort of routine for all kids to wear midi blouses to school then. She looked at my bloomers. I had looked at all the other bloomers, and I thought that I really had the smartest pair. It was the best looking pair in the class, and she said, "Where did you get those bloomers!"

I said, "Why?"

She said, "I told everybody here to go to so-and-so company."

I said, "I thought these were a better design. They conform" -- or whatever the word was then. I'm sure we didn't use conformism then. They were regulation. They had box pleats. They were navy blue, the right length, and so on. She pulled them out, and she called all the girls to halt and pulled out the pleats and made me turn around, and she said, "Look what she's wearing!"

The entire class went absolutely to pieces screaming with laughter, and I stood there. I really think this experience was one of the most traumatic experiences to have. There were probably a couple of hundred girls there -- the entire school. I don't know, but it was the first term, and there were a hell of a lot of girls in the first term. It was a huge school. Well, everybody was hysterical, and she kept making me turn around so that they could see it from all angles. She untied the laces, and everyone shrieked with laughter. I walked out of the class, and I refused to come back. I never went back to gym. I had to report to the principal. I had to report to my immediate teacher and so on, and I refused to talk. I just said, "I won't go to gym!"

I would not tell them after they laughed at me -- I knew they'd laugh even harder -- all these westside girls -- that I couldn't afford the six dollars. I didn't want my mother to scrape up six dollars for this, and I knew that they would be even more hysterical with the idea of poverty and my making my own bloomers, so I refused to go.

Finally I was seen by everybody in command, all the way up to the principal. I said, "I like my bloomers, and that's all I have!" I didn't tell anybody the truth. I liked my bloomers, that's all I had, that's all I would wear, and they would serve the purpose perfectly.

I also remember at the time that I had a little experience shortly before by being asked to go into the movies – some old man picked me out of a group. They were having -- I don't know -- some movie, and they needed a kid, and he thought I'd be fine. I didn't want to be in the movies. I wanted to go to school. Well, I just made it very clear that I would not make any changes, and I refused to attend if I was going to be laughed at. I thought my bloomers were far superior to anything they had. Finally the matter reached the superintendent of schools, Dr. Lee -- I'm sure that was his name. He was so sympathetic to me always in the past in public school. I don't remember whether I told him the details, but I said, "I made them myself."

I just refused to go. He said, "What do you like in the way of sports?"

I said, "Hockey."

I was roller skating all over town. I did the shopping for mother for the store by hitching on to a truck with my hockey stick, so I said, "I'd like to play hockey."

Well, I was excused from gym for the rest of my high school career, and I played hockey during that period and did very well. I became quite a good hockey player. But I couldn't go home and tell mother because she would have been terribly disturbed, so this was a deep, deep secret with just a little hint to Dr. Lee, but I never could talk it out. It remained one of those terrible tragedies in a kid's life. It hardened me in a way, and I think I punished the rich ever after.

DR. PHILLIPS: You mean you played Robin Hood to some extent?

MS. HALPERT: Not really, but I really developed for my self-esteem a sense of superiority about it to compensate for the hurt. I decided that I had better taste than anybody in the school because these were -- they really were much better looking bloomers! Even in retrospect, as I remember the design, they were much better looking.

Many years afterward going all the way into the near present, Mrs. Webb, who was a very dear friend of mine, and every once in a while we would horse around about the poor and the rich, and I always made her feel very embarrassed about being the rich person in the combination. I think that subconsciously it carried on with, "I'm going to punish the westside kids the rest of my life!" I think I did.

DR. PHLLIPS: Isn't it a fact that most of these kids were nameless to you anyway?

MS. HALPERT: Nobody knew anybody. We were all new. There was nothing. It was completely impersonal. There was no sense of dislike, or like because nobody knew anybody. We had just been in the classroom being assigned to desks and so on, given books and whatnot, and nobody had a chance to talk to another, but a number of the girls knew each other. They had gone through the same primary school together on their side of the tracks.

DR. PHILLIPS: Laughter from friends is bad enough, but from a collection of unknowns!

MS. HALPERT: Yes, unknown people, and somebody in authority. The girls didn't hurt as much as the authority -- this woman -- you know, sort of twirling me around to make me the focal point of a jeer with all the kids falling in line immediately. There wasn't anybody who didn't conform to this hysteria about these bloomers.

DR. PHLLIPS: And you had to internalize it with no one with whom to communicate it.

MS. HALPERT: I had nobody to talk to. I never had anybody I could discuss anything with. Even now I don't have anyone to discuss anything with. I can talk a lot, but I don't discuss.

DR. PHILLIPS: You think that this has shaped and configured in part. . .

MS. HALPERT: Oh, yes, it's something I remember so vividly. There are other things I recall, but this I remember, and in talking about it I still get a little emotional, and I don't about other things. I have adjusted. I fit it into a general picture, but this always comes through as a very painful experience.

DR. PHILLIPS: The way you've described your life in this country, you were the one who collected experience quite apart from your mother and your sister who had a kind of sheltered orientation which had some continuity, but there wasn't any shelter that you've described for you.

MS. HALPERT: I didn't have time to play with kids. I really had a great many things to do -- you know, for instance, on weekends. The store was closed Sundays, of course, and I would do the museums. I didn't have time to kid around with other girls in the neighborhood. I just didn't have time because I had so many things to do. I read a great deal, and I drew all the time. I was painting, or doing something constantly.

Somewhere way back I went to art school for about a month or two. I can't remember where. I just have a vague recollection of some man coming in and I was drawing, and he gave me some things to copy. He got very interested in me. He was an art teacher, and he gave me things to copy and showed me how. You make a tracing, then you fold it, and you get both sides that way. I thought that was the most revolting idea! Because you rub the back of the paper and it came through. You used very heavy pencil and then you had the other half of the design. I thought that was the worst kind of cheating, so I gave that up. I went to art school for a very short time, but I can't remember where or what, but I didn't like it. I didn't think the teacher was very good and I did it on my own.

DR. PHLLIPS: This is what intrigues me about you -- the basis for judgment. You just said that you didn't like the

art teacher. This is intensely subjective, isn't it?

MS. HALPERT: Yes. I just felt that what he was teaching was ridiculous. That's all. It's as simple as that. He may have been the greatest art teacher in the world, so when I went to the Academy, I thought Leon Kroll was an excellent teacher until he began correcting my drawings. I screamed like hell. I said, "You can make corrections on the side. Don't you touch my drawings!"

DR. PHILLIPS: Really?

MS. HALPERT: Yes. He talks about it still. He comes in here.

DR. PHILLIPS: You mean there is a pride of authorship?

MS. HALPERT: It wasn't a question of authorship. It was pride of something I saw, and I wanted to do it that way. I didn't object to anybody else's way, but I didn't want my way corrected. They could do it their way, and I would do it my way. I might learn something from the way they did it, but they couldn't correct my drawings, and Leon Kroll never did it again.

DR. PHILLIPS: You were, in fact, the teacher.

MS. HALPERT: Not at all. He may have been right, but I just didn't want him correcting my drawing. I said, "You tell me about it. I'll correct it, but don't you dare draw on my paper!"

I told you I was a brat.

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes, I know you did, but I didn't buy that.

MS. HALPERT: You didn't?

DR. PHILLIPS: No. Life is horribly complex in all kinds of ways and whatever makes you what you are is so blasted unique that it can't be reproduced in any other form, nor easily explained as in "brat."

MS. HALPERT: That's why I like the artists I like. If I told them what to do and they did what I told them, I'd tell them to get the hell out of the gallery. It would be that simple.

DR. PHILLIPS: You'd despise them, and yet there was one occasion when something was said to you; namely, that your eyes were not pretty -- that somebody had lied to you which conditioned you.

MS. HALPERT: That was a different thing. Somebody wasn't correcting me. I had heard this and had accepted it as a fact, just as I accepted the Tsar and the fact that the Tsar wore a crown. It's exactly the same thing -- this is something I believed, and then they'd tell me something I had believed wasn't so, that somebody had lied to me, not that I was wrong, but that the person had lied to me. I had a thing about a lie which was exaggerated.

DR. PHILLIPS: The person who told you this particular bit was authority too -- your mother, but when a man like Mr. Kroll, however . . .

MS. HALPERT: He was my teacher.

DR. PHILLIPS: However well versed he may have been, it was wholly inappropriate for him, in your view, to even add or subtract one iota from something you saw and wanted to put on canvas.

MS. HALPERT: This wasn't on canvas. We weren't permitted to paint. These were charcoal drawings. The boys could work from life, but the girls -- I think there were only four of us -- had to sit in the hall. That too I considered unjust.

DR. PHILLIPS: Outside?

MS. HALPERT: Outside. We had to draw from these damn casts all the time. We couldn't work from life until I got the idea of boring a hole in the door leading into the boy's room where they had live models -- only when the girls were posing, not when the boys were posing, and we used to make the life drawings when nobody was looking. We took turns looking in. They couldn't have a mixed class with a nude model in 1914 and 1915.

DR. PHILLIPS: I don't know anything about the atmosphere of 1914 and '15.

MS. HALPERT: I'm telling you then. It was completely forbidden. The parents would have closed the school, so since there wasn't enough of us -- I remember Lunca Curass, Otley Barzands -- oh, my God, isn't that amazing! -- and Dorothy Lambert. There were four of us, and we had to sit outside. This was the evening class. All the

girls were much older, and they had go to work. None of us could go to school in the day time, but even so there were not enough girls at the art school to have a separate life class.

We sat out in the corridor and drew from the same old casts, and then Leon Kroll would come along and say, "That arm is too long," or whatever. I looked at that damn cast. I knew how long that arm was, and I knew that the head was one seventh of the body, whatever it was, what the proportions were -- I knew all the rules. I couldn't have anybody correct that. Thereafter he used to draw on the side, make his corrections on the side, but not on my drawing -- on the same paper, but way off on the side. He accepted it.
DR. PHILLIPS: This is an association of people with like interests. Did you find much to talk about despite the fact that the other girls were much older?

MS. HALPERT: We didn't have time to talk to each other, and I had a terrible time pretending I was sixteen. I borrowed what they called a high bust corset.

DR. PHILLIPS: Wow! This is way before my time!

MS. HALPERT: In those days instead of girdles they wore a one piece garment which went up on top. Every time I dropped a piece of charcoal, I couldn't find it because the high bust was in my way. There was nothing in it but --.

DR. PHILLIPS: Tell me this, was there much humor in your family? You had a lot of it in retrospect.

MS. HALPERT: We were a very small family, and the age differential of five years between two girls makes it completely impossible to have any association until many, many years later when we became, my sister and I, the most devoted of friends. She's the one person in the whole world I miss desperately, but during the early years we had absolutely no communication whatsoever. None.

DR. PHILLIPS: Looking back in retrospect, it may be funny that you couldn't pick up a piece of chalk. It may even be funnier that you would go to that length.

MS. HALPERT: I laughed.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's what I meant.

MS. HALPERT: I thought it was funny as hell. I had to look for the charcoal when nobody was looking. I couldn't admit that there was nothing in there.

DR. PHILLIPS: But even to put the garment on at all must have had elements of humor.

MS. HALPERT: I had to pretend.

DR. PHILLIPS: It must have been very humorous.

MS. HALPERT: I used to think it was very funny when I did it and got it on right.

DR. PHILLIPS: You were in art school spasmodically, weren't you?

MS. HALPERT: I was there for two years in succession.

DR. PHILLIPS: It wasn't always with Kroll, was it?

MS. HALPERT: Kroll and [Ivan G.] Orlinsky. Orlinsky was much nicer to me, and I forget, but every once in a while I had the best drawing, or something. They both told me I was pretty good. Orlinsky was very much more pleasant to me. Kroll -- now he tells me, or many years ago he started telling me that I was so cute that he just couldn't take me seriously.

DR. PHILLIPS: I believe you told me that you spent time in Central Park -- Sundays, or you went out in Fort Lee to sketch.

MS. HALPERT: I did that over the weekends. There were three young men who used to take me home collectively. I wonder if I remember their names? I certainly do -- Jack Green, and oh, there's a wonderful story attached to this Jack Green, Jacob Barry Green, who was a student in the boy's class. These fellows were very much older -- all the boys were very much older. There was David Strumpf who finally became a high school teacher, and I was very friendly with him years later. Then there was a great big tall boy, Fred Frieda. My God! Isn't that astonishing!

Well, anyhow, those three boys took me home collectively, and we'd go through Central Park. There was one

rich young man at the school who had a motor cycle. His name I don't remember. He asked to take me home. This was after I had been to Kentucky and had come back to New York City. I had another traumatic experience.

I was staying with some very distant relatives while I was working at Bloomingdale's, and I used to bring my drawings home with great pride. I had them in a portfolio in my little room. The boys would walk me home from 110th Street to 69th Street, or we went down by the 3rd Avenue el. Jack was always the last to leave, to say goodnight. He took me to the door, and one night I came home from school and the whole family was sitting in conference -- this old man, his wife and two sons. One became a physician later, and when I arrived they were all sitting in a big huddle with my portfolio spread out, and they said, "So that's what you do!"

Jack Green posed in the life class from time to time. A number of the students did that to earn some puny fifty cents an hour, whatever they got. All the boys wore a jock strap. I used to look through the peep hole, and I made drawings of them. They discovered the drawings of Jack. They told me to get out of that house immediately. They had all my bags and everything in the living room, and they said, "You have to leave here tonight!" "So that's what you do at school! You all undress and make pictures of each other!"

I was so horrified that they would think of a thing like that! I grabbed -- all I wanted was my portfolio, and I walked from 59th Street to 110th Street just at the time when the YWHA was being built on Central Park North. It is now, I think, the New Lincoln School. The YWHA wasn't quite open, and I came there last at night, rang the bell, and Miss Berger -- God, these names! I can't even remember the name of a person I talked to a minute ago.

Well, Miss Berger took me in, and I was there before the place was open to the public. I stayed there. She was perfectly wonderful to me. Old people were so wonderful to me -- male and female. From there on I used to go to school from -- and this was during the Bloomingdale days -- 110th Street, and that's when I learned to ice skate because there was a short cut across the lake.
DR. PHILLIPS: Across the park?

MS. HALPERT: Yes. It was just that they were both -- well, the Academy was either 109th, or 111th -- I don't remember. It was one block from 110th Street. I think it was 109th Street, and it was on the west side, so I'd skate across the lake and come in the school swinging my skates.

Then this rich young man decided to take me home one night. I discussed it with my three regular beaus, and they said that it was all right, that I could trust him -- you know, that it was okay, so I went. There was a seat in the back of his motorcycle, and I held on to him. I thought that it was indecent to hold a man, so I didn't hold so well, and as he made a quick turn, I fell off in the snow.

A whole crowd collected, and I was lying there shrieking with laughter. They thought I was hurt, and when they got me up I was still screaming with laughter. He disappeared. He didn't know I was missing because I didn't hold him. He came back about fifteen minutes later. He became a big broker, or somebody, and he told me that story years later -- how I sat there and wouldn't touch him. I think I held on to the tail of his coat or something.

DR. PHILLIPS: Your education at the Academy of Design [National Academy of Design, NY]-- what was it pointed toward?

MS. HALPERT: We were just drawing, and I felt since we couldn't paint -- in the evening school you didn't paint -- on Sundays, Jack, Fred, Dave, and I would go to Fort Lee to paint, or I'd paint. I have a couple of paintings I made in Central Park, a few things I retained, but this ties in with the second biggest traumatic experience.

DR. PHLLIPS: I wondered in terms of attending the school of design, what it would lead to.

MS. HALPERT: It would lead to painting, but for that you'd have to go in the day time -- to become a great artist, or something. Many of the artists today, not too many of them are alive, came out of the Academy because the Academy was the only school where you could get almost free tuition. It was ten dollars a year, and everybody could afford to scrape that up. That's all I paid, and then we'd get a little prize of some kind, or something which gave us free tuition for a few months. I can't remember but there were some little gimmicks there.

Then on Sundays you got what they called thumb nail sketch pads and you went to Central Park or Fort Lee to paint. There you were on your own completely because you had no instruction, not only that, but you didn't know anything about color. Later when I got to the Art Students League, courtesy of Mr. Jesse Strauss of Macy's, I was so excited about the whole thing that I bought the biggest, but the biggest pallet in America. I had the most awful callous on my left thumb just holding the thing. It weighed a ton. I burned that pallet when this big traumatic thing occurred in my life.

DR. PHILLIPS: Kroll himself -- was he attached to the school permanently?

MS. HALPERT: Yes, he was an instructor. Well, he can't be any more because he is in his eighties now. I see him frequently. He comes in here.

DR. PHILLIPS: Is the same true of Bridgeman?

MS. HALPERT: Bridgeman was the Art Students League. He was a great soak. When I decided that I didn't like his kind of teaching where you had to work on the same thing all week -– he used to come in drunk a couple of times a week, I started a quick sketch class. I was always the youngest, always one of the very few girls, and I said, "Why do we have to do this? Why don't we have quick poses and really learn something about the human figure?"

Bridgeman caught us, and he threatened to have me thrown out because I was ruining the class.

DR. PHILLIPS: Does this dovetail with a story you told me at the Hotel Pierre -- the summer time when school ended you wanted to figure out how you could continue the classes on your own.

MS. HALPERT: That was the Lincoln Square Arcade. This came from the Academy -- still the Academy days, before I had afternoons off to work like a real artist, and I suggested -- you know, the Academy was closed in the summer, and it was a waste of time. We weren't taught to paint. One of these days I must get hold of Ernest Fiener because he's the only one I still remember. Oh, Robert Brackman was another one. I think there were two, or three artists involved -- no. Ernest Fiener is the only one who went to the Lincoln Square Arcade.

There was a guy there by the name of Conan who had a studio, and I suggested that we rent it evenings, get models to come pose for us and work from the live model. That's when I got these instructors to come in giving them the break of their lives. They could give free criticism to these great geniuses we were.

DR. PHILLIPS: The resourcefulness of a transplanted American -- to create this out of --

MS. HALPERT: There was a need for it, and it was so logical. It never occurred to me that it was offbeat -- you know, subsequently I realized not only how utterly offbeat it was; it was insane! To me it was the only logical thing. This was something you had to do, and this was the way to do it. Evidently I had organizational ability which I had in my later jobs -- you know, organizing not only the idea, but establishing a method.

Like I organized the Municipal Show in New York which was unheard of -- you know, getting the mayor. There were no restrictions of any kind, but was an idea that seemed logical and necessary, and we just went along and did it. It was never done in bravado, but it was just something that had to be done, and it got done.

DR. PHILLIPS: At the same time it filled a void created by perhaps the lack of . . .

MS. HALPERT: The continuity. Just as I had a theory -- you know, I quit my job at the end of a year no matter where I was because I thought I'd get stale. You stagnate more if you work more than a year at one thing. You had to do something else. You had to learn something else. You had to expand your experience -- that's all. I mean there was no philosophy, no -- just simple logic. There's always another step to go, and we went.

DR. PHILLIPS: Whose idea was the Lincoln Square Arcade?

MS.HALPERT: Mine.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's what I mean.

MS. HALPERT: Oh sure.

DR. PHILLIPS: This is the compelling thing. It may not have occurred to anyone else in the class at all, although it was a good idea for continuity.

MS. HALPERT: They all came along right away, but nobody dreamed of that kind of thing. I always got the bargains by being little.

DR. PHILLIPS: Not only little, but even at this time you were still two years out of your age class, weren't you?

MS. HALPERT: Nobody was sixteen. Everybody was much older. Most of the people who went to the Academy, who went to art school in the evening, were older. Ernest Fiener was a professional barber for years and Emile Ganzer was a baker -- I mean, these were all people who had jobs and wanted to study art and went in the evening. Most of them were ten to twenty years older than I was, and every once in a while when I was across the street from this place, my secretary used to come up just roaring with laugher and say, "One of your classmates is here."

It was somebody with a beard down to his waist line before the beatniks, but they were very much older people generally. I think Robert Brackman, and some other guy whose name I can't remember were maybe closer in age -- maybe five years older, but most of them were from where I was sitting very old men.

DR. PHILLIPS: You spoke last time in terms of the self-confidence you exhibited for some reason.

MS. HALPERT: For some reason?

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes.

MS. HALPERT: I had no alternative.

DR. PHILLIPS: I meant that as kind of a slow fizz – self-confidence thing.

MS. HALPERT: I saw something had to be done, and I felt that I had to do it, and I just did it.

DR. PHILLIPS: You had no other place to turn.

MS. HALPERT: I either had to stagnate which was a thing I dreaded, or go ahead, and the only way to go ahead was to do something beyond what I was doing. It was that simple. I'm sure a lot of people have the same compulsion -- you know, to get to some other place. That's what makes so many people in this country move.

DR. PHILLIPS: Is it the desire on the part of little people to become bigger people?

MS. HALPERT: Not larger ones. It had nothing to do with becoming somebody. No. The only time I had that kind of illusion had to do with that wonderful word – "passementerie." I thought that was such a pretty word. Would you have a high ball?

DR. PHILLIPS: Please.

MS. HALPERT: I'll let you help yourself. Let me get the old bucket.

DR. PHILLIPS: You almost tripped over the wire, and I thought you might break into a toe dance.

MS. HALPERT: No. Tap dance -- I had two lessons in tap dancing.

DR. PHILLIPS: You what? In the midst of all this?

MS. HALPERT: That was in between. I have an awful lot of energy as you gather.

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes, I do and it had to have some outlet.

MS. HALPERT: That was before the beatnik days so that it was all pretty wholesome.

DR. PHILLIPS: I gather that too. What really strikes me is the age at which you handled these things. This may sound wrong to you because it may even indicate to something pioneerish -- you seem almost at fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen to have been much older than one would normally associate with those years . . .

MS. HALPERT: Yes, I think that's a Jewish thing.

DR. PHILLIPS: Is it -- generally?

MS. HALPERT: It's also Oriental -- the fact that you take care of your parents instead of the reverse. It was a complete reversal of functioning in the family because I always tried -- well, I just felt that somebody had to have the responsibility, and mother wasn't accustomed to this. She was a very poor business woman.

DR. PHILLIPS: The last time you used the word "inept."

MS. HALPERT: Right, and very intelligent -- really, and an extraordinarily intelligent woman, but very un-modern about child bringing-up because then people didn't bring up their children -- I mean you have a wet nurse, and I had a wet nurse like all the kids did. It was a different kind of functioning in Europe. I mean there was the class distinction between the peasantry, and I don't mean the aristocracy. We weren't anywhere in that territory, believe me, but between the peasantry and the aristocracy.

Odessa was a city that we lived in as opposed to -- what did Benison say -- "Minsk" or "pinsk." Odessa was a city, so that you have that distinction between the peasant who is a servant in the city because there are no farms. There's a very, very strong line of demarcation, and of course a mother wouldn't nurse her own child -- that's being a peasant, so you always had a nurse maid who took care of you and the relationship between

parent and the child in the city was a very, very different one.

It's the kind of relationship you had here with the very, very rich who had -- I mean, now they've readjusted, or adjusted since Freud, where mother love is considered a very important factor, but before that the parents didn't bring up their children in the cities. I'm talking way back -- not your age level.

DR. PHILLIPS: You just told me some things about which I was wholly unaware. Which is good, but --

MS. HALPERT: The relationship was a very different relationship from the relationship between Natalie and Patsie, her daughter, a very different relationship. Now I've watched this in other people, and it seemed very strange, and I was a bit envious because I never had that at home.

DR. PHILLIPS: Isn't there another wrinkle to this -- in that when the family was transplanted here, there was no men in the family –- none -- which is void enough . . .

MS. HALPERT: Apropos, when I had Lawrence working for me, he told me when it was Passover. I was very embarrassed because there are two old ladies I send flowers to every year, but this year he's not here. I have a Jewish girl working for me, so she didn't tell me when it was Passover. I need a goya to tell me. I don't listen to the radio, or whatever. But sometime when I was about ten, or eleven and this was still when we were uptown -- 112th, or 110th Street -- I was very embarrassed because there were Jewish holidays when kids stayed home. I stayed home and I had nothing to do. We observed nothing because you have to have a male. You can't have a Seder without a male, and I never went to a Seder. I didn't know what it was about.

Also I was terribly embarrassed because I didn't know any Yiddish. When we talked at home, we talked either Russian or German. German was the second language. I didn't know any Yiddish, and so I decided that I had to be something. With some little savings I'd get from time to time, I decided that I would learn Yiddish on my own, and I went to one of the these home rabbis -- he wasn't a real rabbi -- a teacher, and I began to learn Hebrew. After a while, I learned it very rapidly. I could read part of the Haggadah, but I said, "What does it mean?"

I didn't know what it was about, so he explained to me, and then he taught me prayers, and I learned the morning prayer. I forgot it. After that experience, I forgot everything. I learned the morning prayer, and then he said, "There are two morning prayers -- one for boys and one for girls." He had taught me the girl's prayer, so then he taught me the boy's prayer which sounded almost the same with a different ending.

So I said, "What does it mean?"

He translated for me -- for girls the prayer was, "I thank thee God, for making me what I am." For boys, and did that burn me up! "I thank thee, God, for making me a man."

That was the last time I went to the teacher. I gave up.

DR. PHILLIPS: I'll be damned!

MS. HALPERT: I thought God was very prejudiced and I was through with him.

DR. PHILLIPS: It didn't figure again. This is interesting because I think you told me again at the Hotel Pierre -- and it's surprising the things I'm remembering from that evening.

MS. HALPERT: I can't trust you.

DR. PHILLIPS: You did tell me, and I found it very interesting that you knew nothing about Jewish cooking.

MS. HALPERT: I didn't know about any cooking.

DR. PHILLIPS: The family itself hadn't had that experience in Odessa?

MS. HALPERT: Mother knew how to make fish which I knew, but in Russia even if you cooked kosher, it was Arabic dishes, Turkish, Armenian, or French because of the general environment. After all, it was a seaport. The Black Sea was a very, very active port, and Odessa was a big wheat exporting port. I saw Arabs. To me there was no such thing as a color line. That's why I wasn't impressed by the Negro workman, but by the banana he was eating.

But this female-male thing in prayers made a permanent impression on me -- you know, that God played favorites, the males, so I was through with God immediately after that, but permanently! I'm not on speaking terms with him. He made that distinction that was an utter injustice.

DR. PHILLIPS: This is an idea that has emerged time and time again in some of the stories you've told me -- this feeling of injustice.

MS. HALPERT: Truth and justice are things I must have inherited from the family because I still feel very strongly. I fought every cause I was ever involved in, and I always fought on the wrong side, not because I wanted to make myself prominent, believe me, but because it was something I believed in. All my contributions -- you know, the Southern Conference and all that, and I've been treated very badly by Negroes personally -- very badly!

DR. PHILLIPS: That is interesting.

MS. HALPERT: Every Negro employee has done no dirt -- like Lawrence [Allen] who absconded with twenty thousand dollars after twenty years. I don't let that experience interfere because it's still unjust. I was probably the first person in American to engage a Negro as a secretary. I called the Urban League and said, "I want a Negro secretary."

I was on 13th Street. The secretary had to be male because I had to think of money, and a male secretary would also do a little sweeping with me. I had no porter, and I couldn't ask any girl to do it. What was a little practical thing -- not because he was Negro, but because a white male secretary would do it too, but I called the Urban League. I read about it, and I called them up, and I said, "I would like to have a Negro secretary."

They had only a male, so they sent him down. He was out of school in Virginia. He worked for me a number of years, was dishonest, and I fired him. Years later he came back and pleaded to come into the gallery again, and after twenty years he walked off with a long running thievery which lasted quite a few years -- it added up to twenty something odd thousand dollars. Then I had another one across the street who tried to slit my throat. I've had some very bad experiences, but that has not deterred me from fighting that cause. It isn't that I had any injustice done to me except by God with a different prayer.

DR. PHILIPS: I like the way that came out.

MS. HALPERT: Don't you agree with me? Why should there be two prayers? That was the last of my Jewish learning.

DR. PHILLIPS: I didn't write the book and I agree.

MS. HALPERT: But you have that in the Orient too. I mean the two religions merge very closely, because I talked to [B.D.] Saklatwalla over a number of years. The Oriental attitude is very close to the Jewish, very close. I mean the ancestor worship, the child taking care of the parent which does not occur in the Christian philosophy at all. That is absolutely alike in both the Oriental and Jewish religions. I've been interested enough in that to do a little reading on the subject because of the similarity.

DR. PHILLIPS: What intrigues me from a speculative point of view is would you would have had the same kind of view had your father continued to live.

MS. HALPERT: I wouldn't have because there I had terrific affection. My only recollection of my father is one of the deepest affection. He was the one who had me on his lap, and he was the one who would feed me cocoa, or something with a spoon, and so on. He was the one who would play with me. Mother never did. As an adult I think that her lack of affection for me was related to his deep affection for me more so than the other child -- that there was resentment there.

DR. PHILLIPS: She had her own compensations to handle.

MS. HALPERT: I was the baby, and he was very devoted to me. I have beautiful little recollections about him.

There's another interesting that happened about truth. Oh God!

DR. PHILLIPS: What's happened now?

MS. HALPERT: These things that are coming back.

DR. PHILLIPS: Isn't it grand?

MS. HALPERT: I must have reached senility!

DR. PHILLIPS: No -- never thought by gosh -- you did say last time that people remember way back as an act of senility, didn't you?

MS. HALPERT: I did, and that's what I've heard -- always.

DR.PHILLIPS: I don't believe it.

MS. HALPERT: I've heard that you always remember the distant past when you reach the age of senility. I'm getting nervous because I remember this instance, and I couldn't have been more than -- when he died I was barely four, and it was quite a long time before he died, so this must have been between two and three, and for some reason, or other, I had a distant dislike for anything sweet. I still have, but I've lost some weight, so now I'm eating pie, but I hate it -- sweets, and one day my mother and my sister went to a wedding. I was too small, and they were dressed up in awfully pretty clothes, and I stayed alone.

Father was tubercular. He died of tuberculosis, so he had to rest during the day. I was resting in my room, and I got up a little earlier than he did. I was wearing -- I remember it -- a pinafore, white with a pocket, because that's part of this experience. I went down and played in the yard. Some men come and delivered a sack of candy -- a small gunny sack of candy, the kind of candy that comes in little paper wrappers, different pictures, a raspberry, strawberry, and so on, and I hated the stuff. You couldn't get me to take a piece of candy. I didn't like any sweets So my affinity for sweets was long before the stationery store.

I didn't have anything to do, so I went down to -- I don't know, some sort of lower region. I was terrified. That was another place where I had been told the boogie man would get me, or something. I went down anyway. It was sort of damp clay. With my finger I dug a hole in the gunny sack, opened up the threads, and took out two or three of these candies and put them in my pinafore. I didn't want to eat the stuff.

I came up; I was bored. I had nobody to play with. My father came down. I must have had all the clay on my pinafore. I was lying on my tummy, and the candy was sticking right out of my pocket. He said, "I know you're afraid of the basement. I know you don't like candy. The next time, my dear, that you want something so badly, ask for it."

I said, "How did you know. Nobody saw me."

He said, "God always sees everything."

That's before I knew about the prayer, and I think that was my first sense of the truth. Of course, what I had been doing was very obvious, and so he said, "Now you must eat one of these candies."
I said, "I don't like them."

"That's your punishment."

I felt completely justified. I ate it and pretended I liked it because I felt that I deserved that punishment, but I also realized that I had been seen. It never occurred to me until I grew much older that it was the most obvious thing by the way my pinafore was all soiled, and the candy was sticking out of my pocket. He injected the sense of truth just as this rabbi injected the sense of justice, or injustice.

There were other things that happened before, but I think that's where my absolute horror of a lie originated. After he'd said that he was fine. He kissed me, and we were perfectly good friends. I ate the damn candy, and he played with me. Then he had me change the pinafore. The nurse was asleep too, so he woke her and he got a clean pinafore so that I wouldn't be punished by my mother for being a mess.

DR. PHILLIPS: How gentle and astute he was.

MS. HALPERT: I think that if there was to be any family relationship, it would have been with him. But when you don't have a male in the family, first of all my relationship with males was a very curious one. You know, with kids, I wouldn't play with boys because I didn't know how. I didn't have any sense of relationships with the boys. I learned when I grew older.

DR. PHILLIPS: If you don't have at least a reasonable facsimile around the house, it is something strange, like peas the first time you encounter them, a wholly new experience.

MS. HALPERT: The very first time I went to a fancy party, I got in trouble with an alligator pear. I started to cut it, and I almost got hit in the eye. I'd never seen one before, but I was grown up enough to make a big gag out of it.

DR. PHILLIPS: Humor saved the day.

MS. HALPERT: No, but it creates an entirely different relationship with other people. I mean if I went to a family -- I got friendly with girls after a while. When I was in elementary school, I got friendly with girls and if they had fathers and brothers, I was very uncomfortable with them. You know, I realized, or thought that their

life was abnormal, or that my life was abnormal because our relationship was a very different one at home. There was a real lack.

Mother never remarried until thirty years later. She didn't want us to have a stepfather. She was very attractive, and she had a number of beaus, but she would never marry because she didn't want us to have a stepfather. I always felt that I owed her a great deal for that too. I might . . .

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes, just figure the chance that might have been.

MS. HALPERT: When she remarried I was crazy about my stepfather, but of course I was an adult. I was in my thirties, and he and I had a wonderful relationship, and she resented that a little bit. There again it was the father thing.

DR. PHILLIPS: When you were six, she could have married and added a cipher to the family and have had you all altered in the progress. She avoided that. That was good.

MS. HALPERT: She avoided it for us. She had a stepmother, so that she didn't want to give us a stepfather, and I appreciated that very much because she was inept enough to need somebody, but she didn't want to impose that on us. I know that there were a number of opportunities because one man spoke to me and asked me how I would like to have him as a father. I looked him over and said, "My father, I liked him much better, but you'll be all right."

DR. PHILLIPS: You had a number of friends in elementary school, but by the time you got to high school, you were just too busy.

MS. HALPERT: I was much too busy, and their interests and mine were much, much too far apart. I had a very close friend who lived in the same house we did. I got very friendly with her. We were friends for many years subsequently even after we were both married, and as a matter of fact, her father became my dentist years later so that we were very good friends, but it was proximity. And we had some interests in common, but otherwise I was much too busy. It wasn't that I was a social because I mixed well, but I didn't have time for that kind of nonsense.

DR. PHILLIPS: You've indicated that at the school of design there was no necessary absence of conversation, or convoying home.

MS. HALPERT: Oh no, because I had these three beaus who were very, very devoted; as a matter of fact, two of them proposed to me. That's how I remembered my addresses because I kept all the letters.

DR. PHILLIPS: What made you so document conscious?

MS. HALPERT: I was waiting for the Archives of American Art!

But by the letters, the addresses, it gave me a perfect key as to where I was -- you know, when I was in Kentucky. Now I know from Natalie because she was born there, as was her brother, so that I got my years straight. I even know when I was in Buffalo. They lived there for a short time, and I visited them, but this gave me my earlier addresses. I threw the letters away except the one where the guy said that he wrote it in blood, and I think it was red ink.

DR. PHILLIPS: God, how romantic!

MS. HALPERT: I just didn't believe it, so I was going to wait to have it tested.

DR. PHILLIPS: This isn't a page out of Tom Sawyer. It's the whole volume.

MS. HALPERT: I think I kept that letter. I haven't gotten around to testing it, but it was wonderful because they gave me all the addresses.

DR. PHILLIPS: You took to art as a duck to water. You enjoyed it.

MS. HALPERT: I must have started in from my early childhood. You can see it from that book because nobody else drew. Nobody was supposed to draw. This was my own idea.

DR. PHILLIPS: But then there comes a time -- interest being whatever it is -- it terminates. The last time we saw it in terms of business. At some time in you must have been quite aware of the impact that you had both on the business and on the people who were the giants within the business.

MS. HALPERT: This happened way, way back. During the time when I went to the Academy, I used to go to

exhibitions, and the great love of my life was old man Montross [Newman Emerson Montross] because he took such a shine to me. This was my Saturdays. I went to the gallery. Leon Kroll told us never to look at modern art. It was very bad.

So I saw this ad of a show, a modern show, and I went to Montross who had the show, but I was too late. I think it was Cezanne. That seems unlikely, but it was somebody. It may have been Rodin. I don't know, but it was somebody Kroll told us not to see, so, of course, I hotfooted it there immediately, and I just missed it. He called me over. I was looking around. There was nobody in the gallery, and he called me over and said, "What would like to see?" I told him and I think he told me that the show was over.

He said, "Are you interested in art?" He died twenty, or thirty years ago at the age of seventy, so you can imagine how much older he was. I said, "Yes."

As a matter of fact, I think he's the great influence in my life in relation to the gallery -- more so than everybody else. Everybody else thinks it's Stieglitz, but Montross is really the man. He took me into his backroom, and I still remember that he had this enormous vault -- you know, an oversized safe, and he introduced me to [Jack Van] Ryder. He had a number Ryders there.

He would bring out one Ryder and put in on a red velvet easel, the kind you could turn, and he would turn it to give me the best views because I was so small. He brought it down to my level each time, and he would talk about Ryder with a love --

I think he was the one who -- and this also is in retrospect, believe me, because I wasn't conscious of it then -- instilled in me the way I feel about my artists. When I look at a Stuart Davis, or a Weber, or an O'Keeffe -- no matter how the people act, or what they do, I feel that you've got to love the thing you show. He's the one who instilled that kind of feeling in me without any other reason.

Stieglitz had other reasons for loving the artists, very unlike Montross. Montross was the essence of being in love with the thing he did. He had no ulterior motives, no philosophy about it. But imagine that this old man that was very, very successful in his business -- it was one of the top galleries of American art; he did show some foreigners, but mostly American. He was the kind of guy who believed in things and for no money, no income.

I used to go there whenever I had the time, and he'd go through this routine of showing me things and talking about them. Well, there certainly never was any possibility of my buying anything, but he just felt that here was somebody who was receptive with whom he didn't have to be self-conscious. When I was opening the gallery, I went to see him, the first one I went to see, "Mr. Montross, tell me how you do this."

He said, "Don't! Don't! Don't!" He pleaded with me not to go into it. He said, "Because you have such a good job!"

I did. At that time I was at Strauss, and he pleaded with me not to go, but when I was doing the show which is what really established the gallery -- you know, I got an idea of bringing people downtown. I was the only gallery in the Village. I got an idea that people would come to see Homer, Ryder, and people like that, and Montross was the one who helped me get the pictures. He helped me then.

Once I was there he helped me, but there was a man --. Well, you know, when I look at a Ryder today, I still get the same feeling that he instilled in me about Ryder. As I say, I always had such great breaks with very much older people. All the people who were nice to me were old men, the father image, I suppose.

DR. PHILLIPS: This initial meeting was wholly by chance because the show you wanted to see was over.

MS. HALPERT: He could have said, "Well, I don't have any," and he did say that, but he also said, "Come in, if you're interested in pictures."

Ryder certainly was anything but a modern artist, but he just didn't want to disappoint me or whatever. He showed me Ryder, and I got hysterical about him and of course I can see Ryder in more contemporary art, not the real essence of Ryder because his was profound, with a great spiritual quality and a feeling about nature.

That's one of the reasons I think that I couldn't see [Arthur] Dove at first. It took me a long time because Dove had it in a different way, and -- you know, it couldn't be right. It was only later. Of all the Stieglitz people, Dove was the one I couldn't take until much later, and I'm sure it was because his attitude toward nature was so very close to that of Ryder, and I didn't want any competition to Ryder.

DR. PHILLIPS: Isn't that funny because Ryder himself was more the association with a like-minded person -- Montross.

MS. HALPERT: It was his love of Ryder I got, not my love.

DR. PHILLIPS: Yet the association was like kicking open window to let in something wholly new and unexpected.

MS. HALPERT: It was such a wonderful experience getting into the inside of an artist. After all, Leon Kroll was an artist I respected. He was my teacher. I was very impressed when he invited all the students to his studio, and when he dusted a picture of the *Borsalino Hat*, boy, that got me! Actually it was a very, very different kind of feeling I had about his work, that it had to be correct, that you had to have so many heads to a body -- you know, all that sort of stuff and that the drawing had to be perfect. This was very bad drawing. Ryder's drawing frequently was very bad from my teaching at Kroll's, but I never noticed it. I didn't see it that way.

It was all the way Montross presented Ryder to me -- when he talked about a tree growing out of soil, "the roots go way, way, way down." He talked to me as if I was about four years old. He said, "The roots have to go way, way down, and the tree grows out of the earth. The moon is in the heavens" and so on. He wouldn't talk that way to a collector, certainly, but he was really talking to me as if he was talking to a child on my level, but way beyond it -- if you know what I mean.

DR. PHILLIPS: He's a fellow with a flash light in his hand who is at the top of the heap and says, "Look at that one (as you come up the trail), and make sure you see this."

MS. HALPERT: He used his hands while he talked; I still remember. "The tree has to come out -- the roots are deep, deep into the earth. The tree comes out, and it grows, and it looks toward the moon" and so on. It wasn't corn. It wasn't done that way. It was so real. It had to do with all essences of nature.

DR. PHILLIPS: You must have walked off on a cloud.

MS. HALPERT: I did! It was the only time I went there. I told him when he was retiring -- I think it was at the age of eighty -- he called me up and asked me to come up, and we sat there. He was giving up the gallery. He was taking his wife on a trip around the world, and the wonderful thing was that he died a week after he came home. He had exactly what he wanted, and he spent practically everything he had saved, but they really went in grand style. He told me he was going to do that.

I sat there, and by that time I had been running the gallery for quite some time, and he said, "This little girl is now an art dealer. This little girl is taking care of these artists and they don't realize what she's doing. My artists didn't realize either, but don't you feel good inside, dear?"

Then I told him that I was so happy to have had that opportunity of doing this thing with the tree -- all about the Ryder.

He looked, and he practically had tears in his eyes. He put his arm around me and said, "May I kiss you?"

I said, "I've been waiting for it since I was fourteen years old." He laughed. He was really the person who influenced me. Stieglitz came after that, and he meant a great deal to me, but not the same way.

DR. PHILLIPS: This was one of those chance Saturday afternoons that was free.

MS. HALPERT: Look, everything was a chance. How many times does one plan? If you plan to go to theater, you buy tickets. You don't plan people.

DR. PHILLIPS: But you do bump into many ships that pass in the night, and they leave nothing -- not even paint on the side.

MS. HALPERT: Of course, you remember only those who do leave paint -- one in many thousands, but you do remember them, and frequently when I get discouraged about my art life, I think of him and I look at a picture like that one there -- you know, "That mountain is way, way down deep." Don't ever quote me, for God's sakes! Boy, would I be the "square" of the art world!

DR. PHILLIPS: But it's real.

MS. HALPERT: Yes, it is real, and I still get that feeling when I look at picture. I'm not ashamed about it, but I don't talk about it because I would be thought of as a "square." If I said that to Stuart Davis though I think he'd get it.

DR. PHILLIPS: I think he would too.

MS. HALPERT: I feel I've had a specially good life. I don't preach poverty, but I still think that I would not have had it if I didn't have to fight my own way. That's why I'm not bitter and I try to tell that to Billy Rose, but these are the things that I feel are the big pluses in my life. I could have had diamonds. I could have had a whole coffer of emeralds, but these are the things that would not have meant anything to me. I wouldn't have

noticed. It would not have happened. I was wide open for it. I wouldn't have otherwise and that's why I'm grateful for it, except for the bloomers, I'm grateful for the fact that I had to make my own pleasures, my own jewels.

Did you see the letter I got from your friend, from Ted Richardson? I wrote him and said that I thought he would be interested to learn that I was actually making a date for Dr. Phillips. That I would start on the taping project with him whenever we find an opportunity, that I always seem to be involved with projects that take up a lot of time, but I was so impressed with Phillips that I will make a special effort to accommodate him.

DR. PHILLIPS: Aren't you sweet.

MS. HALPERT: I got this reply which I thought was very funny which was probably something you had said to him. What did you say to him?

DR. PHILLIPS: This was shortly after the first time I met you – you said a number of interesting things not the least of which was the nature of a banana. Symbols.

MS. HALPERT: He didn't know. I never talked to him in my life.

DR. PHILLIPS: No, I never told him anything specific except that I thought you would enjoy the process. Further I always treat these talks as privileged and, more particularly, you insisted on that.

MS. HALPERT: Larry Fleischman told that I went around saying that I was an idealist. That I was born here, how I would give them this big line of how good it was in America. This was counter propaganda between the two cathedrals -- the little girl from Odessa with a *dacha*.

Frank Gotline calls me the "duchess." I invited him out to my *dacha*, and he calls me the "duchess."

DR. PHILLIPS: You said something last time of having burned most of your early work as an artist.

MS. HALPERT: I'll tell you that story which has a lot to do with the marital failing. The marriage, as you have gathered, was a little bit wrong -- you know, aside from the age differential, the fact that this man was a very sick man. I was always terribly involved. He was a wonderful, wonderful person -- kind, sweet, and I thought one of the great artists. He'd hear these noises, and then he'd have cold sweats.

I was up nights trying to get doctors because he was dying and all that, and I thought it was psychosomatic. We didn't know that word then. I suggested the analyst, and we eventually went to Europe, but anyhow, long before that, before I got married -- that I have in my diary in great detail –

You know, Leon Kroll and Orlinsky, particularly, told me that as an artist I was really a hot number, better than most. I was awfully young, but I had promise. Jesse Strauss would not have paid my tuition if he hadn't been told by Bridgeman that I showed some talent. I kept hearing very nice things constantly about it. I think about three months, or six months before I got married Leon Kroll took me aside. He was Sam's closest friend.

As a matter of fact, I got interested in Sam long before I met him because Leon Kroll said, "I know a man who finds the softest spot in the field with the biggest shade tree, sits down, and then he looks for his subject." I said to him once, "Mr. Kroll, I'd love to meet the man you're talking about because you always talk about getting up on the bridge somewhere in the most precarious position to do a painting, and I like the idea of a man picking a nice soft spot, and I'd like to meet him."

Well, I met him at [Dr. John] Weichsel's where I was warned not to talk to any of the men, that they would all make passes at me. I think I told you I was picked as the -- what do you call the goat in a parade?

DR. PHILLIPS: The pet -- the mascot.

MS. HALPERT: I was made the mascot of the People's Art Guild [New York City], about the age of fourteen or fifteen. In the evening where the People's Art Guild had an exhibition, I passed around the plate. A man came over and asked me, "Little girl, would you like to pass the plate?" I collected a buck from everybody in the place. They never had collected so much money, so I was made the mascot.

DR. PHILLIPS: This was like selling pacque in Cincinnati.

MS. HALPERT: Incidentally, my ex-secretary -- I didn't tell her about this, but I told her about the unsung hero of modern art, Dr. Weichsel, and she sent to the Archives a very big story on him. She did a tremendous amount of research on him, and one of these days I'm going to ask for a transcription, or whatever. His son gave her the information, and he really was the unsung hero, Dr. Weichsel was, and the People's Art Guild is where I met all the artists.

I didn't meet the artists through Sam. I met Sam through this, but shortly before we were to be married, Leon Kroll came over to me. I saw Kroll socially after I became the fiancé of Sam, and he said, "You know, you were such a cute kid. I always wanted to pinch your cheek" -- couldn't keep my hands off you and all that business. "That's why I said you were good. You really have no talent."

DR. PHILLIPS: Good God!

MS. HALPERT: We've talked about it a number of times since. I don't hate him. I got that all fixed up, and I looked at him and said, "Mr. Kroll, you said so-and-so. I'll call Mr. Orlinsky."

He said, "He talked to me about it too. Don't bother. You really don't have any talent. You're very pretty. Why don't you develop that, make an asset of that?"

At that period we lived in the Bronx. I was then supporting Mother. We had an apartment on Dorsell Street. I had her come and stay with me. I had -- you know, a huge collection of drawings and paintings. I must have had a hundred paintings, drawings, and that gorgeous pallet that I loved beyond anything. That was my symbol beyond everything -- the most expensive thing I ever got. We lived in an apartment house, and I took my pictures down gradually, very quietly to the basement. There again, the superintendent and his wife liked me. I asked them whether the furnace was going. "Yes. What are you going to do?"

I said, "I'm cleaning house. I want to get rid of a lot of trash."

Nothing was framed. I had taken all the paper things and had rolled them up. I couldn't take turpentine, it would have blown up the joint, and I spent two hours burning everything I had ever done including the pallet. I haven't cried from the time when I was eight, or nine -- you know, I'm not the crying kind. I had a few bad experiences, but I never cried. I looked at the pallet for about a half hour. I kept burning other things, but that pallet -- old-fashioned potbellied stove in the cellar, and I finally cracked it over my knee, and I burned it. That was the end of me as a painter. I got very serious.

In 1927, Sam was in Detroit teaching, and I would go out and visit him. I had the gallery then. As I said, he was violently opposed to it, thought that I was going to disgrace him and all that. And I was earning so much, but I'd already given that up because I had gone to Europe with him, so I went out to visit him. I don't know what I said about painting and about Leon Kroll -- I was very excited about what Sam was doing then. He showed me the pictures and we were talking about them.

He said, "As Leon and I discussed it at the time, one painter is enough in the family."

I said, "What do you mean?"

"Oh," he said, "we talked it over before we got married. I talked it over with Leon, and we decided that you were taking your art much too seriously and that you were doing too many things. You had a job. You came home and cooked dinner. You painted on Sunday instead of posing for me, and we decided that one was enough."

I said, "You were in league with Kroll?"

He said, "Yes."

I said, "Nice knowing you," and I packed and left.

DR. PHILLIPS: What a train of horrible--

MS. HALPERT: All I could think of was the burning of that big pallet, that symbol has never left me.

DR. PHILLIPS: It took not a little in the way of savings.

MS. HALPERT: It wasn't savings. It was a symbol that I had finally achieved. It was the most expensive pallet in the school, certainly the biggest and heaviest. I used to get a callous from holding it. This thumb is still bigger than this one.

Then I spoke to Leon about it and he agreed. He said, "Oh sure," and he thought it was very funny. I said, "Do you realize that that was the most wicked lie! If both of you, or one of you had said, "Look, one has to earn a living" -- I continued to earn a living anyway -- "I would have been happy to make that contribution. I didn't take up much time painting." On Sundays, once in a while, I would paint. I was too damn busy. I had a week's vacation when I would write a short story for Natalie, or something, but that lie! It hurt for so many years.

DR. PHILLIPS: I can see why.

MS. HALPERT: I've been to Europe and I painted a little bit while I was there -- that's how I met old man Monet, and he kissed me right here. I have those paintings -- two of them, and they're goddamn good too -- I mean for that period. I never forgave either one of them . . .

DR. PHILLIPS: I don't see how you could.

MS. HALPERT: Until years later. I grew up and I got myself all adjusted. I have no bitterness about it at all, that if I really had the urge, if I really had it in me, nobody could have killed it, and I decided that I had made a much better contribution in helping other artists. I had to make that adjustment for myself because I could have been bitter.

Now I can kiss Kroll goodbye every time he comes in here. He talked to me about it just about a year ago. He said, "That was pretty rough!"

"Rough!" I said, "That was the most cruel thing anybody could have done!"

"But you're always nice to me."

"Yes, I know it. I respect you. I'm fond of you, but I think that was a wicked thing to do. On the other hand, I made the adjustment very easily. First of all, I wouldn't have been a dealer. There are thousands of artists and hundreds of very good ones, but there are not so many good dealers, and I think I made a greater contribution to art by being a good dealer."

He looked at me, and he said, "Did anybody tell you that?"

I said, "No. I've told that to myself for the last ten years over and over again, and I sold myself the idea. I ain't mad at you anymore."

But I am very convinced that if I had the inner urge nothing would have stopped me. For a kid like me who went through everything that I wanted to do, nobody could have stopped me if the urge was really very deep. If I had enough belief in myself as an artist, I would not have quit. Don't explode this because I need that.

DR. PHILLIPS: I'm not going to, but -- you know, having listened to you certain threads come out to me during your talk. They come through very strong, and while they may not be the ones you intended, I don't know...

MS. HALPERT: No. No. I've had fun living with these things -- I really have. I've had such compensation! A few artists tell me that they couldn't have done without me -- very few. Most of them kick me in the pants, but I don't care what anybody says. You know, I get up in the morning and yesterday I rehung some pictures.

DR. PHILLIPS: I know you did.

MS. HALPERT: Well, they were downstairs, so I got them back, but when I was woke up this morning and I looked at that tree of Dove's -- it was the first time I had it hanging there. I turned the light in that direction at night before I went to bed. I had it on. I got up and automatically pushed that button, and I looked at that picture and I stretched out again and looked at it again. I never could have enjoyed it if I painted myself -- never.

You know what happened to me just looking at that? It made the world so right, so I'm not mad at anybody. It's measuring one against the other, but I still think that the chances of my having been a great artist were very slim, and the chances of my enjoying these things, looking at that picture with the light on it, or looking at that little number there, or looking at my real [John] Marin that hangs there would have been less.

The idea of a man at the age of eighty-three dying and remembers that this is a picture that I loved, and he tells his idiot son to give it to me Christmas Eve. Not that one there -- phooey! I've never let that other picture go out except for this time for his sake, for Marin's sake. It never left the house before.

Anytime I lose confidence in the human race, I come in and look at it. It's my symbol. Imagine a guy is dying and he says -- he didn't leave it in his will, but he had John write it down, and he signed it, "To be given to my gal" -- as he called me -- "December 24th, just before she closes." The compensations I've had! I'm not really mad at anybody. I wouldn't have had all these things.

Bill Lane and I were talking today. We're two of the goddamnedest fools in the world. He comes in and sits with pictures for days. He watches me and a new picture comes in. He'll say, "After all these years, you can still get that way?" I say, "Isn't it idiotic to stand all day and look at them! Come on you idiot, cut it out! You've been looking at that thing for an hour." He said, "I wish I could love a woman as much as I love this" -- he's had some difficulty in life. I don't mean that he's homosexual. He really never loved a woman as much as he loves pictures.

DR. PHILLIPS: Still, that's a searing experience, to burn your art.

MS. HALPERT: It was a horrible thing, and you know, I say it's all passed, but when I pass Brown, or any of the paint supply stores, I always turn my head away. If I saw one of those pallets I would burst into tears. I put that into the furnace! The old superintendent knew there was something up. He put his arm around me, and he yelled to his wife, and she said, "Come and have a glass of tea with us." She made some sponge cake or whatever, and she put her arm around me too and said, "Why are you burning things?"

"Oh, because the house is full of it."

"Oh, no, no, no," she said, "it hurts you."

You know -- Leon is still a little conscious of that.

DR. PHILIPS: Conscious? He ought to be.

MS. HALPERT: I made him feel fine about it years ago, but he was here when Max Weber was having the show. He's bent over backwards about every artist. I think it's done something for him. I said, "You know, you're a wonderful guy!" He really has done more for other artists than any artist I know, and I said so. He looked at me, and he said, "Come over here and kiss me." I did. He was an old man.

He said, "You're not mad at me, are you?"

I said, "Forget it. I feel fine about it."

DR. PHILLIPS: That is the kind of experience which soap can't reach inside a man.

MS. HALPERT: Sam just didn't understand it. He just couldn't understand it when I said to him, "Do you realize how cruel, how wicked that was?" He just couldn't understand it.

He said, "You must have a boyfriend!" I could have killed him double.

I said, "God, you don't know what real hurt means. How could you lie to me?" There goes the lie again. Sam was a sweet person and it would never occur to him. I wasn't really mad at him, but everything just evaporated at that moment. It was finis.

DR. PHILLIPS: You've indicated even in the Lake Mahopac story that there was almost an unawareness of the burden you were assuming in four hours of travel, and the like.

MS. HALPERT: Oh, no. It didn't bother me until he showed me Central Park, but I didn't hold that against Sam. I felt that about all artists. As a matter of fact, I could say that that is a symbol of all artists in relation to their wives. One of the reasons that I opened the gallery was to make life easier for the wives. That was really the basic reason -- actually, it was to make it easier for people like me. All of the wives were working. No artist could support himself no matter what he did, or what he was. Any artist who was creative couldn't do it. I don't think that Sam ever sold more than eight hundred dollars a year in his life time until he got the job in Detroit.

DR. PHILLIPS: Some of his paintings were well received -- the Brooklyn exhibition in 1928, I think.

MS. HALPERT: I remember when I was working at S.W. Strauss -- when did they start the income tax? It was in the early twenties. Of course, I didn't have an accountant, and I made out my own tax, so they sent for me because it was a joint tax, and I had Sam down as a loss -- you know, studio rent -- you could deduct two-thirds of the studio, models, and materials. His income was eight hundred dollars, so he was a complete loss. Against my salary I deducted his loss.

I was called by the board, and in those days they had three men, august gentleman, all of them sitting there. I brought our checkbook because we always had a joint account and I kept the books. Everything checked off but perfectly. It was the year Neward bought a picture and -- well, there were two sales that year, eight hundred dollars, and expenses were over two thousand. I'm hazy on the details of that, but it was quite a deduction.

These three men looked me over and then they told me to wait outside. They had the books and were going over them. Then they called me in again, and they asked me whether I would like to go out for a drink. I didn't drink in those days at all. I said, "No, I have to go back to work." They said, "You know, everything on the books is right, but we can't understand how an attractive, young woman like you could be married to a total loss." I got so mad. I said, "If I'm not complaining, I don't know why in the hell Uncle Sam should."

DR. PHILLIPS: Or why they would call you down to explain this.

MS. HALPERT: They had to call me down because they didn't believe it, but the check book showed it, and then they talked it over and started to figure out that they were going to take me out to see whether I couldn't be talked into a better deal or something, probably. One of them kept calling me at the bank afterwards, but I said, "If I'm not complaining, I don't see why in the hell Uncle Sam should!"

That was a very rough time for the artists because at the best -- I'm talking about the creative artist -- not one of them made a livelihood. Lachaise was supported. I mean every married artist was being kept by a wife who went to work. All the wives went to work, if they could -- if they didn't have any children.

Mrs. Rockefeller and I had a big fight about it. Nelson Rockefeller said, "Not that!"

I said, "You know, there's going to be a book written, and the Rockefellers are going to enter it, so I'd like to make a deal" -- this was just last year. We were in the elevator together, and we were chatting and gabbing, and I said, "By the way, I want to ask you whom you would like to appoint as censor. Your mother, you, and Winthrop, and your father will enter into this picture unavoidably, and I won't permit anything to be published without your okay."

He said, "I'll trust you."

I said, "Oh, no. I don't trust myself."

Abby Rockefeller, his wife, said, "We will go over it."

He said, "Do anything you want. Go ahead, but not the birth control thing."

I said, "That's in the public domain. It was a front page in the *Daily Mirror*."

He said, "Not the speakeasy."

I said, "No."

Well, he appointed Laurance, his brother, to go over the material. That too -- you know, that nobody has children. All the dealers wrote to Mrs. Rockefeller and said that I was immoral. I slept with every customer. God forbid! Most of them were women in the first place.

DR. PHILLIPS: That does make it a little awkward.

MS. HALPERT: And in the second place they were people like Duncan Candler who was old enough to be not my father, but my grandfather.

DR. PHILLIPS: He's the architect.

MS. HALPERT: How do you know about him?

DR. PHILLIPS: My understanding is that he helped design the addition to the gallery when you were in Greenwich Village.

MS. HALPERT: How do you know? I didn't tell you that, did I?

DR. PHILLIPS: No, I found that.

MS. HALPERT: He also designed the Riverside Church. He did all the Ford Buildings in Detroit, the houses for the Rockefellers in Maine. He's the one through whom I met Mrs. Rockefeller indirectly, but Frank Wren, [J.B.] Neuman -- they all wrote letters to Mrs. Rockefeller saying that I was immoral, that I had no children and all that sort of stuff, that I had been married for so many years, and the like, and she spoke to me.

She had a little sitting room downstairs. She had sixty-four rooms, but when she had to chastise the kids that was the room -- a little sitting room -- you know, when she had those little motherly talks. She was a marvelous woman really, and when she asked me to come down there, I said, "What did I do that was naughty, Mrs. Rockefeller?"

I saw all the letters. She didn't show them to me.

DR. PHILLIPS: She didn't show them to you?

MS. HALPERT: Oh, no. She didn't even refer to them. Anna Kelly who was her secretary, and before she left she showed me the whole file of letters, and she said, "What a ham you are! Taking care of all these people" -- and she was talking particularly about Holger Cahill -- "Look what they do to you. They try to murder you."

She showed me the letters, and I read every one of them. I wasn't shy. I handed them back to her and I said, "I survived, didn't I?"

Mrs. Rockefeller said, "John is very disturbed about my collecting modern art."

"Oh, yes. You've told me that many, many times."

He made it very clear. He called me a "devastating influence in the house!" I said, "I knew that."

She said, "No, I want to ask you something. What is it -- you've been married a good many years, and you have no children."

I said, "May I tell you that it's none of your damn business, Mrs. Rockefeller?"

She was very startled. She said, "No artists have children, and John thinks that all of you are leading a very immoral life."

She didn't mention the letters. That I found years later.

I said, "Would you like to come down and visit the Zorachs some time? They live above a Cushman Bakery and -- you know, bread attracts rats, great big rats. Their children play on the floor, and they got bitten by rats once in a while. Most artists are wise enough not to expose their children to that. You wouldn't want to raise your children that way, would you? You even have an infirmary in your house."

She was the kind of person you could talk to. I have another funny incident about dresses, clothes which was very funny before that, and she was used to me about this time -- you know, I would put her in her class group, but this was going a little too far, so she said, "Just a minute! Please don't get cross with me. I don't understand these things."

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I said, "I've been patient with you for many years because for a very intelligent woman you're awfully dumb! When you offer to support an artist at ten dollars a week, I had to explain to you that we pay more for bread than you do because you get it wholesale."

She did. "Your housekeeper told me that you buy in such quantity that all the help you have that you get it wholesale."

I was explaining things to her, and she said, "Well, how can people not have children?"

I said, "There are two ways. One is that they don't play" -- of course, she was horrified; she had five children -- "and the other involves certain preventive measures."

She asked, "What are they?"

My knowledge about it was just one little gimmick, so I said, "I can't talk to you about it now."

I ran like a bat out of hell down to the clinic.

DR. PHILLIPS: Margaret Sanger's Birth Control Clinic.

MS. HALPERT: Yes, Margaret Sanger, and that story is in the public domain -- that is, the rest of the story. I dashed down, and I made a contribution of twenty-five dollars, or something, out of my own gallery money. I wanted information, and they gave me a whole bunch of pamphlets. My God, there were so many ways that I never heard of!

DR. PHILLIPS: *Married Love* -- so-called, was that the title of the book?

MS. HALPERT: These weren't books, but pamphlets. You went there to be fitted, and I never head of these things. They were completely unknown to me. I was so intrigued that I had a ball, a wonderful time. I went home and read those pamphlets. The next day I had a lunch date with her, and I was the greatest expert in the world.

In the pamphlets they also talked about why it should be done, that in poverty children -- you know, all the things that can happen to children; they were born mentally retarded. It was a dreadful bit, and it scared the pants off me. I was so glad that I never had any children because I was sure that they would have been morons and everything else, and I said to her, "By the way, I found these pamphlets at home."

I didn't tell her that I had been down to the Sanger Clinic the day before. "I made a little contribution to them when I got the pamphlets, and I think that it is one of the most worthy causes -- you know, you spend a great deal of money for the care of children of that kind, for the care of women who go mad, and so on."

Well, about a month later there was a front page story, full page, a cover of Mrs. Rockefeller, saying that Mrs. Rockefeller Jr. contributed ten thousand dollars to the Sanger Clinic. Boy! What John D. did to me then! That's what Nelson meant when he said, "Not the clinic!"

I said, "That's in the public domain."

I can probably even get the date of that incident because I have a lot of stuff in my archives, but boy! John D. came to see me in the gallery.

Mrs. Rockefeller was a very innocent woman. She asked me to take Nelson and show him life. I don't mean in the raw. I took him to Romany Marie's cafe where Marie told him his fortune, the most sensational thing I ever heard, and I took him to artist's studios, to Duncan Fergusson's studio, to show him how the other half lived. He'd come down in that ratty secondhand Buick he had. I couldn't sit for three days after I rode in it. I took him around because these people really didn't know. Basically they're very good people, but that Sanger Clinic thing!

DR. PILLIPS: All out of a series of letters about you which she never disclosed to you.

MS. HALPERT: She never said anything. She behaved very well. She ignored them. *Time* magazine ran a big story with a cover too in which they refer to me as her "white haired" -- I think they said attractive, but "white haired."

DR. PHILLIPS: *Time* always has been a little facetious.

MS. HALPERT: I had white hair ever since Sam died. I turned gray at once. I never believed it, but I did. I went to Detroit and watched him die which was not a very bright thing to do, but I thought if he saw me there, it would make him feel good. *Time* referred to me as her "attractive, white-haired agent." She never bought anything through anybody else until later when the Modern Museum [Museum of Modern Art, NY] was established -- you know, paying a director, and that's how I lost all the Rockefellers by handing them over, but I got others.

I got very friendly with Edsel Ford, and that guy broke my heart. He had this dichotomy. He loved that old man, Henry Ford, his father, desperately, and he was so ashamed of him. He used to come, and he'd go over to Mario's for lunch, and he'd practically weep each time. What was the name of that guy who hired all the goons?

DR. PHILLIPS: Bennett.

MS. HALPERT: Yes, Bennett and about the *Dearfield Independent*! He just died of shame he was so sick about it, but he loved that old man. If I smoked a cigarette in their house, I had to go to the girl's room. They'd all come in with me because we'd have a drink in the lavatory because papa might come in, and he would smell smoke. He had the keenest sense of smell. He could smell smoke and liquor. He would drop in unexpectedly some time, and Edsel was in utter terror of him, and he loved him. I think he died of it.

You know I've always been very sorry for these people. I was the one who did the giving -- not in dollars, but, you know. I once said to Mrs. Webb, "Electra, I want to ask you something. How do you visualize me as a person, as a female?"

She said, "I wouldn't trust my husband with you."

I said, "Come, come."

She said, "I know you wouldn't take him as a gift. I know that."

I said, "Okay, that's straight."

She said, "Why do you ask?"

I said, "Why in the hell do you give me a hand knitted woolen bed jacket for Christmas every year?! Do you visualize me as someone who would stay in bed wearing one of those goddamn things, or staying in bed period?"

She said, "I haven't thought about it."

I said, "You buy from the blind, or something."

Every year she'd give me a woolen bed jacket, and I could send her a five hundred dollar gift for the museum for Christmas. We sat and talked together. I said, "You know, Mrs. Rockefeller used to send me three pairs of gloves every year. You rich dames could send me a mink stole. I'm more the mink stole type than the woolen bed jacket type, don't you think?"

She laughed. I said, "One of those pearl necklaces -- a little thing like that."

She said, "You don't like any symbols of wealth."

I said, "Nor do I like the symbols of an old hag sitting there with a hot water bottle at her feet and a hand knitted, woolen bed jacket on."

From there on she sent me a case of liquor. She said, "What would you want?"

I said, "You can send me a case of liquor."

If I had said, "Liquor," she would have sent me one bottle. They are a different breed of people, and they take much more than they give. The millionaires who have died -- I really made their lives much more pleasant for them.

DR. PHILLIPS: It's funny that you should say that. Down at Winterthur I was struck by one thing in particular -- Mr. Du Pont, eighty three with his huge vast area, this enormous museum, still at eighty three gets more in conversation than he ever gives. It was almost like pulling taffy -- worse than pulling taffy because some sticks you know in taffy pulling. He may never have thought in these terms -- I don't know, but the process was quite alien to whatever it is he is.

MS. HALPERT: They are instructed that everybody who wants money what they've got.

I had this interesting experience with a man years ago who -- he was a Parsi, one of the most wonderful people I ever met. I simply adored him -- you know, I venerated him, not adored him. He used to come to New York every Wednesday. He was vice president of the Vanadium Steel Corporation, and he would come to New York every Wednesday morning, and I had dinner with him -- it was a regular routine -- every Wednesday evening. I had to sit up with him until one o'clock. His Pittsburgh train didn't leave until two o'clock, or something, and we had a perfectly marvelous relationship. He was one of the most brilliant people I ever met, and I just adored listening to him.

He also was a famous philosopher and had written books on the subject. I was very intrigued with the Persian, Hindu, and the variations in their philosophy, their religion. I once made a mistake. He took a cigarette, and he gave me a cigarette. The matches were near me, and I went like this, lit it and moved it toward him. He threw it out of my hand because you're not supposed to offer fire. Then he explained it to me. He said to me -- well, I don't want this in there. Turn that machine off.

[END OF 1 OF 5 REEL A2r]

32 East 51 Street, New York City, Tuesday, May 1, 1962

DR. PHILLIPS: Last time we talked . . .

MS. HALPERT: Did I get back from Europe?

DR. PHILLIPS: We did in a way. We terminated the story of your husband. The reason you went to Europe was not the reason that troubled him all those years.

You mentioned once about the artist when he's broke and so on and doesn't get recognition, he blames everybody for it -- naturally. In every field -- it's the fault of someone else, but when the wife helps the husband, feels that his work is so important that she is willing to work her head off and so forth, and then the analyst comes along and tells the wife that she emasculates him -- you can't win. That's what I mean because that, after all, is my experience.

But in terms of the choice you made, it took a lot of courage to make that choice in the light of the success you had had in the business world, even to the point of dropping suggestions in a -- that paid off and handsomely.

MS. HALPERT: Oh God! That really sustained me in a big way.

DR. PHILLIPS: For me, it illustrated the fact that you did have a lot of ideas, and it's inconceivable to me that you would ever really have comfort merely as a housewife -- whether emasculation or not. You would have to have an outlet somehow -- someway.

MS. HALPERT: I had a number of talents, so to speak, so that I could fall into any pattern of work. All my jobs in the past have always ended as great successes -- from my high school days doing work in the summer vacations. I never had a vacation. I worked every summer as a kid, but always they wanted me to stay on. They gave me raises and all that. It wasn't a question of getting a job when I came home from Europe. We used up all the money we had. That was part of the plan. I reorganized a department store in Lills under the funniest, strangest circumstances, but anyhow I got paid for that, and I blew it on myself. I bought -- I forget the name at the moment -- from one of the great designers, a few very expensive French dresses.

With the gift that Strauss gave me and this department store reorganization money I felt I could indulge myself in that, but when we got back it was a question of what the hell we were going to live on. My little nest egg I had I wasn't going to touch because that was all mine. I mean, I promised that I would not use my bonuses for the home, and well, a promise to me is a very holy matter. Unfortunately it's gotten me into a lot of trouble in my life, but that was the nest egg which was to be used entirely for me, and Mr. Strauss made sure. He kept asking me, "I want to know what you're going to do with that money."

Well, we were completely broke. We got back without anything at all, and we had been living very well, I must say. Sam had a separate studio, we had an apartment, and I had to be well dressed at Struasses because I addressed a meeting every month at the Astor Hotel. I was the only female executive. I used to address the Office Managers of America, and I had to be well dressed and I earned enough to buy good clothes. We came back from Europe, and we had nothing. I was there when the analyst said, "Get rid of all your money. You emasculate your husband. Let him be the wage earner."

The thing was idiotic! Sam tried, God knows. He began selling a few more pictures. The Newark Museum bought a picture and so on, but it wasn't until he got this job in Detroit that he was self-sustaining. We went off to Ogunquit. We couldn't afford to live anywhere. We went to Ogunquit and rented a house for a hundred and seventy-five dollars for the summer from Robert Laurent, a sculptor.

He owned a lot of property here, inherited from Hamilton Easter Field, and we had this early American house which hadn't been cleaned in thirty years or so. There was a huge -- I still remember that fabulous black, square piano, the biggest one I have ever seen, an enormous piano, a rocker, a chair and a wood box in the living room. There was a kerosene stove. The water had to be pumped way outside.

In Paris we had had this fabulous house with a forty foot studio for Sam and a guy who did nothing but polish floors. He came with the rent. We had a maid, and then we went down to Vernon and lived at an inn and very well. We sure spent our dough. Did I tell you where I was kissed by Monet?

DR. PHILLIPS: You told me the fact that you were kissed by Monet, but not where.

MS. HALPERT: On his Japanese bridge.

DR. PHILLIPS: Really?

MS.HALPERT: Yes.

DR. PHILLIPS: How Romantic!

MS. HALPERT: How romantic? I didn't wash my face for weeks. I still remember. It was right here on this cheek. This was at Vernon.

Well, coming back to the United States. We moved out to Ogunquit. We couldn't pay all the rent, so Sam suggested that Louis Rittman come and live with us. It was a huge house, and he paid half the rent or something. All this to me was so sordid! It was the dirtiest damn house! I went out and got some calico and made curtains to brighten it up. There were all sorts of animals, and I was scared of everything. There was an outhouse with a snake curled around.

DR. PHILLIPS: Frightful!

MS. HALPERT: It was the most ghastly experience I ever had, but I went through it like a soldier for about a month, and at the end of the month -- well, Louis Rittman had had a very sad love affair, so he would sit and groan. Sam had a bad habit of cracking his knuckles, so after dinner Sam would sit in a big chair. Louis, who was very sad and very little, sat in the rocker which was a child's crib -- you know, put up on end with a base,

and he would sort of get buried in that, and I sat on the only other thing which was the wood box. There wasn't a word of conversation. Sam still heard noises -- you know, and he's crackle his knuckles and Louis would rock in this little hearse, looking as though he was completely buried in it.

One night I decided that I would put on a chiffon dress from Paris. I decorated the table. I stole flowers from the neighbor's gardens and so on. I cooked the most beautiful dinner, and I got most of the food for nothing because some farmers up the road would give me corn and the fishermen would swap -- well, everybody had homemade beer. I hated the stuff. I had it too. Rudy Dirks and various people there used to make it for everybody, so I would trade a bottle of beer for fish and so on.

I went to this grocer, a very funny, but fancy grocer in Ogunquit on the main street, and on Monday's I would get all the leftovers for the week. I got an old hen, or something for about fifty cents, and I would use that -- Boy! I would make meals and meals out of it. In any event, this night I really went to town, and made the most wonderful dinner. I wasn't an awfully good cook, but there were three or four dishes that I did well, and I said, "Boys, this is a gala evening! Let's be gay!"

I was all dressed up. "You've got to talk tonight -- both of you."

There wasn't a sound. I said, "Please!"

They said, "After dinner."

After dinner I took the dishes off, washed them with kerosene stove heated water, and I came in the living room eagerly, all smiles, sat down on the wood box and they went through the regular noises -- Louis groaning and Sam crackling his knuckles and the rocker going. I sat there with this black piano facing me. I said, "Please say something!"

I really got very hysterical and Louis Rittman stuck his head out of this little hearse he was in and all he said was, "So dat's dat!"

He fell fast asleep. I went out on the doorstep and I screamed. I was really hysterical. I mean badly hysterical. I was shrieking with laughter -- you know, not crying, but this was much worse. I went up to my room, and I started to pack. I said, "I'm getting the hell out of here because this is the first sign of madness that you've witnessed. I'm getting out of here."

I went right to town. I was leaving permanently. I couldn't stand it another minute. I met some friends there -- Rudy Dirk's wife. All the older girls were very devoted to me, and they finally convinced me that I should stay, and that they would come out. They started visiting us in a big way, bringing meals out, big steaks and stuff, and they did the talking. I was really going insane. At the end of that summer, I decided --

DR. PHILLIPS: How did you stand it?

MS. HALPERT: I couldn't. I just couldn't. So I said, "I'm going to get a job. The hell with your analyst! I'm going to go on cooking an old hen three days" -- you know, making stew, like the Rockefellers with the oysters. They get a barrel of oysters every year, and when I would go there about the fifth day of the oysters, the kids would say, "Gee, you're lucky! When it comes to stew, that's the end of the oysters!"

Well I reached my "end of the oysters." Of course, that Rockefellers bit happened many years later. Well, I decided to do something. I sat up with myself, and I decided that I couldn't play a dirty trick of being successful in a job again, because that was obviously what had ruined Sam, so I thought I would do something else.

When we became prosperous, we lived right next door to the Carnegie Hall -- this was before we went to Europe. We lived right next door to Carnegie Hall, had a very nice apartment there, and Sam had a separate studio. I remembered that after the theater, or after the concerts, there was no place to go except that Russian Tea Room, and I was sick and tired of that, and so was everybody else. I decided that I was going to open a zacusca place. I had great confidence in myself. I thought, "Anything I do will be a great success."

I had a friend -- Leon Kroll's sister. Leon Kroll was Sam's closest friend, and his sister -- well, the wives and sisters always liked me which later in life sort of irritated me a little bit because it was the wrong pattern. Leon Kroll's sister was very much older -- at least twenty-five years old, and I told her that I thought I would open a zacusca place. Zacusca is sort of an *hors d'oeuvre* place, except that it would be for after the theater.

I went around, shopped around on 57th Street right opposite Carnegie Hall -- my place was going to be competition to the Russian Tea Room. I got artist friends to design the packaging. I was going to have little baskets, beautiful baskets, with all sorts of food stuffs that people could take home instead of sitting around. I was going to have sort of a milk bar. I've forgotten all of the details, but the zacusca part -- I was going to call it

"Zucchuska," and that meant that I had to have hors d'oeuvres. Caviar was out of the question because it was too expensive but I thought -- herring.

The department I knew nothing about, and I began enquiring -- you know, meeting people, going around. This was completely out of my province -- to actually run a store, and then when I realized that I would have to handle pickles and herring which smells, I decided that wasn't so interesting, but I talked to Bea Goldsmith about it, and she said, "I'll go in with you."

For a business I could use my horde, and she said, "I'll go in with you," and I thought that was fine. I did a lot of investigating. I didn't like the smell of herring. Everything else was fine. Stefan Hirsch designed paper containers. I had somebody else for murals. The whole thing -- Zorach was going to do a big thing for the window.

They didn't know what it was all about. I just asked them if they would make designs, and nobody knew what I was talking about, and then I began thinking about it a little more. Most of the other artist's wives were working. Most of them were doing something. I thought that maybe the best thing for me to do was to make it possible for artist's wives to live like human beings. I thought, "Well, I'll open a gallery."

This was so farfetched because I knew nothing about the workings of a gallery. I was on the artist's side, thought that the dealers were crooks and I didn't want to be a crook that dealers were opening and closing, and it was not a very good business. I thought, "I'll see if I can't make life easier for other wives in the future."

I was riding on a Fifth Avenue bus with Bea Goldsmith one sunny afternoon, and I said, "Bea, I don't think that I'm going through with this zacusca business. I think I'm opening a gallery."

She made of those great remarks in history. She said, "Herrings or art, I'm with you."

The rent situation was pretty impossible in New York, and I decided that since most of the artists lived in the Village, or in that vicinity -- Weber had a studio in the Village, Zorach lived in the Village, Davis lived down on 13th Street, and so on. Well, practically all the artists lived there, and I thought that it would save the expense of transportation. I had practical ideas that had to do with my past experience; that the artists could deliver.

I wouldn't have that overheard, that I would create some sort of meeting place, have something that France has -- you know, we don't have cafes, but this would be a place where artists could meet writers, musicians and so on and have more to get out of that very narrow, little path where they yapped about their problems, because that in misery we might -- you know, have a wonderful time. So I thought I would have it open evenings and serve coffee free and so on. I get all of these absolutely insane ideas -- you know, as I think of it now they were the craziest ideas!

I still had that money, and I decided that I would buy a house in the Village and rent apartments so that I could get the gallery rent free of charge. We'd live in the house. Bea said that she would like to buy into the house, so we went out shopping and I decided that it would have to be on a number street instead of a name street because everybody gets lost in the Village.

Well, in any event, I picked 113 West 13th Street, and it was a brown stone. This I didn't know, but that became very useful in time. I got this brown stone, started to remodel it, and really made it into a very attractive gallery with all sorts of new ideas. Bea Goldsmith insisted that she was also a partner in the gallery, and that made me blow my top. I said, "We were just buying a house together."

The gallery was going to pay my rent, but we would make enough money on the rent from the other apartments so that I could pay the rent of the gallery, but she insisted, so I had to let her stay in. That's how we started the gallery.

The idea was to get artists. That was a push over. It was very easy. I picked the artists I respected the most including artists who were with other galleries, and the dealers were tickled to death to share the artists. Nobody was selling. There was Daniel, and also during all the early years I got to know Stieglitz and Montross very well. They were very fond of me. Stieglitz said, "Certainly you may have Marin. Certainly you may."

DR. PHILLIPS: Wasn't his interest photography?

MS. HALPERT: No. He ran a gallery all those years -- started in 1906, or something before my day there -- you know, the "old pioneer." I'll never get over that one.

Well, I asked the neighbors in Ogunquit -- that was the following year. We went back to Ogunquit the following summer, a second summer, 1926. We went to Europe in 1925, and came back in 1926. I knew all the artists long before I met Sam, and I knew them through Weichsel -- way back in those days. That's where I met Sam.

He did not introduce me to the artists. I had met them through others. That has always been something that irritated me -- you know, that he brought art into my life.

DR. PHILLIPS: Weichsel was. . .

MS. HALPERT: He was the People's Art Guild, and I've told you that when I was about fourteen years old I became the mascot, and Mrs. Weichsel would watch so that no man would make a pass, and she warned me.

DR. PHILLIPS: We must protect our Nell!

MS. HALPERT: One night I really went to town. There was this girl -- Otley Barzands who I met at Macy's, and she went to the art school -- to the Academy afterwards. We became great friends. She was about five foot ten. She was about eight years older as opposed to everybody else who was a hundred years old, so I took her alone to Weichsel's, and there was a guy there named Wolf, a sculptor, and Mrs. Weichsel said, "Be careful of that man!"

Then Arthur Craven was out there. He was the nephew of Oscar Wilde, an enormous guy with one of the largest clavicles in the world. If he had an open shirt, I always thought that you could hang on them. He was a prize fighter, or something in between, so the two of them came over and asked whether we would like to go to the Robert Frost's studio.

I didn't tell Mrs. Weichsel, but Robert Frost -- you know, the great poet. I said, "Yes," and the four of us went. The first time somebody made a pass, I socked him in the jaw, and Robert Frost thought I was the cutest thing that ever happened in his life. He came up and said, "I'll beat every man in this joint if he touches this little virgin!"

It was a very dramatic scene. That's the one time I cheated, and that's the one time these boys were all right. They also took us to some joint -- I can't remember the name -- in the Village, but I saw these very, very important people in all the fields -- you know, the writers, poets, everything. It was a great night and everything was all right. The next Friday I told Mrs. Weichsel that I had cheated, and she asked, "Did something happen?"

I said, "No. A man came over, and he patted me on the cheek, and I socked him. Robert Frost thought that was very cute. I was so ashamed! But he didn't get mad."

Frost read poetry that night. We sat on the floor -- you know, the idea of sitting next to God! Because I read poetry in those days.

DR. PHILLIPS: You wrote poetry too.

MS. HALPERT: Well, before and after, but I didn't do it with the idea of becoming a poet. In any event, all these things came to me in relation to -- you know, this café business I had in mind. I remembered this meeting place, and, as I say, I met all these artists -- well, everybody. Zorach I got to know very well -- both Zorachs.

Everybody was terribly nice to me, and I'd ask them very serious questions as to why they did this and why they did that. I really got to know the Armory Show intimately without ever having been there -- how they hung the pictures and so on, and everybody was giving me information. They were all amused. I was a very solemn kid, and you know, they could have said, "Get that little brat the hell out of here!" But everybody was very nice.

I went to the studios; as a matter of fact -- well, I forgot to tell you why I married Sam Halpert. There was a big show held at the church of the -- well, down in the Village there was a church, a very, very important church; I'll think of the name -- a very, very important show with Duchamps, a great modern exhibition. It must have been about 1916, or 1917 -- much later. I went down to see that show about five times and somebody in charge who said -- this is the first Duchamps I saw, the first Matisse, the first anything, but most of this was American art.

There was a painting by Sam Halpert in the show, *Toledo Cathedral* [1916]. I just went crazy mad about that picture and the man who was in charge, an artist -- the artists alternated but this guy always had Sunday -- said, "You must like that picture very much because you always end up at the painting."

I said, "I think this is a great picture. How much is it?"

He said, "Six hundred dollars."

I said, "Well, I'll never be able to afford that. Is the artist single? Maybe I'll marry him for the picture."

Then I met Sam about six months later, and when I heard that he was the artist -- well, I think that really is what inspired it. I thought that he was one of the greatest artists in the world, but the joke was on me -- I never got that picture. Philip Wittenberg owns it, and I still feel that I was cheated.

Well, I did feel that it was necessary to do something about the artists because I heard nothing at Weichsel's except that these great people were practically starving. Nobody was earning a livelihood, so in any event, I opened up the gallery, and it was a very handsome place. I got all sorts of ideas. I had seen the art decorative show in Paris, hung around that and I got a lot of ideas there, and for practically nothing I designed this gallery. I didn't have an architect -- believe me. For the back room I bought a long vestry table, and I had my mother's samovar, and I bought a great big coffee urn, a great big one, and in the evening the artists would come free for nothing and the public would come. Some people were invited, and others weren't, and after a while people started giving me tips, and I told them to get the hell out!

That just didn't work, and that ended in a very short period, but the gallery did become a sort of meeting place for all those people. About five years ago I got off a boat in Washington on a Federation meeting. There was a boat ride that went with the meeting. I got off the boat, and a man came up to me, threw his arms around me, kissed me. I wanted to hit him -- like I did at Frost's studio. He said, "You don't remember me, Aunt Edith? I'm 'Bucky' Fuller!"

I knew 'Bucky' Fuller. He said, "You know, I've wanted to do this for years. You gave me the first opportunity to report on the Marxian theory."

I said, "I did? When?"

He said, "In 1928."

It was so. He said, "Remember? You went across the street to the funeral parlor and asked them to lend you chairs."

I had heard him at Romany Marie's, had met him there, and he talked about the Marxian theory in building, the dome and so on. It sounded utterly fascinating, and I thought I understood it, and I felt that it should be spread, so I sent out penny post cards to a number of people whom I thought would be interested, and we had a full house, and he lectured on this, and it was one of the most fascinating meetings.

There was a restaurant across the street, and they saw this all going on -- and you know, in the Village, you get to know everybody. The owner came over and said, "What's going on here?"

I said, "Shh!"

He said, "How would everybody like some good Italian wine?"

Well, he sent over Italian wine for everybody, but can you imagine thirty years later Bucky remembered it?

Those things happened there every once in a while. It was pretty rough going to say the least. The only reason people dropped it was that they thought it was a speakeasy in disguise, and they were amused and interested. It sent out -- this came from my old experience. Instead of buying a mailing list -- I couldn't afford to do that -- I looked through the telephone book. I must have spent a week going through the telephone book and got all the neighborhood names -- you know, names in the more expensive areas, Fifth Avenue and 8th Street.

I sent out a letter which I have in my files. It's already in the Archives -- "Do you know that there is an Art Gallery in the neighborhood?" and all that sort of stuff. People began to come in, but most people who came in were horrified when they saw the paintings.

We've time for a quickie before she burns something.

DR. PHILLIPS: You didn't float this gallery on no knowledge at all. As I understood you, when you were in France you had taken time out of curiosity, if nothing else, to explore statistically French experience.

MS. HALPERT: Oh, yes. I was in statistics in those days. I went around to art galleries all the time, but I didn't meet anybody. I didn't dare ask to see anyone in the galleries, but I sent around and saw every show, every museum, and I went out to Chartres all by myself. I came back the same day. Sam would never let me leave overnight, and I had to go again. Of course, after I did the department store thing, I was pretty independent. I had that extra money to spend.

DR. PHILLIPS: As I understood you, you went to the license bureau.

MS. HALPERT: Not the license bureau. It was the bureau where you got your identification card. I don't know what it's called. Since we all carried one, and every citizen has one -- like they have in Russia now -- I decided that they must have some statistics. I went there. My French was pretty dreadful, but I was young and presumably cute or something because I -- well, you know, with the French it's very easy, if you're young and female, and I told them what I wanted.

They had the cards all under classifications, what the population of -- you know, and so I wanted to know about art. Modern art started in France about 1907, with the Fauve Movement, so I had my period. I knew a great deal -- much more than most of the curators today know, I'm sorry to say -- so I had all the periods well divided. Then, of course, it was always "*America uber alles*," and so many American artists were part of the movement! They contributed just as much as the Spanish, or the Italians, or the English, certainly as much as the French in a way.

The School of Paris was a composite of every nationality. It certainly wasn't all Parisians; in fact, I think that there were two Parisian artists in all of Paris -- most of them came from the provinces -- you know, like Leger. Everybody came from some other part of the country, and so I got statistics from 1907 -- I've got that written down somewhere. I've got to find it because I have the actual figures. It was about sixty-five thousand artists. An average of sixty-five thousand registered per year as fine artists, not commercial artists, not designers, from every part of the world were functioning. It grew. It went up to over a hundred thousand, but I believe that the mean average was about sixty-five thousand per year during that entire period from 1907 to 1925.

Then I sat down and figured out how many great artists had emerged by then and much later I played games -- this was after the Modern Museum was in existence because I remember asking Alfred Barr and others at dinner parties -- you know, offering a big prize who would name twenty great artists that emerged from the School of Paris. This was after 1930, and nobody got beyond eighteen. I even let them put in Laurenson. This proved something because I irritated the hell out of a lot of those people who said, "Well, of course this is it. Everybody was a great artist in France."

I said, "All right! How many names have survived?" -- this was 1893, or whatever -- How many artists have survived? Give me twenty names -- great artists."

Nobody could get beyond eighteen. You try it some time.

DR. PHILLIPS: Nobody had the statistics to make yours a pat hand.

MS. HALPERT: I had all the statistics, and everybody hated me. When I have artist's meetings, all I have to do is say, "Statistically speaking," and they will get up and get wild. I still have statistics. As a matter of fact, I gave them to Arlene Locheim [Aline Louchheim], the distribution of sales in America, and it was down to a tenth of one percent -- what territories. Then I explained why the Middle West had the largest number of buyers of American art. She published that in *Art News*. She did a beautiful job. I gave her the statistics, but she did the writing.

All this fascinated me. I also picked out all the non-Frenchmen in the total which also is quite a high percentage. There was Picasso, of course, Soutine, Modigliani. There were a great many Russians and predominately a tremendous number of Jews which puzzled me. I had my own theory about it. You had Chagall, Soutine, Modigliani, Lipchitz, and so on -- all these people. It was a tremendous percentage.

I figured out that it was because they could never paint the image of man. This was the first time when there was excitement, enthusiasm and freshness at something that had never been done before, but in any event, I'm full of statistics which again bored the hell out of everyone. But I think they're important. I have them all somewhere in the papers I have.

DR. PHILLIPS: I think you had also in the light of later opening the gallery the relationship between dealers and artists in the French sense and. . .

MS. HALPERT: That came later. That came when I became very prosperous. I would go to Paris on my own. This is 1926 and 1928 and from there on when all these dealers told me how to function. The one who made the greatest impression on me was [Ambroise] Vollard who gave me the most beautiful outline. Week after week he'd say, "*Mon Cheri*, this is the way you do it."

He was very serious about it, and he had his own statistics which were damn good, and in the bank they were fabulous, and the whole philosophy was repeated over and over again, but never as brilliantly and never as convincingly as with Vollard. He was the success story of all times. His batting average of good artist was higher than anybody else's. That's what I mean by success. He also made many millions of dollars.

I met him and [Dikran Garabed] Kelekian also, who had race horses on whom I lost. He took me out, and I had to bet on his horses, and I lost everything I bet. He had very good taste in art, but he sure had bad taste in horses. They were always second, or third -- you know, they almost made it, but not quite, and [Joseph] Brummer -- well, Brummer came into my life after 1930, after Sam died, but as a dealer.

You know all these letters I get that sound so strange. I have to make that distinction. One of the men who really gave me the most information in a very quick way was Cesar de Hauke who worked with Seligmann. He

told me about the auction. It was fabulous. It was so exciting. I have those statistics too. That's the course that I want to give at NYU -- you know, merchandizing and art and having each dealer's philosophy. They're each honorable. There's nothing crooked.

Each one -- I mean they all had different methods, and there isn't anybody in the whole world who has had the experience of having about twelve of the greatest dealers in history including the Lord himself [Joseph] Duveen -- all of them, each one giving me his credo. I remember each credo. I wrote them down, but that's not necessary because I remember them. I spent all of my life working in direct opposition to their credos. Their credos were brilliant, very logical, statistically speaking superb, and so on, but the artists in those systems were completely ignored per se. I mean they did all right, but they were not the consideration, and this is now the pattern in art in America.

We have finally accomplished this great feat of becoming French merchant in American art, and that is what is so painful to me -- the whole system complete -- auctions, artist's contracts, having five, fifty dealers handle the same artist, and what not -- this was the pattern I know about long before 1920, and refused to follow. Now it's become by far the most dominant method in America, and it hurts like hell not because I slipped up, that I didn't do it first. I knew about it long before any of these people did it, but I was very much opposed to it and the fact that it's becoming the dominant factor in art dealing is very painful to me. That's why I want out at this time. I'm very happy about it.

However, the first years of the gallery were really about the most fascinating period of anybody's life who was young enough, strong enough, healthy enough and had some sense of humor to survive.

Well, I think we'd better eat.

32 East 51st Street, New York City, Wednesday, May 9, 1962

DR. PHILLIPS: The name of the gallery which we opened last week was originally "Our Gallery," and I believe you indicated that Zorach . . .

MS. HALPERT: Well, the whole idea was to make the gallery an intimate thing as opposed to -- you see, in those days a man like "Pop" Hart would not be admitted into another gallery. He walked into Knoedler's with a banana, and he was kicked out. As I kid, I was not admitted to any of the galleries. They practically told you to get the hell out, except Montross, but they were very, very few.

Everything you do naturally is a result of something that happened before, and I wanted to make this gallery an intimate thing, so that it was called "Our Gallery," so that anybody could come in at any time, day and evening, and so on. I called it "Our Gallery." Then I decided that I didn't like that name. After a while, Zorach came in. I said, "I've got to change the name of the gallery."

He said, "Why don't you change the name to Downtown Gallery."

I couldn't think of anything more divine than that. It was the only gallery downtown, and it's strange that there's this big revival after thirty-five years -- you know, that have suddenly discovered that the Village is a place for a gallery. "Our Gallery" didn't last long. I think that when I got within ten sheets of stationary I changed the name. I couldn't afford to waste it.

DR. PHILLIPS: You mean from "Our Gallery" to the "Downtown Gallery." This was the first notice.

MS. HALPERT: This noticed summed up many things that I had missed in my career like the installment plan. At that time, it was utterly sensational. Nobody ever heard of any art on the installment plan. Nobody paid on installments in those days -- I mean, even the people who later on began buying like the person who bought the Renoir for one hundred thousand dollars. He couldn't pay it all at once. This purchase was many years later than we're talking about, but it started then, that he could pay fifty-five thousand one year and fifty-five thousand another year, but at the time "Our Gallery" was opened installment buying was unheard of.

DR. PHILLIPS: You'd had a personal experience involving installment buying.

MS. HALPERT: I certainly did. I never forgot it either. I felt that what installment buying meant to me, that I could have had the picture I wanted the most of anything I ever wanted, and I was willing to pay the full price. I was even willing to leave the painting there, and when Brummer told me to "Go to Macy's," I decided -- well, isn't that almost the first line in that announcement?

DR. PHILLIPS: "Any of the fine art objects can be secured through extended payments."

MS. HALPERT: We were very refined -- "extended payments." We never had a contract -- also because of Brummer where I was willing to leave the picture. I still sell things on the installment plan -- of course, now everybody does, but there's no contract of any kind, no agreement. We let the person take the picture right away. They pay something down and they pay when -- you know, we discussed it. They pay monthly, quarterly, or every two years -- whatever, to make it as comfortable as possible. We have never lost a dollar on the installment plan. We've lost quite a bit on cash payments that we didn't get. Of course installment buying has become very, very common in the last fifteen, or twenty years.

It's been picked up by other galleries -- the way they picked up the Christmas exhibition! That was a very funny publicity release about buying Christmas gifts -- "Has it ever occurred to you to use a fine work of art as a Christmas gift?" and you could buy that on the installment plan. That also became sensational. Nobody ever dreamed of it, and there was nothing for sale for the Christmas exhibition over a hundred dollars -- from ten to a hundred dollars.

I think the first Christmas show was even less, from ten to fifty dollars, and we have had thirty-six of them so far. Tracing the result -- well, I'd say about sixty percent of our top collectors. Once they own -- you know, I always warn people, "Be careful before you make your first purchase because your life will be completely ruined. You'll become an addict. Nobody remains with one picture."

"What do you mean?"

I said, "Well, you'll need a mate and then you'll find more and more blank walls" and so on, but it's true. Well, all of these things were the result of my own experience naturally, because nothing like a Christmas exhibition had ever been done in the art world. I could not have done it uptown. In the Village anything went.

The only thing I didn't do was that I did not wear dresses, and I did not wear long earrings. I made it very much uptownish in my attire, but very downtownish in the functioning and the whole idea of having people meet, having collectors see the artists -- that was terribly important.

There's one wonderful story, but you'll have to delete part of it. First, I have to get us a drink.

As a matter of fact, this was one of our very early clients. I don't have my records here. I could look all that up and get the exact date of everybody coming in for their first purchase. This very early client was Edith Wetmore of Newport, Rhode Island -- Edith and Maud Wetmore who were called the Wetmore sisters, and I think their father was Governor of Rhode Island. They were raised by a German governess, and they both talked with a very strong German accent.

Well, she came down to the gallery one time. It must have been about 1928 -- I don't think it was the first year; maybe the second year, and everybody talked about the gallery. All of these rich dames talked about the gallery, "There's something absolutely fantastic! There's an art gallery in the Village and a young woman is running it, and you see early American objects, hooked rugs, early American furniture."

I did the gallery in an early American setting. Well, Edith Wetmore came down one time, and I showed her a painting in which she was interested. She said, "I'd like to see it in the daylight."

It was three steps down from the sidewalk to the entrance. It was a brownstone like all the speakeasies, so it was dim. I had electric light, but she insisted on seeing the picture in daylight, so I took it outside, and I leaned it against something. I don't think she bought that picture, but I remember the very strange look of amusement on her face. But she came and she did buy something that day. About a week later she came down in an open car -- what did they call them in those days, roadsters? -- with two young men from -- I don't know whether they were nephews, or whatever, but they were wearing -- what were those fur coats?

DR. PHILLIPS: Raccoon coats.

MS. HALPERT: Yes. Well, she brought them swinging into the gallery and said, "This is the gallery where they show pictures leaning against garbage cans."

Evidently I had placed this picture she wanted to see outside against a garbage can. It was the only upright thing outside -- a clean garbage can. She got absolutely fascinated meeting artists. She bought nothing but prints. She wasn't ready for paintings. This was all wild stuff. She'd buy a Weber woodcut, a Charles Lock lithograph and so on, and finally after a long, long struggle I sold her a print by [Yasuo] Kuniyoshi. The side room at the entrance was a print room, and I devised something very novel at the time -- you could slip them under glass, by putting wooden strips. Now of course everybody is doing it. She was very intrigued with Kuniyoshi because he was Japanese and all that. His pictures were very queer.

She had very heavy legs, and his women always had heavy legs and that made her feel very comfortable. There

was a cow in a field, a very famous lithograph of his -- it's going to be a dirty word? -- and she'd hang around for hours. She'd come in the afternoon. She'd come in the evening just to meet the artist, she was so intrigued. Now, this was really *La Boehme*. She was a nice old dame, but all this was a great novelty. I would introduce her to the artists, and she would go to pieces with her fifteen dollar purchase -- you know, "I just bought this lithograph. Tell me about it."

He did. He was so tickled that I had made a sale of Kuniyoshi at that time -- well, when he died his English was pretty sketchy, but at that time in the mid-twenties, he never used the article, or he'd say, "I saw house," or whatever. He talked very, very rough. She finally bought this cow -- the wooden cow with a razor back edge [*Milking the Cow*, 1927] and so on and as she was leaving one evening, Kuniyoshi came in and she leaned over and nudged me and whispered, "Artist?"

I introduced her and he looked at her. She said, "Just a moment, Mr. Kuniyoshi, I purchased this print last time I was here. Tell me about it."

He said, "Cow."

He started to walk away and she said, "What are those black things down below?"

He said, "Flop."

DR. PHILLIPS: A man of a few well-spoken words.

MS. HALPERT: Of course, she didn't know what that meant because he couldn't pronounce the 1. There were five, or six other people there who practically collapsed.

That was the extent of his conversation -- just two words about ten minutes apart. There were many of these people who would come in for the full treatment -- you know, the full touch of the left bank. We had nothing like that -- just nothing, except Romany Marie's. She was on 8th Street, but her place was a very different kind of thing than a café, and I remember that for about five years they would always give me boxes to the opera, prize fights.

Whenever they had anything extra, they'd come down and give it to me for me to distribute around -- like prize fights. I wasn't interested in that, but I had a box for a very famous fight. The Sharkey and Schmelling fight, and boy! Was I popular! I had eight seats!

DR. PHILLIPS: Eight seats?!

MS. HALPERT: Yes, but for years any time anybody had a box -- Mrs. Rockefeller, Richard De Wolfe Brixey, Goodyear -- any of those people who had a box at the opera, and they weren't going that night, they would send me tickets, and it was always *La Boehme*, and if I just hear one whisper of that opera now, I could scream because I saw that about eight times! Finally I returned the tickets and said, "Please!" But the association was complete along those lines.

It was like -- and this is later too -- Seymour Knox of the Albright Gallery. He came down with the director at that time -- it might have been Ritchie, but whoever it was, and he told him to come in and look at Kuniyoshi. Knox came in, and we were having a Kuniyoshi show somewhat later. Yas's studio was on 14th Street, that famous building right above an underwear shop, and you had to go through the underwear shop to get into the building. I was so eager to make this sale, I said, "Oh, Mr. Knox, I will take you to Mr. Kuniyoshi's studio."

He thought that was fascinating! It was on 14th Street with all these little girls walking around in short skirts and all those cheap stores -- you know, dress shops at $3.98 for a dress and this underwear shop. I said, "This is where we go in."

We went through the shop to the hallway and he was absolutely petrified. He kept looking at me -- you know, "Where are you taking me?"

I took him upstairs. We had to walk up and you know, there were garbage cans on each flight of steps. We walked up four flights. Kenneth Hayes Miller was in the building. It was an artist's studio building -- very inexpensive and we got to Yas's door. Of course, he had no telephone. Who had a telephone then in a studio? A very pretty girl came out and Knox looked. We got in and P.S. we saw a picture and he bought it for the Albright Gallery. Coming out he was so excited. He said, "Mrs. Halpert, this is *La Boehme*!"

This was really the attitude. It was that that attracted man. Of the uptowners, and believe me, there were no downtowners who were buying art! I don't think I had anybody with less than a couple of million bucks who bought anything, but among the early visitors were men like Duncan Candler who was really my patron, I might say -- unwittingly, he was my patron saint. He was the architect for the Fords in Detroit and the Rockefellers up

at Seal Harbor. He built their houses and then he built the Riverside Church many years later. He came in.

There were twenty-one speakeasies on that block, and frequently -- as a matter of fact, we had a big audience as a mistake -- mistaken identity, people who really thought the Downtown Gallery was a speakeasy. They'd ring the bell -- you know, the side bell and come in, and they looked around. They were scared to death when they saw the pictures. Some of them were drunk and got thrown out by a garage man who was next door. The garage man used to take care of the little woman. I was alone there in the evenings and he'd see someone reeling and he'd watch and just throw them out.

Duncan Candler's first visit was in the evening after he had had dinner at a speakeasy. He was absolutely fascinated and he collected prints. At this time it was impossible to sell paintings and everything had to be a gimmick. Since I was downtown I got Sloan's prints -- I had a great many of them -- and I had an old friend of mine male portfolios, draw a portfolio cover and I created the *Washington Square* series. He had made a great may prints at Washington Square, but I made this separate package.

My friend did a very wonderful job of type on this *Washington Square* series [1928]. Duncan Candler saw these and he was fascinated. He loved them, and he bought them. And then he came in a few days later and he bought a duplicate set. I thought that guy stuttered or something but I wasn't going to argue with him about buying a double set.

Then he bought Charles Lock, Kuniyoshi, and he kept buying various artists, and he asked for Arthur B. Davies and we didn't have his work at that time. Each time he would come back and get a second set, and I was curious, but I didn't want to spoil my good luck. I didn't ask, but he always doubled everything he bought and in the back room where I was serving coffee I had bought this very, very long table and two benches. I had them made, and he got very interested in those benches. He asked me whether I would sell them and I said, "No, but I can have them made for you."

He had them sent up to 10 West 54th Street to Anna Kelly, 10 West 54th Street, and that meant nothing at all to me. It happened to be the John D. Rockefeller residence, and he knew I was so dumb. Then after that, the prints kept going up to 10 West 54th Street too. I had no real curiosity about it. He just bought and paid, and I was delighted and he really had very good taste.

I wanted to get a lot of other people into the gallery. I only had a small group of very rich people and I wanted to get other people, those who were not scared of modern art, because most of the people who came in -- you know, it was like a couple of drunks coming in and seeing -- what color elephants?

DR. PHILLIPS: Pink.

MS. HALPERT: Yes, pink elephants. They really got terrified. People who came in thought they were dead drunk when they saw the pictures. I got the idea of having a show which would take in a great many, very conservative pictures by big names, and by this time -- well, through Montross I got things through other galleries. I got everything -- Charles Haskins, Ryder, of course, from my friend Montross, Marin. I got all the people I wanted, except Homer.

Well, I didn't dare go to Knoedler's and ask for a Homer. He'd kick me out on my rear. By this time, Candler and I got very friendly. I would go to dinner with him and I'd take him to a different kind of speakeasy he couldn't get into and he really was absolutely involved in art. It meant a great deal to him. He was getting a tremendous boot out of it and also meeting the artist. He met Walt Kuhn. He met so many of these people -- it was terrific. I went to dinner with him that night and he said, "Is anything bothering you? You're not paying any attention."

I said, "Yes, I've got to get a Homer, and I don't care where I'm going to get one."

It never occurred to me to go to a museum and no museum would have lent me anything of course. I didn't know where to go. The only place that had Homers was Knoedler's. He said, "What do you want a Homer for?"

I said, "I'm working on a show." And I gave him a list of all the artists I got -- Robinson, Wyeth, and the whole works. "I cannot get a Homer. I even have a Ryder."

He said, "What kind do you want?"

I said, "I'm going to have a landscape show."

He said, "I'll get you one. I have a friend who has a Homer."

I thanked him and the next day he came down and he brought me this perfectly beautiful Winslow Homer watercolor. "Is this all right?"

"Good."

"How about insurance?"

I couldn't afford to pay any insurance. I slept with the Haskin painting. It was five thousand dollars. I took it up to my bedroom every night. I thought that if it burned, I'd burn too. He said, "It will be insured. It's all taken care of."

I said, "To whom shall I credit it?"

He said, "Just put it up and just say, "Lent anonymously.'"

Looking at all the pictures I was hanging I got an idea of hanging the Homer between a Zorach and a Marin. The Homer was not realism because nobody has ever seen red waves, and I thought this is the best message I could put over. Here was a great acknowledged artist. There was one wall between the front room and the rear, a small wall, and I hung the Homer in the middle and the Marin watercolor on one side and the Zorach on the other, and it was a fantastic wall! Really, it was magnificent! These were three very exciting pictures.

By that time I had won over Elisabeth Luther Cary, the critic who hated all modern art, but this who brought mobs of people in. I advertised the name. This must have been about 1927 -- American Landscapes, and the first picture I sold really burned me up because it was a Wyeth. I wanted to sell modern art, and I had brought these old dodoes in order to sell modern art and the first picture I sold was a Wyeth which I borrowed from somebody.

Well, Miss Cary came in, and as I say, she hated modern art. By that time I kept getting a little bit cocky because we were selling, and people would come in from all over town and some from out of town. I said, "You know, Miss Cary, I was a little worried about putting this picture in. It's so wild!"

I pointed to the Homer. I said this very seriously. She was quite an old dame! She died not many years later. Well, she looked at it and I said, "Marin is presumably the most modern artist we have, but it's not more modern than Homer in this context, not is Zorach."

Well, it made such an impression on her that she had all three pictures reproduced. That brought into the gallery Richard De Wolfe Brixey who became an important person in my life later.

DR. PHILLIPS: Your telephone is ringing.

MS. HALPERT: About ten people came dashing in -- this spread appeared in the Sunday paper, and about ten people came dashing in to see the Homer and began asking price and I said, "This belongs to a collector."

"Who is it?"

"I haven't any idea. One of the clients borrowed it."

Finally Brixey came in and he's the one who offered ten thousand dollars for the Homer. The idea that any picture was worth ten thousand dollars when a Seurat -- you know, was so much less, and I really thought he was a much greater artist than Homer. I still do. I don't mean because of price, and if he was six hundred dollars, why should Homer be ten thousand, and here this man came in and offered ten thousand dollars, so I said, "Well, I will get in touch with them."

I was hysterical! I called up Duncan Candler, and I said, "Good God, somebody came in and offered ten thousand dollars for the Homer. Why don't you tell your friend to sell it."

I always referred to the friend as he -- you know, and Duncan Candler came down that evening. I had a drink with him after ten o'clock when the gallery closed, and he said, "But the person who owns it, loves the picture. It's not for sale."

I told him who wanted it, and he sort of smiled and said, "It isn't for sale."

I said, "You know -- I hate breaking up the trio."

The three pictures really were perfect together, and he said, "Well, it's not for sale."

This went on. Certain people wanted to buy the Zorach, or the Marin, and I kept saying, "By golly, I'm going to make this idiot who won't take ten thousand dollars for the picture buy these two and keep it as a unit."

My friends would laugh at me and say that I was crazy as a bed bug, and all that sort of stuff, so one afternoon a

woman came in, very prim, very respectable looking and so on. She looked expensive. She said, "What is the price of that Marin?"

I said, "Seven hundred and fifty dollars."

"What's the price of the Zorach?"

I said, "Two hundred and fifty dollars."

She said, "I'd like to take them."

I said, "Oh, no, Madame, I'm sorry. I will not break up that trio. I'm waiting for that idiot who owns the Homer to come in."

She looked up and said, "I'm that idiot!"

Candler had told her that I wouldn't sell those two pictures to anybody, but the "idiot," and I had to repeat it to her! Well, when she said, "I am the idiot!," all I wanted to do was die but quickly -- you know, not even with a gasp! It was the most terrible experience I've ever had in my life to that time. She patted me on the shoulder and said, "That's all right."

From then on she became a very permanent and steady collector and she said, "This idiot also owns a great many prints that came from your gallery."

Candler was buying all these duplicates for Mrs. Rockefeller. She really was a swell dame, and she came in about a week later and said, "I'd like to have you pick six" or ten -- I've forgotten which, but I have those records in the gallery -- "Pictures that you consider the top paintings in the gallery."

I said, "You'll have to give me time. You'll have to go out and have lunch. Oh, you can't because those are all speakeasies."

She went somewhere in any event, and I picked out what I considered, whether six or ten, and I think it was ten, and she looked at them very carefully, and she said, "You know I've never bought any modern pictures in my life until the Marin and the Zorach and some of the prints, and I'm a little hesitant about that."

I said, "Why don't you have Mr. Candler look at them?"

"Well, he is not up to the paintings as yet. He buys only prints. That's his field."

She said, "Do you mind if I send someone else in?"

I said, "Not at all. I hope he's intelligent."

She said, "I think he is."

She sent in this man. I recognized him immediately, although I had never met him. It was Arthur B. Davies who did more for modern art, worldwide and certainly for American modern art, than anybody in the world. He was at the Armory Show, the Quinn Collection, the Bliss Collection, and so on. So he came in, and he said, "Your friend, the idiot, sent me over."

I didn't live that down for years! Each time I'd get a slight heart attack. "She sent me in to look at the pictures you picked, and she also told me that the person who would come over had to be intelligent."

I said, "Oh, Mr. Davies, I think you're wonderful. You did the Armory Show. You bought the first Max Weber. I think you're wonderful."

He sat down and said, "Isn't there anybody to help you here?"

I said, "Oh, no, not yet. I have to sell these ten pictures before I can hire help."

I was carrying these pictures, and I left him alone. I said, "Just call me when you're through."

I put them in the back room, and then I went up front. He called me, and he said, "Send these up to Mrs. Rockefeller. I'm intelligent enough to think that they're very good pictures."

Again I don't know whether it was six or ten, but my books will show that. That started the most beautiful friendship and also an awful lot of additional selling. I didn't know anything about prices. I used to look at pictures, but I didn't know anything about prices, and he invited me up to his studio. He was at the Chelsea

Hotel. He said, "Since you do so much business in prints, would you like to have some of my prints?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "You're not as fond of my paintings, are you?"
I said, "No."

Well, I wasn't, but I thought that he was certainly one of the great print makers that we had, so he said, "Why don't you buy them? If you like them, why don't you speculate on me?"

I was really such a dam fool! I picked out those I wanted, and he said, "You can buy those for six dollars, and you pay for them after you sell them, but don't sell them cheap!"

I said, "Well, if I buy for six dollars, I have to sell them for ten. Nine would be correct, but if I invest the money, I should not make more than the thirty-three and a third percent."

He said, "No. I would ask more if I were you."

Then he marked some of them -- unique, whatnot. Well, I sure got a bunch of print collectors as a result of that. Those were selling at that time for fifty to a hundred dollars. I gave him his money right away. He said, "Don't sell for less than twenty-five dollars."

I said, "That's an immoral amount of profit to make. I can't do that."

"Oh," he said, "You can help some young artists that way," and I did. I never kept more than the amount I was entitled to. I had a little fund set aside to help young artists with that extra money. But that again brought in a great many people, and I really had the most -- well, I hate using the word "luck," but it was.

DR. PHILLIPS: Incredible, really. How long did it take for the gallery to really get off the ground?

MS. HALPERT: Well, by 1929, no 1930, I built the daylight gallery -- the most beautiful gallery in the whole world! I'll show you photographs -- really the most beautiful gallery in the whole world, barring none! Duncan Candler made plans for me as a present for all the pleasure I'd given him, introducing him to artists, and some of them took him to a burlesque he had never gone to in his like, like Walt Kuhn.

DR. PHILLIPS: He was really living.

MS. HALPERT: Walt Kuhn and Charles Lock, I think, took him to Minsky's -- I don't know what. He had a wonderful time and later on, 1929, when Pascin came to this country, and we became very good friends, we'd go up to Harlem and take Candler along. He lived. He never lived like that in his life. Romany Marie told his fortune -- Oh, Lord, it was something! It was all by-product, but that was the attraction, seeing a completely new way of life.

Then Mrs. Rockefeller -- well, I took her around to studios and showed her how the other half lives. Then she commissioned me to teach Nelson the facts of life and this was really very funny. I took him to Duncan Fergusson's studio -- you know, with his ratty old car with no springs in it. I took him around the Village. I didn't take him to a speakeasy naturally. I took him to Marie's. I took everybody to Romany Marie's, and she would tell their fortunes, and she was always curious about who they were because I would take Saklatwalla, Candler -- they were all much older people.

With Nelson it was the first time I had somebody younger than I, and she looked at me and at him with great contempt -- you know, what was I up to going around with kids? So finally, I invited her over. She read fortunes with Turkish coffee cups. She'd turn them over, create a pattern, and then she'd read the pattern. She'd tell the most incredible fortunes, and I can assure you that they were absolutely incredible without knowing who anybody was.

She just wouldn't read Nelson's fortune. I introduced him as Mr. Nelson -- you know, she never expected to meet a Rockefeller, and he didn't look like one. He was a kid, still going to Dartmouth at the time. I said, "Come on, Marie!" I really brought her a lot of business, and she finally felt that she had to do it, and she had him turn the cup down and turn it three times. She looked in it, looked at him, and she said, "This is not my night!"

I said, "Come on, Marie!"

She said, "This is ridiculous! There he is standing on time" -- and she'd always point -- "on just mountains and mountains of gold."

She got so hysterical, and she said, "All these people below -- thousands of people are working for him. These

mountains of gold."

She slammed the cup down, and she walked off. Well, she never knew.

DR. PHILLIPS: What's incredible!

MS. HALPERT: Isn't that wonderful. Well, Nelson sat with his mouth wide open. He said, "Oh, you tipped her off."

"Honest to God I didn't. You could see that she didn't know."

He said, "I don't have mountains of gold."

"Not this minute. You get a two dollar a week allowance, or something, but some day you're going to have mountains of gold in your lap, and you'll have ten thousand people working for you."

Well, all these people were having a ball who came down. This was *La Boehme*, but they did like the works of art too. They never would have come down otherwise -- you see, one told the other, "If you want to have a fascinating time, do down!"

Then there were others like Mrs. Guggenheim who thought I was such a brave little woman! She wanted to give me money all the time, and I wouldn't take a button from anybody. "If you want to help, buy things!"

She was afraid of Papa, thought she did buy a few things, but actually the majority of the collectors -- oh, yes, there was a funny thing about Mrs. Cornelius Sullivan. Most of the buyers were women. In those days, they represented culture. Papa went to work, brought the money home, and the women supported author's clubs, town orchestras, ballet and the art -- all the culture.

This too was early, still in the Twenties. As I remember, this was before the big gallery in the back part. This was in the closed section. Mrs. Sullivan came in. I didn't know who she as. She was wearing black cotton stockings -- you know, at a time when everybody was wearing not nylons. This was before nylons, but silk stockings. She was wearing a seedy, sort of a rusty black wool suit, and I thought she was an old school teacher, a retired school teacher. She said, "I'd like to see some of the paintings."

I thought, "Well, I'll be a nice person, and I'll show her something," and I kept showing her pictures. This when on and on and finally I thought, "This is enough already!"

You know, I can be accommodating and kind to an old lady, but not that kind, but I went on being very pleasant, showing her things and finally she said, "I think that will do for today. Would you set those two pictures aside and I'll have my husband come in and look at them tomorrow."

I said, "I'll be delighted to," and I put them right back where they were. I thought, "Good, Lord, such illusions of grandeur! Who would marry her with cotton stockings!"

The next day up came a Rolls Royce, and all the kids in the neighborhood ran like hell -- you know. They used to come running down for Mrs. Rockefeller's Rolls Royce too. This was bit stuff. They'd never seen it before. A man came out, and he said, "There are two pictures being held for me. My wife selected them yesterday."

I looked at this very elegant looking guy. He was Cornelius Sullivan of Sullivan and Cromwell. Even I knew that name, and I almost fainted -- you know, I had these awful shocks all the time. Then he told me, "I'm Mr. Sullivan."

I showed him the pictures, and he bought them. I don't tell anybody the names, but any time I employ anybody I tell them, "It's the person who looks least likely like a client that you should play up to," and I've used that. Really, that's my credo I've used always. It's a little, simple, poor looking, little person, and in most instances they turned out to be the collectors, not the swishy, well dressed people.

I did recognize after a while custom-made shoes, because no matter how ratty they looked, how unstylish, if they had custom made shoes, they were rich. I could tell them instantly -- men and women, but the majority of the people who came were females, and there was a very pleasant rapport. They liked the idea of a young woman being brave. They would all say, "You're such a brave, little woman!"

Mrs. Liebman -- you know, even snobs started coming down, and I have all the sales records, most of them were females in spite of the fact that the male dealers wrote the letters to Mrs. Rockefeller and said not to buy from me because I was having affairs with all my customers. I would have been awful off to have had affairs with most of the customers, and the males at that time were Father Kelly, a priest, Duncan Candler, who was really quite an old man, and many others, but meanwhile I went to Europe every year. I forgot my big pal [Frank]

Crowninshield who thought I was utterly divine -- you know, having a gallery, and the critics -- well, Henry McBride was wonderful, and the *Arts*. Well, I really got a big hand. I must say everybody was very nice. I had a great deal of help from everybody, and I did have good works of art because I'm not giving valuations on some of those, and boy!

DR. PHILLIPS: I wondered how the modern art went after a while.

MS. HALPERT: Well, the first show I had of Stuart Davis' work was 1927, and people wanted to break the windows. They would come in from the street and scream -- you know, "This is indecent, having these crazy pictures!"

It was a very active street because of the speakeasies, because of the subway station on the corner, the 6th Avenue 1 on the other side, the home for wayward girls on my side, the funeral parlor across the street and so on, a lot of activity on that block, a very busy block. Oh yes, there was another woman who came in and that was also an early show because every show I had had some catchy title which attracted a lot of people like American Marines. I think I told you that one.

DR. PHILLIPS: No, I don't think so, though I have seen the catalogue.

MS. HALPERT: Well, a woman came in one day, and this gave me an opportunity to have a group show and again I borrowed some things from other dealers. By this time other dealers were very glad to lend me things because I sold for them.

DR. PHILLIPS: You moved goods -- you know, only in New York.

MS. HALPERT: Certainly. I sold prints. For instance my Sloan prints were exactly the same price as they were at Kraushaar's on 54th Street and 5th Avenue. Nobody would believe it, but I swore to them that they were no cheaper, but they just assumed that they were cheaper. They took it for granted that everything was lower I had stunts like having demonstrations on how to make a lithograph. Nobody had ever done that anywhere -- not even in the art schools -- you know, public demonstrations in lithography, etching and so on, and that brought a tremendous number of people from the neighborhood, many of whom had some means, and then when we started the Christmas shows, they did come in and buy something for twenty-five dollars, plus my trips abroad buying European art only if they had a separate budget.

They had to write me a letter, and I had to be sure that I wasn't touching an American dollar -- you know, anything that was taken away from the American budget, and it was only Mrs. Rockefeller, Saklatwalla, and Crowninshield for whom I bought abroad. Well, in time, by 1930, I was dripping rich -- 1929. Remember what happened in 1929?

DR. PHILLIPS: The crash!

MS. HALPERT: The crash did not affect the gallery until about 1931, so I had a terrible sense of guilt making so much money. In 1929, I published the book on "Pop" Hart. That's the best way to lose money that anyone could ever conceive -- publish books, but "Pop" Hart we did very well with, then with the Max Weber book, something very strange happened.

Then I built the daylight gallery and really went into big time art after that. I could really put on after that. It was a beautiful gallery, and every artist in America wanted to be there because there wasn't anything -- well, Walt Kuhn came in and asked me to handle his work. I turned down all sorts of top people who work I didn't like. There wasn't any gallery that compared with it.

DR. PHILLIPS: How did you get the idea for the Daylight Gallery?

MS. HALPERT: Well, I was in a crash in Germany. I flew in Europe from 1926 in those little crates -- you know, and I'd sit in the open cockpit with the pilot, and I was going to Nuremburg, I think, to Paris, and it was bad weather, and I insisted. The ticket didn't say anything about bad weather. I said, "I have a ticket, and I've got to fly right now."

They said, "Not in this weather!"

I said, "If I'm not afraid, why should a big guy like the pilot be afraid?!"

In any event, we went off, and the weather was bad, and we went about as far out of the way as we could and finally he told me -- we were almost in Holland, or something; we were gone for hours and hours -- that he was running out of gas, and he did. We made a forced landing in the mud right outside Essen. He decided to come down in this muddy field. I had bought this beautiful white suit in Nuremburg which I was wearing. We were up to our necks in mud. We were dragged out. The plane was dragged out and so on, and there as a farm house

nearby, and we got washed up. My bags were fairly covered with mud -- inside too. Everything just oozed.

We were taken to the nearest hotel in Essen. I had to send everything to the cleaners, and I had to stay there at least three days. I went to the museum naturally -- the first place I went to, and I was overwhelmed with that museum in Essen. It was the first really modern museum I had ever seen. They had screens, movable screens long before anybody had them in this country. As a matter of fact, the modern museum modeled some of its installations after the Essen Museum. I had photographs. I didn't have much money, but I had the entire museum photographed. The facade was brick, modeled in design. Instead of using it in the normal way, they used the narrow form, the square -- sort of Mondrian design. I had photographs and made drawings, and I asked the director if I could copy it, so my facade of the gallery was a copy of the Essen Museum facade. I left a little yard.

Then I got samples of the glass they used for the skylight -- the most marvelous glass in the world! The light was just utterly divine. I had samples, and I took everything with me. Then I told Candler what I wanted and the interior. He designed it, but I told him what I wanted -- you know, niches, revolving bases for the sculptures, so that I could see sculptures from all angles. Then I got Donald Desky to design these revolving chairs which are now being designed as television chairs, and this was late 1929, 1930.

When I did the municipal show at Radio City, I copied all the color schemes with the prints. That was just about the most beautifully designed museum from every point of view. The effect of the black and white print on a red wall, or having a piece of sculpture against a magenta wall -- it was just beautiful, really beautiful! I swiped all of those ideas with the permission of the museum director there. They also had some very good art there.

DR. PHILLIPS: You mean the design of the Daylight Gallery is really a consequence of your running out of gas in a place where you did not intend to go.

MS. HALPERT: I couldn't have gotten much further away from the direction of Paris in going toward Essen from Nuremburg.

DR. PHILLIPS: A muddy field.

MS. HALPERT: The pilot really had a ball. He thought it was funny. Also I was strapped with a short tight skirt.

DR. PHILLIPS: The Daylight Gallery was the subject of much comment in the press of the time.

MS. HALPERT: They wrote more articles about the gallery than the art. I have all the blue prints. I have photographs because it really was the most beautiful gallery in the whole world, and the most functional gallery. In Germany, they just had the flat glass, and we got that from Germany. It was a special kind of corrugated glass which killed sunlight. You didn't get glare from the sunlight, and it didn't hurt the pictures. Watercolors didn't fade -- you know, prints fade in the sun, but I had to put a sky light over it and then artificial light in between.

I went around, and I got everything for nothing. I got a wall covering made for me. Well, they got a big ad for it, and I went around and you know, I was in the advertising business too, so I went around and gave these people the biggest break in the world, didn't I? The wall covering I got for nothing. The lighting system I got for nothing because we gave everybody credit, and then the turntables in the niches I got for nothing, and then I had Margaret Zorach design the floor. It was simply beautiful -- you know, colored cement in an abstract pattern but very unobtrusive.

Then I had this painter who was crazy about me, a house painter. I was a "brave little woman" -- you know, that stuff kept going on. Everybody was saying, "Brave little woman." He did me a favor. He painted over the entrance to the big gallery. I had an office on one side. Oh yes, so I could see what was cooking because I had no help, I had a speakeasy across the street get me a piece of speakeasy glass, one way glass. I could sit in my office, and I could see what anybody did in the gallery. When they stopped at a picture three times, I came out to sell it to them. I also had a fabulous stock room, but in that little area way, the painter decided to give me a present because he liked me, and he painted over Margaret Zorach's floor -- just that section.

That gallery brought in a great many architects, and then the William Carlos Williams club dinners were held there in the big gallery. I couldn't have had it before. It gave me a great deal of additional space which enabled me to spread out. Then I put the Folk Art Gallery on the second floor. I really spread out.

Would you like a drink?

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes, and I'll mix one for you.

MS. HALPERT: Is there any ice left? No. I'll get the other bucket. There's a glass for you, and there's more

liquor inside. Look, I've got to go to that goddamn party for a few minutes.

DR. PHILLIPS: Whenever you want to call it quits, say the word.

MS. HALPERT: As a matter of fact, Desky's designs for the gallery were the result of discovering him in a show -- I had never heard of him, but there was a place on 57th Street, Julian Levy's father, the dealer's father, owned that building on West 57th Street, right next to the bank, and he let the designers use it free of charge. Then he asked me if I would run it, and I went up there.

I was running the gallery which was all I could handle, but I went up there. All those early designers were there, but I got very excited about Donald Desky, and then I convinced Mrs. Rockefeller that she needed a gallery in her own home and chose him to -- well, we started with just one room, a print room, and she was very pleased with it. She had the infirmary. All the children were grown up, and I said, "You don't need an infirmary anymore."

So we turned that into a gallery, and he had made the best looking, I thought, simple furniture in that show, book shelves and stuff. From the print room we went to the huge, marvelous gallery. Again they didn't need the squash court any longer, and that's the beginning of the speakeasy story.
Don't let me forget that speakeasy story because it was funny! That was the beginning of the speakeasy event with Mrs. Rockefeller. He designed that gallery, and then when Radio City was being built, Mr. Rockefeller asked me to select somebody. I selected him, Ruth Read for the walls, and so on. Desky did the theater and the floor below -- you know, and I got the sculpture and what not.

I did get some commissions out of it because I got three sculptures. Stuart Davis did the mural in the boy's room, and Kuniyoshi did the one in the girl's room. Zorach did the spirit of the dance and so on, but all these various things tied in. Of course, I got Duncan Candler. After I had selected Desky, I realized that I was doing something really dreadful! Well, Candler was the architect with Desky as assistant.

DR. PHILLIPS: Was there any design in setting up the Daylight Gallery to increase the opportunity for the purchase of art for industrial development -- in the new architecture, new office buildings, new construction of whatever kind?

MS. HALPERT: Well, I had the very first show called -- wait a minute! What did I call it? It was a very large show. The artists were starving. This was afterwards, and artists were designing wall paper. Kuniyoshi was designing wall paper for big wall paper houses. *Practical Manifestations of Art* I called that show. I made little booths. In each of them I had a painting by the artist and then his so-called commercial work. Sheeler designed silver for International and glass for Steuben. I even had Steichen design fabric, photograph fabric. Sheeler designed fabric. I have a catalogue with all that, and that was sensational! It was the first time that that was done. You had to be alert those days!

DR. PHILLIPS: What do you mean "Brave little girl!" You've been riding that hobby horse to death. Many of the artists that you had, contributed something to the Daylight Gallery.

MS. HALPERT: What do you mean contributed something?

DR. PHILLIPS: Like the iron work by . . .

MS. HALPERT: Oh, of course. I had Zorach do the grill. Nakian did the lintel. Laurent designed the cabinets. Margaret Zorach did the floor, and that had big write ups. It was photographed all over. The artists were all very happy to do it. Nobody wanted to be paid. Nakian owed me so much money that I supported him. That was a funny one too. Before I had the Daylight Gallery, Nakian and his girl broke up, and he was going to commit suicide. He'd come in every day, moon around the place to figure out which way to commit suicide.

After a while, I got the idea that he really wouldn't commit suicide because he talked about it so much. He hung around all day long. Then I had to take him to dinner every night, and he may be one of the most popular sculptors today, but he was the dullest, damn character! To spend an evening alone with him was the biggest bore in the whole world, but I had to because I didn't want him to commit suicide. He wouldn't leave.

I'd get him out of my hair during the day, but I was stuck with him during the evening. During the day I had work to do. By that time I had two in help, but I still had work to do, so I brought a dart game, an outdoor dart game, and I had to get somebody to play with him all the time. Everybody who came in I'd look over to see whether he had a sense of fun, or whether Nakian had to wait until I got through with another client, I'd say, "Go out and play darts!"

Well, you know, a great sculptor like Reuben attracted them, so the stuff that was going on in that dirty old backyard was really funny! Mrs. Rockefeller came down one day, and I said to her, "I haven't any time for you

today. You go out and play darts," and she did with Nakian.

DR. PHILLIPS: The gallery was the object of a great deal of written comment. Every periodical I consulted mentioned it in one way or another whether it was the floor or whatnot. I think the floor was mentioned most of all because it was novel.

MS. HALPERT: The whole idea was novel as was the garden in between. Desky made those first tubular chairs for the outdoors, and oh, yes, I put in a sculpture -- that was subsequent -- although all those dates I have. I have a catalogue. We had Zorach show, and after this show was this famous *Mother and Child*. I had it out in the garden.

By that time Nelson became a Trustee of the Metropolitan Museum -- I don't know what year that was. It was in the thirties. It was during the bad period. It must have been after 1932, and he came down and I said, "How about selling this to the Metropolitan Museum?"

He said, "All right. Send it up."

I said, "Well, this weighs a ton. I'll bet all your trustees put together don't weigh half a ton. How about sending them down here one at a time?"

It was winter. I remember that it was cold in this little area way between the two galleries, and of the various trustees who came down nobody was under seventy. They would take one look and make some violent remark about the statue. "That isn't sculpture!" "This is dreadful!" "This naked woman!"

I counted them off, and there was only one left. Finally this man came in, and he didn't go out. It was too cold. I opened the door for him, and he looked out, and he said, "This isn't sculpture!"

I said, "Sit down! It's your privilege to say you don't like it, but you don't understand it. You're too dumb to recognize a great work of art, but don't say this is not a work of art. Nobody would dream of coming to your house and saying that."

"What did I do?"

He was the last one. I was finis! He was really petrified. Nobody ever talked to him that way. It turned out that this was Mr. Bleumenthal, the President of the Museum, so he said, "Have you a more comfortable chair?"

I said, "Yes."

I took him into the Daylight Gallery, and he was very impressed with the gallery. He sat down, and he said, "Tell me more."

He really was a very nice guy. He said, "My taste is so bad that I can't see this as a work of art."

"That's all right. Bad taste -- I'll accept that."

He said, "Is there anything else you have that might be in my field?"

I said, "You like all those old masters -- all that funny French furniture. I don't think I have anything."

He kept looking at a picture there by Georgia O'Keeffe. He said, "You won't think I have bad taste if I say that's good art?"

Well, P. S. He bought the picture and about three weeks later I received a letter from Mrs. Bleumenthal, a very pretty note, asking me up for tea. That mansion they had! Evidently Papa said, "I met the greatest cornball" -- well, he would not have used that language, but "an odd little woman, and I'd like to have her come up."

I went up there, and as I entered the butler was there. He took my coat and stood there at attention. Mrs. Bleumenthal greeted me at the door. I looked around and said, "My God! How can you live with this hideous furniture?!"

The butler grabbed the coat and was ready to throw it and me out. Bleumenthal looked startled, and Mrs. Bleumenthal in the doorway was stunned, so he put his arm around me and said, "That's that odd little woman I told you about. She's right! I did that to her."

We became good friends. I got along very well with the rich, not as well with the poor. They thought I was queer. Then again with Mrs. Rockefeller -- since I'm on her subject, or the rich. This was early in the game -- probably 1928, or so. It must have been then or earlier, right after I met her. She invited me to a Sunday

supper party, and she asked Mr. Candler to act as my escort, and I asked him what one wore at a Sunday party at the Rockefeller's. He said, "You wear something covered up -- you know, something pretty. You have a lot of pretty clothes."

Well, I met the Delauneys with Sam Halpert the year I was in France. The Delauneys were very good friends of Sam's, and I met them. Sonya took a great shine to me. I didn't know what she did. She said that she was a dress maker. That was okay with me. I went, and they had a very handsome apartment. I thought -- well, he wasn't selling any art. Naturally, nobody was. I knew he was very poor, and they lived very well in an apartment on the right bank with an elevator even, and it was rather elegant, and I thought, "That poor woman must work awfully hard -- sewing all these clothes."

When I was going back to the United States, she said, "Let me make you some clothes."

I said, "You not too expensive for me are you?"

She said, "You made money on that job" -- this was all the papers when I did that department store in Lille -- "No. I'm not too expensive for you."

She made me five dresses, and I remember every one of those dresses but distinctly. They were the most beautiful clothes I had ever seen, and this dress I wore at the Rockefeller's that night was all hand wood blocked by her husband. He made the pattern design, and every inch of that was wood blocked by him. I didn't know it.

I still remember that it was a brown chiffon and each full design was outlined with beads. I remember those clothes so distinctly because I never had anything to compare with those. This particular dress was sleeveless. I said, "While I was working at S.W. Strauss, I had to go to the office shindigs and so on, and I needed dinner clothes. I have no job now. I don't know what I'm going to do when I go back to America. I think I'd like something with sleeves. How about making a slip with long sleeves? I could wear the slip with this dress."

Well, she made a gold slip with long sleeves. It was the most beautiful dress! I thought, "Sunday night. Long sleeves."

It was a dark color and very quiet. The design was very quiet and very appropriate, so I wore that. Lizzie Bliss who had become a client too -- I had forgotten her, but Arthur B. Davies sent her down pronto, and she bought some things -- well, she looked at me, and she said, "Is that a Delaunay frock?"

I said, "Yes."

I thought to myself, "How in the world would she know a poor little dress maker?!"

About a half hour later Mrs. Sullivan came over, and she said, "Is that a Delaunay dress?"

Well, this occurred about four times. I thought that it was very strange, and I could feel, but very strongly, that it was the wrongest thing I could have worn. Everybody else wore chiffon dresses, and most of them with no sleeves. Here I was sleeved, and I certainly was the youngest person at that party. They were all their contemporaries. I would have been more entitled to a sleeveless dress than they were. I knew that there was something very wrong. Mrs. Rockefeller asked me to lunch on Tuesday to talk about some purchases, or whatever, or the gallery, whatever it was. This time I thought, "Well, what can I wear to this?"

I always wore very smart business clothes in my old days. I know what was appropriate for business. You did not wear smocks and batiste. I wore a black and white checked dress, a real sport dress with a white color -- long sleeves, real business dress. I arrived and Mrs. Rockefeller said, "Oh, Mrs. Halpert, you look so charming. Is that a Delaunay dress?"

I put my cigarette down. I had made a deal with her. I would go there only if she permitted me to smoke. Nobody was permitted to smoke in that house, but we had that deal. Everything was brushed away after I left. I put my cigarette down and said, "What does that mean. The night before last all the women came over and said, 'Isn't that a Delaunay frock?" Is there something wrong about my wearing a Delaunay frock?"

She said, "Well, you know, Miss Bliss has talked for years about getting a Delaunay coat, and she just couldn't afford it."

I looked at her and said, "Well, that's too damn bad!" -- you know because they never can afford anything, and she said, "I get all my clothes from Worth's, but many of these women who go abroad, they just want -- that's their dream to have a Delaunay dress or coat."

I didn't know that she happened to be the chic-est designer in France. I didn't know. She never told me. She said, "I'm a dress maker."

She charged me something like thirty-five dollars for this black and white number. I paid much more in America for a dress before, and this elegant thing cost about fifty. She took a loss on it I'm sure. It was all hand blocked.

I sat there, and I thought about it, and I said, "Well, I won't tell you what I paid, but she was a friend of mine. I did not know that she was this great designer. She told me that she was a dress maker and she made these clothes for me at a price that I could afford. Based on that I did not go out of my limits, and I think Miss Bliss could afford a four hundred dollar coat."

She said, "A frock like that would be three hundred and fifty dollars."

I said, "I paid within my limits."

[BEGINNING OF 2 OF 7 REEL B1r]

Then I got up, and I said, "I don't think I'll have lunch. Suppose I paid twenty-five dollars for this dress. I won't tell you how much I paid, but suppose I had paid twenty-five dollars for this dress. Would that still be wrong?"

"Well," she said, "Delaunay clothes are something only a few people can afford."

We had already sat down at this lunch table, so I said, "Would you excuse me if I left now?"

She said, "Why?"

"I shouldn't be having lunch here. I'm a woman in trade. It just occurred to me that that is what everybody resented. At first I thought they resented me because I was so much younger and presumably better looking because -- you know, they just didn't like that kind of competition around, but at this point I realize that it is a matter of class distinction. I was poor white trash. I was a trades woman. I had no right to compete with the rich. Good bye."

And I stormed out. She had to call me back the next day.

DR. PHILLIPS: You must have left her gasping.

MS. HALPERT: You see, I'm very grateful for all those things because that distinction has never been eliminated with those people. Only I have used it in reverse. At first -- from there on I was always very discrete about what I wore. I was not going to compete, but after a while I said, "To hell with it!"

DR. PHILLIPS: I'll be me.

MS. HALPERT: Yes, and I would come in and say, "I just knocked off a hundred and fifty bucks for this little frock."

Of all my experiences with the rich, this didn't embarrass me. It infuriated me. I mean, after all, it's none of their damn business! But I realized what it was, and it was that. When she called me and asked whether she could come down, we sat down and she said, "I'm afraid you were right."

She was a very extraordinary woman. She was very innocent, naive woman, but she realized that I was right and she said so. She said, "I suppose that it is bad taste to go out of your financial class."

I said, "How do you know I'm not hoarding money. Look at all the money I've made on you. I made ten percent on a hundred and eighty dollar sculpture. I made eighteen dollars on that Matisse, didn't I?"

She said, "Stop that! Let's forget it!"

Here's an experience which happened before I had the gallery, long before, before we went to Europe. Sam knew Adolph Lewisohn, and Adolph Lewisohn being the great patron would give a New Year's party and invite the artists. It would be a big ball. There was an orchestra playing and so on. The year after we got married, he invited Sam and me, and we went. They were on Fifth Avenue. Of course, Sam Lewisohn never forgot this. I told him the story. Years later I got very friendly with Sam, and Margaret Lewisohn, and I told them this story, and they just ate it up.

We arrived, and the men were ushered in one direction and the women were ushered in another direction to take their coats off, and I didn't see Sam. I was scared to death. I had never been in a house of that kind in my whole life. I never saw anything like it in Odessa -- believe me. So I was waiting for Sam to come, and I didn't know how to behave there.

DR. PHILLIPS: I know just the feeling.

MS. HALPERT: That was a magnificent house! There was a grand staircase with a woman standing at the head of the stairs greeting the guests. What was her first name? She was the woman who ran the Grand Street Playhouse. I can't remember her first name, but she was a wonderful woman. Let's say it was Eleanor. She said, "Eleanor Lewisohn."

I said, "No, Edith Halpert."

DR. PHILLIPS: That's wonderful!

MS. HALPERT: Then I realized. She looked very startled. She shook my hand.

DR. PHILLIPS: It never happened before.

MS. HALPERT: I thought that she thought I was Eleanor, and then I heard her repeat it to somebody, and I suddenly realized what that meant. When Sam came I said, "I think I'd better leave, so you can have fun here. They'll never talk to you. I made the most terrible *faux pas* here."

I told him what I said, and he didn't understand. Years later when I got to know Sam and Margaret. We were kidding about their house -- you know, Papa died, and they lived in that house. I said, "The first time I came up this staircase, baby, did I make a *faux pas*!"

I told them the story. Wait! Sam wasn't home yet. I came early to discuss something with Margaret, and when he came she made me repeat the story. He had a drink in his hand, and he almost choked. I said to her, "You can tell everybody. I don't mind, having people know that I had never been to a rich home before.

DR. PHILLIPS: It's a wonderful story.

MS. HALPERT: I thought to myself, "You damn fool! I'm not a member of the family!"

What was her name? She really did a wonderful job downtown.

DR. PHILLIPS: I know them only from the copper mines in Colorado.

MS. HALPERT: Of course, Margaret became very active in education, and she was really a much smarter person than her husband, but he was a nice person too. We became very friendly. Then they moved to a little house. I would always walk in. They just adored that story, and she said, "Well, do you mind my telling this story?"

I said, "No, I adore it. I don't mind having made a fool of myself. How would I know? You don't think my mother trained me?"

DR. PHILLIPS: That's a wonderful story, and it's just about the only response you can make. You make the assumption that someone else has made a mistake. How could they be so wrong!

MS. HALPERT: Yes, how could she be so dumb! I didn't look like a Lewisohn. I said, "No Edith Halpert" -- very indignantly. I'll keep my own identity.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's really precious. Well, you must have had quite a time as this gallery unfolded.

MS. HALPERT: There wasn't a day when something really extraordinary didn't happen. Every day -- I used to get up early in those days -- I couldn't wait to go downstairs. Having these lectures that I had and having these great writers -- why, I have books autographed to me, thanking me for these parties, open houses that were given there, and you know, I just gave the gallery. They paid for their own meals at these dinner parties that were held every month.

It got killed. I think that William Carlos Williams still loves me; presumably still has that terrific resentment, because when they announced that Ezra Pound was going to be the next guest of honor, I had read a little about him. He was on his way from Italy, and I had read these diatribes -- I mean, we had all read that, and I was utterly shocked. Here was this terrible fascist and terrible anti-Semite, and so when I was told that he was going to be the guest of honor, I said, "I'm sorry. Not here!"

Ford Madox Ford who was the manager of the whole thing came in and he was really violent. He said, "How dare you! You have nothing to say about this matter!"

I said, "I own the joint, and I have the right to say it. After all you get the dinner sent in from across the street," and they had all this done only because of me -- you know, they brought the chairs, tables, and everything -- and

I said, "you can all sit there, but I will not house that man here. I'm not going to have this dirty Fascist and anti-Semite! After all, it would be very bad taste. He wouldn't want to be here under a Jewish roof!"

Well, he got very indignant and various other members came in. Alfred Kreymborg came in, and he said, "Edith, now really! You can't do this! He's a great, great poet!"

I said, "You know what I did? I met him in Paris, and I tore up his autographed book. I know it's like burning books. It's terrible, but after reading what he said" -- I didn't tear his book up; I gave them away to a young artist -- "I wouldn't have him here."

Well, he said, "This is shocking" and so on, and I said, "I'm sorry, but this is the way I feel. I've been greatly honored to have this thing under my roof, and I was very flattered that I was permitted to sit in on those things" -- you know, I'd just sit quietly in the corner -- "and I'm thrilled to death with all these autographed books" but that was that!

About four days later Alfred came in, and I said, "Go away!"

I was so mad about this because they bawled me out so. Ford Madox Ford really was violent and vile, and he said something, "You little so-and-so" -- you know, and I kept saying, "I own the joint."

Well, Alfred came in, and he said, "I want to apologize to you. I was on the cutter to meet the great man with" -- well, somebody else because there were two of them -- "And he had this royal suite on this Italian boat. Something happened to me too, and I did not greet him. He was paid, rewarded for this, and I couldn't take it."

Bill Williams, who as you know supported him -- of course, I was younger then than I am today, but I still wouldn't have had him in my place! Perhaps had I been older, I would not have been quite as vehement -- you know, I feel that an artist should be recognized on his own right, but I don't think I would have been any more broad-minded today about Pound than I was then, but at that time, I was really very, very emotional about it. Today, I would have done it much more cleverly. I would have said, "I own the joint."

I kept repeating it until Ford almost socked me in the jaw. Bill really is very fond of me. We've been very good friends, and I saw a good deal of him subsequently. When I read his -- what's the name of that book, his autobiography, he talked of Pound with great feeling and then he also came through with some of the most anti-Semitic statements in that book. This was relatively recent. It was next to the last book he wrote -- years and years later. I saw him just before he had the stroke, and I said, "Bill, dear, now I know why you were so vehement."

Well, the club broke up. That was the end of the club, and they held me responsible for it, so I said to Bill, "At least Kreymborg had the decency to come in and apologize to me because he saw this Royal Suite and all the to-do, and the arrogance. Pound made a speech right on the boat to the press, saying exactly what he had said before -- very anti-American which I felt as strong about, if not more so, than I did about the anti-Semitic business. He wrote such a beautiful autograph in your book, but the book was so full with very much the same attitude, only in one direction, so I can understand why you were doubly angry with me."

He said, "Stop that nonsense! You know I love you."

I said, "I love you too, but I just want you to know that I understand better now than I did then."

When you consider the things that happened in that period -- they're trying to recapture it now in the Village. They're trying that pattern, and I'm very proud that they're emulating the pattern. One of the guys came in here one day and said, "What did you do? When did you do so-and-so, and how did you do it?"

They have -- what do they call them – "Happenings" and music and all that. Well, I had Buckminster Fuller talk about his Dymaxion theory, but at that time it was important and then I also had -- who's that little squirty architect? Who did the World House -- well whoever. He came in right after Bucky Fuller and said, "Why can't I have a lecture here?"

He had a lecture. We had demonstrations. We had all these things, and it brought together people of different interests in the cultural field. This is based, of course, on my experiences abroad where you had that combination all the time, and it's disappeared completely. I meant it didn't exist in this country at all in any form.

The nearest to it was -- oh, yes, I also had what was his name, the explorer? He gave a talk -- went to Alaska. He was the one who ate beef. He tried that -- ate steak three times a day. Oh, lord -- well, he gave a talk on his experiences, talked about eating beef three times a day while four girls in the audience laughed -- you know, he was quite a guy with the girls -- you know, the vitality, the power it gave him, and then in about ten minutes the

whole place roared.

DR. PHILLIPS: This is in keeping with even an older tradition in America -- the coffee house -- you know, where you could argue the first part of the night and tear society apart and build it up the remainder of the night over a tall glass. It's a good tradition, I like it.

MS. HALPERT: I'm glad it's happening again, but it's happening in an entirely different way. This was real. I mean these were people who were very serious about what they were doing. It wasn't publicized. There weren't any reporters there at any of these things. It was a very, very intimate thing with people who were really interested. There was no charge. We didn't charge any admission fee.

I did get the chairs for nothing from the funeral home across the street. We had a wonderful break -- there was never a funeral service those nights. Occasionally there was one -- you know, but we always had a break, and then they'd sit in too -- a couple of guys from the funeral home would sit in and listen to the lectures, but it was really a wonderful era. Like all old folks -- you know. The rapport that occurred at this time and even the artists in relation to the people who came in. They didn't have the arrogance -- you know, "you're a damned fool," or they didn't have the feeling, "I'll play up to you and I'll sell a picture."

It was a very different kind of world, and I think -- you know, somebody once said, "You had a lot of luck. You met all the rich people."

I said, "You're out of your mind? They had all the luck. When did they ever have it so good! When did they come in contact with real people in their lives? It meant a great deal to them."

I have letters from Mrs. Rockefeller which would just practically make you burst into tears -- you know, what it meant to her.

DR. PHILLIPS: What was the attitude -- you know, on the part of the other galleries as you picked up steam and momentum?

MS. HALPERT: I didn't get much chance to go around to the other galleries, but I can tell you because the other galleries wrote letters. Anna Kelly who was Mrs. Rockefeller's secretary at one time -- was very devoted to me. I was doing something for somebody whose name I won't mention and who was really slitting my throat all over. He tried until he died recently. He was always trying to slit my throat. Anna Kelly took me aside one day and said, "How would you like to take me to Romany Marie's?"

I said, "I'd adore it!" So I took her down and she said, "I brought a little package with me. I want to teach you something. You know, you're being taken on all sides all the time. For a person who is not a fool, you expose yourself so terribly. You never think that anybody does you any harm. You always brush it off. I just want you to become wiser now. I'm much older, and I want to show you something."

She brought out about twelve letters. I still remember who wrote them -- Neuman was one of them and Frank Rhehn who was really a nice guy -- I was stunned. All these dealers wrote to Mrs. Rockefeller either telling her that I was taking her in financially because I brought things from other dealers including Charles Daniel who wrote one of the most devastating letters about how I was double trucking, getting a commission.

I never took a commission from a dealer. I paid the full price. I felt that he was entitled to the full price and I would charge Mrs. Rockefeller ten percent for my services. I never took a discount from anybody, but he wrote her that I did. Neuman wrote that, the most devastating letter about the stuff I brought her from abroad. I got the first edition right off the press because the dealers in Paris liked me too. He said that they were reprints. Fortunately I had the bills. I used to give him the bills -- you know, number 1 of whatever it was, and the Matisse dance series -- these were all number 1.

Always they wrote about sex. They should have had as much sex as I did! Who had time! They felt that would be the most vulnerable point. That's when she asked me about children and she came out for birth control.

DR. PHILLIPS: How many other galleries were dealing in modern American art at this time?

MS. HALPERT: When I opened the gallery, there were five.

DR. PHILLIPS: There were five others.

MS. HALPERT: Well, there was Stieglitz, of course. Montross really wasn't but he had two or three Americans. By that time we had Burchfield. He did give the famous show of "The Eight," but he didn't carry them. MacBeth carried them -- that era. There was Daniel who opened in 1914, and he showed nothing but modern art. Kraushaar showed Lachaise, Sam Halpert -- well, Sam was with Daniel and then he went the Kraushaar later, but Kraushaar was mostly French -- you know, the sort of middle ground, not the modern French, but he had a few

American modern artists, and Frank Rehn who opened about the same time that I did. The Grand Central preceded me, and they showed only academic art.

The few American galleries were all academic -- Hilch, MacBeth, Grand Central. I have the 1926 magazine, that year with all the galleries listed. There was Bourgeois who showed Stella, but mostly European art. They used one or two artists as puller-inners for clients. There was the Dudensing Brothers Gallery, but they came later. Actually there were about five showing modern American art.

DR. PHILLIPS: When you started, you were able to quickly get a stable of modern artists because they were not moving.

MS. HALPERT: No. No, because I met them at Weichsel. I got all my Weichsel friends whom I met when I was fourteen and fifteen and sixteen, the People's Art Guild, and also I met them in Ogunquit the year we were there, so I had no trouble at all. As a matter of fact, Kuniyoshi whom I knew very well was with Daniel, but all the dealers were tickled pink to share the artists.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's what I meant.

MS. HALPERT: Daniel went out of business in 1929, so I got them permanently, but all the dealers were tickled to death to let me have pictures or I went and bought things from them. I bought from all the dealers. I bought Bellows -- you know, people I thought Mrs. Rockefeller should have. I went around town, and they sold them to me very willingly, but they'd write dirty letters about me.

DR. PHILLIPS: This is what I don't understand because in effect, the area which you picked for the location of your gallery plus the heavy emphasis upon American modern art. . .

MS. HALPERT: Not emphasis -- it was only American modern art.

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes, but this wouldn't present that kind of competition at all.

MS. HALPERT: It presented this kind of competition that I didn't understand. For instance, Brummer, who was very sorry about that Seurat -- a lot of things happened with him, but in any event, he offered me some fantastic sum to take the top floor of his gallery for nothing. One dealer who does not like women proposed to me. It was never for me -- you know, it was for my clients because by 1930, I had Edsel Ford who would come in regularly and spend five thousand dollars -- that was his limit, and we'd go over to a speakeasy across the street.

This was a regular routine and Knoedler Galleries later offered me their third floor. Seligmann -- all over town I was offered any space I wanted for nothing for a very simple reason. By that time I became a little less naive, and I also knew something about statistics, but the number of people coming up to the third floor would be caught en route.

I had more. I had Paul Mellon -- well, I had all the millionaires. There wasn't one gallery in the United States who had all of them. They might have had one or two. Well, this one -- I told this to Edsel, and this was very funny. Edsel was complaining that he was short, that he needed some money for something, so I said, "I have a deal for you. If you come up with me to a certain gallery" -- I didn't mention the name -- "I will get ten thousand dollars for getting you in there, and I'll split fifty-fifty with you."

That was an offer, that if I took him to a certain gallery -- they had a tapestry that they thought he would want -- I would get ten thousand dollars just for bringing him in. I didn't have to guarantee that he bought anything -- just introduce him and then suddenly have to leave. You know, they'd have a phony telephone call. It was all acted out, but of course I wouldn't do that for anything in the world. It's the most dishonorable thing I ever heard.

All over town I became such a desirable person because I had all these multi-millionaires, every one of them, the biggest names, the whole crew, they all came in. I remember telling this to Edsel, and he said, "Well, I don't think I need it that badly, but if you're going to lose five thousand dollars on the deal, I'll give it to you. It would be worth it."

I said, "No."

He said, "Those people don't understand what it means to me to come here -- to choose something that I just like. You fooled me once and then you unfooled me immediately."

Did I ever tell you how I fooled him?

DR. PHILLIPS: No.

MS. HALPERT: Well, he came in to buy folk art. This must have been after 1932. That's another funny story. He came to see some more folk art.

I arranged a show in 1932, at the Arts and Crafts Society in Detroit, and remind me to tell you that story because that's really something very special.

Edsel Ford got interested in folk art, and he came in to choose some folk art. I didn't -- you know, the folk art was just a puller inner with the idea of making them like modern art. I was getting bored. He came in twice and bought folk art. The third time he came in, and because of this funny thing that happened in Detroit he thought I was entertaining, so he asked me to lunch, to go to a speakeasy, and so on, and we became very good friends. He used to tell me some very personal things about his life. He was a wonderful guy! I was crazy about him, but the third time he came in I thought, "I'm not going to waste my time selling folk art to this guy. It's ridiculous."

I picked out about six things for him to look at, and I put into this group a Charles Sheeler. He never spent more than five thousand dollars. That was his limit -- five thousand dollars, and he paid for my lunch and that was that. This had nothing to do with that fifty-fifty. This happened before all this happened, so he looked at the things and he picked out two early American water colors and the Sheeler, and he picked out an eagle for about a hundred and seventy five dollars. I don't know, but anyhow then we went to lunch. I always made out the bill before we went, and he'd leave a check. I had the check with me. I took it along, and at lunch I said, "I have a little tip for you."

I gave him the check. He said, "What's the matter?"

I said, "I just have this peculiarity. I can't do a thing like this. I did something terribly naughty, and I'm very ashamed of myself. You're too nice a person for me to do that to."

"What was it?"

"Come back and I'll show you."

We returned to the gallery, and I asked him, "Which of these things do you like the best?"

He pointed to the Sheeler, and I said, "That is a modern picture."

"I like it."

"I sold it to you under false pretenses. Let's cancel out this sale, please," and I tore up the check. He said, "You know, you're kind of a foolish character."

I said, "Maybe I am, but let's forget about this. Skip it this time."

"Do you want me to come in tomorrow?"

"No, the next time you're in town."

Next time he came to town he bought a Marin, a Sheeler, and a Zorach, and from that time on he started buying modern art -- never over five thousand dollars and then Bob Tannahill, his cousin, came in and began really buying in a big way, but with a few people like Thompson -- occasionally there was a horrible character like this David Thompson -- most hideous character in the world, but with most of these people -- you know, I didn't hate the rich after a while because they turned out to be very nice people.

DR. PHILLIPS: This is what made you the threat to the other galleries -- largely because you had interests which . . .

MS. HALPERT: Well, it irritated the hell out of everybody. Can you imagine how they felt -- this little squirt coming down and getting a shop in the Village and getting all the cream of the collectors! They didn't spend very much money. None of these collectors spent a lot of money. Mrs. Rockefeller gave me ten thousand dollars to buy her all that French art every year. Of course, it's worth about two hundred thousand percent now, but even so, that was another budget -- then she was really cute how she got around the budget. If she wanted something that was rather expensive, an American picture, she'd say, "Oh, I've gone beyond my budget."

I said, "I'll make you two separate bills."

She said, "I never use up my furniture budget."

Papa used to budget her in each category. "I have an idea Mrs. Rockefeller. Let's charge for the frames

separately. That's furniture."

She said, "So it is!"

"That's decor."

DR. PHILLIPS: What else?

MS. HALPERT: The picture, I think, was eighteen hundred dollars. She spent a couple of hundred thousand bucks on American art, much more than on European art with me, so when she was about five hundred dollars over the budget that year I just sent her separate bills for the frames -- so much for the pictures and about twenty percent for the frames. She had enough left in her furniture budget.

But at the same time what saved me was that through all this I never trusted the rich -- their loyalty -- and I was completely justified with what happened later. I started these shows in which no rich person could buy anything, and I started to build up these little characters -- twenty-five dollar sales, fifty dollar sales on the installment plan, and, as I said before, some of these became my very big collectors over a period of twenty years -- you know, over a period of twenty years they began making a lot of dough so I created this big, big base of little people because I didn't trust the rich.

I had every reason not to trust them because come the Depression. . .

DR. PHILLIPS: You were a luxury?

MS. HALPERT: That Macy slogan is what ruined me -- you know, "It's smart to be thrifty."
The rich became very self-conscious about spending money when people were starving -- in the mid-thirties, when things were really desperate, and they just dropped dead instead of tapering off. Even a man like Saklatwalla who was devoted to me to an exaggerated degree, even he felt that he should not spend money. Everybody dropped. Every rich person dropped because they were embarrassed to be buying things. That was the only guilt they had, so they took from the poor because after all, if they stopped buying for me, the artists didn't eat either.

It was at little person who saved us, and I have in my archives -- I told you I have it cross-referenced -- I have a file called the "Depression file" from which some sociologist twenty years from now will get a complete picture about a period, but complete picture, because I have letters from the rich where they offered one third. I have letters from museums, and the only two museums that came across were the only two museums which had done nothing about American art before and were shamed into it. I have letters from the little guys -- like one said, "I have a hundred dollars that I've saved up for a long time. Choose something for me where it will do the most good."

It's the most beautiful file you ever saw. It also shows framers saying, "If you need frames and you can't pay for them, we'll lend you some" -- the little guys. The people who were also starving were trying to help, and the very rich were trying to take advantage by asking for enormous cuts! I have that cross-referenced. I marked it for a sociologist, but anybody else can read it. Don't you think that's an important record?

DR. PHILLIPS: Certainly.

MS. HALPERT: And this is drawn from thirty separate files -- you know, I just had copies made.

DR. PHILLIPS: How far did your interest in little people extend beyond the metropolitan area -- quite a distance?

MS. HALPERT: All over the country.

DR. PHILLIPS: All over the country?

MS. HALPERT: Yes, I began getting -- well, that's a long story. Some guy from Chicago became a very good client from my ad. I had an ad in the *Art Digest* -- you know, twenty-five to a hundred dollar Christmas Show, and I listed all the top people, including -- I remember he wrote about a Pascin. I had a Pascin water color for fifty dollars. Pascin let me have it for that. He said, "If you want it for this show, fine." Everybody came across, but I made certain that nobody with money would get one of the things out of that show.

DR. PHILLIPS: This went clear across the country?

MS. HALPERT: Yes, from the ads and from the publicity. In those days there were very few galleries, and we had seven newspapers with art reviews. We had two with -- what do they call that brown stuff?

DR. PHILLIPS: The rotogravure section.

MS. HALPERT: Yes, and one time I had a double spread on my folk art show, and that reached all over the country. Those magazines reached all over the country -- certainly. They'd come in, or they would write -- they didn't fly in, in those days. They would write and ask for things, and so on. I'd look at the stationery or I'd write and ask them what they owned in the way of pictures. If they owned one expensive French picture, I didn't answer the letter.

DR. PHILLIPS: You had fun marketing, didn't you.

MS. HALPERT: Well, you know, today with this new -- well, I've been very unhappy the last four or five years. I've really gotten to dislike the art business. If somebody came along and wanted to buy this gallery, boy could they buy it quick if I felt that they would carry on the tradition in some way because I can't stand this art for investment, or art for decor, and all that -- for tax deductions, banks I'm glad that they're buying contemporary American art, but the motivation is so very, very different and it makes me very unhappy. I go to a dealer's meeting and I get awfully depressed when I hear the conversation that goes on about prices.

You know, when I reported today, for instance, that by mistake I got a clipping from Dallas. There's a Downtown Gallery now in practically every state in the union, and I have to pay eighteen cents for each clipping from the clipping bureau, and so I get all the Downtown Gallery clippings. I don't bother to tell them to cut it out because it doesn't matter, but this one clipping was of a Downtown Gallery, and they sent the whole page. I mentioned this at the meeting today. I said, "Well, boys, it will please you, I know, that the Dallas Museum has just paid fifty-eight thousand dollars for a Wyeth."

"God, that's wonderful! That's wonderful! Now we can really shoot up."

It made me sick to my stomach when I read it. I think that for public funds, it's an utter disgrace. I think there should be a law, and despite the fact that Eisenhower thought Wyeth was the greatest artist in the show we sent abroad, I still think that that is a pretty immoral figure to pay for a Wyeth, and this has made me pretty sad in the last few years. I don't mean because I'm losing fifty-eight thousand dollars as a sale -- you know, but the whole psychology.

The most we have in this country -- and thank God we still have them – about a hundred thousand people who buy art because they love it, and nothing will deter them. All this publicity they read -- you know about art for investment and so on, they paid no attention to it. They can read the critics, but they pay no attention to them. They can go to their museums, or any other museums, I don't dare open my trap to these people.

I can spot them right away. I show them things and I can get myself called away. They can do their own buying. They don't want to be told anything. This is their rapport that is so important. They are not going to be killed. But they're not going to be increased in number because they are being out-priced completely. They just won't be able to buy any more art.

You know, Stuart was bitter because he was so low in price, but the people who bought that little picture for two thousand dollars, are going to pay a hundred dollars a month and they are much more important to me than the guy who just paid twelve thousand dollars for a medium sized picture who also likes art. But these kids are making a sacrifice.

Also I feel that I am ending up on a minus side which is what I can't bear.

DR. PHILLIPS: You mean in view of developments that are taking place in the art world?

MS. HALPERT: I felt I always had -- no matter how hard I worked, how I starved and how many disappointments and kicks in the pants I got, I always felt that I was responsible, in part, for this interest on the lower level and to see that killed and to see my whole philosophy demolished as it is being demolished now, I feel that I am ending up on the minus side. I started out as a success, and I'm ending up as a failure, and I feel very sad about it, and nobody can talk me out of it. I'm very depressed when I think about it.

DR. PHILLIPS: Instinctively and factually you know this to be so.

MS. HALPERT: Financially I've never made as much money as we do now. It isn't that. I'm not a failure that way and everybody tells me I'm the best dealer -- you know, I hear all that stuff and I have had many awards of all kinds offered to me and all that. I have no complaint and people come over and say, "I saw you on the Dave Garroway program" and all that stuff, but I don't get any pleasure out of anything anymore because this is looming all around me and you know, I feel that I shouldn't end this way. It's very unfair.

DR. PHILLIPS: Not only to you, but to the interest you've built up in this broad base of which you spoke.

MS. HALPERT: I take it very personally because this is something that I have fought for and have seen happen,

and to think of all the people who are going to lose the pleasures these others have been getting all these years. You've got to meet one couple as a sample, like the Browns.

DR. PHILLIPS: Like the kid whose face I saw the other day when you asked him whether he would like to exchange the Stuart Davis he had for some new one.

MS. HALPERT: That's the couple. Just go to their house. I think that is an experience. Then you can see what I mean because I can multiply the Browns by hundreds and hundreds. This happens to be here in New York City. I can go to practically any big town in America and get another example of that, and you know, what can make one feel better and what has created the climate for the artists -- this is it. American art wouldn't be where it is today if these little people didn't look at Ben Shahn, or at O'Keeffe and say, "Oh, my God, you don't know what it means to me to live with one of your things!"

No matter what they say, I think I mentioned the other day that I have seen a tear in O'Keeffe's hard eye, and that's the greatest stimulus these people have ever gotten, and there's never been a climate for creativity like that in the history of the world. To see it being killed for the future, and for the very simple reason that they'll be out-priced. There won't be anything in that price range for them to get.

DR. PHILLIPS: There isn't any price he'd take -- you know, that fellow didn't have to say a word. He didn't really. It was just the look on his face.

MS. HALPERT: Of course, and I've done it time and again. The very idea -- you know, to have to borrow a picture from these people. They want to cooperate with me, but "How long will it be gone?"

I'll say, "Well, it's important for the artists to be seen."

They know all that, and they want to be cooperative with me and all that, but "How long will it be gone?"

You know what that means to me!

DR. PHILLIPS: That's what is threatened.

MS. HALPERT: No question about it. You look at a catalogue of a youngster who has painted the first five pictures and he has in that catalogue a piece for fifteen hundred dollars. Well, these kids can't pay that. It isn't as though they could go to some young artist in their community. They can't. They always urge them to start in their own community and buy people in their locale who will express their immediate environment and so on. Whenever I lecture, I always say this, and I've created markets all over the country that way for the local people, the local artists.

I think that it's a curse for the local artist to come here and get swallowed up in the art and become performers in two weeks. With all the lecturing I do they're still coming here, but if they're supported locally, they're not as apt to run away. There's nothing I can do single-handed. I've talked to the dealers, and they say to me, "You've been around too long! Why don't you retire, for God's sake! You're getting on!"

DR. PHILLIPS: That's a sour note to destroy the kind of look that that kid had.

MS. HALPERT: But that's not the only kid. This, too. I keep those letters from all over the country. There's a little doctor in Georgia. There's a kid who came in here in a soldier's suit, and he gets -- whatever the last pay is. This happened shortly after the war, a kid by the name of Allen Brandt. He now has a gallery of his own. He came in with his -- what was his check called? Severance pay, I think it was called. He came in and he saw this Shahn drawing. He had a check for two hundred and fifty dollars. He said, "How much is it?"

I looked at him and looked at the check, and I immediately deducted my commission. I think it was a hundred and fifty dollars and I said it was a hundred. Then he saw a Jack Levine -- anyhow, at these prices for three things it was two hundred and fifty dollars worth. He said, "I'll take them."

I said, "No. No. You'll take one thing. Spend half of this on yourself. I'll hold the others until you get a job."

He said, "I'll write a song. I'll go home and write a song."

He went to the bank and cashed the check first. He gave me the money. He put the picture under his arm and then he went off. A week later he had fifty bucks for a song. Well, he tells this story, but can you imagine that! He was about twenty-two years old -- to want that more than anything else! Don't you think that's important?

DR. PHILLIPS: Darn right it is.

MS. HALPERT: Today they come in to you and say, "Is that a good investment?" -- looking at the title and the

signature. Boy, did I give them short shrift!

DR. PHILLIPS: I heard you on that subject -- that tall, willowy woman who came in the gallery and wanted one of the Davis paintings. She brought her husband in and her husband was thinking in terms of investment -- as distinct from what his wife was thinking. She just wanted it and he had to balance whatever it was he had to balance. It must be sticky to run into that kind of thinking that is going to project a sense of joy -- you know, four years hence, as to what it will bring in the marketplace. I don't know what kind of mathematics that is.

MS. HALPERT: Look, I have a very simple mathematics. I can prove that the people who bought out of love -- and I give very simple well known instances; certainly people like the Steins, Gertrude and her brother, did not have to buy for investment. The Cone sisters didn't have to buy for investment, Quinn, and so on, Mrs. Rockefeller -- none of these people bought for investment. Their collections are the ones that have shot up so much more than any planned collection in the history of the world.

It's those people, or that horrible guy -- Dr. [Alfred] Barnes. He really bought because -- well, they were all guided by somebody else. I must say that none of those people had enough confidence in themselves to do the buying like these kids did, but they did enjoy the things. Some of them -- the Steins, of course, Leo was the one really, but she also had a salon -- there were other elements -- but all those people who bought in the early days in each period of a new kind of art here and abroad, bought just because they had some rapport with the pictures. Those are the collections! The Browns have been buying for about ten years, those two kids both going to work every day, no vacations, just to buy. I'd buy their collection back right now for at least five times what they paid for it and still make a profit.

Those who go around figuring out who, or what -- all those people who bought those enormous Kline's and so on at fabulous prices are going to have a terrific surprise someday and not very far away. When that crash comes and it's in the making right this minute and has been for some time, it will drive out, I hope, all the investors -- you know, that hundred thousand dollar deal that "Time" reported about me -- now they come in and say, "Is it a good investment?"

At that moment I thought of a good line, and if I get a good line, I use it over and over again.

DR. PHILLIPS: I've read some of your speeches.

MS. HALPERT: Have you? I told you that those were repeats because they were delivered in different parts of the country. I never do it when they're close together, but the line I use is very simple. That day I did it out of desperation because I was goddamn mad. I said, "I'm sorry. I can't sell anything to you. I don't have a brokerage license and I may not sell securities." I said that and I walked off. Now when they ask me about art for investment, I repeat that line because it's still good. Occasionally somebody laughs and says, "Suppose I like it, is it all right?"

Then I say, "Now you can sit down and we'll talk."

DR. PHILLIPS: It's so simple, isn't it.

MS. HALPERT: It's idiotic because, when you think of all the people who bought Barbizon school; when you think of all the people who bought the salon pictures, the people who bought Grant Wood -- the people who paid fifty-eight thousand dollars for a Wyeth, you know, that's utter nonsense, because none of those things are going to have any long standing certainly. So if they had any brains, or if they stopped to think about it, you know, how many people are there who can afford to pay that for a picture. After all, it's a very limited number who have the space.

I mentioned once that if you go to Burton's house, or to Blanchette Rockefeller's house, or to Gertrude Mellon's house, or to Friedman's house, they all come from entirely different backgrounds, and they have entirely different types of education, they're entirely different personalities, they all have the same damn pictures -- duplications! Now where does taste come into that? They may all be good pictures. In California they have horizontal Brocks with letters.

Every place I went and I went with Fanny Brice one day to visit some of her friends, and after the third visit, she grabbed my arm, and she said, "I'm going to throw you in that pool."

All I have to do when I walk into a house and I'd say, "Are they hip?"

So I shut my eyes, and when that happened the first three times, she told me to stop it -- a vertical Utrillo [white period] over the mantel, Dufy around the corner. If they weren't hip, there was a remnant of a Renoir. If they were hip it was a loan, and it happened in each of these three houses, but absolutely! Try it some time. Then in Chicago they had a vertical Brock and it was a replica and the same thing with the abstract expressionists. It's

sad.

I'm trying to make it funny to myself, but I don't find it funny because I'm thinking of all the joy that I have seen in people's eyes, and I hate to see it go, and I don't think of anybody who is going to carry on. I've tried a few assistants here and I can't take it. I just can't take it. They look at me as if I were a fossil -- way beyond the pioneer period. "Well, why didn't you sell it?" -- you know, or somebody brings something in to sell, and "Oh, gee, you can turn that over quick!"

So I say, "This is self-indulgence. I'm queer and I'm indulging myself."

DR. PHILLIPS: They don't understand.

MS. HALPERT: I said to one of them who got very fresh about it, "You know, I also made a lot of money."

"Oh, well that's never going to happen again!"

What time is it?

DR. PHLLIPS: It must be getting rather late.

92 East 51st Street, New York City, Wednesday, May 16, 1962

DR. PHILLIPS: On the phone you told me to remind you of a story involving George Luks which, as you put it, was enormously important.

MS. HALPERT: I meant to get the dates. For instance, I know the dates of the show and so on because that relates to the story. There was an organization called Artists, Painters and Sculptors. It was anti-academy, to which all the so-called modern artists belonged, and they had an annual show. This particular year they had it at the Anderson Galleries which is the forefather of the Parke-Bernet. They were on 57th Street and Park, or something, and they had the show. Of course, I never missed any show. At this time, I was still living uptown on Dawson Street with my mother, which meant that I either worked at Macy's or Stern Brothers because everything dates before I was married, which means I was sixteen or seventeen years old at the time.

Well, I went to this evening session. They had demonstrations of media -- oh, for a whole week, every night an artist would demonstrate portrait painting, lithography, etching, and so on, demonstrations which I later copied. The printing, etching and lithography I copied at the gallery because I thought it was fascinating. Nobody ever knew how a print was made, so I went. There was a dollar admission each time. I skipped the portrait painting. I skipped everything, I think, until I got to the lithography. I knew how an etching was made, but I didn't know how a lithograph was made, so I went there, and the following night was how to make a monograph.

George Luks demonstrated it, and I knew nothing about monographs, and because I was little, everybody always let me sit up front -- you know, they'd push me ahead. I was sitting right in the front row, and there was George Luks, slightly drunk as usual, he was giving a brilliant demonstration, and it was the easiest thing I ever saw. He still had the printing press from the night before, and all he did was to paint on this hunk of glass. Then he had a tub there, and he took out a wet sheet of paper from the tub, put it on this painted glass, put it under the roller of the press, raised it so that it wouldn't break the glass and out came the monotype, and then he'd put another paper on, and he got three and sometimes four monotypes -- complete and signed them. They were very exciting, but it was so easy. I was simply fascinated with this medium about which I'd never read and I knew nothing about it.

I came home and mother was very distressed when I got home late. She was always afraid that somebody would chase me. Nobody bothered. I always walked faster than anybody else. I had things to do -- you know. I got home probably eleven o'clock. She was already in bed, and she heard me come in, and I said, "I'm here. I had a wonderful time."

I went to my room and I had to make monotype that night, or bust. I didn't have any sheets of glass. I looked all over the house. I couldn't break a pane out of the window. Suddenly I looked up, and in the living room there was this photograph, a family photograph, quite a large one with a glass. I took it apart. I got the glass. I had the paints. You did this with oil paints and I had oil paints. I had the whole works. But I didn't have any printing press so I decided that I would do it with a rolling pin. I had plenty of paper. I took a basin, put the paper in the basin, and I was up all night making monotypes. It was the most exciting evening!

They were absolutely beautiful -- the most incredible things because you get effects by pressing with a rolling

pin which curves at the end. I didn't get an even pressure, so the second one would be entirely different. If I went off center, I got an entirely different effect with the same thing. They were absolutely incredible! I thought that was pretty hot stuff, so I didn't dare bring them to Kroll. I'd get kicked out of school or the League, wherever I went. They were very offbeat.

I thought, "Well, since I was inspired by Luks, he's the logical person for me to go to. I didn't know Luks, so I looked him up in the telephone book and called him up. He was somewhere downtown. I called up, "Mr. Luks?"

"Yes. Who's this?"

I told him my name -- Edith Fiviosioovitch, and he said, "Who?"

Then I went on and said, "I saw you the other night. I saw the demonstration and it was the most brilliant performance," and really, I was so excited about this thing that I went on and on and like everybody else, he responded to that. I said, "You inspired me to try and I would love to get your opinion of what I have done."

He said, "How old are you?"

I said, "Sixteen."

He said, "What?"

"Sixteen."

"Are you pretty?"

I thought for a minute, "Well, I've got to get down there" and so I said, "Well, some people say I am."

He said, "Come right down!"

I picked out what I considered the best, and there were three that made every artist of the past look sick. That rolling pin idea was terrific! -- you know, because you got that very uneven pressure. I took about ten of them. Meanwhile, after I got through early the next morning, I took turpentine and cleaned off the glass and put it back. Mother didn't know. We were pretty far apart in the house, and she didn't know I had the light on. I went down to see George Luks.

You mentioned that Stuart once found him in a bathrobe. Well, he was not completely dressed, but nothing mattered. He looked at me, and he said, "Only a few people said that you're pretty?" and he chucked me under the chin and as I turned around, he pinched my fanny, and I thought, "Oh, God, I had to get out!" -- you know, Mrs. Weichsel. But I had to show him those things, or bust, so I thought that the only way not to get your fanny pinched was to sit on it, so I sat down quick like a bunny, and then I began talking about his demonstration, which one of his paintings I liked the best.

He took that very seriously, so he sat down too, and I started to put them -- that is, my things on the floor right in front of me. I wasn't going to stand up and expose that fanny again while I was there. I kept sitting, and I took these things out and finally I brought out these three that I really thought were absolutely -- well, they were much better than Luks, so I said, "Mr. Luks, don't you think these are very good?"

He actually picked them up. He got up from his chair. I didn't. He picked them up and looked at them, examined them, kept looking at me, "How old are you?"

I told him four or five times. He said, "When did you do these?"

I told him that I stayed up all night. He shook his head. He said, "You know, that's awfully childish. A girl as pretty as you shouldn't waste her nights that way! Let me tell you a better way."

I was really getting awfully unhappy. I said, "Please, Mr. Luks, let's talk about the monotypes."

He said, "All right."

I said, "I went over these and don't you think these three are really very good?"

He said, "Uhm-hm. Yes, they're pretty good. How did you get that tapering off effect?"

I said, "With a rolling pin."

"With a what?"

I said, "With a rolling pin."

He said, "God, that's a great idea -- a great idea."

I said, "Would you like one, Mr. Luks?"

He said, "The same one?"

"Oh," I said, "I can't give you mind because that belongs to Mother, and she makes noodles every Friday, and she'll recognize any other rolling pin, but I'll get you one."

He said, "Tell me more about this," and he became rather serious about it. He said, "All right, little girl, these are really very good," and he got up and pinched my cheek, or something -- I mean the upper one, and he said, "Let me tell you something. The effect of the monotype is very largely accident. For Christ's sake, don't plan your life based on accidents!"

Well, that, like my experience with Montross -- his love for the things he showed -- those were the two credos that I developed. I've never told that story, and when I had open house on Fridays, how often I thought about it, and every once in a while I wouldn't say it quite as sharply, but I'd say, "Well, isn't that an accident?"

But that is particularly apropos of what has been happening, automation in painting, or whatever they call it, "automism," or whatever it is -- you know, the painting must be an accident to be of our period. It paints itself. That's become the modern credo and I think of Luks and his advice when I heeded.

DR. PHILLIPS: It was a very wise comment.

MS. HALPERT: I think it's one of the wisest things that has ever been said about art, and I have cited it many times because I think that it's something that anybody who is doing something should remember.

Then I had another experience with Luks who gave me my third great philosophical precept, and this is not too long later -- possibly this is again before I was married. I was a member of the Whitney Studio Club, the only paying member. They were all artists, and I get in. It was a wonderful deal because they had a sketch class once a week with models free of charge, if you were a member. It was wonderful.

If Mrs. Force liked you, she invited you upstairs. She didn't like me, but I wouldn't have gone upstairs because I had to get home early. Stuart and a lot of the artists will tell you that I sat on the steps because I felt that I had no right to occupy a real seat, so I sat on the steps to make sketches and so on.

One evening there was a bulletin saying that Mrs. Whitney was giving a party for the members of the Whitney Studio Club, an evening party, such and such an evening, whatever it was, and everybody was invited. This was before my great *faux pas* at the Lewisohn's. Of course, I was terribly excited about the idea, of meeting other artists because only a few artists would come there to sketch at night; they didn't have to. I mean, the sketch class was only for artists who couldn't afford a model -- Niles Spencer, Stuart Davis, and a number of these people used to come there.

I made all my own clothes, and I still remember the dress I made for this occasion. It was black velvet, very prim and very attractive. I came to the party, and Mrs. Whitney was standing at the head of the stairs greeting people, but she didn't say, "Mrs. Whitney" -- like Irene Lewisohn did. I arrived. I looked around, and I recognized a number of these artists. I saw George Bellows, and Henri and Luks, and so on. All these great artists were there. I was hysterical.

I still had this thing about Luks. He was so cockeyed by this time that all he did was follow Mrs. Whitney as she moved around the guests saying "Hello," and I noticed that he was right on her heels. Then Mrs. Force, who at that time was secretary, announced dinner, and we all filed in. I didn't drink in those days, and Luks was following Mrs. Whitney, and I was following him, so we got into the dining room. There were place cards. I looked and I saw my name, sat down, or I waited until Mrs. Whitney sat down, and who was next to me but George Bellows. He was on my left. Henri was on my right and I just died. We were about three chairs away from Mrs. Whitney, who was sitting at the head of the table.

George Luks came along. He didn't look at any cards. He just plunked down. Nobody was sitting. We were all waiting for Mrs. Whitney. I watched to see what other people did and everybody was standing up. She sat down, and by this time he arrived and he sat right next to her. She looked terribly irritated. Mrs. Force came over, and I heard her say, "Mr. Luks, this is not your seat. This card is so-and-so, who is coming here very shortly. Your seat is over there."

He tore up the card and threw it at Mrs. Force and plunked himself down and from there on, because we were so close by -- at least, I was so close by -- I watched his performance because I was so interested in Luks. He put

his elbows on the table and kept watching the spoon go from the bowl to Mrs. Whitney's mouth. This went on, and finally she dropped the spoon and almost screamed, "Mr. Luks, why do you persecute me so! You followed me all through the afternoon and now why do you watch me eat?"

He slapped her on the back, and if she had had false teeth they would have come right out. It was a real slap on the back. He said, "Take it easy, old girl. I just wanted to see how much soup you could eat with all your goddamn money!"

I was horrified. I was so horrified! Whenever I came home, my mother would ask me what I did and so on. I mean, she was in a way quite disinterested because I was completely out of her territory, but you know, where did I go and what did I see, and I told her. She'd never heard of Mrs. Whitney, and I said, "Mother, I never want to be rich."

"Oh," she said, "I always thought that you were so bright that you'd become very, very rich and take care of all of us."

You see, among Jews, it's the child who is the mother. It's the same among Orientals. It's the worship of the ancestor. Well, I felt very badly. "I don't want to be rich." Coming home in the subway I thought about it, and I realized that Mrs. Whitney could not eat any more soup than I could, than any beggar could, and I said furthermore, "She couldn't wear more than one dress at a time. She couldn't live in more than one house at a time. Why should anybody want to be rich!"

My mother said, "You always wanted to be rich."

And then I remember that as a little girl in Odessa somebody was very pleased because her daughter had a lot of hair on her arms and her legs. That was a symbol -- if you have a lot of hair that means you're going to be rich. That became something you wanted to be. You had to be rich.

So Mr. Luks was responsible for my contempt for wealth. I've never clipped a coupon. I have things lying in the bank vaults. I don't clip coupons. I can't go in to see what I own. The idea of owning money still distresses me very much -- courtesy of Mr. Luks, so I am indebted to him for two of the most wonderful bits of philosophy -- I mean, from my point of view. They're probably wrong in most people's thinking -- you know, the short cut like having accidents and the second knocking yourself out just for the idea of wealth. I'm very grateful to the old boy -- even if he did pinch me.

Dr. PHILLIPS: What an incredible scene that must have made!

MS. HALPERT: By that time practically everybody was stewed. It was free liquor by golly! These artists couldn't afford to pay for the liquor. Everybody was very stewed, and it was a huge table and there must have been sixty people there. I just happened to be close enough to hear this. I don't think it made much of an impression on most people, except that he was terribly rude, and Mrs. Force did get him out of there. Finally, she moved him, or got several other people to move him, coax him down to the lower end of the table where he belonged. I don't think I ever saw much of him after that. I never heard any other words of wisdom from him, but those two events were really very, very important in my life, and I always remember them.

This accident thing I have quoted to an awful lot of young artists. I don't say that it came from Luks. If I did, they'd say, "That old dodo!" -- you know, but I'd just say that I heard that when I was young. But that whole group of people -- they really had a special kind of integrity, and they had a philosophy which was not the image-makers. It was not the popular philosophy, but they had a small group, and they had a cult, but it doesn't exist anymore. Do you agree with me on that?

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes.

MS. HALPERT: In all fields. It's just like these people going to Europe now, to Paris, and the people who went to Pairs before; it's a very, very different motivation. They went there for the atmosphere, which made it easy to exist as an artist, as a writer, as a musician because even the concierge didn't look down at you. You were a creative person. Here -- you know, you were just a nut, but the whole attitude has changed and I still think those were two hunks of pretty philosophy.

DR. PHILLIPS: Most of these people, or a good many of them, also came out of a journalistic tradition.

MS. HALPERT: Not very many. Very few of them actually had the opportunity. There were only a few -- well, they had these off-beat magazines, and there were a very few and they didn't last very long -- like *Playboy*, even the *Dial*. They didn't last very long. There were a great many others, and I can't remember their names. The *New Masses* and *The Nation* occasionally used something in the way of stories and pictures and so on, but it was very limited.

DR. PHILLIPS: Sloan, Luks, Shinn and others had worked for the Philadelphia Press as illustrators, a sense of reporting, being left-footed people in a society which put a premium perhaps on right-footed-ness. They must have found themselves out of step and didn't particularly care.

MS. HALPERT: But it was a very limited group when you think of it numerically, very, very limited, and it was Sloan who would invite a friend of his to do something. I mean, first of all there was a beautiful relationship among the artists. They always passed something on. For instance, a guy like Kuniyoshi. When I think of his success, it was really based almost entirely, or entirely, on artists like Davies, who bough American modern art. This artist bought the first Weber and the first great many other people, not for himself, but for Lizzie Bliss, or Quinn, or someone like that.

It was the artist who supported the other artists, and with Kuniyoshi, I know that Alex Brook, who was among the more successful artists, he brought in every client he had to look at Yas [Yasuo Kuniyoshi], because he admired his work, and there was a camaraderie that was real. It was limited, but in each group, if he got a customer, they passed him on, and it was a very dreadful, but beautiful period because they starved together, and they shared.

I witnessed this in the gallery constantly. Walt Kuhn came in and I said, "I'd love to have a 'Pop' Hart show." He'd never had more than six bucks a week. That was all he ever had up to that time. He'd go to Mexico, sleep out of doors and eat baked beans. He died of that actually, and Walt Kuhn took the trouble to take me out to Fort Lee, or whatever -- somewhere in New Jersey, the other side of the bridge, and he broke a window, crawled in, then opened the door for me. We were there for about four hours, and I selected a show of 'Pop" Hart. Walt Kuhn got Miss Bliss in right away. He was selling pictures to her through Arthur. B. Davies.

That kind of thing doesn't seem to exist anymore, and then of course, by that time I had a number of collectors, and we sold a large part of that show. But this was a lot or trouble for Walt Kuhn because, you know, we didn't take a taxi. We went by subway. There were all sorts of gimmicks to go way out there -- I think it was Fort Lee, and he broke the window, crawled in and so on, and helped me with the framing because they were all unframed. We put them all in frames.

I think he advanced the money on some of the frames, and he bought a picture himself, and got Lizzie Bliss to buy two, and so on, but it was a very, very -- well, as I said, a kind of camaraderie in helping each other with a real affection that doesn't exist when the number of artists has grown to the point where they're a dime a dozen now.

I had a very amusing experience with 'Pop' Hart. I have those letters which are going to the Archives. Years ago -- well, he starved all his life. But his family was well off. His brother lived in Great Neck, and he had to go in through the servant's entrance because he was the dirtiest, filthiest guy you've ever seen. He really looked like a bum. He started out as a sign painter, and he'd go to Mexico, where being dirty and smelly was perfectly all right. He was very comfortable there. He was a little uncomfortable in New York. He returned here and everybody kidded him. He was always the butt of everybody's jokes.

Rudy Dirks and a couple of other cartoonists who really made a great deal of money, could spare it, and so on, took him to Europe, and the jokes they played on him! They paid his fare and so on. They used him just as the clown. They bought him a cane, dressed him up, and told him that the climate in Germany was so wonderful that he would grow taller constantly. They kept cutting his cane down. It's an old, old gag, and he fell for it. Finally, he felt that he had grown so enormous!

He came back from Mexico. I had been selling his prints, but I wasn't quite up to his paintings at that time. I thought he was good. I didn't think that he was really a great master, but when I went out to his studio and selected those that I liked, it was a very good show. I sold a picture to the Metropolitan. Kelekian, a great dealer, bought three. We sold a tremendous number of pictures, so when 'Pop' Hart returned to New York, I told him about the show and the sale. I said, "Look, 'Pop'" we sold" -- whatever it was, probably six thousand dollars. Compared to today, that's about fifty thousand dollars, and he looked at me. He was so utterly hurt. "Don't you do that to me! I've been used as the fool for a long time, but you can't do that to me, Edith."

I said, "Honest to God! I'll show you the books."

I showed him the clippings. I showed him the sales involves. He got terribly excited. The clippings! All these people envied him. He was the butt of all their jokes. There were three of them, all commercial artists, and I met them at a banquet.

Well, in any event, 'Pop" Hart was completely overwhelmed by this, and finally believed me. He became very excited. This is when I got him a steak. That's when I made the most wonderful lentil soup in history. You know, it will feed you for a week. Not knowing how to cook, or having learned to cook, I was very inventive because I didn't know how to do it the right way. I put the lentil through a sieve so you didn't get any of that

waste matter. And what I could do with one frankfurter! I traded soup for a steak. That's the only time we had beef. I made vats! It didn't cost anything. A box of lentils was twenty-five cents.

You know, all this time he was a bum. He wanted to go back to Mexico in grand style. Well, nobody pays bills right away. The show had ended about two weeks before he arrived. It was already closed and then Walt Kuhn told him what a success it was, and he met a number of other people, and it was just great! This was in 1927, so he went to Mexico. I think I gave him two thousand bucks. He'd never seen that much money is his life. I collected about that much money. Mrs. Rockefeller paid right away, and Lizzie Bliss paid right away, but the others didn't, so he had two thousand dollars, and he wrote me the most beautiful letter. When he left I said to him, "Look, 'Pop,' you tell me where you are going to be, and as the money comes in I'll send it to you wherever you are."

He said, "Two thousand dollars will keep me for a hundred years."

I said, "I don't like to keep anybody's money. Let me know where you'll be."

Just before he left, he sent me this letter, which I have -- "Dear Edith, Darling Edith: you are the Joan of Arc of American art" and so on. Two months later I get a letter, "Mrs. Halpert: You filthy, dirty crook!" -- you know, "I ain't got a nickel from you since" because I didn't have his address. That's the story of my life in a way. Even Stuart did that to me in reverse.

Oh, yes, then there was -- and I have the invitation in the clipping book. I decided that I was making money. In 1929, I really had dough, and I felt rather guilty about making money on the artists. That was before I put up the building, and I thought the best way to lose money -- I had always heard -- was to publish books, and I decided to start with a book on 'Pop' because he was the most colorful. I decided that I would make this a successful book. He really was a most colorful personality, and I hired Holger Cahill to write the text, and I gave him a hundred bucks to do it. He was going to do it for nothing. I said, "Oh, no. You're going to get paid."

I got the press to do it and it was the first illustrated book they ever published, it was the most beautiful, really the most wonderful typographical job. It's a beautiful book! I'll give you one if you remind me. I have some downstairs. All these old dames were always saying to me, "Can't I do something?"

Mrs. Guggenheim was always driving me nuts, "Can't I give you some money?"

Mrs. Liebman was the same way. I said, "I'll have a special edition at twenty-five dollars, a limited edition with an original lithograph, and why don't you each order ten copies to give away as Christmas gifts? That will help me with the book, and you'll get more than your money's worth because the print is worth twenty-five dollars," so I had quite a few subscriptions. It was a limited edition, and they were sold out in advance. I had five hundred bucks, and they had this valuable book. Mrs. Rockefeller said, "What's this about books?"

I said, "Will you order an advance copy?

She said, "Certainly. How much is it?"

I told her, and she said, "I guess I will."

Then jokingly I said to her, "It would be nice if you had a publisher's party."

She said, "What?"

I said, "In your gallery."

She had this Top-Side Gallery -- the infirmary I got her to change into a gallery, and she had a very limited budget for that which Papa gave her, so we went out, and we shopped for fabrics. I always had to pay the taxi fare because rich people don't carry any money. She didn't have any. I said, "We can't travel around in your Rolls Royce and go to these cheap joints."

We would go to these little side street stores where you could get wonderful fabrics, or remnants, and so on for very little. She never had such a good time. We upholstered some old furniture. That was a different account, and then I mixed the paint, and I got one of the servants there to paint the walls, and we had this very attractive gallery. So I said, "We'll have a show."

She had a complete set of 'Pop' Hart's lithographs, his prints which she had started buying through Candler, and she completed her set. She also bought two or three of his paintings. I said, "If you have an exhibition of his prints, the things you own, have a party."

She said, "We can't have strange people come to our house!"

I don't know how, but I finally convinced her, and she had this party. It was a tea. I have all that. The clippings of that are just marvelous. Look that up tomorrow under the 'Pop' Hart book – clippings, the invitation card and the *New York Times* full page. Oh my God, what went on! This was a sensation -- you know, Mrs. Rockefeller gives a party for an artist, and he really was so dirty! I commissioned Walt Kuhn to clean him up. He had plenty of money about that time. Get him to get a haircut, have him change his underwear, get a suit and so on, and bring him to the party.

Of course, I had to co-hostess with Mrs. Rockefeller. She didn't know anybody. McBride came up, and she had a number of her own friends, plus a number of people from the art world. Nobody refused the invitation, believe me, because nobody ever got into that house. It wasn't too long after the Ludlow Massacre -- you know, so they had detectives all over the place. I told her that nobody would touch their silver, that artists have better taste -- you know, I'd kid her. She was a nice old dame, so she had the tea served in the grand dining room.

DR. PHILLIPS: Nobody would touch her silver!

MS. HALPERT: Nobody.

DR. PHILLIPS: No artist would touch her sliver! They had better taste.

MS. HALPERT: They wouldn't. That home on 54th Street had the worst taste in the whole world -- Good God! There were forty-six rooms one after another, and they were pretty, pretty ghastly. She and I stood there as the guests arrived to see the exhibition upstairs. I had subscription blanks. I didn't want to be so vulgar as to bring the books up and have them autographed from there, but the subscriptions entitled them to an autographed book.

We went downstairs, and they didn't arrive. 'Pop' and Walt didn't arrive, and I was getting very upset, so we went down to tea. Shortly after, 'Pop' and Walt arrived, and I would never have known 'Pop.' Walt told me the next day that he took him to a Turkish bath and kept him soaking all night and got him some new underwear -- the whole works, haircut. Nobody would have recognized him. They were rushed in by the butler, and I said, "Mrs. Rockefeller, this is Mr. Hart."

She said, "I'm so glad to know you, Mr. Hart."

He said, "You don't know me. This ain't me! This stuff I've got on! God, I've been soaked and scraped," and all these old lady friends of hers were just absolutely horrified! Everybody was having tea. This Mrs. Hitchcock, who was really the last word, stood for everything that a cartoon of an old rich woman stands for, and she rushed over to 'Pop' Hart, and she said, "Mr. Hart, I think your work is just darling!"

He was this dirty bum, painting dirty Mexicans and so on, and she said, "I think your work is just darling!"

He slapped her right on the fanny, and he made some terrible four letter remarked, so Walt grabbed him by the arm and said, "Keep moving, 'Pop'!"

It was just about most wonderful, funny party! Of course, this was a dream world for Mrs. Rockefeller. She really lived. She enjoyed pictures. She enjoyed these people. It was kind of a new breath of life coming into the house because 'Pop' was so funny! I was dying a thousand deaths because he said the wrong thing to everybody. I said to Walt, "Please hold onto him! As soon as he starts a word, make sure it's three syllables!"

Walt said, "Are you kidding! He couldn't make a two syllable word."

He was a completely ignorant guy. He couldn't spell. But he was a wonderful, wonderful character. The next day, this would be Sunday, there was this big story about the book, a tremendous story about the book in the *Times*. We sold most of the books, so even then I couldn't lose money. I was distressed. I came out with a profit on the 'Pop' Hart book, so then I published the Weber book, and that was a very different story. On that I lost several thousand dollars. The "Pop" Hart book was 1929. That was 1930. I'll show you both of them.

Well, Weber was a different kind of person. From Weber I got one of the great designers, Jacobs -- and I paid everybody. I never accepted any professional work for nothing. I wouldn't hear of it. Well, the book was all set up, and it was the most beautiful book. Neumann, who was burnt up -- he was one of the dealers who wrote a letter to Mrs. Rockefeller saying that I was immoral and so on, whatnot -- he was a friend of Weber's. He had handled his work for short time, and he was a very knowledgeable person. He really knew a great, great deal about art, but the idea of this little squirt, this little female coming into business! He never could make a sale to anybody. Those were very bad years, and here I had all these rich customers, so he wrote letters to all the people, not only to Mrs. Rockefeller.

Well, I made the mistake of giving the final proof to Max Weber. He thought it was beautiful. Eddie Cahill was

the kind of person who talked to someone and he really had the replica of the person in his writing. He was a very non-creative writer, but he was like a blotter, and he got the quality -- well 'Pop' Hart thought he wrote the book. As a matter of fact, he told a hell of a lot of people he did. It was 'Pop' Hart, and it was Max Weber and so on, so I gave Max the final proof. It was on the press, ready to shoot, and he came in about two days later, and he said, "I want changes made."

There were woodcuts interspersed in spaces in with the typography. Jacobs really did a superb job, and any change would throw the whole thing off. I thought it was so beautiful that I didn't want anybody to touch it, and in the first paragraph, the opening sentence, as a matter of fact, that "Max Weber lived the life of modern art in America" and then a wood cut in the right place. He wanted "In America" taken out. He insisted, and I said, "It's too late. It's on the press."

Eddie Cahill came in just at that moment, and Max said, "I want 'in America' taken out!"

Holger said, "If you don't like it we'll take it out."

I could have killed him. Well, it was too late. He said it, and I said, "No."

Max got very indignant, and I said, "Max, that means that you lived the life of modern art in the world. There are people elsewhere -- Braque, Picasso. They can't say that. In America, you really introduced modern art. As the publisher I have a responsibility. I will not tell a lie."

We got into this terrible battle. The book was published. The special edition had been subscribed for completely. I sold those and I never sold the two-dollar copies because he didn't want the book. I took that terrific loss. I paid storage -- did you ever see a thousand books, two thousand books? I don't know how many there are -- hard cover and thick books -- like your five-dollar book, so I paid storage for years.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's a steady drain.

[END OF 2 OF 7 REEL B1r]

MS. HALPERT: And one day -- when I was remodeling for a second time. I had the Daylight Gallery. In 1930, I built the Daylight Gallery. The back room had a fireplace, a great deep fire place and a set-back on each side where I had the folk art. By that time I had no books, no folk art. It was going to be modern art or bust. I had all the other things tucked away and having been very much interested in Sullivan's architecture, the idea of wasted space seemed very wicked. I no longer had shelves there. I had nothing to put on the shelves.

This was going to be a gallery and I was blocking up those two niches. They were deep, very wide, big room, and I thought of this wasted space -- unfunctional space. I suddenly remembered those books. They were all in packages of about twenty per package beautifully packed in gray paper. I brought them from the warehouse and I put them all in those two niches, all the way up, in these packages. We got the Sheet rock and we covered them up and made one solid wall across, which made a very good exhibition wall.

Then in 1940, I lost the building, and of course, I had forgotten about the books completely. Years passed. I moved up to 51st Street (across the street) and I woke up in the middle of the night with the most terrible nightmare. This must have been about 1940, and by this time the building in the Village had been sold. It had been rented. I had nothing, I just had two hundred and fifty dollars out of a forty-two thousand dollar building. When they tell me I'm a great real estate operator because of the jump in the value of this building, I always remind them about that building. I paid forty-two thousand for the building on 13th Street. I paid thirty-five thousand for this building, and I'm turning down four hundred thousand dollars for it now, and so I'm a great operator, but there I lost everything. I got two hundred and fifty dollars because a lawyer messed up there too.

Well, it must have been about 1942, about two years after I moved up town that I had this terrible nightmare of somebody, some man -- you know, without a face, a person living in this building in this room on 13th Street and tapping the wall of the niche. It was hollow as opposed to the central portion, and in this nightmare the man thought there were great riches there, something hidden. With his bare hands he kept ripping that Sheetrock, and his nails were bleeding -- you know, it was simply ghastly! It was the goriest thing! He finally pulled out a package of Max Weber books, and I woke up.

I had forgotten. From 1930 to 1942, I had forgotten these books completely until this nightmare and I wake up and the horror at the guy's fingers bleeding -- it was like Caligula or something, and the books! So having, what some of my friends call a very perverted sense of humor -- I can laugh at myself -- I sat up in bed and I got absolutely hysterical about these books! What a joke it was on Weber!

The next day I hied me down, and a sculptor by the name of Grippey [Peter Grippe? –ed.] had rented that floor, including the gallery, which he used as a studio. I went down to see him, and I told him about the books. I said,

"May I have these two panels ripped out? I will replace them. You can pick your own carpenter and repaint the whole room. I want those books."

Well, he said he couldn't do it because of the landlord. I said, "The landlord won't care if you put the panels back again. Nobody in the world will ever recognize it.

"Well, I can't do it."

So the books are still there, unless the building has been torn down, or something, and that's what happened to Max Weber's book. Now, everybody wants those books. People keep asking about them because it's in the libraries -- "Were can we get this book?"

They're willing to pay any price.

DR. PHILLIPS: This rivals the Comstock Lode.

MS. HALPERT: I never told this story to Weber, and I've lost two thousand bucks right there now in those books. Now I could make a fortune on them. I never told Weber this story because this would have annihilated him. He would have died -- you know, the idea that I didn't think they were precious enough, but imagine forgetting them from 1930 to 1942.

DR. PHILLIPS: Have they torn the building down?

MS. HALPERT: I don't know. I've tried. When Grippey [Grippe] was moving, I said, "Let me know," but he didn't. The same atmosphere among artists does not exist. I said, "I'll give you half of them. I want to save those books. They're beautiful. Nobody will ever print that way again. Do you want to see one? "

[END OF 2 OF 7 REEL B2r]

East 51st Street, New York City, Monday, May 21, 1962

[BEGINNING OF 3 OF 7 REEL B1r]

MS. HALPERT: I was at the Modern Museum opening last night. I met some woman, and we stood there talking. She said, "You know, you're the woman who had a cold in the head. You were such a fabulous character in my life when I was young, I heard this story and I thought it was fabulous."

I asked her, "Did you ever have a cold in your head?"

Well, people interrupted us and then finally she said, "Uncle O'Donnell and Aunt" -- whatever the wife's name was -- "seemed to be very disturbed about an experience he had with you."

She went on and on, "We had a dinner party at the house, and she told the story. She came down to meet you after this experience."

I didn't have the slightest idea what she was talking about. All these people were milling around -- you know, I'm waving, saying "Hello," or "Goodbye," and so on, and finally she pinned it down to the early thirties. She was very careful because that would date her. She said, "It was some time in the thirties."

I said, "A lot of things happened to me in the twenties. Don't mind me, go ahead."

DR. PHILLIPS: What did she do when she picked herself off the floor after that one?

MS. HALPERT: She went on, and I still didn't know what she was talking about. She said, "The time you couldn't sit."

Then I began to laugh. I swear I never thought of that thing all these years. Mr. [O'Donnell] Iselin came in, and I had just opened the Daylight Gallery, which means it was 1930. It couldn't have been 1931. It was just 1930, right at the very beginning. I had a little private office, and I got from the speakeasy guy across the street a hunk of one-way glass, so I could see what was going on and nobody could see me. I watched people come in, and I saw Iselin come in, so I came out.

I had a desk in the main gallery too, a little bit of a desk. I still have it. It's very pretty. Donald Deskey designed it for me, and I pretended to sit there. But I really sat in my little cubbyhole and I could watch. I could see only two-thirds of the place. I couldn't see one end of it, and if somebody looked at a picture long enough, I

could come out and -- you know, just casually talk about things and take this guy to that specific picture because I realized that that was the one he was interested in. The speakeasy glass was a wonderful idea. I saw Iselin going on and looking sort of anxious. I came out. He wasn't looking at pictures. He saw me, and he said, "Oh, I have something very important to discuss with you."

I said, "Very well, sit down."

I had a chair at the desk. I had another one right next to it and I said, "Sit down."

I was standing up, and he kept saying, "I can't sit down if you don't."

I said, "I've been sitting all day. Do you mind? I'll stand up."

If you knew who the Iselins are, they're very proper people.

He said, "I won't sit unless you do."

I said, "I'm sorry. I just can't sit down."

He said, "Why not?"

I said, "Because I have a cold in the head."

I sat up on the edge of the desk, and he told me about his problem, but he was very uncomfortable. A gentleman of the old school -- you know, you don't sit with a woman standing up. I was leaning on one side -- I was going to say one cheek. Then he left and, of course, I forgot all about it. Whatever problem he had I resolved to some degree, and the next morning about eleven o'clock I got a telephone call, and the voice said, "This is Mrs. Iselin" -- I'd never met Mrs. Iselin -- "Mrs. Halpert, we've never met, but you've got to help me out. O'Donnell kept me awake all night. He was so upset, so curious. He could not understand. Of course, he knows you're very modern, but he could not understand the significance of your statement, and he kept me up all night. He kept saying, "Why couldn't Mrs. Halpert sit down because she had a cold in the head?"

I got hysterical, and said, "I couldn't tell that to Mr. Iselin, but I can tell you. You know, there's a new cure for colds. They give you a shot, but they don't give it to you in the head. You can't sit down. I'm allergic to injections, and I swelled up."

Of course, she didn't hang up, but I thought she did, so I hung up. There was nothing on the other end of the line. She called me back and she said, "I'm sorry. I think I disappeared from the phone. I think that's the funniest thing I ever heard" -- and she got hysterical -- "May I tell O'Donnell?"

I said, "Certainly. I couldn't, but you may."

Well, she came down to meet me after that, as a curio. A lot of these people from uptown came down to meet the curio. It was true, but this was 1930, and I meet this woman last night at the Modern Museum. She was the niece of O'Donnell Iselin, and she said, "You're the woman who had the cold in the head."

Of course, I continued the story when I was there and when I got home, Natalie said, "What in the world was that?

I told her, and she said, "I've never heard that one."

Poor Bill Cummings stood there, and he didn't know what was going on, but I did laugh. That was the early period of shots, and I still can't figure out how it knew how to get to the head, but, anyhow, it didn't work with me. All I got out of it was that I couldn't sit down, and that puzzled Mr. Iselin.

I opened the wrong book. I was preparing this. I was trying to figure this out. I told you about the 'Pop' Hart party. These notes I prepared for Fred White -- American Marines, [Edith] Wetmore and Kuniyoshi. I told you that one. Friedenthal [Frendenthal? -ed.] overcoat -- I don't know what that means. Brixey -- caviar and champagne, that's a funny story! Davis sale and night gown.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's very cryptic!

MS. HALPERT: Oh, here's the Ford Madox Ford thing. This is the book I hadn't looked at. I told you about the William Carlos Williams club that met. Here's the press release sent out by Ford Madox Ford. It was 1939. Do you want to read it?

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes. This is the dinner.

MS. HALPERT: That's one of the dinners, but it's not the first one.

Oh, no. This is the [Edward] Dahlberg dinner when he wrote *Bottom Dogs*. "Mr. Dahlberg is the author of *Bottom Dogs*, a novel which attracted considerable attention in England, but very little here." Is that the one -- well, there it is, April, 1939, with an autograph from Dahlberg. Oh, I bought the book for the opening. God, was I tactful!! Here it is. I evidently called up this character and asked for the book. I paid five bucks -- reduced from six and a half dollars. He told me not to cut the pages, that if I didn't want to read the book, he'd take it back. Well, I did cut the pages. "Suggestion: If you want to placate Mr. Dahlberg, take this copy of your book off your bookshelves and ask him to inscribe it. Be sure the pages are cut, however. Authors resent unread copies of their works." Five bucks I paid for it.

DR. PHILLIPS: That was one dinner.

MS. HALPERT: Yes, this was one of the dinners, but this was not the first at the gallery. "The purpose of the society is the encouragement of writers who have made a start and being of conspicuous merit" -- D.H. Lawrence wrote the introduction; that's why I was so excited because I was reading D.H. Lawrence then -- "have, as is often the case, difficulty in placing their later work. It is hoped that the testimony afforded by a dinner given in their honor by their literary conferees may conduce toward that end."

What does "conduce" mean? "It is proposed also to offer a prize annually for a work of conspicuous imaginative merit, a work being chosen by a committee of the society."

These are all the people who used to come.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's quite a list.

MS. HALPERT: Ford Madox Ford, Garmunsen, whom I knew very poorly, William Carlos Williams, Archibald MacLeish, Marian Moore, Charles Olsen, Katherine Ann Porter, Allen Tate, Sherwood Anderson, Waldo Frank, Marsden Hartley, John Herman, Dave Collum and Mary Collum, Ford Madox Ford's wife. She became a painter. Then there was Joseph Brewer, Holger Cahill, Garmunsen's wife, Edith Halpert, Dr. Harcritt, Helen McCall, Shelby Shackleford, Charles Sheeler, Alfred Stieglitz, and Robert Ellman. Very impressive group!

DR. PHILLIPS: I'll say it was!

MS. HALPERT: This went on for a long time, until Mr. Ezra Pound was invited. I got about three hundred letters. This was just at the time when there was a song called, "Did You Ever See A Dream Walking" -- and this long article which deals with my organizing the first municipal art exhibition with this heading, "Mrs. Halpert's dream comes true."

This evoked the most tremendous number of letters from all over the country -- you know, "Did You Ever See A Dream Walking" plus I don't know how many records of that song. It was like "*La Boehme*" which made me a little bit bored. I have this clipping book. Isn't that wonderful for reference?

Here's the occasion when I wrote a letter to *Time* magazine. This was in 1936, when there was a *Time* cover story on Mrs. Rockefeller, and there was a reference to me: "to her assistant and special agent in special circumstances went handsome, gray-haired Edith Halpert" -- and in 1936, I had gray hair. Let's see, "one-time efficiency expert for deflated S.W. Strauss & Company." That's it! I got very annoyed and said that that was the most deflating paragraph ever written about me.

DR. PHILLIPS: How did you get the show into the Grand Central Gallery in 1927? -- "Thirty-three Modern Americans"?

MS. HALPERT: That's not 1927. It's much later than that. I couldn't have been in business only one year to get that show. It was later than that. It must have been. It ought to be in here. This starts in 1929. No, it wasn't that early. It was 1930 –"Thirty-three Moderns." Oh, I remember. Mr. [Walter Leighton] Clark came down, and I thought he was Mr. Stephen Clark, who was a big collector. I was simply delighted. Well, it was the wrong Clark, but I didn't know it. I didn't know this man's first name, but he was the president of the Grand Central Gallery.

To date, the only two people who have survived who were founders of galleries in the twenties, are Erwin Barrie of Grand Central Galleries and myself. Well, the president of the Grand Central Galleries was a man by the name of Clark. As I say, he was the wrong Clark. And I was very thrilled that I was going to meet him because he was a big collector. When he came down and asked me if I wouldn't like to work with them, I was willing to work on anything with Stephen Clark at that time. I can't remember what year it was. It couldn't have been 19 -- what did you say, 1929?

DR. PHILLIPS: 1927.

MS. HALPERT: It was around 1930, I think. Well, in any event, I finally learned that it was not the Clark I was interested in, and I thought that it would be kind of fun to do something. It must have been 1933. Wasn't the show called "Thirty-three Moderns"? Well, whenever it was, I made pretty rough terms because the Grand Central Gallery was the deadest institution, but they did a tremendous amount of business -- you know, people were still buying academic art, and it was huge! It was in Grand Central Station -- the Grand Central Galleries. Maybe it was 1930. I have the date somewhere, and I thought maybe it would be fun.

Mr. Barrie came down the next time with Mr. Clark, and he was a much nicer person. Clark was really a pretty dreadful old dodo. Everything he looked at in the Downtown Gallery horrified him -- he was so shocked! You know, the artists didn't know how to draw, they didn't know how to use color, and they were immoral, indecent, but Barrie was much more intelligent about it, and he asked whether I would arrange a show up at the Grand Central Galleries, and I said, "You know, if I arrange a show, it will ruin your gallery permanently. You can't have modern art in your gallery and survive."

"Well, we're not afraid. We're going to prove that this is just a passing whim."

I said, "If you're willing to take a chance, kid, I am, but I want it my way."

He agreed a fancy party -- I didn't know, I just thought that it would be kind of nice to have a concert and caviar -- you know, really have an opening like no opening ever happened before.

Well, walking into the Grand Central Galleries there were murals that they were struck with. Also I learned that they had the most brilliant system in the history of the world. You couldn't lose. You became a member of the gallery by paying six hundred dollars a year either as an artist, or as a collector. The artist had to give the equivalent of three six hundred dollar pictures, and he became a member for three years. The collector paid six hundred dollars a year, and he got a painting for nothing. There was a drawing every year, and I don't know how many they gave away, but the gallery didn't pay a goddamn thing! Excuse it! You can cut that out.

DR. PHILLIPS: That was the flavor -- the salt at any rate.

MS. HALPERT: Well, it was the most wonderful idea -- the artists paid, the collector paid, and the gallery didn't pay anybody. It was a beautiful idea, and I thought, "Well, they're pretty smart. I'll go up and learn."

I went up and there were these murals all over the entrance -- the most ghastly things you ever saw. The sculpture -- well, they had a pool with all of these what I call "tweet tweet sculpture" -- you know, somebody blowing the flute, a naked little boy, or a little cupid blowing a flute. Since they wanted a show, and I still didn't know why except that they decided that they would clean up this modern thing I was doing.

They were so sure of winning, and I was so sure of winning that, as I say, I made very rough terms. I said that they had to cover up the murals. They couldn't remove them. They had to cover them up, with fabric or something, and we'd paint over them. The pool had to be cleared of all the "tweet tweet sculpture," and we put our sculpture up. I wanted an orchestra and drinks -- it couldn't have been drinks then.

DR. PHILLIPS: Not if it was 1927.

MS. HALPERT: It wasn't 1927 -- that I'm sure of. They had something -- ice cream, or whatnot, and caviar -- real Beluga caviar. You could get it at Amtorg at the time. It was very expensive. They also had music, so that was all set. There were thirty-three artists, so I invited thirty-three collectors. I got them to promise to come to the opening, and it included -- well, meantime I met Stephen Clark and told him I had picked the wrong Clark, and we became friendly immediately when I said I had picked the wrong Clark, so he came, too, and Lizzie Bliss -- all the big collectors, Frank Crowninshield came with his complete entourage, and we sold thirty-three pictures the opening day! And the big headlines!

DR. PHILLIPS: They were tremendous!

MS. HALPERT: Where did you see that?

DR. PHILLIPS: I went through the press of that day -- the *Art News* and others.

MS. HALPERT: *Downtown moves Uptown*. That's business, so that show wouldn't be in this book. This is all personal. Well, in any event, it was a fantastic mistake made by Grand Central Galleries, because they watched the most respectable people like Mrs. Rockefeller, Lizzie Bliss, and all these very respectable people buying. I told everybody that they had to buy a picture the opening day. There were thirty-three moderns and thirty-three sales were made, and the wrong Mr. Clark had never been wronger in his life. This was the greatest mistake he ever made because the publicity on that show was absolutely overwhelming.

Everybody had a ball. The artists were hysterical. They had never had caviar before. Who had caviar -- real

Beluga caviar! This orchestra was playing, and all the "tweet tweet sculpture" was taken away. The photographers -- you know, they really had a big staff of publicity people. We never had that kind of publicity, but that show lasted, and we sold practically every picture in that show, including Pascin, who had a semi-lascivious nude which the wrong Mr. Clark wanted removed.

I can't remember, but I think it was Stephen Clark who bought that picture. It was a great picture, which he got for about fifteen hundred bucks and so respectable! It's probably worth twenty-five thousand dollars now, but that show was really quite a ball -- you know, you're having dug that night out is rather funny. It's like last night -- I go around with ghosts all around me these days wherever I go.

DR. PHILLIPS: The publicity on that show was a continuous thing. I don't know whether people were drawn there because it was the Grand Central Gallery, but once they got there, it was a wholly different kind of show than they'd had before.

MS. HALPERT: They'd never had anything like it. The publicity and somewhere in my regular clipping book I have a photograph of all the artists in a row with Glenn Coleman in the foreground doing the wrong thing and Stuart Davis in the background, I believe -- this crowd of artists. I refused to be photographed in this thing, but it was the beginning of the end for that gallery. They had to go into portraits and so on, and they were really devastated. They never dreamed that the tables would be turned. *Downtown moves Uptown* -- wasn't that the headline, or something like that?

DR. PHILLIPS: Up until that time, certainly in the trade papers, you'd received a paragraph here and there and once in a while a story on a single artist like Marin, or someone else, but very little mention of the Downtown Gallery, per se.

MS. HALPERT: Oh, no. You haven't read the right clippings!

DR. PHILLIPS: Wait! These aren't newspaper clippings. These are trade papers, and the trade papers -- well, the introduction of modern American art was viewed with some alarm anyway because most of their thinking was purchasing lines either from London, or Paris about auctions and the old masters. The trade press was set up that way, and then suddenly to have this bombshell which they couldn't ignore anymore -- they just couldn't.

MS. HALPERT: This was really a great sensation! I remember a taxi driver -- by that time I was taking taxis, and I remember I said, "113 West 13th Street."

He said, "Isn't that the queer gallery where they have all those strange things going on?"

We really made the press at that time. It's the kind of thing that the Modern Museum practices today -- I mean, sensationalism. They do it deliberately -- you know, the whole Downtown Gallery thing was carried on without -- you know, I had no publicity crews. I didn't even know what publicity was, and it was all because these strange sensational things happened.

In 1930, when we had the Pascin show with everybody wearing a derby. We had newsreels. That had never happened in an art gallery before. I didn't ask for it. I didn't know that there was such a thing as newsreels -- you know, but the elite uptowners were coming to this opening.

I met Pascin in 1927, or 1928. When he lived in New York, as he did for a while, he lived in Brooklyn. He had one of Robert Laurent's houses. Hamilton Easter Field died, and he left his estate to Robert Laurent, who he had adopted when he was a kid. There was no evil intent here at all because this was a perfectly legitimate adoption, and he inherited all the Brooklyn property where Kuniyoshi lived. Field really was interested in artists, and he published the greatest magazine we ever had in American art in the art field called the *Arts*.

Well, Pascin had been here before and during the First World War. Stieglitz told me this story. He arrived here, he was born in Bulgaria, and he had lived in France. He was not a French citizen, and during the war he had to get out. Stieglitz was his patron when he went to get his citizenship papers, and Stieglitz told me some very entertaining stories about it, but, in any event, he was here at that time for several years. That's when he influenced so many artists. He was a terrific influence on many of the artists. I didn't know him then because this was just a little bit before my time.

Then he came back many years later, in the late twenties, and he lived in Brooklyn, Brooklyn Heights. He had developed a thing about the Downtown Gallery and about me, that any artists who was in the Downtown Gallery was going to be made, and he was one of the most made artists in the world by that time, but he was just desperate about showing in the Downtown Gallery. His agents appointed Knoedler as what they called their collateral dealer, and Pascin couldn't have a show in the Downtown Gallery much as he wanted to, but he was on a regular European contract and under the contract he was permitted to retain a certain number of pictures.

He had to deliver so many pictures per month of such subjects and so on, and while he was on the very upper level at that time, he still had to retain that relationship. He could retain a certain number of pictures, and those pictures he let me have, and every time I made a sale, this was the biggest thing in his life- you know, he was getting the equivalent then of about twenty-five thousand dollars a year, and he certainly didn't need the money, but he had some sort of strange association with the gallery.

It was his dream to have a one man show in the Downtown Gallery -- well, you know, with every gallery in the United States dropping dead for his work, so when he died, I decided that I had to do this for him, so I planned this one man show, a memorial show, and we really -- well, I have it downstairs, a beautiful catalogue, the most expensive thing I ever did, and it was an all loan show. I had borrowed pictures from various people in the United States, some of whom were very bored with what they considered dirty pictures, and I had them for sale eventually. I didn't expect to, as this was to be a non-sale show.

Pascin always wore a derby. We had the derby on most of the time, and he had a cigarette dangling and I though the- you know, the kind of party I would have had if he were alive would be to have everybody in smoking jackets. He adored getting into a dinner jacket. I invited everybody to come in a smoking jacket and a derby, and they did, and poor [Emil] Ganso, who was his devoted slave, had to go out and buy a pair of patent leather shoes, which he took off in between talking to people -- he was in agony!

Well, somehow or other, and I had nothing to do with it, Frank Crowninshield was devoted to Pascin -- you know, he used him in *Vanity Fair*. He reproduced covers and so on. He was crazy about his work, and he owned a great many pictures. He was probably responsible for it. I borrowed three pictures from him, and Henry McBride had a number of drawings that I borrowed, and so on. Somebody -- one of those people, was responsible for the newsreels, and what happened on 13th Street was like the time not Babe Ruth, but who was the next greatest baseball player?

DR. PHILLIPS: The next greatest?

MS. HALPERT: Yes, the one who was very close to him and came shortly after -- after Babe Ruth died, there was a follow-upper who was equally great.

DR. PHILLIPS: Joe DiMaggio?

MS. HALPERT: No. You're thinking of what's her name -- the bosomy dame. There was somebody else in between, and when he came to the gallery three thousand kids appeared from nowhere to follow him in, but this newsreel thing -- well, you can imagine it on 13th Street! To have all these ladies arriving and, you know, in those days evening dresses were long dresses. Conger Goodyear came with that famous actress from Buffalo. He did a portrait of her -- a very famous, a great actress, and there were crowds outside watching everybody come and go, like the opening of a big movie show. It was the most sensational thing, and all the men, most of the men whom I knew well enough to ask, "Please wear a derby," came with derbies.

That was just about the biggest story that broke, and it was just about the kind of party that Pascin would have adored! This was really -- Ganso and Robert Laurent and all these people wept. We all sat and wept (and everybody left at 4 a.m.) Because Pascin wasn't there, and this is what he would have loved. It was just the kind of party he would have had.

The next day a lot of the collectors called up and said, "If you have any customers for any of the pictures, sell them." I had nothing for sale, and I was just doing this purely as a token of devotion to Pascin. I never made so much money in my life at any one time. All these people decided to release these pictures. They took advantage of the newsreel and all the publicity, and I sold about eighteen pictures on commission.

All that kind of sensationalism which occurred like the "Thirty-three Moderns" and the Pascin show, none of these things were planned as sensation getters, but they became that naturally, and now when you think of all the museums that are having Tingley start a fire in the backyard and all that, for sensationalism, this was all real and it happened accidentally! I was too dumb to know how to do anything about publicity. I hadn't the slightest notion of what it was about. I never knew whom to call. I never knew who was an editor of which. I only knew the newspapers, but I didn't know any of the editors, or anybody. The only newspaperman who was nice to me was Henry McBride, who met me for the first time at some exhibition. Sam Halpert introduced him to me, and he made me turn around and he said, "You have a front!"

I said, "I beg your pardon!"

He said, "I've seen noting but your rear view all these years."

I used to pose for Sam. I was the only free model he could get, and I was always doing something -- cooking, so he always painted a rear view of me fully dressed. That was a great discovery of Henry McBride; that he could

see me *en face*, and he became very devoted. He really did a great deal for the Pascin show. He lent me pictures, and I don't know when it was he -- probably it was Crownie who arranged about the newsreel.

I never heard o f newsreel coming down, but I had all these people -- you know, Miss Bliss, Miss Wetmore, and Mrs. Rockefeller, Mrs. Guggenheim, Richard De Wolfe Brixey and his wife -- getting them all in one group was sensational! All these people came down to the party. These were all big newspaper names. They weren't worth a button in this show because nobody bought anything, but it made big news. All these things happened. I mean, there was no talent involved.

The "Thirty-three Moderns" was really a very exciting event -- God, I'd forgotten all about it -- completely!

DR. PHILLIPS: It drenched all the slick paper magazines which more or less had ignored the fact that you were in existence. It really did.

MS. HALPERT: I made uptown.

DR. PHILLIPS: Not only did you make uptown, but you used another gallery and destroyed it.

MS. HALPERT: They came and asked for it. I didn't go to them.

DR. PHILLIPS: There is no indication that you destroyed the gallery in the press. This only comes in when you tell the story. It must have been an awful shock to Clark.

MS. HALPERT: Mr. Clark almost collapsed -- the wrong Mr. Clark.

No one believes this, but here it is. This is the *Arts* -- I bought this at an auction some time ago. These are all the issues of the *Arts* -- July through December, I believe, in this volume, 1926. Here's a list of the galleries that existed in 1926, and there were -- of course, every gallery that existed advertised in this magazine -- Frank Rehn, Scott, Montross, Daniel. This is nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The Daniel Gallery was the important gallery of modern American Art. Frank Rehn had Hopper, Crow, Luks, McFee and Speicher. Montross had Charles Marian, Monks, Chase, and Charles Hopkinson. Stieglitz didn't advertise, but there were only five galleries at that time showing modern American art, and that included Kraushaar, which had mostly sort of very conservative French and a few American artists. American modern art was really an unknown quantity, except for Stieglitz and Daniel. Here Thomas Benton wrote an article on the mechanics of form organization in painting.

DR. PHILLIPS: Stuart Davis growled at Benton for attacking modern art. Didn't Benton arrive at his hometown the other day and make some snide remark about modern American art?

MS. HALPERT: I didn't read that.

DR. PHILLIPS: It was comparable to what Eisenhower said.

MS. HALPERT: Well, then we go to the other extreme. Everything that is so called "new" is great, and we've gone to the complete extreme now, but we are reverting any minute. The current show at the Modern Museum, in spite of the fact that they danced the twist at the opening, has figures and real naked girls. You could see human beings in all the pictures, and there's going to be a complete change. There is already. They announced this show two years ago, so there is a revolution again. I'm afraid that we're going to the opposite extreme, but when you realize that this is what was happening in 1926. It was a very, very rough period, and maybe a little of that crazy sensationalism that occurred did a lot to help the situation. I don't remember it going into any of the national papers. You say it did.

DR. PHILLIPS: I was thinking of the slick trade magazines which largely ignored the gallery. There's only an occasional paragraph here and there about the opening of "Our Gallery," something about the sentimentality in the title, and the like, then a paragraph about the change of title to the Downtown Gallery, but -- you know, just a passing paragraph in an extended story dealing with new openings, but nothing ever singled out for extended comment.

MS. HALPERT: The newspapers -- we really had a terrific break in the newspapers all along. For that one show in 1927, of the American landscapes, we had almost a full page in the *New York Times*, and we had an awful lot of rotogravures. Who had them -- the *Tribune*? The *Post*?

DR. PHILIPS: I believe the *Times* had them, too.

MS. HALPERT: Well, it's curious, but at a time when there were very few galleries in America and a very small percentage of the museums we have today, we had seven papers functioning in New York -- you know, with a

whole rotogravure section turned over to art. Now we have two papers, and the *New York Times* is mostly ads with a little bit of an essay by our great genius on the *New York Times*. The *Tribune* devotes more space than it has in recent years, but it's only half the space that it devoted in the twenties and thirties. And then you had the *World,* the *Telegram*, the *Sun*, the *Post* rotogravure, and there was a morning paper, a racing paper.

DR. PHILLIPS: *The Morning Telegraph*.

MS. HALPERT: That's right. All those papers had art pages, and today we have two. The *Post* has a little bit -- the *Evening Post* has a little bit. It's really shocking except that the national magazines have taken over to a degree. You have *Time* magazine, *Life*, which has stopped on art completely, and once in a rare while there's a story in *Look*. Now *Show* has an occasional notice of an art exhibition, but actually when you think of magazines like *Vanity Fair* -- it did a fabulous job in relation to art.

Frank Crowninshield had a great deal to do with the promotion of modern art because he got a rake off, but that doesn't make any different. He didn't really. He used to get a painting by each artist who was run in the magazine. That's the French method, so that was perfectly legitimate, but that devoted a great deal of space. The first folk art show I had, he had color reproductions in *Vanity Fair.* Actually, our coverage today is a small percentage of what we had in the twenties and thirties in lineage in spite of the fact that the interest has grown to extraordinary proportions.

I mentioned in the lecture I gave at Hartford a couple of weeks ago that we've run full circle from folk art to 1960, and in the dark I could see a number of raised eyebrows, but it was true. Then I pointed out the fact that folk art was art for the masses and not the classes, which always irritates the rich collectors beyond words! Every time I use that expression – [Edgar] Garbisch gets absolutely violent! He always calls me a communist, but it's true because art was used by everybody.

There were no radios, and they had to get their weather reports from a weather vane. There were no bureaus of vital statistics, so they had to get their information from a birth certificate, or a mourning picture. If they wanted to look up the date when anybody was born or died, they either looked at the Bible, or the more creative people in the family would have paintings and so on. There were no photographs, so they had portraits painted, and this goes on right through the line- all the historical events had to be reported that way by artists. Even as late as the Civil War, artists were sent off to report the events.

Folk art was used in public buildings. It was used in schoolhouses -- you know, you had the feather indicating the weather vane and so on. It was used as trade signs, and they were all works of art people couldn't read. They were illiterate, so you had to have images in every field, and we've come back to this same thing in 1960.

You have art used for advertising, in every phase of advertising, including pamphlets sent out by CBS, and so on. Some of the best things that Ben Shahn did were done for Bill Golden of CBS, and most of our advertising is being done by artists -- Christmas cards by artists. Then every shopping center, most big shopping centers, airports, banks -- you have art everywhere. We've gone back to the American folk art period, whether anybody likes it or not. It's true.

If something happens today which is carrying folk art -- the man I mentioned to you today who was visiting here is doing something that is really the final touch on how art is being used by the masses. The classes collect for investment, but the masses are enjoying living works of art, which is really a very important thing. It's been a hundred years since the end of folk art, and we've entered exactly the same kind of era.

DR. PHILLIPS: When you first started, you indicated that the vast percentage of people who came in to buy art were women. Has that changed, too?

MS. HALPERT: And how!

DR. PHILLIPS: I told you, you were a great one for punctuation.

MS. HALPERT: I'm going to get a drink of water. Do you want some water? You can butter it up. There's some liquor there. Well, I created a stir at the Modern Museum. This was about five years ago, or six years ago. They had a symposium, and at every symposium, I'm always picked as the dealer. Who else? I mean, they're stuck. Alfred Barr represented the museum. I think it was George Morris who represented the artist, and I forget who the critic was as I usually do. I was the dealer.

It came my turn, and this symposium was about what happened in the past and what's happening today, and of course, I referred to my deep past in 1926. Then all dealers were males, with one exception, and then later there were two. Mrs. Harriman followed me by about five years, or something. Just before me there was one really quite wonderful woman, and I can't remember her name now. I'll think of it -- Marie Sterner. She worked for Knoedler, and she was responsible -- no one has ever given her the credit -- for the Adolph Lewisohn

collection actually. She handpicked it. None of these people picked their own collections. We always gave them credit, but -- you know, they did pick it. You showed the one picture, and they said, "I'll take it."

Sometimes you were very generous and gave them a choice of two, but in any event, they did select the thing when it was offered to them. Marie Sterner made up the Lewisohn collection, and later on she opened her own gallery for a short period. She was my predecessor, and then I remained the only female for a long time, until Mary Harriman saved up enough money to open her gallery on 57th Street, with the help of Walt Kuhn.

You know, these people really had a ball. Walt Kuhn picked the artists, arranged the shows, and so on, and Mary Harriman ran the gallery because she paid for it, but that happened with most rich people. Somebody else did the preliminary work, and they made the final selection.

I referred in this symposium to the period in 1926, when ninety-nine percent of the dealers were males and one percent were females, and the collectors were almost the same ratio in reverse. You had the largest percentage of collectors represented by the female population, and a very small percentage by the men. I said, "All that has changed. The picture has been completely reversed. Today most of the dealers are females in New York" -- actually, a very large percentage -- "and the buyers are very largely males," and suddenly I felt this dead silence. I heard a titter and came to, and then I said, "Just a moment. All I can tell you, ladies and gentlemen, is that you're completely wrong. There ain't no sex in this."

Then I explained what had happened, and that actually started with the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Didn't I tell you this before? Our whole cultural world was controlled by women up to almost the Second World War, though tapering off before. There were author's clubs run exclusively by women who paid a writer to give a talk and so on. That went on all over the country, and that really helped to support a great many of our writers. The ballet was supported entirely by females. Occasionally you saw a slightly mixed gender at -- not slightly, but in any event, at a ballet performance. Some poor husband was dragged along by his wife. The opera, the Philharmonic -- all the concert music, everything, was supported by women, all the culture, and certainly all the collectors of the early period -- you know, starting with Mrs. Harriman in this country.

She didn't buy in this country, but she was one of the great collectors of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Most of the collectors -- you know, the more daring, certainly the more daring with more contemporary art were women. No question about it, and this went on, and it was accepted.

My own experience -- you know, when I said that there was no sex in art, I can guarantee it because most of the collectors I had in the early days were women, and that was true in anything contemporary. With the old masters, you had [Joseph] Duveen and with many variations on the theme going all the way down to Scott, but this was art for investment at that time. Those people were buying art for status -- you know, the coal miner's son had to have very elegant ancestors, and they bought all the English portraits. Most of the English portraits are in America. I think we got mostly female ancestors because they were better looking than the men, but in any event, the buying that was done by men was largely ancestral, or status, culture, and that goes for Carnegie and that whole group. It goes for Frick, whose table silver was picked by Duveen. He said, "You can't have that kind of silver at the table. I'll get you some correct silver for eight hundred thousand dollars," or something, "and I'll guarantee to buy it back plus ten percent."

I knew all these people. I knew the old man, the Lord, Lord Duveen, who gave me a few lessons, too, like all the other dealers did. Well, the change started during the WPA, when for the first time in our history since the folk art period, art was brought to all the smaller communities. There were fifty-two hundred artists on the WPA project. They weren't all easel painters or sculptors. There were a great many teachers, photographers, designers, and so on, but they were involved in the arts as we have the theater, which also was popularized during the WPA days.

The guide books written by writers are still among the most important things we have historically today, but in any event, something had to be done with these pictures when they arrived in Washington and the WPA storeroom. Something had to be done because Mr. Hearst kept talking about boondoggling, and something had to be proved, so I got involved, naturally, in that. I stopped off for a day and I stayed four months in Washington on a per diem arrangement. I stayed in Hopkins' apartment. He wasn't there. I subleased his apartment, and I spent much more than I got, organizing the allocation and exhibition program.

The exhibitions were sent to places like Winston Salem, where they had never seen a hand-painted picture of any period. There was a guy by the name of Danny Diefenbacker who was a sort of salesman for exhibitions, and he was such a smart cookie that he got the president of the bank in Winston-Salem to give space for an exhibition, and this president was a Republican. He was a brilliant salesman! Danny Diefenbacker was a fantastic salesman, and I organized these shows.

I planned the groups that went out all over the country, and they went to places where contemporary art had never been seen, and since they belonged to the people, and there were very good people running these things

locally, the public came to see it, and they were astonished that this big bum, the Jones boy, was a painter and had a picture in the show. It came very close to home, and that meant that art was seen by millions and millions of people in the United States. It did get some publicity, usually unfavorable, because Hearst made a real project out of killing everything that Roosevelt did -- naturally, and so did other papers, but there was a good deal of very, very favorable publicity also. People got very excited about the idea, and the fact that so many males in America were painting and were being shown took the curse off to some degree.

Later on when the war broke out, the Modern Museum -- I recall that auction they had- it was fantastic! They had all the rich collectors contribute a painting for auction, and that money was being used to buy art materials to be sent to Army camps all over the United States and abroad, so that whatever people needed therapy and those who had been artists could paint. There were murals painted in the mess halls all over the country.

This goes back to another project I was on at Mitchell Field -- it started there, but in any event, it continued. The ballet, which was supposed to be sissy as hell, was sent to army camps, the theater, music and so on, and gradually it became masculine entertainment, and that's when the change took place.

Then after the war, I had a little bit to do with that too, when I went to Washington and got them to approve the use of art for advertising as a tax deduction and Christmas cards as tax deductions -- that's a long story and a very funny one for future reference, but business began to use art in its various manifestations, and when it became a tax gimmick, then the big shots, the business man began taking it seriously. It was real! It was something that had a value. If you could deduct it as a business expense, or as a tax gift, it had validity. It was masculine as hell at that point! And that was really the turning point.

It all started with the WPA, and it all started, you know, I said that in Topeka, Kansas, in a lecture -- it all started with Franklin Roosevelt. That was the wrong place to say that at a time when -- the sunflower boy was running from that home town. Who was that?

DR. PHILLIPS: Landon.

MS. HALPERT: I was in Landon's hometown for a lecture when I pulled that, and boy, was that effective! I finally asked what was wrong, and somebody said, "This is Landon's home town."

I said, "Excuse it, please."

However, it is true that the Roosevelt administration was responsible for the change in direction. Today, ninety percent of the buying -- and I'd say this without exaggeration -- is in the hands of the male population, and I still stick to my story that most of the dealers are females, and again I continue and repeat, it has nothing to do with sex. It's just a matter of aptitude -- shall I say, or whatever.

DR. PHILLIPS: It is of interest, however, that a combination of things, the less space available by way of publicity in the press. . .

MS. HALPERT: We really have the least coverage of exhibitions when you consider that instead of six galleries showing American art today in New York, you have three hundred. There are four hundred and ten galleries, but three hundred of them show contemporary American art, and we have one-fifth the coverage we had when there were six, and that's fantastic! But it doesn't affect the buying at all until this art for investment started just a few years ago with the switch into the European merchandise pattern -- using art as merchandise.

Before you had people who bought art only because they had a rapport with it. I hate using the dirty four letter word, but, I mean, there really was L-O-V-E which played a tremendous part in the art buying, and there's never been anything like it in any part of the world, or any time in history -- the number of works of art that are being bought per capita in this country, and I'm talking about contemporary art. This has never, never been equaled in any period and in any place, and it's only in the last few years when it has switched from the noble reason for buying to a very ignoble one.

Now that a new show has opened in the Modern Museum recently, it's going to change the picture, I hope, and this thing that happened today that I can't talk about, which has to do with our friend, Vincent Price, is a symbol of the great dream I've had -- I had nothing to do with it -- but I've never been so happy as I was yesterday and today, and it might shift the scene back to where it was just a few years ago -- maybe five, eight years ago.

Then this article that appeared in *Fortune* magazine -- I think it's November 1960 -- I have it here. I promised ten people I'd look it up. It is devoted entirely to statistics which I adore. They proved, I think, more than anything else since there was no comment whatsoever -- it as just statistics, facts, and actual facts because they do a very good check up job. That had to do with the number of paperbacks bought in America. Have you seen that article?

DR. PHILLIPS: It's tremendous.

MS. HALPERT: Isn't that fantastic! Well, there it is. If that doesn't prove completely that no country in the whole world has ever had that ratio of culture, and this takes in every field -- you know, when you read the number of professional orchestras that there are in America -- that's probably the most expensive setup in there is -- it's astonishing! The number of records that are bought, the number of books, the number of museums and the attendance -- you know, we've broken that baseball record years ago. The greatest national pastime is art, it's no longer baseball -- you know, that we should tell the Russians, but nobody ever does anything about it.

I've mentioned this *Fortune* article a hundred times, and nobody has ever seen it. The business people who subscribe to *Fortune* I'm sure, haven't read it because whenever I mention it to anybody, it's news, and it's shocking because it is important. Now that art has become a man's world, it seems to me that some men will get up and boast about it, and no one has. You know, when I mentioned that at the museum a few years ago, I say that there was a big titter in the audience. They thought it was funny as hell, but it's true. Something should be done about it -- you know, being a dealer, I can't write anything. I'm illiterate. This morning I spent a good time talking to somebody who is going to write this article in his name -- not this, but it has to do with various important factors that have developed, but it is, I think, a terribly interesting factor.

I keep reading that the women have most of the money in America. Maybe the men are going cultural in self-defense, but there is a reason beyond the reason that I give which has to do with simple outer facts -- you know, taking it out of the sissy class, and it's become really masculine because the buying is not done by the sissies. They may make dresses with zippers that no normal woman can zip up without breaking her arms -- they're getting even on us. I mean, all the dress closings are really dangerous for women. They're getting even on us, but there is -- a very important sociological change which no one has done anything about.

No one has ever really made a study of it. Don't you think it would be important to go into the actual facts? I mean, I can give them the superficial facts -- all right, so we have WPA, and we had a war and we had tax deductions, but there must be more than that, and women had most of the money, but I think that even that combination isn't the complete story, so who's going to do it.

DR. PHILLIPS: That is a very interesting state of affairs, particularly when you started off on 13th Street, having received all the tired, worn out advice that you had to discard, or that you did discard.

MS. HALPERT: It wasn't worn out. It's become very alive in this country today. That's what has disturbed me so. All the things that [Ambroise] Vollard told me on how to peddle art -- it was wonderful. It was really absolutely wonderful, and I remember every word he said to me. My French wasn't very good, but I understood everything he said: "Never own more than fifty percent and never invest a nickel."

It was the most beautiful hunk of advice, and it started with the Gaugin business. It all started with the Gaugin story -- how he bought the Gaugins, and how he sold fifty percent for the full investment, and he sat on his fifty percent until he sold it to ten dealers to distribute, so that ten dealers would have money invested and would knock themselves out to put this guy on the map. Vollard waited until they put him on the map to a degree where he was so expensive that his fifty percent was worth about five thousand percent, and that is the philosophy of merchandising which I haven't followed. It was too easy.

It certainly was not good for the artist. It was the worst possible method for the artist, including someone like Pascin. I saw contracts. It was the most -- but the French artists were happy about it. The American artists won't take it. In that way the dealer remains the villain and the artist is the poor little helpless soul the dealer takes advantage of. Yeah! I'm still waiting after thirty-six years for the time I can take advantage of an artist. In my experience there are only two artists who have been honorable, two artists who haven't taken advantage of me, who haven't tried, and as I said previously, they were Stuart Davis and Charles Sheeler.

DR. PHILLIPS: They have a fantastic press to put out that idea -- you know, that they are sheep being led to the slaughter.

MS. HALPERT: It's a tradition. It started way, way back with the church, with a noble where the artist really was a performer. He was the court clown in a way, and he was taken advantage of. On the other hand, he had an opportunity in many instances -- not all; he was corrected many times, and history shows it of stating what he wanted to state whether he did it on the ceiling of the Vatican, or whether he did it as a portrait of a queen, or a dwarf, or whatever. He still had that opportunity and made his livelihood that way, but he was always serving somebody.

In the European method the artist has to produce so many pictures. He signs a contract, and he's over twenty-one -- until recently. I just recently got a catalogue of a kid of twelve who has had a one-man show, and another one of eight. In the same mail I got an eight and a kid of twelve, but actually all the artists are over twenty-one, and when they sign a contract, they're pretty well informed. Most of them have good lawyers.

They sign a contract to produce so many pictures per month of such and such a subject. They know exactly what they're signing.

That's the European method, and in this country where they're completely free, they consign their works of art. They have no expense involved. The dealer took all the risk. He paid the overhead. He paid the advertising. He paid the printing. This is not today. I'm talking of my era, and every artist felt that he was being taken for a ride, and I still say that every book that has ever been written, whether it's *Lust for Life* -- God help us! -- or any play, the artist is the one who had all the sympathy, and the patron was always wrong. Whether it was *One Touch of Venus*, which was a very bad play, or all the way back, you still have that story. People still believe it, and it's the most untrue thing that has ever been.

I'm still waiting for the day when I can take advantage of an artist. Like the other day when I wrote a letter. I went to an auction. I heard that there was an auction to be held at the Berkeley Express. They were going out of business. They announced this in the papers, that all the paintings, sculpture that they had which had been in storage and had not been paid for for a period of three years was going to be auctioned off, and they stated that the artist had been advised by registered mail legally. You have to advise everybody by registered mail three times, so I went to that auction, and I was shocked. I went to see Berkeley. That isn't his name, and I said, "How could you do this thing? This is an outrage!"

He said, "I'm going out of business because I'm unable to collect all these bills."

He showed me the actual letters -- you know, the receipts and so on, "You owe eighty dollars for three years. Will you please pay it, or we will have to auction it."

Well, the auction was being held, and I was there, and I saw a big piece of sculpture going for a dollar. I couldn't bear it. I went inside, and I said, "I'll pay storage bills. If I pay them now, I have to take the pictures," so I picked the few artists who I thought really shouldn't be caught in this, and I bought these things. I have had them all this time. This happened -- oh, about eight months ago, and every once in a while I was tempted to put one in a show. I thought, "God help me! If I put one in, and I paid fifty dollars apiece for these pictures and I sell one for seventy-five dollars, there will be the greatest stink in the art world!"

I had them, and I kept thinking about them. The other day I was cleaning up a lot of stuff, and I wrote a letter to one artist. I said, "I've bought fourteen of your pictures for the bill. If you would like to repurchase them for that price, you're welcome to do it, but I do want to dispose of these, and I'm giving you this chance for what I paid. I don't want anything."

I wanted to put one in the Christmas Show, and I didn't dare. It's my property. I wrote a pretty stiff letter about it. "Please let me know what you're going to do about it."

He called me up. He said, "Why didn't you let me know you were buying these?"

I said, "I didn't know until I bought them that I was buying them. I was right there, and they were being sold upstairs at auction, and they would have gone for a buck, or five bucks apiece at the most."

This auction wasn't advertised in the art magazines. I didn't see it. Somebody told me. It was some back page -- the auction thing. Somebody told me about it, and I dashed down there that morning. I said, "All right, buddy, let's not argue about it. You come in and you give me a check for that amount, and you can take the pictures. If you write anything to the newspapers, this will give me the first opportunity I've ever had to really give the lowdown on artists."

This was all playful. So we made a date for the next week. I'll see what's going to happen. Instead of being grateful to me, this guy is going to hate me. I know it. I had to do it. I couldn't see the things sacrificed. I don't want the damn pictures! On the other hand, I could sell them for fifty bucks apiece. I probably paid forty, but if I did, I know what is going to happen. I saw receipts. He got three letters telling him to pay the storage charges, or else -- legitimate for credit.

That myth will never die! Unless I cure it by writing the truth, and I'm going to, if it isn't going to be opened for twenty years, I'm going to have the complete report of this thing. And I really think that there should be a record for future history, if anybody survives, and I think it will be very important for sociologists. The Archives will have all that. There's enough material without any annotations on my part -- just the letters will do the trick -- even Stuart, whom I admire so.

In a depression, people are wiped out, and they're jumping out of windows and so on, so whom does the artist blame for not selling -- the dealer. He writes me telling me that I'm the greatest liar and stinker. I still admire him because -- he says, you either beat your wife, or you bawl out your dealer. He's the only one who made a fact of it, but it's going to take a hell of a long time to wipe out that myth, if ever.

DR. PHILLIPS: Of course, you know, the view I would have would be relevant to what I've come to feel about him. I don't know of anyone in our own society who is as anachronistic as he is. He's an individual right in the midst of the most interdependent society, and the only tie he has with that society is his dealer.

MS. HALPERT: Excuse me, I'm going to get some more ice.

DR. PHILLIPS: You once used the word "self-indulgent."

MS. HALPERT: I use it all the time.

DR. PHILLIPS: Artists are self-indulgent. They weren't the ones who went to a nine o'clock job. They didn't punch a time clock. They didn't have to be at a given spot, attend meetings -- theirs was a wholly different kettle of fish.

MS. HALPERT: Yes. Well, you know, I think I told you about these bankers who would say, "Why the hell should I worry about the artist! He's doing exactly what he wants to do. Do you think I want to be at the office at nine o'clock? Do you think I want to sit and talk to that schmo for two hours? Do you think I want to" -- and I'm now speaking for myself -- "sit and talk to some of the schmoes I have to talk to?"

The artist is doing the one thing he wants to do, and how many people in the whole world are there in any field of endeavor who can indulge themselves, get up any hour that they want to, go to any part of the world they want to. If they want to go to Greece today, they can get a fellowship. There are forty eight fellowships that go around begging for young artists who have painted five pictures in their lives. This is relatively recent, but just the same, Gaugin wanted to go to the South Sea Island, so he contracted a lot of diseases. Nobody gave them to him. He had fun getting them -- presumably.

DR. PHILLIPS: Let's hope so! God!

MS. HALPERT: All right.

DR. PHILLIPS: Davis even confesses to having two left feet, or being out of step, though I think in a different way he has a deeper sense of what this complex society is all about than the banker.

MS. HALPERT: In his art he does.

DR. PHILLIPS: Here's a man who is in a society and is halfway out of it at the same time, and one contact he has within the society is his dealer.

MS. HALPERT: Not necessarily. I think he's pretty aware.

DR. PHILLIPS: But no interest in it.

MS. HALPERT: Not at all.

DR. PHILLIPS: He doesn't give a damn!

MS.HALPERT: The snobbism among artists is something that fascinates me. You know, if I say that this picture was bought by little Irvin Brown in Brooklyn, there's a reaction. If I don't see their faces, I can sense the artist's reaction.

DR. PHILLIPS: Who?!

MS. HALPERT: Yes, who? Who is he? I say, "He's somebody who loves works of art. He stays home, and he and his wife both go to work, and he doesn't take vacations. They just sit at home and love their pictures."

"Yeah?"

Then, if I say, Mrs. Bliss Parkinson bought your picture.

"Oh, she did, did she!"

Even a museum doesn't impress them as much. You take a guy like Sheeler. When I told him the first time Mrs. Rockefeller bought one of his pictures, it was the biggest thing in his whole life, and then when he met Edsel Ford, when Edsel sent a car for us -- I didn't realize that they didn't admit any car on their grounds because they were afraid of bombs, kidnappers, so he sent a car for his self-protection, not for ours, believe me -- well, Charles Sheeler just went to pieces. He said, "Ford sent his car?"

I said, "He always sends his car."

I didn't want to tell him why. You don't disillusion an artist. Ford was just afraid. Even his cousin, Bob Tannahill, couldn't take his car. He didn't drive. He had a chauffeur, and he had to change cars. That wasn't a courtesy. It was fear. Well, I knew it, and I loved it. All these things would amuse the hell out of me because it gave me a great sense of superiority. I felt that I could live my way. I didn't have to worry. These poor bastards were always caught that way! They had to do a great many things for their protection and so on. Well, when the Fords invited us for dinner -- I had been there before -- it was a pretty good dinner. I've had a better dinner in a nice kosher home, believe me.

DR. PHILLIPS: They don't work hard at it, do they.

MS. HALPERT: No, they don't stand over a hot stove, but it was a nice dinner. They were lovely people, and I enjoyed them very much, and Edsel really was a very special guy, but Sheeler would have given the picture for half price. Do you know who gets the bargains in America? -- the rich. People are so hysterical, artists are so hysterical about selling a picture to those people that they will take a cut for cut rate every time, and that has always shocked me.

DR. PHILLIPS: Incredible.

MS. HALPERT: But they have.

DR. PHILLIPS: Particularly in the light of the thesis which obtains quite apart from you -- you know, in plays, novels, and so on, that these are the great victims of our technical, complicated society.

MS. HALPERT: I'm really sorry for us! -- no, I'm not. I've had a good time.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's a great title.

MS. HALPERT: That's another good one. That's the third one. My favorite one was at the time I told two publishers that I wouldn't write a book, or I wouldn't have anybody write a book, and they said, "Why?"

"Because I don't want to kill Santa Clause."

But I am sorry for us dealers in a way because we've been so unfairly maligned, and we're nice people. We were -- this previous generation were nice people.

DR. PHILLIPS: Something must happen to a man at the time when he begins to sell as distinct from not having sold before. He lives on the edge, and this is quite real, and the interesting thing is that all the other paraphernalia -- furniture and the like doesn't mean a damn to him. He never saw it before, and he didn't care about it. He's doing what he likes to do -- wandering the streets at night, tumbling into speakeasy after speakeasy, having himself the kind of time he enjoys, meeting people he knows.

MS. HALPERT: And walking out on people he doesn't like.

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes. There is no compulsion in a society sense. The odd ones, in effect, are the free ones, really.

MS. HALPERT: It's very curious, and I've talked to them about it.

DR. PHILLIPS: Have you?

MS. HALPERT: Oh God, yes, we have. For years and years and years, as long as I had the so-called roster -- they call it stable; I call it roster -- I had a meeting every year. In September, late September, we had a meeting of the artists, a very serious meeting with minutes. I have all the minutes. I had a secretary who took down the minutes, no comments, just minutes. Then after the meeting we'd go upstairs, and we'd have a big fancy supper party -- you know, liquor, food, and so on -- became social, but this was a real business meeting I had introduced, and it was a very important factor in our functioning. We'd make plans, and occasionally somebody would make a suggestion that was good for him and so on, and there were funny things -- like Kuniyoshi. I'd say, "Any gripes, boys?"

First I'd say, "Statistically speaking," and everybody would get up to walk out. They couldn't bear my statistics. Then I'd say, "Relax, I was just kidding. Sit down," and we'd talk about plans. I'd tell them what was happening, and I'd read stuff to them. Sam Kootz, I think, sent out this manifesto, and I said, "This isn't funny, boys. This is going to be taken up by the *Art News* and the *Arts*, so prepare for it. I don't want you to do anything about it. I just want you to be conscious of the fact that you're going to be old hat within a year, and you'll have to take it boys. Don't get mad! But I'm warning you."

Well, it happened. I've forgotten what that direction was called, but it was a big movement. This is the abstract expressionists. It was called fourteen other things -- non-objective, intro-something -- I've forgotten the names,

so we would discuss it and then I'd talk about the shows I was planning and so on, and this was a very business-like meeting, and then I'd say, "Any gripes?"

And Kuniyoshi would always get up and say, "Let's have more parties."

That was his gripe. He just wanted more parties. I thought this was a good time to hash over any problems. I never directed them. The only time was when we were beginning to get larger and larger pictures, and there was a war on. In the post-war period, people weren't buying a great deal, so I said, "Statistically speaking" -- and you know, they'd look like they were ready to leave -- "I'm going to give you a little report on what's happening in the world today. You don't know anything. You're in an ivory tower.

The Parke-Bernet is a great index of what's happening, and I'll read a list of auctions that have been held the past year. These are the big mansions that are being sold out. There's a servant problem. There's a money problem, and so they are moving into apartments, hotel apartments, and so on. All the mansions and all the salon pictures, everything big is being sold. People are moving into apartments with small walls."

I thought I was subtle as hell -- you know, "Stop painting great big pictures, boys."

This was actually just before the biggest pictures in the world were being painted, and I'm hinting that -- you know, big pictures haven't any space anymore, and I thought I was subtle. I read all this thing -- right out of the Parke-Bernet catalogue as they set there. Then I changed the subject, and I talked about the little guy who buys art and loves it. Nothing bores the artist more, and of course, to me that's the only important thing, the only reason for my being. I wouldn't be in this business one more minute if there weren't little guys, or little girls, or whatever, who come in clutching fifty bucks in a hot little fist! These are the people I'm interested in. The artists don't like it. Well, we had a very pleasant meeting, and Yas insisted that we should have more parties, and the news came upstairs -- wives, girl friends, and we were having a ball.

The pictures began to arrive for our annual opening exhibition which is new works of art by all the artists and Ben Shahn, who had never painted a picture over such and such a size -- he always painted small pictures; he never painted large pictures -- sent in the biggest picture he had ever painted in his life. There was number one.

The second one came in from Jack Levine, and it was the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. Well, I've forgotten the title. I looked at the picture, and there was a seam in it. He added one foot of canvas, sewed on a foot of canvas just to make the picture larger, and I'm not kidding! The picture is owned by the Whitney Museum, and it has a seam in it. He added a foot. I won't go into all the details, but this went on and on, and everything got bigger after my talking very subtly about big pictures -- I didn't think they understood me, but they did, and as these pictures arrived, I began to scream with laughter -- you know, it was so funny, I thought, "How subtle can you get, you idiot!"

DR. PHILLIPS: You know, I thought "Next time I'll take a piece of chalk and give it to them one, two, three."

MS. HALPERT: I really thought it was very funny. Of course, anything like that sells pictures twice as well. If I can tell a good anecdote in the gallery, it's an immediate sale -- you know, I make an awful lot of sales by telling a funny story -- not a dirty one, but something this. You dictate to artists! I remember going to bed after the third big picture arrived, and thinking, "You know, this is really wonderful. I take my hat off to the boys. They sure indulge themselves."

This is another sample of self-indulgence. They aren't going to let anybody tell them. The French artists will paint fifteen pictures of exactly the same subject -- it's in the contract -- you know, number twelve is so and so figure; and number three is so and so still life. They have an entirely different approach.

When they asked Degas, "How do you feel about the picture you sold for five hundred fetching eight thousand?" He said, "I feel like a horse who won the race and they threw the wreath around the jockey's neck."

It's the same thing. They have a different philosophy. American artists just won't take that. The American artist is the dictator, and there's no getting away from it, even he imitates the best seller, it's his -- you know, who made that remarks which I read in some book latterly? -- well, anyhow, the artist is the only protestant, his whole philosophy is one of the protesting, and because we have mass production, the American painter produces very little but protest.

[END OF 3 OF 7 REEL B1r]

DR. PHILLIPS: This would seem to put a premium -- since they are such a cussed crew -- on misleading them factually, saying that the walls are getting smaller so we need larger pictures.

MS. HALPERT: Well, look, it goes back. This is also a characteristic! You know, in the Paris salons that they held, the only way could get a central spot in the exhibition was by having the biggest picture because they hung the pictures symmetrically. For that reason you had to put the big picture in the middle, and then you taper it off, so in the next salon there were forty big pictures, and in the following one there were all big pictures and then the whole thing died.

What happens in this country -- suddenly a big picture was bought by Blanchette Rockefeller. Well, she has three houses -- I mean "homes." Excuse me. She has a lot of space. The next person who bought a big picture was Gertrude Mellon who has a duplex, huge rooms and so on, and since artists are snobs and they want to get into the collections of Marymount who has not only a huge house out on the South side of Chicago in the fashionable suburbs --I've been there, but I can't remember its name -- but also three huge business buildings with enormous walls, so they weren't panting for my little Irving Brown.

Everybody began to paint big pictures. Well, the time has now come when there are just so many millionaires, so many people with duplexes, and so many banks. The Chase Manhattan depositors are beginning to complain about all the money going into these funny pictures. The officers who sit in the offices can't bear these pictures, so they're buying folk art. I sold a lot of folk art to them, and it won't be long before there will be a deluge of these huge pictures at auction. Who's going to buy them? So the artists will start painting small pictures again, like post-salon. Well, it's fun watching these things, but this all has to do not only with self-indulgence in the way of living, but self-interest in the way of selling.

DR. PHILLIPS: You mean, if they can hear anything from this complex society it's the way the cash register sings.

MS.HALPERT: That tinkle is the prettiest little tinkle in an artist's ears -- you know, even Stuart calls up and says, "Is that all I sold?!"

I didn't tell him I sold another one, but good God! He only sold thirty thousand bucks out of a small group of pictures for sale, and I'm withholding some I tried not to sell because I don't want to bother him and press him for a picture. He'll say, "Stop pushing me around!"
He uses a wonderful expression -- something along those lines, but it's much more concise. This amuses me. I still have a great feeling about the artist, but somebody sends me a box of candy. I don't even know when a holiday is, and suddenly I get a box of Barricini candy. Everybody knows I loathe chocolates, and I get a big box of Barricini candy. I thought, "I'll give it to the maid."

Then I thought, "That's not nice. They meant well. It's for Passover."

This was a couple of years ago, and I didn't know it was Passover until I opened the wrappings and found that it was Passover. I opened it up, and what do I find in it, but a huge reproduction of a drawing by Ben Shahn made especially for Barricini. It was a drawing of Moses who led the Jews out of -- you know, Passover was based on that.

DR. PHILLIPS: It's a great story, and if he'd taken a left hand turn you'd be on the Riviera.

MS. HALPERT: Oh, boy! What would have happened to us!

DR. PHILLIPS: I imagine it would have changed the whole history of the world.

MS. HALPERT: We'd be selling salami sandwiches. Well, you see a thing like that shocked me so. Even if I had liked candy, I would have choked, so I took the goddamn thing out, tore it up, and gave the box of candy to the maid. It was sent to me deliberately by someone who knew that it would burn me up. I didn't know he did it. That kind of thing, I think, is about as low as you can get.

If I did something equivalent to that in ethics, it would be in every damn newspaper in America, but an artist has a license -- his excuse for it. I brought it up a few months later when he brought me the drawing to sell. I mentioned it to him, and he said, "You love the little man, don't you? This -- is art for the people." Unfortunately I don't use four letter words. I can't -- something must have happened in my childhood -- except "love" in lecturing, but you can't win. They can't lose.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's an incredible story!

MS. HALPERT: He does that all the time.

DR. PHILLIPS: There was one story you told me last time relevant to this which I wish you'd put down now, and that's a talk you had with John Marin about how an artist ought to take an inventory of his past work from time to time, and the subsequent events.

MS. HALPERT: This is -- let's see, Stieglitz died in 1944. This was 1945. Since Marin and O'Keeffe never had anybody else handling their work, I handled it through Stieglitz. I had a one man show of Marin, and a one man show of O'Keeffe, but it was through Stieglitz. He was the only -- well, I don't dare call him a dealer. That's another story. I've got to clear up that story sometime. He wasn't a dealer, but he used to take twenty-five percent for the rent fund. Well, in any event, he was a great man. I'll forgive him everything, except one or two things.

He willed the artists to me. He told me that. He told the artists. He wrote that when he died, I was to take over. They were to move to the Downtown Gallery. Well, about a week after he died, Bill Dove, Arthur Dove's son called up -- Dove was still alive -- but his son phoned me, and he said, "You know, Stieglitz willed my father to you. Do you want him?"

I said, "Do I? Certainly."

I got Dove. I called up Marvin, and he said, "Well, talk to O'Keeffe."

I talked to O'Keeffe, and she said, "No we're going to keep this gallery going" -- The American Place. They kept it going, and it didn't go. They had a great many people who were advising them -- friends, and they had all sorts of arrangements, contracts, and so on, and finally, Wildenstein wanted to sign a contract with Marin. Knoedler wanted to sign a contract with O'Keeffe, offering them great sums of money, and that didn't go.

Then the American Place was still so-called "functioning," and I was waiting breathlessly because it was an agreement with Stieglitz. He really appointed me his heir -- not money-wise. Nobody ever game me a goddamn nickel! All the rich people I've know! All I got was a bed jacket, and I have it here from Mrs. Webb. Mrs. Rockefeller used to send me three pairs of gloves every year.

DR. PHILLIPS: The story of the delivery charge yesterday afternoon in your office was enough!

MS. HALPERT: Every year that was the Christmas gift, but it didn't rub off, but this -- I was really hurt because I was so enthusiastic about the artists' work, and also I was very flattered that Stieglitz appointed me as his successor. I worked with him all those years, so Marin came in here one day, and he said, "Well, all my friends decided that I should go to Rosenberg. I had to tell you this. After all, they are my advisors."

I said, "Do whatever you wish. I feel very badly about it, and incidentally did you ever hear the story of Rosenberg?"

This was Stieglitz's story of Rosenberg. This was a little snide, but it was a true story, so I said -- you know, he knew that Stieglitz had Hartley, and he had Weber from the beginning, and finally towards the end of Stieglitz's life, Hartley and Weber were with Rosenberg who, I found later, used them as puller-inners because American art got hot. If somebody looked at a Weber and looked on the verge of buying, they said, "Come on upstairs. I will show you the real thing," and they would sell them a Picasso, or a Brock, or something for a lot of money. They would sell these guys at very low prices. Hartley too, and Stieglitz was very bitter about these artists going with a dealer in French art. He was very bitter, so I came up, and he always had these wonderful, long, long stories.

I mentioned Weber, or something, and he said, "Let me tell you about myself. I lived in Germany, and I became really a very good pool player. That was my great, great joy, and I came back to America this very hot summer, and I was walking along Broadway," or off Broadway, a side street. There was no air conditioning in those days, of course. "I looked in, and I saw somebody playing pool." Backstage he could see it, or there was a slit, or something. "It was the end of the show, and I got in for nothing. It was Weber and Fields playing pool, as part of a show. I went every night to watch them. They were very funny. They really knew how to play pool, and they made a big gag out of it."

This was a long, long story. It went on from Germany with all the details. He talked about years and years, and I was there about five hours. I repeated this to Marin. He looked up, and I said -- I made it very brief -- "The end of the story was, well Rosenberg can have Weber and Hartley; I'll take Weber and Fields."

I almost died. It was so funny -- this long, long story, coming to this completely unrelated ending, and I told that to Marin. Well, he laughed. He had never heard that story which was unusual because Stieglitz would tell his stories over and over again to everybody. He had about ten really good numbers, and he'd repeat them. Marin laughed, so I said, "Before you go, let me tell you something. You don't belong in a French gallery. You are an American. I want you Marin."

He walked out. He came back the next day, and he said, "You know, he offered me a very big contract" -- so much a year, whatever it was. "What will you offer me?"

I said, "My complete devotion, my enthusiasm, and you pay thirty-three and a third percent."

He walked up and down the room, and he said, "Put it there, kid! That's so Yankee, I'll take it."

I said, "A Yankee from Odessa?"

And that just threw him. Well, we signed no contract. I have never had a written contract -- you know, if anybody -- well, I would never sue an artist, and an artist would sue me with or without a contract, but I certainly would never sue an artist. This has to be done as a matter of mutual faith, so I never signed a contract. "You want a contract?"

I said, "That's not Yankee! Get the hell out of here!"

It's too early for you to go to bed, kid. [Natalie]

He said, "Come up, and we'll start picking out pictures."

[END OF 3 OF 7 REEL B2r]

[BEGINNING OF 3 OF 7 REEL A1r]

MS. HALPERT: Well, it was in the summer, and I came up about two or three weeks later and there was Marin. I went up there to the American Place, and sitting in the middle of the front room was Marin, surrounded by a sea of paper, and the paper had color on it. Before I said, "Hello" to him, I picked up a hunk of paper, and it was a torn watercolor. All these scraps were torn watercolors, and I just wanted to die! It was most ghastly! I thought the old guy had gone completely nuts. I was so absolutely horrified. He was tearing paper, in the act of tearing paper, and I said, "Stop! What are you doing?!"

I screamed, and he stopped. He said, "Sit down."

There was no chair there, so I said, "Come inside and tell me what the hell is going on."

He said, "Many, many years ago this little girl was here, right in this little room. Stieglitz was lying on the cot, and she sat there very solemnly. She was Stieglitz's pet. He listened to her as if she talked real sense, and she said, "It's too bad about Picasso -- this great, great artist releasing everything he does!"

Stieglitz replied, "What do you mean by that?"

"Well, I don't believe any artist should just release any pictures as he paints them. He should take inventory. Every artist should put his pictures aside for a year and look at them, take inventory to make sure that he really achieved what he was seeking in that particular picture. He should destroy everything else.

"Stieglitz said to her, 'A year?'

"She said, 'Well, every year he should put some aside. He shouldn't destroy them right away. Five years.'"

Marin then continued, "This old man remembered that, and he got everything out of the warehouse, everything from everywhere, and he arranged them by year as this little girl suggested. She said, "Do it by years," and I looked at them. Every year I did some of the greatest work that anybody ever did and the worst. They're all more than five years old. I haven't torn up anything less than five years old. I've sat with these things for two weeks, and Jesus! Did I paint stinkers! There they are. Now I can bring the rest of them to the little girl."

I said, "Who?"

He said, "You. You're the little girl."

I said, "I didn't do it. Don't blame me for this!"

I really got very dramatic about it! Really, I was almost hysterical. You never saw anything like it. There must have been hundreds of pictures torn up on the floor. He said, "It was you -- my little Yankee girl."

I said, "When was this?"

He said, "Maybe twenty years ago -- fifteen years ago, but I remembered it when I began looking at the stuff. Don't you dare say another word to me."

I sat there practically -- well, if I were the crying kind, I would have burst into tears, and you know when I go through the stuff we have of his, when I go to the warehouse, there really ain't no stinkers. He used very good

judgment. But that experience! I don't know how I survived that day, and when he said, "It was you -- you're the little girl."

I said, "Good God, no!"

I must have done it.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's an incredible story!

MS. HALPERT: He was an incredible guy -- oh, what a wonderful guy! O'Keeffe does the same thing. She destroys her pictures right and left. She did the same thing when she moved, and then every once in a while, I think I woke up at least ten nights, different times, "Good God! What did I do!"

You know, it really frightened me.

DR. PHILLIPS: There's nothing like a critical eye going over your own work.

MS. HALPERT: I'm glad that at that time I changed from one year to five. At least I have the last period of stinkers. I rewarded him when he was moving here. I said, "Marin" -- this was after he had agreed to come -- "remember you talked about Rivera building a museum of his own pictures, that Picasso built a museum of his own pictures, how would you like to be the first living artist to have a room built for you?"

He said, "What do you mean?"

I said, "You know that hole we have next to the building, where now we have the prints? How would you like to have a Marin room? It's going to be awfully narrow. It's only seven feet. Okay?"

He nodded, and we had a Marin room. We changed it only very recently to a print room. We had a party for the opening, and that's the one time that I called the church and said that I was going to have a party, drinking on the first floor. The deal I made when I bought the building was that we wouldn't have any drinking on the first floor. I put a screen in front of the door, and we had the most beautiful champagne party for Marin with a room all to himself. We had the Marin Gallery, and it cost me fourteen thousand dollars to build that little room -- that hole in the wall. That made him awfully happy. That was not a promise. That was a bonus, but what a wonderful man he was. What a mind! I don't mean only as an artist, but he had a mind like a trap, and this graphic description. Of course he didn't come to the meetings -- neither did O'Keeffe.

When this non-objective stuff was going on one day, he was up here, just the two of us. He used to come late in the afternoon and chase me up the stairs, "Come on! It's time for a drink!" You know, he retained all his faculties to his dying day, and he never wore glasses, no hearing aid. He was eighty-three years old. He could really race me up the stairs. He had one cute little trick. He'd say, "Gal, I have a whole bunch of letters I got last week," and he'd pull them out, look at them and say, "Here's one I want you to read."

He'd hold it. He's day, "Just a minute," and he'd run around at get me my glasses and say, "Here Grandma."

He read the letter without glasses. He was really extra-ordinary, and every once in a while he got very excited, terribly excited about what was going on. "This goddamn non-objective business! These non-objective Johnnies!" and then with a gesture, not a word, he'd say, "How can they do this?" -- you know, he put both hands over his eyes -- "Shut out their visual images and their experience?" Boy! That said more than anything anybody has ever written.

What a memory he had! A week before he died I went out to see him. I was en route to visit him, and he had a stroke. There was no way for anybody to reach me and tell me not to come. I arrived, and there he was limp. I just wanted to die. I loved that old man. I looked at him, said hello, and he sort of gave me a wry smile. One side was completely paralyzed, and I said, "Marin, you've ruined" -- you know, you always say the most idiotic things under those circumstances -- "Maine for me. All the way up the minute I hit this part of the country, all nature disappeared. All I saw was one goddamn Marin after another. Nothing. You've killed all my personal vision."

He did because when you go to that part of Maine, it was all Marin. Everything just disappeared. There would be one little pine in the whole forest and that's all I could see -- just the way he selected it against the sky, or whatever. He gave me this funny smile. Then the doctor came in. We went outside. I was absolutely devastated, so I said, "Do you mind if I talk to him?"

It was a Chinese doctor up there, and he said, "Go ahead."

There were just the two of us, and I said, "Listen, Marin, you told me that if I came up, you were going to give me the greatest lobster dinner, that you were going to catch them and were going to serve them. Get up out of

there!"

Well, he got up, took my arm, went to the table, and we had a lobster dinner. The doctor was there all the time. Everybody was sort of stunned. Then he went back to bed and said, "That's enough!"

He went limp again. I stayed overnight, and the next morning he was on the porch there. He said, "Everybody get out."

He was smoking. He was paralyzed, and the cigarette would fall out. He gave me his wishes which included his son -- I won't talk about the son, the various wishes that he had -- but he said, "Continue with the periphery, Gal. Thanks for it."

That was it. I leaned over, kissed him, said goodbye, and I left. I promised. I left the house. Fortunately I had taken somebody with me. I couldn't have held the steering wheel, believe me, and the deal I had was driving half the time, but on the way home this periphery was driving me nuts. What did he mean by the periphery? "Don't forget, continue the periphery. Thanks."

Well, it wasn't until just before I got to Ogunquit -- I hadn't said a word to my companion -- that I said, "Oh."

He said, "What's the matter?"

I said, "Nothing!"

I began to smile, and he said, "Thank God, you're all right now -- eh?"

I remembered this periphery thing. Every once in a while Marin and I would kid about the Yankee business. He adored it when I said "A Yankee from Odessa." He just loved that, and I loved his saying that I was really taking him for a ride in relation to Rosenberg. Of course, he did fabulously here. I remembered one day he came in, and I said, "Marin, we completed your periphery!"

When he came to the gallery, he was with about twelve or fifteen museums, and then by this time he was in sixty. It was from 1945 to 1953, and in those eight years, I finally made a sale to South Texas, and that completed the whole periphery of the United States, the museum periphery. He remembered it, and it was several years before that I said, "We completed your periphery, Marin. We just made this sale to San Antonio."

Shortly before he died, he remembered that, "Continue the periphery. Thanks."

So I've really had a very good time. Don't you think so? If the artists are doing all right, they say, "Thanks, Gal," and if you slip up once, or they think you do, God help you! Nothing you've ever done in the past can help. You have to adjust yourself to that pattern. I have, because I couldn't have exited this long. I don't think that I have mentioned more than several times what a psychiatrist friend of mine calls a very perverted sense of humor.

DR. PHILLIPS: What's the only thing that saves you. Some of the things you've told me on and off the tape require it.

MS. HALPERT: I can get hysterical about being kicked in the pants.

DR. PHILLIPS: This is the artist who left word to have delivered to you on Christmas Eve, the picture you liked so well.

MS. HALPERT: The picture arrived today. It was sent by mistake from the Corcoran Gallery to New Hampshire. It was not to go. I didn't want to withhold it from the Corcoran show because John Jr. thought that it was so important to have in, and I was grateful to John Jr. for giving me the picture Christmas Eve, but can you imagine Papa Marin remembering when he was dying that I was so hysterical about this painting when we were hanging his show in January 1953. We were hanging the show, and I kept going back to this one painting and saying, "Marin. It's the greatest picture you ever painted!"

This went on. He kept looking at it. He didn't think so, and he wondered, and he kept looking at it and said, "Why do you think it's such a great painting?"

When the show was hung we were pricing the pictures, and he had nothing over seventy-five hundred dollars -- from about fifteen hundred to seventy-five hundred dollars, and when we got around to it, he said "Fifteen thousand!" I wanted to kill him. I wanted to buy that picture -- "Fifteen thousand" dollars, and I said, "You're out of your mind!"

He said, "I've watched you with this show, and if any picture can do that to you, it must be goddamn good! Its fifteen thousand dollars. Let them take it, or leave it. That settles that!"

Well, it was the one picture that nobody priced in the show. I couldn't tell them that figure. I thought it was funny as hell. I thought that it was the great picture of his career. They priced every picture -- you know, different people will price different pictures. It was the only picture that nobody priced, so I didn't have to say, "Fifteen thousand dollars."

This was in January. Well, later on December 24th, about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, John Marin, Jr. -- I used to pull that picture out once in a while just to look at it; you know, wishing I had fifteen thousand dollars, and I couldn't possibly buy that picture at that price -- calls me into the showroom. You know that easel we have. Well, the picture is standing on the easel with the lights on, and I said, "Oh, John, don't tease me with this picture!"

"I'm not teasing you. Dad told me that I was to give you this Christmas Eve, and I've got to go home early."

I didn't even say, "Merry Christmas" to him. I went upstairs and just sat there. I couldn't believe it. Don't you think that's the most beautiful thought! I can't live without that picture! This is my symbol of humanity, of good in humanity. You know, every time I get depressed here, I go into that room and look at that picture. It's never been off the wall. This is the second time, but I had to do it for Marin. No matter how John Jr. behaves, I remember him doing this. He didn't have to. It wasn't in writing, and I never would have known.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's more than compensation.

MS. HALPERT: It's that beautiful! Every time I get unhappy, this is an assertion of faith.

DR. PHILLIPS: It's comparable to that four letter word you use. He must have been something.

MS. HALPERT: Have you ever read his letters? There are a lot of books. He was the true Yankee, and I don't mean "Yankee go home" Yankee. He really had -- well, he's the guy that used that four letter word all the time in all his letters -- you know, about art. He always used that, that you have to fall in love with nature -- you know, you have to inject the love that you have into the picture. I know that there have been many times when I've been so depressed about artists and the art world, I'd sit here. You know, I don't know -- what the hell! -- why I feel so strongly about artists. I shouldn't!

DR. PHILLIPS: That's something that we'll have to explore some other time.

MS. HALPERT: Everyone has a disease and that's mine. I married a guy for his painting, and I never got it. That's practically the story of my life. I have bed jackets. It can't be killed. I must be a moron. I must be the opposite of a sadist. What is the opposite of a sadist?

DR. PHILLIPS: Self-inflicted wounds.

MS. HALPERT: Yes, that's the opposite -- a masochist. I must be a masochist because I stick with a goddamn artist, and I sit here getting so depressed wondering, "What the hell am I doing this for?"

I've been offered fabulous jobs -- even in the last ten years. I've been always offered fabulous jobs, twice as much money. Why am I hanging around? I must be a masochist!! I have a perverted sense of humor. I'm abnormal. Then I go into the other room, and I look at that Marin, and I remember that he's dying, and he tells his son to give it to me Christmas Eve, not when he dies, but Christmas Eve. Then I think "Well."

DR. PHILLIPS: You can equate so much with that.

MS. HALPERT: We'll let the psychologists work that one out. All I know is what it means to me. What it means in abnormality is their business.

DR. PHILLIPS: It balances the ledger.

MS. HALPERT: What ledger?

DR. PHILLIPS: You accumulate scars and ills, this balances them.

MS. HALPERT: Yes, that's my symbol of faith. That stands for everything, that one picture, and I just can't bear to have it away. It always hangs in that one spot, and I've never removed it. I wouldn't tell it to my analyst friends because they really would have me locked up.

DR. PHILLIPS: I know that line -- "What again?"

MS. HALPERT: After all, it is a privilege I have enjoyed, meeting and knowing some of the worst bastards and some of the most noble human beings, even going back to Vollard, Brummer, and that ilk, and knowing

Montross. It takes one good guy to balance off fifty bastards, but he's good enough to do that.

DR. PHILLIPS: Well, the bastards we always have with us, but when you run up against someone who is other than that, it's so shocking, I suppose in terms of the daily routine you run into -- you know, the mean, little petty things you run into. Marin must have been -- the only word that comes to me is a king of a broad-gauged fellow -- you know . . .

MS. HALPERT: He was a narrow gauged fellow. Again with his seeing and his doing he had a consistency about people. I think that he could see truth in a human being faster than anybody else. I listened to him talk about people. He wasn't taken in and everybody else is. He wasn't. He got right at the root of a statement, the root of a thing, of a rock, of a tree, of Maine, of Jersey, of New York, and so on. So -- you know, I really consider it a privilege for me to have known some great guy like that, or someone like Stuart Davis. Stuart in a different way. I won't put him in the same class, except the consistency of personality. You can take a lot of the others.

One time I was getting into a real state and I learned to have superficial irritations. I have achieved that without any analysis, and I have achieved that very well. I have people in this gallery here that irritate the hell out of me, including a certain son, but it never goes in, and even when I forget this Christmas Eve thing, it still doesn't penetrate. It's surface irritation. I have that surface irritation with the artist too. It doesn't go in, and it's fortunate; otherwise, my hair would turn black.

DR. PHILLIPS: Jesus, if you catalogued all the possibilities internally, and had a ready card index to all the...

MS. HALPERT: This has to do with Budworth not calling for a picture -- you know, I get mad as hell at a thing like that, if somebody doesn't deliver a picture. I get screaming mad, but it's way out here somewhere. It's never inside because I'd have bleeding ulcers three thousand times over. Everybody you work with in relation to the art world does something to drive you nuts whether it's the packer, or whether they deliver the wrong stationary, or whether the catalogues don't come on time, or the girls forget to put postage on as they did in the last mailing, and fifty cards come back without postage, so I put postage on them and send them out -- everything that has to do with the art world. It's a little off -- beat anyway, but it takes in all the simple little working elements.

DR. PHILLIPS: I'm learning that from an exponent par excellence at being off beat, or on the best, that square across town -- you know. He's a liberal education in his own way.

MS. HALPERT: He can call up four or five times and irritate the hell out of me about some petty little things -- you know, "Why didn't I get the medal?"

Now what in the hell do I have to do with the medal?! Do you know how many times he's called me about that medal? I don't even know the address of this place. All the correspondence went to him. Did he get the medal?

DR. PHILLIPS: There's only one suggestion I can make, and that is that you give him a whole series of other phone numbers to call. He knows your number. Who else is he going to call? I made the mistake of giving him mine, and he hasn't been able to see it, or find it, or he's lost it, because he's never phoned me, but whom does he phone -- his only contact -- really?

MS. HALPERT: No matter what it is. To whom does he go when he has a festered leg? He pulls up his trousers and says, "Look."

DR. PHILLIPS: You have to be a combination lawyer, doctor, psychologist -- the whole works throw into one, and because he only has the one phone number. My only suggestion would be to send him a series of other phone numbers. He just doesn't have another one he can dial. It would never enter his head to look into a book and find some other number. He couldn't be bothered. He wouldn't be bothered.

MS. HALPERT: No matter what it is.

DR. PHILLIPS: That comes over pretty clearly. He got up one day and walked from his chair over to the door. I thought that he was going to fall -- you know. He got to the door, and I heard this nice, pleasant, sweet voice and he said, "Thank you very much." He took the package, dropped it on the floor and returned to his chair and just as soon as he got seated he exploded, "I don't know what the hell's the matter with this goddamn leg of mine! I sit here for a while, and every once in a while I get up and when I do, something locks." He went on -- I don't know for about twenty-five minutes about that leg. If I hadn't been there, he would have picked up the phone, and you would have heard all about it.

MS. HALPERT: In great detail -- whatever it is.

DR. PHILLIPS: He needs a series of other numbers.

MS. HALPERT: It's the same thing with Sheeler. The Sheeler's drive me completely insane with the telephone -- five, six calls a day.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's another story we'll get some other time -- that is, the finding of your house in the country. I don't care whether you put in the background story about Mrs. Rockefeller. I have that up here in my mind. If you want to put it down, that's up to you, but the finding and searching for that house is a good one.

MS. HALPERT: It took months.

DR. PHILLIPS: The tying of the pears to the tree is a precious story.

MS. HALPERT: He chose the most expensive grocer -- what would you call a place like that.

DR. PHILLIPS: It's like Park and Tilfords, I suppose.

MS. HALPERT: It's even beyond Tiffany's -- Cartier's for fruit. He paid about fifty cents a pear in those days. Getting those pears and tying them on with green ribbon which matched the leaves and me falling for it like a goddamn fool!

DR. PHILLIPS: That's a rare story. Just the search for this house and its discovery, and your notion was, "It's my house!" and you couldn't even get inside. There is a flavor of concern -- there really is, like Mr. Davis. Mr. Davis -- see how respectful I am.

MS. HALPERT: Drop that and call him Stuart Davis.

DR. PHILLIPS: I really wasn't brought up that way, but I believe I know why he would make you the recipient of all his ills.

MS. HALPERT: Why?
DR. PHILLIPS: Out of sheer affection, in part. It has to be. It's either that, or the paralysis which comes from not knowing any other phone number.

MS. HALPERT: The time I enjoy the most is being alone. I can never understand anybody being lonesome, and when I'm alone, I don't mean that I sit here and brood and go look at the Marin painting.

DR. PHILLIPS: No there's an old cliché that you live in society, and with Stuart Davis -- look how risky I'm getting -- for one reason or another, and they're probably all complex, it's walking along the fringes all the way and not giving a damn about atmosphere, circumstances, surroundings, environment in a comfort sense, nothing. Any many who can . . .

MS. HALPERT: He's in his own environment every minute of the time. He's never left that environment no matter where he is. Jack Levine can say that he hates a tree. He can't go to the country because he hates a tree.

DR. PHILLIPS: He's out of his mind!

MS. HALPERT: Stuart won't say that he hates a tree. He doesn't want to go to the country because he doesn't want to leave himself for a minute, and he alone exists, and Roselle exits as sort of a slavey, and someone he can vent his . . .

DR. PHILLIPS: Well, maybe he puts on a performance, but his tone is one of real concern about the kid.
MS. HALPERT: The kid is something else. . .

DR. PHILLIPS: It's like a wholly new, unknown thing that has entered and complicates what is already complex.

MS. HALPERT: After all, the kid's a bit of himself, an extension of himself. This is something that comes out of him.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's true, but what he seems to confront all the time is the limitations implicit in this goddamn leg! He can't run with the kid.

MS. HALPERT: At the same time he doesn't do anything about that leg. He has taken care of it for a time -- you know, the time he showed it to me, and I got the doctor, and the doctor fixed him up, and if he continued with the treatment -- all those things can be cured. It isn't an incurable disease.

DR. PHILLIPS: But there's a quality of sadness in re the kid in his saying, "I used to tramp all over Cape Anne. I wish to God I could do it today!"

MS. HALPERT: He doesn't wish to God he could -- you know that.

DR. PHILLIPS: That may be part of the sales pitch, but to be self-imprisoned even with one's self, however nice the landscape, or the manscape. One wrinkle that comes into his world comes into it at 3:30 every afternoon when that kid comes home from school. That just shatters the whole picture, takes the atmosphere by the roots and just rips it right up. His whole tone changes.

MS. HALPERT: It's very funny about this identification with a child. You're a father so you know. I see it as a non-mother -- you know. For instance, somewhere along the line I asked Vincent Price to show me a picture of his baby. He was hysterical telling me about becoming a father. He's the father of a three week old baby. I think I have made the greatest contribution I have ever made today to something he's working on -- I mean money-wise. He'll never know that I lost at least as much as I'm getting for something. I actually cut my costs in half for something he's doing.

Anyway, he's sitting there, and he was very harassed. He didn't know whether he should do this, or that, and we were talking, and I said, "Vincent, you must have a picture of the baby." He lit up like a big Christmas tree! I didn't think he would. What does a three weeks baby look like -- you know. He had a picture of it when it was a day old -- a day old kid, cross-eyed as hell, and a week old. It was a wonderful looking kid.

Of course Stuart and his kid is very, very special -- you know, when at the age of sixty you become a father for the first time -- that's an experience! It must be a fantastic experience! When Charlie Chaplin had his eighth kid at the age of -- what, seventy-eight, that's nothing. That's a habit -- you know, another one.

DR. PHILLIPS: Spawning in captivity.

MS. HALPERT: You know, "I can still make it." There's probably a very special kind of pride about that, but nonetheless this is a sort of continuity -- you k now, once a year this thing happens, and there's another one coming next year, and only when it won't any more, he'll begin thinking about the past -- you know, "Gee, I could do it once," but to have a first child at the age of sixty and become a father for the first time! Vincent was hysterical because the last child he had is twenty-one years old, and a twenty-one year gap -- that too, when I said to him publicly, "How did you do it?" It was fantastic!

Ben Shahn who had all these failure children -- it's the most fantastic story. Ben Shahn was married to a plain little Jewish girl from Brooklyn who was a school teacher and supported him -- like all the wives supported their artist husbands. We all did it by choice. We didn't have to. Most of us could have gotten someone to support us if we tried, but we did this by choice, so this was not being noble, or anything. We did it because we wanted to do it -- self-indulgence. It wasn't good, but it was self-indulgence, so he goes off and for the first time he makes twenty-three bucks a week regular on a government project, and he falls in love with another girl to whom he's now married and has been all these years. He left his wife. He had two children by his first wife, and both of them have grown into successes, but it didn't fit into his living so he discarded those two children completely.

The first child born of this new marriage was a badly deformed female who developed into a horrible case from every point of view, and there too, the telephone calls came to me from Chicago, from Philadelphia, "What are we going to do about this?"

I said, "Call up Ben. Why do you call me? I have nothing to do with this child."

Anyhow, she was this horrible flop. The first child was so vicious, as most cripples are, that she deformed the second child in a way. She really did, and here are two horrible females. They all came to visit me, and I know. They stayed with me for a week, and it was a horrible experience, and then the boy, the only one who ware normal looking, a bright boy, went completely berserk, so he had three desperate failures. His wife cried to me about it -- you know, "What am I going to do about this girl?"

Suddenly this picture changes. The first wife's son has gotten every honor in science. He's got fellowships going around the equator. The daughter married a poet who just got the Pulitzer Prize, and also she's a painter who sold out her show. Who wouldn't in her position -- she may be better than I think, but with that name. He drags everyone he knows to assist him on any project that has to do with his family, so she sells out her show, and her husband suddenly becomes a great poet with prizes. He's on TV and in all of the papers and so on.

He has now taken on the role of the proud father, and he is really making a career of it. He hasn't painted a goddamn picture in a year because he decided that his son who took three lessons, or something, should be a great sculptor. The daughter has become a great painter, and he by writing to every client, to everybody I ever sold a picture to -- you see, this is the only gallery that gives the name of the buyers -- he suddenly corrals everybody to contribute to this big project of a Roosevelt Memorial with a sculpture of Roosevelt made by a young art student, his son. Nice people like Henry Schnackenberg -- Henry Schnackenberg is an artist who is

the only artist I know who gives money through the Wadsworth Atheneum for the purchase of contemporary artists who work against him -- you know, modern artists. He's a traditional artist, and that's a noble guy.

DR. PHILLIPS: Darn right.

MS. HALPERT: He lives up in Newtown, and I'm very fond of him because of that and other things. He's really a very swell guy. He's of the wrong gender, but I love him just the same because that's a noble thing for a person to do in the profession; to support the people who have ruined him -- not deliberately, but they've put him into the category of being an old-hat traditional artist, and he's paying for all these people -- you know, other artists. He gives quite a lot of money to the Wadsworth Atheneum, and they may buy anything they like by a living artist, and they always buy from the modern artists.

Henry was driving me up to New Haven for a party that was being held there, and he turns to me and says, "Edith, Ben wrote me" -- he paid for a Shahn at Wadsworth, and he thinks he's a great artist; he was very happy when they selected Shahn for that year -- "he wanted me to send a check for this monument. His son is doing the sculpture. What do you think of the son's work?"

I said, "Henry, dear, I don't know. I have never seen his work.

He said, "How long has he been sculpting?"

I said, "I wouldn't know."

He said, "Come. Come, you do know."

I said, "All right, so I sent a check, and you're going to send a check, and shut up!"

He said, "I won't send a check, and I'm shocked that you sent a check.

I said, "Look, I have great admiration for Roosevelt."

He said, "Oh, God, I can't win with you. I'm going to send a small check."

I said, "Okay. I sent only a small check too. I sent two hundred and fifty dollars."

He said, "Is that all you sent? I'll send two hundred and fifty, so we're both pickers."

Well, Shahn has written to everybody. He had Dore Schary also out of admiration for Roosevelt. I'm sure, and in admiration for Ben. He has used every goddamn client! Everybody he has ever met -- they raised one hell of a lot of money. Yesterday he came in with this book, and three people were here, and he corralled them. I don't know whether he got money from them. I just walked away. I can't stand it. I can't take it. He's now made a career of being a father. I mentioned once that he has a deist complex, but he didn't bear a Jesus Christ each time, at least I don't think so.

And, you see, with Stuart's attitudes toward his client that is completely normal. He doesn't tell you that he's the brightest, most wonderful kid, does he? He just loves that child. He doesn't impose it on anybody. He loves that child, and he's the father and this is a different kind of thing, but this guy Shahn imposes. He made the gallery handle his daughter's work. He made the *New Yorker* buy her spots and so on, and he imposes that on everybody, and suddenly this poet, this son-in-law, and so on. I can't take it, and we're beginning to have this very severe rift. I just can't take it!

DR. PHILLIPS: You're right about Davis's attitude toward his boy. It's a perfectly normal thing. He's eager to find out -- you know, "Cut a piece of water melon. Better eat it before you go out. Have a glass of milk." It's a folksy kind of warmth, which must be wholly unusual for him because he became a father at such a ripe age . . .

MS. HALPERT: He gives evidence of his warmth. He doesn't conceal it, or anything. It's perfectly normal, and every time he looks at the kid, he's surprised that he has it -- he's small, but, you know.

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes, it's a shock and wonder rolled into one. He said something to the effect that if you do these things in the normal course of events, you do them in your twenties. Just this statement alone would indicate partly a kind of sadness that he didn't begin sooner in a way, and a kind of joy that it happened anyway.

MS. HALPERT: Every time he looks at that kid -- you know, I've watched him -- it's as though something just arrived suddenly.

DR. PHILLIPS: I was told the first day that if we closed the door to his study it would be stuffy in here, "but we'll close it." I said, "Jesus, I don't like it stuffy perhaps any more than you do, so let's leave open." I didn't know

that there was a rule that the door is shut the rest of the house goes about its business while he's left alone. We've had the studio door open every time, and I want you to know when the door to the apartment opens at 3:30 and that kid comes in with his school bag, he walks right into the studio -- it's great!

MS. HALPERT: Ben Shahn, whose work I admired tremendously -- I mean I've always had that about him -- in the last three or four years his opportunism is something I can't take. I mean it's like you're saying that you saw someone become a different human being when Du Pont came in. What did that guy at the Four Seasons say? It does something to me. What did that guy at the Four Seasons say? It was wonderful! I remember now. You know, I had a thing about the Four Seasons, but I won't go into that.

I explained in detail why I thought it was the most abnormal, the most horrible, most -- and to whom was I talking but to Wexler who owns the joint, so I have a card from him that anything I do there is on the house, and I still won't go into the dining part. I have gone into the bar part with people, but never into the dining part, except this one time. It was very late. We were the last ones at the bar, and I said, "Look, for nothing we can see how the other half lives. Let's go in."

They were mopping the floor, and there was a new painting. They changed their art every season -- you know, certain works of art are suitable for spring, but they're no good for summer. They're impossible -- you know, and the fall. All these things are changed. This one had been changed, and there were several people -- Harvey, George Cowl, the director of the San Francisco Museum -- all very knowledgeable people. We walked in, and there was a new painting up, and nobody had any idea who it was. They looked at me, and I wasn't embarrassed. I said, "I don't know. I'm not up to date. This is the first day of the new season, and I don't know yet. I haven't gotten into the new season mood."

Well, no one knew and everybody looked distressed. These were all experts, and nobody knew whose picture it was. It wasn't signed, so I thought I'd put one over on them. I walked over to the guy who was mopping the floor, and I said, "Do you know whose picture that is?"

He said, "Lady, I don't know, and I couldn't care less."

I said, "Why?"

He said, "Every time I look at that picture it makes my stomach churn.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's great!

MS. HALPERT: Of course, I just went to pieces and the guys came over and said, "What happened?"

I said, "I was going to put one over on you," and when I told them what the fellow said, they practically fell into that pool they have there. The next day I called up, and I found out. It was by Larry Rivers. I called Harvey -- this was several years ago -- he was in New York at that time, and I called him and I said, "Harvey, do you know who painted that picture?"

He just went to pieces on the phone before I could tell him, and I said, "It's Larry Rivers."

He said, "You make my stomach churn."

That's what Ben Shahn does to me. It's just reached the point where he makes my stomach churn, and it hurts. The only way I can explain it, and thank God, I don't know anything about it so I can use any terminology that suits me, that makes me feel better, but about five years ago I decided that he had a deistic complex, and this is part of it. Then he's bearing Christ's, the father of Gods -- I mean, the sons of God. I'm going to that unveiling. Mrs. Roosevelt and Stevenson are coming to the luncheon. I was invited to the luncheon, and Ben Shahn forgot, and he said, "Well, I'll see you."

I said, "What time?"

He suddenly looked up, and he said, "Oh. Oh, you're coming to lunch."

I said, "Do you really want me to?"

After all, Roosevelt, even if you're a Republican, was still a great, great president, a great man, and to have a student of the Boston School of Art do a head of him with any sculptor in the world available for that for nothing -- Lipchitz, the great sculptor would have done it for nothing. I'm positive. Right here. More in England would have done it for nothing. To take a stinking little student who bears his name and have him do the head -- now really! I can't bear it! But there again, it doesn't go inside. It's right here. It goes outside of my bra. It doesn't penetrate the bra.

DR. PHILLIPS: What was he like in the thirties?

MS. HALPERT: He was an idealist, but a real one.

DR. PHILLIPS: For his Judge Thayer -- you know, you say certain things have to balance -- for his Judge Thayer and the handball players, something which I like, it's kind of hard to balance the scale. But even so . . .

MS. HALPERT: I do like the idea of Marin better. I'm being factitious. The best thing that ever happened in my life was learning this lesson about the Jake [Jacob] Lawrence affair -- when Jake Lawrence -- you know, when I said, "How can an artist, who according to common verbiology, is a nut, crazy as a bed bug, everything, how can he continue painting in a straight line of continuity? How can his work be completely and utterly normal in relation to his previous work -- no deviation, only a greater perception which is normal as the guy develops?"

Dr. Korn looked at me, and I adore the way analysts, psychologists, not philosophers, look at you when you say something like that as though you were the goddamnedest moron in the whole world. "Don't you know?"

"I don't know. That's why I'm asking you, and don't get so goddamn superior about it. You know more about your field and I know more about art than you do. Don't get so cocky. You know more about your field, so tell me."

He relaxed and sat down, "I'll sit down, and I'll be a good little girl, and I'll listen to the professor."

So he said, "These are two distinct" -- it couldn't be personalities, but the equivalent of it -- "elements. The creative personality is completely unrelated to the person."

I said, "What do you mean?"

He said, "What he's doing as a creative personality" -- and he repeated -- "is a distinct and distinctly separate element of this human being."

I said, "That's strange."

He said, "It is strange, but it's true."

I have asked at least ten analysts and psychiatrists, and they all tell me the same thing, and I feel so happy about it because one is the primary process, and the other is a secondary process -- whatever it is, they all told me the same thing, and it made me very happy. Jake's was a distinct case of a very, very advanced period of schizophrenia, and then he painted these absolutely incredible pictures with complete control, absolutely complete control, no accidents, the same control that he had before, but, as I say, it was a development which would have been consistent with his previous development from year to year -- you know, the "price-less extra of experience," courtesy of Pan American Airlines. I can take a lot of artists, but I find it a little more difficult. The only one who has really stumped me in that relationship is Ben.

DR. PHILLIPS: Although he was the occasion of your winning a dollar bet which is a charming story.

MS. HALPERT: Three dollars.

DR. PHILLIPS: A dollar per -- however many was involved.

MS. HALPERT: Without disturbing him in the slightest degree.

DR. PHILLIPS: I wondered about that -- when you announced to him what you had been up to.

MS. HALPERT: He'll top anything and anybody.

DR. PHILLIPS: He didn't blanch.

MS. HALPERT: I said, "I lied. How in the hell could I have done these at the age of five?" He said, "I did."

He topped every story. In his case, the thing that disturbs me is that he will do the candy thing. He will do an ad. He will do a cover for a record album, something he doesn't believe in. When he did the *Lucky Dragon* series [1960-62], when he did *Mooney-Billings* [1933], *Sacco-Vanzetti* [*series*, 1931-32] -- that was something he believed in -- right from here. He couldn't possibly believe that very bad book by Dahlberg -- the one he wrote recently, *The Sorrows of Priapus* [Edward Dahlberg. New York, NY: New Directions, 1957], a very bad book, and Shahn made the illustrations for that. He didn't believe in it.

DR. PHILLIPS: He couldn't bear not to be part of it.

MS. HALPERT: But he made the drawings for it. As long as he can elevate his son, and that will make me choin . . .

DR. PHILLIPS: "Every time I look at it, it makes my stomach choin" -- that's just great!

MS. HALPERT: I met the most interesting people when a guy who mops the floor will come out with a term like that. It's like my mother said, that famous remark of hers, "You ask a foolish question, you get a foolish answer."

She didn't even know what a pansy was. You know, when a man asks you to marry him, you don't ask why. When you ask why, he tells you -- and "You ask a foolish question, and you get a foolish answer." That kind of wisdom always fascinates me, and you get it all the time.

It's like the kid who tells you about a picture and says, "It's an optical illusion" -- about the Stuart Davis, and this an eight year old kid. Papa bought the picture because the kid made that smart crack. Papa liked the picture. I have to tell Stuart that because he'll love that. I didn't tell him about this last sale. He'll say, "Is that all you've sold?"

DR. PHILLIPS: He's incorrigible, but I love him.

MS. HALPERT: So do I, but I don't, like Ben -- you see, if it enters into the picture world, it's different. With Stuart, no matter what he does, it never enters into his aesthetic world -- never.

32 East 51st Street, New York City, Monday, May 28, 1962

MS. HALPERT: I've told you that Rockefeller story, but I'll never do it with the same emotion.

DR. PHILLIPS: Last week we talked about Marin, a great story -- where you found him carefully going through his collection of watercolors. You told me another incident on Saturday when I came in to the gallery about an artist who was working through some new process. He had a one man show scheduled, and you were able to remove it, and his pictures weren't shown, and when he came later he was grateful to you. That's a good story, and it ought to be in here.

MS. HALPERT: That's Karl Zerbe, and this has to do with the thing that doesn't happen today, or if it does happen, it happens like it did with Kline -- you know, every creative person in any field, and it doesn't matter what it is. I've known scientists. My brother-in-law was an aeronautical engineer and designer, and every once in a while he'd come here and just go to pieces. He reached the point of frustration. Every creative person reaches a period of frustration, and some people solve it like Kuniyoshi solved it, superbly -- you know, when your ideas don't flow, if you're creative, you want to do something new.

Unlike today when the guy becomes a public image in a certain style, theme or whatever, in order to remain before the public he repeats himself consistently. Brook is a perfect example. He's painted the same damn picture in different color schemes for years and years and years. Then he quotes some cornball critic -- you know, giving his credo, using that as his personal credo. Then you have people like Kline who committed suicide by over drinking and so on because he really got bored with himself, but this is sort of a new era among the top people. It's like the theater when somebody introduces -- what's a nice word for whore house?

DR. PHILLIPS: Say it. Be natural and say it!

MS. HALPERT: I can't think of a nice word, but when somebody has a whore house in a play, the next five plays that come on Broadway will have that too. I went to see a play the other day where they have dummies -- you know, that's taken from *No Strings*, the first time that was done, and immediately, just three months later, this play starts with this dummy scene and some come to life and some remain as dummies, and so on. Well, that goes on all the time. As soon as something is a success, it creates a pattern.

This goes back to August Heckscher who is our cultural chief today. He sounds like a wonderful guy, and he said that this is a period of self-parody in all cultures, it's true. It's never been that way before. Artists copied other successful people, but now they copy themselves to such a degree that it's become a great vicious circle, and that has occurred recently.

In the past, let's say a decade or two ago, artists had the same frustrations that artists have now, or have had any time in history. Well, they had different ways of solving their frustrations, or they didn't solve them. They conked out. Think of all the artists whose names appear in catalogues in the earlier days who have disappeared

from the picture completely. I'm not talking about American artists, I'm talking about all countries, all periods. Well, Kuniyoshi would reach a point of frustration. He didn't get an idea for a painting, and he'd struggle with himself. He went into a new medium like Casein which he never used before. That was a struggle. He struggled with the new medium and broke up the frustration because it was a new struggle. He did this every once in a while. Every five, or six years he'd have a period in his work where nothing happened, so he'd go off in something else. He'd start painting in Chinese ink, or something. That process hasn't been common certainly because of the artists who have just disappeared.

There was a period when Zerbe who had -- well, he had a fair success. All of his shows we had were quite successful, and he was getting quite a name in the art world. He was also getting terribly sick. He was choking, had headaches and so on, and every one said he was allergic to something. He had every allergy test in the whole world. At that time he worked in caustic, and after a year of tests they discovered that he was allergic to wax.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's great!

MS. HALPERT: He came in and told me, and I said, "Well, you're allergic to your own pictures."

We laughed about that. He had a student by the name of [Alfred] Duca who developed palmera tempera, and he worked out that medium very successfully. It has the same flexibility that caustic has. You can get it very fluid. You can get every kind of effect that you want. So Zerbe decided to change. He had to change from wax to palmera tempera, and he worked -- we were having a show. We planned a show for a certain month. We always have to plan way ahead. In those days when we had meetings, we would discuss the plans, and this one would say, "I'll be ready in April."

Another one would say, "I'll be ready in October."

We made plans for the shows, and so it was coming along fine. Zerbe kept bringing in paintings, and each one was a little bit worse than the other. They were really utterly dreadful -- you know, they had no color. They were monochrome and wonderful textual effects because, like wax, when palmera tempera is warm you can take a piece of linen or cheese cloth and press it on, and you can get that character in it -- the weave right into the paint. Zerbe got very intrigued with textures and tried to learn how to use this new material. It was a very difficult new material to use. The pictures were simply dreadful.

The artist has integrity. I have integrity. I will never sell anything I don't think is good goods. My taste may stink. I may be wrong -- whatever, but unless I feel that the picture is something -- you know, somebody asked me what I am in the art world, and I said a shot gun because I am the cupid between the artist and the public. I'm a match maker, and I'm an honest match maker. I don't take commissions from both parties -- only from one, and I want to make sure that I marry off the bride to the right groom. There are certain paintings I just feel haven't come off -- that the painting was not the artist's intention because a successful work of art is where the artist realizes what he wants to express, that's when it's successful. It may not be good, but it's successful from the point of view of his intentions.

So as these pictures arrived, I got very depressed about it. I could not figure out how I would tell Zerbe that I could not have a show, that I was not having a show of those pictures. Well, I found some means to convey the idea that we weren't having a show at that particular time of the year. We postponed it. I don't know whether it was a bad period, or whatever, but I worked up a perfectly logical story, and nothing happened. He had no show, and I kept putting his pictures down in the basement.

I was in Boston toward -- well, it was late summer. The gallery was closed, and I think I was visiting the Brewsters and various other people in Boston, and I went up to see Zerbe on Snake Hill. It's somewhere near Cambridge, and this was a new house which he had had built, a small community. The guy who developed the Polaroid camera lived up on the hill, so there were very nice people there. I saw Zerbe's house for the first time. It was very, very attractive. I was delighted with it, and I said, "Where do you work?"

He took me downstairs, and he had the most magnificent studio which impressed me very much. He showed me a number of things which he had done during the past two or three months, four months, whatever, but he hadn't been sending any in. He was all through sending in for his show. I got terribly excited about these pictures, and I said, "Let's have a show of your new pictures in October" -- the first one man show in October which meant that I would have to postpone another show I had planned, but it was all right. I worked it in, and the show, incidentally, was a terrific success. He came in for the opening, and we had a lovely party. We sold about eight pictures that evening, and he was very happy.

They decided to stay in town. He was one of those persons who was very devoted to you, and he decided that we would have to have a special celebration so that he was staying over three days for something, to do something. He came in about the third day after the opening, and he said, "Gee, it just occurred to me that you

didn't have any of my owl series."

You know, it was just like that. I didn't expect it, and I said, "Oh gosh, no, we haven't."

The phone rang, thank god. It gave me a chance to think, so I said, "Somebody just called, and I'm going to be tied up for the next two hours. Come back at five-thirty will you? And we'll continue with our conversation."

He went away blithely -- you know, and when he came at five-thirty, as I did with Stuart in connection with the "Recurrent Image" show, I said, "Go inside. I'll join you."

He went inside, and there was the whole owl series, variations on the theme. These were all brown, muddy, gooey, gummy, and so on. I left him alone, and there was silence. He didn't say, "Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ!" the way Stuart did. There was silence there, and I walked in. He said, "Where were these pictures?"

I said, "They were downstairs. They were all in the basement, the stock room down there.

We threw his arms around me and he said, "Thank you."
I said, "What for?"

He said, "My God! These are terrible pictures. They're terrible pictures!"

I said, "Don't you dare talk that way about one of my artists!"

We went through this thing, "I was so involved in the medium and so on, I didn't know how bad the pictures were. Thank you for not showing them, and thank you for having this show."

If he hadn't come through, it would have been a permanent distress, but this way he was delighted, so I sent them all back, and he destroyed them.

This is apropos of the Marin thing when Stieglitz died. Before he died -- well for years he told me and told everybody that I was going to be his successor. He told me that he was willing his artists to me. Well, you know, he didn't own the artist, so it was sort of strange, but I was very pleased that he thought I was the only one qualified to handle the people he liked, and I had them all these years -- you know, even for the opening he lent me some pictures.

I had a Marin show downtown, and I had an O'Keeffe show on 13th Street, so after he died I waited for the American Place to close up and the pictures to arrive here. I saw O'Keeffe and spoke to her about it one day, and she said, "Oh, no. We're going to keep the American Place and continue right here."

Well, there was nothing I could say. I couldn't burst into tears because I'm not the tear bursting type, so I was terribly distressed but there it was. I still had some pictures by the greatest artists, and about a week later, Bill Dove, Arthur Dove's son called up, and he said, "You know Dad is ill. Are you planning to take his work? Stieglitz told Dad that you would inherit his artists."

I said, "Would I? Certainly!"

I got Dove, and I spoke to Marin this time, and he said, "Well, O'Keeffe wants to keep this place going."

There was no argument against it because this was the only place that any of these people ever had, the sentiment, and so on. I was on their side, but I was heartbroken. Meanwhile Wildenstein offered a tremendous sum of money per year to Marin; Knoedler wanted O'Keeffe. Everybody was trying to get these people, and they didn't budge. I kept seeing Marin. He came in one day, and he said, "As long as O'Keeffe wants to run this place, I have to be with her."

Later he came in and said, "Well, I think we're giving up the place."

It was a mess -- you know, with no one to run it, and all the advisors -- you know, Stieglitz had lawyers, advisors, friends, all of whom were terribly interested and everybody had something to say -- writers, everybody, and the one place they didn't want these artists to go was the Downtown Gallery -- you know, how low can you get when you have Wildenstein, Knoedler, and so on. Marin came in, and he said, "Well, my advisors think I should go to Rosenberg," and that really hurt because I had a very strong feeling about the way Rosenberg ran the gallery. He would use the American artists as puller-inners, and then he'd say, "If you want to see the original, buy a Brock and here it is."

I heard about it -- you know, in the art world there are no secrets. I know everything that's going on. I think I timed it once -- seventeen minutes from here to 57th Street. I felt sick about this, and finally I told Marin this

fabulous story Stieglitz had told me about Rosenberg. Stieglitz had a big thing about him too because he realized that he was using the few American artists he had like Hartley whom he took from MacBeth who had revived interest in him, and Weber with whom I parted for very good reasons. He'd been at the AA, and they had success with him. Stieglitz told me this wonderful story about his youth when he played pool in Germany -- did I tell this before here?

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes, you did.

MS. HALPERT: I thought this story was very funny -- "Rosenberg can have Weber and Hartley. I'll stick to Weber and Fields." Well, I told that story to Marin. Marin laughed. He'd never heard that story which is astonishing because Stieglitz would always tell the same story over and over again. He thought that was very funny. Now I said, "It will be Weber and Hartley and Marin. Stieglitz will turn in his grave, but if that's what you want to do, good luck! You're breaking my heart, but good luck Marin."

He turned to me, and he said, "Well, he's offered me so much guaranteed per year."

This sounded tremendous to him -- about twenty thousand dollars. I could have guaranteed him a hundred, but I didn't. I didn't know how much, but I beat that record in the first six months, so, "Well, what do you offer me?"

I said, "My complete enthusiasm, belief, and faith in you, and you pay me thirty-three and a third percent commission."

He walked toward the door, walked out and came back about fifteen minutes later, and he stuck out his hand and said, "Put it there, Gal. You're so Yankee, I'm coming here."

I said, "Yes, a Yankee from Odessa."

The question came up of moving all his worldly goods, his paintings to the gallery. He was a very prolific artist, and he was at that time -- 1946 -- seventy-six years old, and so he said, "It'll take me a couple of weeks to get my things together."

Many of the things were in the Lincoln Warehouse because Stieglitz didn't have too much stockroom space, and he said, "Come by in a couple of weeks."

It was in the summer, and I kept coming in from Newtown. I was waiting, and I didn't dare break in on him. I telephoned him finally one day, and he said, "Come on over, Gal."

I walked in there, and he was sitting in this sea of paper, but literally. He was sitting on one of these little folding chairs right in the middle of the room with pictures all the way back into the other room -- you know, stacked -- folios with unframed pictures. I looked around, and these papers were watercolor papers. I saw pieces of them. He had torn literally hundreds of watercolors -- at least two hundred water colors -- just looking at the stack which was high, and I almost died. I kept thinking of the two hundred people who would be so happy with them. How could he do it? It was cruel, immoral, indecent, and I got terribly excited, and I said, "What are you doing?! What have you done?!

He said, "Sit down."

I moved the papers away, and I sat down on the floor. I didn't want to sit on one of the papers. I was very tense. I said, "This is an outrageous performance!"

He pointed to the little anteroom where there was a cot. Stieglitz would stretch out during the day and hold court. He said, "You see that room. Stieglitz was lying on that cot, I was sitting over there, and there were several other people" -- and he mentioned several people, two writers -- "and a little girl came in. Somebody was talking about Picasso, and the little girl said, I met that man and shook hands with him. It was one of the glorious moments of my life, until I began to look at his work more consistently. In Europe, I saw his work, and with all the great pictures he painted, there were so many bad ones around. Nobody should let bad pictures go out to the public.

I was listening to this from Marin, and I was wondering, "Who in the hell would be saying anything like that?"

He went on, "She said that everything he didn't want to live by, so as I gathered all my material to transfer to you, I had everything brought in and I had everything arranged" -- there was a man who worked there by the name of Zola -- "I had Zola arrange them by years, and I went through every year's work, and boy, did I paint stinkers!"

"Why did you tear them up?"

"I want to live by my good deeds, not by my bad ones. Don't you dare say anything, you little girl!"

Then I really wanted to die. I recalled this thing -- you know, there were all these older people around, and I would come out with these big gestures. They used to die laughing when I walked out, but occasionally something hit, because I was very solemn about art -- you know, integrity. The artist has to have integrity no matter what else happens in his life, and I'd go along with these high ideals which to these folks sounded pretty silly. Well, evidently it didn't sound silly to Marin. He destroyed about two hundred pictures. I brought everything left to the gallery and said, "Everything we have here is something the artist approved."

There are still a couple of pictures that ain't so hot which I don't show because he did not come through. There's something about a picture that you know. Every once in a while somebody looks at a painting and says, "Why didn't he finish it?"

The great genius is to know when to stop, as Marin did in this one here, but occasionally he didn't know when to stop, and he went a little too far. I don't know what he destroyed. I just saw little pieces, and as a result of that, O'Keeffe before she moved here also destroyed a great many pictures. This wasn't anything I had ever said in her presence. She scared me to death, but evidently she saw that Marin had destroyed a great many pictures, or whatever. She may have done it all her life. I don't know, but she destroyed a great many pictures, and I feel very strongly about it -- just as Zerbe destroyed them. But the frustration that an artist suffers from time to time and how he resolves it is a very personal thing, and I don't know that it is successful in a great many cases because I know, as I look through records, how many artists have stopped.

Take a man like Stanton MacDonald-Wright who really was a very important artist in our history with his symbolism. He's been painting ever since. He's never made a statement since. This was it. He was through. He's continued working the rest of his life without getting anywhere. Oh gosh! That recalls an incident.

Way back in the Lincoln Square Arcade, he and Thomas Benton, and Thomas Craven shared a studio. That's where I formed a class one summer when the academy was closed. I was about fifteen then, and that's where somebody painted -- I was a cover girl with ice skates, one of these *Saturday Post*, or *LibertyPost* covers. Well, there were big freight elevators, and I ran into Wright one time, and he said, "You're a student upstairs?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "Do you want to see a professional studio?"

I walked in, and Thomas Craven was there and Thomas Benton. Here were three very important people, and of course, the fact that Wright was the brother of the Wright who wrote the 'who done it?' impressed me very much, but I knew of his work. Benton I knew and Thomas Craven I knew from his writing. I walked into the studio with great excitement. There were paintings all around the room. The MacDonald-Wrights were wonderful, and the Benton's weren't. I didn't like them. He asked me to sit down, and Benton said, "For heaven's sakes! Where did you pick that up?"

I had said some nice things about Wright's work by that time, and Wright said, "Well, she's a student. She's and art student and she has very good judgment."

Benton said, "Oh, get her out of here, for Christ's sakes! These kids here! What next?"

Well, years passed, and Thomas Benton came along and asked me to handle his work. P.S. I got even. I wouldn't touch it with a ten foot pole.

DR. PHILLIPS: "Get him out of here!"

MS. HALPERT: You know -- a great many years passed between the two incidents, but I didn't forget it. I remembered Thomas Craven because he said, "You made some very interesting remarks about these pictures."

He came out with me. He said, "I've just written a book. Do you want to read it?"

He gave me his manuscript, and he said, "Don't lose it! It's the only copy I have."

I put it under the pillow at night. I thought, "If it burned, I'd burn with it."

He became a very important critic, and he got very violent about modern American art, and he built up this American School which was terrible -- very fascist point of view, but still I kept quiet about it because I always remembered that he let me read his manuscript and listened to me when I told him what I thought of it.

Then you take a man like Wright. He had one thing to say and he said it superbly. He's never been able to go on from there. That was the end. It was the beginning of the end. Well, that happens to a tremendous number

of artists, and all you have to do is go through the early catalogues. Go through -- which I do every once in a while -- the Armory Show catalogue. I didn't attend, but I have a catalogue of it. You'll find names that have disappeared completely. The artists just reached this frustrating period and never went beyond it.

At that time you had to continue experimenting so that you would not repeat yourself as you can today. This is a very evil period for that reason because -- you know, it's like being typed as an actor, same thing. Look at the difficulty a man has, or a woman, who is typed as a sex pot, or something. They can't do a character. They can't take on a character act. They can't. They can't take that role. Well, the same thing has happened in every field. Look what has happened to all the writers today. How many of them have survived a success? It's sad because there's no open horizon.

Now I'm hoping with the figure painting, and one good thing about the Modern Museum show that nobody has impressed sufficiently is that Alfred Barr did pick about as great a variety in that show -- well, far beyond anything he's done before, because he's really had everybody typed, except for the shocker which the museum has introduced -- like the smashed car, or the Tingley business, which is a disgrace for a museum to do, but I think that this figure show will open up the field a little bit. At least it breaks this one sided direction that we have had which was one style of painting plus shock.

DR. PHILLIPS: What do you do with the nine thousand odd pictures that were submitted and were not chosen?

MS. HALPERT: They go back to the artists, and they'll start painting what has been accepted. I don't mean to be cynical. They can always say, "He has stinking taste" which is usually done.

DR. PHILLIPS: This is applying a Band-Aid to your own wounds, but by the same token . . .

MS. HALPERT: Don't we all do that?

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes, but this is not Zerbe working through to something new. This, in a way, makes creativity dependent upon a policeman.

MS. HALPERT: Right. This is an outside judgment, rather than an inside judgment. This is what this man said. Now if I had said to Zerbe, "This picture isn't very good."

That's something I have never, never done. I once had a beau who went with me to a party at Julian Levy's house, and everybody got sort of high, and then somebody said, "What does your dealer do when you bring in a picture?" -- somebody from another gallery. Julian and [Louis] Guglielmi did an imitation, a one act play, of bringing in a painting, one the artist and the other was I. They did this imitation. I laughed over it. I thought it was the funniest show I'd ever witnessed because Guglielmi was the artist and Julian Levy who was quite a comedian, took my part, and he just sat there and looked at it very intensely and then looked away and said, "Do you think it's going to rain today?"

It was something like that. I thought it was very funny. I don't remember all the details, but my beau was horrified. He grabbed me by the arm and said, "Let's get out of here. Are you a man, or a mouse?"

I said, "I wasn't insulted. I thought it was very funny."

But I have never said a word about a picture to an artist -- never, because I don't care who it is. An artist is wide open -- but wide open to criticism. While he will say, "I don't give a damn what anybody remarks," he certainly does. It may not be a conscious reaction, but boy! It hits right into the id, or whatever, and he's influenced. Well, shortly after this occurred . . .

DR. PHILLIPS: There's someone at the door.

MS. HALPERT: Well, shortly after, maybe a month or two later, I was at the Levy's. I was very fond of them, and I used to visit them a great deal then. The gallery was downtown then, and they were nearby. I was sitting in their study. We all shared the same grocer, and the grocer had a moron, a half-wit, delivery boy who was wonderful. He delivered goods. He came in, and I saw this picture on the easel in Julian's study. His wife went out to make some coffee, or something, and that picture bothered me dreadfully.

After all, he was an artist who worked in the more naturalistic manner where you're very conscious of any distortion not intended, and the head in this picture was way out of proportion for no good reason. I mean, it wasn't of any significance. It was just bad, and it bothered me, but I didn't dare say anything. I never did. Sammy came in with the groceries, plunked them down, looked at the picture, and he said, "Grandma, what a big head you have!" and he walked out.

DR. PHILLIPS: That moron took the words right out of your mouth.

MS. HALPERT: When the picture was delivered to me months later, the head was no longer big.

DR. PHILLIPS: Isn't that interesting.

MS. HALPERT: Then we sat down, and I said, "Julian, remember that act that made Nat so mad?"

They were hysterical, and Nat really got very angry -- you know, his girl was being kidded this way. He felt that it was an outrage. I said, "Remember. You all laughed at Nat. That was the first time I realized that I did not say anything, and that's why I laughed so. I had never thought about my reactions before, or how I acted. I knew my reactions, but I didn't know how I acted, and it was very good to see. I thought it was very funny. You did a beautiful job impersonating me."

He did it with gestures and everything else. It was very funny. I said, "What happened in your studio is an excellent example of why I should never say anything about a painting. I say, "Thank you for bringing it in, don't I dear?"

He said, "What do you mean?"

I said, "Sammy, the dope, the neighborhood half wit, said, 'Grandma, what a big head you have', and you corrected it."

He said, "Did I?"

I said , "You did. I thought it was a big head too, only I didn't say 'Grandma' to you the way he did."

We talked about it at great length. Julian is a very perceptive, very intelligent guy. "By God, I think there's something to it." I said, "After a show, nobody cares about reviews. All artists say, 'I don't give a damn what anybody says,' but I have seen you. You don't bother. You have six copies of a review if it's good, or ten copies. This is all nonsense, and you're lucky I don't say anything. Every once in a while I see something that drives me nuts, and I keep quiet about it."

There's no question about that. I watched that. Jack Levine was the only smart cookie I knew apropos. For years, he would call me at the end of the summer. When I arrived, he would call me up and say, "Come and see what I'm doing."

I'd arrive, and I'd look -- for a long time. I'd spend a couple of hours looking at the paintings. We would chat about what I did in the summer and what he did in the summer. When I moved my younger generation to Charles Allen, Jack Levine called me several times, and I felt that it just wasn't cricket for me to go down there. He was with another dealer. It wasn't a nice thing to do, so I spoke to Charles, and he said, "Go right ahead -- as long as you don't buy the pictures from him."

[END OF 3 OF 7 REEL A1r]

I would never dream of doing that. I always go to the dealer. Levine was very persistent about it. I went down and looked at his pictures. Some time after at one of these séances, and I'd say absolutely nothing, he'd ask me to come down again, and I said, "That's ridiculous!" You're having show at Charles's, and I'll go and see the pictures on the wall."

He said, "Oh, no. You've got to see them before. I want your reaction. It's very important for me.

I said, "You want my reaction? You're out of your mind! Have I ever said anything to you?"

He said, "Never. Not a word."

I said, "Then why do you want me to come down?"

I used to say, "You've had a very successful summer, dear!"

I always say that even if I wasn't so sure. He said, "You've been criticizing my work all these years."

I said, "I have not."

He said, "Yes, you have. When your eye lingers and goes back to an area, that's the place I work on afterwards. Did it ever occur to you that I always stood behind the picture, or next to it facing you? I never sat next to you. I've always watched those eyes of yours, baby, and when they started to go back to a certain spot, and they always did, there was always an area that disturbed you. That's the area I worked on. I didn't know just what was wrong, but I knew that there was something wrong, and I discovered it."

He was the only one, and then I got so self-conscious that I wouldn't go to anyone's study. I recall in the early days I was Sam's favorite model because I was the only one he could get for nothing, and the very first time -- you know, I was an expert on art when I was married. I was eighteen years old, by God. I knew everything about art by then. When I posed for him and I took a rest -- a professional model recessed every half hour, a buck an hour, and you'd take a rest in between, but this model didn't except when I heard the soup running over, or something. I stood it as long as I could, and then I'd look at the picture and come back and one day Sam threw his brush on the floor and said, "Stop correcting my picture!"

I said, "I haven't said a word."

He said, "You keep moving around to show me that I'm out of drawing."

He was out of drawing, believe me, and I did it completely unconsciously. I kept changing my pose to correct him, and that conditioned me ever after. I never said anything, gesture, or anything, to any of the artists I ever had -- never.

DR. PHILLIPS: Except that perceptive Jack Levine noticed your eyes.

MS. HALPERT: That was very funny, and I remembered the way I looked at a picture. It's the little area that disturbs me that I will look at. I'll go right back to it. I'm correcting the picture. Because Jack made me self-conscious about that, now I don't look while the artist is around.

My publicity releases -- one of my great prides was having Henry McBride tell me that I wrote the best publicity releases -- this was many years ago, having had no training in that field whatsoever, but I decided and I think I've been able to do that pretty well throughout my career, that I can anticipate what a critic will say -- the obvious thing.

For instance, in this show, we had a Max Weber nude picture painted in 1907. I immediately say that it's not a Modigliani. It's so obviously like a Modigliani, except that it was painted ten years before Modigliani, and Modigliani didn't see it. He didn't copy it. The color, the pose, the gesture is so Modigliani -- that reclining nude. I say that first. I know that everyone who will come in will think that.

They may not say it, but they'll think it, and this is apropos of Jack. He reached a frustrating period too. He was the great chiaroscuro boy. Stuart ain't. I told you about his saying that one day to me. I said, "You're hitting it up kid," or something. It was something that he had just started. I was just kidding him because there was nothing there to discuss. He said, "Yeah, I was going to do everything there is, but I ain't no chiaroscuro boy!"

Jack Levine, of course, is the chiaroscuro boy of our era, or certainly the best one of that school, and he got into a very soupy era of color. I mean chiaroscuro and the old master color, and he was reaching a very dull period, which disturbed me. This is one time I went to his studio and really got hysterical. It looked like a group show. He had about eight pictures, on which he had been working. I hadn't been there for a year. He hadn't been bringing anything in, so he was working.

He'd been abroad, and I kept looking there because the great break was a picture that hung here -- "The humanist," he called it when he squeezed paint right out of a tube -- you know, the most brilliant reds and greens, and so on. Well, he worked with two colors. He was not mixing them. He was not going into shadow, or delicate, subtle nuances and all that. This picture was right out of the tube, and then another picture was right out of cubism and looking around his studio his paintings looked exactly like a group show, but I was never so excited in my whole life because he was really opening up. He had reached this point of frustration and he was opening up.

[END OF 3 OF 7 REEL A2r]

32 East 51st Street, New York City, Monday, June 4, 1962

[BEGINNING OF 4 OF 7 REEL A1r]

MS. HALPERT: We'll start with this other stuff. This is out of context.

DR. PHILLIPS: Out of context? What about this museum that was going to be opened?

MS. HALPERT: I don't want to make a separate issue of the anti-Semitic statement.

No, this has to be in context with the Shahn thing. Here they are. Oh, look. I did that sheet years ago -- who was in. In 1926. There were many more galleries that I thought. There was the Kraushaar Gallery. That double

X means that they handled both European art to support the gallery and also had American art -- mostly, well, for instance Kraushaar had the very conservative artists, and even the French artists with Daumier prints and what not. Dudensing had a combination also. He had French artists as well. Frank Rhehn had all American -- God, this is terrific! When did I do this? He had American art -- very good American art. Knoedler was in existence, but they had nothing to do with American art. They had old masters. They might have had a few of the American old masters, 18th and 19th Century. Grand Central Gallery was all American, but all academy, nothing but academicians.

Ferargil had everything, including fakes. He became famous for that. I have a wonderful autobiography of his -- but fabulous! It's a little pamphlet. I mean he had a few sculptures because that was why it was called Ferargil.

Then Montross -- these were the good galleries -- who had Ryder, etc., had "The Eight," a special exhibition every once in a while. The Daniel Gallery had all the better artists, the younger Americans, the difficult type, the hard to sell type, and he went out of business subsequently. Then, of course, there was Stieglitz, and later on I opened in November, October.

Then the New Gallery opened some time later. A lawyer, James Rosenberg ran it, and he had sort of sensational artists, but actually, the Grand Central was the successful one and had a wonderful gimmick, a marvelous gimmick. It was a non-profit institution, and I was too dumb to understand what that meant at the time, and they had a membership -- I found out later -- everybody contributed six hundred dollars to be a member, a customer member, a client member for which he got a picture at the end of the year. They had a drawing, a party with music and stuff. The artist in order to join the gallery had to contribute three works of art. In other words, every artist was worth eighteen hundred dollars to the gallery because they had three free works of art, paintings, or sculpture, or whatever.

Mr. Barrie who is the only other survivor of that era -- everybody else is dead, except Barrie and I -- and me, eh?

DR. PHILLIPS: Makes no difference to me -- whichever version pleases you.

MS. HALPERT: I got worried yesterday. Everybody was using who instead of whom in their speeches, but the Grand Central was a very active and very prosperous gallery. [Frederick J.] Waugh -- did you ever hear his name? He got the prize every year at Carnegie, the popular prize, and the one man show of his was really a trip around the shore. He started with a rock at the extreme left and last picture in the show had the rock on the extreme right. They were hung that way -- the same theme, the same sea, the same sky, but moving the rock twenty times -- as many pictures as there were. Then I can't remember the name of it, a still life painting in which he used very precious Chinese artifacts -- you know, beads with an apple. Grand Central sold that.

I mean these were very, very popular artists, and the public was interested only in popular artists -- just as they were abroad. This country was no different -- you know, France was not buying, and that I always get violent about because everybody in France talks of itself constantly as being the country of culture. Like hell they were! They didn't even support Courbet. Courbet couldn't sell there. It was the foreigners who after all created the greatest bit of tourism in the history of the world. They created the atmosphere for creativity, but they did not support their artists, and the public in all countries were buying conservative academic art, and the Grand Central was prosperous in this field.

Of course, there were other galleries that sold old masters. There was Lord Duveen who gave me ideas on how to run a gallery early in the game. Dudensing did a good job. He did bring in some modern artists. Stieglitz was the number one and Daniel who opened a gallery in 1914. I got acquainted with that gallery in 1917, 1916. The first one man show that was held at the Daniel Gallery was Sam Halpert, and I saw a second show of his, and it was run very badly. This man had absolutely no business sense. Everybody was suing him. He used the money for overhead, and he used his own money. It was a complete flop. Nobody could support himself on modern art.

Stieglitz, you know, had a gallery fund, a rent fund, and a great many people contributed to it -- like Brixey. A number of people who hadn't the slightest interest in his artists just had an interest in the idea of a gallery and if you bought something, twenty-five percent went to the rent fund. He didn't charge commission, but twenty-five percent went to the rent fund, and the balance went to the artists. He took no money. He really didn't, but it was a form of business commission, and the artists really had a rough time.

There were very few places for them to show at that time. The museum wouldn't take their work. The -- let's see, I think it was the Pennsylvania Academy, the Art Institution of Chicago and Carnegie which had juried exhibitions, and if they had someone like George Bellows, Leon Kroll on the jury, they would take a couple of the modern artists, several of the successful artists like Leon Speicher. Leon Kroll, of course, was an academician, as was Lawson. All these people were, but they were interested, in experimentation, and they refused to join the academy. They were anti-academy, but they were traditional artists.

On the other hand, they did help the revolutionary artists, and Arthur B. Davies was really the godfather of all of them. He bought the first picture that Weber ever sold and so on, and he introduced modern American art, mostly European, but also modern American art to people like Quinn, Lizzie Bliss. Most of these people bought very precious French masters by this time. They were buying Degas. They were buying Cezanne, and so on who were very revolutionary as far as America was concerned. This was all before my time, but Arthur E. Davies did support the American artists as well.

The climate for the painters I had was a pretty sad one. They were with Daniel, and if they did sell something, they never got paid. Of course, I had been to Ogunquit when I opened the gallery, and I knew many of the artists long before I met Sam, and I went around to the artists and told them that I was opening a gallery and everybody thought it was very funny and very cute. Unfortunately I was small, and I was not taken very seriously by anybody. They just thought that I was -- like Luks, or Vollard later -- they just thought I was cute, having this little female come along, and nobody ever said, "No." Well, by arrangement with the other dealers I asked the artists -- like Kuniyoshi who was with Daniel, Spencer was with Daniel -- all these people were with Daniel.

In Stieglitz's case I asked him directly, and he let me have the artists. Daniel was perfectly willing to let me share these people. Then he went out of business not very long after I started. It was before the depression that he went out of business -- before 1929, I think -- so all the artists that I wanted from his group moved in with me completely.

DR. PHILLIPS: What criteria for selection did you have for that first group -- like, for example, Peggy Bacon?

I think I said this in my first announcement -- that I felt very strongly about the type of art a country like America would represent, that America would be represented by the type of artists because of this corny expression we all use -- "melting pot." Artists came from all parts of the world and I could not see one direction style of art in America.

I tried to make it as varied as possible to indicate at least my reaction to an artist's work when I saw Ryder, saw Homer -- they were working at the same time, and there is no relation whatsoever. One responded to the inner forces, and the other one responded to the outer forces, and so on. I tried to make it as varied as possible, getting artists who had a very personal approach. Take Kuniyoshi. Everything about his work had an Oriental base, the horizon, the transition of tone, the understatement and so on. Peggy Bacon's work was satirical, hard, nasty as hell, and wonderful. It was of its kind. She was by far the best artist in that direction. Weber, of course, had this religious feeling -- even when he painted a still life -- you know, sort of a minor key, a Hebraic key.

All these people on this original list represented personal points of view. They had to be individual without being just different. It had to be related to their kind of environment. Marin lived in a place where he was surrounded by the sea, the forces of nature, and so on, and his work had to have a very different feeling from the artist who painted in Woodstock and saw those little, dry, rolling hills and nude models.

DR. PHILLIPS: What about a fellow like Spencer?

MS. HALPERT: Well, Spencer was so New England. The sky of New England the greyness of New England. And he had that and also a New England understatement, not an Oriental understatement. And then I was very excited about Sheeler. He showed at Neumann. And I saw his work there and was very excited about it. I had never met him and finally he was no longer at Neumann and everybody was folding up.

DR. PHILLIPS: Even in the late 1920's?

MS. HALPERT: Yes. You see there was a short boom in 1925, we had a big boom. But whatever buying went on was either the rich people bought old masters or through whether it was through Knoedler or Wildenstein, and of course Duveen. That was one classification. There was no middle class in art buying really. And there were only a few of the more daring rich who experimented and a good many of them were really stimulated by Arthur B. Davies in one way or another.

If they were exposed to French modern art they could accept American modern art as well. Not to the same degree, but I think the idea of having *La Boehme* (I hope I won't bore you with that expression, but they did call it that.). I know that I was invited always. I got boxes to the Metropolitan Opera for *La Boehme* nothing else, for years. When I hear the sound of *La Boehme* music, I run now.

But the idea of having, right in the art center -- this is a natural art center of New York, and it was – because that's where the artists lived. I mean most of the artists who did not live in the country somewhere or some little hut, lived right in the Village for very, very little including Mrs. Whitney who was a sculptress. She lived in the Village too. Everybody was there. All the studios were there until the rich brokers brought their girlfriends

there, and then the artists had to move. The same thing is happening in the Village now. The artists have been shoved out of the Village, and they are down in Chinatown and the lower eastside, because it's the fashionable people who decided that *La Boehme* was the place to be.

DR. PHILLIPS: Time passes.

You could go to Sullivan Street, and the push carts there had the most wonderful fresh vegetables. Italian push cart peddlers would come along right from the market with the most wonderful vegetables for nothing, and you could really live on a very small budget that way, and they did.

They taught a little bit. Zorach taught in a private school. He taught drawing and painting. He was a very, very attractive and very artistic looking person, and he was -- you know, the artist type with long hair, sandals, and so on, and very good looking, and he taught for a living. The few who taught could have children -- you know, Mrs. Rockefeller told me that her husband was cutting off her budget in American art.

In those families everything is budgeted -- so many loaves of bread a month, everything. I talked to the housekeeper, so many pounds of sugar, and you didn't go beyond that, so much for American art which she finally eked out of him. Then he decided that it was very immoral, that these people, these artists were leading an immoral life that he was aiding and abetting free love and gin drinking. He withdrew the support for American art, and that's when she asked me why I had no children and I told her that it was none of her damn business and walked out on her. I used to talk out on her at lunch time, whether it was the dresses, but that story we have, haven't we?

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes, we have.

MS. HALPERT: Did I tell you about the clinic?

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes.

MS. HALPERT: But the artists managed somehow. They sold something here and there, and they would be introduced to rich people -- as sort of court clowns, and they'd go to dinner parties, and somebody would buy something for fifty dollars, or whatnot. They managed to eke out a very honest kind of meager living, and turned down any commissions that came along. The corruptions that could have existed did not exist. The artists were asked to paint bottles for lamps. All that sort of stuff went on at the time and it does now, but now it's noble, and they manage to survive. The good ones all survived.

I don't recommend poverty, but no artist stopped painting because he was hungry, and they weren't that hungry. It wasn't quite that bad. They had no recognition of any kind, and that is what was very painful until people like Henry McBride came along. The advantages of those years was that you had a wonderful magazine like the *Arts* which was run by an artist, Hamilton Easter Field, who has never, never gotten the recognition he deserves. He was really one of the most important factors of that period in every way. He's been a very important factor in my life. I owe the folk art to him.

I did see it at [Elie] Nadelman, who opened a museum in 1924, and I went to his home before that and saw his folk art, but I saw it first on artist's homes -- Alex Brook, all those people -- Stefan Hirsch, Robert Laurent, everyone who came in contact with Hamilton Easter Field had folk art. He bought a great deal of American art. He had shows in his Columbia Heights -- he had two houses. He rented apartments for very little to the artists who lived in those houses. He had a school out in Ogunquit, and you could live out there for seventy-five dollars the entire summer, and you got a fisherman's hut. It wasn't much, but they managed to work there. He had a grocery store where he sold things at cut rates, and there were just a few people like that who made it possible, who are the unsung heroes, and nobody ever mentions them. I always feel very bitter about it. Whenever I lecture on folk art, I go on about Hamilton Easter Field. Nobody has ever written about him. I do. Everything I write I give him and the artist credit, and of course the Nadelman Museum which was fantastic! It was a great museum, but it did not reach a public. It was known to very few people, and that's why when I opened the gallery everyone told me -- you know, when I went to Montross and asked him about running a gallery, what do you do, how do you get things, do you sign receipts, do you carry insurance, and so on, nobody would tell me.

DR. PHILLIPS: Why their reticence?

MS. HALPERT: First of all, nobody had a system. Frankly, I think that's why, and secondly, they didn't like the idea of having competition, added competition. One gallery could be supported, but not five -- you know, it was a rough period, and I still remember when I sat down and said, "Mr. Montross, I'm opening a gallery."

He raised his arms and said, "But my dear child, you have such a good job!"

Everyone knew that I had a good job and that I was earning so much money. I was earning -- well, I started out at fifty bucks a week, and I got a raise immediately. I never stayed at any job long enough not to get advanced and ready for the next job at a higher salary, but I was getting six, seven thousand dollars a year and more with bonuses when I decided to open the gallery, and I was very happy if I could draw twenty-five dollars a week out of the gallery after a while.

DR. PHILLIPS: Even with this list which, in retrospect, is a fantastic list of people that were not selling in those days.

MS. HALPERT: We began selling pretty much. When I opened the gallery everyone said that no one could do it with contemporary, modern American art. I had early American furniture, wonderful hooked rugs and I bought in Ogunquit and travels. I bought these things long before I opened the gallery. We had a place up at West Camp on the Hudson, and I furnished it. I paid ten dollars for a chest of drawers, five dollars for chairs and so on, had decoys and some pictures, whatnot, of folk art things, and so when I opened the gallery I had an early American setting for modern American art, and it looked very well with the early American furniture.

The thing that burned me up is that I sold the furniture much faster than I did the modern art. I sold it out the first year, and I never had it again. I sold books. I felt that I had to follow somebody's advice. I rarely do, but I got rid of those things very quickly. I remember the pottery I had, ironstone and milk glasses that I would buy for ten cents, twenty-five cents on my trips in my model T Ford.

I'd go to Portsmouth, and I met "Cappy" Stuart who was a fabulous character who had never been a captain. He was called "Cappy" Stuart and he was right on the sea, and I would buy these old second hand dishes to take home. Gradually I assembled a whole service which is very rare, and it was unusual for matrons to go around. There weren't any young women who were interested in these things. After all, I was in my early twenties, and I would go around in this horrible old car. I was poor, and the car looked even poorer, and I got these dishes for five cents, ten, a quarter, and when I opened the gallery in the back room I had shelves and so on, and I had this whole milk glass service.

You couldn't repeat that for anything in the world now. You just couldn't assemble a whole service. Somebody offered me three hundred dollars for this. I had dinner size plates, cake plates, little plates, and so on, and I thought this woman was utterly mad. It cost me about fifteen dollars complete, and I wouldn't give it up. She came back and offered me five hundred dollars, so I was delighted to sell it, and that helped out, but we did start selling contemporary art within about six months. I started with prints, and then we went into paintings, and by 1929, I was publishing books because I felt very guilty that I was really making money.

DR. PHILLIPS: What role, if any, did the museum purchases play?

MS. HALPERT: Museums? Are you kidding? There were no museum purchases at all. The Whitney Museum did not exist. The Modern Museum did not exist. The Modern Museum opened in 1929, and the Whitney opened in 1930, or 1931 -- they were one year apart, but of course the Whitney was furious with me because I was responsible -- quite responsible for the modern Museum. I still have the correspondence leading up to it. I kept talking to Mrs. Rockefeller about it, and she got her friends, Mrs. Sullivan, Edith Wetmore, and so on, and I suggested that it be done entirely by women.

DR. PHILLIPS: Really?

MS. HALPERT: Yes, because women had the culture in the world. The culture in this country. The men made the money, and they never went to the ballet. They didn't go to art exhibitions. They bought the old masters. They didn't buy any contemporary art. There were no males buying contemporary art.

DR. PHILLIPS: And no museums.

MS. HALPERT: And no museums until somewhat later. About 1929, we got to be pretty well known by then, and I think it was this show basically -- the landscape show -- that really brought the men in. That was the turning point from the point of view of getting the public in, a different kind of public, and by 1931, I was really rich. In 1932, I was desperate.

DR. PHILLIPS: How did you handle a fellow like Charles [Joseph –ed.] Pollet?

MS. HALPERT: He was sort of the darling, the van Gogh -- well, he painted a little but like van Gogh. He was an advertiser and fairly successful copywriter who became interested in art, in painting, and his work was really -- well, I have still one very large painting, and Natalie has one I gave her, and they're still very, very good quality. Then unfortunately he got a Guggenheim, went abroad, and got acquainted with the old masters.

He had an arrogance and an ego like some of my best friends among the artists have, and immediately decided

that he could outdo anyone. He learned the techniques, and I have fabulous letters from him saying that he could outdo Rembrandt by this time, but within six months he learned all the technical -- well, he had all the technical equipment practically because a great deal had been written about these old masters, and he studied the paintings, and then something happened to him.

He finally wrote me this letter that he was going to stay on, and he said, "The world is my forge, and you are my tool. I will send you some pictures to sell." Then he deteriorated gradually because he changed from a spontaneous, natural painter with some knowledge -- you know, he did study -- to a phony old master, and it was very, very sad, and he never recovered from it.

He's just completely forgotten, but the pictures of the early period were good. He had great support from John Sloan -- you see, the older artists were very generous in their enthusiasm for the younger artists, not all of them. Max Weber wasn't, but Sloan and Bellows -- that generation and that group were in a huddle. They were all friends, that whole group, Henri, and they were very, very generous toward younger artists. Stuart Davis was greatly benefitted by them. Even if they bought an illustration once in a while, it meant a great deal to the artists, and Pollet certainly had the support -- I don't mean financial, but the enthusiasm of John Sloan and some of the other artists, and his work was very fascinating. It was really good quality, and then gradually -- of course, that's what happened.

You know, when *Life* magazine wrote that I was the great picker of all time, or something -- that's a lot of nonsense! They listed all the good artists that survived. Percentage-wise maybe it's true, now that I think of it, but Pollet is one who faded out.

Alex Brook is another one who faded out, and in his case it was also terrific desire for success. He went off on trips with them and wanted to live the way they did. He went off on trips with them and was really -- well, demolished by all that. We split up for a very simple reason.

We had a number of shows, and when in 1929, we were selling to museums. The Boston Museum certainly bought his picture by 1929, 1930. Carnegie gave him a prize, and the Metropolitan was buying his pictures, they became very popular and were talked about, and the next show we had, he brought in three paintings of the same theme. He had repeated certain paintings that had sold. They had been very successful. This was about 1931, because the show was being held in the Daylight Gallery which is after 1930, and I looked over the group of pictures that he brought in, and I said, "The show's a little too big. I think we'd better eliminate two, or three, or four pictures."

In the Daylight Gallery we had niches for sculpture, and he demanded that we remove the sculpture. He didn't want any interference. That I accepted reluctantly, but I accepted. He wanted to be all alone in a one man show, but when he insisted on having these three pictures in the show, I refused. I said, "I don't have the space."

He said, "Put those in the niches!"

I said, "They don't look well in niches."

I never wanted to make an artist self-conscious, and I never wanted to impose my feelings. Finally I had to break down, and I said, "These are repeat performances, Alex. They're identical with the three pictures of the same theme we sold."

He got very cross. He said, "Of course, they are. You've got to learn to make hay while the sun shines. If this is what people want, we'll give it to them"

I said, "I'm sorry. I won't."

When he admitted that he did that for that purpose, he said, "You don't know how to run a gallery."

I said, "Very well, why don't you move."

We had that show, and that was the last show of his we had and without the three pictures, and then he moved. He had no gallery for a long time. Then he went to Rhehn after that and was successful. He began painting portraits and so on, and he made a good deal of money. Two or three years later, I met him at a party and he insisted on coming back over to my table and asking my escort, or whoever was with me, to please leave, and he burst into tears and said that he had made this mistake and so on, and that Pascin -- had a thing about me -- that "she puts a charm on an artist," and he said, "You did, and now I'm nothing."

Well, it was too late. I just couldn't take him back because he didn't get any better, but that same kind of thing occurs now and has always occurred. An artist feels a certain direction in his painting is successful, and he begins to parody himself. They've been very, very successful. Those are the artists who have made the most

money.

Dufy is the best example. He's painted three pictures all his life after the Fauve period which was terrific, and from there on he found that painting orchestras, painting seascapes, and what's the third theme? I'll think of it in a minute. He had three themes that he repeated indefinitely, and he sold everything he painted. It makes it very easy. When a person recognizes a picture, it's half sold. When we walk in and says, "That's a Dufy!"

That gives him a sense of such gratification that he recognizes an artist, it's a pushover for a sale. We had it in the beginning. Everybody would come and say, "That looks like a" whatever it was. It didn't at all. It might have one common denominator of a brown goo. I remember having three people one day, and I told them about Watson's theory of behaviorism, about the dog and the cat -- you know, and that worked.

Any time I got a gimmick that works, I'm like an artist who repeats himself. I use an anecdote indefinitely if it's a good one. I don't use it to people in the same city, or the same state, so they don't tell each other. It's always fresh. I have an anecdote for any artist that knocks them silly. The Watson's behaviorism -- I think I paid a dollar fifty for that book, and it was worth thousands of dollars to me because I would make people so self-conscious, say, "Pretty pussy!" and boy that would shut 'em up immediately.

You had to really contribute something in selling those days. Today it's very easy because the artists are very well known, but then these artists were known to very few people. There were reviews, but how many people read the book reviews who don't buy books, and in those days each section was specialized. I never look at the stock market page. I own stock, but that's my broker's business. I haven't the slightest interest. I don't want to know what it means.

I can understand how people who were not interested in art wouldn't look at the art page. They would just skip it, so that you had to use all sorts of puller inners that were fairly honest. I don't mean that they were tricky. We didn't give away silk hosiery, or dishes, but you had to attract them with ideas. You know, if you advertised art for Christmas, nobody ever dreamed of giving a work of art for Christmas. That was a new idea. They'd come in, they'd look around, and they'd see a print, a lithograph, or something, and for twenty-five bucks they could give somebody a gift and prove that they were very cultured people.

I had biographies mimeographed right away. Even if the artists were in one museum it was listed so that this character could go home, read about it and say, "You know he was born in Atlantic City," or "He was born in Iowa, and he studied with" so-and-so. We had those biographical notes, so that you had to use all those gimmicks to make the thing interesting. The idea was to keep the character in the gallery long enough so the picture grew on him, or tell an anecdote about that specific picture which he would remember, and it would make an impact. It was the only way to function when you had material that was completely unpopular. You know, most of it looked crazy as hell to these people. They didn't know what it was about. The drawing was out of shape.

PHILLIPS: Kuniyoshi.

MS. HALPERT: Yes. Kuniyoshi and the wooden cow. They never saw a cow with a square back and pointed rear, so that you had to explain that to them and you had to do it logically. You couldn't just tell them a funny story. That added. That was always good. Even today we still sell art -- you know, we complete a sale quicker with an anecdote because the human interest is what people like.

Human interest is what the magazine play up -- you know, when *Life* magazine writes about an artist, take Modigliani, they write about his being a dope fiend and about all the women he had. That people remember, and they're interested. Well, we didn't use any of those stories, anything like that. It might have something to do with where they lived, or the kind of furnishings they had, the kind of an anecdote that happened on a trip in a jitney, breaking down in a strange place, whatever, but that little human interest touch was very, very helpful and you learned as you go along. I never sold except in the peanuts era, and you just make -- well, that's the whole secret of being a good sales person.

DR. PHILLIPS: What would bring a person into the gallery in the first place, and I don't mean Bliss, or Arthur B. Davies, but a person.

MS. HALPERT: The biggest plus was that there were twenty-one speakeasies on the block, and it was a very popular street -- 13th Street. Mario's was one of the very best speakeasies. There were quite a few good ones there, and they'd pass by and come in out of curiosity. They'd laugh at the things, and they'd come in again. They'd look, they'd talk, and they'd sit down and chat and meet an artist, and it developed. It was an atmosphere that was completely different from any other gallery in America, naturally.

It was in the Village, and it did look like a speakeasy. It was a brownstone, exactly the same shape, and they would ring the bell which didn't work, thinking it was a speakeasy, but we did get a number of people down by

mistake, and out of curiosity. Edith Wetmore sent down dozens and dozens of people. They would talk about it. This was a great experience, to find a left bank art gallery, and they assumed that everything was cheaper.

I had a big fight with Kraushaar, because he consigned to me a great many [John] Sloans, and I sold so many Sloan etchings that he just went out of his mind, and he said that I was underselling him. I was not. Used to make portfolios of them and charge extra for the portfolio, the same price that he charged plus, but he was convinced and people were convinced that they got everything cheaper, and I had to plead with them not to say that because it wasn't true. We charged exactly the same price, but they assumed that they were getting a bargain because it was out of the way.

Then we began getting terrific publicity, and you know, when you get a reproduction -- even today, when you get a reproduction in the *New York Times*, you're made, and I'll show you the clipping books someday. It's astonishing. Every once in a while we'd get pages -- you know, with this exhibition of the landscape, we had tremendous reviews in all the papers and even those reviews that said that the things were funny, that they were bad drawings, that they were all out of kilter, that these artists didn't know anything about color -- they used reds and greens, yellows, and so on, even that aroused enough curiosity to bring people in, and so we had terrific attendance after a while and then we began having opening parties which nobody had, and those were the gay parties.

All the artists would come. Every artist in the Village would come in. Our great problem was to keep artists out because everybody wanted to move into the gallery. Then when Daniel closed which was still in the twenties, the few artists I wanted came -- they all wanted to come down, but I didn't want. I didn't want a number of the artists, and they were very good friends of mine, and that made it rather difficult, but I never deviated from that, of course. I never took an artist in -- I made mistakes, but at least I thought that they were very good when I took them, and I've always had new people coming like Ben Shahn.

He came into the gallery in 1928, and I gave him a show immediately which was sold out, but completely -- even then. I think that we had something like fifteen, or twenty pictures. I called him up -- no he didn't have a phone, and I had to send him a note to bring in some more. He had a great many more, and we had room for just so many paintings. We sold out the whole show from twenty-five dollars to seventy-five dollars.

I think they were when he was painting in a Rouault manner, somewhere in between a Matisse and a Rouault manner, if you can image that, because they were young, and they were all influenced at the time. The very next show, the "Sacco-Vanzetti" show, was completely sold out, and these were the first shows the artists had. We had that happen with a number of artists we had.

We had Friedenthal who was one of the most exciting draftsmen, and we sold out his show. The Brooklyn Museum bought two drawings. We did have museum sales -- sure we did, but on a small scale.

DR. PHILLIPS: There was a Society of Brooklyn Modern Artists.

MS. HALPERT: We had nothing to do with them.

The Newark Museum -- John Cotton Dana was way ahead. He had the first show of useful objects. The Modern Museum had the same show later, and this was the greatest thing that ever happened. Well, Dana went to the ten cents store, and even that was before my day. He had a show. I have a book on him that gives a date, and he anticipated a lot. He hated the stuff, but he had a Weber show.

Weber installed a show of photography. He hired Weber to make the settings and so on. I think it was a white school of photography. Well, can you imagine having photography as an art? Dana was way ahead of his time. He was a person who loathed modern art, but he had respect for it. He showed a good deal. He bought a Halpert, and that must have been in the twenties. Yes, that was with me, so that it was in the twenties. That was a Paris picture of Sam's, but I think he bought it in 1926. He bought Stellas. There was a man by the name of Egner in Newark who was a lawyer who started buying -- he was the one who bought the Stellas for the museum.

There were the smaller museums, but the big ones stayed away. For a long time Boston didn't buy anything until I wrote that depression letter, and they came through. I mean, the two museums which hadn't supported modern American art were the ones that came through in a very noble way. They bought several pictures each, and boy! Was that a windfall for us! We had to do things like that. I sent out a form letter -- I was a great form letter writer. This I learned in my previous business.

I've got to open this window.

DR. PHILLIPS: Can I open it for you?

MS. HALPERT: I'm not a blonde, dear. I've learned to do this for myself.

DR. PHILLIPS: You make me feel so useful.

MS. HALPERT: I learned that lesson years ago, only a blonde gets things done for her. I was a blonde until I was about twelve.

DR. PHILLIPS: Success is a strange thing, but take a fellow like Stefan Hirsch -- the range of the selections you made, even that first time . . .

MS. HALPERT: I met him in Ogunquit. He was part of that Brooklyn Heights affair, but I met him in Ogunquit. He was part of it. By the way, that's another gallery that had a few modern artists, that had Canady -- not John -- and Friedman, sort of primitive, and he had prints by practically all the artists. It was a great print gallery, still is, and that helped. Bourgeois showed Stefan Hirsch and Stella until Stella chased him down Fifth Avenue with a knife.

DR. PHILIPS: Really? He what?!

MS. HALPERT: What happened was that Bourgeois was very interested in Chinese art, Oriental art. He specialized in it, and he had a few. When American art took over, a number of the galleries -- like Rosenberg did when he came to this country -- had American art a puller inners, so Stella found out. Some man came to his studio, and he had just sent all of his pictures up to Bourgeois. It was a very elegant gallery on Fifth Avenue, and he was very prosperous -- you know, selling great Chinese and Japanese art, and he had a few Americans, so Stella sent this man up to Bourgeois and asked, "Where are Stella's pictures?"

This man came back and told Stella that he went to look at his work, and Bourgeois said, "Don't bother about this. Let me show you some Chinese art, " and that's what they did. That's what Rosenberg did with Rattner and Weber, and so on, "Why don't you come upstairs and see the real thing? I have magnificent Brock."

A few people would tell this to the artists -- you see. In Stella's case it was pretty rough because Stella needed the money. He went up there and grabbed a knife -- he was going to kill Bourgeoisie for killing this sale. Stella had a readymade sale. This man came to his studio to buy a Stella, and he sent him up to Bourgeoisie who switched him to Chinese paintings, and he didn't buy anything. He told Stella, so Stella went up there with a knife, and Bourgeoisie ran out of the gallery and down the stairs with Stella after him. I didn't see this, but this was talked about all over New York for a long time. Stella chased him down Fifth Avenue with his knife. Somebody caught him and held him back. A few weeks later, after I heard this story, Stella comes into the gallery, and he says, "You will handle my work."

I didn't want his work. He was then painting still lifes and so on, but what he was painting then I did not like. I looked at him. He pointed his finger, and I could see the knife coming at me, and I said, "All right."

This was one time I took an artist when I didn't want him, but I did want him later. This was just a bad period in his work for a short time, but I did it because I was afraid of that knife.

DR. PHILLIPS: There's another fellow whose work intrigues me quite apart from the fact that I heard a good bit about him from Stuart Davis, and that's Glenn Coleman.

MS. HALPERT: He was really very exciting. We had -- oh boy! When I told him -- you know, every once in a while something really wonderful happens. His things were sort of drab, and then he got color into his work, and he was really very exciting. He painted the interior of a speakeasy, which he knew intimately, believe me -- well, I sold a good many of his paintings. His great aspiration was to get into the Metropolitan Museum.

I had a philosophy, I never told an artist of a sale until I got paid, or until it was a very assured sale because the disappointment, if the sale didn't come through, was just too much for an artist to bear. I never told an artist anything until the sale was actually made. The Metropolitan asked me to send up this speakeasy, or was it the poolroom? -- I've forgotten who bought which. Mrs. Rockefeller bought one and the Metropolitan bought the other, and I can't remember which was which. I think the speakeasy is the one that went to the Metropolitan. Well Henry Whaley came in, and he said, "Send it up on approval."

Then I called him up, and I asked, "How's it coming?"

He said, "Okay, but you'll get the official announcement, or the official letter shortly."

Well, Glenn Coleman came in, and he looked absolutely miserable. We had already sold a good many pictures. There was something about him that worried me. He never said anything. He would come in, stand around, look at his watch, and at six o'clock he'd say, let's go out and have a drink."

This was the fullest extent of his conversation, so I said, "Tonight I will go out and have a drink with you. You've just sold a picture to the Metropolitan Museum."

The next day he died -- or within a short while he died, but the expression of joy on his face, I thought, "My God! If this doesn't go through" -- you know, I didn't get the official notice, but it did go through, and I was so pleased that I gave him this moment of joy because this was the peak. The artist talked of the Metropolitan with great contempt, but when we sold a picture to the Metropolitan they would just die of joy. We must have sold the museum -- sure we did. We sold them in the twenties -- you know, because we were very prosperous. Our success started very quickly.

DR. PHILLIPS: You moved stock which other galleries did not move.

MS. HALPERT: Stieglitz never got over the fact that I sold the first oil of Marin that had ever been sold. I didn't know that it was the first oil. He always kept the oils hidden, and I insisted in this show at Radio City that I had to have an oil of Marin's as well as water colors, and finally I coaxed one out of him. I sold it immediately to Bob Tannahill in Detroit and then when I told Stieglitz about the sale -- I sold water colors too -- Stieglitz said that was the first oil of Marin ever sold. I didn't know that.

Even in a show like that at Radio City, I had a lot of gimmicks as I did with the "Thirty-three Moderns" show. I wrote to everybody. I said, "You've all got to come to this party. You've got to buy a picture." I either wrote, or telephoned, "You've got to buy a picture to prove to the Grand Central that modern art is being bought by people with the best taste in America."

They couldn't resist that. We sold thirty-three pictures of the thirty-three moderns. The same thing was true of the Radio City exhibition. I wrote, and I said, "This will be a preview, and so that Mayor La Guardia, when he opens the show tomorrow, can announce that thirty pictures were sold," or something, "came and buy one, and it will create an avalanche."

Artists were desperate! Everybody had to buy, and I made dates. I wrote the letter to all the dealers -- I mean, I had the letters sent out. Holger Cahill was in the hospital, and he wasn't near the place. I wrote letters in his name, and then I wrote letters to all the dealers saying that this would be open house and would they write to their clients to bring them in. Well, we sold one hell of a lot of pictures before the show was opened, and the names were announced on the radio. It was a national -- what do you call it?

DR. PHILLIPS: Hookup.

MS. HALPERT: Yes, hookup, and the names were mentioned one after another. Then LaGuardia got some money from somebody to buy art for the high schools -- you know, prints and whatnot, but you always had to have a gimmick of some kind, and if you had an idea, it paid off because nobody else had ideas. Now, no idea is any good. Before you breathe it, somebody else has it.

That was the great saving grace that Radio City show in 1934, because it revived the interest -- well, Mrs. Rockefeller thought she had to buy. I've forgotten how much money she gave me to buy some stuff for her in that show. That was announced -- you see, at the opening, and all those people thought that they had to do something because having it in Radio City wasn't too bad. I mean, everybody connected with it contributed so that interest in art and artists was really revived.

There was another thing during the peak of the Depression. Our depression started in 1931 -- the commercial depression started in 1929, and we weren't hit until 1931. In 1930, we did one hundred and ten thousand dollars in business. Of course, we didn't match that for twenty years -- you know, and I had the Daylight Gallery, published books. Boy! I used taxis -- no more Sixth Avenue "e1." Before they tore it down, I stopped using it, so I spoke to Mrs. Rockefeller.

That's the time I suggested to her that she have artists do things for her. She showed me the fabulous unicorn tapestries in her home -- they're at the Cloisters now. They are marvelous! One room is devoted to them, and no matter what time of day I came, I also walked through there. That house was like Grand Central Station -- sixty-eight rooms, or something, and I would always go to that room, and the name of the person who paid for the tapestries was incorporated. I said, "Who in the world would ever know the name of this noble, if not for this work of art?"

I kept repeating that until I could see that she was getting bored. Your mentioning Stefan Hirsch reminded me of this. I said, "Why don't you commission artists to paint, to sculpt for you. This was the way great art was created in the earlier ages."

She said, "Very well."

She decided that she liked a view from her window looking south, and Stefan painted this view in his style. There was no concession of any kind. She didn't ask for it. Margaret Zorach made an embroidery of the Rockefeller family in Seal Harbor. Charles Sheeler made a drawing of Central Park. I mean, none of the artists made any concessions. Ben Shahn went out to paint a portrait of her favorite horse -- went out to Pocantico [Pocantico Hills, NY] and painted a portrait of a horse. Reuben Nakian mended a piece of sculpture, and these artists had a ball because they did exactly what they wanted to do. There was no dictatorship in this of any kind. She accepted anything they did, and she was very happy with them -- she really felt that she was carrying on the great tradition of the past.

As I say, you had to think of some gimmick all the time, and the artists fell into it because they did not prostitute themselves. I mean, I would pick the artist who was best equipped for that particular thing. I picked Ben Shan because he needed it very badly. He could draw anything, and he painted the horse. He doesn't mind my telling this. At one time he would have killed me, but now he thinks it's all right. He painted a portrait of her favorite nag, but this created a great deal of interest.
All these activities were talked about, written about and so on -- the Brummer show of the tapestries by Margaret Zorach, several sculptures Zorach made on commission, and we did have this exhibition of "Practical Manifestations of American Art"where Sheeler designed silver which brought up the quality. Kuniyoshi designed wall paper. This was in the late thirties when artists were really desperate. That was Sam Kootz's idea -- this was before he had a gallery. He wanted Steichen to photograph designs for a fabric. Kootz was working for a fabric house. Sheeler made some designs, and then I said, "Why don't we go into this a little deeper?'

We got the biggest silver company, and they stole the design. Sheeler conceived the idea of the S and the P, but he didn't patent it, so they stole that. Kuniyoshi made the most wonderful wallpaper. It was really very handsome, and the fabrics was very beautiful, and they sold, and we had this exhibition of the practical manifestations with an original painting -- you know, the painting had nothing to do with the fabric, but a painting by the artist. I had them all in little booths, and we had a fire.

DR. PHILLIPS: In the gallery?

MS. HALPERT: In the Daylight Gallery, and it was so fire proof! It was an extraordinary experience! I came down, and there was a big flame shooting up. The fire department was there in just a few minutes. The flames were banging on the walls and just bouncing back. It was a fabric wall I had woven for me for nothing -- you know, it was a sample. I said, "We'll advertise," and we did too. We used the first flocking in this building and across the street and so on, and that was a very simple gimmick; to tell them that you were giving them publicity and you'd introduce a new idea. The lighting system we had downstairs was the first one of its kind in America. That was done for nothing by some big company, and we gave them a terrific amount of publicity, so it didn't cost me anything.

Well, the flames just came shooting right back and the only thing that happened was in the two niches in one and where I had wooden shelves for ceramics. Karl Walters made very beautiful ceramics. That was the only thing that actually burned, and I still remember the fire chief -- you know, they came in with all these hoses and axes, and nothing was burning. I had to scream. I had everybody take the pictures out, and they weren't touched, but it was so hot that the skylight glass which I brought from Essen cracked from the heat, but nothing -- there wasn't anything damaged, but that corner, so the fire chief got up on a stool because I had to get up on a stool. There were all of these hoses and so on, and the fire chief did an imitation of me. I'm sure I didn't sound so funny. He said, "Boys! Boys! -- this in a very feminine voice -- "Don't touch these works of art! Put down your hoses!"

Nothing was damaged actually. We just washed the walls -- except that one corner, but that show brought a terrific audience. People were fascinated. Steichen was known as a great photographer; these beautiful fabrics he designed. It's in this catalogue, but I've forgotten what was in it now. As I say, it was simply getting a new idea to attract the public, but it was authentic. It was not sensationalism. That's the thing I object to now. It was something really authentic, and the artists were so cooperative.

We had a meeting. We discussed the problems -- you know, "What are we going to do? We need some ideas. Boys, what do you think of this "practical manifestations" and so on. As long as I didn't give them statistics -- if I said, "Statistically speaking," they'd all get up in a body. Oh, how they hated statistics! That became a gag. They discussed this practical manifestations idea, and you know, I could guess what was coming. I'd say, "So-and-so is going to happen, and we have to prepare for so-and-so, and how do you feel about this idea?"

We'd have theme shows. I'd tell them a year ahead, or something, that we would have a theme show -- like "The Artist Looks at Music" which was one of the very, very successful shows, Sheeler painted a -- what do you call it -- whistle, a factory whistle, and each one painted something in his own manner. There was never any deviation from the aesthetic philosophy of the artist. Sheeler didn't deviate from his subject matter. He did an industrial music. It was a wonderful painting -- really marvelous!

They all had very exciting things, and it was stimulating, exciting, and the artists were having a good time. They weren't yapping, and they weren't cheating, and it's only in the past ten years that the whole philosophy, the outside philosophy, changed to such a degree that the artists became a little unhappy -- you know, that so-and-so was getting twenty thousand dollars more than they were, and that this direction was becoming popular.

I think the new image that has been presented, the Madison Avenue thing that came in, the kind of publicity, I don't think the artists of this period -- I'm not talking about the older artists, but the artists of this period are having the same good time these older artists had, and it was a good time. It was a period of real gratification because what they were doing no matter what name it was presented under, some name, it didn't matter. It wasn't anything that hurt them in any way certainly. There were enough pictures that had to do with music, musical instruments, whatever, and that gave me an idea, and I said, "Let's have a show called The Artist Looks at Music."" Well, most of them had something, and the few that didn't have anything thought of something that would fit in and there was lots of time -- you know, it was always months ahead -- and really there was a much greater cohesion, a family spirit in the gallery that was nice.

Our annual parties were just absolutely wonderful! I have the minutes of all those meetings. I always had minutes typed up. I kept very careful records what was said because artists come out with some awfully good business ideas that make a dealer look sick occasionally.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's a good thought, and you ought to dwell on that for a moment -- you spent two hours or so downstairs telling me one time that if anyone ever again told you that an artist didn't have business sense that you'd scream.

MS. HALPERT: Well, you know, that myth that has existed for thousands of years about the poor creative personality who doesn't know anything about the practical manifestations of life, that's a lot of baloney -- from personal experience. It think that I try to keep cleaner than any artist has really, and I'm not saying that in any derogatory sense, because they have a sense of license that a business person doesn't have -- you know, there's certain ethics in business and there's a good -- what's the bureau?

DR. PHILLIPS: Better Business Bureau.

MS. HALPERT: Better Business Bureau that protects the public from presumably dishonest dealers -- I'm not talking about the art business, but generally. The number of times, not in the early years, nor during the bad days, but as soon as things began to break, they'd say, "Don't you think this picture would be good for so-and-so? Why don't you call up so-and-so?"

Oh yes, one of the things in the early days of the gallery that made the dealers dislike me very violently, all the dealers, was that when we paid the artist, we always put down on the bottom of the purchase slip, which accompanies the check, the name of the buyer. We've had parties where we would introduce the collectors, and nobody ever had openings of that kind where the artists met the collectors, and the dealers felt that I was ruining the art business completely by having the artist meet the collectors. They frequently went to their homes, and frequently they sold something on their own. We'd know it in about -- well, it never took more than a week to find that out. Today, I can't keep up with it, except when there's a big exhibition that goes abroad, and I see pictures reproduced with names that I knew nothing about, but that I've accepted a long time ago. If you tell an artist that, he'll say, "Oh, I was going to tell you about it."

But they come through with pretty good commercial ideas -- believe me, and very smart ones too, and I thank them for them. Sometimes I pursue that idea, and sometimes I drop it because I don't think -- well, it isn't up my alley. I let them do it on their own and don't take a commission. Anything I don't approve of, I don't play along money-wise. First of all, they're very worldly people. They really know…they meet everybody. They read. They know what's going on, and they even tell you what stock to buy occasionally. The innocence of the artist is a myth. I don't care whether he lives outside of Waukesha, Wisconsin.

They're pretty well aware of what's going on, just as they know that the year of our Lord 1956, the highest price obtained by DeKooning. So you go to jury a show or four or five shows that year, and you know, I have a very perverted sense of humor, that's the way I've picked a number of my artists. By traveling around to the regional shows you really know what is cooking in a certain part of the country. There was a time when there was a local idiom which was very important. That has disappeared. So today, even if you don't know how much DeKooning had sold for in 1956, you knew it was the highest price because you'd go to four regional shows, which you juried, you'd find the predominant style was Al DeKooning.

The next year it was Kline. And the same thing would happen except it was in the Kline direction. The following year it was Rothko. And then the following year it was Rauschenberg. And you could tell it. When I went to Baltimore last year, and I found three crushed cars as I walked in, you knew that Chamberlain was in!

That did not occur in the early days because nobody was prosperous enough to create a desire to imitate, except the academicians or the fashionable illustrators. But there was a certain kind of cohesion and a give and take among artists, which was really very beautiful. I mean those early parties; Alex Brook would bring in somebody who he knew would like a Kuniyoshi. The artists would sell each other's pictures all the time. If an artist had a good break he'd pass this collector on to another artist. That happened in the gallery consistently, and it was a beautiful, beautiful thing to experience--this little family group business. Those parties were beautiful. It was actually a family working together, working with each other for each other.

Well, of course, that kind of thing doesn't exist anymore. All I have to do is mention Shahn to Stuart, or Stuart to Shahn, and they freeze up because it's become competitive. Styles have become competitive. Directions have become competitive, and that's why I say I don't enjoy the gallery anymore at all. I don't have the same feeling anymore that I had. It's become -- well, artist commerce now, generally, and to keep it this way is very, very difficult.

That's why I have these educational shows -- like this one. I just got the catalogue -- I haven't looked at it -- from the University of Iowa. At least I'm having fun of organizing a show that has some overall friendly context of a great many artists working within a period, and that kind of family attitude really doesn't exist, except in a promotional way -- you know, like the New York School. They have a club, and they all go to the Cedar Bar -- whatever it's called. They plan the next move -- you know, whom to hit, or to write a letter to Canady, but it's an entirely different spirit. In those days Stuart was just as much a part of the planning we had. He was terribly interested in what was going to happen when I'd tell them what was going to happen and not to worry about it.

Kootz sent out manifesto about a new style of art. I can't remember the name of it. It was the beginning of action painting. I read this, and they thought I was making it up. I have it. It was a very funny pamphlet. It sounds like the *Art News* does today. Every once in a while I did make something up, and Stuart would say, "Cut it out! Cut it out! Where did you get that language?"

This pamphlet was real, and I said that this was going to hit the art field and that I hoped nobody was going to be disturbed about it. It was going to be written about. It was going to be the big thing, and it was, but I also said that it was going to be a passing phase. Well, I wasn't afraid, but just the same maybe a little bit underneath I was afraid that it might condition one or two of my artists to go in that direction because action painting became fashionable. That was even before the fellow with the sword and all that sort of stuff, but these were the beginnings which led to that.

The artists would look at each other, and I think it was the fact that they did not want the others to criticize them that they stuck to their own guns. Again -- I repeat -- this is what disturbs me so much about what is happening with this current generation. No such thing exists now, and it was really very, very beautiful. We all struggled together. We had good times together, and each artist, whether he liked the other guy's work -- they can't really, but they respected each other's work. Some of them don't respect each other, but they respected each other's work, which was very important.

It was non-competitive, and in a way while this was never part of the plan, or the idea, the fact that they were so very different in their aesthetic goals was very good because it was not competitive. If they worked along the same lines, it would be. If they were all action painters, or all painted the largest pictures and had to get a little larger, and so on, it would become competitive. This way they all ran off into their own little direction without any interference from each other because it's the family criticism that would be the most painful. They never got it from the gallery but criticism from each other would have been painful, but this way, they said, "Well, that cornball is working this way, but he's doing it well. He's picked a crazy direction, but he's doing it well. He means it."

They respected that. Someone like -- well, it doesn't matter. Take an artist who painted with impasto and he'd look at a Sheeler, and it was cold, and it was bare. Sheeler would look at a guy's work who didn't respect the essence, who put all the goo on top, and they couldn't possibly like each other's work, but they respected it, and there was -- well, I hate to keep talking about the past, but I suppose that when you hit my age, you think of it a great deal. You think back and the horrible things that happened still remain, but the good ones stand out -- you know, in neon lights, and this is the thing that standouts in neon lights, this sort of family -- I don't mean the gallery family per se, but this mutual respect. Then when I talked to them about taking on a group of new artists, there'd be a heated discussion about it, and the artist would say, "Do you want suggestions?"

I'd say, "all right," and the painters always suggested sculptors, and the sculptors always suggested painters which used to slay me, but that was very consistent. They were not suggesting any competition, and then I'd kid them about it. I'd make a list of their suggestions, and I'd say, "The painters all suggest sculptors, and the sculptors suggested painters," and they'd laugh their heads off -- you know, this was funny.

But the number of people who responded when I looked through the old list in our Christmas shows were always,

even from the earliest show, which was -- well, I think people came in because they never heard of such a thing. The letter that went out -- "Give a work of art for Christmas" The people came in, and then they'd look at a painting or whatnot, and it would be a hundred dollars, and so on. And I'd say, "You can keep it for yourself." Very few people really gave away what they bought at the Christmas show. They kept them, but that was a great experience -- you know, having a genuine, a real work of art in the home, does something to a few people.

Just as reading the first good book in your life conditions you to do more reading, and so on, listening to music, you suddenly find that the sound gives you great pleasure, and then you go out and hear more music. The idea is to get the first picture into the home, and you warn them, "Now, wait a minute! Before you make this purchase, remember, this is going to be a dangerous adventure because nobody has one painting."

Of course, they buy it like snapping your finger, but it's true. They all come back for more. It was really the quantitative buying during the Depression, it was those people, who made it possible for us to exist at all, but most of all, the guy who made it possible for the gallery to survive was a very dead artist who died in 1892 -- Mr. Harnett.

When I was completely penniless, really penniless, when I lost the building on 13th Street, I bought out my partner long before, and I paid her the full half. It wasn't worth a tenth at that time, and then I had forty-eight violations. This was before I got coy enough to go down and say to the Building Department, "I came down to be de-violated!" Then the violations were wiped out in fifteen minutes. That was years later after I became more sophisticated and owned a lot of Chanel perfume that I could pour over myself before I went to the Building Department.

DR. PHILLIPS: You must have stampeded the Building Department!

MS. HALPERT: I'll bet they couldn't get rid of that smell for weeks.

DR. PHILLIPS: I'll bet they couldn't either. They'd know you anywhere.

MS. HALPERT: Well, in any event, just at the point where the end had come, the Boston Museum bought what I still consider one of the three very great Harnetts for forty-five hundred dollars. I suddenly had forty-five hundred dollars. This was 1940. Well, we had sunk to the lowest. I was just penniless. I didn't have to pay anybody. It belonged to me, so I came uptown, and I rented a six story house with an elevator. That's the time I went back.

The whole family was visiting me in the country, and Natalie's husband is a lawyer. I was gone for two days, and I arrived with great excitement that I had a lease and a contract to rebuild the whole place -- six stories and a penthouse, and I had no more money. This was it. I had to pay three thousand dollars down for the rent, and I had to pay the lawyer -- I did this without a lawyer until I had to sign the papers, but I did it all within forty-eight hours. I came back so excited.

This whole street was boarded up. This was really a ghost town. I had a choice of a building on 57th Street, and there was some museum director who saw me sitting on the pipe -- one of those brass pipes in the street -- fire hydrants. He saw me sitting, and he pushed me, and I practically fell. He caught me, and he said, "What in the hell are you doing?"

I said, "I'm contemplating -- should I take this place?"

It was a Hearst property. Things were so desperate then that they offered me a whole floor for some ridiculous rent, and they offered to rebuild the Daylight Gallery, to make a facade inside, for some very foolish rental to start a gallery building. I saw this building here across the street, number 43. The Talon Company is in it now. Because I had a perfect record, I'd paid my taxes, never delayed paying my taxes and my mortgage -- I had a very good record -- I got that building. I decided on that building because I was always out of the district. I was on 13th Street.

This building would be out of the district because everybody was on 57th Street and up. Even Kraushaar had this big corner, 54th Street and Fifth Avenue, and everybody moved during the Depression. They moved into one room in the Hecksher Building. Macbeth -- all these galleries moved into one little bitsy room, so in 1940, I rented the six story building, and my family and my nephew-in-law takes me aside and says, "Don't worry. I'll go to town tomorrow morning, and I'll get everything straightened out. We will have you declared incompetent."

It was very sweet of him, but he did not do it. Well, I sent out a publicity release -- and that is going to the Archives as a special. That I'm going to put on parchment because I said, "In her faith in American Art" -- it started that way. Did you see this? Oh, you haven't read this. I'll show it to you -- "Edith Halpert has taken a six story building" -- I was using only three, but that line...

DR. PHILLIPS: What were you thinking about sitting on the fire hydrant?

MS. HALPERT: I was sitting there thinking, and I evidently looked very conspicuous there -- well-dressed, and I wasn't tight, or anything. It was the middle of the day and I was sitting on a hydrant -- you know, leaning with my chin on my fist -- and this museum guy from St. Louis, Myrick Rogers, pushed me, and he caught me, and he said, "What in the hell are you doing?"

I said before, "I'm contemplating."

I took him down 51st Street, and he said, "Good God! This is a ghost town."

These were all mansions. The entire street was boarded up. The corner was church property, and there was one mansion which was a defunct art gallery -- I have forgotten the name, one of the old master galleries with a son who married Wildenstein's daughter, but it was closed to the public. It was a beautiful old house, and then I modernized this building. Well, when I showed it to Myrick, he said, "This is awfully odd."

I said, "It's six stories and it has an elevator in it."

It was thirty-six hundred dollars a year, the first year, with an elevator clause, and I said to my nephew-in-law, "I'll declare you incompetent. I have forty-five hundred dollars. I can't lose more than I have. I didn't have it last week. I now have forty-five hundred dollars, or I had it this morning before I signed the papers. After all, I cannot lose more than I have. I'm not afraid. I won't have it again. That's all. I'll go out and get a job."

Well, it opened up. I got the flocking. It was the most beautiful gallery. Do you know what flocking is? Well, it was simply a beautiful gray. The whole gallery-- one huge gallery. I went to Radio City -- I've forgotten the name of the company. The lights that I have on the second floor here are still the lights that I had there, and it was the first time florescent light was used. They did the whole thing for me for nothing.

I designed a door -- well, that's all in the publicity. There was more publicity about the interior than about the pictures at first. There was a terrific story, a full page story on me. I was the designer, but it didn't cost me anything -- the trimming. Of course, the rebuilding did, and the contractor turned out to be someone who knew me when I was sixteen years old and was presumably in love with me -- he told my mother, and he didn't tell me, and I don't know how I dug him up, but I did, and he did all this, and he waited for payment.

I had all these breaks! The elevator was impossible! I had that fixed up. It was illegal, so I went down -- that's the time I had all this trouble, and I went down to be "de-violated," and I got the whole Building Department with me. They came in and told me that all I had to put in was a diamond shaped window and put in some gussets, or something, and they arranged for me to have it done in the most inexpensive way.

In any event, this opened up, and it was simply magnificent. We sold out the entire first show. I wrote to everybody about this opening, and it was a beautiful, beautiful gallery, and we sold out the first show, and from there on American art was on again, so I'm very grateful to William Harnett. The following year when we were really popping, the artists were so pleased with themselves -- you know, "Look what we did for you!"

I said, "Wait a minute, Boys! Let's get this straight! Thirty of you have never been able to keep me, and one dead artist did it all, so let's stop all this rejoicing -- what you did for the little woman!"

It was that forty-five hundred dollars that did it.

DR. PHILLIPS: Did you keep the Downtown Gallery open during the Thirties?

MS. HALPERT: I never closed. I was closed in the summer. When I got those letters from Stuart Davis and Zorach -- Zorach told me; well, can I get blackmail for those two letters! Stuart told me that I couldn't have any pictures he ever painted or anything in his letter. Zorach wrote and said that I was a clerk at heart and because of that they all stopped selling. This was 1939 -- during the Depression -- 1934, 1936, during the WPA. Stuart wrote me and said that I lied, that I never liked his work because if I did, I'd be selling his work.

That was the one time I was giving up the gallery. When I came back from the WPA, I came back with twelve new artists -- that's what happened. I spent the summer on the WPA, and I got very excited about what was going on. I brought back twelve new artists and all those things always created an interest -- sort of a revival, brought new people and some excitement, but it was a very, very hard sledding and in 1940, I was really washed up, and that's when Mr. Harnett saved my life.

There were other things that had to be done. I went to Washington and got all sorts of rulings about taxes. I started selling pictures to businesses for Christmas cards, and they owned the paintings, and I went right through the Washington bureaucracy to get that okayed.

DR. PHILLIPS: The market dropped steadily then throughout the thirties.

MS. HALPERT: Completely in every field, in everything. I mean everybody was desperate, and I say they all moved into one room. These big galleries. You can look at the ads the year before and the year after. About half the galleries closed up completely. Quite a few of them did. They couldn't survive. Look at Duveen. Duveen was owned by the Chase Bank by that time. You couldn't borrow a nickel on art because of Duveen. They found that there was nothing they could do with the art. It was very bad. They're sorry now, believe me, that they didn't hold onto it.

You see, the war in a way -- a horrible thing to say -- did something for American art because there was no import during the war, just as fashions -- you know, that was the beginning of American fashion. Up to that time, nothing but imported fashion would do, and they couldn't import anything, and this country had to become self-sufficient. That was the beginning of American furniture design, American dress design. This country became very important. The Europeans are wearing American suits and so on. The skirts changed, everything changed, and they couldn't import foreign art, so this country really became self-sufficient in all these upper class fields out of sheer necessity because there were no imports.

There was a great accent on that, and that was really the beginning -- there were many beginnings. The WPA was the great thing that happened in American art. But for the WPA, it would have taken a hundred years to reach that point. I did talk about making art masculine, changing the picture.

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes, we talked, in part, about the WPA the last time.

MS. HALPERT: I thought I had gone into that. That changing picture is something that very few people will acknowledge. I've talked about it for years everywhere. I think I told you about talking about it in Topeka during the Landon-Roosevelt campaign -- you know, what Roosevelt did for American art. Well, the WPA was certainly the most important thing that happened for American culture -- overall culture. It took in the ballet, music, theater, and so on, all the experimental work in writing -- you know, those guide books that were written.

DR. PHILLIPS: They're great.

MS. HALPERT: Yes, they're terribly important. The theater, the experimentation in the theater -- what was her name? I've forgotten who was the head of it. Wait a minute. I almost had it. The one who was head of the theater in the WPA, but you had all that experimental work down on 14th Street with Orson Welles and all those people. It really brought an entirely new life into the theater. It really brought new life into literature, into art, into everything, and it was the first time that art was distributed all over. All the arts were distributed all over the country. When Hopkins said to this guy who attacked him at a party I went to -- the beginning of the WPA -- and said, "Boondoggling! Boondoggling!"

Hearst did nothing but call the artists boondogglers, and Hopkins said, "Well, we have employed plumbers, we've employed masons. We're employing artists. We're not interested in what their work is. They have one thing in common. They have stomachs."

That was wonderful and why I stayed on. Hallie Flanagan was her name. Well, I organized the shows, the exhibitions and set up the allocation program, and there was a guy by the name of Danny Diefenbacker who sold art exhibitions to Republicans in Winston Salem. He was incredible! He was the greatest salesman of all time. I'd pick out the material, and he'd take these shows all over the country, and that brought art into communities that had never, never, never seen art before -- art of any kind, good or bad. And also it introduced the facts to them that their neighbor's son was not a boondoggler. He was doing something that was being shown in a bank. The bank in Winston Salem gave space or art to the people.

Contrary to Mr. Hess on the program yesterday, it was the most important thing that happened to all the arts, and the theater, I think, enjoyed even greater benefits than any of the other arts, but in any event, there it was.

Then we have a war, and there's some very interesting material here about the war which has to do with Mitchell Siporin's brilliant campaign to get me and Edmund Gurry to come in evening dress to Macy's where Mitchell Field was having a show of camouflage. This is the most incredible story of all time! Mitch was out at Mitchell Field. He called me up, and he said, "Macy's is giving the space to Mitchell Field for the Camouflage department" -- which was very, very small -- "and you and Edmund Gurry" -- who is the most elegant man of all time, but elegant to the nth degree -- "must come to the opening."

I said, "I'd love to. Send me tickets."

He said, "All right. Wait a minute" and then somebody else got on the phone -- you know, they have fifty kids in line vying for the public phone at Mitchell Field. Then he called me again -- it had to be done right away -- "You must wear that red evening dress."

I said, "You're out of your mind! Nobody wears evening dress at this time."

Nobody wore evening dresses. It was very un-chic to be seen in evening dress during the war, and he said, "Edmund Gurry must wear that special shirt he has -- you know, he has shirts made in England, and the trousers with the silk band down the side."

I got very angry and said, "Mitch, cut this out! What's more you don't wear that kind of thing in Macy's!"

He called me the next morning, and he said, "Do you want us to win the war? Do you want the artist to have a good life?"

He went on, and I said, "This is the craziest conversation I have ever heard. I'm not wearing the evening dress to Macy's!"

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He said, "Do it for me. Do it for artists you love."

I called up Edmund Gurry, and I said, "Look, don't give me an argument. This is the maddest thing you ever heard of, but you and I are going to Macy's at eight o'clock tonight, and we're going in evening clothes."

He said, "What?"

We went, and I wore a long coat over this dinner dress. It was cut way down the back -- you know, it was a very good looking dress, but you don't wear an evening dress during the war and at Macy's, but there we were, so I wore my coat -- a black evening coat over it. When I arrived and somebody grabbed my coat, took it away and said, "I'll hang it up."

I turned around. It was somebody in uniform -- a soldier, so there I was practically stark naked in relation to everybody. Everybody stared at the two of us. Mitch got out of line. He was in one of the booths. He came over, and everybody wanted to be introduced to these two people. They thought that we were movie stars. We certainly didn't look normal. Well, it ended up by the Colonel -- Colonel Fisher -- well, by this time we'd gotten up to the captain because each rank introduced us to the higher rank, and poor Edmund and I were ready to die. You know, we really made the most spectacular fools of ourselves in the history of the world, and I kept saying, "Edmund, this is for the sake of artists and for the war."

He mumbled something, and I said, "Look, you've met all these people. You're up to the captains," and then we were up to the major and finally we were taken to Colonel Fisher who was the head of Mitchell Field -- he became a general later -- so we were introduced and Edmund was a very charming guy. He took over Mrs. Fisher, and I took over the Colonel, and I said, "This is fabulous!"

I knew I had to do something. I didn't know what. This was a plot. You've got to get to know Mitch. Get him to tell the story. By now he has embroidered it, but these are the facts. "This is the greatest thing that ever happened. You have what, one, two, or three artists at Mitchell Field? You'll go down in history as the Colonel, the one Colonel in America, or anywhere, who is utilizing the great talent of American artists for the war."

Well, he invited us to come out to the camp, and I said, "I won't go out unless I'm met by an officer in a jitney" -- I always wanted to ride in a jitney, and I said, "Do you mind if I bring some other people out?"

He said, "Who?"

I said, "The director of the Modern Museum."

He said, "Let's make a date."

This was just for the two of us. He called me up the next day. I said, "Would you mind if I brought along the director of the Modern Museum and his wife? But two jitneys!"

I talked to Alfred Barr, and he was hysterical about it -- he and his wife. Everybody wanted to go -- oh yes, Jim Soby came along, and we went out there, and we were met with everything but a band. Before this thing ended the Modern Museum -- I knew that they were planning to send materials, paint, and so on to some of the camps for therapy, so, of course, Alfred was very excited about the whole thing, and I said, "Why don't we start out here?"

We were really received as generals. We had a ball. We had lunch there. We had drinks there. We went to the officer's club -- all the males were kicked out, and the girls used their lavatories which were pretty elegant. They even had face tissue and stuff, and from there on I was appointed -- I have it all in writing. I don't believe it, but

there's the war file -- where Fisher asked me to get any artist I thought should be in his camouflage corps, so I got Edmund Lewandowski from Milwaukee, artists -- Jack Levine was down in the hell hole somewhere in Virginia. I got all the Downtown Gallery artists transferred first. They had big names.

The deal was that as an artist enlisted, all I had to do was put my name across the enlistment paper, and he was taken right to Mitchell Field. There was a terrific amount of publicity about it, and I have all the correspondence. I came across this when I started to get material ready for Fred Wight, and these were all surprises. I was really shocked when I saw what happened, and this was all a plot. Mitch said, "Knowing you, I knew you'd do something there, and I knew that if you came in that evening dress, everybody would stare at you and Edmund, so I had a hunch that you'd just finally meet Colonel Fisher, and you'd know how to handle him."

Of course, Edmund went with Mrs. Fisher. He knew all the right names. He knew her family, so that also started the artists in war. Fisher got busy on that. This I have right in that file, so the war became more responsible -- not because of this, but generally. The army camps had murals. The army camps had ballet, the theater, and up to that time art -- all culture was in the hands of the women -- right? All the orchestras were supported by the women.

The ballet -- well, no real male, only the other gender, the middle gender, went to that ballet. Opera -- some poor husband was dragged along. Art was being bought by women chiefly, and the businessman wouldn't be caught dead in an art gallery. Well, all culture became masculinized. It was in all the camps -- all over the world, troops were sent to entertain. It wasn't just slap stick stuff, but serious art of all kinds, good music, serious music, ballet which was the most unmasculine thing became masculine from that time. This was -- you know, a great many people were working in this direction to help this along, and when the boys came home from the wars, the idea of going to the ballet was perfectly normal. You weren't a sissy.

Going to a concert was no longer sissy. Going to a museum was no longer sissy, so you got trustees, you got all kinds of financial support that way, and that was the turning point to a degree now that ninety percent -- and I'm not exaggerating -- of the art buying is in male hands, or couples. I think maybe the picture has changed since I read that the women have all the money. Really, isn't this the first time in history that that has happened, but it's very prevalent -- you go to the ballet today, and you go out for a smoke, and there are many more men than women.

DR. PHILLIPS: The Second World War created a kind of communication that was never in existence before. You put twenty million men in uniform, and suddenly you find some fellow from West Virginia on one side of you and another from Shreveport, Louisiana on the other side. Across from you is a fellow from Tulsa, Oklahoma. You begin to identify common things, common interests, without actually planning for it.

MS. HALPERT: A complete revolution! But I hear it from my friends in other fields. The same thing exists in every other cultural field. You don't have women's clubs for authors anymore, do you? Who supported the authors in the old days? The women's clubs paid for the lectures. What writer lectures now? It isn't necessary. All he worries about is his goddamn income tax.

DR. PHILLIPS: You know, is it deductible.

MS. HALPERT: There are some wonderful articles by my favorite writer.

DR. PHILLIPS: Who is he?

MS. HALPERT: I never remember his name. It's a mental block, and this is ridiculous. In the *Herald Tribune* -- a humorist.

DR. PHILLIPS: Net Crosby.

MS. HALPERT: No.

DR. PHILLIPS: Art Buckholst.

MS. HALPERT: No, that's not his name, but you're hot -- Art Buchwald.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's it.

MS. HALPERT: He did one column on an interview with a writer on income tax. I have it. I cut it out because I thought it was just the most wonderful thing I ever read, because I hear that among artists all the time -- "Does that put me in a higher bracket?"

But there has been this complete reversal. Reading, taste, reading anything, or the book I helped with -- *Proud Possessors* [Vintage Books; 1968]. In the *Proud Possessors*, a very large number of the buyers are female, a

very large number. And from that point on, and that goes through Mrs. Henry Havemeyer and through Mrs. Webb, and from there on the picture changes completely. We have very few female buyers now, unless they're unmarried, but they're self-supporting women, but most of the buying today is men and business.

When in the lectured a couple of weeks ago about Folk art, when I said, "We've gone full cycle from folk art to our current period where art is in every phase of living," you have art in banks, a lot of art, art at airports, art in offices, art in advertising -- I'm talking about fine art -- and in every home, and most of it is male buying, and for this we have to thank the WPA and a world war, a depression and a world war. So many tragic things -- it's strange that tragic experiences in one's life -- many tragic experiences, and I'm not talking about public things, but private things create a complete revolution for the better, and here are the two worst things that happened in America -- the WPA and the Second World War.

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32 East 51st Street, New York City, Wednesday, June 13, 1962

DR. PHILLIPS: Earlier this afternoon I mentioned a string of stories to which, in part, you've alluded and some of which you've already told me, but either we were already packed up and I was on my way, or whatnot. It's a little difficult to know just where to begin. There are a lot of stories. For example, there's a gap in one of the early transcripts where you said that there was something humorous about the circumstances under which you reorganized a French department store. That's the only statement you make. I don't know what the humorous circumstances were.

MS. HALPERT: Oh yes, I remember. I met this man who -- well, I forget the term used at that time -- had patent leather hair plastered back. A gigolo. He was the gigolo-type, and he approached me at a café through some writer whose name I've forgotten. He wrote *The Blessed Event*. Later he wrote a play -- way back, long before your time, in the mid-twenties, 1928, something like that, but I was sitting at a café table with this writer and his wife, and this man came over and spoke to the writer and said, "Is she the woman?"

"Yes."

He told me that he was working for a big advertising company, that he had heard that I was a company organizer, an efficiency expert in department stores, and before I had a chance to say I wasn't, this writer said, "Oh, God yes! She was the efficiency expert for a bank."

That was true, and I said, "Yes."

Sam had told him that I worked in department stores, but in any event, we talked there. I never dared go out with anybody. Sam was very, very sensitive on that score, and this man asked me whether he could come up to the house and talk to me some more, and I said, "All right."

Sam had this huge studio. We had this beautiful house on -- well, I've forgotten where, but it was right off Montparnasse. We walked over there with this writer and his wife, and this man asked me whether I would consider reorganizing this department store in Lille. I knew practically no French, except a little French that I learned from Soutine's model. I think I told you that.

DR. PHILLIPS: Not for the tape.

MS. HALPERT: Well, I decided -- Sam didn't want me to learn French, and I was kidded by everybody, because I saw a Louis for rent, and I pronounced it wrong, and everybody laughed, and I decided that I didn't want to be a comedian. I wanted to study the language, but Sam wouldn't permit me. He didn't want me to talk to any of these people, and at that time Leo Stein talked to me a great deal in English, and he said, "You really should learn French."

I said, "I want to, but Sam doesn't want me to."

In any event, we got to Soutine's studio, and he had this very hideous model whom he used frequently, and I made a deal with her to teach me French, and I was learning rather rapidly. I didn't tell Sam, but I told Leo Stein, and I started talking French one day -- you know, a few words, and he kept asking me to repeat, and he said, "Talk English now."

I talked English, and he said, "Well, this is very odd. You lisp in French."

I said, "I do not."

He said, "You do too. You lisp."

He pronounced the word correctly, and I began to laugh, and I said, "I do."

I repeated the words my way, and suddenly I realized that this model didn't have a tooth in her face and . . .

DR. PHILLIPS: You had to have a French teacher without a tooth in her head.

MS. HALPERT: She didn't have a tooth in her head. She was a famous model, that hideous one that he painted, and she talked -- well, that's where I got my lisp in French. We had a big laugh about it.

I told this Swiss -- this advertising man was Swiss -- that I couldn't speak any French, and I couldn't. I didn't dare lisp in French because I realized how it sounded when Leo Stein repeated what I said, and spoke correctly. I made a deal with this guy that he would get fifty percent of my take. I was thrilled to death just to do something -- you know, I was a useless person. We had a cook that came with the deal at the house. We even had a man who kept going around the place on slippers with felt on the bottom waxing floors all the time. He kept skating, and they did it with their feet. The place was filed with help, and there was nothing for me to do except to pose for Sam -- you know, backside. I'd go off on long walks. I did every block in Paris in and out because I had to see Paris, and I thought, "This will be a wonderful opportunity for me to do something."

This writer was a very well-known person. As I say, he wrote *Blessed Event*, and he convinced Sam that this was a wonderful thing for me to contribute to France's system and all that sort of stuff, so it was agreed that I would go for three days, four days, whatever. Sam got very upset about it, and Leon Kroll who always has been my nemesis -- inadvertently; he didn't mean to be -- said, "you know everybody will say you're wearing horns."

I didn't know what that meant, so that had to be explained to me. He said, "Look at the man she's traveling with!"

He really looked like a typical gigolo -- you know, shirtwaist, very well dressed with this patent leather hair.

DR. PHILLIPS: The first V-8.

MS. HALPERT: The only thing he was interested in so far as I was concerned was fifty percent of the take -- just as Zorach said to me one day years ago, "You have sex appeal." Now you have checks appeal."

The latter is all this Swiss guy had in mind, but Kroll and several other people talked to Sam about it. He got very excited, and we got to the railroad station, and he threatened to jump across the tracks in front of the train. There was a big scene, and finally some other person who had come to the station with us took him away. I was very upset about the whole thing. We got to the Lille the next morning. This was a night train. The trip didn't seem that long, but it was a night train, and this is the funny thing that happened. We were met at the railroad station by three men in cutaways, each one with a bouquet of flowers.

DR. PHILLIPS: This is carrying modern art a bit too far.

MS. HALPERT: I had with me -- I had brought my typewriter, my American typewriter. I wouldn't trust any French porter to hold that. That was precious, so I was carrying that, and I had a handbag, and so on, and here were these three guys who clicked their heels and bowed and in English they said, "We are pleased and honored to meet you."

They all gave me their bouquets simultaneously, and I didn't have enough arms. These were three of the big shots of the store. Then we went to the hotel. My expenses, of course, were being paid and so on. The man kept saying, "No, no, no, no, no."

The clerk said, "*Oui, oui, oui.*"

I don't know what it was, but in any event, we got adjoining rooms. The clerk said, "A man and a woman traveling together and occupying separate rooms!"

So we had adjoining rooms which I didn't like very much. I was never afraid of that kind of thing. I handled these situations. Every girl in New York had to learn. The door opened between us. I looked over, and he said, "One of us has to do it. Everybody will talk if we don't. You may shut it whenever you like. I had to do it. We would be insulted otherwise."

The beginning was really very entertaining -- those three men clicking their heels and saying, "We are pleased and honored to see you," and this garden of flowers was handed me. I was there about four days, and I

typewrote -- made the blueprints. I did it all in English, and I got paid. I still have those plans. The amount I got paid I split with this guy, and he was simply delighted.

I didn't realize this but the Paris papers ran this big story that Madame Halpert who had reorganized Macy's, Gimbels, and Wanamakers -- I hadn't even walked into Wanamakers any time in my life -- had just reorganized the Gallerie Lilleois. That was pretty embarrassing, but from there on there were parties. We had to give a big party, and there were parties all over, and it was very nice. That was my extra spending money, and I came home wearing a Pateau dress.

DR. PHILLIPS: Wasn't this also responsible for the Delaunay dresses?

MS. HALPERT: Of course.

DR. PHILLIPS: That story we've already put down, and this one is background for it.

MS. HALPERT: That gave me the money that I felt that I was entitled to spend, and I had her make those dresses which, as you know, played a great part in my career.

I want to finish that part about the speakeasy. How far did I get?

DR. PHLLIPS: We talked about the development of the Rockefeller gallery -- the boys having gone off to school, there was no need for squash courts, and that you had been helping her to reorganize this place into a gallery.

MS. HALPERT: Oh yes. Mrs. Rockefeller looked across at me and said, "There are no speakeasies here. John's brother owns this property."

She pointed in every direction, 54th, 53rd, and I said, "That's what you think. There's one of the greatest speakeasies right in this territory."

I didn't tell her where because I was afraid that papa would call the police, and I said, "I was there."

It happened to be the Ambassador -- well, Lindbergh's father-in-law.

DR. PHILLIPS: Dwight Morrow.

MS. HALPERT: Yes, his house was rented to someone, and he used it as a speakeasy. It hadn't been changed. It had Corot's hanging on the walls. I had been there the night before and we had to wear dinner clothes. I told her, "I was in this territory last night" with one of my clients. She got very depressed about it. We went downstairs and tended to a lot of business about the gallery, whom to get, and this is when I picked Donald Desky and as I was leaving, she said, "Would you take me to a speakeasy sometime?"

I said, "Well, can I trust you?"

She got very offended, "What do you mean?!"

I said, "You won't tell Mr. Rockefeller because he will feel it imperative to report it."

She said, "Good Lord, I wouldn't dream of telling him. This will have to be the greatest secret from him."

I said, "Is it honorable for me to mislead you like this?"

We laughed about it and we made a date. Oh yes, she came down in her Rolls Royce to 13th Street, the gallery. We had this date for about four o'clock before the -- you know, the serious drinking would start. She just wanted to see what it was like. She was just bursting with interest in how the other half lived, and I said, "Well, you know, Mrs. Rockefeller, I don't think that it would be wise for us to go to Julius's in a Rolls Royce. You wouldn't want your chauffeur to know."

She said, "I never thought of that."

I said, "Just park it here."

By this time we had Rolls Royces coming to the gallery occasionally. Cornelius Sullivan had a Rolls Royce, Wetmore -- you know, a number of people had them, and it didn't bring a crowd as it did the first time on 13th Street. We parked the car and got into a cab. Julius's was on Hudson Street, way over on the westside, and I said, "Don't worry about it. You don't have to drink. I'll order a ginger ale for you. I'll order something else because I've been there frequently, and they'll think it's very odd if I don't have a drink. It's a little early in the day, but I'll have a drink."

Well, in order to get into Julius's you have to go through a very long, narrow corridor. You didn't go through a street front, and I thought she'd be amused because the barrel staves were used for the lighting fixtures, and the chairs were seats of barrels and so on. I thought she'd be entertained. We just about got to the door. He knew me. I had brought any number of uptowners there.

Very few of the downtowners needed me to take them to a speakeasy, but I brought clients there, and they loved it. So he wouldn't have paid a bit of attention because she just looked like a very nice person, not like one of the café society dames, but a nice, respectable middle-aged woman. He wouldn't have recognized the gown, or the make of the suit, or whatever, but just as we were getting to the door, she suddenly grabbed my arm, ran out, and I followed her, and she said, "I don't know what happened to me! I don't know what happened to me! This is the most ridiculous thing!"

She got very upset, so I stood on the corner and got a cab. She said, "It would make the front page of the paper."

I said, "I wouldn't take you here, if they would recognize you. They wouldn't know you from Romany Marie."

They might recognize Romany Marie, so I changed that to somebody else. She said, "Somebody would recognize me -- the cook, the dishwasher, somebody, and the next day there would be this big story in the *Mirror*; that Mr. and Mrs. Rockefeller were dragged out drunk from a speakeasy."

Nobody would have recognized her, but she got absolutely petrified so we went back to the gallery. She was leaving, and she said, "Please, Mrs. Halpert, ride home with me."

You know -- time was important to me. I had no help, and when I walked out, there wasn't a sale. I missed prospects, telephone calls, and so on, and I was hesitant. I said, "I really can't."

She said, "Please."

So I got into the Rolls Royce, and she pulled the panel across between the chauffeur and us, and she said, "I am so sorry to have wasted your time. How stupid can I be! Can you imagine this being discovered!"

She turned and looked at me, and burst into tears, and she said, "Mrs. Halpert, how I envy you! You can go anywhere. You can go anywhere, and you can say anything, and you do."

I was so dumbfounded. Then I began to laugh, and I said, "You know, Mrs. Rockefeller, you're reversing our roles. You are rich and I am poor, and I'm supposed to cry and envy you."

"But," she said, "You don't."

I said, "No, I don't."

"But," she said, "I do," and she bawled away. That, too, was a great lesson in my life. I realized that she was the victim of her name. The Aldrich name -- after all, her brother was a big shot. Her father was Governor, and so on, and she was a victim of two names, particularly the Rockefeller name which had restraints which the Aldrich name never had, and I was sorry for her. It was the most touching thing and funny. I laughed at first. Finally, when we got to the house, we had tea. Papa came home and he said, "What are you girls up to now?"

She still looked a little teary, and she said, "Oh, we're just having a very serious discussion."

He said, "Mrs. Halpert has the look of mirth of her face" -- an expression I've never heard before, or since, and she said, "Well, she's just a naughty girl."

He said, "I know she is."

I left shortly after and said, "Smile, please."

Shortly after this occurred, we got into this idea of giving things – of charity, and this started with Jack Levine. Did I tell you that? This was not shortly after, but 1938, but it was a sort of a follow up. In 1938, we had a one man show of Jack Levine's work, his first one man show, and this we had down on 13th Street. The Daylight Gallery was where the "old masters" were, and the WPA boys that I had brought in were in the front gallery. I had rebuilt it with a very handsome exhibition room in the back.

Kuniyoshi had a one man show in the Daylight Gallery, and I thought that I would open the Jack Levine show the last week of the Kuniyoshi exhibition because Jack would get the benefit of the great numbers of people who came to see Yas' show, and we did. The opening was a tremendous success. That was the period when artists were very kind to young artists. They weren't selling, and they weren't worrying about the young artists taking

the bread out of their mouths, and Yas was particularly enthusiastic, and honestly so. A number of the artists were really, terribly impressed with Levine's show and told him so, and a number of collectors who came in to see the other exhibition stopped off met Jack, and told him that he was a brilliant young artist, very promising. They didn't buy anything. When the show was over, Jack was really elated, and he said, "This is the happiest moment of my life."

I invited some people for dinner. Afterwards we were to meet at some local restaurant with Jack, but he wanted to see me alone. He went on, and he said, "There's nothing I want in this world!"

I said, "Jack, nothing? There must be something. That's a very bad situation when one wants nothing."

He said, "But this has been a great, great day!"

I said, "Just think."

He said, "Oh yeah. I would like a Victrola and two records" -- I can't remember which they are, but they were Bach records. Then some of the dinner guests came, and we had to leave. That made a great impression on me. Here was somebody who had everything in life, and all he wanted was a Victrola and some records.

I always know people who sold wholesale. As a matter of fact, I came across some of the correspondence, and it was Masters before they were the big Masters. I called up, and I think I got the Victrola for thirty dollars, or something like that. Well, the whole deal was something like forty-five dollars with the records, and so I had this sent from Masters, no card, no anything, to Jack.

There were no telephone calls in those days; long distance was expensive. I received a letter two days later saying -- well, it changed his whole philosophy in life, "I no longer hate, but love" -- something like that. He had no idea who sent this, but he knew that it came through that conversation we had. He said that he was up all night the night before, playing these same two records, and to think that he could have those all to himself, "I'm resigning from the hate club, and I'm joining the love club."

That's what it was. That was that. I was reading the letter. It came in the afternoon, and Mrs. Rockefeller came in, and she said, "Now what? I have never seen such an expression on anybody's face."

I said, "To quote somebody as of a few days ago, 'This is the happiest moment of my life.'"

She said, "Tell me! Share it with me."

From the day that she wept in envy of me, which was so funny and so sad, I wanted to share with her. I really felt that I did have more than she did -- not in the bank, so I showed her the letter, and she was so deeply touched. She said, "We give millions. Nobody has ever written a letter like this."

There it was again -- I had everything and she had nothing. She said, "Please, Mrs. Halpert, who paid for this?"

It was very, very little, and I said, "I did."

She said, "Would you let me give you the forty dollars and you give me the letter?"

I said, "This is not for sale, Mrs. Rockefeller, I'm sorry. This letter I must have."

She said, "I must have it more.

I said, "Very well."

I got the bill from Masters. I pulled it out, and it was $39.70 with postage, whatever, and she said, "I'll send you that check."

I said, "Excuse me" and I made a typewritten copy of the letter for myself. I have it, but she had the original. About two weeks later, when I was up to lunch there, she said, "I showed the letter to John, and he too said, 'We've never received a letter like that.'"

I said, "It's because you don't give right. You give much, but you don't give right. It has to be much more on an intimate scale. No institution, after all, the animal shelter -- no dog is going to write you a personal letter. No church is going to write you such a letter. Giving has to be on a more intimate scale.

She said, "Let me think about it."

A week later Anna Kelly called me. She said, "All right, Kid, you asked for it. You're going to get it."

I said, "What?"

She said, "You are being invited to tea on" such-and-such a day.

I said, "Oh, my God!"

She said, "Mr. Rockefeller will be there too."

I said, "How thrilling!"

Or something. I got there, and the deal was that I would get five thousand dollars every quarter, every month -- I can't remember which, but it seemed like a lot of money to me, probably every quarter, and all the personal letters relating to art would be forwarded from the Rockefeller Foundation, or their charity department, whatever it was, to me, and I was to investigate and decide where the money should go. Didn't I tell you this? There, too, I have letters for the Archives. The letters arrived, and this time I really felt like God -- you know, with five thousand dollars for whatever, one month, or three months, and I was to do it for a year. The agreement was that she get a letter of this kind from everybody -- "I'm leaving the hate club . . ."

So I went off on the first of these. Meanwhile I was giving up my time. I was giving too, so I took the letters that dealt with my locale, and this first one was a female sculptor who was working on "historical sculpture of the greatest consequence" and so on, and she needed a thousand dollars immediately to complete something before the final project which was to call for a great deal of money, but on the basis of this one thing, she would raise money -- you know, everybody would come storming down to the studio.

I took the letter with me, put it in my purse. I looked up the address, and it was in the Washington News which was a little bit -- well, it wasn't really for a poor starving artist. That was where Mrs. Whitney was, and she was not a starving artist. I thought that was a little odd. I knocked on this woman's door, and I asked for somebody non-existent, said I was looking for "so-and-so." That's what I did in Russia. I got into more places by saying that I was looking for my old teacher. I got into more apartments, more houses that way. Well, it was a good stunt that I discovered at that moment. The woman said, "There's nobody by that name."

I said, "I'm certain that there's somebody by that name."

Meanwhile I edged into the place, and I said, "Oh, isn't this an interesting place!"

Then she began telling me all about her sculpture, and I looked at it. It was the most ghastly stuff I ever saw, starting with George Washington, she had the presidents -- well, I didn't know any of these presidents intimately, but I had an idea that's who they were. Then she told me about this history that she was doing and so on. I looked at my watch and said, "I've got to find so-and-so. Thanks so much for letting me in. This has been a most fascinating experience."

Well, that thousand dollars didn't go. This went on. I went to four different places, each time using the same ruse, "I'm looking for so-and-so," and the minute you go into a studio, they certainly don't throw you out if you show any interest, and I looked, and they were all strictly bad, pseudo-artists who certainly shouldn't be supported.

I got desperately unhappy about it because I wanted to give that money away -- there it was, but there really wasn't anybody with the slightest bit of talent, and each one had some utterly ridiculous project. They're all projects. Then I realized later that no really creative artist would demean himself by asking for charity. This was a charitable institution they were writing to. They weren't writing to her as an individual. They were writing to an institution, and finally a letter came addressed to her -- of course, all those letters were forwarded to her, and it was from an artist that I knew, a guy the name of [Bernard] Gussow. I told you this.

It was Gussow whom I knew. He was a friend of Sam Halpert and a talented artist. He wasn't a great artist. He never got very far, but the man deserved help. He knew me, so I couldn't conceal myself in going up and saying, "I'm looking for so-and-so." I thought this over, and he asked for fifteen hundred dollars." He wanted to go -- his wife was Scotch -- to Scotland to get some fresh material and so on, and I thought that was a very worthwhile project, but I had to discuss with somebody about the sum to be given to an individual, and there it was agreed -- at least I was told, that you never give as much as you're asked, never.

So we had to cut it down to twelve hundred and fifty dollars, and in this case I said, "I don't want to go there and say, 'I'm giving you some money.'" I'd much rather have the check made out in Mrs. Rockefeller's name, or in the fund's name -- all made out so that there won't be any suspicion that I'm getting a commission. Even in that early stage I knew that artists always felt that you were going to get something out of anything, always did it for money, so the check, was made out for twelve hundred and fifty dollars, and I went up to see Gussow. He and his wife were very glad to see me. We were friendly, and I looked at a number of pictures. I said, "You know,

I've sold Mrs. Rockefeller a number of paintings."

He said, "Everybody knows that, but you never bought one of mine."

I said, "I've never had occasion to, but she has just given me twelve hundred and fifty dollars to buy something from you."

I never made any reference to the letter. I said, "She always gives me money to buy things from other galleries" and she did. I used to charge her ten percent on things that I bought for her without any charity situation involved at all -- you know, I'd go to the dealers, and I'd buy a Preston Dickinson whose work I didn't have, or a Peter Blume, whatever, or a George Bellows, and so on. She'd pay the bill, and I'd charge her ten percent for the service. In this case, of course, there was no charge. This was charity.

His pictures were marked on the back. They had gone to various exhibitions, and they were marked two hundred and fifty dollars, three hundred dollars, and for twelve hundred dollars he was giving me one picture. I said, "Bernard, I can't do that. Everybody knows that you never got that much for picture. I feel that I should bring her more than one picture for that price because you've never sold anything for twelve hundred and fifty dollars. Why don't we make it two?"

This was charity, but at the same time I wanted to give him the dignity of selling two pictures marked three fifty and two hundred and fifty dollars, and I said, "I'll take them with me."

I did. They were really very delightful pictures, and she was hanging them in the guest rooms in the country. She was very happy with them, and that was the only successful project I had to that date. Then a few days later Mrs. Kelly called me, and she said, "I've got something to show you."

I said, "I don't have time to come uptown."

She said, "I can't give it up. It's addressed to Mrs. Rockefeller."

I went up there a few days later, and she showed me the letter from Bernard Gussow, the most violent letter, saying that he realized -- well, the organization wrote him that his letter had been forwarded to Mrs. Rockefeller, that the organization understood that Mrs. Rockefeller had taken care of the situation, and this was in response to his letter. I didn't say anything about it. I was trying to protect his dignity, and he wrote this vehement letter, saying that "Edith Halpert kept two hundred and fifty dollars." I got only twelve hundred and fifty dollars. She stole two hundred and fifty dollars" -- something to that effect. It was the most vehement letter, something to that effect. Here we were friends. So while I was there, Mrs. Rockefeller came up. The butler told her I was there, and she said, "What's going on?"

I said, "I can't talk to you now. I'll be up one of these days."

A few days later I had lunch with her, and Mr. Rockefeller was there, and he said, "How's the project going?"

I said, "I just resigned."

He said, "You see, it isn't easy to give, is it?"

I said, "No. The reason I resign is that I can't supply you with a letter that Mrs. Rockefeller wants -- you know, a thank you letter that comes from the innards. I saw the hate letter. This man joined the hate society instead of the love society, and I won't be responsible for that. I'm sorry. I'll have to get out of this. I have seen nothing but bad work to date. This was the only man I felt should be helped, and it just won't work. I can't do it. I won't do it. I'm sorry!"

Then I began to laugh, and he asked me why I was laughing, and I said, "It reminds me of a wonderful Jewish story. I'll tell it in English."

He said, "Go ahead; tell it."

I told him that Rothschild story, a very well known story now -- courtesy of Mr. Rockefeller, of this very, very poor Jew in a small town who had every kind of catastrophe -- his own cow died. He had five children, two of them were sick. His wife was ill, and she couldn't take care of them, the house, and so on. With everything it was the greatest tragedy. There was no one to go to for help, and in his desperation he wrote a letter to God, because "only God could help me."

He wrote a letter to God and how do you mail a letter to God? He got up on the very highest spot, top of a hill in this town, and he let the wind blow the letter to God, and he went home and prayed. The letter flew and flew right to the doorstep of Baron Rothschild, and the butler brought the letter to Rothschild, "Sir, I found this letter

addressed to God."

Rothschild was so intrigued that he opened the letter, and the letter was full of all the woes and so on; "if only I had five hundred rubles, God, I could buy a cow. I could do" thus and so. So Rothschild sent a man to this old Jew's house, and this man said, "God asked me to act for him and here is the money."

He gave him four hundred rubles. The Jew went home, counted the money and found that he had only four hundred rubles, and so he went back to Rothschild the next day, entered the house, and shook his fist in front of Rothschild, "You so-and-so, you've cheated God and me out of a hundred rubles."

Well, Mr. Rockefeller practically collapsed. He choked on his teeth. He laughed so hard. This was an absolutely perfect replica of what happened between Gussow and me. Well, they both laughed so hard! I don't remember whether it was Winthrop, or Nelson who came in -- or maybe David because it was during the day, and Mr. Rockefeller repeated the story, and he did it beautifully to this kid who also exploded, and as I was leaving, Mrs. Rockefeller said, "Do you mind if I quote this story?"

I said, "Not at all. It isn't my story. I didn't make it up. I heard it. It's a story that is quite well known among Jews. If you don't mind telling it among Gentiles and if you don't involve me in this, I certainly wouldn't associate it with the artist. I think that would be bad taste. If you want to tell it just as a Rothschild story, fine."

He said, "I promise."

Months later he told me that that story saved him a fortune. Every time when he was at some meeting where they were raising funds, he would tell that story, and he would cut his figure down each time.

That was the end of my charity business. As a matter of fact, I think it's pretty typical. It isn't because Gussow was a Jew. It was typical in relation to artists all the time. All the time they always think they're gypped, and if anybody can out gyp an artist, boy I'd like to meet them. I'd like to see the day when I could put something over on an artist. I haven't tried, but I don't think I will.

DR. PHILLIPS: Why was the decision made as a rule to give less than asked for?

MS. HALPERT: That's the whole idea. If you ask any charity organization for a certain sum, if you ask a group of businessmen, the American routine is much smarter than Rothschild's routine, because they'll match anything you can raise. Nobody, but nobody has ever given the sum asked. If the university asks for three million dollars for a building, they don't get it do they? They're always cut rate. The Gentiles are smarter than the Jews. They give only fifty percent. That's the regular routine in all the charities, isn't it? Nobody ever gives as much as you ask no matter where.

DR. PHILLIPS: This was a burden imposed on you . . .

MS. HALPERT: Not by the Rockefeller's -- no. I mean they gave me -- well, certainly originally they cut it down from fifteen hundred to twelve-fifty because that's the regular routine. I learned that from the John Price Jones people. When I said that I wanted so much to be raised for museums, they said immediately, "That's perfectly ridiculous! You always ask for more," so that to me it was no shock when they reduced the sum to twelve-fifty from fifteen hundred.

I recognized that as the regular routine. John Price Jones raised money, all sorts of funds, for the Tuberculosis Institute, Harvard University -- they were the great fund raisers, and they told me immediately when I went to them with this crazy project of mine -- this was even before the WPA, long before, way before that in the twenties that I went to them with the idea of raising money throughout the country to be given to museums in each state, each area. I made up a whole list. I showed you that plan of where the museums were and that money was to be spent for the purchase of American art, starting with the local artists. A certain percentage was to be expended locally and the rest on a national scale, and when I gave them the figures, they immediately doubled them, so that to me this was no surprise.

It was fortunate that I remembered that Rothschild story that I had heard from somebody just a few months before. That's a famous story. It's been retold and retold, but evidently among or in lower echelons because Rockefeller told me that nobody had ever heard it. It always brought the house down, and he saved so much money with that story. That was the end of the charity business, but Mrs. Rockefeller still has the original letter for $39.80. I have a copy. It was a beautiful, beautiful letter and he meant every word. To this day, Jack Levine doesn't know that I did it.

DR. PHILLIPS: She set you up in business with the possibility of obtaining such letters.

MS. HALPERT: That's what prompted the whole thing. After all, they did give millions and millions and millions,

and she never received a letter of that kind, a heartfelt personal letter. They never gave money on a personal basis but that's what she wanted, and the first letter that was received was a "cheating God" one.

DR. PHILLIPS: A generous impulse.

MS. HALPERT: He went to Scotland.

DR. PHILLIPS: Of course.

MS. HALPERT: He would have gone on less too.

DR. PHILLIPS: How did you get Mrs. Rockefeller to support the shindigs at Romany Marie's?

MS. HALPERT: Romany Marie's was one of the great places of the time. She was one of the important people in America at the time -- a long time before I met her. It was the only place in America -- that is the only place I know -- which approximated in any way the café life in Europe -- France, Italy and so on, where people in various cultural followings met.

That's very important because this inbred thing of the club, the Eighth Street Club, or the Theater Inn, or whatever -- that's all very bad because you get people in the same field with the same gripes, and it's competitive even in gripes. One guy has a bigger gripe than another; whereas, where you have writers, artists, musicians, architects, and so on, they stimulate each other, don't you think?

The exchange of ideas, the excitement is very, very stimulating. I found that in Europe just listening to various people, and the only thing in America again, as far as I know -- was Romany Marie's where you had in the earlier days, as I learned from Marie, Eugene O'Neill, writers, musicians, all sorts of people, Edgar Varese. I met Edgar Varese there, and artists and [Vilhjalmur] Steffanson, the explorer, and Buckminster Fuller. You met people in every calling, and there was a terrific stimulation and exchange of ideas, exchange of problems, and so on, and she did it on a button.

The cooking was pretty good, but it was frequently mixed with things you didn't pay for. The place was filthy. She couldn't serve liquor. She had no license. Occasionally some uptowners came in. They were the only ones you paid -- you know, Hartley didn't pay for a meal for a long, long time, and when the WPA project came along, the artists immediately moved to other restaurants as soon as they could pay. They had tabs hanging all over Marie's.

Well, she was having great difficulties too. Of course, I visited her very frequently. She was then somewhere in a basement. I met her when she was on -- well, I've forgotten whether I met her before she was on Main Street, or after. Then she moved to 13th Street right opposite me. This was years later. She was somewhere down in a hole, and I was trying to figure out how I could help her.

Mrs. Rockefeller was always very interested in everything that was going on, how the other half lived, and she was sincerely interested. She was terribly intrigued -- I mean, this was a new world that had opened up for her. She had me take Nelson around to studios, including Romany Marie, to experience this new world because this was all completely new to her and she got a tremendous stimulation and excitement out of it after she realized that it wasn't all gin and sex.

She went to people's homes. I took her to the Laurent's, several studios, and so on. She met these people. She found the Zorachs so nice that she invited them to her home in Bar Harbor. Shahn was out there at Pocantico painting a portrait of her favorite horse, and Nakian was cleaning the naval of a Greek sculpture, or repairing it rather because the water dripped on it and it had turned green. She met these people and found that they were -- you know, human, so she was talking about a Christmas party, a New Year's party they were having, and she said, "Do artists have parties like that?"

I said, "With what?"

Well, in any event, we made a deal that she would give me a hundred dollars, I think, and the party was held at Romany Marie's, and artists -- well, that was good for about fifty people, and these parties were fantastic! They were the most wonderful parties ever held, I can assure you. The place was closed to the public. It was done late in the evening. She really put up the most wonderful meal, and there was cheap wine bought and so on. There was singing. A number of musicians brought -- well, it wasn't Edgar Varese who played the accordion, but it was somebody, some very well known musician came and played, and there was dancing. They were wonderful parties, and they went on for several years. She asked one day if she could come, and I said, "No, you can't."

They were perfectly respectable, gay parties, but she would have died of envy because she never went to a

party where people were so gay and it meant -- you know, half of it went to Marie. I made certain that she kept fifty percent for the food. She made a fifty percent profit on it to help her along for a few weeks, but Romany Marie's was really a great, great place. The artists gave her paintings. There were paintings all over the place. Occasionally she would sell a picture for artists -- you know, the uptowners would come. She actually sold a few pictures, introduced these uptowners to these Bohemians and so on, and it wasn't the same kind of thing that you get today. It wasn't the same kind of thing you get anywhere.

It was really unique because this woman was mother earth. She really was an incredible, incredible person. I think she was one of the great people of our time. She embraced everybody, knew exactly what to say to comfort them, and for years she fed all these people who hung around there, and she was just desperately poor -- always. She made a little money on the uptowners, and she gave it to the creative people, and it was too bad that she finally failed.

She told fortunes. She was one of the puller-inners for uptowners, and they'd come there and have a cup of tea. They had to have a cup of Turkish coffee to have their fortunes told. She didn't take tips. They'd buy more food, and they'd invite some of the regulars to join them, and they'd talk to them -- you know, they would pay for a lot of meals for several people, and this meant an income for Marie.

She told incredible fortunes -- really, she was a great fortune teller. I took people there from time to time, and while I knew something about them, I never said a word to her, but she would get their profession from this Turkish coffee, very thick, of course, in a demitasse, and you'd drink until there was just the dregs. Then the cup was turned upside down and turned three times by the person and then it was turned up, and it made a pattern, and from the pattern -- she never looked at the person; just at the cup -- and she'd say, "This man is an architect," and he was.

There was no way of her knowing that Candler was an architect. There was no way of knowing -- well, I didn't know that he was divorced. I didn't even known that he had been married, and she said that there was a severance there, and in every instance she got the person's profession which was important and his kind of living. Whether it was sheer intuition, or what, I certainly didn't say anything. I was so curious that I wouldn't give her any kinds of hints. The time I brought Nelson Rockefeller in when she -- I think that's in here already.

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes, and that is incredible.

MS. HALPERT: That was the most incredible thing. "I see gold."

DR. PHILLIPS: "Mountains of Gold."

MS. HALPERT: Yes, "Mountains of Gold." And all these people, dependent. She certainly had no idea -- this young boy. After all, he was in college then, and she had this violent attitude, "This is wrong! This is ridiculous!"

She stopped. I said, "Oh, go on -- can't you be wrong for once!"

"This is absurd!"

When we went out, Nelson said -- well, it sounded like an act because she got very dramatic about it. And I said, "Honest to God, I introduced you as Mr. Nelson."

She was very curious that I came there with a young lad, but I feel she made a very, very great contribution to our cultural life of that period. If you talk to any of the people -- well, did you talk to Stuart about her? Didn't he feel that way?

DR. PHILLIPS: He said that she was the most incredible woman he'd ever known; that she could talk, and give you the impression of warmth and sympathy no matter what the topic was.

MS. HALPERT: Mother Earth.

DR. PHILLIPS: Whatever the topic was she had something that she could contribute somehow.

MS. HALPERT: She was a comfort to everybody. She had a sensitivity to human beings, a great love for people, a great respect for anybody who did anything, and she knew exactly what string to play with who. With somebody who was proud she wouldn't say, "I'll feed you," but she would say, "I'm hungry. Would you please sit at the table with me and keep me company?"

I heard her do that to Hartley a couple of times, and that's one of the reasons I felt so bitter about Hartley when he wrote me at the time he moved uptown. He said, "I'm through with downtown. I'm through with that dirty joint of Romany Marie's!"

Then I blew my top. *Se la vie*! You know, that was not only an era, but the individuals that made that up, and I have never heard -- there may have been another place in America that equaled hers, but I never heard of it. She lasted for a long, long, long time, through several generations, and in each case she gave and gave and gave.

When I ran into Bucky Fuller in Moscow -- he did the golden dome at the Fair and somehow we got talking for a minute -- you know, he was surrounded by a lot of dignitaries and so on, and we somehow mentioned Romany Marie. I mentioned Romany Marie. I said, "This is a far cry from Romany Marie's dome" -- and she had a little dome. He said, "That dear, dear soul."

Many of his contacts were made right there. He designed -- of course, there was a very tragic ending in that, but he designed the first car with the rear motor, and he was demonstrating it when it went kaput. He met the man who financed it at Marie's. Even that kind of thing occurred.

It wasn't like the beatnik joints of today where everybody is on exhibition. There's a tremendous difference, and I'm sure that when I decided to have these evenings, somehow subconsciously I'm sure I was influenced by that kind of climate for people, that kind of environment. Of course it was very different. There was no food served. It was just the idea that people could meet -- non-creative people could meet creative people and discover that there was a rapport, that there was a common denominator somewhere. Mine didn't last long. Somebody gave me a tip.

DR. PHILLIPS: Romany Marie was an incredible institution. Stuart Davis didn't talk warmly, or quietly and warmly about very many things, but about Romany Marie it was something else.

MS. HALPERT: I'm glad to hear it because she helped him in many ways; incidentally, he did not give a picture. I did. She wanted a Davis very badly, and I really loved that woman. She wanted one, and I gave it to her -- I think at the time when Stuart was on his own. Did I tell you that I just bought a big Davis?

DR. PHILLIPS: No.

MS. HALPERT: 1928.

DR. PHILLIPS: One of the Paris pictures?

MS. HALPERT: I'm having it cleaned, and I'll call him up.

DR. PHILLIPS: Why did someone unload it? I don't understand.

MS. HALPERT: Someone bought it from him for some petty cash -- I don't know. It was a long time ago. Someone called me up and had this elegant duplex, and I went up there, and he showed it to me. He had called up a number of people. He asked a tremendous price for it, and then he finally called me, and I went up there, and I bought it -- not for the tremendous price. I told him what I could sell it for and so on, and he sold it to me. I paid a very good price, and I bought a number of things from Romany Marie's estate -- let's see, what did I did.

She sold a number of Pollets. She really worked at it, and she introduced musicians to people who could do something for them, do a recording. She was always acting as a sort of a matchmaker -- both ways as a matchmaker. A tremendous number of romances started there -- oh, God! I used to watch this. It was a riot! Who is this one very famous actor who started out as a waiter there and met somebody from Hollywood and became a famous actor?

DR. PHILLIPS: At Romany Marie's?

MS. HALPERT: Stuart will remember. I didn't hang out there. I didn't have much time after all, but he was there very frequently.

DR. PHILLIPS: It was a comfort.

MS. HALPERT: That's why I kept repeating that because for me she spelled Mother Earth. I never came to her with problems. As a matter of fact, the only one I ever went to with a problem was Lloyd Goodrich. The first time I met her, the very first time I met her was the coldest day in the world. This was before I was married. Sam took me to Marie's; I didn't discover her.

He took me there, and it was a bitter cold day, and we had a long, long, long walk from the subway station because we didn't take taxis in those days. This was a short skirt period, and my legs were practically numb with this bitter cold. It was mid-winter, snowing, and this terrific wind. She had never seen me before, and I came in and looked very unhappy, and I can remember her saying, "You poor child. You're cold. You're frozen."

My legs were turning purple. She had never seen me in her life, and she rubbed my legs and warmed them up, gave me a hot cup of tea, and this was her immediate reaction, one of doing something. I was very happy that I could do things for her later. I don't mean only those parties, but later too because she was -- well, I still wish somebody would write about her. Her nephew is still trying to raise funds for monuments and all that. He keeps writing me. I'd like to see somebody write a book about her because I think she was responsible for a big hunk of culture among top people.

DR. PHILLIPS: The fertilizer, the enrichment.

MS. HALPERT: The Provincetown Players came through her indirectly. I went to one of them -- oh, Zorach was an actor in it. I haven't got the slightest notion what it was about, but I remember him sitting on a throne that he designed which began to wiggle as he sat there. He wore a gold crown that he had cut out, and it said, "I am the king," and the throne came out from under him.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's a great line.

MS. HALPERT: Zorach was very devoted to her. He did things too when he became a little more prosperous. She had a very, very rough time financially. She never got paid, and the thing that was so painful was that when the artists began getting twenty bucks a week from the project, they went to what's the name of that restaurant on 8th Street? It was up an alley. They said that her place was dirty!

DR. PHILLIPS: This wasn't Tranchino's, was it?

MS. HALPERT: No. Tranchino's was the Italian place way over where Coleman and Davis went.

DR. PHILLIPS: They liked that food.

MS. HALPERT: I got ptomaine poisoning twice from there. There's a painting called *Tranchino's* by Glenn Coleman.

DR. PHLLIPS: You told me, I think, at one time, and I don't know whether you want to put it into the records, but it is another facet, and it has to do with poetry written by one of the members of the Rockefeller family which is a touching story.

MS. HALPERT: That's John the Third. Oh yes. It was 1930. I had to come home from Europe in a hurry. I had pains. I had developed appendicitis. That's a common operation, and I thought nothing of it.

Anna Kelly kept in touch with me. She was very fond of me, and I was crazy mad about her. She was wonderful, and she was an old -- well, she was retired. She must have been sixty at that time, one of those wonderful Irish dames who also embraced a lot of people. I came home, and she learned that I was there, and I remember that Duncan Candler came to visit me in the Hospital. I was over at the French Hospital, and I got a letter from Mrs. Rockefeller. This was in the late summer when I came back. She learned that I was in the hospital.

She was in Seal Harbor and wrote me and said that she'd like to have me go to Pocantico to recuperate. I couldn't think of any place I wanted less to go, but Anna Kelly and Duncan Candler came to see me, and they made a big to-do, and nobody was at Pocantico. The house wasn't closed up, but nobody was there. I could see no reason to go there. I had other places in mind, and I didn't need the country to recuperate, but in any event, I went and it was very thoughtfully arranged. They sent the equivalent -- what do they call those things -- ambulances where you sit up, sort of a cab ambulance, ambicab -- that sounds like Kennedy, but something like that.

I went there, and I brought a hell of a lot of reading stuff. I found that John the Third was there that period of the summer, and I always liked him very much. He was sensitive, very shy. He'd blush when you talked to him. He was very, very shy. He came up to see me. I couldn't walk around very much. I was just out of the hospital. I came directly from the hospital. In those days they didn't make you do exercises the second day -- you know. They treated you as an invalid, and I felt kind of woozy. I had lots of time because I got back much earlier than I usually did to open the gallery, so John the Third would come in and have breakfast with me in the morning in my room.

The maid served breakfast there, and this was the first time that I got the opportunity to talk to him -- and I was terribly impressed with him; he was so non-Rockefeller. The other boys were -- you know, sort of aggressive. Nelson was very aggressive. He was a real go-getter. Winthrop was my favorite because he went out with chorus girls, and he smoked and drank. He was the one who told me -- I made a deal with Mrs. Rockefeller that I wouldn't come there unless I could smoke, and he came over one day and said, "Let me have a drag."

I said, "You're not supposed to smoke."

He said, "Now wait a minute. I've smoked for years."

I said, "My God, you won't get that bonus."

The boys were promised a thousand dollars on their twenty-first birthday respectively if they didn't smoke nor drink until they were twenty-one years of age. That was the John D. Sr., and as a rule nobody drank or smoked in the house. I think the daughter did. She was married, and she wasn't in the house. I don't know if she drank, but she smoked, but that didn't include the daughter. It just included the boys, and when Winthrop asked me for a cigarette, I said, "Go on."

He said, "Come on! I've been smoking and drinking for two years" -- something like that. "Those damn fool brothers of mine! Waiting to get a thousand bucks on their twenty-first birthday. Do you know what we're getting apiece? -- millions."

DR. PHILLIPS: What's a thousand!

MS. HALPERT: I had a very special affection for him because he was so realistic, but John was one I saw very little of. David disliked me. He didn't trust me at all. He hated modern art. He was the baby in the family. Laurance was very pleasant, and Nelson was very friendly, but Winthrop and I really hit it off after that thousand dollar incident. "Those idiot brothers of mine! Waiting to get a thousand dollars when they're twenty-one! We're going to get millions."

Well, John would come in very quietly, and we'd chat a little bit. I was on, among other things, a big poetry kick at that time, and I had a tremendous number of books of poetry, and he was terribly intrigued when he saw the books. "What have you got here? You know, I write poetry."

This is going to be a Rockefeller story.

DR. PHILLIPS: No. There's more in this story from his point of view in terms of. . .

MS. HALPERT: His continuity.

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes.

MS. HALPERT: There's no question about it.

DR. PHILLIPS: Even in this little vignette of a fellow who has an interest -- unlike Stuart Davis, who did indulge himself freely, this is a wholly different kind of problem that Davis would never face.

MS. HALPERT: This was a very touching thing. He said, "I write poetry."

He had to go to work in the morning -- you see, so we had early breakfast, and then he would go to work and then dinner had to be served in the dining room, so I had it brought on a tray into my room, and then I'd send the maid in to find out whether it would be all right for John to come for a little while because I was to retire early. I said to him, "I'd love to read your poetry sometime."

He showed it to me. At that time I was really quite versed in it -- you know, I was reading a great deal of it and very modern literature, so I spoke to him about it. He left it one morning and in the evening he asked to come in, I was really terribly impressed with it, and I said, "You know, I think this is extremely sensitive and quite profound."

After all he was young. How old is he now? He was about twenty-six then, something like that. Nelson is fifty-three. I read that yesterday in *Time* magazine. He's fifty-three, and -- well, in any event, for a young man who was not exposed to life, his poetry had a very profound quality, extremely sensitive, very unmaterialistic, and I was terribly impressed with it, and I said so. He realized that I was very serious about it.

In chatting, I recited my favorite poet at the time who was Curt Smithers, with great elegance, and he was simply fascinated with it, so I gave him a number of *Transitions* [*transition*. Paris, France: 1927-1938] which had all the modern poets, Gertrude Stein and writers, and this opened up a very different avenue for him. These books weren't sold here. They were not American publications, and he kept coming in and I said, "Why don't you try sending your poetry. You know I'm sincere. I know nothing about the field. This is just something I'm enjoying, and if you get acceptance from an authority, it might encourage you to do this. Why don't you send it in?"

He looked at me again with that look of almost disdain. He said, "Can you imagine my name in a magazine? Can you imagine the number of letters that would be sent?"

I said, "Did you ever think of a pseudonym?"

He was just like Mrs. Rockefeller with the speakeasy, "Somebody is going to find out, and we'll be the laughing stock."

That went back to the ride uptown and her crying about these things she couldn't do, and there he was. He was a victim of the name. Now, the interesting thing about him if you study his history is that as the scion of the family, he was either to be Chase Bank -- Uncle Aldrich was the president; I mean, their family. He refused the Chase job. He refused to have anything to do with Standard Oil. There he was to be president, or vice president, or whatever. He turned down every family interest including Williamsburg. For a moment he almost took it. He talked to me about it, and for a moment he almost accepted Williamsburg. He said, "You said it was phony."

Williamsburg is phony, but I got mad because she wanted to send the folk art down there, and he heard something about it. I said, "You don't send folk art to the Governor's Palace!"

He finally accepted the charities, the foundation, for a very short time. He just couldn't, and even now you notice how he never appears. The only thing that interests him is the Orient, and that's only to give, and if you talk to anybody in Hawaii, and that's as close as I got to the Orient, there's such a reverence for this man, his understanding. I mean everything he does, he does with an undertone. He has nothing to do with the Modern Museum. He has nothing to do with any symbol of the Rockefeller family, anything that has to do with the money, but the poetry -- I haven't had the nerve. I see him very, very rarely.

I'm no longer the art agent for any of the Rockefeller's. It's just last year when I had to explain to Blanchette Rockefeller why I wouldn't help the Modern Museum project. When I was asked to act as the chief of the dealer's group to raise money for the building fund I refused, and after having three committees call on me, I said, "I just wouldn't do it," and I gave no reason. Blanchette called me and said, "I understand that you won't have anything to do with the . . ."

I said, "That's right."

She said, "Why, Edith, I'm simply astonished!"

I said, "Now, wait a minute. You're president of the Museum of Modern Art, and since I was somewhat responsible for the inauguration, its existence, and I have a slight vested interest in it, I think I owe you an explanation. If you'll come up here, I'll tell you why."

I did, and the next day she came in with John. It was the first time I had seen him in years, and we had a very touching reunion. I was dying to ask him about his poetry because the guy really had talent -- little as I know about poetry. I felt, having been involved in it so much in reading, this guy had something, and I often wondered what had happened. He's still the same personality. He hasn't changed in the slightest degree. He came back a second time, and she said, "Let's buy a Marin."

She's a lovely person. I'm very fond of Blanchette, and I instantly said, "Look, Blanchette, no payola for me, dear."

He put his arm around me and said, "Good old Edith Halpert! You haven't changed."

He shook hands with me. He said, "Will you let us buy something sometime?"

I said, "Something Oriental."

That was that. Months passed, and we had a Tonyo show, and Blanchette came in with him, and he really got very excited and so did she about Tonyo's work. She was Oriental, and he said, "May we?"

I said, "Um hm."

But the sensitivity of that guy! He hasn't changed one iota. I'm very proud of him, and I'd love to tell him so, but I haven't the nerve to do it. I've never said anything nice to anybody in my life, and I don't want to change my character.

DR. PHILLIPS: I was going to say that your directness is perhaps the most refreshing thing they ever ran into.

MS. HALPERT: That's what he said that day. When he came in with her, she was a little startled when I said, "No payola" because I had told her something that was very important. I had said, "You will go down in history as the commissar of art internationally," and I meant it. She cried. Then when she came in with him, and I said this "payola" thing, he looked at her and said, "Dear, relax. You know what Dad said about her at the meeting with Rosenwald" -- no, who is the Sears and Roebuck man?

DR. PHILLIPS: It is Julius Rosenwald, isn't it?

MS. HALPERT: One of them. I was at a luncheon to which I was invited, and all the boys luncheon that had to do with Sears and Roebuck doing something. It had to do with hot dog stands. Why I was there, I don't know, and very strange things happened that day -- very strange!

DR. PHILLIPS: Jesus, what next?

MS. HALPERT: That I won't tell. I was sitting next to a lawyer. Gee, I haven't thought about that in years.

DR. PHILLIPS: It must have been very strange indeed.

MS. HALPERT: John was there at this luncheon. Mrs. Rockefeller and I were the only two girls there, and I saw between John D. and their attorney. I'll tell the story. Somewhere along the line there was something said about Jews, and there was Rosen-who, whatever, and somebody else said, "There's nothing worse than a Russian Jew."

This old man sitting next to me who was the attorney for the Rockefeller interests kept getting closer and closer, uncomfortably so, and I kept getting closer and closer -- well, I practically sat in John D.'s lap by this time, and this old man whispered to me, "May I take you home?"

I said, "Oh, no. You wouldn't dare. Do you know whom you're sitting next to? -- a Russian Jew!"

I must have said it loud enough -- well, he was really pressing my knee to the point where I thought the knee cap would break.

DR. PHILLIPS: I guess you were right when you said some "very strange things happened."

MS. HALPERT: Now I ask you, at that table you don't expect it, do you?

DR. PHILLIPS: No.

MS. HALPERT: Well, John D. realized that I was very uncomfortable because I kept moving closer and closer, kept shoving the old guy away, and it was at that luncheon -- John the Third remarked; he didn't tell this story, but he said, "You know, dear" -- to Blanchette -- "Dad said at a luncheon one day that the trouble with Wilson is that he never had Mrs. Halpert to tell him the truth."

Blanchette said, "What does that mean?"

He said, "That's a secret between Mrs. Halpert and me."

I said, "Yes it is. Don't you dare tell."

He is a very special person, and I'd love to tell him so, but I don't know how. He's never been involved in any of their business enterprises. He's had no association with any of their business enterprises. Nelson became the scion. He became the representative of the family. John side-stepped all of that and succeeded in doing so against every kind of pressure, I'm sure.

DR. PHILLIPS: While he doesn't have the freedom for his own expression, he has preserved his dignity.

MS. HALPERT: Yes, he retained a consistency of personality without any change and Blanchette is the most perfect mate for him. She's a very, very fine human being. Her sister, Mrs. Marquand, and the one that married that Irishman and had big difficulty -- Hooker, was the maiden name. Anyhow another sister was married to an Irish writer, and she was the one who bought a lot of art here to take to Ireland to show the Irish that the Americans were pretty hot too. She bought a lot of Irish art to bring here.

Blanchette has the same understatement quality that John has, but she has accepted the role of the senior female of the family. Mrs. Rockefeller handed that down to her in relation to art, and when I had this conversation with her that time, she took it very seriously, and you can see the change in the museum since. She really got frightened because the museum did have the international influence.

Everybody painted the abstract expressionist pictures and the thing that burns me up is that it isn't abstract. I mean it's a misnomer that has driven me crazy because it is not abstraction! It's non-objective, but she took it very well, and she calls me up occasionally to call attention to the fact that they have been making changes because she really did not want to go down in history as the commissar of art. I can remember pointing this finger at her. The poor dear cried. They're two very, very swell people, and the old girl was swell until she "reverted to lavender." That's a tradition. They can't help that.

DR. PHILLIPS: We might as well leave a mystery, a real good mystery. We've got some time left on this reel, however.

MS. HALPERT: Do you have time to have a drink?

DR. PHILLIPS: We have some time left. I'll mix you a drink and you can tell me about the search for -- well, the circumstances under which you designed the kind of a place in the country you wanted to have. Come back here.

MS. HALPERT: Where were we?

DR. PHILLIPS: This was the circumstances under which you somehow, or the idea came up that you might like some place in the country.

MS. HALPERT: Oh, yes. I decided at one point that I wanted to have a dacha. As a matter of fact I got a letter addressed to me as the "duchess." After I invited what's his name from the *Washington Post* who was going to do a book on me before Fred White? He's a reporter on the *Washington Post*. Well, in any event, he came out to visit me, and I'd just returned from Russia. He said, "Hiyah."

He liked the house very much. "Do you like my dacha?"

He wrote me a letter to the "Duchess." I thought it was kind of cute. Well, anyhow, I wanted a house in the country, having always been a city girl. I was born in the city, lived in the city, and I decided that I wanted to have a house in the country. Well, I bought two houses, and I canceled out on both of them. I bought one for the Forsythia, and I came out and that was over, and I didn't like the house anymore. Actually, I had a dream of a house, and I made a drawing one day. I was fulfilling my dream, and I made a drawing of a salt box house with a picket fence and huge trees. I was visiting the Sheelers right after I had bought a place in Quakertown -- no, Quaker Ridge, in New York State. That's the Forsythia house, and when I saw it without the Forsythia -- I'd never seen so much Forsythia in my life -- I was very unhappy about it. I paid a deposit. The agent came along, and he said, "Somebody very important wants to buy the house."

I said, "I'm crazy mad about the house. I wouldn't think of selling it."

Well, I got my money back with about two thousand dollars bonus. It was Dewey.

DR. PHILLIPS: Really?

MS. HALPERT: This was long before Dewey was on the scene. It turned out to be Dewey, and later on when I heard where he lived, that was it, so I made two thousand bucks for not buying the house after the Forsythia. I was at the Sheelers right after this happened, and they thought it was the funniest thing because I was going to drop my deposit when a man comes along and says, "Will you take a bonus?"

I said, "I love the house."

Sheeler said, "Why don't you move up this way?"

I said, "Frankly I prefer Connecticut, and I haven't any time to shop."

He said, "What kind of a house?"

I made a drawing of this house that I wanted. I'd never seen one, but it was a combination. It was a picket fence, and I love very old maple trees. Also I was crazy mad about a salt box. So about two months later I get a call from Mrs. Sheeler, the first Mrs. Sheeler, and she said, "Get into a taxi, run like hell, and make a train. We'll meet you in Danbury. We've found your house."

Well, I ran like hell. I made the train, and I was met by two cars, the Sheelers and an agent, and they took me to Newtown through woods, over dirt roads, ruts and so on. It was the most ghastly ride. Charles had the drawing right in front of me, and suddenly there it was, but just absolutely identical, so I asked, "How much is it?"

The man told me, and I said, "I'll take it."

I did say, "I'd like to look inside."

He said, "I can't take you inside because Mrs. Jackson who owns the house can't let anybody in at this time because the son had some terrible form of sleeping sickness, and everything has to be kept pitch dark."

The whole house inside was painted almost a black, the whole interior, so I didn't see the interior. I paid the

deposit, and we left. I had an appointment that evening. I went back to the train, and Charles called me the next day. He said, "You know, the agent said, 'Is that woman all right?'"

This never happened to him before -- you know, getting a deposit, no bargaining, no anything. The price was very right. I didn't even ask him, "How many acres?"

I didn't know what an acre was.

DR. PHILLIPS: City girl, indeed.

MS. HALPERT: Charles said the agent Brisco, a very reliable old time agent up there -- he's dead now -- "Is that woman all right?" -- you know, is the check all right?

Sheeler said, "Well, we just took her out of the institution, but she's okay. She gets lucid moments. It's okay."

We made a date to sign the papers. I was to see the interior and sign papers about a month later. It was on the 13th, and I had a friend drive me up. The Sheelers didn't appear there. They drove me to the Town Hall first to meet the agent, and then to go look at the interior. It was all dark green and black and hung with copper pots -- the entire thing. She was an interior decorator. It was ghastly inside. I didn't care anyhow because I knew that I would find that I wanted to do the interior over. It looked terrible, but I haven't done anything to it. It looked wonderful when it was repainted. It was just what I wanted on the interior too. This friend was driving me up, and he said, "You're buying a house? What in the hell are you going to do with a house? You're all alone."

I said, "That's why I want a house. I want to be all alone in a lot of space."

He said, "Yes, just twenty-five acres." How much is an acre?"

I didn't know it was so many feet or what. I knew an acre was a lot of space, but I didn't know how much, but I felt that it was a whole lot of territory to be alone in, that it was wonderful. He said, "You know, you certainly won't have the stamina to stay there alone.

I said, "If I don't, I can always invite guests."

Twenty-five years later, I said to him, he having said, "You're so fickle you won't be able to stand it," "What do you think of my stamina, boy?"

He and his wife came out to visit me there, and the wife was absolutely hysterical about the place. She'd never been there. I told her the story about being fickle and not having stamina, so she said, "Nat, dear, don't you think twenty-five years is a long time for stamina?"

He said, "I guess so."

But finding that house was the most incredible thing. I have the drawing, but it's but identical.

DR. PHILLIPS: This illustrates, I think, in part, the practical joking quality of Sheeler.

MS. HALPERT: You mean the pear trick?

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes. You've got to tell that -- you know, anybody who would go to that length!

MS. HALPERT: Sheeler was -- I'm sorry to say, "was" -- really an incredible person, extremely intelligent with, not a Yankee humor, this was a Philadelphia humor. I didn't think anybody in Philadelphia had a humor, but he had and a very special sort, gentle, never a painful one. It never digs. It was always a kind wit which is a very special distinction. It isn't smart alecky, but subtle, and precise like his paintings. The first time I came out to see the house after I paid for it and went there and -- you know, owning a house was very important! I had a house in the Village, but this was the country, a dacha -- you know, and owning trees, grass! All my life in Central Park it had said, "Don't walk on the grass."

This was mine, and I could walk on it -- you know, twenty-five acres of grass, and I was hysterical. Of course, Charles knew that I wasn't very bright, and he and his wife and I got out of the car and suddenly I looked up and I saw the most beautiful pears I ever have seen, and I went completely to pieces. I said, "That's a pear tree!"

He said, "Of course, it's a pear tree!"

Of course if I had had any sense I would have known that pears don't grow that time of year, but there they were -- you know, red, pink, green, the most beautiful pears, about ten or twelve of them on the tree. The leaves were full. I didn't see anything else. I said, "I've just got to have one of those pears!"

DR. PHILLIPS: One of my pears!

MS. HALPERT: Oh, yes. "These are all mine. Everything here is mine -- the grass, the trees, the picket fence" -- and I got very dramatic about it, and his wife was hysterical. She thought I was very funny about it, but I really meant it. I said, "I've got to get one of these pears."

I didn't know whether you snipped them, or broke them off, or what the hell. I touched the pear, and it came right off, and it still had a little green ribbon on it. I found out that Charles had gone to a specialty fruit shop . . .

DR. PHILLIPS: That's the greatest plant of all time.

MS. HALPERT: He probably paid a dollar a pear, and he had come there that morning and tied twelve pears to the tree with green ribbon so that it wouldn't show. Of course, that was the most glorious moment of his life -- I fall for it just like that. We took all the pears off, and we had the biggest party of all time.

DR. PHILLIPS: He sounds like a superb person.

MS. HALPERT: He was wonderful. Steichen is a horticulturist. Charles was a very close friend of his -- you know, he lived at Redding right near Ritchfield, and some time I have to tell you about the mint juleps.

DR. PHILLIPS: There is one thing that you did to that house -- I remember when you opened your window, there was a color on the flowers down below that just affronted your sense of beauty.

MS. HALPERT: Phlox.

DR. PHILLIPS: Was that it?

MS. HALPERT: It was a whole bed of lavender phlox, and that really counteracted the pears completely. It became the most obnoxious spot. I have some sort of a block on lavender because I remember as a kid, mother bought me a lavender dress at Bloomingdale's, and I refused to wear it, and to buy it at Bloomingdale's was pretty chic, believe me, when we got to America, and I wouldn't wear it. I hate lavender, and I love purple. There's a difference, but lavender is a color that makes me very unhappy, even in paintings, in anything, but that lavender phlox got me, so I tore them all out, tore them out by the roots.

I was crazy mad about the shape, about the way they grew, about the way the leaf parted in a certain way, and I was driving along, going to Bridgeport one day. When I moved out there I had to discover the whole area, and every day I would go out in my car. I found the greatest covered bridge, the first steel bridge in America, and this had everything that a wooden covered bridge in Vermont has only it was made of steel. I was fascinated with it. I took a bunch of photographs of it, and I still have them, but I kept riding around discovering the country.

Columbus never had anything on me. I found all sorts of funny little things, discovered rivers that had been there for thousands of years -- you know, these are personal stories. Well, I passed a green house, and I saw something that was just the shape I loved. I got out of my car, and I looked in the window there. I had to go in, and I asked the man what the flower was, and he said, "Phlox."

I said, "In salmon and in white?"

He said, "Yes, we cross flowers."

I said, "They grow?"

He said, "Yes."

So I bought the whole works, and I planted them. I didn't do any more reconnoitering, but came right back, stuck them in -- you know, readymade flowers. In the morning I plant them and in the afternoon they're blooming. I never planted from seed. I don't have time. I'm only there for two months. They kept coming up. That became my favorite little spot. I weeded that religiously, and I watered it in dry seasons. If I had just one bucket of water, it was for the Phlox. I woke up one morning and looked out the window, and there they were--lavender. I dashed back to Bridgeport and said to the man, "I hate lavender! I pulled out all the lavender phlox. I bought white, salmon and pink."

[END OF 4 OF 7 REEL B1r]

"Oh," he said, "don't you know flowers revert to type."

DR. PHILLIPS: That's a great story.

MS. HALPERT: They do, and they did, so now I buy a new crop every three years. I never let them turn lavender. I catch them just before. I pull them out the end of the season, and there's nothing, and when I go out again the following summer, I go to Bridgeport and get my color scheme again.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's a really good story. Sheeler must have a great wit.

MS. HALPERT: He really has a certain unique wit. As I say, there's a certain Yankee wit which is represented for me by Marin in an upper grade and then by Cappy what's his name -- in 1925 and 1926 in Ogunquit, in Maine, 1926 and 1927. I used to go all over to buy folk art and early American plates, whatnot, china, furniture, and Cappy Stuart was my favorite Yankee. He's the biggest liar in the whole world -- that's not Yankee necessarily, but he had that same kind of Yankee wit on a low level, and Marin had it on a high level, but Sheeler's wit was unique.

I never met any Philadelphians at that close range, and, as I said before, there's something about his wit that has much the same qualities as his pictures. It's like the drawing downstairs that I borrowed from the Modern Museum, *Self-Portrait* [1923] -- a telephone. Everybody comes in and says, "Where is the portrait?" Well, there's a reflection in the window. That is the self-portrait. That is his kind of wit.

Before I had my house, I would go frequently to Richfield, spend a weekend with him and Katherine who is also a very special person. She was solid, just the opposite, a very, very fine person, a wonderful combination, and I had a ball with them always. There would be very serious conversations -- you know, we talked about art, about people and so on, then he'd come through with something like the pears which I think was the greatest achievement of his life, certainly in my life. I don't think I ever laughed so hard.

I never got such a thrill in my whole life -- you know, this possession, this little girl from Odessa with her bare hands gets this dacha with pears like that, the most gorgeous pears, and they were. They were imported from somewhere at a dollar a piece, but the idea of his coming. It's quite a distance -- about twenty miles. Well, to go to New York one day and buy the pears and to come to my house early the following day, to tie them on the tree in the morning and watch for me. He walked me up that lane -- you know, and there it was, beautiful pears, my pears.

DR. PHILLIPS: The time that he must have spent searching for a place that resembled your drawing!

MS. HALPERT: They drove up and down -- it had to be Connecticut. I was very often fond of them, and they were very fond of me, and they wanted to make it close enough so that we could visit. They drove around, and Katherine told me that they drove through every damn road from Richfield all the way in various directions. Then they came upon this house which was on a dirt road completely remote. It wasn't near anything, about six and a half miles from the town, and at that time it was the most isolated place. Nobody would dream that a woman alone would live in a place like that because I was really completely alone and to reach me you had to go through mud holes, everything. I didn't care. I had my picket fence, and those three hundred year old trees.

DR. PHILLIPS: This is the essence of devotion to spend this much time.

MS. HALPERT: Well, as a friend, I can't think of anybody, and this has to do with other people, I can't think of anybody who has his belief in a thing. He's very selective. In his art, he's selective. He's selective in the objects he gets, and in the people around him, and it's real, and the devotion is complete, and full and rich, and that is why I was so sad about seeing him as he is.

Last summer I suffered agonies when they came and stayed. I was so happy that they were there, but seeing the disintegration of a human being, seeing this perfect specimen become an imperfect specimen was terribly painful; seeing that wonderful hand of what I consider very great paintings lying in his lap useless and his wit gone -- you know, his personality gone -- God it was painful! Very painful, but -- you know, I've said this a number of times, but of all the artists I've ever met and that's inclusive, going way back to my childhood and here, abroad, everywhere meeting people from all over the world, the two artists that I respect the most and admire the most are Sheeler and Davis, or alphabetically, Davis and Sheeler who have a consistency of personality and art. You can't separate one from the other, this elegant wit, a dollar pear, not a twenty-five cent pear.

DR. PHILLIPS: Together with the green ribbon.

MS. HALPERT: With a green ribbon so that you can't see it, and the thing that he says you must never see, the evidence of the way of a painting. You put a green ribbon in with green leaves. There's a consistency there, and also the elegance. I don't mean cheap. I mean elegance in the best sense of the word. Looking at that picture and there you have wit, taking a window and making it the great motif, or the door, the glass part of the door. Now, it would be a very commonplace thing if it were done by anyone else, wouldn't it? Taking that theme, it would be very commonplace, but there it is, the elegance and the wit and the rightness, the precision

and the admiration in most cases of the manmade object. It's architecture, interiors, objects. He painted landscapes as a youngster, but his great pictures are manmade objects, and the cream of manmade objects.

Gee, I've got to remember that. The next time I write a publicity release. That's true, but I hadn't thought of that before, that he's never painted a person.

DR. PHILLIPS: Except the "self-portrait" and . . .

MS. HALPERT: That's wit. That isn't a person. It's a shadow. That's wit -- self-portrait. That goes way back, but why do people disintegrate? I always feel that it has been a very great privilege to know a man like that and this has been -- you know, traveling with him. If we got into a shop, that eye of his! He'd never see a stainless steel object, but silver, a beautiful silver object -- there's always that precious quality, the most beautiful material, and the most beautiful fashioning of the material, just like Shaker.

There isn't anything more beautiful actually than a Shaker object. In fact, I have a Shaker sewing table which everybody calls a desk, and I use it was such -- I don't sew at it. Made in1810. It still pulls out, the drawers come out. I have new objects, and the drawers get stuck, and everything on the top of the chest falls to the floor. You use brown soap, and it slides out, but here are things which were made a hundred and more years ago, and they still function. When they talk about the functional furniture and functional architecture, what's more beautiful than that round barn, and it was done.

The same idea that Saarinen had at the airport. I haven't seen it yet, but from the drawings, so that your distance from various points is reduced because coming to a plane from a desk where you check in is a mile walk.

Yet this round barn was functional because you could get at the hay with the least movement. Every piece of furniture functions that way, the sewing chair that I have which I use for a telephone table chair, revolves just so much because it was a sewing chair. You had to reach this side, and it revolves just enough for this motion. The rocker -- you can't tip over in a Shaker rocker unless you're really cockeyed, and the rockers are very, very brief. You can't trip over it.

Everything was done with precision, and that's why Sheeler has picked those things, subconsciously -- everything he had in his home, unfortunately, is a portrait of him, the clothes he wears, everything and that sense of perfection in unity and contrasted and compared because I think they're very similar with Stuart Davis -- I mean the contrast in the type. He has exactly the same consistency, don't you think so?

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes, I do.

MS. HALPERT: I've never met two other people like that in any field.

[END OF 4 OF 7 REEL B2r]

32 East 51st Street, New York City, Monday, July 18, 1962

DR. PHILLIPS: I'd rather have you talk; you're a much better talker.

MS. HALPERT: Come on! You mean I don't write good?

DR. PHILLIPS: I didn't say that, but there is some zest to your talk!

MS. HALPERT: Well, this is 1933, and this has to do with Lord Duveen. Are we on?

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes.

MS. HALPERT: Let me get us some drinks. That may be too short. This one is the lighter one.

Well, this was back in 1933 which was really the peak -- can you say "peak" about the low of a depression? Well, there was a great deal of gossip around town that a new museum was opening up in Kansas City with millions of dollars. You walked along the streets -- the galleries ran on 57th Street largely -- and some of them had ancient lions which were being polished up. The polishing up that went on -- windows were changed. There were a terrific to-do around New York, and one day -- well, we all knew it was Kansas City. Kansas City was starting a museum, the William Rockhill Nelson Gallery [The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art].

It says here that I am "one of the few surviving dealer guests who were present at the inauguration of the gallery." Well, that's later. In any event, I kept worrying about this thing because everybody was fluttering, and the idea that no art would be bought from any artist that hadn't been dead for thirty years -- the Louvre and the National Gallery put that out as an idea. All my artists were living, kicking, starving, and I was going nuts because most of the galleries -- you know, they had a Homer, or a Ryder, or even a Robinson. They had something -- French, Italian, and they were being polished, the antiquities, Oriental, and so on. I didn't have anything.

I was walking down 57th Street, and there was one guy who disliked me more intensely than most of the other dealers, and that was [Frederic Newlin] Price of the Ferargil Gallery who was the one who started the rumor that I was leading a very immoral life. You'll notice how clear I am on this. He was a famous homosexual, and he sold anything, everything, and I ran into him on 57th Street, and he said, "Well, my dear, this is one institution that you can't put your hands into because you have all living artists."

So I said, "Yeah. Even if I killed one right away, I can't pre-date him."

Well, I went home, and in the middle of the night I woke up, and I thought, "My God, I've got folk art!"

You know, those were the deadest artists in the whole world, so I wrote a letter immediately -- thanks to Price. I never would have dreamed of it. I thought, "They're polishing up old lions outside," and I had a lion weather vane. So I wrote a letter to the -- and I've forgotten his name -- man who was hired to supervise this thing, another one of the boys. I wrote him and said that I had some absolutely fabulous late eighteenth and early nineteenth century American sculpture, would he come in. I didn't say anything about the paintings.

Well, he came in -- I didn't mention his name, did I? I had a figurehead of Hercules with a fig leaf. I sold it years later to the Museum of the City of New York. This fellow was really quite a number, pink dimpled knees, a great big burly guy, and I had this magnificent, fabulous figurehead. He got very excited about that. He didn't look at anything else for a while. I finally got him down to the smaller things. I had that figurehead earmarked for the New England Museum because that was where it belonged. It was really a magnificent figurehead. I showed him weather vanes and so on, and he selected quite a few things, and he said, "One of these days I will come with a committee to go over this material."

I showed him some paintings. It meant about a five to ten thousand dollar sale, and these things belonged to me outright. With cash money I could send each artist a check from the gallery to live on for a couple of months, and I could live too. I was very excited about it.

Time passed, nobody came, and then one day this little character came in with three of the biggest men I ever saw. They all wore big hats like cowboys, ten gallon hats, big burly guys, very impatient, saying, "All right! Let's see your art!"

I don't think any of them had seen much art before. One of them was J.C. Nichols, who had been elected president of the museum. Then one of them was named Jones, and the other one I think I have in here. I asked his name when I got there, but I don't remember it now. I showed them. I started with the weather vanes, and I began making these glowing remarks about the forms, the modeling of these untutored artists who saw nature and translated the things that they knew the best, "the flowing forms of this cow," and I went on talking about this cow specifically.

This was Parsons who was the purchasing agent. Gardner had been made director. The museum hadn't opened yet, and so they all -- the two art people sat there very patiently, and these three big guys were getting absolutely rabid. They wanted to get the hell out. I brought out a horse, a cow, a sheep, and all sorts of weather vanes, wood carvings and whatnot, and they were just bored to death. I went on.

For some reason or other, I kept talking about this one cow. Of course, I said that they were great, authentic works of art, that they represented the early beginnings of America, and that they were very different from the European things because they were not glorifying. They were not crests. They were not responsible for the French Revolution. The first thing that the populace did was to tear down the weather vanes because they were crests, and that's when weather vanes became popular. I was giving them all this history that I had found here and there. Nothing was written, but I didn't make it up.

Finally, I talked about three dimensional quality -- oh, the art talk was terrific! I couldn't do it now on a bet! I don't know as much. Finally, one of these men turned around. I compared the objects to Assyrian and Greek and Roman -- oh, boy, I was really hot! Listen, I needed that three thousand bucks, and these were good weather vanes. Finally one of them drew himself up, and he said, "look here young woman, you can tell me this is sculpture, and I'll have to believe you, but for Christ's sakes stop calling this a cow. I'm Secretary of Agriculture, and this is a steer!"

That's how I learned about sex. Well, P.S. because of other circumstances I won't go into, later on the president of the Museum really got the biggest boot out of the whole performance and also the little woman giving them this sales talk and mixing up sex. He had some ideas on this subject. I sold the entire group that had been selected including some paintings. They have them there, one of the best things around their museum next to their Oriental collection, and that was that. I got this check and I was completely hysterical. We had a big party at the gallery, and the artist ate and I ate, and thanks to that cow that turned out to be a steer. How in the hell was I supposed to know!

Well, some months passed, and they had this huge opening, a grand opening -- you know, people like Duveen sold about a half a million dollars. These were all the top dealers -- Kelekian, Brummer, all those people, and Koppel was the only one who was nice to me, David Koppel who had the great print gallery we ever had in America. He sold some old master prints, English prints, provided the artist had been dead thirty years. I was invited to the opening, and I saved enough for the carfare. I made my own clothes so I was all set.

They had a special car -- you know, there were enough people so that a car was assigned to al the dealers, and I went into the car, and I was ushered out very politely. It was for men only. I was the only female, so I sat in another car. In Chicago, I was to change trains, and they were to take all the luggage, all the baggage, and transfer it from this railroad station to another, and nobody would touch mine. I mean I was just a pariah. They were all furious, that this little squirt from 13th Street was in on this deal, and I sold three thousand, five thousand, whatever it was which was the price of the tail of a Greek lion -- not Greek, Roman, and I was completely ignored. Well, in Chicago we changed. Koppel who was very nice, said, "Oh, you're on the train?"

I said, "Yes, but I wasn't admitted to the regular car."

I had a seat there. We each bought our own tickets. We were all assigned to the same car, and I had to go into some other car alone. Of course, I managed all right. When we changed, everybody went to dinner, and nobody asked me to dinner -- all my beaus like Kelekian, Brummer -- I just didn't exist.

DR. PHILLIPS: Those bastards!

MS. HALPERT: And I was really so upset, so hurt! I didn't want anything from anybody, but -- you know, I didn't want to be treated as though I was a pariah, and you know, how low can you get?! I got a porter, and I gave him five bucks, and I said, "Take my bag, and put it on the Kansas City car."

Then I wouldn't have to walk around with my bag -- you know, I had evening dresses. This was a three, or four day party. I had a lot of clothes, and we wore long dresses then -- shoes, bags, and so on. Well, in any event, he did take my bags over, and I said, "Put them in the other car."

He did, and I got there. Well, in the morning when we arrived, I got off the train very dejected, and I thought I would go right home because I thought -- "Good God! I don't know anybody in Kansas City."

I had never been there in my life. I did meet Nichols four or five times. He was pleasant, and I went to dinner with him once, or twice. I knew the director. I had met him only twice also, and this other guy too -- you know, what was I going to do there, what hotel was I going to -- I didn't know anything. I was going to inquire about trains going back. I decided to go right back and forget about it. I heard my name called out. They didn't have a public address system in those days -- this was thirty years ago -- so I heard my name.

I came out, and I thought, "Well, they've already gotten me a ticket to go home without my even looking for it," when who should rush at me with open arms but J.C. Nichols, the president of the museum, and the kissed me smack on the lips -- that's a western custom I found out later. And his wife as in a limousine, and she kissed me, and she said, "You are going to be our house guest, dear. You're the only girl, and you're going to stay with us. If you think we're going to throw you to this bunch of wolves! You won't mind? Lord Duveen is going to be our other guest."

I said, "Good God!"

She said, "What's wrong?"

"He will die."

He almost did. So I was put up at the Nicholses. Well, Mrs. Nichols and I were the greatest affinities -- you know, we clicked, and she kept saying, "I'm just a rough diamond. I'm a diamond in the rough! You and I are going to stick together with all these guys.

I told her what happened. I said, "If my name hasn't been called, I was going back because nobody on the train would even talk to me. None of the men would talk to me."

She said, "I don't believe it!"

I said, "No, they didn't, dear. They put me out of their car. I didn't want anything from them, but they could have been polite, and the only one who was pleasant to me was Koppel, and he got on at Chicago."

He wasn't on the first ride. She said, "We'll fix them, baby! What do you want me to do to them?"

I said, "Nothing. Just leave them alone. The mere fact that I'm staying here will just burn them up. Who thought of that idea?"

She said, "I think that J.C. has a crush on you, dear. He keeps talking about you."

I said, "I don't care what caused it, but I love it."

The opening was that night. At four o'clock I had to have my nails done -- something happened. I broke one of my nails, and she called her manicurist. I really had a ball in that house. The dealers were put into a great many homes -- you know, they weren't stuck in hotels. They were distributed.

DR. PHILLIPS: They were farmed out.

MS. HALPERT: Yes, they were farmed out, but the Lord and I -- well, the Lord took one look at me. He knew me. Well, he really stuck to his room. He just couldn't bear it! The dinner before the big opening -- I told this to an audience there about twenty-five years later. There were enough people there who remembered the incident and they just adored it. I just skimmed over the story, and they adored it -- they just roared. You'll have to read this speech. It is funny. We got there in the morning, and at the luncheon Mr. Nichols was to give the formal address as president, and I kept interrupting him. I said, "For God's sakes, don't you know there are living artists?!"

He kept talking about "the geographic heart of America." I don't know whether Kansas City is, or isn't, but it's pretty close I imagine. He kept talking, "Kansas City is the geographical heart of America."

I said, "That's some heart, baby -- not a living American artist!"

Lord Duveen said, "Let us go on, Mr. Nichols."

I said, "J.C., don't let him interrupt us. Let's get at this thing."

Well, by the end of the luncheon -- Mrs. Nichols kept kicking me under the table, saying, in effect, "Keep going! You're going good."

She just adored it. Before that thing was over Mr. Nichols said, "Well, the museum can't do it, but what did you say can be done?"

I said, "You can have something called, 'The Junior Committee.' Why don't you start a new club called 'Friends of the Nelson Gallery' and have people chip in to buy contemporary American art. No cows!"

Well, he had a wonderful sense of humor, and she was absolutely terrific! She called her two children in to listen in on this deal because the Lord was really practically having apoplexy. About five o'clock she said, "What the hell is going on in this house?"

The door bell was ringing, and corsages began to arrive for me.

DR. PHILLIPS: Really?

MS. HALPERT: Which was about the most revolting thing that ever happened! Suddenly the dealers who wouldn't talk to me on the train saw -- well, they heard it at the station that I was staying with the president of the museum, and they began sending me corsages. Nichols got me a beautiful corsage. As these corsages came in, I said, "Where do you throw these things in this elegant house?"

"We'll stick them in the garden. Let's make a garland."

She was the most extraordinary woman. She never had such a good time in her life because this really was the most vulgar display of something, or other -- just suddenly these guys who probably never heard of corsages -- except Duveen who didn't give me one, but I mean, he used to send a messenger, by hand, to deliver orchids to a lady client. Well, here I was loaded with corsages, and I just wore the one Nichols gave me, and he escorted me. I said, "Walk in slowly."

DR. PHILLIPS: Those bastards must have died!

MS. HALPERT: Well, they were pretty nasty, don't you think -- ignoring me like that?

DR. PHILLIPS: They must have died.

MS. HALPERT: Well, they all sold ten to a hundred times as much as I did, and you know, I was really the smallest potato in the whole world, believe me, not only in the whole world, but the wrong sex, and I thought I was pretty damn sweet, but the dealers didn't know what was happening -- she just said, "You're the only girl, and we decided to invite you to our house."

It was as simple as that, real mid-western -- you know . . .

DR. PHILLIPS: Warmth.

MS. HALPERT: "The geographic heart of America!"

That night Mr. Nichols announced that he was the first one to make a contribution to the "Friends of . . ." I said, "Don't mention me.

He announced that they had conceived the idea that since there was no money for living American art, that there should be an organization, and that private citizens should contribute to it, and he made the first contribution.

If that didn't burn up every antiquarian in the joint -- Frank Rhehn! None of the American dealers were there because they didn't have dead artists. The few American dealers didn't have an American artist thirty years dead. They might have had one who died five years before, but not thirty years, but so this really took the antiquarians chiefly, together with Knoedler and Wildenstein, the very upper crust with this little potato in there. I never had such a great time in my whole life! I said, "I'll be goddamned if I leave the same time they do. I'm going back alone!"

I stayed on two extra days, and I had the most wonderful time. This Mrs. Nichols was -- well, I must say, just about the grandest person I ever met. First of all, she had the most fabulous sense of humor, and this whole idea appealed to her. She was simply crazy about it. Wherever there were parties she would say, "Look what I brought!"

Well, all I can say is that I never had such a gorgeous time in my life, and from there on I did quite a bit of selling, and when I discovered this absolutely fabulous Raphaelle Peale, the famous one of the *Towel After the Bath* [*Venus Rising from the Sea – A Deception (After the Bath)*, 1823] for which I paid seventy-five dollars after Knoedler turned it down. I had to get that in there. I didn't know what the picture was. I ain't boasting, but it just looked -- well, it was perfectly black, and it looked absolutely fabulous to me. It looked like a dirty Brock -- you know, and it was almost incised with dirt, so I bought it for seventy-five bucks shortly after. I was in the dough. I could spend seventy-five dollars like nothing, and I sent it to David Rosen to have cleaned. He was the great restorer and a very good friend of mine. Through Brummer I met him, and we were very good friends, and he said, "Edith, I will not clean this!"

He got very insulted -- "You don't clean this kind of thing! I clean masterpieces!"

I said, "How do you know this isn't?"

Well, finally, "What would you charge if this were a masterpiece?"

He said, "Five hundred dollars."

I said, "Okay. I'll pay you five hundred dollars. Something tells me that this is a great picture."

There was enough of an outline to indicate that there was something under this. It had been turned down by Erlich -- you know, all along 57th Street, and Knoedler. That's what pleased me. So I'm having a dinner party -- maybe two weeks after I gave it to David Rosen, and I told him, "I'll pay what you charge for an old master."

He called me up right in the midst of the dinner party, and he said -- he lived on 10th Street -- "You must come over right away. It is important! It is exciting! You will die!"

I said, "I'm having a dinner party. I can't come. Tell me about it."

He said, "I can't tell you. You will die!"

I said, "Why should I come to 10th Street to die when I can die right here?"

Well, P.S., I finished the dinner, and at coffee I said, "Will everybody excuse me. I have to go to 10th Street to die."

I didn't die at all. The only thing he had cleaned was the bottom, and it had a signature. I died laughing -- you know, Raphaelle Peale, 1821. That was what he had cleaned, and I still didn't know what the picture was. I could just see that the outline of a toe was there and the band across it. It looked like an abstraction. Well, seeing Raphaelle Peale didn't make me feel bad, I must admit, but I said, "Hurry up! Clean this thing!"

In about a week, he had cleaned the picture, and it turned out to be one of the great American pictures. I had a show -- oh, I ran into well, I've forgotten the name of the guy who was assistant to the *Herald Tribune,* an old man. He said, "You look like a Christmas candle."

I said, "God, I thought I had a shape."

He said, "No, you look illuminated."

I said, "Illuminated? Boy! This picture just arrived, and it's the most exciting thing that ever happened. I think it's one of the greatest pictures in the world."

He came over, and he looked at it and said, "It sure is. Can we announce it?"

I said, "Oh, no. I'll have a show and just slip it into the show."

I slipped it into a show, and he told of this discovery, that I got it for seventy-five dollars, something to that effect. Well, everybody in the United States wanted to buy it. I called up Paul Gardner, the director of the museum, and I said, "Have you heard about it?"

He said, "No."

Like Kennedy, he doesn't read the *Herald Tribune*. He didn't hear about it. I said, "Well, you come down. I'll hold it."

He was a little bit suspicious. I said, "I've already had ten calls for the picture at any price."

It was worth about twenty-five thousand dollars even then, and I said, "I think if you'll just ask J.C., I think he'll pay the fare."

You know, the museum would pay the fare. Well, he came down, and he said, "How much would you sell it for?"

I said "Five."

It cost me seventy-five dollars. Five hundred dollars for the cleaning. I sent a bonus to the guy who sold it to me, but he returned it because he decided that I was the biggest faker in the whole world, that this was a junky picture, that nobody wanted it, and that I put it over because I was a pretty woman. This is what he told me. He wouldn't take the money. I sent him a five hundred dollar check before I sold it. I was going to send him a whole lot more, but he returned the money because he didn't want to get involved in any dirty deal like this, and when the thing was cleaned, it was just a towel, with an arm above it and a foot sticking out.

DR. PHILLIPS: But a Peale!

MS. HALPERT: It's a hell of a Peale! I mean, it's a great picture! It's been reproduced and shown all over the world, so I sold it to them for five thousand bucks, and I have a very, very soft spot for them because that folk art sale meant a great deal to me and to my artists at that time, and the profit on a five thousand dollar number meant even more, but what meant the most to me was that I burned up every antiquarian in New York City with the help of Mrs. Nichols. Nichols is now dead.

Of course, a lot of people there knew the story. Many of the younger ones didn't, and I told the story about sex, and the audience really was in hysterics! -- about this whole thing, and there was enough people there. Well, it was their twenty-fifth anniversary, and there were enough people who knew the story -- Mrs. Nichols told the story all over town when I was there -- about how the dealers treated me.

They were simply delighted, and an old beau of mine who lives in Topeka, he and his wife came down to talk, and they were so fascinated because -- you know, nobody ever believes me. Everybody thinks I make up these stories. Even an old beau didn't believe me, but I'm so glad I found this -- because it starts out learning all about sex. This is much better -- listen:

"No one can imagine what occurred on 57th Street, then the official art center, when the Nelson Gallery project was announced. Marbles were scrubbed or repainted, sarcophagi were brought up from the vault. Chinese sculptures were treated for bronze disease. Paintings were cleaned. Moth balls were removed from tapestries. The street was humming" -- and so on, and they just adored it.

"The prospect of an enormous funds available for art purchases created such a furor that the vibrations reached the Downtown Gallery far down on 13th Street. Happily my artists were alive, but alas for that reason were ineligible for the Nelson Gallery. Suddenly a taunting remark from an uptown dealer made me aware that I too could get into the act. American folk art was nineteenth century, or late eighteenth, and I had the only sales collection of it in the whole country. Off went an irresistible letter to Mr. Harold Parsons. My modest stage was set with my modest wares, and as luck would have it, a number of the objects appealed to Mr. Parsons and to Mr. Gardner."

Then it goes on about these gentlemen who scowled at the objects, Parsons and then at me until Mr. Jones said, "Stop calling it a cow. I'm Secretary of Agriculture and know that this is a steer," and so thanks to Mr. Jones I learned early about sex."

DR. PHILLIPS: That must have broken them up.

MS. HALPERT: The audience just absolutely roared.

DR. PHILLIPS: What a crazy experience that was!

MS. HALPERT: When I dared to murmur, "What a heart with no room for living American art," Duveen practically collapsed. This I repeated, "It gives me pleasure to be here and to see that the geographical heart of America has opened up a tiny bit. The Nelson Gallery now owns a few examples of contemporary American art," and so on.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's fantastic! It's unbelievable that you could be treated so shabbily.

MS. HALPERT: If I were someone who dusted sarcophagi, they might have at least greeted me.

DR. PHILLIPS: If you had had seventeen arms, something like that, it might have given even me pause.

MS. HALPERT: If I had had seventeen arms, I would have broken seventeen jaws -- I was so mad!

DR. PHILLIPS: You must have been just furious!

MS. HALPERT: Well, it was the most humiliating experience because I've always been treated awfully well by people -- you know, my white hair. I had white hair then.

I owe it to Sam that my hair turned white overnight. I would never have believed it, but it did happen because I've had more good things happen to me because of the white hair and the little widow, the most wonderful things.

DR. PHILLIPS: This is a scandalous story from their point of view since they had done so well with the new museum opening up.

MS. HALPRT: They had millions to spend -- you see.

DR. PHILLIPS: The other dealers at least had reason enough to be reasonable with you. You sold what -- three, five thousand dollars worth.

MS. HALPERT: It couldn't have been over five thousand dollars. (The phone rang.)

DR. PHILLIPS: We were in the midst of the folk art story. You said that you first got intrigued about folk art by Hamilton Easter Field who owned Ogunquit and who was something of a collector, or at least he was aware of folk art.

MS. HALPERT: He did that. He'd make these little fish houses. It was called fisherman's cove. They were just little cottages where they stored the fish. They didn't even live in them. The place stank to high heaven at one time, and he rented these little cottages to artists -- seventy-five dollars a summer. Believe me, he didn't gyp the artists, but he wanted to make them attractive.

They were all furnished, and he went around and what was cheaper than antique furniture? He got a Boston rocker for seventy-five cents. You couldn't get a new cane seat kitchen chair for less than five dollars, and to make it attractive he put in a decoy duck. In fact, the place was dripping with decoys and a little painting, a

clock with a painting in it, and he really did it for economy, but he had very good taste and whatever he bought in the way of junk, second hand furniture -- he'd go into the attic, nobody heard of the stuff, so that I got acquainted with it.

Well, before that he had it in Brooklyn, in Columbia Heights. I went to visit him once, and he had -- well, he had French moderns and American moderns, and he bought pictures from many of the artists. He edited the magazine, and so on, and he was really interested in promoting living American artists. There's no question about it. He wasn't taking advantage of them. He tried to make these places look attractive. He whitewashed the walls. He stuck in a couple of hunks of furniture, and that was that.

I got acquainted with folk art before I went to Ogunquit. I didn't go to Ogunquit until 1926. By then I'd already met Nadelman. They had this big mansion, 6 East 91st Street, or 93rd Street, a huge mansion because she was a fabulously wealthy woman. She bought some property on the block south, and that was Nadelman's studio, and he was simply crazy about folk art. He had folk art around his studio. I got acquainted with him and in1924 he opened a museum in Riverdale, a huge mansion with some of the greatest pieces of folk art in America. They still are -- you know, I bought a good deal of it for Mrs. Rockefeller and some for myself later, but in any event, I got acquainted with it.

When I met Sheeler later in Richfield, he had folk art there. He had some wonderful folk art paintings in Richfield. Alex Brook had folk art. The artists were the ones -- through Robert Laurent and Hamilton Easter Field from whom Laurent inherited everything, or the other end, Nadelman, and here and there, and Mrs. Force was collecting folk art.

DR. PHILLIPS: I didn't know that.

MS. HALPERT: Oh, yes, she had a very good collection of folk art. She had a very good collection of Shaker furniture. She had a place out in Bucks County, so that I came in contact with folk art in a very small way until 1924. I didn't see -- well, I'd see one object in somebody's house even in 1926. Well, by that time, I had already seen the stuff in the museum at Riverdale, but his was in international collection, international folk art, but I'd say that he had about forty, or fifty American folk art things. It wasn't an inclusive kind of thing, so that I was bitten by that bug, and when we bought this house up in West Camp on the Hudson which was not too far -- well, far enough from Woodstock not to be close to it. It's on the other side.

Well, I bought early American furniture for the same reason as Hamilton Easter Field. This was before I knew him -- I mean, I automatically because it was the cheapest stuff you could get, and the whole house was furnished with early American furniture, and this was way before 1924, before Nadelman and so on, you know, the kind of thing that you just did automatically because you'd get a chest of drawers for three dollars. You'd go to Bloomingdale's, or Macy's, and you had to pay at least thirty-five dollars, so you put brown soap on the drawers so that they would slide out, and you'd paint the things. I painted them.

When I got married I bought unfinished furniture -- you know, just plain wood. When I was married I was working at Stern brothers and the furniture buyers showed me where to get it and I got it for nothing. I painted it myself, and Daniel's assistant's girlfriend made batiks, and she taught me how, and I had the most beautiful batik curtains you ever saw. You know, I sewed everything, so that I got into folk art through associations and through poverty.

DR. PHILLIPS: When did you bring folk art into the gallery as a commercial item?

MS. HALPERT: Well, I had some folk art when I opened the gallery in 1926. First of all, the whole gallery was furnished with early American furniture. I had shelves, some of them filled with pottery and clocks. Hooked rugs were hanging like pictures, chalk ware I bought -- you know, fifty cents, or whatever, watercolors, early American watercolors; in fact, I gave the Newark Museum years later the first two watercolors I bought, and then there were shows.

In 1927, the Whitney Museum had a wonderful show that Henry Schnackenberg assembled -- you know, I've said that in every talk I've ever given. I talk about what all those other people did who did this before I did it. The only difference between all those people and me was that I made a business of it. They bought and I sold. I did the commercial thing about it, and I had saved up a thousand dollars on my own, and I decided to invest in Folk art.

I didn't go to Europe one summer. 1929, that summer, I skipped. I toured around the country, and for a thousand dollars, I was loaded, and I bought quite a lot. For a thousand dollars I was loaded. I had cigar store Indians, figureheads, weather vanes, paintings in every medium -- God! I was really loaded. I bought this Hupmobile, the freewheeling kind, wasn't it? I couldn't travel alone. When I left the car to go into the shops, I had to leave the stuff in the car, and I always had to have someone in the car. No woman would travel with me, so there was always some guy available.

Harry Bragstrom had a frame shop. He was the nephew of Martin Beerbohm, a very great dealer. Well, he had a frame shop, so I knew him. He came down one day, and I was traveling around in the first freewheeling car, and he said, "What's that outside?"

"It's a beautiful car, and a brand new one too -- freewheeling."

He said, "What do you mean -- freewheeling?"

I said, "It goes down the hill without gas."

I didn't know where he was going, but he said, "Do you want to take me for a ride? Let's stop at my house first."

We stopped at his house, and he took a bag with him, and we free wheeled no matter where we were going. If there was a hill, a slope down, we went that way, and we sloped down all through New England and out to the strangest places, and I got some wonderful stuff. Every year I had somebody -- Eddie Cahill. That's the accident I had. He wasn't a very good driver, and boy, did we get smashed up! At least I got smashed up! Then there was Albert Duveen, the nephew of the Lord, not the Lord. I always had somebody traveling with me for the very simple reason that somebody had to sit in the car while I did the buying.

DR. PHILLIPS: Somebody had to mind the store.

MS. HALPERT: What I did finally with that Hupmobile was that I took all the seats out of it. It was a limousine, and it was probably the first station wagon. I took everything out of the back.

DR. PHILLIPS: And loaded it up as you went along.

MS. HALPERT: It was a very fancy limousine. We had a glass panel for the chauffeur, or something, and so I tore the whole back out, filled it with corrugated board. I'd go on these trips, and I had to come back in about two weeks because I had loaded it with so many things.

DR. PHILLIPS: This led to the opening of the folk art gallery?

MS. HALPERT: Yes. Well, first I got enough. I spent my thousand dollars and then I heard about this woman -- I took the Albany night boat; no, it wasn't the Albany boat, but going to Boston at night. Gee, that was a wonderful trip!

DR. PHILLIPS: Wasn't it.

MS. HALPERT: A woman by the name of Mrs. Isabelle Wilde who was one of the very early collectors -- she had already had a show, and I still claim that a lot of other people got there before me. I did not invent folk art. She had a show at the Parker Museum. I went to her house and bought a tremendous amount of it. She had very good taste.

I had no problem in most places. I had to dig under things, and some of the best pictures I found in Vermont, St. Johnsbury. There was a junk shop there. He had three barns. He was famous for early American hardware. It was a fantastic place. He didn't have any furniture. He just had architectural material, and architects who were rebuilding early American homes all went to this old guy. He didn't have a tooth in his head. I've forgotten his name, but it doesn't matter. He kept saying, "I ain't got nuttin'. No pichers!"

I said, "Do you mind if a rummage here?"

Among the "no pictures," he had what I still think is one of the greatest pictures in American art -- I own it -- it's up in Newtown, painted by a young girl, and it's a Chagallian picture -- *King David Playing the Harp*. It's simply magnificent, and the other one is the *Charlestown Jail* [*Charlestown Prison*, c. 1851] for which even Karolic would give me five thousand dollars. He said, "Who is Yankee?"

He lives in Boston, and he said, "I live in Boston, and I'm a Boston Yankee" -- you know, that belongs to me. He tried to buy it. He came up to Newtown to try to buy it. I wouldn't sell it for a million. That's what I wake up to in the morning -- *The Charleston Jail*. There's no Freudian meaning in this.

I found those two, and the most beautiful steel pen drawing in the whole world, and it got destroyed at the Boston Museum. They have a gas chamber for taking foxing out of pictures, and they didn't know that ink was eaten away by the gas, and that was completely destroyed, but those three pictures I bought from this old guy, and he asked me twenty-five dollars apiece for them, and I said, "Mr. Johnson, it's much, much too cheap!"

Then he insisted that it was fifty dollars for the three. Well, three times twenty-five dollars -- but that was his kind of personality. Then I'd get to a place like Pennsylvania. A man by the name of Rice, the man who made up

the pottery collection for Du Pont -- I met him, and I heard that he had a stove plates. I went there, and his wife weighed about three hundred pounds. They were way out in some little hole in the wall, and there was Schinfelders who cook the most fabulous meals, and she said that I was so starved, "this poor little woman who travels around by herself," and frequently I traveled around by myself on short trips, and I had to stay and be "fed up." Boy did I get fed up! I must have gained fifteen pounds in three days.

Well, this guy told me more about the history of folk art from three generations of knowing about it! There was no literature on it.

DR. PHILLIPS: I know it.

MS. HALPERT: None whatsoever! I met Mercer in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. I would drive in and out of streets because there was no such thing as a folk art gallery. They didn't show folk art even in antique shops -- you know, as art. It was behind latches and mantels that I found three of the greatest pictures in America in St. Johnsbury. Also I developed this great passion -- that's where I learned about blueberry pancakes than which there is nothing more divine, but nothing!

DR. PHILLIPS: Agreed.

MS. HALPERT: A couple of years past, and I developed the most beautiful trip in my experience, from Williamstown into what is the name of the Vermont town across the bridge? Oh, what's it's name? I go there practically every year. They have the old Mountain Hill Inn. In any event, I discovered Williamstown, New York, and then I went across to Vermont. It's a most famous town in Vermont. It's a most famous town in Vermont, the most beautiful town there is. You sit there, and you see the whole valley for a hundred miles.

Well, in any event, I sold a Charles Sheeler to Springfield, Massachusetts, and it was right off the griddle, and it had to be varnished. Sheeler wanted to varnish it, and you don't varnish a picture for a year, so a year later I got it. I had to go up there, pick up the picture for Charles to varnish, and he decided that he wanted to take it back with me, and that was wonderful because it was difficult for me to drive alone. I could drive, but again leaving things in the car, and I did get tired driving the car. I don't back well.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's very interesting.

MS. HALPERT: Well, I always had plastic backsides -- you know, the open cars. I wouldn't drive in a closed car for anything. After I got going on these short trips, I always had a roadster, and it's very hard to back into a place you can't see so well, so it's very easy to find a spot that almost a half a block long and you front in -- you know. It was very nice to have somebody drive with me, so Charles said that he would come with me.

Francis Taylor was director of the Worcester Museum, and I said, "I want to stop off and see Francis because he always had the most wonderful jokes in the world," so we were going to Springfield, Worcester, and then I wanted to go to -- my God! What is the name of it, my favorite town in Vermont? Well, in any event, we finally drove by way of this place in Vermont, and the place had changed hands. Up to this time the proprietor and everybody knew me because I had been there a number of times.

I had the choice room I always had on the second floor overlooking the valley, and I invited Charles to have breakfast with me the next morning on my terrace, and I ordered -- this place got very elegant; up to this time it was just a nice country inn. They had a real captain head waiter who spoke wonderful French, but his English was very bad, and he brought the menu. I said, "I've never had them in this place, but I want blueberry pancakes."

He said in French, "What did you say, Madam?"

"You know -- blueberry pancakes. Pancakes with blueberries.

He'd never heard of it. He called the cook, and there was a big scene with Charles Sheeler dying. You go to a fancy place, and you don't make a scene. This wasn't a scene. Everybody was having a very good time. When the chef came up, he never heard of blueberry pancakes.

I said, "But this is a native Vermont dish."

By this time I had had it in every town in Vermont. This Frenchman said, "How you make this?"

I didn't know how to make them. It seemed very logical that you make the pancake batter and you throw in blueberries.

DR. PHILLIPS: Very logical.

MS. HALPERT: Well, you know, it was just plain sense. The chef came up and the captain waiter came up, and they watched us -- you know, Vermont maple syrup and so on, and I said, "*Magnifique*!"

We were having a ball. Well, Charles Sheeler has told this story with embroidery, and it doesn't need any embroidery. This captain guy looked a little familiar to me -- the captain, the manager, and I thought, "His French is perfectly authentic." I didn't know where I had seen him, but certainly not in New England -- Bennington, Vermont, that's where it is, the Bennington Mountain Inn. So he said, "I will taste this."

He went down, and he tasted it, and he came back, "Ah, Madame, we thank you for introducing native dish" -- I kept talking about a native dish -- "I'm so happy to have Vermonter introduce veritable Vermont dish."

I whispered to Charles and said, "A Vermonter from Odessa."

And this guy said, "*Stoi*!"

He was a "Frenchman" from Odessa, so we have a very expensive breakfast, and it was on him. He was hysterical. He too came from Odessa.

DR. PHILLIPS: You couldn't plan that.

MS. HALPERT: Well, Charles Sheeler went around and told that story all over the United States, but they were wonderful pancakes. Then we became great friends, "Oh, no, this breakfast is my pleasure," and Charles said, "Do you think we could get another pot of coffee on this Odessa deal?"

I said, "Anything you want, kid."

The Frenchman said, "You want more pancakes?"

I said, "Sit down!" and he had been at a very big New York restaurant -- that's where I had seen him before, so that there were all these really fantastic experiences including the firehouse one. I told you about that, didn't I?

DR. PHILLIPS: The firehouse?

MS. HALPERT: The firehouse and the deer?

DR. PHILLIPS: No.

MS.HALPERT: Well, nobody is going to believe any of this, but nobody. You want witnesses historically? There was another person with me at that time. I had a girl with me.

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes, this is driving without maps where you have no idea what to anticipate.

MS. HALPERT: You have no idea what to anticipate because you have to go in and out of roads. Someone would say, "Look, you, I have a cousin who lives up on so and so" and the number of times that I was pulled out by an ox cart, believe me, in the early days, even a sand dune -- you know, there were no roads.

Dorothy Miller was on one of these trips, but I don't remember her on this one, but it was a very pretty girl. This is another car episode where my car broke down -- well, I won't go into that. I bought a brand new car since I was right in front of this place, and it was a sample, made of aluminum, just shellacked, a real silver car with red leather upholstery -- fabulous. This girl -- now, who in the hell was this? I usually went with someone who would alternative driving because it was pretty tiresome going into these lanes and so on, so one would drive in the morning and the other would drive in the afternoon. Well, we passed through this town going somewhere -- this was also New Hampshire, or Vermont, terrific territory, untouched by human hands.

In Massachusetts, word had gotten around already by this time, and they were alerted. Pennsylvania was way ahead because the Pennsylvania Germans preserved their own material, birth certificates and so on, and there were a lot of people who bought that stuff long before I got there, but Vermont and New Hampshire was open territory. Mrs. Rockefeller said that on her way back. She had passed through a town called Bath, Vermont. I knew Bath, Maine, had been there many times -- you know, that was ship building, and there you found figureheads. This was wonderful territory around there. I kept saying, "It can't be Bath. Bath is in Maine."

"No, John and I drove through Bath coming from Seal Harbor, Maine."

She described it and said that she saw a weather vane of a horse, and that it was in Bath, Vermont, or New Hampshire. I traveled all over the joint in Bath, Vermont, or New Hampshire, and the horse was there only it belonged to an extraordinarily rich man. I knocked at the door. The butler came and said, "Yes?"

I said, "May I see the master?"

He said, "About what?"

This silver bullet with the red velvet bothered him -- a silver bullet, the only one of its kind ever made, and this girl and I were both wearing red dresses that day, and we really looked like two scarlet women in this open car. The butler wouldn't let us in, and finally the master came to the door. I had all sorts of gags about taking weather vanes off, and I told him about radios, "It's ridiculous! How old fashioned can you get to look at weather vanes for weather directions when you have radio," and so on, but I couldn't work it with this guy. I said, "I just want to tell you how much I admire that horse, do you mind?"

He said, "Not at all, but it's hardly the proper thing to do."

I said, "Don't get so stuffy about it! You should be very glad that anyone admires anything you have because the house is hideous!"

Well, we drove on, and p.s., I didn't buy the horse. Then we went through some little funny place, and we passed a firehouse. This was on a Sunday, and the firemen were sitting outside gabbing, and we came by, and there was the biggest whistle you ever heard -- I mean, two scarlet women shooting through. I turned around, and this girl said, "Now, really!"

I said, "You never know when people can be useful to you."

You know, I just waved, and we shot along. We were driving along, and I see the most wonderful deer, the first time I had seen a deer weather vane, so we went down this dirty little lane, and we got stuck. We couldn't go any further, and we got out of the car. I walked along, and there was a man, a farmer outside, and I said, "Do you raise deer?"

Well, you couldn't be direct -- you know, not with a New Englander.

He said, "What?"

I said, "You have a deer weather vane. A weather vane always indicated what you did in that house-- well, if you raised chickens, you always had a rooster or a hen weather vane. If you had cows, you'd have a cow."

He said, "I've got cows.

I said, "Why do you have a deer?"

He said, "It's always been up there."

I said, "How would you like to trade? I just bought this fabulous cow weather vane, and this is wrong. You're telling everybody the wrong thing. You don't raise deer. I'll trade you this cow for the deer, and I'll give you twenty-five dollars."

That's what I used to pay for those things, and I had never seen a dear weather vane before. He said, "Wait a minute."

He went inside. He came back, and he said, "Okay."

I gave him the twenty-five dollars and the cow, and his wife came out -- she evidently looked us over -- and he said, "Go and get it."

It was the tallest barn I ever saw. I carried slacks with me, and I'd climb into all sorts of dirty joints, so I went off into the bushes and got into my slacks, went into the barn and started to climb, and I saw a rat, and I jumped off the hay so fast! You know, a little bit of a field mouse, and I'd drop dead! I can pick up snakes and I can chase burglars, but any rodent and I drop dead, so I got off. I said, "I can't get it," and even if I had climbed all the way up, I couldn't possibly get it from the inside. Well, he and his wife just cackled with joy. He had the cow and the twenty-five bucks, and he said, "It's yours, but you get it."

I went off, and I remembered the fire department. I drove back, and they were still sitting out there. They were very pleased and who in the hell was it? It was one of three pretty girls -- Evelyn, Dorothy, or Merriam, and as I say, we just happened to have been in red cotton dresses -- nineteen dollar numbers. They were delighted to see us. They had never seen two women in a silver bullet. I said, "Look you guys aren't doing anything. Do you have a ladder?

They said, "Where's the fire? You've got all the red right here."

I said, "There's something I want to get off," and I gave them twenty-five bucks, and they got out the hook and ladder, and I got the deer weather vane, and it's now in Williamsburg, Virginia.

This was a period when all this was unknown as a buying material, so I cleaned up the territory pretty thoroughly. And it was hard. Then in Pennsylvania, you know all the different sects there, and when I went to that wonderful place where the cloisters were. What's the name of that town. I wrote a book -- well, I'll think of it. I got into that town alone -- on very short trips of about a week's duration I could do it alone, lock the car and carry a lot of stuff. I went to Ephrata.

First, I went to an inn run by two sisters who were absolutely wonderful -- they were just wonderful, and they tipped me off on where I could get these funny things. They really had some great silver and glass in the inn -- you know, for decoration, nothing was for sale except one wonderful picture they had in the girl's room, a picture they let me buy. They tipped me off on some things -- Schimmel eagles, a Mrs. Miller from whom I bought a lot of Schimmel things which were the great prize of all time. These old ladies were wonderful to me -- you know, to this poor little woman traveling around, working her way alone.

When you get to a town like Ephrata, everybody's an alien -- that whole area, so I got there, and this Mrs. Miller told me that some of the song books -- you know Ephrata was one of the first cloisters in America, a perfectly magnificent building. The ministers and the brothers made these wonderful, beautifully illuminated manuscripts, something in their religion and philosophy which was brought over from the old country. The Mennonites are in that territory, and they were all in costume, and they were the most religious of the groups.

You couldn't get into anything. There is no house you could get into -- you know, you knocked at the door, and they looked at you. They were very pleasant. You pulled this gambit asking for a drink of water. That worked for a long time. That I learned from -- who wrote the book *Penrod*? [1914]

DR. PHILLIPS: [Booth] Tarkington.

MS. HALPERT: Tarkington wrote about an antique dealer who asked for water so I . . .

DR. PHILLIPS: We pick up wisdom in the strangest places.

MS. HALPERT: It was a stinking book, but I learned an awful lot. What was the name of that dealer he had? Tarkington wrote about a dealer. The *Saturday Evening Post* ran the story about the dealer who bought furniture. He really did. I'm not making that up.

DR. PHILLIPS: He needed water, and so you learned . . .

MS. HALPERT: I learned that when you knock on the door when you're driving, when there isn't anything close and you're parched, and you think that you're in the Sahara -- you know, people always give you a glass of water. Sometimes they invited you in, and you saw something that they'd been doing to get rid of for twenty years. That I learned from Tarkington.

In Ephrata, you don't do that. By this time I had been to every small town on the eastern seaboard, and I decided that I needed a new tactic. I'd tried it in Ephrata, and I tried five or six gambits, and nothing worked. It was getting on and I was dying of hunger. There were no restaurants. It's very Amish there. I passed a cider mill -- a saloon of some kind, and I saw people eating.

The other trip I spoke of earlier was the only one that we put on red dresses. Usually I wore real, practically early American clothes -- cotton, always very simple, with long sleeves, and so on. I was very properly dressed, and I walked into what looked like a cafeteria. It wasn't a cafeteria, but one of these cheap joints. I walked in, and I sat down. Everybody stared at me. I knew they would. A waiter came over, looked at me, "Beer?"

I said, "Oh, God no! I don't like liquor. Could you spare a cup of coffee and a sandwich? I've been traveling eighteen hours, and I'm so hungry."

Well, he served me the most wonderful sandwich I ever had and a cup of coffee, and then he said that he had a bun, some sort of a cake that somebody brought in that they hadn't sold, would I have it, and by this time everybody was so sorry for me. I said that I was a business woman, that I was traveling, that I'd never been in Ephrata, that I didn't know where to park the car, or where I could stop. Boy! I still say my gray hair is worth its weight in gold. I never used any makeup, not even lipstick on these trips unless I went to Boston, a town, so he said, "The constable is here. You can trust him. He'll find a place for you. There's nothing here. Maybe somebody will put you up. There's a little place nearby."

The constable came over, and it must have been about eight o'clock. I was really dying of hunger. Believe me, I didn't know what that sandwich was, but it was the greatest sandwich I ever had in my whole life. In any event,

I had the sandwich, and the coffee, and then I had another cup. Then he brought me this beautiful homemade bun, so the constable came over, and he said that I could stay at so-and-so's house, that it would cost me three dollars, and I said, "That's wonderful!"

It was clean and immaculate. Nobody talked to me. I had already had my dinner -- clean, you know, clean sheets, bed, and it was wonderful. I paid in advance which I had learned to do in most of these places, and then they know that you're an honest person. I excused myself and went to bed. I was dead tired. The constable came to see me the next morning to find out whether I was all right, and I thanked these people. They served the biggest breakfast in the world, and I all I usually had was coffee and toast, but there I had about four different courses -- you had to.

DR. PHILLIPS: I know what that is.

MS. HALPERT: It was like this woman who was going to feed me up. We sat around, and he asked me what I was doing, and I told him that I was buying early American objects, that I had a store -- which was true, and that I was buying all these things, that I was very proud of what America had produced, and I was. I told him about Mrs. Miller and her Schimmel eagles and so on, and they knew of her. We became very friendly. There are no shops in Ephrata, no signs of any antiques of any kind, so I didn't ask about them, was completely uncommercial, and I thanked them for everything. I think I paid three dollars for the night and that fabulous breakfast, and they wished me God speed and so on, and they were so on, and they were so sorry for me. "You have no husband."

I said, "I have no husband, no father, you know. I am working for a living."

I wasn't lying. I was getting into my car, and the constable said, "Where are you going now?"

I said, "I think I'll drive over to Lebanon. There's a dealer there who told me he had a cigar store Indian."

I told him about museums, and he said, "You mean those things are worth money?"

I said, "Yes. The birth certificates, the hymnal books around here that I've heard about are just magnificent. They are."

I said, "All the fracturess."

He said, "Listen, now wait a minute. What if a family is not interested in these things anymore."

They didn't have bureaus of vital statistics, and these people had these birth certificates, and he said, "Do you want to buy some of these?"

I said, "Yes."

I was interested, but I wouldn't really dream of going into the Cloisters to ask them whether they had something for sale. They did sell things, but that I thought would be really sacrilegious.

He said, "I know some places."

I said, "Well, would you drive and take me to these places? I'll pay for the gas, all the expenses, and I'll give you a percentage on everything I buy."

He lit up like a Christmas tree. I came home with some of the most -- well, I wouldn't sell those things to God! I sold them to top museums -- like the Chicago Art Institute. I sold them to art museums because they were the most fabulous things -- Williamsburg. Mrs. Webb wasn't interested in Pennsylvania things, so I left her out of the act, even later, but they were the most superb things, and I'm so glad that they're preserved. The places were spotless -- they were so clean.

I still remember when I was hanging a show for Mrs. Rockefeller, and there were two bed bugs crawling up in that house, I went up in the attic. And I said to the butler, "Look, William, you have bed bugs in this house!" Well, everyone came running, so we went down in the backyard -- by this time I knew what do to about bed bugs. You put kerosene in the stretchers. You took one of those cans and you squirted kerosene inside -- you know without touching the picture, abut that sure had the butler scared to death.

The Pennsylvania territory was absolutely immaculate, and I have a couple of hymnals, and they are absolutely superb, but everybody basically at that time, as opposed to how I feel about people today, were really wonderful. It evidently was odd to see a woman traveling, and believe me I didn't play up the fact that I was a woman. I was, and there was nothing that I could do about it. No men were traveling, buying this stuff. It was completely unique. Nobody was doing it -- you know, to buy for a resale. A Hamilton Easter Field would go

around Ogunquit as far as Portsmouth, New Hampshire, but going in odd territories -- no. Well, I've had at least five thousand objects, and it's only in recent years that things are being brought in.

Then I had pickers. I'd give a guy a hundred bucks, tell him that he could deduct his expenses, and I would buy that much, the difference between his expenses and anything he bought, and a guy by the name of Joseph Goff in Bridgeport brought me some of the most fabulous things in my history. He's the one who brought in the five thousand dollar number, the Raphaelle Peale, and I had about eight people like that in different parts of the country because after a while, I just didn't have the time to travel.

Now, I got to the antique shows, and there's nothing at all. I'll bet I haven't bought ten objects in five years. I've gone to White Plains. I got that fabulous figure about three years ago, at the White Plains show, but the stuff is -- well, after all, everybody in the whole country has been collecting this stuff in the last ten years, and it's pretty much cleaned out.

In those days traveling required a great physical outlay. It was the roughest traveling anybody had ever done -- you know through a town and up a hill that nobody had gone up in a car there-- ever.

DR. PHILLIPS: I don't believe that they even had road maps in those days. You were just loose in the territory.

MS. HALPERT: It was just wonderful. Being loose was the best thing because you went in, and people would tell you that they were so sorry for a woman alone. The greatest advantage in the world is being a woman. I don't want to make you feel bad, but it's true.

DR. PHILLIPS: I understand.

MS. HALPERT: People are always sympathetic. You know, "Don't you have a husband?"

I didn't have a husband. I was all alone in the world, and it would just break their hearts, and you know, in all these years people would say, "Why don't you get married?"

I said, "The greatest asset I have is being alone, little woman with gray hair. You don't think I'm going to sell my birthright for a man."

DR. PHILLIPS: There comes a time when you put these folk art shows on the road. We talked about the early days of the gallery and how suddenly you became quite fashionable not so much perhaps for the gallery, but because of the clientele you had. You didn't plan this. It just happened.

MS. HALPERT: I was fashionable with the other dealers because someone wanted me as a partner or something.

DR. PHILLIPS: I was talking to you the other day about a number of shows that you sent out on the road quite early -- the print shows.

MS. HALPERT: That came later. Well, you see, we had no American Federation of Art shows. The Modern Museum wasn't in existence, or they didn't start the shows. The Whitney didn't dream of doing it. There was no such things as circulating shows, and shows cost very little to circulate at that time. The most exciting show -- did I tell you about Henry Ford?

DR. PHILLIPS: I was thinking about the Arts and Crafts Institute in Detroit.

MS. HALPERT: Well, Sam Halpert -- right after I opened the gallery I met Gurry who had become the head of Arts and Crafts. By that time I knew Mrs. Haas very well. I'd sold her a great deal. As a matter of fact, I met Gurry through Mrs. Haas who, at that time, was one of the major collectors. Robert Tannahill I knew because I had sold him a number of things for Detroit, but I had never met any of the Fords. I did not meet Edmund Gurry through Mrs. Haas, but with Mrs. Haas.

He came into the gallery, and we got friendly. We were chatting, and he told me that he needed a teacher and that John Sloan had recommended Sam Halpert, so I introduced him to Sam Halpert, and he hired him. Sam was violently opposed to my having a gallery. He thought that it would hurt his reputation as an artist, and so did a lot of other people, so it was just two months after I opened the gallery that Edmund Gurry hired Sam for five thousand dollars a year.

DR. PHILLIPS: Wow!

MS. HALPERT: It was the most wonderful thing for Sam -- you know, after the analyst said that I was emasculating him. We went to Europe, spent all the money, and we were both desperately broke. He was on his own, and he got this job for five thousand dollars a year. He went to Detroit. He was very happy that he got the job, and I was very happy he was happy. This was in 1926, and meanwhile not through Edmund, but

generally, various people from Detroit came in. Then I'd go out to visit Sam, and I'd meet some of the people at Arts and Crafts.

The woman whom I met who really introduced me to most of these people was Mrs. H. Lee Simpson. Dr. Simpson was a great surgeon, and he operated on Sam. Not thoracic, a nose ear and throat specialist -- you know, there were a lot of thyroid cases in that area because of the water, and so on. In any event, she had a place, she had -- not a gallery. I forget what it was called, but it was wonderful for local artists. Detroit was really hip. Long before anybody did this, her place was something like the art mart. It wasn't called that, but it was something along that line. We advertised that we had things for twenty-five to a hundred dollars, and she came in because of that. We got friendly. She as a very, very wonderful dame. She sent in various other people -- Mrs. Haas and Bob Tannahill. Years passed.

I went out there and George Booth got interested in this little woman -- I still say that was the greatest asset I had. This was before my hair turned white. Sam died in Detroit, and I was there, and my hair turned to gray overnight.

But anyhow, in 1932, when things were really about as low as you could get and that was the year before Kansas City, folk art really saved the gallery, just as Harnett saved it afterwards -- when I told the artists that they didn't have to get so cocky about my being prosperous, that I never had a living man keep me in all my life -- never, and that I had to depend on dead men.

DR. PHILLIPS: That must have gone over great.

The biggest sugar daddy I ever had was Harnett. This was before Harnett. That came in 1936, 1937, and 1938. Edmund came in, and he thought it would be a good idea -- by that time I had arranged the folk art show of Mrs. Rockefeller's collection at the Modern Museum, and it had a terrific press. The Newark Museum had a terrific press at the time. They asked me in Detroit to arrange a show at the Arts and Crafts.

I said that I would be delighted to, and I got out the catalogue. It was a magnificent show and in those days it was a pushover. They put on a great show. I had so much stuff. The show was sent out, and on February 20, George Washington's birthday, the show was to open, and on the 26th of February, Edmund called me -- by this time Edmund and I became good friends, and, of course, having entre to speakeasies was one of the other great assets I had.

When Mrs. Haas would stay at the Drake Hotel -- that's where she would stay, and she wanted to have cocktails, there I would come up with that -- I still had that gallon cocktail shaker, and I'd go in gently, and I'd tinkle gentle in the elevator, and I'd bring up a gallon of martinis, so I was very useful. Well, Edmund called me up and said, "You must come out for the opening."

I said, "Edmund, I can't. I can't afford the time and I can't afford the trip."

He said, "It's imperative! I would not ask you, if it weren't imperative. I cannot tell you why, but you've got to come to the opening."

Well, knowing that my interest is his interest -- he was really devoted to me, we had become very good friends. Mrs. Haas phoned me and said, "You must come, Mrs. Halpert."

The morning of the 22nd I got on a plane to Detroit, and I pick up a *Saturday Evening Post* which for some reason or other I never would read -- you know, I always read the *Nation's Business* or something like that. I had to rush so that I didn't take along my own reading. I always carry my own literature, whatever it is, *Arts News*, so I read this.

I opened the *Saturday Evening Post* and there was a big article about Henry Ford, about his financing, but he never borrowed a dollar from a bank -- this was February 22, 1932 -- never borrowed any money, and he had a perfectly marvelous system. He never paid a bill before a year was up. His bookkeeping records remained so that nothing was ever paid for, whether it was steel, glass, groceries. I read this.

You can look up the issue that would have been on a plane on February 22, 1932. I was simply fascinated with this article, being interested in figures because this was a brilliant idea, that he was using other people's money to make a profit, and this went into millions, but it included groceries. I thought, "That poor little grocer!"

I didn't worry about the steel company, but I did worry about the grocer. I read every inch of the article, and I remembered every figure. I arrived there early in the afternoon, and I checked into a hotel worrying about the carfare and the hotel and so on because I was very broke, but Edmund and Mrs. Haas said that I had to come. I realized that there must have been some very good reason for them to say that, so I got dressed up for the tea.

Oh, yes, I got an invitation, for the tea was being held in my honor. I got a written invitation. Mrs. Edsel Ford was to pour, so I got out of the hotel and I'm all dressed up in a frock that I bought at Hearn's. Did you ever hear of Hearn's? It was the cheapest department store in New York, but they had a Paris room. I bought two Paris frocks there not for this party, but earlier, $29.50 or something like that, and I always bought antique jewelry there because they had some very handsome jewelry, not "Villagey," this was chic.

I walked to the corner of the street, and there was a cordon of police, and I couldn't get through. "Back! Back, Lady!"

I had my invitation with me, and I said, "Look, I'm the guest of honor."

The cop thought that was the funniest thing he had ever heard. "I was invited. You can call Mr. Gurry. Call him out."

He had never heard of Mr. Gurry. "Call Mr. Tannahill."

Tannahill was head of Hudson and Company. He didn't run it, but he owned it. Those names sort of stopped the cops for a minute, and by this time another cop came along. I showed him this letter, and he said, "Oh, yeah?"

I thought to myself, "Jesus, they can't be there to guard my folk art."

You know, something was happening. They let me through.

DR. PHILLIPS: Let you through indeed.

MS. HALPERT: I said that Mr. Gurry was the director, and they called him out. It was on the letterhead -- it said, director, "Here's the letter."

They called Edmund out, and he said, "My God, I was a nervous wreck!"

I got in. They let me in, and I said, "Edmund, they're not guarding my weather vanes are they?"

A car arrived, and Mrs. Edsel Ford got out, and she said, "How do you do?"

It was a tea party, and the ladies greeted me all effusively and so on. I was in there about ten minutes when Mr. Henry Ford appeared with two men, one on each side with their hands in their pockets. In those days I used to go to the movies, and I knew a "Dick" from the movies -- two "Dicks," one on each side. Henry Ford said, "Walk around with me."

I had sent a price list which we do -- a consignment invoice with all the prices, and they were getting ten percent. I didn't carry the price list with me -- you know, I didn't know the prices. He didn't ask any prices. He said, "I'll take this. I'll take this."

I'm going out of my mind. Deerfield -- what do you call it?

DR. PHILLIPS: Dearborn.

MS. HALPERT: Deerfield is something else again. Dearborn hadn't even opened, but it was talked about. It was in the works. It wasn't open to the public -- yet, so I said, "What are you going to use them for, Mr. Ford?"

You know, these two guys -- every time I said something I was terrified because I expected, like a movie, that they would shoot me if a said anything. When I raised my hand and said, "Look at the flowing forms of this" -- like I did to the Kansas City guy later -- well, every time I raised my hand, these two guys would sort of move in. It got to be funny, and nobody came near us -- just Ford, the two men, and I, and I was walking on the side, not ahead of him, and he'd say, "I want this. I want that."

I had in the show the first railroad coming into Pennsylvania. It's a very famous picture, and he said, "I want this."

I said, "I'm sorry, Mr. Ford, I'm holding this for Mrs. Rockefeller."

"Does she own it?"

I said, "No. I tried to sell it to her, but she thought it was too expensive. It might be too expensive for you too, but I feel that she should have it in her collection."

It's hanging at the Modern Museum, one of their late primitives, but I said, "I won't sell it to anybody. She's got to have it. I'll get her to buy it eventually."

He said, "I want that."

I said, "No. This has to go into her collection. You're a friend of hers. You can write her, and if she says, 'No,' you may have it. It's very expensive. It's twenty-two hundred dollars."

He said, "I'll write to her."

We went on, and he bought all these things. Everybody was standing at a distance.

DR. PHILLIPS: Some afternoon!

MS. HALPERT: Tea! I said, "You can't withdraw these from the show -- you know."

"What do you mean?"

I said, "Well, after the show, these things will be delivered to you. Where do you want them sent -- to the Dearborn Museum?"

He said, "Yes."

I said, "You will leave them in the exhibition because they're catalogued."

He said, "That's all right. Would you like to see the Dearborn Museum?"

I said, "God, yes."

You know, everything was stacked in a couple of rooms in the building. I said, "I'd love to."

He said, "I'll take you there tomorrow at eleven o'clock."

Well, tomorrow at eleven o'clock I had already made a date. I said, "I can't make it at eleven o'clock. Can you make it later?"

He said, "Well, I'll have Mr. Edsel take you."

That was a deal, and as he was leaving with this little coterie at a distance -- you know, Bob Tannahill, the family, and Gurry, I said, "Oh, Mr. Ford, just a moment. You know I read an article on the plane in the *Saturday Evening Post*. I can't wait a year for payment."

I'll never forget the dead freeze. The minute I said that, everybody moved back, and there were these two guys with their guns in their pockets. I thought, "I should drop dead at least."

I meant what I said. I paid cash -- you know, each time I had to pay cash for these things. I said, "I can't wait for a year."

He walked out with these two guys, and then Edmund came over, and he really had tears in his eyes. He said, "Edith, can't you ever learn?"

I said, "But Edmund, I can't wait."

Well, p.s., the next morning I was awakened at the hotel -- I stopped at the hotel right opposite the Museum -- what's the name of it? I still stop there. An envelope arrived with a check. Now how in the hell he got all the prices I don't know because I didn't have the prices. They had a consignment. This was the next morning. He didn't have to exaggerate, but I got the check for the whole thing, except for the twenty-two hundred dollars. He did write to Mrs. Rockefeller, and she said that she decided that she wanted that picture. That was the end of that, but it was the first railroad in transportation, so the next day I'm taken -- that I told you, didn't I?

The next day I had a date. Well, Mrs. Ford was absolutely overwhelmed with the frock I wore. It was an accordion pleat. I told her that it cost me twenty-nine dollars. I had learned my lesson before that, "I bought it at Hearn's."

She thought I was the chic-est thing she ever saw, so I said, "It's probably some 7th Avenue..."

The frock was really imported from Paris, but I didn't tell her that. She thought that was a very chic dress, and she's a charming woman. Edsel Ford kept looking at me. He had heard this business about the check. Anyhow, I had a date and John Carroll was teaching there at the Arts and Crafts. He followed Sam, and he said, "Gee, can I go?"

Henry Ford had said, "Mr. Edsel will take you," and Mr. Edsel said, "What time will be convenient for you?'

I said, "Anytime in the afternoon."

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I had to go back the following night, so we made a date for three o'clock, something like that, and he would take me to Dearborn. John Carroll heard this, and he asked, "Can I come?"

Edmund Gurry said, "After all, I'm the director. I should be there too," so I walked over to Edsel and asked him whether it would be all right if the director of the Arts and Crafts and the instructor could come too, and he said, "Certainly, I'd be delighted. I'll send the car for you."

I told the two guys that we were being picked up at the hotel, so we got there, and we met Edsel outside the gate. It was closed to the public. It wasn't finished, and so as I was walking in -- and he had several people, guards and others who were going to open up -- somehow I got ahead with Edmund and one of the guards, and I whispered, "This is going to be the first Jewish visitor in Dearborn."

Edsel came scooting over, and he said, "Mrs. Halpert, the building was designed and built by Mr. Cone."

That put me in my place, but from there on we became very close friends. I still remember Edsel who is one of the most beautiful people I've ever known -- I mean, he really -- well, our friendship went on for years until he died. He was so thoroughly ashamed of the *Dearborn Independent*, and he loved his father so dearly -- that schism was the most horrible thing I ever witnessed in any human being. He was crazy mad about his father. He was terribly ashamed about his labor fights, the goons and the anti-Semitic publications. It just killed him, but he loved his father. We talked about it frequently, and after a while I was on the verge of becoming anti-labor and anti-Semitic to cheer him up because he was absolutely devastated by his father's point of view, and loved him.

He invited me to the factory about a year later. We became very good friends, and I sat on the edge of his desk in this big place with glass partitions, smoking a cigarette, and suddenly he smacked my hand. He almost broke my wrist. He knocked the cigarette out of my hand and stamped on it, and asked me to take the chair there. I was sitting on the desk because I wanted to see what was going on. I wasn't getting coy. It was something that he told me about, and I was standing up, looking at it, and I was utterly astonished when he did that. He said, "Sorry. Dad is coming up here and he doesn't permit smoking."

I always feel that somewhere along the line the guy died because of his father. He was passionately devoted to his father and was so thoroughly ashamed. If we'd go to Mario's -- he'd come into town about once a month, and we'd go over for lunch regularly -- he just had to talk about it. It was an obsession to him. Who was the guy -- Barnes? No. You know, the guy who was responsible . . .

DR. PHILLIPS: Bennett.

MS. HALPERT: Harry Bennett. He would talk about Bennett. He had tears in his eyes. He'd talk about the *Dearborn Independent*. He'd talk about that church guy -- what was his name? You know, he was running the *Dearborn Independent*, writing for it. I can't remember his name.

Edsel used to break my heart. I almost became anti-labor and anti-Semitic to cheer him up. I'd say, "That's all right, Edsel," but he was a beautiful character, beautiful. And then for years thereafter he'd say, "Edith, my God, when you pulled that *Saturday Evening Post* thing!"

DR. PHILLIPS: You were talking to God.

MS. HALPERT: I said, "Your father exaggerated it a bit, you know, to wake me up to give me the check. He didn't get the stuff."

He didn't get it for a month. I remember going home from there -- you know, all that dough. Somewhere they said something that they sold about three thousand -- well, they're crazy. In this catalogue -- I looked at it the other day, it said that it was one of their most successful shows, that they sold three thousand dollars, and if they got three thousand, it must have been thirty thousand. He bought the biggest load of stuff you ever saw. I was sort of practically dying inside.

DR. PHILLIPS: The way these things fall into place -- the aeroplane, the *Saturday Evening Post* where you were forewarned, and the sudden shock of two men with guns -- gee.

MS. HALPERT: You know why that street was blocked off?

DR. PHILLIPS: No.

MS. HALPERT: Because -- this was during one of the strikes, and they had to guard him. I didn't know. I thought, "Jesus, they're not guarding my weather vanes."

I came home from that trip, and on that plane I didn't read anything. I was just way up there with all the dough and -- you know, the interesting things that happened, feeling embarrassed as hell about Cone, but how he heard me! I have a letter from John Carroll about that. He recommended a place in Venice for me to stay and then he put in a postscript about, "Don't read the *Saturday Evening Post* en route!" This is many, many years later.

DR. PHILLIPS: Folk art has stood you in good stead, hasn't it?

MS. HALPERT: Oh yes. Look what it did for me. I still say a lot of people should be given credit who have not been given credit. In my travels, I had -- oh, why don't I ever remember the names of anything? Well, I met Henry Mercer at Doylestown. I was driving through Doylestown, and I saw a concrete building, a poured concrete building which astonished me utterly. It was right opposite a jail, and I had never seen a concrete building. It was the first concrete building in America, incidentally, and I was just simply fascinated with this building. I got out of the car, and I was alone. I asked five or six people, and they thought I was visiting someone in the prison which was right opposite this building. I said, "No."

You know, in their minds, I wanted the wrong building. This was an empty building. It was just a bunch of poured concrete. It wasn't open to the public, and finally they told me that a man by the name of Mercer was building a museum there, that he was a very queer duck. I asked where Mercer was, and they told me, and I went there, knocked on the door, and they said that he was very interested in tile. He designed tile. About ten people walked over to me while I was standing there, and they kept saying, "The entrance is across the street."

I was visiting somebody in the prison, not the way I looked -- it was just that there was nothing in the concrete building. It was the wrong place, so some very nice old man said, "Well, Dr. Mercer" -- I don't know whether he was a Dr. -- "is very interested in tile," and he made tiles. What do you do when a guy's making tiles and you knock on the door? You can't ask for water, so I told him that I was very interested in tiles. I mean I told the servant, and he brought me in.

Well, I spent more -- well, about eight hours in that house, and Mercer took me to the museum -- also like the Dearborn, things weren't up, or anything, and he gave me literature. I stayed overnight in Doylestown and went back the next day. He was so delighted that somebody was interested, and he gave me the first book on fracture. I didn't know why the word was used. I had already brought a number of them, but I didn't know anything about it as a process. There was absolutely no literature about it. I found out later that there is an historical society where somebody had read a paper on the subject at some time which hadn't been published, but there was nothing, but nothing.

I have all of Mercer's books. He wrote a book on -- well, that whole closet is full of folk art material, and there isn't any place in the world. It's all marked to go to the -- well, I'd better take those goddamn ribbons off -- Shelburne Museum [Shelburne, VT]. He wrote the first book -- well, no book. These are all little pamphlets on fracture in his museum, and he showed me a kit before the museum was open which contained cat's hair brushes which were used for this kind of painting, the cherry gum, and all that. I wrote the first public article on the process for my show with credit to Mr. Mercer, and he wrote the only pamphlet -- nobody has written about it subsequently. I got all these pamphlets from him at the time -- on stove plates which are among our really great sculpture.
Mercer was obsessed, not in a sick way, but obsessed in interest in these things, and his museum is responsible for the Dearborn Museum. Ford happened to pass through Doylestown -- he just happened to. I don't know what happened, but in any event, he went to the museum, and that's where he got his idea for the Dearborn Museum -- from Mercer's. It was cylindrical poured concrete. First of all, it's the very first poured concrete building in America. Nobody has ever written about it. I've talked about it frequently in my talks on folk art, and I get so mad that nobody has ever picked that up.

It was about three stories high with a balcony for ramps and so on, and he had separate departments. It's still in existence, incidentally, the most fascinating museum in the United States. He had hearses hanging -- well, everything was used, and then there were these little cubicles with pottery and how pottery was made, all the tools. It was the first tool museum -- Cooperstown is a hundred years behind this.

It's the most fascinating place, but very few people ever visit. It is not advertised. It is not listed in any tours, and it's really one of the greatest museums. The idea of the footprint in Hollywood comes right out of Mercer. I came up there, and I bought six tiles. From there on he loved me dearly. I still have the demitasse cups. I paid about five dollars apiece. I needed them like I needed a hole in the head. Who has time to serve demitasse? But this was a way of winning him over.

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DR. PHILLIPS: What was his background? You said he was a doctor. What was he -- a physician?

MS. HALPERT: He called himself Dr. Mercer. No, he wasn't a physician. I don't know. He was a very cultured guy, *The survival of Illuminated Writing Among Pennsylvania Germans*. In 1897, he read this to the Society of the Pennsylvania Germans who were very conscious of their heritage -- very, very German. In any event, he took me through the house, and he had tiles -- I mean, he showed me through the house, and used tile in fireplaces, on tables, and so on. This was his passion -- making tiles, and he had all the equipment for it.

We walked upstairs, and he had something to do with concrete -- as I say, he poured the very first, unquestionably the first poured concrete house in the whole world, and nobody has ever written about it. Well, he was making concrete steps, and I walked up these concrete steps. I see this very funny form in the concrete. It was a dog's paw, and you know, I was a little startled. He grinned, and he said, "When I was pouring" -- he did this himself -- "my dog walked up. I was furious. Then I thought it was a very, very pleasant little note."

Somewhere, somehow somebody heard about it -- that's what started footprints in Hollywood, and you know, I keep thinking of the people who should write. I've told a lot of people about it, and why don't people write about these fabulous characters who've made America?

DR. PHILLIPS: I don't know. You say that the museum still exists, and yet it is not well attended, nor is it on my list of tours.

MS. HALPERT: You can go there. You pay something like twenty-five cents, and they also sell reprints. These are the original pamphlets. They sell reprints. I used all this material, and I've mentioned it. All my early catalogues have been used by Gene Whitman who took things verbatim from the catalogues and from this wonderful woman who has done a great job on figureheads. I don't remember her name, but I always give them credit. She took all these things and tells them to everybody else and never mentions these people. They take them and use them without credit, but this is one of my favorite books.

DR. PHILLIPS: You stumbled on this fellow wholly by accident?

MS. HALPERT: Yes. I wasn't going to the prison. I was going to the museum. I read all these learned books. Where do you think I got my information? The section in this one book that has been the sensation, and I like to watch people read, is the section on medicine. May one reprint a book with credit, or is it against the law? This book is the most incredible book that has ever been published. It tells you how to carve a roast. It's a complete practical library.

DR. PHILLIPS: Radcliffe College has made a specialty of collecting all kinds of cook books from various sections of the country.

MS. HALPERT: Look what this takes in -- agriculture, bees, bleaching, brewing, calico printing, carving a table, cement, confectionary cookery, crayons, diseases, distillation, dieting, food gardening, engraving, gilding, health, ink, metallurgy, oil colors, pastry, perfumery, pickling, preserving, scouring, silk worms, tanning, varnishing -- everything, and the information I got out of this book is just incredible, and the information that doctors have gotten out of it -- do you notice how it's open on this page? Every doctor has gone into this -- hiccups, heartburn, dropsy, putrid sore throat, ulcers and pimples on the throat, enlargement -- oh, I can't say that.

DR. PHILLIPS: These are all native ailments? When was this published, and what are you laughing about?

MS. HALPERT: This is where everybody has turned to as you can see. There are very funny words for things. Here, you look at it. They even have cancer here. Somebody must have torn that page out -- is there anything missing?

DR. PHILLIPS: Not that I can see. I'd like to know what the date of this publication is.

MS. HALPERT: It's in the front -- 1810.

DR. PHILLIPS: Where did you find this book?

MS. HALPERT: I picked it up in some joint for a quarter.

DR. PHILLIPS: Those are the best kinds.

MS. HALPERT: You know, it's reprinted from something in England in 1829, but reprinted from an earlier English

edition. It was originally printed in England.

DR. PHILLIPS: Apparently this was published as a public document by the State of Pennsylvania under an Act of Congress, an act to encourage learning by the securing of copies of maps, charts and books to the office of properties who set copies during the time they were indentured -- whatever that means.

MS. HALPERT: It sounds wonderful.

DR. PHILLIPS: This reference to remedies for social diseases is incredible.

MS. HALPERT: Actually, one doctor who specialized in that field -- "yard" which I never heard of and neither did he, but he said that he tried it, and that it was the most brilliant thing. Was it the pickled herring juice -- no. That was for the hair.

DR. PHLLIPS: You mean, a doctor actually tried something that was recommended in this book?

MS. HALPERT: He said that it was the most effective cure, but it's called something else now. It's being used, but I can't remember what it is. I had this book out in the country, and all the guests -- I had a lot of doctor friends -- and they'd go to this book. I picked it up in Philadelphia in a junk shop, and every once in a while among books I'd find a wonderful family record that went with a book, so I'd hang around and get these things.

I found a wonderful article written by -- well, I have it, but I can't remember the name, but he was explaining the origin of figureheads which is the most unhistorical thing. It goes way, way back to the Chinese junks with the eyes and so on, the Scandinavians, the Egyptians, and the Orientals. He has all that, but it started right here. I'm not making this up. I have this in his own handwriting. I have it here in typescript. It has the most fabulous stuff which I left to Mrs. Webb, but she's dead now. I don't know whom the hell to leave it to now. I'll send it to the Archives. It will probably be forgotten. There's so much rich stuff that I don't know where in the hell to send it.

This guy had a theory, and he asked me to publish it -- something on folk names, but his English was fantastic. His whole theory was that when the pirates captured a ship with the captain and so on, they put the captain in front of the boat, tied him there, and the reason he began to lean forward was because he got so thirsty with all the water there beneath him he couldn't get at it, and that's why the figureheads lean forward. The guy became petrified from the salt air, and he became the figurehead. It was about a twelve page treatise, a guy by the name of Parrish who -- he is the one who found -- well, you have to come to Newtown to see some of the stuff I have there.

I have a mourning picture for the name of Halpert, and he's the one who found it. It was hanging over my bed until mother once came to see me, and found it directly over my bed, so I moved it to the night table. Parrish found this picture and Halpert has two T's. A very famous museum director said, "Didn't you say that you were born in Russia?"

I said, "I just made that one up. That's my ancestral name."

He said, "But it has two T's."

I said, "My great grandfather Halpert stuttered like hell."

He said, "Oh."

DR. PHILLIPS: That must be in this receipt book.

MS. HALPERT: It seems to me that a book like this could be reprinted in bigger type. People had better eyesight then, but it covers everything. There really isn't anything that it doesn't touch upon. The encyclopedia has nothing on this. How to paint on velvet -- this is what I got in there, and then I'd write these period catalogues. Nobody ever knew how any of these things were done. I got it from this book, that one, and that whole collection there, but you get that kind of a collection only from traveling around.

You have to be interested. Anybody can get this information if they're interested. I don't care what the information is. I got so intrigued! I stayed in the goddamnedest places, and ate the worst goddamn food that anybody ever tasted, but I didn't even know it, or I didn't eat any food when I came across something like this. But you know, I sold some of these things to Mrs. Rockefeller. I drop dead when I find a picture like this, and those hymnal books from Ephrata-- I mean, this was a labor of love, and they were just as great as the 14th century illuminated manuscripts -- honest to God! I showed Mrs. Rockefeller one of those, and she said, "How interesting!"

I wanted to die. That's why I have so much. I kept the stuff for myself. I don't know what the hell to do with it,

to whom to give it. I have this Shaker spirit drawing which is one of the great passions of my life. Suddenly Shaker gets very chic, and Philadelphia has it, and I got twenty-one, twenty-three letters offering the most fantastic prices for it. I wouldn't sell it for a million bucks, but you know, that kind of thing was available years ago.

DR. PHILLIPS: There's an indication in the craft that rather than sell on the market some of the better items, you took them up to your home in Connecticut.

MS. HALPERT: Who me?

DR. PHILLIPS: That is to say, that you preserved them. The experience with Mrs. Rockefeller . . .

MS. HALPERT: With anybody. None of these people really understood -- if I told them, "This is important," they took it, but I didn't know what to do with this collection of books and pamphlets. I'm dying to give everything away now. I still want to live with it at Newtown, and I can't figure out to whom to give the folk art. Modern art I have settled. I'd like to have the folk art in New York. I offered it to the Metropolitan Museum a long time ago, and they laughed and said, "It's the funniest thing!"

I said just kiddingly too. I finally got that into the Metropolitan, and they never showed it.

In going from Topeka to Kansas City, I discovered this Vermont Village which had been transferred, and I found some wonderful stuff there. One town in Maine, one of the beautiful towns that is preserved, I passed through one rainy night, and I see chalk glass, Pennsylvania chalk glass. This is one of the very fancy, historic towns in Maine. I stayed overnight, and the next morning -- you know, I went in and I saw some chalk glass. I'm doing a book on chalk glass. People invited me. In Newtown, Connecticut, I have the most beautiful footstool and a whole lot of Pennsylvania Germans -- Good God, that's a model Maine town, Wiscasset, the whole area, but right on the main street were Pennsylvania Germans who had been transplanted.

Then on the cape I found some of the most fabulous Pennsylvania German stuff. This was another transplanted group. I have this all written down, but what in the hell is going to happen to it? Suppose this was dumped into a secondhand shop -- it will be. After all, the Archives is not a library. This should be in a reference library, but no university is interested in this material. There isn't a university in the whole United States that is interested. I suppose Williamsburg would be the logical place. Cooperstown is mostly tools. If I didn't hate DuPont –

DR. PHILLIPS: That's one spot, but it lingers only briefly. The flowers there are just gorgeous.

MS. HALPERT: I have never been there, but now that Ted is there, maybe I'll visit him.

DR. PHILLIPS: The problem is not only to find a spot, but use for this collection of material.

MS. HALPERT: It's a reference library on folk art only for the three people out of a hundred thousand who might be interested. There isn't anything comparable to this. There are bigger libraries, but they don't have these highly specialized pamphlets. I have in that collection there the earliest thing written about folk art, and to me, this was the most exciting thing, learning about history pictorially, instead of reading a book on history which would bore the bejeezus out of me. I was interested in geography, but interest in history was not mine. I love geography, and I could make maps, but to get history that way was so utterly fascinating!

I came across insurance signs, fire marks, a hand, and so on. I bought them, and after I bought something, I had to know about it. People would buy it just as an object, but I had to know about it for myself, so I would go around and finally I would see a barn marker in Philadelphia with three barn marks on the same building. I knocked on the door. By this time -- you know, I'm doing a book, and this guy, about eighty years old, was delighted, and he told me about the fact that his father's house burned down because had the wrong fire mark. No other fire company would touch it. He tells me this story, and it seemed so incredible -- you know, the fire department comes out, and you have a tree instead of a hand, and they say, "To hell with it!" and they go home. I couldn't believe it. I got some material from him, a pamphlet. He gave it to me. He said, "Nobody's interested in this stuff. You can have it."

I almost dropped dead it was so exciting. Can you imagine! In those days there was no municipal fire department. They were all private where you had to pay a fee, and there were three big companies in Philadelphia -- a tree, a hand, and the engine, and if you had a fire and the company you belonged to was out on another fire, people would come with pails of water, put them back on their wagon and go home. It just broke my heart, but it's true. One insurance company now has a collection, and they published a book on this subject which is wonderful, but there are at least fifty other things that have never been published.

DR. PHILLIPS: The only thing I can do is give your problem to my book genius friend, Saul Benison.

MS. HALPERT: If he'll just tell me to whom to give this collection -- I don't want to get paid for it at all. I want to give it to somebody. I'll keep it for a little while -- you know, when I get this other apartment with all fireproof vaults. They are not worth more than ten cents apiece basically, but historically they're very valuable, and I want to leave them to somebody, some specialized place. I can send them to a public library, but then they'd go under "F" for fire and so on.

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes, and they'd be scattered as pamphlets in a box somewhere.

MS. HALPERT: This is all related to folk art -- shipping, trade signs, symbols going all the way back to the Phoenicians.

DR. PHILLIPS: When you tackle a project, you tackle a project. Did you have any idea that you were going to go into folk art as deeply when you began?

MS. HALPERT: Oh, no. Anything I get involved in, whatever it is, I want to know how it's done -- it's that simple.

DR. PHILLIPS: It was initially an economic gambit, wasn't it?

MS. HALPERT: No.

DR. PHILLIPS: You said that you purchased old furniture as distinct from buying new.

MS. HALPERT: Oh, yes, and it was good looking. I liked it, that's all. Then I got interested in the subject, dovetailing -- you know, why is this different? The drawers pull open like no other drawers, and so on, dovetailing and using different words. For the bottom, you use the light wood instead of the heavy wood, not because of the weight, but because it slides easier. The facade which gets the rough weather -- you know, the humidity, sun, and you get interested as to why everything. I always came across these characters, and I wrote it all down -- like this Parrish with the figureheads. That's a wonderful article!

DR. PHILLIPS: Thinking about your collection in terms of a library, where they preserve this sort of thing, I've been in the Winterthur Library and it is well kept and it is used by scholars.

MS. HALPERT: They have a school there, and that's the thing I like. Out of the school three guys will be interested in fracture manuscripts, and they will refer to this volume which sold for seventy-five dollars a few years ago. I tried to get a copy for Mrs. Webb, and I had to pay seventy-five dollars. This was published at twelve and a half, and I bought just one copy for myself.

DR. PHILLIPS: Interest takes you to Winterthur as a student. They have an arrangement, I believe, with the University of Delaware for a fellowship program. Fellows come on to study American decorative art and other things, but their collection goes back far into American art -- you know.

MS. HALPERT: The source of decoration -- where it comes from. It comes from Europe, the Orient. The sources -- aren't you interested in this?

DR. PHILLIPS: Oh yes, but the reason I like the Winterthur Library was the fact that it was set up to care for rare books and manuscripts and collections. It's a beautiful little library and from my point of view, this collection ought to be there. I'm not selling Winterthur, but merely making the suggestion. Some young fellow who was working on artists was killed during the Second World War, and his family, the Bolknap family, left a specialized library to Winterthur which was some research on early American painters. I don't know whether folk art was within his gambit, or not, but this was a specialized library set up inside the Winterthur Library, so that there is a tradition started there of housing specialized collections.

MS. HALPERT: The fascinating thing is that folk art pulls in cultures from all over the world which we have utilized and made our own. It's like the bird of paradise which is not common in America, but the Pennsylvania Germans never deviated from their original symbols. They finally broke down and changed from a bird of paradise to a robin which is a very common bird in this country. That's interesting, and that fascinates me, or take the peacock. It was never used in one of these places -- neither Pennsylvania or New England. It's bad luck in New England. I believe it is. It's never appeared on anything -- furniture, quilt, pictures, weather van, or anything, because it was thought of as bad luck. In Pennsylvania, or the reverse, it's good luck.

The angel Gabriel is Vermont -- almost exclusively Vermont, and then it spread gradually into Connecticut. Well, all this has to do with foreign cultures, and the fascinating thing about America is that it's the greatest conglomeration. England has had an awful lot of migrants coming there, or the other way -- emigrants, but there isn't any other country in the world comparable to America.

In those books off the shelves there, and those shelves are eighteen inches deep, a double row of books, you have a history of so many cultures that have created what is happening today. I can put on a folk art show that

will represent antecedents of a very large percentage of what is going on this minute in American art, but Jesus, why isn't anybody else excited about it? Do you have to be a foreigner to get excited about it? Why isn't a native America interested in it.

DR. PHILLIPS: But you do say, and you're quoted to this effect, that folk art dealt with design, and that this was an inspiration for modern art.

MS. HALPERT: It was based on a need because they didn't have things -- for instance, the first folk art we had was tombstones which are among the most beautiful art we have in America. Some of the greatest sculpture is found on tombstones and there's a wonderful book on this. Books have been written about it, and I'll bet that I have mentioned this for the last twenty years to thousands of people, and no one has ever seen the book. It was published. It was advertised. It was sold for ten to fifteen dollars.

All of these books are expensive relatively because of the very small audience, but wouldn't you think that one museum in the United States would own it, or one university? I'm willing to bet that there isn't a university in the whole United State that has a copy of this book. This is a great sculpture. It wasn't only the name on a tombstone. It had a death picture, a mourning picture, a weeping willow, which is the symbol of death. It had the woman with her handkerchief, all these different symbols done crudely, carved by some guy, who was not a sculptor professionally. After a while, he developed a little skill.

You go to the Bennington Cemetery. The reason I let Charles Sheeler go with me specifically was because he took photographs of those tombstones. I use to die. I'd go to the Bennington Cemetery. Everybody thought I was a queer duck. People used to look at me. That didn't bother me. I went to that goddamn cemetery, and I went to Bennington at least four times every summer, coming, going. I had to take that trip from Williamstown. It's a short trip, but it's the most beautiful ride in the whole world, not in America, but in the whole world. I'd go into that cemetery and go over those tombstones, and it's great sculpture. Well, Charles Sheeler got interested too. He had a big love for such things, so he made me a whole portfolio of these photographs. Well, ten years later, somebody got interested and published a superb book on this subject.

This goes on with the fractures, a book like this one in color -- perfectly beautiful. It's out of print. They published about five hundred copies, I think, and I paid seventy-five dollars for it for Mrs. Webb, which burned her up because I paid twelve-fifty for mine. I gave her the bill, and she paid it. I'll bet there isn't one university in the whole United States that has it, and it kills me.

DR. PHILLIPS: In terms of what you've said, you've had a rich variety of religious experiences. Some people can get moved by what in the ordinary run would appear to be strange things, like fire marks.

MS. HALPERT: Jesus, what are eyes for?

DR. PHILLIPS: You've heard the Shakespearean line -- someone had "eyes, but nought to feed upon." You've been fortunate in this respect. You've had so much to feed upon. Discovery even behind the wheel of a car over rutted roads is fun, like running up and discovering your house in the country just the way you drew it. You don't anticipate what you're going to find, and chance takes care of you -- you had the good fortune to run into Mercer and the concrete building.

MS. HALPERT: This has become a normal American process -- poured concrete is the cheapest way, even at the Seattle Fair. This Oriental architect out there was said to use the latest materials to do it -- well, a very early type of architecture, but he used poured concrete to do it. Why doesn't somebody want to know the source? I haven't the slightest interest in who my great, great grandfather was, but the source of this kind of thing!

Here's the first poured concrete building in the whole world by this little character in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, right opposite a prison. Nobody has ever written about it. I bet -- you know, I get excited about something when it hits me freshly. I've told five hundred people, please -- you know, I can't write about it because I don't know anything about pouring concrete. The lack of interest in the last two generations! I sound so goddamn old hat!

DR. PHILLIPS: I don't know that the modern generation, the last generation, or ten generations are necessarily unconcerned about sources. Most people when they jump into the river, they find it just flowing by. I'm not sure whether many of them care which way it flows, one way or another.

MS. HALPERT: I'm talking about students, people who are going to be scholars in the field. I'm not talking about the public.

DR. PHILLIPS: It's surprising that people have never used folk art to illuminate the strains that make up our country and how those strains have been transplanted and altered in the new context one way, or another.

MS. HALPERT: That to me is very, very fascinating because -- you know, we had this big argument in *Antique*

Magazine about folk art. I've had a letter giving me the privilege of using the name folk art. It was used first, the very first time, by Nadelman who called his the Museum of Folk Art [Museum of Folk and Peasant Arts, Riverdale, NY]. Ours is not an agrarian culture -- I mean our folk art is very different from European folk art. Russian and Swedish folk art was peasant art, a different thing. This is the only country that has had folk art comparable to the folk art of primitive countries -- you know, African folk art, Pacific folk art, because this was an art of the folk.

We had this controversy. Five of us wrote articles, and I used the term folk art. Some called it primitive art. But I get so burned up -- after all, my interests are so scattered that I can't complete any one thing, but I have enough material for somebody to carry on. I started any number of these things, but I can't carry them to a conclusion. The only thing I went into deeply was trade signs because of Stuart Davis. I have a book right there, a folk art book, and in there I also have a Harnett book, neither of which is finished. It has to be edited, but my trade sign article goes all the way back. The same symbols that were used, the sheaf of wheat, various symbols that go way back, and I have them all traced. This has to do with literacy.

We've made a complete cycle, and today the symbols are -- Stuart Davis -- for words because of literacy. We traced it back to Pompeii. The first signs were traced back to Pompeii, and I'm not talking about the whorehouses they dug up -- where in the hell did I read that? It's in there, and then the Romans picked up the signs, copied them completely, the same symbols. Then the English -- well, they went through Europe into England where they became very prevalent. Then it was brought over from England here, the same goddamn symbols. They never changed. The same purpose. The pharmaceutical sign.

DR. PHILLIPS: The mortar and pestle.

MS. HALPERT: Yes, the mortar and pestle goes all the way back. The sheaf of wheat of the most prevalent one -- the bakery signs, all kinds of them. That's one thing I must have spent at least a month on.

DR. PHILLIPS: Tracking it down and writing it up?

MS. HALPERT: This was the beginning -- you know, each one of these is good for a thesis, somebody spending two years, and really doing it completely. This article of mine just touches on the subject. I don't want it to die with me -- I had so much fun getting it that I want to share it with people, but -- you know, I use to take a trip for three weeks and when I made some of these discoveries, I almost had a heart attack.

DR. PHILLIPS: You must have worn out more axles!

MS. HALPERT: The information I brought back is up here in my head. There are people whose grandfather made things, and they had them -- like this guy Wright. Good God! I was there for four days with this woman feeding me 'til I was up to here! And that really hurt because she was going to fatten up this poor little widow or bust. And I almost busted.

Papa would bring out kits. Among other things he knew how chalk ware was made, and who in the hell knew about that! He had the molds, and he'd sell it for twenty-five cents apiece. I got all this information, wrote it up in a little catalogue that I sent out, and people looked at the pictures and threw the damn catalogue away! They didn't read it, but there must be somebody in this country who must be interested, but I've tried and tried and tried.

DR. PHILLIPS: I don't really know of a university library designed, or is receptive to this kind of material.

MS. HALPERT: Maybe I should go out to the University of Iowa. Don't they have the largest enrollment, the University of Iowa?

Willy-nilly there must be some place that all this stuff can be stored. I'm just being realistic. All art has a beginning no end; that's what I thought. I want a continuity -- not me, but in this collection. I've tried for years to get somebody, and nobody gives a goddamn, but I think it's terribly important because this country is the repository of everything. Don't you agree with me?

DR. PHILLIPS: I would hate to define what this country is because it has been the recipient of so much in the way of strain.

MS. HALPERT: But it is a repository isn't it?

DR. PHILLIPS: Take Ephrata -- it is perhaps something that was ripped out of I don't know where, transplanted here and preserved.

MS. HALPERT: It's the first cloisters in the United States. They're very big, and they were all going to pieces. When I asked Mrs. Rockefeller -- I said, "Look, you've given money to practically every town in France."

They had, and they had separate scrolls from every town. I said to her one day, when he got a scroll from Rheims Cathedral -- he gave a million and a half; something like that -- I said, "How would you like to give twenty thousand dollars for something that is unique in America -- the first cloisters?"

Here were these absolutely fabulous buildings -- I mean, architecturally. Thank God, the Shaker is being preserved down there. This woman, Mrs. Miller whom I've never met -- we talk to each other twice a week, and I'm crazy mad about her -- raised money for it, and they are bringing it back to its original form. But here Rockefeller had all this petty cash, but it just means that somebody has to care. Why in the hell do I care?

DR. PHILLIPS: I can't answer that. I really don't know.

MS. HALPERT: I spent a weekend here, and every weekend I'm in New York I don't want to go anywhere from here because I have never had such a big ball since I started going through these papers urged on by you, and I find these big treasures, like this folk art library, and you know, I realize that I don't know any place I can leave them to.

DR. PHILLIPS: The only one I can think of is Benison who has a flare for this sort of thing, and perhaps he might be helpful.

MS. HALPERT: I would appreciate it if he would just tell me. It's become a serious responsibility in my life. I feel that something has to be done about it because you can't buy these things every day. I had every book dealer -- you know, whatever they call those people who find books for you -- and I wrote to every one of those goddamn place for about ten years, and nobody ever came across this book of receipts. The same thing -- I went to a bookshop one day, somewhere near New Hope. I go through, and they had paperbacks and a blooming basket full of stuff, and I find a volume of the diary of Edward Hicks. It was expensive -- about a dollar and a quarter, and I asked him, "Do you have anymore?"

"No."

I said, "Don't you realize that this is very valuable? Hicks was one of our great artists. Did you hear me?

"Yes."

They're very suspicious if before you pay the bill you say it's worth more, so I buy it. This was the actual diary of this guy, one of the early Quakers. This is a fabulous record -- not one of his work which is incidental -- you know, a Quaker is like a Shaker, you're not supposed to do anything decorative, so he did only religious things -- verse seventeen of Isaiah, whatever it is -- you know, the lion. I saw twenty copies of "The Peaceable Kingdom," and he must have done a hundred.

Finally I bought a painting for Mrs. Webb, a Hicks, and we decided that this was a picture of the only treaty that was sustained between Benjamin West and the Indians. He did a whole series of those. I paid a hell of a lot of money for it -- this is way long after, and the book was thrown out. Mrs. Webb used to come here, and she burned up. She'd say, "You have everything, dear."

I said, "Everything but your millions."

You bring this guy Benison in and see whether he can help me with this stuff because I've really gotten a big thing about the responsibility for this collection of folk art literature. I have my modern collection out of my life. I've been cutting all the personal things out of my life so that everything is taken care of. The library really bothers me. The modern library stuff doesn't bother me half as much. No one single museum has everything collectively, they may, but this folk art library is absolutely unique. Williamsburg doesn't have anything like this. They have things that have been published since 1950 -- everything, but these early things.

DR. PHILLIPS: In the folk art business, did many get into this as a commercial venture? Not many. You had covered the eastern coast.

MS. HALPERT: Who in the hell would bother? I had to have that deer weather vane, or bust. Nobody had the intensity. This wasn't a commercial thing because I still have most of the things that were really important. I've kept them.

DR. PHILLIPS: I misconveyed because it wasn't a commercial thing to begin with.

MS. HALPERT: It was commercial.

DR. PHILLIPS: Hamilton Easter Field wasn't commercial. That was an atmosphere that he was creating.

MS. HALPERT: That wasn't commercial -- none of these people sold -- Mrs. Force. That was only when Nadelman

got caught in the crash.

DR. PHILLIPS: Your laughter. Is this your perverted sense of humor coming out again?

MS. HALPERT: You know, it really got bad, and I said to Mrs. Rockefeller, "I'm going to get some stuff for you out of the Nadelman collection."

He had the absolute cream because he got there long before anybody else, and he was an artist, and after all, an artist's eye is absolutely superior to anybody else's eye. I went there, and that's the time I had that Hupmobile. I bought the stuff, and she never could wait. When I went to the Davies auction and bought all the stuff, I told you she woke me up in the morning. I told you about how she rang the bell?

I always have a pansy living in my house. It always happens and not by choice. Mrs. Rockefeller gave me so much money to spend at the sale. You know that Peruvian thing, I bought that at the Davies sale. I went to the sale, and I bought a still life drawing, the one with the umbrella. I bought a lot of stuff, and this is one time she came late. She was a friend of Davies, and this is one reason why she wanted to go to the Davies sale – he died.

So the sale was held in the evening, and I waited there until they put everything into a taxi, everything, and I took it to my apartment, thinking that she would want to see it the next day, or the museum would, that I'd call her up. Everybody who knows me never calls me before ten o'clock in the morning. Nobody can wake me up, and I spent until four in the morning looking at the things -- a perfectly marvelous sale, and the most fabulous stuff. I was going out of my mind.

And the bell rings at nine o'clock in the morning. I paid no attention, and it rings and rings. She evidently rang all the other bells, but there was only one tenant then. The rest of the building was the gallery. The first two floors were the Downtown Gallery, the third floor was a tenant, and the fourth floor was my place. She must have rung all the bells. Finally, I came out in my nightgown, and I said, "Who is it?"

"This is Mrs. Rockefeller."

The guy below me was on the landing, and he said, "So's your old man!" and he slams his door.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's a great line from the twenties.

MS. HALPERT: Mrs. Rockefeller at nine o'clock on 13th Street -- you know, it was preposterous, and so he said, "So's your old man!"

She said, "I thought I'd pick up the things you bought yesterday."

I said, "Fine!"

They were on the first floor and I was groggy. I put on my dress over my nightgown. I hiked up the nightgown. It had a ribbon belt, and I hiked it up, and I put the dress over it. I put on stockings, and in those days they had special stockings you could roll and shoes, no lipstick, no nothing, no breakfast.

I came down, and there was Valentine, the chauffeur, and he took all the stuff back. I bought about fifteen or twenty pieces. The way I was dressed didn't affront me. Finally I was walking her to the car, and you know how the door opens. It was the first time I ever saw any expression on Valentine's face. He was a well trained chauffeur. He never heard anything, he never saw anything, and a smile flitted across his face. I was still half asleep, so we got to the house, the butler and I, and eight servants took the stuff upstairs. I said, "May I have a cup of coffee, please?"

The bill was ready and she was going over each item. Then I woke up, and I said, "You know, Mrs. Rockefeller, it's the first time I saw an expression on Valentine's face. I'm so intrigued. You think he thought the art was funny?

She said, "It's the first time he saw a nightgown hanging out from under a woman's dress."

DR. PHILLIPS: It was early in the morning wasn't it?

MS. HALPERT: It was down two inches below the hemline of the dress.

DR. PHILLIPS: Gee, she must not have known too much about your gallery to have arrived at nine o'clock in the morning.

MS. HALPERT: She never called me before ten o'clock. She did know that, but she couldn't wait.

The time I bought all this stuff for her from Nadelman's, I had a porter whose name was Eddie, and he could also drive a car, so the day before I was to go, I told him that we had to go to Riverdale and pick up a lot of stuff -- I always got corrugated boards and put them in the back of the Hupmobile -- and then we had to go to Pocantico, the Rockefellers. The next morning he arrived at about ten o'clock, and I looked at him. He was wearing a chauffeur's cap. I hardly recognized him. He had on a dark suit, and he was somewhat miffed when I mentioned this.

He'd go wherever -- to Great Neck to pick up Webers and whatnot, and he wore whatever -- denim. I was so amazed, and I said, "What did you do that for?"

He said, "We're going to the Rockefellers."

We got out to Riverdale, and I said, "Take that goddamn hat off!"

He said, "Please, Mrs. Halpert. I've been waiting for something like this for a long while."

Well, what do you do? We go to Riverdale, and we loaded the things I had selected. Once loaded we set off for Pocantico. We were late for lunch. We came there at 1:15, and they have lunch at 1:00, so they were sitting out in the terrace waiting for us. Finally I said, "Eddie, you wait, and I'll find out whether we should bring them into the house. I'm a little late for lunch. You can eat with the chauffeurs. They'll have something for you to munch on."

I got out of the car, and he never waited on me in my life. He never opened the door for me in his life -- you know, he opened his door, and I opened mine. He opened mine this time and clumsily. Well, I walked in, and I said, "I'm sorry. I'm fifteen minutes late."

John D. said, "Good morning."

She said, "Where have you been?"

He said, "We're late for lunch. Let's go in."

I always knew when I was being censored. Then we had lunch, and after coffee I took my cigarettes which really burned him up, but that was the deal -- I would never eat with them unless I could have a cigarette. I said, "Mr. Rockefeller, you seem awfully annoyed. What did I do now?

He said, "Mrs. Halpert, this is the first time I think that anybody ever drove up to this house and sat with a chauffeur."

I said, "That's not a chauffeur. He's a porter."

DR. PHILLIPS: Jesus!

MS. HALPERT: He said, "What do you mean?"

I said, "He hired the hat, but don't worry -- I'm not charging it to you. I don't know how much it cost."

He said, "It's very embarrassing for us to see that."

DR. PHILLIPS: You mean, for you to ride in the front seat when the back of the car was loaded with the things you had purchased for her?

MS. HALPERT: I said, "What's wrong about sitting with a chauffeur? It's a much more comfortable seat!"

I was not very bright, but I couldn't understand what was wrong, "I thought that if I sat in the back, I'd get hit by something -- the front of the car, you know, is much more comfortable."

He said, "After all, you passed the gardener, the gate man -- it just isn't done!"

This was after lunch. I said, "Now that I have eaten my lunch, may I talk freely?"

She gave him a high sign -- she was always doing that because we were always having an argument, and I said, "You don't want me to sit in the back and get hit by an Indian? It would be terribly uncomfortable to be sitting there with all those pictures and the sculpture. There's no space there. This is my explanation to you for your kind of thinking, but I've never been so thrilled as when my porter said, 'For Pocantico, I got to have a hat.'"

He looked at me strangely. He said, "You know that you and I think very differently."

I said, "Of course."

DR. PHILLIPS: Was that ever a cold shower!

MS. HALPERT: Oh, no. It ever disturbed me. It interested me. This was a plain porter who knew from nothing, and I said, "Pocantico and the Rockefellers" and he went out and rented a hat. On the way back, I said, "Eddie, how much did you have to pay?"

He said, "Oh, I ain't charging you with this. I can go home and" -- you know, he ate with the chauffeurs. He was absolutely glowing. He said, "Mrs. Halpert, I'm not going to charge you."
I said, "Look, I want to pay for that."

It was a dollar and twenty cents -- tremendous, something like that. For a dollar and a half he could have bought the goddamn thing! But I insisted on paying for it. It really intrigued me -- you know, that kind of thinking. Mrs. Rockefeller always sort of wanted me to explain how the other half lived -- you know, the other side of the railroad tracks business which intrigued the hell out of her. That's where she wanted to be. A few days later she said to me, "I'm sorry that John seemed to be disturbed."

I said, "It cost me only a dollar and twenty cents."

She said, "What do you mean?"

I said, "I had such a good time that I insisted on paying the rent for the hat."

She didn't understand, so I explained to her, "He rented this hat to go to Pocantico, the Rockefellers. It made such an impression on Mr. Rockefeller that I felt I should pay for it. He didn't want me to pay for it because he had such a good time."

She said, "Mrs. Halpert, how do you plan things?

DR. PHILLIPS: Indeed.

MS. HALPERT: I said, "I don't."

He hired a hat, and I looked at it. I was amused. He was putting on the dog which is not part of my business, and he had such a good time that I was delighted. He enjoyed it."

She said, "You know, John finds it very difficult to understand you."

I said, "I'm terribly sorry, but if I really thought these things out, I probably wouldn't do it. I didn't want to disturb you. I'm very fond of you. I don't want to disturb you. Did I really disturb you?"

She said, "As a matter of fact, I was very amused."

I said, "You mean, you really thought I was putting on the dog?"

She said, "Well, you really looked awfully imposing coming up the drive."

DR. PHILLIPS: God! It's strange indeed what people will subtract from experience. Incredible isn't it.

MS. HALPERT: We can't win. But Ira had such a good time. He wanted to wear it, and he ate in the chauffeur's room, and it stood him for years. As a matter of fact, after he thought about it a while, he insisted on refunding the money because this was his contribution.

I still think that this is a wonderfully amusing country. I looked at that photograph yesterday -- you know, of Sonia and me, and I thought, "What would have happened if I had stayed there in Odessa? I couldn't have had so much fun, could I?

DR. PHILLIPS: You would have been Rosie the riveter, or directing traffic in Odessa Square, or doing something, but . . .

MS. HALPERT: I would have been shot for talking back. I sure would have. But I've had fun. The fun I've had!

The reason I keep bringing up Mrs. Rockefeller all the time is that -- you know, she really played a very large part in my life, a very, very long period, from 1927 to 194 -- something, a long time, a very close association. She was teaching me the facts of life, and I was teaching her the facts of life, and this was to go through every conceivable department and division, and it was really very funny because the schism -- I pronounce it different. I know the correct way, but I don't like it and won't use it.

I could be with Mrs. Webb and say, "Come on, Electra! Cut out that crap!" I'd given her *Lady Chatterly's Lover*, and said, "Look, a lady rolling in manure."

She said, "My boy says that his wife is rolling in manure."

I said, "It's very well put, dear."

I lent her this book. I could do that with her; it was a pushover.

But with Mrs. Rockefeller, I could never go up to that level, so here were two completely separate worlds. I was as intrigued with her world as she was with mine. This wasn't a give. This was a give and take. It was an even batting average. I was intrigued with her kind of thinking.

Then came the auction -- that I really have to tell you because it's really very funny. They were going to Egypt, and I thought their home was the most hideous place in the world -- using fifteen thousand dollar Chinese figure as a lamp base, I'm not kidding. All their lamps were made out of great pieces of sculpture, but if the shade were separated from this base it wouldn't be so bad, but the shade was an Oriental shade which curved and covered about one-third of the figure. And they had four eighteenth century chairs which used to drive me nuts when I saw them.

They were going to Egypt. I bought things for them, and about some of them I knew nothing. I charged them ten percent for buying which helped me a great deal. I'd go to these auctions, and they had the benefit of my knowledge and contacts. Just before they left, there were these eighteenth century chairs for sale, six eighteenth century chairs, and "Would you get them for us?"

Mr. so-and-so, his secretary, financial secretary "will send you the check."

They were leaving in about four days. I went over and looked at the chairs, and they were the most -- well, the same goddamn chairs that they had. They were hideous! I came back and talked to her. She would always tell him -- when he was not always there. He was there most of the time. I said, "Mrs. Rockefeller, you don't want to buy any more chairs like that! They're hideous!"

Mr. Rockefeller walked in. He said, "We didn't ask for your opinion. We just asked you to buy them for us."

I said, "Very well."

She had paste pearls. She said, "John told me that I shouldn't take my real pearls because they cost half a million dollars."

The strands ran all the way down to her belly button, so I said, "Well, Mrs. Rockefeller, after all, somebody knows that you own these pearls" -- they were internationally known -- "they won't steal these pearls because they're cultured pearls."

The only way I knew how to tell the difference between real and cultured pearls was by biting them. She got very disturbed and before she left she offered me the paste pearls. How in the hell would a crook know -- you know, how stupid can you get!

Well, anyhow they went off. I couldn't stand those goddamn chairs! They were driving me crazy. They asked me to buy Paul Revere silver. I didn't know anything about silver, silver candlesticks for Williamsburg, and so on, and you know. I knew enough dealers who would give me the information for nothing. They couldn't get that information for anything in the world. I couldn't stand those chairs so I ran into Brummer, "Joe, you know about eighteenth century French furniture?"

"Who knows more?"

"Okay, you go up and look at these chairs."

"You going to buy them?"

I said, "No. I'm just curious about them."

"I'll go up and see them."

I had gotten the evaluation. They were at the Anderson Gallery -- from Parke-Bernet, 57th and Park, and they were five hundred and eighty dollars, something like that, a piece for six chairs. On that I could make six hundred, seven hundred dollars. I couldn't stand it. He called me up, and I said, "Don't talk to me on the phone. I have a date uptown. I'll be up."

Brummer told me that the tapestry was original, but the chairs were new, fake, and so on. Then I found out that French & Company were going to bid on them, so I went to French and Company, and I said, "I'm going to make a deal with you. I heard that you were going to bid on those chairs. I want them. I'll stay out of the auction, you'll get them for much less, but you have to give me the privilege of buying them at a profit of ten percent. They bid on the chairs, and they got them for forty percent less. I didn't go to the auction. They agreed. They went there, and the whole thing, including the tapestry came to about six thousand dollars.

[END OF 5 OF 7 REEL B1r]

Right after the auction, the Rockefeller financial secretary, business secretary said, "Mrs. Halpert, how much did you pay for the chairs? I'll send you a check."

I said, "I didn't buy them."

He said, "You got orders to buy them!" The guy went completely insensible.

I said, "Fine."

He went to pieces, but completely -- he was losing his job, and so on, so I said, "Look, the Rockefellers will be back in six weeks or so, so don't worry about it."

"You got orders!"

He just went on and on and on. I said, "You won't lose your job. I won't lose my job. The chairs will be available."

He said, "You didn't buy them, that's all. I have a blank check ready for you."

I said, "I don't want a check."

Six weeks passed, the Rockefellers arrived, and he met them at the boat. Somewhere en route Mr. and Mrs. Rockefeller were told -- I'm sure he never did that in his whole life. Mr. Rockefeller said to me, "I heard that you didn't buy the chairs. We told you that we were not interested in your taste. We wanted those chairs."

I said, "Mr. Rockefeller, you've had a long day, why don't you relax. You'll get the chairs for half the price. Please relax."

He left, and the next morning I called up Mrs. Rockefeller, "Do you want me to come over?"

She said, "Yes."

"I'll be there at three o'clock, or four o'clock. What time does Mr. Rockefeller come in?"

"He's not going to work today. He's very disturbed."

I said, "I can't be there before three o'clock."

I arrived and I had a bill for the furniture, a tentative bill. I said, "Do you want the chairs delivered tomorrow morning? A friend of mine knows much more about eighteenth century French furniture than I do" -- I didn't know anything at all -- "And it was a great privilege to have a friend tell me that these chairs are fakes. The tapestry was all right. I bought the tapestry. Here you are. I stayed out of the auction and instead of paying eighteen hundred dollars, you're going to get them for half, the biggest bargain you ever got. I'm paying my ten percent to French & Company. You're going to save a tremendous amount of money on this deal. You'll get them in a day or two. They can't deliver them tomorrow, but the day after. You have to unpack."

She said, "You know, we're very tired from the trip."

I said, "Here's the bill. I forgot to tell you that there would be no charge for transportation. It really doesn't matter because they're terribly ugly chairs."

That's when Mr. Rockefeller got mad. He said, "That's what you've been saying right along."

I said, "Well, if you will have your secretary make out a check to French & Company, the chairs will be delivered to you, and you'll all be happy because they've been holding them for me, and you'll be saving a lot of money."

The next morning I called up Miss Kelly, and she said, "Why did you make everybody's life miserable?"

I said, "I'm sorry. The chairs are here and I'm ready for delivery."

She said, "They don't want them."

I said, "Okay. French & Company wanted them for somebody, but we made the deal."

She said, "Mrs. Halpert, don't you think you're odd?"

I said, "I guess so. Everybody seems to be amused. The chairs will be delivered this afternoon. The financial secretary can make out the check and send it directly to French & Company. They know the whole deal."

"Do they know they're fakes?"

I said, "No. I didn't see any reason why I should give them the information, they're experts.

So I waited and no word all day. I didn't hear a word. I was getting nervous, so about eleven o'clock the next morning, Ms. Kelly said, "I know you're busy, dear, but the Rockefellers must have you for lunch today."

"Good God, I'm not even charging the ten percent. Leave me alone."

She said, "Oh, come on."

I went to lunch. They were talking about Egypt, and so on. It was very pleasant, and we were having a lovely time. The secretary was there, and I thought to myself, "Will give the check already?" I wanted the hell out.

He said, "Mrs. Halpert, Mr. Rockefeller told me to apologize to you."

I said, "What for?"

He said, "I was very rude to you."

I said, "Good God, you sure were -- you said, 'This was an order' not a request -- that's all right, but I've forgotten about it."

"Will you forgive me?"

"By all means. You were just carrying out your orders and I wasn't. I congratulate you."

We shook hands, and he gave me the check. I said, "What's that for?"

He said, "Don't you know?"

"No."

He said, "I've got to pay for these things. We want them to be delivered."

Mr. Rockefeller sat there, and he said, "You're a naughty girl. You hate those chairs, don't you? Do you think French & Company will buy our four chairs?"

I said, "Not really."

He handed me the envelope with a twenty-five hundred dollar check in it with the sweetest note I ever got, "Thanks for taking such good care of us, and forgive all three of us."

I said, "Thank you Mr. Rockefeller, will you forgive me for tearing it up?"

I still say that nobody would believe any of this, but I have letters. I don't have the check -- I tore that up, but I still have the letter. This is the problem of all rich people, a guy who has extreme wealth -- well, they all have this thing, every one of them. They don't trust God.

DR. PHILLIPS: Only if he's kin folk.

MS. HALPERT: Why did I tear up that check? For years it burned me up.

DR. PHILLIPS: Self-indulgence. Like pulling for freedom.

[END OF 5 OF 7 REEL B2r]

MS. HALPERT: Are you sure I didn't say anything about this before?

DR. PHILLIPS: You have mentioned the New York City show, that Radio City was made available, and that there was some opening day announcements to indicate a demand where none had been for some time -- just a trickle. This was in conjunction with a larger topic -- artists in general.

MS. HALPERT: The first municipal show, the very first one, was in Atlantic City. A character by the name of Louis Stern who died recently was a collector of prints. He had one of the greatest collections of prints in America, mostly European and very high priced ones -- you know, he paid fifteen hundred dollars for *Good Friday*, or whatever. He came into the gallery one day -- can I talk sex on this?

DR. PHILLIPS: Wildly.

MS. HALPERT: It just occurred to me that this is a wonderful sex story.

DR. PHILLIPS: Without the trading stamps.

MS. HALPERT: He came in and asked me whether I would organize an exhibition -- you know, choose an exhibition for Atlantic City. I couldn't see any reason for my doing it, but none whatsoever, so finally we made a deal that he would pay me a thousand dollars which was of great interest to me. Atlantic City wasn't, and neither was he. Well, I said, "I have to go out to see the place first because it is a new auditorium."

It was a new building that they had built.

DR. PHILLIPS: The Boardwalk?

MS. HALPERT: No. On the Boardwalk they built this huge municipal building, and I forget what it was called -- exhibition hall, or whatever, where they have all the great expositions now. He wanted to open it up with an art exhibition, and his interests up to that time were exclusively in graphics. He knew nothing about American painting. He knew something about European painting here and there, and he asked me if I would do it, and I said that I would consider it, but that I would have to see the place -- you know, the physical layout, the space, to see whether it was dignified enough to have an exhibition and how it was going to be used and whatnot.

I went out, and he was staying at the -- well, there's a book by that name, the hotel. He said that he had all the arrangements made. I came out there by train, and I went to the hotel, and he had this huge apartment. He lived in the hotel, and I had to stay overnight in order to go to the municipal building the next morning. I never make a date for ten o'clock any place in the world. Unless I go there the night before I never get there on time, so I arrived there rather late in the evening. I'd had no dinner, and I did say something about being hungry after a while, and he sent down for some sandwiches and whatnot. We talked about the plan. I was to meet the mayor the next day because the mayor was to open up the show. He also mentioned something about the mayor's desire to show his coins. The mayor had a coin collection, and I said, "We'll talk about it when we see the place."

I sat around, and I was getting awfully tired. Finally, I said, "Mr. Stern, if you'll show me to my room, I'd appreciate it because I'm tired, and I have to be up early" -- I think I had to meet the mayor at nine-thirty -- "I'd better get to bed."

He said, "You can stay here."

He had this huge apartment. There was an enormous living room with sort of an alcove. He said, "There's a very comfortable bed in there."

I said, "If you don't mind, and if I have to pay for it myself, I would prefer a room of my own." I went to my room. This story got to be known all over the country after a while, so in any event, I went to my room. I had a maid, a very elegant maid at the time who packed my bag. I was tied up very late, and she packed my bag. For Christmas one of my girl friends gave me a black nightie, chiffon -- lace, ribbons, and the maid thought -- you know, I was going to Atlantic City, so she gave me the works. She put everything under the sun in that bag. When I unpacked, I practically collapsed. Her idea of Atlantic City was a very special one.

I was getting ready for bed. I spread out my things. This black chiffon nightie -- I wouldn't be caught dead in it! If the place had caught on fire that night, would have run out in a blanket rather than that. I spread out a robe to match. I had those lying on the bed when there was a tap, tap on the door. I think when I got to my room I was still hungry, and I had ordered something; could be the water. I had let the water run in the bath tub. I grabbed a coat or something, and put it on -- I was partly dressed and my host was at the door. He walked into the room, picked up this black chiffon nightie and said, "Oh, isn't this pretty?"

I said, "Yes, and I look absolutely ravishing in it. How would you like to get the hell out of here! I ordered a

sandwich. You didn't give me enough food!"

He left, and then I got into the tub. Then I put the nightie on and the robe, and tap, tap again. I was still waiting for this sandwich and some coffee, and there he was again. He came in, and he made some remarks. He said, "Good God! The only modern thing about you is your art!"

I said, "Right you are, Buddy! Get the hell out of here!"

I locked the door, and I called the dining room. I said, "Never mind. I don't want the sandwich. I've been opening the door over and over again. Forget it!"

They said that they were very sorry, that the man was probably on his way, and tap, tap again. This time I'm sure it is the sandwich and coffee. I opened the door wide, and there was my host again, this time holding a bottle of Argerol, and what do you call those sticks with cotton at the ends?

DR. PHILLIPS: Q-tips?

MS. HALPERT: That's for babies -- but, you know, the long ones that doctors use, and I looked at him . . .

DR. PHILLIPS: Swabs.

MS. HALPERT: Yes, a swab stick and this bottle of Argerol, and so I softened a little bit, and I said, "Now what?"

He said, "I have a sore throat. Will you please swab it for me?"

Well, never having done that before I think I hit his appendix with that stick. I was so damn mad! That was the story of my sex life in Atlantic City.

The sequel to this is very funny, and it's why I mentioned it. About two years later he arrived in Chicago, and he arrived with a very attractive woman by the name of Mrs. Hudson, a widow or divorcee, but very, very attractive, and he announced at this time during the evening -- there was some gagster present, and Stern was a great gagster. Somebody around offered a prize for the best sex story told.

Well, I changed the location of this story to Paris, or to Rome, some other city. I was sure that Louis had forgotten this incident. My telling of this story including the changed location made no impression on him. The swab stick made no impression on him. He probably used that as the gimmick in his Atlantic City career. I told this story, and I got the prize of how to try to make a woman. Nothing happened to him as a consequence. He had absolutely no association with it because I had changed it sufficiently -- probably with a few exaggerations, although it didn't need any. I got the prize that night of the most outlandish sex story they had ever heard.

Well, then they got married. There was a very popular play in New York, and every client who would come in would write, or telephone to hold the evening, and I saw this same play four, or five times -- *Showboat*, that's what it was, and I saw this same play about four or five times, and I really got very bored with it. Coming out of the show the fourth time, I saw Louis and Irene -- - this was two weeks after they were married -- and they both turned their backs on me. Somehow, somewhere the two of them worked out the association of the story -- Louis remembered the swab sticks, or something, and he had told her, so neither one would talk to me.

Going back to Atlantic City -- the next morning we went to the auditorium, and it was simply magnificent. Space-wise it was wonderful. I met the mayor who was involved later on with a big ring -- he was an Italian who had this big collection of Italian coins, and I had to convince him that they did not belong or fit into the show because it was an American art exhibition -- you know, some day I would come there for nothing and arrange of nothing but a show for his coins, so he left very happy. I took all the dimensions of the space and came back to New York.

I went to all the galleries. I never organized a show only at my gallery for that kind of thing. Everybody was very generous and very delighted. This was not a period of great sales. Then I insisted that the place really be done up beautifully because this was the first exhibition that they were going to have.

I think the third, or fourth week of the show they had a coffin manufacturer's convention there with dummies in the caskets, caskets all over -- that was about eight floors below, and it was all right.

I had Donald Desky. I suggested that Donald Desky design furniture, and it was a really a beautiful place. I have photographs of it. I think I showed you photographs.

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes, you did.

MS. HALPERT: It was really a beautiful setup. Whenever there was a possibility of getting Holger Cahill in

anything to earn some money I got him in, and he was a very good public relations man. That's what he did for the Newark Museum. He knew nothing about art, or very little, but he was very good at publicity.

I kept saying that I had this funny idea about Coleman, who was the skinniest guy. Somewhere along the line I said, "My ambition, or my dream in life, is to see Glenn Coleman in a bathing suit."
He was very tall and terribly skinny. The idea came to me that nowhere at any time had an exhibition been held where all the artists were invited free of charge, so I suggested that all the artists be invited and the critics, and this was subsidized by the hotels. The whole show was subsidized. Louis Sterns put in quite a bit of money, but there were a lot of hotels there.

The idea was that the first art exhibition held would bring people in, so they chipped in, and it was done very lavishly. Buses were hired to pick up the artists in New York City -- these were mostly New York City artists -- and the critics; Henry McBride and I don't know -- all the critics were invited and they all came out in buses.

Then the night before the opening there was this enormous dinner party given to us at the hotel where Louis was staying -- I've forgotten the name of it -- the Hadden Hall. That's right, and this was a great banquet. There were speeches. All the artists got up. They never had it so good, with beautiful rooms and baths in this expensive hotel. The critics never had it so good -- never! They couldn't afford this. It was done very lavishly, and it was a howling success.

I showed you the clipping book and I don't think any show had ever had so much publicity. I wasn't around at the Armory Show, but I don't think any show had that much publicity -- you know, rotogravures, pages and pages and pages in all the papers. The critics adored it. They were buttered up the night before, believe me -- champagne, the most wonderful meal, beautiful rooms and so on, and it really went over. Eddie Cahill sent out brilliant publicity releases, had photographs of the artists. Everything was going out.

I stayed on for a little while, but then I had to go to Europe, so I hired the most beautiful dame in America to be a sales woman. I had Lawrence Allen who worked for me come out there to be the receptionist, and I wrote to all the clients. Even people like Saklatwalla, who had never heard of Atlantic City, came from Pittsburgh and he bought a picture. Louis Stern bought his first painting -- an Alexander Brook I think. A great many paintings were sold, one of the first oils by Stuart Davis was bought by some traveler who came there. It was a terrific success -- you know, record breaking attendance.

It ran on. It was extended for quite some time, and everybody was happy about it. The artists never got over that trip. The critics really went to town. They really gave it more space. They stayed two days, and they didn't have time to review any other shows, so they gave it all the space, but that was the first municipal show.

The mayor was very delighted. I didn't get around to the coins ever. I think he got indicted. Meanwhile, he was connected with some ring of -- what do you call them -- prohibition?

DR. PHILLIPS: Bootleggers.

MS. HALPERT: Bootleggers at one time. He got indicted, and I didn't have to do the coins.

DR. PHILLIPS: What of Glenn Coleman in the bathing suit?

MS. HALPERT: Oh yes. The first morning I got a telephone call at my hotel -- I didn't stop at the same hotel because no dealer ever stops at the same hotel with a lot artists. Each one comes around with his problems, and he wants to be in the gallery, and this show was such a success that I knew a lot of them would want to move to the gallery, so I stayed at some other hotel.

I got this telephone call, an anonymous call, to be at such and such a corner at such and such a time. I walked up the Boardwalk. It was one of the funniest sights in the world to see artists being wheeled along the Boardwalk in all their glory. They never had it so good! I got to the corner at the appointed time, and as I arrived there, suddenly someone emerged from a chair that had been sitting there for a while, and there was Glenn Coleman in a bathing suit, and he made a complete turn -- you know, like a model. He waved his arms, put his hands on his hips and so on, went back to his chair and disappeared.

He never said a word -- you know, he was the most taciturn person I ever met. He might have talked to Stuart Davis because they were very good friends, but he would come to the gallery. We handled his work, and he really was very happy. We sold a good many of his pictures. He would come in at five-thirty and say, "Will you have a drink with me?"

Each time I'd say, "No," and that was the end of it.

That was the entire conversation we had for years, but that bathing suit scene was really wonderful!

That whole Boardwalk business -- you know, I don't think I ever got such a kick out of life as I did on that show. It was wonderful seeing artists. They had never had an opportunity like it. They had never been to Atlantic City before, and it was beautiful weather. It was very early summer -- like June, something like that, or May, but it was beautiful weather and warm enough to be in a bathing suit. At the banquet I remember Weber getting up and making a great speech about artists being treated so beautifully. He could be very, very poetic, and the next hour, or so he could say the most hateful things about Louis and about Mr. Hadden Hall, about everybody. Henry McBride made a speech -- everybody was making speeches. It was a beautiful party.

I want off to Europe and when I got back I decided that it would be a good idea to have an Armory Show. This Atlantic City show was so successful, I thought it would be wonderful to have such a show in New York, but nothing happened. I didn't know how to go about it. When LaGuardia was running for office -- that was 1934, I believe, I knew a great many people, but someone by the name of Joe Lillie on the *Telegram* told me that he was a special reporter for the newspaper in relation to the La Guardia campaign, so I said, "Is that so? Do you think I could meet him?"

He said, "He hasn't been elected yet."

I said, "Don't be silly. He's going to be elected."

Well, we talked a bit and then I said, "I want to meet him."

The day before election in his campaign office somewhere, I went to see him. I said to Lillie, "After he's elected, it won't be any good. Let's do it now. You just arrange for me to meet him."

He said, "All right."

I went up there about five o'clock in the afternoon, and he was there with the comptroller, and I forget his name. I've long forgotten.

DR. PHILLIPS: McGoldrick?

MS. HALPERT: Yes. What is his name?

DR. PHILLIPS: Joe McGoldrick.

MS. HALPERT: That's right. Just the two of them were in the office. It was the end of everything -- you know. I had never seen La Guardia. He was behind the desk, and he said, "Who are you and what do you want?"

I said, "I'm nobody with a brilliant idea, Mr. Mayor."

He said, "If you don't mind, call me Colonel. I'm not mayor yet."

I said, "You will be tomorrow."

He said, "What did you say about yourself?"

I said, "I'm nobody with a brilliant idea."

He said to McGoldrick, calling him by his first name, "Joe, this is new. Everybody comes here and tells me what a big shot he is, and he has no ideas. Here's a dame who comes in. She's nobody, but she has an idea. All right, come out with it."

He came from behind the desk. He had this enormous torso, and I thought he was walking toward me on his knees. He was so short. I told him what I had in mind, that he would go down in history as the first mayor of New York representing culture if he sponsored an exhibition of art. I told him about the Depression and how it affected the artist. The depression in art was greater than in any other field, and he got very interested. He liked the idea of being the cultural mayor and so on. He was amused by the whole thing. He seemed to be in a very good mood. He said, "Okay. You can put on this show as long as you put in the Pitcherelli Brothers."

I thought to myself, "My God! This other Italian mayor wanted a coin collection in. Now I've got to put in a Vaudeville team."

I didn't realize that they were two sculptors, the only art La Guardia knew. I said, "We'll discuss the details later. Now, I want an armory."

He turned to McGoldrick, and he said, "Go and get her an armory."

McGoldrick said, "You're not elected yet."

We let that thing ride. I was there a long time getting all sorts of details. I told him about the Atlantic City show, and I said, "That's just a pleasure haunt, but this is a big city, a great metropolis. You'll be the first man" -- and I went on about his being the first mayor to promote culture. He told me to come back in a few days after the election. He introduced me to a guy by the name of Lester Stone whom I well remember who was his secretary whom he kept on after the campaign. He was elected and I sent a telegram and I had a lot of artists sign the telegram -- or at least, I put a lot of artist's names in the telegram, and from there the thing was planned. Then McGoldrick took me up to the armory on 34th Street and then another one way up -- not the Park Avenue one, but somewhere in the 70s.

DR. PHILLIPS: The 79th Street Armory?

Yes, and he had me choose my armory, and I had a hard time deciding which of the two would be better. I decided that the 34th Street one would be better. I was all set. I was really gloating.

By the way, when I came home from seeing the mayor the first time, I had invited some people to dinner, including Niles Spencer. I was so excited about the whole thing that when I came in, my hat was on crooked. I was just going completely to pieces, "If I'm elected, you can have the show. I'll sponsor it."

I had a maid at the time and very frequently I'd arrive late from something, and she had instructions to start dinner without me, at seven, or seven-thirty, so all these people were at dinner -- a small dinner party, but I still remember Niles Spencer looking up and saying, "And where have you been?"
I said, "I've just been in the mayor's office, and we're having an armory show!"

He said, "Good God, take your hat off and sit down. You must have been drinking all day."

I looked cockeyed. I really did because I was so excited and nobody believed this story about La Guardia. And yes, the biggest thing that happened was that McGoldrick took me back in a car with a siren up and down 13th Street three times because that was my ambition in life. He went through the red lights and everything -- or at least, the chauffeur did and all the noise! When I went upstairs, that's when everybody at the table decided that I must have been crazy. I said, "Did you hear the sirens?" I was brought back in an official car.

A few days after I had seen the armories, I had decided on the 34th Street one. I had a date with Nelson Rockefeller. I don't know what that was about. I still remember that he took me to the Park Lane Hotel where they had a mural, a very bad mural by somebody, and I said, "Buy that for me."

He called over the waiter, or the captain, and he asked how much it was. We were having a very gay time, whatever the project was that he had in mind, and I told him about the armory show. I couldn't talk about anything else. I was really hysterical about it. He said, "What are you going to do in the armory?"

I said, "Hang pictures and put up sculptures."

He said, "Is that so? What are you going to do about the lighting?"

He was a very bright boy -- Nelson said, "What are you going to do about screens?"

I said, "The city will supply that."

He said, "You'd better find out whether they will."

I said, "Will you put up the money for it?"

He said, "No. No. No. You'd better find out about it. I have an idea."

Through the mayor's secretary I got in any hour of the day to see La Guardia, or to talk to him. There was another, a social secretary there too, and I got to know him also. I t was all through Joe Lillie. He introduced me to all these people and gave them a big sales talk about me, so I had -- you know, free entre to the cops and everything and everybody. I spoke to McGoldrick about the armory and he looked at me in utter astonishment. He said, "You don't think we're going to paint it up for you, put screens up and lighting?"

You know, without lighting you couldn't hang a show there. I was so intent on the municipal show in the armory that I never thought of any of the details. That distressed me and I went to see a number of people. There was no way of getting screens. I could get walls done for my own gallery and lighting systems and all that for nothing, but not for this huge thing.
Nelson called me a few days later and asked me to have lunch with him, and that's the time that Walter Winchell wrote about us. We sat -- I said that I didn't have time to have a whole lunch, so we went into some

cafeteria, or something, and we sat on the library steps near the lions. Winchell wrote about it, and Nelson's somewhat younger than I. It was a very funny thing, and I almost died of embarrassment. Nelson must have gotten hell. Well, he didn't because this whole thing works out very well for the Rockefellers, and for me too.

I still rated at the S.W. Strauss & Company -- you know, where they thought I was a big shot in the company and I had a little shop in the Village and when they spread this -- I never saw Winchell -- my ex-boss called me up, the vice president. He said, "Good God! I just read about you and a Rockefeller sitting . . ."

We were not sitting on the lion in the first place, but you know, it was a real Winchell thing, so I rated at S.W. Strauss, and so Nelson said, "Look, I'm not raising any money if that's what you think for the screens. How about having this show in Radio City?"

Well, Radio City was not finished in 1934, and he said, "We'll do anything you want. You can have the Sixth Avenue entrance."

The place was just a big hole, and the whole thing would take quite a while to fix up. I wrote out a tremendous plan so that I would have nothing to do with the selection. I always stay away from that. I thought about the museum directors in this locale, in greater New York which included the Metropolitan, the Modern, the Whitney, and Brooklyn, and oh yes, I dragged in the Newark also -- they would do the selecting. They would be the committee, and the whole thing was laid out pretty well.

I think you saw the plan, the book which was sent to the mayor. He okayed everything. He thought the idea was fine, and we did put in the Pitcherelli Brothers, both of them, and they did not do any somersaults, just sculpture. I had to tell the museum directors that they had to take the Pitcherelli Brothers. That's the only thing I would ask them, so finally we agreed on Radio City, and they built it to order. I had been in Essen and had carried with me a color scheme. It was one of the most beautiful layouts that you ever saw, and everything was shown to the most beautiful advantage.

There was a committee appointed by the museum directors, a hanging committee, all artists, and the whole thing was beautifully done, and the opening night was just terrific! We had a national hookup.

Everything was wonderful, except that the mayor stepped on Mrs. Force's train, a full evening dress, and the deal I had to make was that David Rockefeller was there to meet La Guardia. He employed him later, and also there was a subway station thrown in on this deal, but I figured out that that was perfectly honorable because when I asked Nelson why they wanted that show so desperately in Radio City -- Momma called me, Pappa called me, everybody -- the whole family, "Please have it in Radio City."

I know they spent forty-eight thousand dollars on the lighting fixtures. The lower floor was a sculpture court. I had cheese cloth put over to make a diffused light. We had lighting on the ceiling. The place wasn't finished. It was the most beautiful sculpture gallery. There were photographs in the publicity. The show had the biggest publicity, I think bigger than Atlantic City. Also on a national scale.

The whole idea was to stimulate sales in American art, and it took in all American art. The museum people were very liberal, we had about fifteen hundred items in the show, and so it took in every school of art. Each artist could not only be represented by a painting but also a graphic, a print and a drawing, three media, so that the artists were all overjoyed with this thing, A huge catalogue was published. It was all done on a grand, grand scale. There was an admission charge.

I hired the people, Arch Horn, Eddie Cahill, except that he was in the hospital all through it so he didn't appear. He was the director of the show. Dorothy Miller I hired -- or at least I had them all hired, and Radio City paid all the expenses, of course, but they had a big gate. I think it was only a quarter admission, but a tremendous number of people came.

It was terrific, and I was terribly worried about [Mayor Fiorello] La Guardia's speech because he really knew nothing about art, nothing at all, and I spoke to his secretary who was really marvelous. I had entre any time. It was just wonderful. I had a ball, so I said, "What in the world will he say?"

You know, it worried me and I said, "He doesn't know anything about art. He doesn't know anything about the history of this thing and what it's all about."

He said, "Well, you write his speech for him."

I said, "Well, how do I" -- La Guardia was a cocky little guy -- "I can't hand it to him."

He said, "Just slip it into his right hand pocket. He always sticks his hand in his right hand pocket. He keeps his notes there."

We were having dinner -- Mrs. La Guardia, La Guardia, Lester Stone, and I -- just the four of us on the way to the opening, and we were chatting, and so on. I was sitting right next to La Guardia, but he was sitting on my right, and I couldn't get into his right hand pocket. I was going out of my mind. Finally, I switched places with Mrs. La Guardia -- you know, made gestures to Lester Stone and switched places, and I got very chummy with La Guardia. I slipped this thing in his right hand pocket. Then I was completely relaxed.

We arrived there. There was an anteroom. David Rockefeller was there and Mr. Rockefeller, and I introduced everybody, and everybody was happy to meet him. P.S. they got the subway station too, but that seemed perfectly legitimate. That was not politics, because they have this huge number of employees. I didn't feel that I was doing anything dishonorable in giving McGoldrick and everybody else a sales talk about the subway station. That was up to the Rockefellers to do, and they achieved it and again very honorably.

Then a procession started, and Mrs. Force of the Whitney Museum who was on the committee was the only woman, so she walked on ahead, she in a full evening dress, and little La Guardia kept stepping on her train. She'd fall back every once in a while, and finally she switched the train. La Guardia gave the most brilliant talk, about the need for culture in American and so on. He never saw the paper.

DR. PHILIPS: He never saw it?

MS. HALPERT: I was up all night writing the most brilliant speech, and he made no effort to look at it. He never saw it, and his talk was really magnificent. He was an extraordinary person, and he didn't go beyond his depth. He didn't talk about specific types of art or periods of art. He just talked about this great metropolis, this great country and all that, and these great artists in America, and this great auditorium that was being turned over , and he went on and on, and the need to encourage people to love art , like the Europeans, to live with it. It was the most fabulous talk that came right out of his own little noodle. There was absolutely no reference to anything that had ever been written. This was pure and wonderful. I always remember that. It was the greatest thrill of my life to hear what he had to say.

About a week before the show opened, I thought something had to be done to stimulate sales because everybody was desperate. I spoke to -- oh, the people in charge of Radio City, the real estate -- whatever the firm's name was. They worked for the Rockefellers, of course, and I suggested that they put up twenty thousand dollars for purchases -- I think I settled for five thousand -- to give to high schools. La Guardia was to announce -- well, these were to be prints and drawings, and La Guardia was to announce that these great works of art were to be distributed to New York high schools.

I had to do the picking in a great hurry. La Guardia was not going to choose the things. I got several other people to help -- you know, to distribute the sales as far as possible. I think every artist in the show sold a print anyway, but then it occurred to me that it should go beyond that, that it might stimulate sales if we could announce that so many things were sold before the show was opened.

So I got up a letter and signed Holger Cahill's name to it. He was in the hospital having his gall bladder out, and for a long time he was really very sick. I gook the letter to the hospital and got him to okay it. I sent it to all the dealers to come the day before. Each dealer had a couple of hours. It was worked out so that groups of dealers had such and such an hour to bring their clients. I think I did it over two days to make sales and a great many sales were made that way.

The first oil by Marin was sold. It was bought by Tannahill. I telegraphed him in Detroit, and he flew in. He bought that and a water color by Dove, and all the dealers sold things. He gave La Guardia the list of buyers, and it was a terrific opening. No liquor was served, but the artists didn't need it. They all sold something, and it was a great, great opening, and the attendance for that show was simply tremendous, and it started sales -- a lot of things were sold to out of town people. It attracted a lot of out of town people. It was called "the mile of art."

There were all sorts of write-ups, and it was on radio several times every day, both local and national, and it brought in a tremendous number of new people. It started a large number of new collectors -- unfortunately a lot of it was conservative academic art that they had bought, but just the same a great many of the artists, the more modern artists got breaks. I know, I think Prendergast was one of the first things sold. You know, it spread around pretty thoroughly because each dealer worked on it, and it ran for about six weeks and brought mobs.

Then the deal I made -- I made a tie-in sale, that they had to have a free for all. This was a selected show. The museum people made a selection of the artists, and each artist could send whatever he wished. He could send one oil, one water color, and one drawing, or a print, or whatever.

The next show was -- well, the *Salons of America*, sort of an offspring, or a substitution for the *Independents*, and that's something that Hamilton Easter Field, my American hero, organized originally, and so there was this big free for all. Mrs. Rockefeller gave me quite a bit of money to spend in that show.

DR. PHILLIPS: Was this held at Radio City too?

MS. HALPERT: It followed the first show, as soon as it cleared out -- the same place, the same space, and this second show was run entirely by the Salons of America, and to stimulate sales she came across. She was very generous about it.

The Rockefellers were really delighted about it to the degree that the people who ran the building offered me an enormous salary for a job. They thought it was the greatest promotion to start a building. I hadn't thought of that before. Of course, I never got paid for any of these things except the one in Atlantic City -- I got a thousand bucks out of that. I had to write about five or six letters before I got the check, but in this case I worked something like twenty hours a day for weeks and weeks.

It was a terrific show, and there was no one to do it. They didn't know whom to employ. I had to get everything -- even the hanging. The artists were ready to hang, and I think Leon Kroll was chairman of the hanging committee, but nobody thought of wires, or screw eyes -- you know, simple things like that. That was a very important pick up in the economy at the time, but not enough, and it was of very short duration naturally, while the show was on, and it almost died. The WPA followed that, of course.

DR. PHILLIPS: The mayor must have been overjoyed at your initial idea.

MS. HALPERT: I have letters from him -- you know, thanking me, he was so delighted. I wrote him a letter thanking him. There was a picture of him in the front of the catalogue, and every bit of publicity that came out said that it was sponsored by La Guardia. La Guardia, the first time a mayor of New York had sponsored an art exhibition. A great many things happened subsequently, all sorts of things. He was bothered to death about sponsoring everything else, and Lester Stone would call me up ten times a day and say, "Is this good? Is this bad?"

He was very happy with the whole idea -- the national and international publicity because there were quite a few international papers involved. The Italian papers picked it up immediately because he was the first mayor. They forgot all about the one who was indicted because that one really was the first one, but La Guardia was the first mayor of New York, so he was very, very happy about it.

I kept those letters, very sweet letters and very witty. He was really a wonderful guy. He let Peggy Bacon come in and make an etching of him, a drawing for the catalogue, except that he was very irritated. He had a habit of having his hand on his hip, and she made a drawing of him that way. He called me up and said, "I don't like that drawing! It makes me look like one of the Neuters, and I ain't."

But he always had that pose. She made a couple of drawings and he was very happy about the whole thing. We all were. The Rockefellers were happy. I was overwhelmed with joy. The museum people – everybody, and about a year later -- less than that, I just came across that, and I forgot about that completely -- Mr. Rockefeller asked me whether I wouldn't run a gallery, a permanent gallery. I have the blue prints. I came across it the other day.

DR. PHILLIPS: Was this to be at Radio City?

MS. HALPERT: At Radio City. There was a corner building. Maybe it was six months, a year later. I had a contract, everything, and the thing that amused me the other day when I was taking stuff out to the country to sort of the archives, was the blue prints that were drawn up -- I made my own blue prints -- which included in the basement a bowling alley. I still can't figure out why I wanted a bowling alley under the gallery, and this was to be an all arts building. I have the drawings and so on. This was to take in art for business.

DR. PHILLIPS: Industrial art?

MS. HALPERT: No. Not industrial art, not commercial art, but paintings, murals, and so on. There was a mural department, architectural sculpture, real art to be used by architects, an architectural department, and then regular sales rooms -- you know, a gallery, and it was to be self-supporting. The thing like that with the overhead would be terrific. The rent would be for nothing because it would be a big promotional idea. The art department would be for nothing. From there on upstairs they would pay rent, but each dealer in New York would be entitled to an equal amount of space, just a little cubbyhole for all the professional dealers, only in American art.

It wasn't very many -- all schools of American art, including Grand Central Galleries, and so on. Each would have a cubicle. He would pay for his footage. The central portion would be for nothing, and he could either have some paintings or photographs, have someone there all the time, or no one, do anything he wished to show samples of his wares. The central area was to be an exhibition area. Each dealer would be entitled to so many feet of space, rotating, so that any time you came into this gallery, you'd see a complete cross section of

American art in New York.

Once a year there would be a national show and none of the New York dealers would have any space except their cubicles, and you'd have a forty-seven state exhibition also chosen by the museum people in each locale. There was to be a sculpture court. The next floor was to be ceramics, commercial, and then there would be Eddie Fields, the rug people. It would be self-supporting, that's right. Each dealer would pay for that little piece, and then you'd have central shows, so that you'd have an arts and crafts exhibition building.

I have the contract. I was to run the art part. I refused to do the other part, and I've forgotten whom I picked -- not Donald Desky. All the designers were to have a floor, the architects. The entrance to the building would have everything that had to do with so called aesthetic directions. It was a corner building which was on the south end, just east of the garage, a patio for sculpture and so on.

That's the time I got so dramatic about it. At that time the real estate people -- they had a hell of a time renting space in that huge, huge place, and they were attacked because the renting agents moved a great many people from other buildings by giving them free rent and something for a period. There was a big scandal about it, and after that big scandal Mr. Rockefeller asked me up to lunch, and the lawyers.

I hired my lawyers, House, Grossman and Morehouse, and they had their lawyers. The contract was signed. I had his signature, and I was to take charge of it on a part time basis because I didn't want to give up the Downtown Gallery. I had my own little cubicle. By that time everybody was convinced that none of the dealers were going to be sore about it. Everybody was convinced. I included all the other dealers and all the other artists.

I didn't want to give up the Downtown Gallery, and this was to be a part time job, and it was quite a high salary. I can't remember what it is now. It's all in the contract I came across. I didn't read it. I did look at that bowling alley, and it stunned me. I didn't know why in the world I wanted a bowling alley. I had something about how much it would take in. It was the largest sum of money. Bowling wasn't fashionable then was it? I can't remember.

We used to go bowling on Third Avenue -- a lot of us, Walt Kuhn, that whole group, the Kit Kat Club group in Brooklyn. We had ladies night and boys night, and all that, and we used to have a lot of fun. Maybe that was it. We paid about fifty cents a night. But this was to be on a big scale.

Mr. Rockefeller had me up to lunch, and he told me this sad tale, that he couldn't put up that building. They couldn't put it up, and it wasn't put up for several years. It remained an empty spot. He told me that the thing was working out very badly, that they couldn't get enough tenants, and he handed me a check, the second time he handed me a check to pacify me, and the second time I very dramatically tore up the check and tore up the contract, one copy of it. I have another one without this signature that I kept. But I tore the other one up, and I handed it to him saying that I wouldn't be paid off, that it couldn't be done, that I was very sorry.

Then I came home, and I thought what a goddamn fool I was because I could have used that money -- you know, we were really in a bad way, and I had put in so much work on this thing. I got all these other people -- you know, in each division, the architects.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's quite an idea.

MS. HALPERT: It still is. Now, of course, you have that furniture design center up on the eastside, but this was to be inclusive with the art on the first floor. It was a wonderful idea, and everybody was delighted with it. I have the entire plan of the whole thing, and all these things I had to do after working hours. I was up nights working on it.

Mr. Rockefeller almost cried. He felt very, very badly. Everything was signed. I could have sued him for a million bucks. He knew I wouldn't. He gave me -- I think it was a ten thousand dollar check for my time, or something, and I tore it up. They really didn't put up the building for quite some time, because they were having a rough time renting the space.

That would be a good idea now too. I still wish that I got ideas like that nowadays -- God! I was popping when I was younger, but there was such a need for all this, and everybody -- you know, I never had any problems going to La Guardia. I didn't have to fight about it or anything. You just presented an idea, and everybody cooperated.

There were a lot of amusing things that happened as side issues, but -- oh yes, I want to set the record straight because a lot of people are always given credit for things and in this case, I was given a great deal of credit. Of course Cahill who had nothing to do with it at all was given a lot of credit, and the one person who was really responsible for it was Joe Lillie! If not for Joe Lillie, nothing would have happened. So when this article came

out -- Jewel wrote that in *the New York Times*, "Mrs. Halpert's Dream Comes True," and I forgot how many records I got from all over the country, "Have You Ever Seen a Dream Walking?"

That was a popular song at the time. I got so sick of it! When I went to a café, or someplace, they'd start playing it. It got to be the big gag, but in that article, I set the picture straight about Joe Lillie and Lester Stone, and there was another very rich young man who was La Guardia's social secretary -- everybody cooperated, all these people, and of course La Guardia and Nelson. So we got that record straight historically. Joe Lillie was really the one most responsible, because if he hadn't introduced me to La Guardia, it never would have happened.

I would have needed ten years to get to him. This way I just walked right in, but it's amazing how many people will cooperate if you have an idea, and they realize that it's not for self-aggrandizement, or money, because I never got a nickel out of these things. I still haven't gotten a nickel from any of these outside plans like going to Russia. I paid all my own expenses -- always, which gives me the freedom -- you know, to work at it, and the cooperation that I got!

But it was a very exciting era, very exciting. People worked together -- my God, the artists, the hanging -- they worked through about twenty-four hours. These were the big shots of American art at the time, and they hated all the modern stuff, but they were there for twenty-four hours actually placing this picture, moving the sculpture and so on. That sculpture hall was fantastic! That beautiful light! The day before that show opened, the artists were there for twenty-four hours right through -- everyone involved worked like a son of a gun.

DR. PHILLIPS: From what source did the drive come for the creation of a municipal gallery?

MS. HALPERT: You mean later -- that municipal gallery?

DR. PHILLIPS: With the artists union on one side and Mrs. Breckinridge and La Guardia's Committee of One Hundred on the other.

MS. HALPERT: I know Mrs. Breckinridge, and the unfortunate thing was that she was almost blind. She was a very bad symbol for the visual field. After this show at Radio City everybody wanted a permanent municipal gallery, and there would have been one. This other thing, the plan I had, was really in the form of a municipal gallery, and it was completely self-supporting. I worked it out -- comptrollers and everybody, and it was completely self-supporting. Each floor would pay for itself. The little bitsy cubicles would pay for the largest space.

It would not have paid for the original installation. That was to be taken care of by Radio City and the idea was to make a permanent municipal gallery. Well, this thing fell through. That building would have gone into millions, and they just weren't prepared to put up another building at the time. They didn't cheat. If they had put one up immediately, I might have done something about it. I would have been mad, but they couldn't do it, and then La Guardia got very interested in the idea. He wanted to continue it, and there was something else.

I remember I had artists and models parade up to the City Hall. We had -- where was that held? Oh gosh! There were several things that followed. I think it was at the Art Students League building. We got some other building for that -- sort of a festival, like a summer festival, and again we had a very large collective exhibition, but there was no place for it. I pleaded for a school house, a dirty old school house that was to be torn down. I wanted to have that rebuilt, and the city just couldn't furnish the money and nobody else would.

It was a bad, bad period, financially, so nobody did anything, but that municipal gallery didn't last very long, and the minute you get artists running anything it dies. It doesn't last very long. When you get museum directors from every type of museum, and they get together, it's impersonal. They don't care. They really do care, but they don't care about individuals, but when you have those people shouldn't be in -- and the same is true in any other organization. If you have any kind of collective idea, you can't have professionals.

It's like the time I was at the Ford Foundation, and I made that terrible faux pas! I never was so embarrassed in my life! I was objecting to the fact that the artists were chosen -- this was only a few years ago -- when one artist got ten thousand dollars every year, and others got shows, and so on. The selection committee was made up of artists largely, and the idea was to select an artist who had great potential, or an artist who went through a very frustrating period and needed a lift and so on. The committee was made up very largely of artists.

I went up to the Ford Foundation, and you know, they had a table of young men with yellow pads. I was very vehement about the idea of having an all artist committee with just a few museum people, and I said, "After all, I don't want to be on the committee, but at least the dealers should be asked to cooperate because the dealers are in a good position to know whether an artist needed the money or not -- you know, by the amount of money he's sent in payment for sales, or against sales, and I got so vehement about having artists judge other artists that I said, "After all you wouldn't have Jayne Mansfield judge Marilyn Monroe and offer the prize for the biggest

bosom, would you?"

I suddenly realized where I was. All the pencils dropped and for the first time in twenty-five years I blushed a very deep red. I couldn't think of anything better as an example, but you don't get somebody in the same category to judge -- well, they did make a change after a while, but I didn't appear there for a long, long time. After that I wanted to die. I think I even made gestures.

DR. PHILLIPS: You said you were visual.

MS. HALPERT: If La Guardia had stayed on much longer -- this became a very pet idea with him. He really wanted a municipal gallery which doesn't exist anywhere in America and which we need desperately here. Even today we don't have that. We don't have a municipal, an American art museum in New York – we have nothing, except -- well, Roosevelt did something too. *Art Week*, wasn't it? I remember. Yes, we had that at the Art Students League. That was a wonderful stunt to have running in the summer when all the galleries, or many of the galleries, are closed. We need it desperately now, to break up this little group idea again, to have a free for all, like the *Independents*, only with some selection.

For Roosevelt's *Art Week*, each dealer was given the same amount of wall space. Of course, now you couldn't do that. You have four hundred and ten dealers, but at that time all those years American art dealers were very limited in number. Even when we got up to twenty, we each got ten running feet or something -- well, a lot more, thirty running feet and the pictures were small in those days, and we stacked them in three rows. Those *Art Week* shows were very exciting shows and those went on for about three years. Was it called *Art Week*?

We didn't have a municipal gallery at that time. Somebody was willing to put up the dough. He's dead. I can mention his name, twenty years -- I.B.M. What was his name?

DR. PHILLIPS: Watson.

MS. HALPERT: Watson -- yes. He was very intrigued, and he certainly would have put up the money for that. But nothing ever crystallized into a permanent thing. There were all these tries, and enough interest, but it always required a great deal of money. McGoldrick went around looking at schools, dirty old schools, but it really meant putting up a great deal of city money, and there wasn't any for that kind of thing. Nobody would hear of it. They never could have gotten the vote for that any more than we have a museum of national art in Washington. The federal government won't do it, and no municipal government will do it, and it is important.

I must say that things were popping in those days. There was something happening, and people were wide open for ideas if somebody else worked at it, and it meant really killing work, all the plans had to be typed up for everybody. You had to do it so that everybody could understand what you were talking about. You always had to inject something that would make these guys glorious.

The unfortunate thing was that that center didn't go through, that Rockefeller thing, because some day if you're interested -- I'm sending it to the Archives, but the contract is really, really interesting, not the signed one. That one I tore up, but I have a copy of it with all the details.

DR. PHILLIPS: It was a fantastic idea.

MS. HALPERT: But it just came at the wrong time. There was one person who is very much overlooked in history. She hated my guts, but I still thing that she was terribly, terribly important, and that's Juliana Force because she worked on these things. Much as she disliked me personally, if I could pull something like that, she was always on the committee. She never fought it because of her dislike. If it was an idea that would help American artists, she would knock herself out, and she did too. She was responsible for the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) which came before the WPA.

I read somewhere about Bruce being WPA. He had nothing to do with that. His was the PWAP, the previous thing, and also it was the project where Mrs. Force's idea was central -- one percent for each building put up in the United States, every federal building no matter where it was put, a certain percentage, maybe it was five percent, was to be devoted to art, and that's where Bruce came in. He was on the committee to choose the jury, and I was selected to submit sketches for murals, sculpture, and so on. That was a wonderful, wonderful deal. Schools all over the country -- that was not part of the WPA. That was a separate project in which Bruce was so active.

DR. PHILLIPS: The initial committee meeting was held in his home. He was named the secretary to the overall committee which included the Secretary of the Treasury and others, various and sundry other people in Washington, but it was a public building deal. The locus of the funds and ultimate control was lodged in the Treasury Department which had control over public buildings.

MS. HALPERT: That's right.

DR. PHILLIPS: And they created sixteen, seventeen, eighteen regional areas throughout the whole country.

MS. HALPERT: Yes, throughout the whole country.

DR. PHILLIPS: Which was the network through which work was channeled.

MS. HALPERT: Mrs. Force was leading spirit in that before. This was one of the things that happened as a result of her fighting for American artists. There are a number of unsung heroes that I keep talking about, but nobody pays any attention. I wish somebody would write them up like Hamilton Easter Field. I bore everybody with him. I met him twice. There's no personal -- well, he lisped and he was a little odd, but he was really doing a very noble thing, and Mrs. Force too. Here were two people who really fought for living American art. And Mrs. Whitney too. She put up the money for it, but Mrs. Force was the one who went out and did the spade work.

DR. PHILLIPS: Was she really fruitful with ideas? She had the same kind of set of blinders that an artist would have with reference to his work.

MS. HALPERT: She was very personal about it -- to her discredit. She disliked me personally, and didn't buy any pictures from artists who needed the money until I mentioned to her that she had that privilege. She got up at a party one time. She was very high, and she pointed her finger at me and she said, "I hate you!"

I said, "I know. Everybody knows that, but you think you have the right to punish the artists because you hate me? Hating me is your privilege. Go ahead and hate me and have a wonderful time doing it. I admire you. I don't like you; I admire you, and but I don't admire you when you eliminate a whole group of artists because you hate me."

The next day she came in, and I think that's when she bought the Max Weber *Chinese Restaurant* which is known as one of the great American pictures. She immediately responded, but this went on for years before she came in. She never came to the gallery. She told me why she hated me.

DR. PHILLIPS: A vindictive streak?

MS. HALPERT: Well, she told this the same night. I said, "Why do you hate me?"

She said, "Because you've made a success of something I didn't."

The Whitney Studio Club used to have shows and so on, but there too, she liked Alex Brook, and she'd buy eight Brooks. She liked Charles Sheeler, and she bought ten Sheelers at one time. I made a deal with the Whitney recently, about five years ago, to swap some of those early Sheelers, because Bill Lane was making a collection and he had nothing from that period. She'd fall for one artist and instead of buying ten pictures from ten artists. She'd do that all the time. It was a very personal thing, and I don't mean that she was having any affairs. It was just that she liked a specific person.

She liked Dorothy Varian, and she did wonderful things for her. That I approved of, but in many cases she overdid it. Guy Pene Dubois -- good God! He got more money out of Mrs. Whitney than all the other artists put together, and there was no reason for it. He wasn't the best artist, but she'd just get enthusiastic about one artist at a time.

That evening we talked about it. Since she made it very public, I had to defend myself. I told her that she could go on hating me. I thought, "Let's get to the root of this" and since she was in a talkative mood, she told me why. Then I mentioned the fact that she had no right to let her personal dislike for one individual to punish thirty artists, or have her great liking for one person -- look at all the Krolls they have, and Kroll was rolling those days. I don't know how many Krolls she bought at one time.

It was always quantitatively, and it's bad for the museum to have so many pictures from one period. But she fought for the artists. She got Mrs. Whitney to put up money for the artists, send them abroad, all sorts of things. She really did a noble job, but she had these little side discrepancies. I know she fought for the PWAP. She had shows to help many of these causes, but nobody else did.

DR. PHILLIPS: I think in some respects her enthusiasm in the PWAP worked to the disadvantage of the Whitney Museum.

MS. HALPERT: A picket was placed there.

DR. PHILLIPS: I'll say.

MS. HALPERT: I'm going to get a tall glass.

DR. PHILLIPS: So that they had to close the Whitney Museum early.

DR. PHILLIPS: Quite early. Public pressure outside the door. When it was announced that the local regional PWAP would be set up under Mrs. Force, the more conservative art elements in the city got quite angry at what appeared to them to be favoritism with reference to the school of art supported to the exclusion of all the other schools.

MS. HALPERT: It wasn't so much schools as individual people.

DR. PHILLIPS: Sloan summed it up the best way. He is reported in the press as having said, "When one scatters corn in a chicken coop, the feathers are bound to fly."

MS. HALPERT: It was very witty.

DR. PHILLIPS: You know how things rub off on an institution quite apart from people who are concerned and the Whitney faced a public relations problem which really had nothing to do with the PWAP.

MS. HALPERT: There was this favoritism that went on which was unfortunate -- basically she did one of the most noble jobs in America -- but where were those little personal things. She'd have parties after an opening, and she'd invite only certain people up to her apartment. You have people all go home and come back rather than do it her way -- you know, everybody stand and wait to see whether he was being asked.

DR. PHILLIPS: Selected.

MS. HALPERT: Yes. It was very, very bad taste.

DR. PHILLIPS: It's a weird exercise of power.

MS. HALPERT: It wasn't power. She didn't throw that around.

DR. PHILLIPS: The mere fact that one selects?

MS. HALPERT: It was a favoritism, a very personal thing. She likes certain people. She loved having Hopper, and of course Hopper never utters a word. She could and did repeat this thing about his leaving one time and saying, "This was a very dull party. Nobody talked."

She loved that. One time she heard Sloan was coming up the stairs, and she rushed out like a bat out of hell to hang a picture of his, and he saw her hanging it herself. The butler was mixing drinks, and he said, "Never mind!"

He went down the stairs and out. She'd forgotten to hang a Sloan going up to her apartment.

During these very bad periods like the municipal show there was this wonderful community spirit among the artists like the different clubs that they had at the time too, the Artists Congress and so on, they really worked, knocked themselves out as a community project. As soon as somebody from the outside came in and began to pick the people, the thing always broke up because as soon as some dollar signs were around -- you know, then the artists changed character. They have a funny philosophy. I mentioned Joe Lillie.

Well, his sidekick at the *Telegram* was a guy by the name of George Britt, also a very nice guy, and while they were both editorial writers, or in the editorial department, I don't know what they got, certainly not much money in those days, and George and his wife fell madly in love with Zorach's paintings. They wanted one of his watercolors, and all they could afford to spend at the time was about fifty dollars for a picture. They lived down in the Village in a small apartment.

hey came in, and I mentioned very casually to Bill that he had a lot of small watercolors, and at that time the big ones sold for two hundred and fifty dollars. I said, "Do you think we could find one? I won't take any commission on it."

That always makes an artist's eyes light up when I say that I'm not going to take any commission.
Oh boy! But I was very fond of the Britts and I wanted them to have one. I said I'd pay for one now and he wouldn't give up anything for fifty dollars and I said that, "It was really for seventy-five dollars. You have a hundred on it which you'd sell for seventy-five to anybody. On the bill will be seventy-five dollars, less a third will be fifty dollars. That's all I'm going to get. All right, seventy-five dollars and I'll refund the twenty-five dollars." But no, he wouldn't do it.

Then about two weeks later he came in. Those were unframed and in a portfolio. He said, "I want my portfolio."

I said, "Here it is. What are you going to do with it?"

"Wyatt said he'd pay me a hundred dollars for a bunch of watercolors and I'm going to take them over."

I said, "You sold a hundred dollars worth?"

"Yeah!

"All right. I'll give you a hundred dollars for two of these. If you sit here, I'll go to the bank and get a hundred dollar bill. A green one with a pretty picture on it."

Now this was a deal that sounded perfectly wonderful. But he didn't do either. That kind of rational I've never been able to figure out.

Same way with prints. The AA started this print thing.

God, what an artist did for a hundred bucks! He made a stone and signed all those and if I asked them -- you know, I was trying to start a hotel art service.

DR. PHILLIPS: When was this -- in the twenties?

MS. HALPERT: Yes, in the twenties. I knew somebody who was vice president at Gimbel's, and they had a hotel department -- Sheldon Coombs. His wife was a very good friend of mine. They were both friends, but she was very close to me. I had dinner there one night, and I said, "Sheldon, how about having good art for hotels? How much can they pay -- frame, screws, screw eyes, and wire because you have to sell it to them that way.

He brought his books and very honestly showed them to me. He brought them home one night. I've forgotten what it was, but if we made two hundred prints -- you needed them quantitatively -- the artist was to get something like five hundred dollars, and we'd pay for the printing. Miller was going to make a special price -- quantitatively right from the artist's stone, and the artists would sign. He would get five hundred bucks for it. Whatever they figured out, they were going to sell them for twelve and a half dollars apiece, something like that, and that included frame, glass, screw eyes, overhead. They had the whole thing worked out, and the artists wouldn't do it.

DR. PHILLIPS: What went wrong?

MS. HALPERT: The whole deal fell through. I had it practically signed up, and this must have been about 1929.

DR. PHILLIPS: What was their objection to the five hundred dollars?

MS. HALPERT: Because I said that they would be getting five dollars a print. If I had held up a two hundred dollar bill, or two one hundred dollar bills, they would have grabbed it. I did it very badly by breaking it down, saying, that you'd get five dollars a print.

"How much would they sell them for?"

I said, "Twelve fifty."

DR. PHILLIPS: They said, "What?"

MS. HALPERT: I was being paid by them, not by the artists, some very small fee to supervise these deals. I wanted the artists to have some money, and five hundred dollars was a lot of money then, but I shouldn't have said five dollars a print and they were getting twelve-fifty, but I explained that they had to put on a mat, screw eyes, glass, a frame, wire and their overhead. They have to double which is a third.

When I was working at one of the jobs I had when I was assistant advertiser and manager at Stern's, I couldn't understand why when they bought a hat for ten dollars, they put down fifteen as cost. I just couldn't understand that, so they explained to me that the overhead is a third, so you add the overhead and then you put the profit on. I think one artist in the gallery knows the difference between net and gross. I don't use that at all anymore. They don't know what it means. Maybe today's artists do.

DR. PHILLIPS: "Gross" means large -- what else?

MS. HALPERT: I stopped using the term. You get so much net and this is gross -- you know, it was vulgar.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's fantastic!

MS. HALPERT: There were all these plans, and then the AA came along and the artists got practically nothing. They made an infinite number of prints and of course that killed the sale of all prints permanently because that was sold mail order to collectors. By then I'd get letters, "Why did I pay twenty-five for a Kuniyoshi when I can get one for seven and a half dollars now, the same kind of thing?"

With the hotel it would not have been competitive -- you see, and when you get up in the morning you would not have to look at a moonrise. What's that one in Florida? That was wonderful. What's that spray? Oh, spray gun. That's not the word, but that's what it was, a technique that was developed, and I woke up in the morning and I see this ghastly thing hanging over my head -- it was probably in Miami, or somewhere and it said spray gun and so-and-so, done entirely by hand -- you know, with a label on it.

Now life is very easy. No more ideas and nobody's mad.

DR. PHILLIPS: Apparently when . . .

MS. HALPERT: Like the little magazine we published called *Space*. After the third issue, everybody wanted to be paid so much a word. We couldn't get any free articles anymore, so I said, "To hell with it!"

DR. PHILLIPS: Mrs. Force was behind the *Arts* magazine.

MS. HALPERT: After Field -- yes. The *Arts* was Field. Then afterwards it became *Creative Arts*. Mrs. Whitney put up the money, and Mrs. Force was behind it. Forbes Watson was the editor.

DR. PHILLIPS: That served a function too.

MS. HALPERT: Of course, it was a very good magazine.
There's a new magazine. Roland Pease came in the other day with a dummy.

DR. PHILLIPS: In the field of art?

MS. HALPERT: Yes. Well, it's sort of a cross between *Show* -- a man who is almost as rich as Huntington Harford is willing to lose money, but I think it has some very, very good ideas -- and the old *Art Digest*. Everything will be briefs from abroad and from America and so on. I went over the dummy with him -- I spent hours with him on that, and found an article on art for investment and I began to scream. I said, "Get out with this damn magazine!"

I had already spent three hours with the guy. I said, "If you're going to put that column in, forget it!"

This was going to be prices before and after. All that is utterly phony. He almost ran because I got so violent. Then I said, "Wait a minute! I've got an idea. I'll give you art for investment column -- an idea for it, but I'm not going to do anything on this."

He said, "Yeah."

I said, "Why don't you take people who bought art for love? Don't use that expression for God's sake, but people like Katherine Prior, people who are still known and their collections are still known. Well, just take Aline Saarinen's book. She was Louchheim before, but the *Proud Possessors*. I worked with her on that. Take those people and show their collections went up in value because they did not consider value to start with -- Mrs. Havemeyer, the Cone sisters, and, of course, most of them were women. The adventurous buyers were women. How the world has changed, and the buyers are all male. That's why art for investment!"

This really sums it up. When women bought they bought for pleasure and sometimes to be lady bountiful -- either way, it didn't matter, but the men buy with the idea of making money. The whole character of the art world has been changed since sexes have been switched. I didn't put that very well.

DR. PHILLIPS: Leave it just like it is. It tells its own story. I think you're right. I think it's time we stopped.

32 East 51st Street, New York City

MS. HALPERT: Where are you going to -- Pennsylvania Station?

DR. PHILLIPS: I've got to get back home to Huntington Station.

MS. HALPERT: I thought you had a love nest here in town.

DR. PHILLIPS: Why I did. Well, the last time we talked, we talked about Atlantic City, the first municipal show as a prelude to the New York municipal show which we also discussed.

MS. HALPERT: Did I say anything about the night show?

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes -- and incredible story.

MS. HALPERT: Did I tell that story -- black chiffon nightgown?

There's another funny story attached to that. I went to see this new thing they built to see it. The mayor of Atlantic City had been indicted. He was mixed up with some racketeers, or something -- I can't remember his name. This was 1929. I haven't the slightest recollection. He was connected with some racketeers -- he was Italian -- a whole bunch of Italian racketeers. He said, "I want you to meet the mayor."

I said, "Tell me about him. Hasn't there been a lot of dirt about him?"

He said, "Well, I think you'll have to put up a collection of his. He collects either coins or models -- one of those things; I think coins, and he wants to show those."

I said, "How many floors are there in that building? He can put up a show in the entrance. You can make it part of the show. I don't care. Just say 'coins -- street floor.' I'm not going to put these coins in."

He said, "You're certainly difficult in every way."

I said, "I am that."

But the whole thing was that it really worked out beautifully. I looked at the place. It was a beautiful spot, and I said, "I have a friend who is one of the best young designers in America. His name is Donald Desky. I want him to do the interiors, furniture, pedestals. I designed an extraordinary pedestal. I don't know how to make it because I can't draw plans, or have it made, but he can do that and all the furnishings."

We were going to have sort of a lounge and all that sort of stuff. He said, "Is that going to be expensive?"

I said, "No. Because this will be his first big public break."

I got him in Mrs. Rockefellers, and he did part of the interior. Afterwards he did her whole gallery, but I said, "He's already made a head start."

He okayed it immediately. I picked the entire show and from all the dealers. I've always been very objective about those things, and it was a marvelous show. I had Holger Cahill as publicity man. I always had him in my rackets. I never got paid. He did, and he was a public relations man, a publicity man for the Newark Museum. He knew absolutely nothing about art -- even when he died he didn't know anything about art, but he was -- well, his character was like a sponge. He would assimilate anything he heard, and it would be his own.

John Sloan once told about the rain dances in New Mexico. It was his story, and Cahill published it. Sloan created a terrific racket about it, but there it was. Cahill was published in *Harpers*, and he got three hundred bucks at a time when he was starving. Anyhow, he got this job, and he got a brilliant idea.

He said, "You've been able to sell everything down the line -- you know, getting Desky, getting the artists invited to the show. How about inviting critics?"

In those days giving critics a ride out to Atlantic City was fantastic. Getting the artists invited was one thing, but getting the critics -- well, they were invited, and they came, and the show had the biggest press of any show. You didn't see all the clippings. Louis Stern had the entire thing, and it was the most howling success. One of the hotel owners had a dinner party for everybody, and Henry McBride went to town. All the critics just went to town, and it was just a ball! It was really a terrific success with a great many thing sold, but the biggest press on American art that had ever occurred. I don't think there had been anything before or since that equals it -- whole pages of rotogravure and so on, and I'm talking about national press, not New York press or even Atlantic City press which had a story every fifteen minutes. It was a terrific success and it introduced American art to a tremendous number of people who had never, never dreamed of buying anything before.

I didn't stay on. I went to Europe. They extended the time. I was very proud of that, and everybody contributed with the extension. The hotels were filled. People came from all over the country to see the show. They had all sorts of conventions. This one brought about the biggest audience and the hotel people did fabulous things, throwing money into it. One of the hotels which was named after a book I liked when I was twelve years old --

well, the owner of that hotel bought a number of pictures for the hotel, probably the first commercial buying of art bought by any kind of a business corporation, so it really was very exciting and very gratifying. In those days they were happy with little itsy bitsy things.

DR. PHILLIPS: This was worked out in conjunction with galleries then in existence in New York.

MS. HALPERT: Yes, for instance, I didn't handle Nadelman. There were a great many artists I didn't handle. I went around. There weren't many galleries, believe me. I didn't have much leg work then. I had about eight galleries to see, and they were all most cooperative and absolutely astonished that things were sold. Then they -- even out of the way -- they suggested making replacements to sell more. It was a quite a sensational show. After all, that was the Depression.

This show started Louis Sterns buying paintings. He bought the first painting in his whole life. He had a great collection of prints, but this show started him off. He bought the first hand painted picture he ever bought, and this was true of a great many others who came there, people from Chicago, from California, from all over the country, buying their first pictures.

DR. PHILLIPS: Where did you run into Cahill? He had had training with Dana in Newark.

MS. HALPERT: I met him -- gosh, I don't remember. In Ogunquit, for about fifteen minutes.

DR. PHILLIPS: He later was dubbed the prime minister of the art project.

MS. HALPERT: Oh, yes with momma always right back of him. He ran it for a very short time. He was not an organizer, and I was known as an organizer because that was what I did at S.W. Strauss. He got absolutely panicky because he didn't know what to do. He was wonderful with people. He would go around the country and work with museum directors who selected -- he had nothing to do with the selection of the art. It was a state thing. I think forty-six states were involved. Idaho didn't have any artists. Anyway it was done pro rate, or in relation to the population as it was done in all other fields, the theater, and even in the non-cultural fields. Cahill would travel around, and he was wonderful with people because he assimilated anything he heard anywhere, and then used it immediately. He was intelligent, but very uncreative, so he got very panicky and called me up. I urged him to take the job -- you see. I got him jobs right along. In every project I was in, I'd get him in for a job.

I got Dorothy Miller in. That's how she got into the Modern Museum. I got her the job there. I got Eddie the job there. They got married there. In any event, he got very panicky about it. He didn't know what to do with the WPA pictures when they arrived. There were fifty-two hundred artists and what in the hell do you do with all the goods you get. Each state had to send its pictures, and he had no idea what to do.

Well, it was a question -- first of all working out a chart of some kind, where the pictures came from and so on, classifying them into A.B.C. I was going to work there for a week and I stayed there four months -- my whole summer vacation, so-called, and I worked on a per diem basis and paid more rent. I was desperate. It was the worst part of the Depression.

It was just shortly after I got that letter from Stuart Davis. I wouldn't have gone if it were not for that, telling me that I was a crook that I lied to everybody, that I really didn't like his work. I got a letter from Zorach too. I have all those letters. They're going to the Archives. The artists would give me the greatest thing they ever created in their whole lives for the letters, but I think they're too valuable to give away. Zorach called me and said that I was a Macy clerk at heart. I still remember it. It stayed here.

DR. PHILLIPS: A Macy clerk at heart?

MS. HALPERT: And just six months before he made that very funny statement with a big audience, "When I first saw you I thought of you only as sex appeal, but now you are my checks appeal." This from a dumb cluck like Zorach is a very smart crack. Of course, we all howled, and a few months later when he didn't get a check, he said that I was a Macy clerk at heart, so I was pretty much through with the art business.

That's why I went to Washington -- just to help out, to help Eddie out; otherwise, he would have lost his job. First of all, I got a man to run the thing -- someone on the project, someone in the architectural department, and he was a very good administrator, so I got him to act as assistant to Eddie in the administrative section because Eddie didn't know what to do with anything.

Then I set up the allocation -- you had to get rid of the damn things. I set up an allocation program for giving pictures, sculpture, drawings, prints away to high schools, to jails, to hospitals, to the senators for their offices who took them home later when they heard that they had become valuable.

[END OF 6 OF 7 REEL A1]

I organized this whole series of exhibitions including the first big exhibition on a big scale which is the one I organized at Phillips Gallery in Washington. That's where he wouldn't have the Jack Levine, and I told him that I would take all the pictures out if he didn't hang this painting.

DR. PHILLIPS: Who is "he"?

MS. HALPERT: Duncan Phillips, the famous Duncan Phillips. He had a museum -- whatever it was called, Watkins House [Studio House], an adjoining building which he gave me, but I insisted on having the exhibition in the museum, not in this workshop. I worked in the McLean building. The government had that. You know, I needed more space for the sorting and so on, so he lent me the Watson Building that he owned. It was a school in the winter, and he let me have it during the summer. The exhibition was held there, and it was a terrific show.

Then that same show went to the Modern Museum with this fabulous catalogue, and that established the fact that these artists were not boondogglers, despite Mr. Hearst and his crowd. The show was really quite sensational. As a matter of fact, I looked at his catalogue about four years ago and an awful lot of the top artists today, the older artists, were in that show.

I mean, the WPA really was responsible for modern art and interest in it. I say that all the time. Even in Topeka I said that one time. Landon was running against Roosevelt, so I should know that Landon comes from Topeka. I started with the WPA and what Roosevelt did, Harry Hopkins and so on, and I never heard such a thud of silence in my whole life until my host almost broke my ship, saying, "Landon comes from Topeka. This is a sunflower town."

It was the first time in history, and in my opinion, it goes beyond anything also because the things weren't censored. There was no censorship in the WPA. An artist had complete and utter freedom. He could do anything he wanted to. He didn't work for pay. This is the difference between then and today. He didn't work to get into an exhibition. There were no exhibitions planned, no such idea existed originally, and there was no allocation.

I've got to see that! [Some woman is screaming in the street.]

She is alone.

DR. PHILLIPS: What's going on?! We've had everything here.

MS. HALPERT: I've had an explosion here too -- you know.

DR. PHILLIPS: The last thing I remember your having involved gas.

MS. HALPERT: The diocese.

DR. PHILLIPS: Oh, yes.

MS. HALPERT: That was the most underplayed. Boy! Are the Catholics strong in this country!

DR. PHILLIPS: Not a word.

MS. HALPERT: They just had a little story, but I heard it.

DR. PHILLIPS: The day you had trouble with your gas stove is the day I thought of.

MS. HALPERT: This was absolutely a fantastic thing. I never heard -- you know, I was awakened by the noise at one-thirty, and when you come out of a sound sleep, a noise is awfully exaggerated. I accept that fact, but it was the greatest noise in the world because I was sure it was The Bomb.

DR. PHILLIPS: Really?

MS. HALPERT: The house shook. This was completely underplayed in the paper. The house shook. The noise was fantastic, and I was almost thrown out of bed -- you know. There's an area way in the back that goes right through, and I thought it was upstairs. I thought the house had caved in, and so I ran out barefooted in my night dress, went up to the roof, and I thought, "Good God, somebody else must have heard the noise, and they'll come out and see me running around the building in a night dress and without any slippers!"

Then I went down to the gallery, and two pictures had fallen off the wall, so that it wasn't my imagination. Following that terrific noise there was a sound of shattered glass -- you know, it kept going and when the noise

of things dropping, stone, or whatever, and in about fifteen minutes the fire engines -- 51st Street has a fire department, and the fire engines with the charming siren they have started coming. Fire engines came from all directions. They went against lights. They came from the Westside on 51st Street which I had never seen before -- you know, they don't go on one way streets in reverse. Then until four thirty police cars -- but in the morning I read in the paper that it was just a little bitsy home firecracker. Believe me, it was nothing like that. It was a real explosion, and it went on for three hours -- incredible noise of the sirens, but it went on for three solid hours.

Going back to the WPA.

DR. PHILLIPS: Who was the fellow who was the salesman for the road shows?

MS. HALPERT: Danny Diefenbacker. He was a terrific guy. I think I told you that he sold Winston Salem. They had no place, no museum, no place to show anything; as a matter of fact, there were few museums that had room. He got the big Republican in Winston Salem who owned the bank to give him the floor above the bank and ran an exhibition. He was the greatest salesman of all time. Years later he became the director of the Walker Art Center. He married the boss's daughter.

Then he went down to Fort Worth as director of that museum, but he was basically a salesman. He knew nothing about art. He never did. There are people who have a great talent in one direction, and he was one of them like Holger Cahill. A number of people were really not equipped to paint. They were not good enough, and museum people did a fabulous job here because they selected them as teachers. Then Ruth Reeves thought up, though Cahill took the credit for that, but she was responsible for the craft project which was a brilliant project. The National Gallery has all those original drawings, copies of early American crafts and so on.

DR. PHILLIPS: Is this the *Dictionary of Design*?

MS. HALPERT: Not the *Dictionary of Design*, but something design, and the National Gallery has the original drawings and paintings, and it was very well done. This guy was a photographer, and they were doing photography. They didn't have everybody on the painting and sculpture project -- there were all these offshoots, and there were a number of schools set up, or artists in schools to teach children. The children's work down among the Kentucky mountaineers was just incredible! What the government got out of it was sensational, though the press was violently opposed to it, and things were just thrown away. There were all these murals and an awful lot of material is still in the high schools, an awful lot of good art. A great deal of it was allocated to museums. I know because I have the records. Somewhere in my archive I found the records. I have my charts -- the whole working plan that I made, and the thing really functioned very well. Got twenty bucks a week plus material.

Russia is doing that now on a very high scale. They get twelve thousand dollars a year, but the result of this was that artists for the first time did exactly what they wanted to do because no matter what they would do, it was accepted. Nobody questioned it. I graded it A, B, and C, and D. Somebody else would have graded them differently. I don't mean that I did a brilliant job in that, but I tried to find the creative artist in the group. It was fascinating to me because it showed.

Not the direction that we have today where if somebody paints a target and flag and it sells, forty other artists are doing it, or Chamberlain takes an old car and smashes it and puts a little paint on it, and I go to Baltimore and jury and there are four of them right in front. It wasn't that kind of thing at all. Nobody knew what the other guy was doing. Nobody saw anything for a long time before the shows began to go out. They'd go to small locales. They didn't go to the major cities.

Of course -- what's that school called? What kind of realism? Social realism, that school became very prevalent all over the country independently. The artist expressed their respect to the world of that moment, and it was interesting to see this complete counter play of social realism, a figurative painting, destruction, war, poverty and all that, and then you had that clean, meticulous, sort of magic realism coming through. That's why I discovered Harnett because he was the answer to this. When I saw the first Harnett, I thought, "This is the current trend."

Nobody had ever seen a picture of his. I thought that was so fascinating, to get the contrast of moments, one completely alien to the other from the same locales. From Chicago you'd get both. From Milwaukee you'd get both. From the West Coast and from the South you'd get both. It was very fascinating. I'm not a philosopher like you, and I can't explain why, but it was -- you know, a direct reaction, or a counter-reaction, two completely different things.

Also that was the beginning of the American scene -- you know, visually factual material, the birth of that. It was so fascinating. Those four months were among the most exciting months I had ever spent in my life. They wanted me to stay on. As a matter of fact, I got an offer -- I used to go around with charts and plans constantly,

and I used to be the battle axe for all the groups -- you know, the theater, Hallie Flanagan. I forget her first name. Look what happened to theater, and in literature, those guide books.

DR. PHILLIPS: They're terrific, even today.

MS. HALPERT: Of course, all that material, dancers and everything came out of the WPA. If anybody made a complete survey, I don't know about carpenters and brick layers, but in the cultural field, so-called in every section something really great came through. It was the birth of more movements, and more freedom, and it's carried on -- enough of it, but it can never been the same without that kind of backing right from the top.

There was no politics in it, except in the newspapers, but Harry Hopkins really ran this thing superbly. I still remember at a conference when two newspapermen came over to him -- you know, with their chins out and said, "How come you're funding these bums! The gin drinkers! The guys who live in sin! Who believe in free love!" Hopkins didn't puke, or anything. He just looked at them very, very calmly and he said, "We're also working with carpenters. We're also working with men who are on the road building new roads, trucks and what not. All we're interested in is does the guy have a stomach."

That shut them up completely. "We're not interested in what they're doing. They're doing something useful in one way or another. We don't want anyone in America to starve, and if they have a stomach, they're going to get their twenty-three dollars a week.

That was all, and that shut those so-and-sos up immediately.

DR. PHILLIPS: It was the *Mirror* that was running Sunday feature articles in their magazine section, I believe it was, and oh boy!

MS. HALPERT: I remember the series. I had to pick most of the artists that I picked later. Zerbe had a still life with five fish, and Hearst said, "If one fish stinks, two is double and three" and on and on. They did it in color, and I cut them all out because they were good records, and of course Jack Levine came into the picture. When I was through I picked twelve artists for the gallery.

DR. PHILLIPS: This was the young generation.

MS. HALPERT: Yes, the younger generation, and this was very important for the older artists because I didn't realize how important it was for them to have these kids breathing right on their necks.

DR. PHILLIPS: This is a period in which organization appears among the artists.

MS. HALPERT: The Jumble Shop really cleaned up on the WPA, and Marie who had fed these people all these years lost them because they could pay for a meal. I remember her saying -- she was never bitter, but I remember her looking at me and saying, "Edith, don't you ever feel that we're working with the wrong people?"

I said, "Why Marie, how can you!"

I got very excited, and she said, "You know, you've scolded me, and you were wonderful in getting Mrs. Rockefeller to give these Christmas parties and New Years parties. You'd get money for me in various ways so I know that you were sympathetic. Don't you think that it's dreadful that they're all buying meals in the Jumble Shop!?"

I've learned that since.

DR. PHILLIPS: There was Tranchino's also.

MS. HALPERT: They went there before that because wine was very cheap. I went there twice, and I got sick both times. The food was pretty dreadful. Stuart used to go there with Glenn Coleman.

DR. PHILLIPS: He told me about the shot gun for the mouse or rat that strayed into the dining room.

MS. HALPERT: As a matter of fact, Glenn Coleman painted a picture at Tranchino's.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's the pool game.

MS. HALPERT: Did I tell you that I sold that picture to the Metropolitan a week before Glenn Coleman died, and it's the only time in my life that I told an artist of a sale before it was really consummated because in those days you weren't really sure that the picture wasn't coming back. I don't know why I did it. I didn't know that he was going to die, and this was the most wonderful moment of his life to make the Metropolitan Museum.

DR. PHILLIPS: I think that you indicated that he used to pop into the gallery late in the afternoon and say, "Come have a drink with me."

MS. HALPERT: We'd never talk, never said a word. He'd just hang around until six o'clock, and he's say, "Come on. It's time for a drink."

That was the extent of his conversation, but when I said to him, "Glenn, your painting *Tranchino's* has just been bought by the Metropolitan Museum," he just gasped. He didn't say very much. He just looked up. I said, "Honest to God."

He said, "You mean it?"

I went back, and I pulled out the invoice and said, "Here it is. They bought it. It was all of eight hundred dollars."

DR. PHILLIPS: Davis told me this story which is a riot because it illustrates Coleman in a way. Davis had seen someone who was a musician -- also in art, and in some kidding way he said to Coleman, "I just saw a thirteen year old boy who is already painting art." Coleman said, "Jesus Christ, why don't they leave us alone!"

MS. HALPERT: At Coleman's funeral, I still remember watching Stuart. There were a great many of us out there that day. In all the years that I've known Stuart I have never seen a change of expression on his face. He always looked sort of -- well, his face was going through all sorts of contortions of anguish when he looked into the coffin. He was just ready to cry when he sort of shook his head and walked away. He really loved that guy, and he was so happy when I took him on. He didn't suggest him. I saw his work, and I took him on. He came in and said, "You got a great guy, this time."

DR. PHILLIPS: Feelings aside, he still regards Coleman as a man who could paint immediately what it was he wanted to paint. The kind of picture he was painting didn't sell well.

MS. HALPERT: He sold after a while. A number of museums bought them, and a good many people. He was becoming quite comfortable. The washes sold right away, and the prints were a howling success. We sold his prints. After all, the Metropolitan didn't buy it for charity -- somebody there, Harry Whaley, though they weren't buying much American art.

DR. PHILLIPS: I like the two of them because they belong to the pro-saloon league instead of the anti-saloon league.

MS. HALPERT: Glenn Coleman was a motorcycle cop.

DR. PHILLIPS: Davis said that his father ran some print shop in Siegel and Cooper's Department Store when they first met in 1910.

MS. HALPERT: "Meet me at the fountain!"

DR. PHILLIPS: That's it -- "Meet me at the fountain" -- Boy! Does that date you!

MS. HALPERT: That doesn't date me. My age has been in every paper in the United States.

DR. PHILLIPS: But Davis didn't mention that Coleman was a cop.

MS. HALPERT: He was a terrific cop. I'm sure he was.

DR. PHILLIPS: Then he knew his streets well.

MS. HALPERT: He did all the streets. That's how he got the street scenes. But that time in Atlantic City in that bathing suit, that I will never forget -- when I got this anonymous call; meet me not at the fountain, but you must come to such and such a corner on the Boardwalk. There he was coming down in those rolling chairs that they have and he got up, turned around like a model -- he was just bones. I had said one time that I'd love to see Glenn Coleman in a bathing suit. He was just bones. He was very tall and stringy. He was all angles, and when he crossed his knees there would be a point, and his elbows would make a sharp point. Well, there he was. He must have heard me say it, or somebody quoted me, and he had a wonderful sense of humor. You must come to such and such a corner at such and such a time and there he was in this chair, and he got up in a bathing suit.

Can you imagine the artists there for three days, Atlantic City, rolling around in beach chairs, eating the best of food and staying in the most expensive hotels free of charge. All the hotels put them up for nothing.

DR. PHILLIPS: This was the great age for the artist. Even as individuals they developed a collective spirit.

MS. HALPERT: Of course, Artists for Action.

DR. PHILLIPS: That was a local outfit to put pressure on Mayor La Guardia for a local municipal gallery to be run by artists.

MS. HALPERT: God forbid.

DR. PHILLIPS: That was the gambit -- you know, marching in parades.

MS. HALPERT: Stuart Davis was very active. Certainly he's not a club man of any kind, not a meter, but he was very active in that. Of course, they were all in the same boat. Now, one guy is very successful, but there, they were all twenty-one dollar guys. They had a common cause. They attacked Mrs. Force -- you know. Even the abstract artists marched on the Modern Museum because they wouldn't show abstract art, though that was later.

DR. PHILLIPS: There was great disturbance in front of the Whitney. The funds were limited.

MS. HALPERT: But the artists did it collectively, which they don't do in good periods because then you immediately have a caste system.

DR. PHILLIPS: Them what have and them what don't?

MS. HALPERT: That's right.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's interesting.

MS. HALPERT: Just the human thing. There was no discrimination of any kind at the time. There were Negro artists included in various projects if there were any artists. Negro children certainly were in it -- in the schools for the first time they had art classes throughout the country where artists who weren't producing the kinds of things that were presumably useful were involved. The museum directors in each area would eliminate some people because they were really very bad, but they would get them other commitments.

DR. PHILLIPS: It was a good period.

MS. HALPERT: It was very good. Everybody worked. A guy like Pete Pollack -- you know him. Good God! He opened the Southside Gallery. He was in the grocer business, or something. Everybody got in on the act. I don't mean everybody, but a great many people did. There was a kind of unity. People in the arts helped the theater -- like Provincetown in the old days with O'Neill when a number of the artists were active. They did the stage sets, and they all worked together. There was a common cause only because they were in the same boat.

DR. PHILLIPS: What's of interest is that they formed what was called the coordinating committee between the musicians, actors, writers and the artists when the army colonel replaced Mr. Cahill, Sommervell. They developed this coordinating committee for further united action to resist the liquidation of the WPA.

MS. HALPERT: I have that literature too.

DR. PHILLIPS: What do you mean -- you have that literature too?

MS. HALPERT: I have all sorts of pamphlets and literature from that period. It's all going to the Archives. I've started to work on it again. I've got to get in touch with the Archives to see whether I can't get someone to do it. I get so interested in one little bit that I spend three hours looking through one little folder. A lot of it -- I'm sure -- never happened, except that I have it, like this folder I found about my being invited to Russia in 1934. I still don't believe it, and I called the Rockefeller Foundation to check on it. I have absolutely no proof except the letters from Russia, cables, and my tickets to go by the Hudson Forwarding Company, and I was all set to make the shipment. I have all that in a folder. I came across the folder, and I looked at it three or four times, and I have no recollection about that. The same thing with the magazine I published called *Space.*

DR. PHILLIPS: Three issues.

MS. HALPERT: Yes. There were three issues. All this happened during a period when you needed action. You were stimulated by need, and it's too bad that the stimulation comes from that source most of the time -- I mean need really stimulates action, good or bad -- you know, you either kill people, or you do something creative.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's about it.

MS. HALPERT: Don't you think so?

DR. PHILLIPS: It appears to be an either or proposition.

MS. HALPERT: Stuart said after he wrote that letter -- he was not really apologizing; he was explaining it -- "You were my meal ticket, and you know, when you're hungry, you beat your wife or your dealer."

I'm dying of thirst. Would you like some more?

32 East 51st Street, New York City

MS. HALPERT: It was the early period of my house in Newtown. I bought the house in Newtown, and Chick Austin, the Director of the Atheneum, was really one of the few who was buying in both directions. He was buying -- well, seventeenth and eighteenth century artists -- very good ones, and he made a very good collection. He was also buying contemporary art, and he came to the gallery several times and he bought several things. We were sort of nicely friendly without knowing each other well. Would you like a little one?

DR. PHILLIPS: I sure would.

MS. HALPERT: One day after I bought the house, all the antique dealers that I worked with -- my folk art dealers -- came to see me in Newtown, and one of them said, "Oh, I want to give you a house gift."

She was a glass woman, and she said, "What pattern do you like in glass?"

You know, you have the daisy pattern, the bull's eye, and so on. I don't know much about it. I didn't want any glass. My mother told me that Solomon said, "Don't collect glass! It breaks."

The ten cents store had very nice glass I could use. I didn't want any glass. She was persistent, and she said, "Don't you like any kind of flower pattern?"

I said, "Oh, yes. I adore pansies."

So I got about forty, or fifty plates, glasses, door stops -- what do you call those heavy things? I can't remember the name, but porcelain and glass, all sorts of things in the pansy pattern. I was a little overwhelmed -- you know, a gag is a gag. I didn't expect to be taken seriously. Evidently that's the least expensive pattern because it goes into the Victorian period, not early. I had a maid at the time who was really a riot, and she said, "Don't you think we should get these boxes out?"

I had all those plates and stuff in boxes. She said, "Let's take out these pansies," and she'd laugh -- you know. We laid them all out on the floor in the Victorian room. That's a room that isn't very necessary. I have two living rooms, and I thought that was enough, so this is sort of a fun room where I have all my crazy objects. We had this stuff laying out on the floor, and I was to sort the things I couldn't keep in that house -- -you know, cake plates, some of the most ghastly things, so we had them all laid out -- about sixty objects of all types, no pictures, all porcelain and glass, things I really had no use for, paper weights, two beautiful paper weights. These were the only things I needed.

I had them all laid out on the floor when I suddenly get a telephone call. It was from Chick Austin and Thomson who did the *Four Saints in Three Acts* [1934]. They were very close friends, and they were both of the same ilk -- one was a double decker, and Thompson -- well, I don't know enough about him, but it was obvious. Austin called, "Mrs. Halpert?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "We're in Newtown, and I thought I'd look you up. You live here."

I said, "Yes."

He said, "We'd love to come over and say hello."

I said, "Come on over and have lunch. That's wonderful."

It was about twelve o'clock, and the maid -- she was the most marvelous cook. She made the most marvelous cheese soufflé, and so on. These were very elegant people, and we were going to do it up in style. It was a warm day. I got her rushing around and getting things ready. I said, "Let's eat out of doors."

She was getting things ready. They came by in about twenty minutes, or so. It's a pre-revolutionary house, and usually people want to look it over. I asked them whether they wanted to wash upstairs, and they go upstairs.

Suddenly Cora gets hold of me and says, "Mrs. Halpert, that room! You can't let them in."

I said, "I know. It's messy."

She said, "It's more than that."

I said, "Well, shut the door quickly."

Austin said that he would like to see the house. There's a central chimney. The architectural details are very fascinating. Usually there are three fire places flanking the chimney. I showed them two, and he was perfectly satisfied. Then we went upstairs, and I had the exposed chimney up there. I showed them the bundling windows and all that. As he was coming down, he said, "What's in there?"

I said, "That's just a closet."

From the other side, he said, "What's in there?"

I said, "That's a closet."

He was perfectly satisfied. I said, "Let's go out and have a drink."

Then Thomson decided that he wanted to go upstairs, and so I told Cora that I would stand in front of one door and she'd stand in front of the other. He came down and said, "What a fascinating place! I looked over the upper story. I went up to the attic. I hope you don't mind. This is a wonderful old house."

I said, "Yes, it's pre-revolutionary. Would you like to see the cellar? It's built on just four beams, the entire house on four beams."

He said, "Wait a minute. I want to see this floor. What's in there behind you?"

"That's a closet."

He went around the other side, and he opened the door, and there was nothing that I could do. There it was. I know my face turned crimson. He said, "What are all these things?"

He was walking out when he suddenly looked again, and he said, "Do I see a single pattern running through?"

Then he called Chick Austin. Well, they looked at each other, looked at the things, and I said, "Yes. It makes the most wonderful table setting. They've got a lot of cake plates, platter and salt shakers. Thomson picked up a paper weight, and he said, "This is really handsome."

I said, "Isn't it beautiful! You may have it."

He took it, and Chick just stormed out of the room. They stayed a very short time after lunch, and I never sold Chick another thing. That was the end of my Wadsworth Atheneum career. Well, fortunately Thompson didn't remember. He's getting on. He remembers that we had met, and I never said a word about Newtown but just, "We met many years ago. We met at Nat Saltenstall's a long time ago."

He said, "Of course, at the Wadsworth Atheneum when you had the *Four Saints and Three* . . ."

He said, "That's right."

I hope he doesn't remember because he wrote me a very sweet forward.

DR. PHILLIPS: Indeed, he did. Did you have anything to -- well, one story [Stuart] Davis told me about the Radio City show, I believe, was that he was handing out leaflets.

MS. HALPERT: Oh, about the [Diego] Rivera thing? They had removed the Rivera mural?

DR. PHILLIPS: Davis said that Jonas Lee came along and singled him out as a troublemaker, for starters, and said, "Arrest that man!" Jonas Lee with his cape and silk hat.

MS. HALPERT: That I didn't know.

DR. PHILLIPS: Davis told me that he had in his pocket an invitation from the mayor.

MS. HALPERT: All the artists were invited.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's right. He walked around -- he attended the show, but he attended it in the company of a policeman who wouldn't let him out of his sight -- you know, "One false move and you're under arrest."

MS. HALPERT: That was the Rivera thing, and I would have been in the line too, if I hadn't gone to the Robinson and Todd offices. I had a contract with Robinson and Todd. They ran the building. They were in charge of the building, and I had a written contract with them. I organized the Radio City show, the New York municipal show, and I had a written contract that no art activities would take place during this period. They were still building.

I think two nights before the opening, the Rivera mural had been destroyed. I went up there, and flaming, believe me, and Todd Robinson and Todd -- there were two Todds, an old man with the junior. It was Robinson who took my arm and told me to sit down. I yelled, "You broke the contract. I'm going to sue you for five million dollars! How could you destroy a work of art!"

To me it was the most horrible thing I had ever heard -- to destroy a work of art. They had a water cooler. He said, "Take a glass of ice water, and here's a clean handkerchief. Mop yourself a bit" because I was dripping. I was so mad I was dripping perspiration, and he said, "Go into that room and read the correspondence."

Is that something flying around here? Then it's my eye again. I'll have to go to the doctor because I'm seeing little black things flying.

DR. PHILLIPS: Really?

MS. HALPERT: I haven't had a chance to go. I just let things go. That's one of those things.

Well, they showed me the correspondence, and I have some of it in the Archives because I had to convince myself. I thought that was pretty dreadful. I watched the painting being done. I was there every night, and I always walked through to see what was cooking. I watched Rivera on the ladder. Ben Shahn helped him, and the destruction was not anti-communist! Mrs. Rockefeller bought the *Red Square* series [1927] of Rivera, and I hung them in her gallery in her house, also this was not anti-communist. That I was convinced of. It had nothing to do with Lenin's portrait because she had a drawing of it hanging in her house.

They told me what it was, and I didn't believe Robinson. Then I saw the correspondence. I'm giving those to the Archives because I think it's important to know what happened. I have never mentioned it. I was just convinced that our show was important enough to go on without a guy who was immoral. After all, he did take gold from the Rockefellers. He painted that mural in the Worker's School with Rockefeller eating gold.

DR. PHILLIPS: Is that the Rand School?

MS. HALPERT: Yes. I saw that mural with Ford and so on, and then Rivera took money from the Fords to do the big mural at the museum! He took forty-two thousand dollars from the Rockefellers, and he told them to go ahead and destroy the mural. I mean -- I saw the letter, also saw letters from John Sloan, the big socialist, who told them to destroy it. A number of the artists wrote to Todd Robinson and Todd and told them to destroy the mural. The immorality that went on in there was pretty sticky.

The thing that really started them off was that it was during the terrible rental period -- you know, all the office buildings were empty. It was all filled during the crash period, and the whole thing, and when people asked Rivera -- well, there are photographs of the mural all over. He had all sorts of forms, like fountains spouting from the center. Then he had the rich people on one side and the poor people on the other, and the little blobs here and there were -- what do you call germs under a microscope? Well, whatever it is on one side were all the health giving ones, and on the other side were venereal disease germs. They were very actual, realistic portrayals of those germs, and nobody in the world would have known, not even a scientist or a biochemist. Nobody would have thought of that, but Rivera told that to everybody from the ladder while he was painting. They asked him what it was, and he said, "Venereal disease on this side" with people playing bridge -- you know, all that business, and "health giving ones on the other side."

Well, nobody would rent. They couldn't get any tenants because of that. Now this never appeared in any paper, and I'm saying this because it was twenty years ago, and nobody will care, but that was the actual reason. I was convinced of it from reading this huge folder of correspondence. They had asked him to make some variations on the theme because enough would-be tenants heard this venereal disease business, and since capitalists were going to rent this space, they wanted some variation.

Rivera told everybody. Nobody would have known otherwise. Nobody cared about the Lenin head. Hearst could have, but the Lenin head had nothing to do with the destruction of the mural because it was a portrayal, and people took it as a realistic thing. Rivera didn't glorify Lenin. He just had his head. It was this venereal disease business rather than anti-communism. I sat there, and I thought about it. Then they showed me the final letters. Rivera wanted his forty-two thousand dollars, and then it would please him greatly if they destroyed this

because he'd be ahead of the game.

DR. PHILLIPS: That created a furor at the time.

MS. HALPERT: You don't think I would have been a scab!

DR. PHILLIPS: No, no, but this aside, the Artist's Union got hold of it.

MS. HALPERT: But no one knew the facts. I kept my trap shut. I just said that I thought about what this show would do for a great many artists. Rivera really wasn't worthy of having all the artists sacrifice themselves for him. He was very dishonorable. Then I played him a dirty trick. I was very angry when I saw that correspondence! It was really -- of course, it was the Spanish translation. I had the carbons, and I took it for granted that they wouldn't have done that for my benefit because they answered. They had their answers and so on, this huge file of correspondence.
There was a party being held at Mrs. Rockefeller's -- Mrs. John D. They didn't even know what happened. They didn't' know that this mural was destroyed because I called up the next morning, and Nelson didn't know. He said, "I don't know what you're talking about."

It was destroyed during the night, and at five in the morning I heard it. I think I was still working there. I heard something to the effect that it was being destroyed, and I called. I knew -- I'd give anybody my word of honor that Nelson did not know that it had been destroyed. It was not ordered by the Rockefellers. It was ordered by Todd Robinson and Todd. They ordered the destruction of the mural. They ran the thing, and Mrs. Rockefeller was absolutely appalled. She felt sick about it because it could have been taken by somebody -- the Fogg Museum would have taken it off the walls, and they were very shocked but there it was.

DR. PHILLIPS: They have an obligation to clarify this.

MS. HALPERT: Nobody can approach them because nobody knows, and I'll never tell God about it, but I would like to go there someday and talk to Nelson about it. I don't know whether he knows that I know, but I know that Todd Robinson and Todd offered me a job at twenty-five thousand dollars a year.

DR. PHILLIPS: Gee, you're the most sought after organizer I know.

MS. HALPERT: Well, they thought -- public-relations wise. It was a public relations job that had nothing to do with art. I could still stick to my art.

DR. PHILLIPS: You were just about to tell me that you had reversed the tables on Rivera.

MS. HALPERT: Oh, yes. Now when did this happen? It seems very strange. I think it must have been after this that the party was held. I was mad at Rivera at the time, I know. Why would I be mad at him if not for this because I admired him tremendously as an artist, but tremendously, so I couldn't have been mad at him for that -- it must have been, but on the other hand, how could I be? Well, there was a party. Mrs. Rockefeller was having a party, and Frida [Kahlo] was there, Rivera's wife, and Mrs. Rockefeller invited Rivera and his wife, and she said, "Mrs. Halpert, what am I going to do? It's a black tie party."

I said, "It's all right with me. I've got my Delaunay dress!"

I used to kid her about that, but by that time, it was worn out. I said, "I have a Delaunay dress."

She said, "Come, come, come. I'm inviting the Riveras. I can't ask them to come in dinner clothes."

I said, "Yes you can. He's doing very well, and he can afford to rent a suit and any woman, any Mexican woman -- she can drape a shawl and make a dinner dress out of it."

I was very persistent, so this was a party -- none of their parties were written up, except that "Pop" Hart party that I arranged. She did that to help sell the book. For some reason this came out, that he was in dinner clothes. He was expelled from the John Reed Club. That gave me a big kick! I wouldn't have done that if I weren't mad at him somewhere along the line.

DR. PHILLIPS: The John Reed Club was the predecessor of the Artist's Union, wasn't it?

MS. HALPERT: It has no relation to it. No. The John Reed Club was a leftist organization of some kind. That was before my time. When did it start?

DR. PHILLIPS: The late twenties?

MS. HALPERT: It started long before that. I didn't go to that. It must have started earlier because if I never

went.

DR. PHILLIPS: I was under the impression that the John Reed Club in the thirties no longer served the same kind of purpose that it had in the twenties and that it grew into the Artist's Union.

MS. HALPERT: No. I think it's completely unrelated. A number of artists were members, but there were writers who were members. It was really a sort of lecture hall. I think they had an art class there too. They even taught English to foreigners.

DR. PHILLIPS: It wasn't merely a local outfit was it?

MS. HALPERT: I really don't know very much about it, but Rivera got expelled.

DR. PHILLIPS: For wearing a dinner coat -- marvelous!

MS. HALPERT: And eating at the Rockefeller table.

DR. PHILLIPS: He is a great artist.

MS. HALPERT: Of course, except for the murals. A friend of mine is following his pattern. He painted those murals in Ciro's in Mexico City. The minute I got there I dashed down to Cuernavaca where he did this absolutely fabulous mural. Then I went back to Mexico City, and I ran into some very rich people I knew in New York. They insisted I meet them at Ciro's. That's the only way I'd get into it. I thought, "Well, gee, that's pretty snazzy."

That was in the forties. I went in there and I wouldn't eat. He painted this mural -- commercially, beautiful girls and so on, and it was simply the worst stinkaroo I ever saw. Then I saw others of his around. This was out -- it wasn't out of hunger. You can forgive anyone doing things out of hunger, and I keep thinking of that relationship with a friend of mine.

DR. PHILLIPS: I can see the parallel.

MS. HALPERT: He came out of him in a way. He worked with him on the mural, and while he did the Sacco-Vanzetti [*Sacco-Vanzetti series*, 1931-32, Ben Shahn] things before -- I don't say that he was influenced by Rivera but it was that whole atmosphere of WPA and so on.

I lost all interest in Rivera when I saw the sort of things he was doing and the painting he was doing in the forties. They were very, very bad, vulgar illustrations, and there was no need for it. It's something that has puzzled me with this show. I've been thinking about it, but I pretend it doesn't hurt.

DR. PHILLIPS: I know it does.

MS. HALPERT: Whether -- you know, I remember Kuniyoshi whom I admired but tremendously. He was the President of Artists Equity, and I think that did more to cause his death than anything else -- overwork and so on. He was devoted to young artists. He really fought for artists, and he meant it. Artists fought for him. I must say that people like Alex Brook and Louis Bouché had built him up in the early days. They were in and they always talked of Yas, and Lloyd Goodrich -- -you know, a number of people that went to school with him.

This was way, way back -- long before I had the gallery. This was when Kuniyoshi was at Daniel, but he paid it back, believe me. That Artists Equity -- how he worked at it, and what he did at Woodstock -- you know, the artists fund at Woodstock. He worked for artists all the time. Every once in a while, say, during the summer -- we have this annual show annually -- he would come to town, oh possibly two or three weeks before I needed the pictures, and he'd be practically in tears and say, "Come to Woodstock. Look. I dry up."

He'd been working on a picture all summer, and the thing didn't suit him, and there were no histrionics attached. He meant it. He almost cried because he couldn't let me down, and then he would come through with the most fabulous caseins. He didn't have a great big oil, but he had four of the most fabulous caseins -- you know, fair size, that more than made up for one oil. Five years later the same thing happens, and he comes through with black and white, paintings in black and white, fabulous, so I would thank him.

We were very formal with each other. He was very Oriental, and I never knew whether he wanted to kill me or whether he liked me. There was never indication of this until we had that show during the war. We had a Kuniyoshi show for China Aid which I thought was fine until the police came in, and for that he was very grateful. He did break down then, the only time I felt that he liked me. Not the first time when he did the caseins and I was so grateful to him. I said, "Thank you. These are wonderful," and they were. They were marvelous! Then he did these black and white paintings. He said, "You know, Edith, some time I dry up -- no ideas" -- I won't try to do an imitation -- "nothing happens. Nothing inside. Nothing here and nothing here" --

pointing to his innards and his head and putting out his hands -- "Nothing!"

I said, "You're out of your mind. Look at these wonderful things that you do!"

He said, "Then I try new challenge. I change medium. I fight with material, and then come ideas."

Well, every artist dries up -- there's no question about it. You can't whether one is a writer -- well, we all know that in creative work. I suppose it's so in science too, though I don't know. And you go either go back to something you've done and repeat it without bringing it up to date. Every artist repeats, but he updates it. He unconsciously repeats with an update which makes it very different -- that's the show, the *Recurrent Image.* That's it, and at the end of his life, he recapitulates. That pattern I've seen with creative people, but there is this drying up process, a time when any of us -- well, when a woman doesn't know what the wear to a party. She just has no idea at that time. In every phase of our lives we have this. With an artist, a creative person it's a difficult situation.

Kuniyoshi knew that he had reached that point, so he found a new challenge, a new material, and involved himself, then the ideas came to fill his challenge. Or you go back and you take an old drawing and you make a repeat a little bit bigger. You change the gesture of the thumbs, or something, and looking at this annual show, I wondered.

That's what is happening with a few of my boys. I don't mean Stuart. The picture that Stuart brought in is not the up that he's had consistently. It's of this type, but it's a little involved. It looks good, and a lot of people are going to be crazy about it, but it's the first time I felt that something, but I'm sure it's just a momentary thing in his case, but I suppose the fountain gives out. The external things affect one, but not to that degree. It's an internal thing when it comes to creative things. Sheeler had it, and he came through.

DR. PHILLIPS: I was going to say that the idea that we've had as a nation -- you gave an either or context earlier between destruction and creativity. There must be a third point somewhere. We've over looked prosperity. Some people just can't stand it.

MS. HALPERT: That -- you know, I have fought all my life. While we've had a hell of a lot of publicity, I must say it's not because I pushed it because I don't believe in it. I think it's very bad particularly with your artists. I think I did make one mistake. I was saying to you one time that I was punishing the upper classes, and in Honolulu it was a very unfair thing of me to use Yu-ho for that. I was going to prove to them that an Oriental in Honolulu can make an occidental look sick, so I called up *Time* Magazine. I should have slit my throat.

Early success is the most -- well, in literature you see it much more obviously because they can only do one book in a long period as opposed to knocking out a painting. Think of all the authors who have had great success with the first book. Look what's happened to them; how many have survived that. I had a wonderful time up in Gaylordsville, or Sherman, Connecticut, at that Malcolm Cowley party because I knew them all way back and I said, "Good God! With the same wives! This is revolting!"

You know Matthew and Matty Josephson, and what's that old guy who says his poetry. I know him so well. He lives right near me. I had a block about his name. He's not of -- in Washington -- what do you call the compilation of many authors?

DR. PHILLIPS: An Anthology.

MS. HALPERT: Yes, he's an anthologist -- what's his name? Now he's doing children's books -- he and his wife. He's about seventy, or eighty, and he was there. Then the other old boy, Van Wyck Brooks -- of course, he's had three wives, but the whole crowd. It was fun seeing them all and one of them -- I mixed up the *Exile's Return* [1934]. I was telling the wrong guy how good it was -- that now everybody is doing it. I credited the wrong author, and he said, "You've got me mixed with another book guy."

But this thing -- I was thinking about how I can serve an artist by not doing things, or by doing things. Never! I learned that in my career when Sam said, "Stop correcting my drawing!"

You know, when I was changing my pose to correct his drawing. I've never, never said anything to an artist about his work. I learned fortunately very, very early.

DR. PHILLIPS: How does this fit some of the artists that came on the scene in the forties and didn't live through the thirties, or the late twenties, in the same way that some of your older fellows did?

MS. HALPERT: That's why I lecture at the university every once in a while and attract the young guys. They're not aware of the fact. Just recently I've been working on the Weber estate, and there are about twenty-five really, absolutely incredibly great pictures of the era that he never showed out of bitterness.

Then this book that I had Eddie Cahill write for us, a wonderful book -- you know, he wrote on "Pop" Hart and on Weber, and he went back to the early reviews on Weber and how these people -- Good God! Those reviews in 1912 are just fantastic! How anybody had the courage to go on. That whole era.

Well, it's time for me to retire. I've felt that for several years, because I just don't get any ideas. When I look back, and it's because of you that I look at some point of this stuff, or I talk about it. I was popping with ideas when I was young, and here I am absolutely sterile. Nothing happens up here. I can't change mediums. Well, I got very depressed, and I thought, "To hell with it. I'm moving to a hotel and I'll just be. . ."

Well, you know, if I just quit completely, I'll have to learn knitting, or something, so I want to stay in this field. If I retire, nobody will call on me for anything. This way I can give a lecture once in a while, or do something.

This summer I thought about it, and I decided that I was finished. That's all right. Thirty six years is long enough. I have nothing to complain about. I've been treated very well, and I've been patted on the back. I even got an award from *Art in America*, the only dealer who ever got it. I have no complaints, so I thought, "Why don't I retire gracefully while I'm still sitting on top?"

Nothing happens all summer. I couldn't get on damn idea! I'll sit down to a typewriter to write a publicity release about a show I'm having and nothing happens. So this summer I went to -- you know, after that incident, I was very badly injured more so than I realized, and I had these periods of amnesia. I thought, "If Kennedy's father can go there, why can't I?"

I called up Dr. Kobalt who knows me only because I paid the Sheeler bills. I wrote him a letter telling him that he was so wonderful at the Rehabilitation Center. I called him from Newtown. I said, "Look, I don't want to go into the hospital. I think I need a little therapy. My arm shakes, and you have all the equipment and I'd just like to come in as an outpatient."

He said, "You come in any time, and I'll be delighted."

He was so sweet. I came shooting in the next day, and the first person who examined me was Dr. Marks, a neurologist. He said, "What's the matter with you?"

I said, "I think at my age I should still have some mental activity. I've just dried up. Nothing's happening up here. I know I came here to discuss my muscular problem in my arm which everybody agrees has been affected by this accident, but do I have muscles in my head?"

He said, "Sit down," and I spent about an hour. I said, "Is my time up?"

He said, "No. That's all right. I'm having fun, are you?"

I said, "Yes."

We talked about it and I asked at what stage does this thing happen that I become completely sterile mentally, I have no idea."

He said, "Do you want to take some tests?"

I said, "Not those corny ones I took at New York Hospital."

He said, "I'll have to give you the corny ones to check up on you."

I brought that accident report with me. I got it from the doctor, and he looked at it. He read it, and he put me through this very corny thing, and I was kidding him about it. I said, "Don't you think it's time you got a new set of questions. This is idiotic."

He said, "All right. I'll give you some tough ones," and he put me through another test, and I said, "Well?"

I said, "I don't mind being crazy. That's creative. I don't want to be dried up."

He said, "You know, you've had an injury, and you have periods of amnesia. Since this report, a lot of it has disappeared, and the rest of it is nothing. Go home and do something, and then we'll talk about it again."

Well, I didn't have time to go back, but nothing happened. The other day, about two weeks ago, I read this article in the *Art News* -- three weeks ago. I couldn't sleep. *The Pop Art Artists.* First there was an article about Tobey that made me blow my top. I mean I don't handle Tobey, but there's a very consistent real artist, something absolutely his own, and he didn't come by it like Line who vulgarized, or to quote somebody who said, "He looked for the laundry mark."

But this guy Tobey really became an Orientalist -- to a degree even in his philosophy. He spends a great deal of time at it. What he's doing is really a very personal thing, and I think a very beautiful thing. I got very mad when I read that article. I got out of bed, and I was going to call somebody, but it was too early. It was four o'clock in the morning, so I read this pop art article -- of course, me and my statistics, but all the artists mentioned were from twenty-nine to thirty-three years old, this great new art that has been created.

I still remember that beautiful slogan I swiped from Pan-American Airlines -- "the precious extra of experience" and at twenty-nine you don't have that precious extra. I read this article and one artist worked for the Disney Studio, and two were billboard artists, and three of them were advertising men -- these were all commercial artists and doing the most vulgarized version of commercial art as pop art. Then I sat down to the typewriter, and I wrote, "Dear Dr. Marks: I've come to life."

I was going to write him a letter, but I threw it away. That's as far as I got. It was a terrific idea. I'm going to start with folk art trade signs, real commercial things. I've got some lu-lu's. I've got my folk art book written which I will someday edit and publish. I pulled out that article that I wrote years ago. It was never published. I wrote it for Mrs. Webb ending up with Stuart Davis -- you know, the illiterate period where symbolism was a necessity and so on.

I have the most wonderful trade signs, purely symbols, and some of them -- not the white horse inn! I'm not using that -- but some of them are completely literal, where people wouldn't understand even the symbols. A sheaf of wheat was a baker, and that goes all the way back to Pompeii -- you know. I've got all that. I even read a book once to get the beginnings. In England they published a book on the origins of trade signs, so with credit I took some of the material going back to Pompeii, Rome and all that, then using words, and then the symbols became sex symbols and so on.

I'm going to get some early ads that appeared in the subway -- the changing of symbols and the coming into a vulgar literal thing and then getting Stuart Davis picking, creating his own symbols of our period -- the vulgarity, the color, the noise, and so on, using letters instead of pictorial symbols and then end with pop art. Don't you think it would be fun?

DR. PHILLIPS: You're just going to cut the ground out from underneath that article which is a good thing, to give it background, depth and show continuity.

MS. HALPERT: I did that in the article ending up with Stuart Davis, but now I'm going beyond that. I'm getting as contemporary as you can. Don't you think that would be fun? The show itself would be fabulous -- I mean visually when those trade signs come in, and I've got some absolute lu-lu's -- spectacles with the eye painted in. I'll have to borrow a lot of it because I sold most of those. Did you ever see one of those with the eye painted in?

DR. PHILLIPS: No.

MS. HALPERT: You know, a blue eye with eye lashes around the frame of the spectacles. I've got some absolute lu-lu's. Well, I got so hysterical about that that I started to write Dr. Marks. I didn't send it to him. I haven't even called Dr. Marks, but this is the first idea that I've had in a long time.

The youngsters don't realize -- first of all, there are forty eight fellowships. The first one was the Pennsylvania, the Lambert Prize, some little thing that says that a guy gave him a hundred bucks. Then there was the Chicago Art Institute Prize, and the Carnegie prize. This was in an exhibition, but there were no scholarships, fellowships, or anything. We had the G.I. Bill where artists could go abroad. They had all that sort of stuff. These guys in the early days didn't have a damn thing. There was nothing. They didn't have the press. They didn't have the museums. They didn't have the collectors.

No French man bought a damn thing during that era. It took the Steins, Quinn, and a couple of Russians, the Hermitage and the Pushkin Museum, Swiss, and so on. There wasn't a Frenchman who supported French art, and these guys today, these youngsters, get up in the morning, they paint a picture, they hang it up in an exhibition, and the Ford Foundation gives them a prize -- they have all these things -- the Academy of Arts and Letters. They got all these things -- there were forty-eight, and now in addition there must be fifty more, and they do have the magazines, the major magazines with the larger circulation and so on.

They have their Ben Hiller, the B.H. Friedman's who stand there and catch the next picture that comes off the easel. They have Jim Sweeney who gives a lecture at the Albright Gallery and says, "No work of art is contemporary unless it's on the easel and you still smell the breath of the artist on it."

Noguchi was sitting next to me, and I said, "Indeed!"

DR. PHILLIPS: Where did he get off stuff like that?

MS. HALPERT: I heard it, and immediately afterward he announces a show, a one man Darin show. You see, all these inequities. It's really revolting, and I think these young guys are getting away with murder, and the success, the push that they have and so on is ruining a lot of them. When I had Blanchette Rockefeller here, I made her cry by pointing at her and by saying, "Blanchette, do you know you'll go down in history as the international commissar of art?"

She burst into tears. It's true -- the support these young kids get is the most unhealthy thing that ever happened. I'm not against you. I really like kids.

I'm watching your time.

DR. PHILLIPS: This disturbs me because they go off in a different direction, a different groove, and -- you know, *Sacco-Vanzetti* to burn.

MS. HALPERT: I've got to tell you about the Zorach. When I sent the bronze to the Corcoran Gallery, I was busy in the show room. A European man said, "There are two people who want to see you. Just a minute."

I came up. I never saw those two people before, and a man said, "Please, Mrs. Halpert, put back that beautiful bronze silhouette.

He's never been in my house.

DR. PHILLIPS: He saw it from the street?

MS. HALPERT: He lives right across the street on the third floor -- over there.

DR. PHILLIPS: He's watched that every day. I came by here this fall with my wife and I showed her how one gets a crooked neck.

MS. HALPERT: "Please put back that beautiful bronze backside. We don't like this one as well."

I got very hot up about what's happening to the young, not because of my age, that I want to protect the old, but these people don't realize the breaks they have no more than the people who refuse to take jobs as long as they can get fifty dollars a week on unemployment. These things didn't exist then, and while I don't object to prosperity, I object to exaggerated promotional use. It becomes a national asset. What other country has a plus forty club. There is no other country that has that where a guy has to die his hair. Then I read in a cosmetic magazine that men spend more money on hair than women.

DR. PHILLIPS: Jesus -- really?

MS. HALPERT: This is a cosmetic magazine I picked up somewhere -- oh, no. Julian Levy's wife worked for a magazine, and she left a copy to show me that she had changed the format. Here was this article, that men spend more on dyes than women. I couldn't believe it, and then I read this thing about the plus forty club. You know, at fifty they're fired because they're too old to get jobs on the executive level. The plus forty club is a club to get jobs, an employment agency to place these executives who are doing a wonderful job.

They've got gray hair, or something at the temples, and they're forty years old, and they get a kid from M.I.T., or the Harvard School of Business and throw the old guy out, and I resent that because I keep going back to that ad, that Pan-American ad that I love. I should get a huge check from them, because there are more people flying Pan-American because I use that in every talk I give now. "The precious extra of experience."

DR. PHILLIPS: The older artists that you've had are . . .

MS. HALPERT: But I don't want them to dry up and I have dried up.

DR. PHILLIPS: They seem perhaps too healthy, and therefore too unproductive.

MS. HALPERT: It has nothing to do with physical things. When I watch someone like John Marin at the age of eighty-three -- he chased me up the stairs here. He wanted to get that drink here, and he'd say, "Come on, gal, make it snappy! Get up there and get that glass out for me."

The way he worked. That picture that was here is almost the last picture that he painted, but did you ever see anything younger?

DR. PHILLIPS: No.

MS. HALPERT: Okay, and Zorach -- that piece of sculpture downstairs is about the best thing he's ever done. He

just did it, so it isn't that because good artists become better. It isn't the physical thing. They can still use their hands, but what they've got in here and in there is a plus.

DR. PHILLIPS: But how after the shift in anxiety -- the kind of anxiety you can have because you're on the brink financially?

MS. HALPERT: They have a shift of anxiety. I can understand for a little while when they were all completely down. A great many artists made the shift into abstract expressionism, many artists who did corny figures. Now they have to go back to the figures -- God help them! I went down to Alabama to judge a show and eighty percent of the pictures were figure painting. Jim Foster of Santa Barbara who was on the jury, and I got absolutely hysterical. He said, "All right. You always prophesize. Come on, what are we going to see?"

I said, "You're going to see one hell of a lot of figures."

He said, "Oh, no. This comes from southern states -- way down there. They don't even know what has happened up in New York."

I said, "Yeah?"

So when they started to pull out the pictures, he said, "Jesus, there you go!"

I said, "That's the pattern."

I've seen that always -- whatever becomes popular you find in the regional shows. There is no regional art any more. It's international. There's no idiom, no local idiom.

DR. PHILLIPS: Or as Davis explains it, "Whatever happens anywhere at the moment, is known and happens everywhere."

MS. HALPERT: Of course, sometimes you know, in this discussion about Dove and the Modern Museum -- - you know, the Modern Museum accused me of predating Dove's pictures.

DR. PHILLIPS: I didn't know this.

MS. HALPERT: Oh yes, and there is a lady at the Modern Museum who doesn't like me, and she's very well justified. She started this thing. You know, I had 1911 Doves. That's ridiculous because that antedates Kandinsky and the 1911 Doves were a little bit in that direction. You find that constantly. They couldn't possibly have seen each other's work.

There was no communication of any kind. They were little sports that nobody ever heard of, and even the few reproductions that did appear would not have been of some kids, so that happens just as it does in the Patent Office -- you get some patent the same afternoon from two different people who have no communication at all. There's something about the atmosphere that seems to hit several people the same day. This is wholesale now. This isn't a question of intent. It's a question of seeing and taking.

Hopping on the bandwagon. Somebody pulled a wonderful line the other day. "It goes into one eye and comes out of the other" which I think is great. I love that line. Now who told me that? He said, "Do you want to hear a great remark that I made?"

DR. PHILLIPS: Do you mean the show that you put on was subject to criticism?

MS. HALPERT: I'm talking about the Dove thing, that I faked the date -- you know, that it couldn't have happened in America. Dove lived in Canandaigua. That's where he did them, and fortunately I have clippings dated January, 1912 reproducing a couple of the pictures. Well, we couldn't have printed them in 1912 because the newspaper is dated January, 1912. He and his second one man show. The date is now accepted reluctantly.

I keep thinking about the future. I say, "If I'm going on with the gallery, I've got to get some more artists. I can't work with five passed living artists anymore."

How many one man shows can I have? Stuart Davis can't possibly have more than one show in five years. Earlier in the twenties he could have a show every year. Every youngster is much more productive. He doesn't have the self-editing device that an older person has. I mean he hasn't achieved, and he doesn't have to worry about his reputation, but this complete switch that occurred with all the promotions that started with the museums and the magazines, a great many artists just had to fall into this new trap -- I mean new direction.

When I go to Baltimore and see those Chamberlin cars that the kids in Baltimore did -- of course the kids in

Baltimore didn't have big cars to back up so they were little ones, but they were complete swipes, and you see that all the time whenever you go, whatever is fashionable. Now, if I go on a jury and I go there with the hope of finding artists -- that's how I found all my artists, going to regional shows. They didn't have enough communication to get ruined at that time, and there was a local idiom. There's no question about it.

There was, and that doesn't exist, so I think well, I have to get some more artists, some young artists and that's why I go to these regional shows. Believe me, I don't like to go to Alabama, or Baltimore, or any of the places I've gone to, but I still have that little hope, and I can't find anybody. Maybe I should stop looking. Maybe I wouldn't know a good artist if I saw one anymore. I don't know. I don't know whether it's my fault, or their fault. I said to Jim Foster. I said, "Look, before we start jurying, you're young. You're alert, and you have good vision. Pick me three artists out of this show whom you think have something very personal, and I'll go and see their works and see whether there's a continuity or see whether this is an accident."

I never picked an artist without seeing things he did, or way back to when he was fourteen years of age, or whatever, to see whether there's a continuity. I don't mean repetition by any means. He said, "Three? I'll pick you ten."

I said, "Okay. You pick ten and I'll take three, or I'll take five."

After three days of jurying he had to leave on an earlier plane. He had to leave that afternoon to get back to California. I was leaving the next morning, so once in a while he would make a note -- you know. He was very kind. He was really working at it and I was so pleased and flattered that he was interested. Then when we were about to give prizes, we all picked the pictures we thought were the least worst. I had picked out this one picture that I really thought was good. None of us cheat. We never look at the name on the back of the picture to see where it comes from. I thought to myself, "Whatever city in the United States it is, one of seven states, I'm going to fly there next week and look at this artist's work."

I kept looking at this picture so much and talking about it that the two jurors, of course, put the picture in right away. When I said, "This is a picture that I would certainly pick out for the first prize."

Each one picked out a picture, and I kept talking it up, and Jim came right in with me and said, "Okay."

We talked about electing only professional pictures, not an accidental one. You can tell when a mean knows his métier, and there were a lot of old artists there. Everybody sends to these regional shows, everybody who hasn't had success, the instructors included, and I said, "Well, I want to pick that one."

Each one picked what pictures he liked best, and we were putting them all in one room to decide. If we had three votes, it would be the first prize. Jim was with me on the first prize, and then somebody in the office came in and said that there were two pictures by this artist and two pictures by another artist that would have to be eliminated.

Only one picture was allowed, so the second picture by this artist came out, a small one. The first one was sort of a Bacon-esque figure, distorted and blown up, the most sensitive painting and very professional because there were areas where there was a sear from the arms, or around it, translucency and so on. It was done with real knowledge, and we were talking about it. By this time the third juror who was a very conservative artist, a painter, said, "I think that I'll go in with you on this one."

Then they brought the second picture out which was quite small. This other one was a great big picture, and he said, "God, I'd give this the first prize. It's so beautiful."

It was so small we didn't notice it. I said, "Well, now that we've decided I'm going to turn it over and see where it comes from."

On the back of the name of Kay somebody -- a girl, and it said, "Age -- twelve."

DR. PHILLIPS: Come on!

MS. HALPERT: Well, we all practically dropped dead because this was professional. Seeing the two of them together was fantastic with an understanding of all the values of paint design and so on, and I said, "We'll have to eliminate those. We'll just have to throw them both out just as we eliminated any picture that was over five feet. That was the limit. We discussed it. I said, "We can't give it a black eye. I don't mind getting a black eye. I've had that many times because I did select this one, and I've been fighting for it, but it's going to give the museum in Alabama -- the Atlanta Museum a black eye, and it's going to hit modern art right below the belt. It's like picking a painting by an ape, picking a twelve year old as the best picture in the show."

We talked about it, and I said, "We just can't do it."

We eliminated big pictures, and we have to eliminate this because it's not an adult. "But we'll write her a letter, explaining that this was an adult exhibition but that we all thought that she did very well -- something."

I'm going to follow up that kid. There have been composers who were composers at the age of six and became great composers. Here I discovered this great artist to bring to New York and Jim had her down on this list -- just the description because we at that time didn't know whose it was.

Afterwards we were at some dinner party, and we talked about it. We all got very heated about it; whether it was honorable to do this, or not, and I said, "No. She just wasn't eligible."

He said, "Well, are you going to pick her?"

I said, "I'm going down to whatever towns he's in in about a year and see what she's doing, and after all you don't have to put the age in. That has happened, certainly with composers."

DR. PHILLIPS: Mozart among others.

MS. HALPERT: There are at least three, so why shouldn't it happen to an artist, but that big picture was really one of the best things I've seen in quite a long time.

DR. PHILLIPS: You mentioned forty some paintings that Weber had.

MS. HALPERT: That he held back. They were pictures that he had shown in the very first exhibition he had, or in two or three of the first exhibitions he had in the frame shop and Stieglitz, and they were laughed at to such a degree that he took them all away, and they have never been shown since and boy! Of course, they're going to be shown. I'm letting them dribble out one at a time. But I'm going to have a show of just the pictures that have never been shown and not explain why. Just say that Weber chose to retain them in his possession and not exhibit them, but they were absolutely -- well, I almost dropped dead. I saw about ten of them before in his studio, but way, way back.

I'm going to write a book called the *Unsung Heroes*! Weichsel will be one of them because he bought one of that type. They're all different. These were all experiments. Now, how in the hell people can go on experimenting and painting I don't know. The courage it took; the self-belief which is the important thing, the conviction, the inner conviction. Not -- somebody patting you on the back saying, "I'm giving you a gold star."

Do they give your kids gold stars now?

DR. PHILLIPS: Second and third grade, I believe.

MS. HALPERT: Yes. Do they still do that? Oh, good. I'm glad. That is wonderful. I used to come home with so many old stars -- like my science book with the double check. Do you know what that means to a kid from a professional -- not from a friend. These guys didn't get it for their painting, did they -- not one of them. It takes a very special kind of conviction and the self-belief to know that you're doing the right thing and everybody else is wrong.

DR. PHILLIPS: Politically, socially, and economically the thinking at the turn of the century and after was on a level which would not support academic art. Academic art was like an edge. It wasn't the main stream. This ferment, this political social ferment like Terrible Teddy, or the muckrakers, all this reexamination was bent on supporting something new.

MS. HALPERT: This *1903-1923* [1962] show was a very interesting experience for me and a most gratifying one, that so many people saw something in it. Putting on the show was one thing, but to have the converts, to have someone like one of the finest guys in the whole field, Douglas McKenzie, who was almost connected with the gallery.

I said, "Doug, you're like a Jew turning Catholic. For God's sakes control yourself!"

It was like Mrs. Luce, outdoing the Pope when she got converted. Do you remember all those corny stories? I said, "Cut it out!"

He'd start giving me a sales talk about these things, and I said, "You're hired."

We said, "You want me here?"

We hadn't even talked about it, and then we talked for a long time about it, that I had a guarantee that I had to die very shortly, and I couldn't. It ended up in that. He wanted to take over, wanted -- well, he said, "You're making me your heir apparent?"

I said, "Apparent -- yes."

Well, he wanted to become the immediate heir. I got a very strange letter from him, a very cute letter, so I hired another guy. The reason I wanted him was because he had fresh ideas, and he could start something else. I'm through. After the "Pop" show I'm through. I've got to have that show. Don't you love it? That goes all the way back -- yes, the way back to Pompeii. I'd better read that book again.

DR. PHILLIPS: Davis says that there's nothing new that can be discovered.

MS. HALPERT: Of course, in anything, in architecture, in anything, even in science. You know, I went to the Shaker Village twice this summer to Hancock to sort of renew my enthusiasm, or to change it or whatever, and Good God, there isn't anything that has been done in what do you call that -- functionalism. It's the whole basis of their religion, and their credo, hands for work, hearts for God. Every object in that place -- but every single object was built on the idea of functionalism.
Of course a lot of designers like John Gibbings copies the furniture. Well, the stuff has been copied over and over again. This is based on the -- the size of the drawer, the variation in the size for different rooms, everything -- there wasn't a damn thing in the place that wasn't functional. The hooks they had to hang their clothes on were also used for chairs when their chairs weren't being used for a meeting. There wasn't one object.

I went to an auction two years ago when one of the Shaker Villages was being sold out, another one, and they had something that looked like the greatest piece of architecture. It makes all the contemporary architects look sick. It was for heating irons. It took something like forty irons made of metal. It was one of the most fabulous pieces of architecture. The shape of the iron had a point, and the shape of this container had a suit this shape of the iron. When that came up at auction, I just practically died. I thought, "What the hell I'm going to do with it, don't ask me. I'll just put it in the living room."

Thank God, it went to Hancock where it belongs. It came from the laundry but what a beautiful, beautiful object. It was made for very, very practical use. All this stuff I read those days, all the corn, and then I kept saying, "Well, if I was twenty-five years old, I wouldn't think that way. That comes with old age."

Then I looked at the object again, and I said, "To hell with it. It's nice to be old."

But the thing that disturbs me now is what is happening to some of the older artists. The destructive quality that has -- well has overwhelmed all of us in every field, whether it's politics, international affairs, Cuba, Mississippi. I met a guy from Oxford the other day at Arneson Harvey's. He said, "I'm from Oxford -- not Mississippi -- you know, the place across the channel."

The same kind of immortality, the same kind of destructive quality -- I suppose it had to hit the art world as well.

DR. PHILLIPS: There were so many reasons for existence in the thirties.

MS. HALPERT: There was a challenge. There was a fight. You were -- you know, this thing that I saw in this guy's eyes. He was in the paper recently, a Russian artist. Someone said that he should have a one man show. I know him. I've had a lot of correspondence with him. He was doing modern art. It wasn't too good, but it was a departure. I've told you about those six portraits he painted of one man. I went to his house. I had open house the second time I went to Russia. I went for the government at my own expense, and I had the biggest suite in the hotel at my own expense. I had an idea that I would entertain.

I used to close the gallery every day from one to three o'clock so that artists would come and see it -- you know, ten thousand people pushing into a gallery that couldn't hold more than five hundred people at one time! It was really frightening! Nobody could see anything, but for the artists I closed the gallery. Since I was anathema to the American administration, nobody paid any attention to me, and I did anything I wanted.

I closed the gallery for two hours. I had my policemen check everybody's union card, and we admitted only artists, writers, designers, the cultural groups, and for two hours they sat on the floor. They could move around. For two hours they could see every work in the show and then for two hours they would sit around, and we would talk. I'd get one batch at one o'clock and another batch at two. I let the first batch remain because there weren't very many. They didn't get many tickets. The agitators got tickets. They never had enough for the cultural groups and believe me Marilyn Monroe never had waiting for her an entourage I had at nine o'clock. I had a big gang waiting for me when the gallery closed. I invited some of them, and I'd say no more than twenty would come to my apartment.

This guy came up several times, and finally he invited me to his studio. He brought me little photographs and drawings and so on. I went to his studio, and he showed me his modern pictures. They weren't on stretchers. They were rolled up, and I saw a great many others. The thing that surprised me was that they were mostly

German expressionist rather than really contemporary. The only modern pictures they could see were those in the Hermitage and the Pushkin Museum -- whether they went to Leningrad or Moscow -- and they were all French modern before 1916. It seemed very strange that they would do this. I don't know the reason for that. He showed me these things which were creative in a way. They were very excited, not exciting and I was very pleased. I saw about forty, or fifty of them.

His wife is a British girl who had come there as a correspondent for a British paper. She married him and remained there. She had coffee there, and we went into the living room where I saw these six portraits hanging up all of the same man. They were different sizes, starting with a huge one six feet high down to a rather small twenty-five by thirty -- the same guy and the same pose, and I looked.

We had become good friends, and he was very cute. He used to correct my Russian because every once in a while I would get into my childhood -- my Russian was recalled, but I did take some Russian lessons here to get an adult level. He'd kid me about it and correct me. He didn't know a word of English. His wife learned Russian from him. I really got hysterical about these portraits. I said, "My God! How can you do this!"

This is apropos because the light that came into his eyes really frightened me. I got very angry, and I was going to march out of there. I got perfectly furious because he talked about modern art. He was hysterical about the Davis picture, about Stella. He knew what was cooking all over the world. Every catalogue that is published they have in Russia, and he had a way of seeing them. He worked for the government, was very well kept. He earned the equivalent of twelve thousand dollars a year, and I went on screaming at him. I was really getting myself into a terrible state -- you know, "How can you do this to me!"

His wife came and patted me, and she gave me some more coffee. I couldn't drink vodka, so I couldn't have a drink. He said "Listen, Listen" -- and the light came into his eyes -- "Yes, I know. I work for the government, and I get paid. This is what I do for the government.

I said, "Then don't do the other. You can't do both. This is revolting! This is disgusting!

I couldn't think of any dirty words in Russian. I didn't know them, and I was really in a terrible state. I'd say, "My, God!"

In Russia it's practically a cuss word. I was practically screaming, so they both held me down, quieted me. He said, "This men's factory had the biggest production in the Soviet Union of pistons.
The word he used wasn't in the dictionary. I know because I looked it up, but it may have been pistons. "One portrait goes to the union in Moscow. He will be honored there. One goes to the airport of Moscow. One goes to the railroad in Moscow. One goes to his airport in whatever town the piston guy came from. "One goes to his local union" and so on. He had them all placed in size. "This will inspire other factory managers towards greater production" and then this light came into his eyes, and he said, "Our people will have more consumer goods."

This is what frightened me because he really believed it. I knew that the picture stank and so did he. They were terrible. They were well painted, very well painted. Any Academy would have passed them. They were the dullest kind of photographic portraits, but he didn't think he was dishonest. Here I was calling him all the dirty words I knew in Russian, and he was shocked that I had that reaction. We felt that he was really doing a creative thing. The other thing he loved doing for himself. That was self-indulgence. He believed in what he was doing. He couldn't show it until this guy came from Rome and they wanted to give him a show. Why wasn't he given a shot in Russia? This is three or four months ago. Well, that faith that all of us have lost, that most countries have lost -- France certainly has lost it; England lost hers a long time ago; ours has just dissipated. I haven't heard any young person, or seen a light of that time that we had in the thirties here, fighting depression. Well, I don't think we should have a depression. I don't think that we should have a terrific upheaval, but what will bring this back to any kind of a faith -- I don't give a damn what it is.

DR. PHILLIPS: It's hard to come to some understanding with a Jupiter C. Rocket.

MS. HALPERT: I know, but look, whenever -- well, even the bow and arrow was a menace, and when the cannon was conceived. . .

DR. PHILLIPS: It isn't so much that it was a menace . . .

MS. HALPERT: It was something that you were terrified about. You didn't know when you were going to have an arrow shot into you -- or wherever, but there's. . .

DR. PHILLIPS: There's a hard psychology of superiority and power that is related to a Jupiter C Rocket, or whatever it is . . .

MS. HALPERT: Doesn't this depress you?

DR. PHILLIPS: Terribly?

MS. HALPERT: You're a young man. It depresses me as an old dame.

DR. PHILLIPS: Terribly -- we're going to pour whatever substance we have into the maintenance of this because we're compelled to do it.

MS. HALPERT: When I read the figures -- you know, I'm going to stop subscribing to the business magazines, the *Nation's Business*. That's the most depressing magazine in the whole world. I don't know why I punish myself reading it. It's very terrifying when you read the statistics of what is going on-- the money, power and the man power that is going into war material of all kinds in relation to everything else. Never in history has that ratio existed in the destructive elements.

DR. PHILLIPS: But the prestige thing . . .

MS. HALPERT: Yes, but it's destructive. Prestige -- having the greatest musicians. Did you see the statistics. . .

DR. PHILLIPS: I'll base my prestige on the Stills cape for Six Colors -- does that answer your searching question. I couldn't care less about all the Thor Rockets there are. It bores me endlessly.

MS. HALPERT: Bores you? Look what tax you pay for that. It more than bores you. It's the philosophy of the thing. When I heard the explosion that night, my first reaction was -- well there it is.

DR. PHILLIPS: You were "at the ready."

MS. HALPERT: "Ready?" I was in bed. I could just stretch out.

DR. PHILLIPS: You figured, "What way do we go from here?"

MS. HALPERT: You know, first I thought it was overall, and I saw that this apartment was still standing, so I thought it wasn't overall. I went to see what exploded, but it was very simple. All I had to do was lie back.

DR. PHILLIPS: It was only one Meson -- so what.

MS. HALPERT: I thought it was all over, and all I had to do was lie down. I'm not afraid of death, but it's a depressing thing. I don't mind paying taxes. That doesn't bother me, but what happens to the people living in this. What happens to art -- that interests me, the assemblage -- that kind of stuff and these enormous pictures with the thrusts -- that's my favorite word which has to do with destruction, annihilation and so on, when it enters into -- well after all Goya did something about war and in relation to his era those were great pictures.

I mean they're still great pictures in relation to his era. Jake Lawrence did it with the *Migration of the Negro to the North* [1940-41]. You can still use a negative theme, or a theme of negation and still make great art out of it, but to excuse all bad poetry, all bad theater we have, and bad art, bad literature, and go on because it deals with the beatnik thing is too much. The Dada period was nihilism at one point but destroy to create, not to destroy.

DR. PHILLIPS: Autobiographically I was never zeroed in for the atomic age. Now that we've passed through the atomic age and are in the space age, I'm even further removed from the dominant impulse that generates all our excitement. Just what you do with a Thor Rocket, I really don't know.

MS. HALPERT: The whole thing is very pleasant because you're just going to be destroyed completely, and this is much more pleasant than having a hunk of you destroyed.

DR. PHILLIPS: Stuart Davis used the word "smashed" which I thought was pretty apt.

MS. HALPERT: It's time for you to go.

DR. PHILLIPS: All right. I'll get started. But he said that there was a time when you could stand apart from explosions. We knew what explosions were. We had seen them in the movies. We knew what they were, but you could stand apart from them. You can't stand apart from them anymore. We can be "smashed."

MS. HALPERT: Are you going to ask him, or shall I ask him some time whether he will let me hear the tape. He said that it will take forty-six hours to hear it.

DR. PHILLIPS: It's four hundred and some odd pages of transcript.

MS. HALPERT: Really.

DR. PHILLIPS: It's very good.
MS. HALPERT: It must be. It must be absolutely fantastic.

DR. PHILLIPS: We knew some very strange friends who come popping to the surface.

MS. HALPERT: But you see, he has something that is almost unique today. I talked to a young guy today form the Corcoran Gallery who is doing a show, art before 1940. This goddamn show that I arranged from 1903 -- they're fourteen shows all of which are embracing artists from here, and I can't possibly lend the same picture to eight of them. They're asking. He's doing art before 1940. The University of Minnesota is doing Stieglitz, his artists. Then there's a show on abstraction with eighty percent coming from here, and they're all dating way back. This goes on. There are something like fourteen shows in which we have to participate. Of course, there are a lot of things owned by other people I have to work with and, of these people with a chart like the one I got up at Strauss -- you know, this chart business, so that I have an idea where the different pictures are going, but now I've reached the point where the same pictures are being requested for about a minimum of six shows.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's good in a way. I think your *1903-1923* was a real shocker.

MS. HALPERT: Then the show that I have at the Corcoran now -- I asked this guy to hang each artist chronologically, separately as a unit. I've gotten over forty letters from total strangers -- I don't know who the hell they are, saying that -- oh, God, the publicity. I think there was a story in each of the papers for five or six days with a big spread on Sunday. I've never gotten so many clippings in all my life, but the letters that are coming in are very fascinating because it's the first time -- as many of them said in different form, the same thing -- that they realized that an artist could go on being original. How original can you get in eleven pictures and still be the same man, still have the same handwriting which I thought was something. I have all those letters. I kept them. Corcoran wants those letters back -- my personal letters. They're going to Detroit some time. But the show impressed a great many people because it's not like an actress who gets typed as a prostitute and she always gets a prostitute's part. If you're a sex pot, you get a sex pot part. There are some others -- you know, nobler.

DR. PHILLIPS: But less entrancing.

MS. HALPERT: You think those two are entrancing.

DR. PHILLIPS: Well, they're part of our ethic.

MS. HALPERT: The same thing is going on in art. Everybody is being typed so thoroughly, and they type themselves because they do the same thing. When you think of people like Jasper Johns who happens to be one of my very pet abominations who has painted targets and flags but consistently and numbers. He 's done the same thing over and over again in slightly different sizes, or Kline who has done the same Japanese symbols, black on white until -- you know, he was just getting somewhere when he died. He went into color, and look at this guy -- he has three girls going all at the same time, but he doesn't have to paint the woman constantly with thrusts, and I'm talking about the top people.
DR. PHILLIPS: I don't know why -- hardening of the arteries.

MS. HALPERT: No, something from publicity, from Madison Avenue. Did you ever read the book by Father Lynch?

DR. PHILLIPS: Which one is this?

MS. HALPERT: It has to do with the same thing. He doesn't go into art, but he talks about T.V. and movies. I've forgotten the name of the book -- the *Madison Avenue Image*, or whatever.

DR. PHILLIPS: The only encouraging thing I get from Davis is that art can stop -- that's the only change it can make. He says that art presupposes that you have a wall, a place to hang something and that the something you hang there has value. He says who the hell knows in the light of present day living whether we'll have walls in the future. He leaves that to the future and to someone else. "I live in the now. That's all I know -- the now, or the attempt to recreate from the past those relationships. I'm doing this badly, and I'm doing him a disservice probably. But the thought is that those relationships which gave pleasure in the past you try to find the possibility of recreating them in the present.

MS. HALPERT: Incidentally, do you have a minute? You haven't? All right. Next time. This has to do with a book I don't want.

MS. HALPERT: Every page I turn to in this book I see something familiar.

DR. PHILLIPS: You are going to tell me of a party you went to which involved ultimately -- well, this is before we get on to the subject of Peggy Bacon.

MS. HALPERT: You mean you're interested in sex?

This is very funny. This must have been around 1927. It was the beginning of Mrs. Rockefeller's visits, and she came in one day with Laurance, her son, to look at something. She was buying a present for someone, and it was the day before Thanksgiving, and I had been invited -- of course, I won't remember the names of these people -- up to a party in Bucks County, to Frenchtown. There was a writer who had been in jail for breaking windows, stealing fur coats, and so on. He was well known -- an anarchist. He wrote a note that he would break such-and-such a department store window on such and such an evening, and he was never caught. Finally he was, and he was put in jail. They released him because they decided that he was more batty than wicked. He invited me and somebody else whose house it was. They were all writers and I was invited.

They were all terribly poor, and I remember signing a few Morris Plan notes not knowing that I had to pay. I thought, "Sure, I'll sign this note," but I had to pay a couple of them. I was the rich woman in that crowd because -- you know, I ate fairly well at times. I drew twenty-five dollars a week from the gallery, but I was taken out to dinner such a lot that I managed to live. I had no rent to pay, so they invited me to this dinner party, and all I had to do was bring the turkey and the wine -- no, the fixings. I had telephoned the local butcher who was very sweet and pleasant, and he got everything ready for me. Mrs. Rockefeller stayed on and on, and the turkey had been cooked. I was to bring the raw makings, and this friend who was escorting me up there by train was to carry the bundle. I saw him come by and wave, and I said, "Mrs. Rockefeller, I'm afraid I have to leave."

We were right in the midst of a transaction. I said, "I have the makings of a Thanksgiving dinner which I am taking out of town, and you'll have to excuse me."

I walked out. We went there, arrived, and the host cooked turkey as well. I didn't know how to cook it. I helped set the table. I'd never been there before. After dinner which was very successful with pies and everything, there was a poker party and I loved playing poker. At that time I was quite a fiend. This wasn't really a poker party. They were just drawing cards. There were pairs of cards, and I thought that was sort of funny. I thought, "This is a hell of a poker game. I've played all kinds, different versions, but this wasn't poker."

They said, "Come on. Don't you know anything about life?"

I said, "No. I never heard of it."

I really didn't from what ensued, and they said, "Well we're drawing partners."

I said, "Okay."

I thought it was another kind of poker. Well, it turned out that everybody was staying over, and the drawing partners was the person you slept with that night. Four of the pairs -- eight of the people were married -- there were four pairs, and everybody got mixed up. I was stuck. I was absolutely astonished.

DR. PHILLIPS: I'll bet you were.

MS. HALPERT: I heard about those things, but I had never experienced it. I thought that was something that was done with rare people in a rare place. I was stuck with this guy, and I was embarrassed to act as if I was shocked. Everybody separated, and I said, "I think I'll stay down here."

There were two window seats, and they were so goddamn narrow! The others went upstairs, and I had a little chat with this man. I said, "I never played this kind of poker and I don't like it. One of us has to get the hell out of this room. I can't move the window seat, but there's a long bench in the kitchen, and I'm going to stay there."

It was an old fashioned long table, and I said, "I'll stay there because I can't make the train out, but I'll settle for that."

He said, "No. I'll do it, if you're sure."

I said, "I'm terribly fond of it."

He said, "But in the morning, please come into this room, lock the door. I'll be dressed and pretend you stayed here."

I said, "I'm embarrassed."

He said, "All right, I'll protect your non-virtue."

But it was that time -- Matty Josephson was one of the people and Katherine Anne Porter was another. She wasn't married, but he was, and his wife was there, and all the rest of them were married, but if I looked at this Josephson book I would recall the names. Burke was there -- he was one of them, Kenneth Burke. There were two other fairly well known writers. That's how I learned about the literary bigs. It all seemed -- you know, for people who were very serious about their work, it seemed so childlike. I just thought it was ridiculous -- that's all, because it was nothing but a game. It wasn't poker. It was very stupid -- and poker was so much more fun.

DR. PHILLIPS: Before we turned this machine on we were talking about ideas for shows. There was one that took place, I think along toward the end of the twenties, featuring Peggy Bacon and her caricatures. Do you remember those?

MS. HALPERT: Oh yes. Did you see the one of me? I have that?

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes, indeed.

MS. HALPERT: It's a marvelous one -- the best portrait I ever had. That must have been 1930. Her show was in the Daylight Gallery which was built in 1930, and it was shortly after the opening of that gallery. She was a brilliant artist. She was a very good illustrator, but also a brilliant artist, a caricaturist, and she did the art world. She did it good. She had the most wonderful caricature of Henry McBride holding a cup of tea, because he did go to teas. He was the type. He was a brilliant guy, certainly one of the best critics we had. She had one of Cortissoz with a cigar. He always had a cigar in his mouth. He was terribly nearsighted, and every time he went to look at a picture he almost gave me a heart attack because the cigar was practically on the canvas. She did Mrs. Force, who did a great deal for Alex Brook and for Peggy, and she had the most malicious look. That was the worst caricature of all. She had Forbes Watson. They were all vicious characters.

The one of me I thought was very nice. She gave it to me as a present, and I accepted it. It was a caricature. I thought it was the kindest thing in the show. Anyway, the show was on and, of course, I operated both departments. I had only one person helping me. I was outside, and this man marched in right after lunch. He looked very seedy, and he was unquestionably high, and in the front of the gallery had some ceramics by Karl Welters. There were at that time relatively expensive -- seven hundred and fifty dollars for a lion, five hundred for a dog, and so on. He started picking them up, and I said, "Look here, buddy, you'll own one of these things, but you have to have five hundred dollars to drop it. Why don't you put them back?"

"What kind of a joint is this?"

I said, "It's a speakeasy in disguise."

That's where he came from. The whole street was speakeasies. Twenty-one speakeasies we had on that street, and it was just a few less than 48th Street which had the big record. He went on, and I followed him every step because I was sure that he would break something. Finally he walked into the Daylight Gallery, and he began to roar, standing in front of each caricature. He was just roaring, and I thought, "It can't be that funny to an outsider because they don't know who these people are."

They were brilliant paintings, but unless you knew who they were you wouldn't find them so amusing. He walked along, and he looked at everything for a long time. He didn't touch anything. He was very well behaved, and he just laughed, and then he picked up the catalogue, and he looked at this caricature of me and said, "Oh, so you're Edith Halpert."

I said, "Who are you?"

He said, "Dr. Barnes."

I said, "So's your old man!"

I laughed because I thought that was the funniest thing that had ever been pulled. I had never seen him, and I thought that Dr. Barnes -- you know, his collection and his importance of being a very dignified, elegant gentleman, and there was this seedy looking drunk, so my conversation with him was on that level anyway. So I said, "So's your old man!"

He said, "You don't believe it?"

I said, "I do not."

He stormed out, and he came back in about three quarters of an hour later with [William James] Glackens. The minute I saw Glackens I knew that he was the doctor. Glackens came over and whispered to me, "Don't be a fool!" This is Dr. Barnes, and he can make you a fortune."

I said, "It's just too damn bad! He won't."

Then he introduced him, "This is Dr. Barnes."

I said, "Are you an M.D. or a Ph.D.?"

He turned to me, and Glackens was purple with rage. I had to carry on. I couldn't renege at this point, and they both walked out. I lost a fortune. They walked out. The next morning I get a telegram, "I am Dr. Barnes, and I have a collection, and I will meet you at the Philadelphia Railroad Station at such-and-such an hour and prove it to you."

Boy! Did I get going! I had to close half the gallery. I had to close the Daylight Gallery to get to Philadelphia, and I spent all of the following day there. He kept me, and I had the most wonderful time. He kept saying, "Do you believe me now? Do you believe me now? Do you believe me now?"

I said, "I believed you when I saw Glackens."

He said, "Gee, you're the only person in the art world, I think, I'm going to like."

We became very good friends. He never bought anything from me because he always wanted bargains, but he did come in. I went to see his collection a number of times and really had an extraordinary experience -- he took me down to the basement and showed me all the things that weren't hanging, and I got to know the collection pretty thoroughly.

We had a fight because he wanted me to sell him a whole collection of folk art. He was going to be the first folk art collector, and I refused to do it because he just opened cabinets and pulled things out. I had the folk art gallery in 1929 upstairs. I didn't have it together with the rest of the gallery. It was a separate floor, completely independent, and he went upstairs on his own, opened cabinets and pulled out all my prize possessions and said, "I'll give you fifty dollars apiece" or "a hundred dollars apiece."

That's the way he always bought, but he punished me. We went out and bought latches, early American tools and so on. He didn't buy a single picture. He said, "That isn't folk art!"

He was really sore. He bought H and L hinges, latches, little tools and so on that he hung right with his Matisse's and various other works of art, but in spite of everything that is said about him, he did get the benefit of other people's judgment. Glackens was really the person who helped him, just as most of the great collections were made by Arthur B. Davies and Duchamp made Katherine Dreier's collection. There was always an artist or a dealer in the -- but I feel very strongly that he really loved what he was doing. He began to seek for himself after a while because one summer in Paris -- I didn't meet him at this time -- but he was the only one who had the guts to buy Soutine.

Nobody would buy Soutine. I took Kelekian up to see and Brummer, a good many of knowledgeable dealers. Soutine was starving -- you know, but it was actually the old boy who started the flurry for Soutine. He always boasted that he bought sixty -- thirty dollars each -- he lied. He bought thirty at sixty dollars. He used to come here, and I used to correct him each time. He used to say, "I bought so-and-so" -- he told everybody that he paid twenty-five dollars apiece for his Pascins which is an utter lie.

That too -- it's like the Chrysler affair today. For some reason these people have to assert themselves. It's a form of vanity to outsmart everybody and sixty dollars a piece was cheap enough. I'd say to him, "Now, come on. Don't you think sixty dollars makes people flinch? Why do you make it thirty? I was right there."

He said, "Why didn't I meet you?"

I said, "I was a quiet little character that stayed out of everything, but I heard the whole story."

It was all over Montparnasse. It was the big thing that happened at that time. But of course, the motivation for buying is a very interesting one with people in the upper bracket. The only real honest to God buying that is done personally and for something you want to live with is done by these little people that I cater to so much, with whom I spend four times as much time as I do with the others because with them it's either something that they need physically, just for ordinary comfort, or something that they buy which means more to them than comfort. It's never a matter of outdoing anybody. They never buy fakes -- you know.

It's someone like my good friend Bryce Burroughs who'll buy to outwit a dealer -- this was outwitting me. He

wanted a Marin of New York, and the only one we had at that time was five thousand dollars, and he called me a burglar and everything else. He called me about two months later after that episode and -- did I tell this before?

DR. PHILLIPS: No. You've been called lots of things but never a burglar before.

MS. HALPERT: He always kisses me hello, and then he says, "You robber! You burglar!"

He called up one day and he said, "Okay, baby, I'll show you. I bought the most fabulous, the most magnificent Marin of New York -- eighteen hundred dollars and just to rub it in I'm sending my chauffeur down with it for you to look at."

I said, "Okay."

The picture arrived. I happened to be at John Marin, Jr.'s desk working on something, and we both turned our heads at the same moment as the chauffeur was coming up with his naked picture. It wasn't even wrapped. It came in the limousine, and he had the face out. We both looked at each other, disappeared and got absolutely hysterical. It was the Dial portfolio, color reproduction of the *Singer Building* [1921] by Marin, the original of which hangs and has hung for a long time in the Philadelphia Museum. The reproduction was selling for forty-five dollars around the corner at Raymond and Raymond. He paid eighteen hundred dollars -- with a frame of course. That was probably the most beautiful moment I ever experienced. I told the chauffeur to leave the picture, and he said, "But Mr. Burroughs wanted me to take it back."

I said, "No. Just tell him that we haven't looked at it. It's such a great treat that we don't want it to leave so quickly."

Selig phoned me, and he said, "Well, cookie, you probably feel pretty rotten, eh?"

I said, "I never felt better in my life, kid."

He said, "What do you think of it?"

I said, "Well, you know, I don't know anything, so I've decided to send it over to Bill Lieberman at the Modern Museum."

He said, "Bill Lieberman -- that clerk?!"

I said, "He's not a clerk. He's a curator."

He said, "I know Nelson Rockefeller. I know the Rockefellers. I know the President. I don't go to little clerks!"

I said, "I do. I go to the curators."

He said, "What's the idea?"

I said, "You asked me to look at it. I want to look at it thoroughly. Do you mind? You're not going home. You'll get it back before five o'clock. You drive by with your limousine and chauffeur and pick it up on the way home. Sorry, I have another call."

I hung up, and I sent the picture over to Bill Lieberman, and he called me. He said, "Have you gone out of your mind, Edith?" Why do you send it to me?

I said, "Because you have equipment. I have only a naked eye."

I won't go into the sum of the conversation that followed, but I said, "I want you to look under your lamp, through your special glass equipment and see what the grain of this is."

He said, "Will you do this for me and write a professional report?"

I said, "Yes dear. It's a reproduction, but how do you know with your naked eye? Do it under the lamp."

He did, and I had the great pleasure of waiting until five o'clock hoping that the guy had already cashed his check, his eighteen hundred dollars and had left town, to punish this character. He came at five o'clock beaming, and I show him the report.

DR. PHILLIPS: He must have looked like Cape Canaveral.

MS. HALPERT: They really don't move. He's such a smart cookie. He knew everybody, and he called the clearing house. I think he got his money back, or something. No poor person would go through a thing like

that -- nobody.

Chrysler is the best example. This is the biggest exposure of any time, but I can repeat this thing from my own experience at least fifty times, and it's always a rich man, or a woman. Women aren't taken in as easily, but it's just the desire they all have the feeling -- well, there was a fellow who came to the gallery who had to turn the picture around to see the price to see whether I was lying to him because he had the price marked in plain figures then. I asked him about it. We got to be great friends, and he was a wonderful guy. He said, "Well, you know, Edith, everybody tries to take us for a ride."

I said, "When you came in, did you suspect that I would?"

He said, "Everybody does. We take it for granted. Every rich man has that fear."

That's true. I think that is the number one motivation -- you know, to try to get a bargain, that they're being asked more than anybody else, and they always get rocked.

DR. PHILLIPS: This certainly was an instance of it.

MS. HALPERT: I've had at least fifty instances of that kind in my experience here of people bringing in something with great pride that they bought, and I take great joy in telling them.

DR. PHILLIPS: I guess you do.

[BEGINNING OF 6 OF 7 REEL B2r]

MS. HALPERT: Because they deserve that kind of punishment. Suppose they do overpay occasionally. They're getting something they want, but it's very, very hard to convince them of that. The Rockefellers were going to Egypt, and they were at 54th Street where the Modern Museum Garden is now. I did all the buying for her in every field, and she had the benefit of all the greatest experts. She told me to buy silver, and I don't know silver from aluminum -- certainly not the difference between that and stainless steel, so I'd get me the great dealer in silver to help me out. I was getting his advice free of charge. The same is true of any field in which I had no experience. I never trusted my own judgment except with the things that I knew about.

They were leaving, and he asked me at lunch before they left to buy six Renaissance chairs with a petit point, and they wore the most hideous chairs! The furniture in their home was the most hideous furniture! These six Renaissance chairs matched the chairs they had. I said something about it, "You don't want any more chairs like that, do you?"

He took great offense. He said, "We're not asking you. We're telling you."

Mr. so-and-so, the secretary, was to take care of the finds. They got evaluations, or the appraisals, or whatever from Parke-Bernet -- it wasn't called that then, the Anderson Galleries. They got the appraisal from them, and the chairs were to be -- well, I can't remember, but I have it all down somewhere in a letter from Mr. Rockefeller. I hated those chairs, and I hated the idea of buying them, but I did get ten percent for buying. I called Brummer who was right across the street, and he knew furniture very well. I said, "Joe, would you take a look at some furniture? I won't be there so that there won't be any association -- number so-and-so. They've been on exhibition for a week."

He called me back and said that those chairs were false. The petty point was right, but the bottoms were all new, phoned up, and I said, "Thank you."

He said, "Why?"

I said, "I won't buy them."

He said, "You're working for rich people. You do what they tell you. You have no responsibility. Did you get a letter from Mr. Rockefeller?"

I said, "I did."

He said, "Buy them. Don't get so fresh! You know, you can't get away with this. If you were young and pretty, maybe, but now you're a little older" -- at that time I was twenty-eight; he was kidding me -- "You won't be able to get away with that much longer."

Well, I went to the auction, and I saw French & Company, looking at chairs, so I said, "I'll make a deal with you" -- what is his name. No Schwartz, but something like that, the old man. He's dead now. I said, "I'm interested in these chairs now too. I won't bid against you to shoot the price up, if you'll give me a letter saying

that in the event I will want these chairs in a month, you will sell them to me at a ten percent increase."

He said, "Okay.

I got a letter from him, and that was that. I didn't go to the auction, and bought them. The secretary phoned me in the afternoon. It was an afternoon sale, and he called me up, and he said, "Do you want the check?" Will it look strange on your books for you to make out a check for this size?"

I said, "No. I didn't buy the chairs."

Well, he said, "You were told to buy them!"

He went on, and he got absolutely hysterical. I said, "Look, they were fakes."

He said, "I heard Mr. Rockefeller tell you that he wasn't asking you, he was telling you."

I said, "Everybody has been rude as hell in this affairs, but I did not get them and relax!"

I was so mad that I would tell them that they could have them if they wanted them. A few weeks passed, and I got a telephone call. The boat practically docked fifteen minutes before, and I got a telephone call, would I please come up to 54th Street "immediately." I did, holding the letter from French & Company in my bag. Mrs. Rockefeller put her arm around me and said, "Mrs. Halpert why do you act so badly? This is very naughty. We did want those chairs so badly."

She was pleasant about it. She was almost in tears. I said, "Mrs. Rockefeller, I discovered by asking one of the great experts whose name I can't mention that they were fakes. Very few people would have known the difference."

She said, "Are you sure"

I said, "Positive."

Mr. Rockefeller said, "Again, we didn't ask you for your opinion, or for anybody else's opinion. We want those chairs."

I said, "Very well. You can have them, and you've got the most wonderful bargain" -- I pulled out this letter -- "You may send the check directly to French & Company. Just add the ten percent commission that you would have paid me to this sum, and the chairs will be delivered to you. They may charge you for delivery, I don't know. Good day. I hope you had a lovely trip."

DR. PHILLIPS: I'll bet you were livid with rage.

MS. HALPERT: The next day Mr. and Mrs. Rockefeller came down to the gallery to thank me. Mr. Rockefeller gave me a check for five thousand dollars, and I did the thing I wanted to all my life. I tore it to bits. I said, "My integrity cannot be bought!"

It was something dramatic like that. Why I didn't get punched down I don't know, but there it is -- you know, you cannot service these people -- you really can't. That lavender business comes through each time. She really was very fond of me. He became sort of fond of me after a while, because when the Radio City Music Hall was being designed, he asked me to get the designer -- I mean for the interior. I put it all the art, the murals and so on. He tried to pay it off in some way. I think he felt kind of guilty because he was a very just person, and she was a very nice person, but to me it was just a routine matter.

As somebody remarked about the Chrysler thing -- he was the most despised man for every reason and some very, very good ones. He was about the most immoral man starting with his sex life right through in all his business dealings, in everything. Somebody remarked -- I've forgotten who it was -- it couldn't have happened to a batter man because this scandal is coming through in *Life* magazine in the biggest spread they will have had on anything, but it is unfortunate because after all, the great collections in museums had to come from these people. Some of them were wise enough to have an adviser whom they never quite trusted, but they can't do any better. Many of the things that are in museums are great works, and they're authentic, but there are also a great many that are not, and this is going to be the beginning of the greatest exposure of fakes in the world. Everybody's gotten the fever now.

My feeling is that the article should not be written about the dealers because these dealers are gimps if they gave bills with no indication that it was authentic -- just "in the manner of" or "attributed to." I didn't go to two of the meetings at which I was supposed to be present -- there was no need for it, just to gloat. Our attorney was there, and he was the one to handle it. The President of our organization is a wonderful guy, Alexander

Rosenberg, and there was no need to have all the trustees -- whatever we are. We're called directors. As a matter of fact, when the papers and magazines called me from all over the United States to make a comment, I said, "I have nothing to say."

I was just a director. A comment had to come from an officer and an attorney, but I refused to make a comment, and it went on and on and on. Then Frank Getline from the *Washington Post* an old friend of mine; he's a critic, and he came in. I said, "Frank, I have nothing to say about this anymore because *the New York Times* has carried the story every day through the week. *Time* magazine had the story and *Life* is coming out. You'll just repeat."

He said, "I wanted a new angle."

I said, "All right, I'll give you an angle, if you have the guts."

Frank Getline also writes for the *New Republic*, a very honorable, nice guy. I said, "Why don't you attack the collector?"

He said, "My boss is a collector. It's kind of hard. How would you like to an article?

I said, "I'm not an art critic. I'm not a writer. That's not my profession."

There's no use telling that to anybody. Nobody will sign that article. Nobody will dare attack the collector because everybody's boss today is a collector. It's like attacking art while you're working at the Chase Manhattan Bank, or for Marymount, or Inland Steel. You can't do that anymore. You have no freedom.

DR. PHILLIPS: On the subject of collectors -- you once wanted me to remind you to tell a story as to the way they developed. The man's name, I believe, was Preston Marshall. Nothing?

MS. HALPERT: From Chicago -- oh, his brother was the mayor of Chicago. Oh look, I have it right here. I was looking at his folder to see the first thing he ever bought. It's Preston Harrison who gave a good part of his collection to the Los Angeles County Museum. A lot of his purchases from me are there. This was his first letter, December 19, 1926: "Dear Our Gallery" it was called then. We was at Western Avenue, Los Angeles, "Please tell me what you happen to have by the way of water colors of leading American contemporary artists." That was our advertised Christmas Show "by great contemporary American artists."

My attention was called to an advertisement of a Christmas exhibition ranging from $10 to $50 dollars -- I take it as prints. If you specify approximate size and prices, that serves sufficient in beginning. Later if interested, more details could be asked for and furnished.

This was written December 19, 1926, and he bought some things, and they weren't prints either. He bought probably twenty-five things over a period of time, and he raised his ante considerably when he wanted a Pascin watercolor and so on -- Niles Spencer. Did I tell you about the time I was to finally meet him?

DR. PHILLIPS: We had dinner, I guess it was with the Gilberts one night, and in the course of the evening, you said to me, "Don't forget . . .

MS. HALPERT: Well, this is really funny. We continued this correspondence. When he learned I was a woman, and I wrote very learned letters in those days. I had to throw my weight around and he didn't meet me, so I thought I'd sound very learned, and I'd give him histories of the artists and so on about the pictures. I'd go abroad in the summer, and I bought him various things abroad too -- for nothing always, and I never met him. Finally, it must have been 1930, just before 1930 maybe, I get a letter that he and his wife were coming to New York and would I arrange to have dinner with him a certain night at the Brevoort. They were staying there, so that he could come in frequently to see what I had.

All this was always done by correspondence with photographs and so on, sizes and whatnot. I began getting awfully worried about it because by this time there were several references in his letters that he thought that I was about his age, and he was about thirty years old. He's been dead a long time. He died in 1935. Anyway I got very distressed. I got the letter about five days before he was to come to the gallery. It was closed for four months, and I sued to come in the latter part of September to get things straightened out.

I had dinner with Leonore Kroll, Leon Kroll's sister, and she was one of the great milliners in America. I used to get my hats from her when I went abroad, to show that American designers were better, so I went and had dinner with her, and I told her this problem. I said, "What am I going to do? This man will never buy from me again when he finds out how young I am."

I had dark hair then. This was before it turned gray. Sam was alive, so it was certainly before 1929, and she said, "I'll fix you up dear. Come to my apartment."

She fixed me up. She was also a dress designer. She could sew, and she had someone there, a maid, and she fixed me up. I still remember it. She took an old dress of hers and put a wide waistband in to make the shirt shorter. She was taller than I and the top was made of surplice, but only for elderly people. No young person wears surplice, and she said, "How many days do you have?"

I said, "Four days."

She said, "I'll make you a bonnet that will make Barbara Fritchie look like a school girl."

Well, she did. She made me some kind of a turban that was out of this world! It would cover my hair completely. They wouldn't see that I had dark hair. I wasn't going to dye my hair for this occasion. I went up, and I had a wonderful try out on how to walk in this dress and so on. By that time she had a number of people at the house and everybody just died. I did a real Sarah Bernhardt, but that hat was really a classic! So I was all set for this dinner party, and I could talk my way all right because -- you know, I did know about artists and about art. I wasn't afraid of that. It was just that he'd say, "You fooled me," and all that business.

The day of that evening I was in the gallery wearing some sort of a country garment -- you know, without sleeves; in fact, what we call a sun dress. Of course, the place was dirty. I was cleaning up, and I had a ribbon, a very wide ribbon over my hair coming across, but it stowed a great deal of my hair -- sort of a bandana thing, and I was whistling away, wearing sandals, and this man comes to the door and knocks on the pane with a cane. I took one look, and I thought I would die. I was alone. He saw me there, and I couldn't ignore his wrap. I opened the door, and I said, "Yes, sir."

He said, "Oh, I was hoping that Mrs. Halpert was in."

I said, "Oh, no. I don't know whether she's in town as yet. I would have seen her."

He said, "Who are you?"

I said, "I'm her niece."

He said, 'You're a pretty little thing" -- or something like that -- "and you tell your aunt that I was here."

Well, I stopped cleaning. I went upstairs. I didn't know whether to slit my throat, or what. I didn't know what I was going to do, I thought that niece part was pretty good, and I could have a niece that looked like me. That evening I got all dolled up in this get up, and I didn't dare look in the mirror. It was the funniest thing -- no make-up, but rouge. She said, "Old women always use rouge," and I never used rouge in my life. She gave me some. I made those circles on my cheeks -- you know, the way they do it, and I had this bonnet. I still remember it. It covered my hair all the way down, and then it extended out like this. It had two wings, one on each side. She had these two feather wings.

I went to the Brevoort in the surplice dress. We jumped up because by this time I recognized him. I did see him that morning and I sat down. His wife was very charming, and she kept staring at me constantly in a very strange way. I was getting terribly self-conscious, so that I didn't carry on my conversation as well. It was getting nervous as hell. She was looking at me strangely, and I thought after all who wouldn't. With that outfit everybody was staring at me. I was the funniest looking thing that ever happened.

He went on. He kept telling me how learned I was, how helpful I had been, and how marvelous it was to meet somebody who knew almost as much as he did about art, and he went on and on and on. He began talking about younger people as I do now -- you know, who know nothing about art. They have no experience, and how wonderful it was that a woman of my age would open a gallery and so on. Then after coffee Mrs. Harrison said, "Would you please accompany me to the ladies room? I don't want to go alone."

I couldn't say no. I had a funny feeling, so we went into the ladies room. She ripped off this bonnet, and she said, "What an atrocious hat!"

My hair came tumbling down. She went and got some toilet tissue -- they didn't have face tissues in those days, and she dipped it in water, and she washed off the rouge. She said, "You are a sweet little girl."

I said, "Oh, Mrs. Harrison!"

She said, "I won't tell on you, dear. Honest to God I won't tell on you. You can fool old Preston, but you didn't fool me a minute."

I said, 'How did you guess?"

She said, "First of all the hat was too exaggerated. Whoever did that for you might have been a little more

discrete."

I said, "This is the Village."

That's what Leonore had said -- you know, when I looked at it. She was really a darling. She was perfectly wonderful. She said, "Now you don't have the rouge with you."

I said, "No. I never used it in my life."

She said, "I have some."

I put it on, put on my hat, and she kissed me as she walked out and said, "I swear I won't tell."

I said, "Can we cut this short tonight, please."

She said, "But you can't wear that hat in the gallery tomorrow when he comes in."

I said, "Yes, I can. I will be coming in from somewhere. The gallery is closed. It isn't open to the public. Nobody will see me. The door will be locked."

She said, "I won't come with him. I couldn't bear it. It's a wicked thing to do, you know, but I understand it thoroughly."

Well, he came and that was the first bigger picture that he bought. Again we shook hands because he was so delighted. It wasn't until quite a few years later -- you know, a number of other people told him, "You're out of your mind! She's not fifty years old!"

There was a story in *Time* Magazine about my age. He found out and I apologized. It was all right, and by that time we were very fast friends. It was okay. I'll never forget that evening as long as I live. I just wanted to die when she ripped my hat off. Of course, nobody else was in the powder room. We had no witnesses.

DR. PHILLIPS: This is the second story in which a woman figured so strongly. Remember the dealer story?

MS. HALPERT: I certainly do -- Kansas City.

DR. PHILLIPS: This is the same thing in a way.

MS. HALPERT: They're much more sympathetic. She was a doll. She could have ruined everything. She was devoted to her husband. It isn't that she wanted to see him punished. This wasn't malice toward him, but she just thought it was a very funny thing to do. She thought it was cute as hell, and I told Leonore that that hat was a "complete failure." Of course, Leonore would tell that story all over town, all over the country. That surplice dress -- it was so uncomfortable! I was all tied up from the back.

Unfortunately I didn't have much occasion to go to the Brevoort. I knew very few people who would pay for a meal there, and those that did wanted to go to speakeasies like Saklatwalla. We always went to these fancy speakeasies, so that no one at the Brevoort knew me then. I wouldn't be meeting people I knew -- fortunately because somebody else might have recognized me.

DR. PHILLIPS: They would remember the hat if nothing else.

MS. HALPERT: That outfit! He was one -- there again what attracted him was the ten to fifty dollars. It was the same old thing. He was a multi-millionaire. Why he had to buy things for ten to fifty dollars! That's something they boast about to their friends.

It's like this guy May from St. Louis. Charles Nagel was here today with his wife and his assistant to select a show, and he mentioned that again. He said, "Did you sell any bargains to" -- whatever they call him. He has a pet name -- May who owns the May Department stores. He came in one time, and he wanted a Stuart Davis, a small one. He gave it to the museum. I think at that time it couldn't have been more than twelve hundred dollars. It was quite a small picture, and he offered me eight. I said, "I'm sorry, Mr. May, this is not 7th Avenue. We do not sell wholesale."

He ran a department store. I said that with a smile, so he said, "I certainly have no intention of paying more."

I said, "If you can't afford one for twelve hundred, I'll sell you something smaller."

No. He wanted that picture, and this went on bargaining and bargaining and bargaining, and finally I got tired, "all right. I'll give you a ten dollar discount, and you'll have to wait. I'll go upstairs and take it out of my purse

and give you the ten dollars. I will not break my policy, but I'm just tired."

He said, "All right. Never mind, sit down!"

I said, "But why do you do this? Why? Really? You know that this is a good value. I'm not even talking about the future, but for the moment it is good value, isn't it? It is a picture that you want, but why do you have to bargain?"

He said, "Because I'm ashamed to come home to my wife and say "I paid retail."

The same thing is true of [Charles] Zadock, who is vice president of Gimbels and came from Milwaukee. He never bought anything here. He wouldn't pay the full price for anything. They can't. These are merchants. Stanley Marcus -- the first time he came here he bargained his head off. I never gave any of them a nickel discount.

I finally shamed May into breaking down because I said that I would go upstairs and bring him ten bucks. They really do see themselves a great disservice because no dealer is stupid. A new young dealer might feel that it would be a good idea to get into a collection, or something like that, but no established dealer is so stupid that he is going to take a loss. Especially abroad, they always ask for very much more. They usually asked a third more then they expect to leave room for bargaining, and it makes the guy feel wonderful. I think I told you about Eddie Robinson and the bargaining.

DR. PHILLIPS: No.

MS. HALPERT: Well, Eddie Robinson came to the gallery. Of course, he was furious that I didn't recognize him -- you know, theatrical people can't take that. Zorach was in the gallery, and Robinson said, "Tell that dame who I am!"

He did. I said, "Okay, you're the actor. What am I supposed to do -- swoon?"

He said, "Yes. Thousands of women have swooned."

He laughed, and we became friends. He came in. Any time he was in New York he would come down to the gallery. He'd take me across the street for lunch or something. He never bought a picture. He'd bargain each time -- bargain and bargain, and I never sold him anything.

About 1930, I had a Pascin show. Pascin always wanted to have a one-man show in the gallery, and I had some marvelous pictures on loan from various people and dealers, and we sold a great many and shortly -- he did see the show, and shortly after the show he came in and I had a beautiful, beautiful nude, and he said, "How much is that?"

I said, "Forty-four hundred dollars."

He said, "I'll give you twenty-two hundred dollars."

I said, "Okay, you can have it."

Pascin was always in the upper brackets as related to the other artists, American artists. He was very successful in Europe, and forty-four hundred dollars was a bargain. He said, "I'll give you twenty-two," and I said, "Okay."

Well, he began to shake practically. He looked around, and he said, "I don't have a check book."

I think somebody was working for me. It must have been Lawrence, and Robinson said, "Here's a book. Go out and get some check blanks. Do you have any check blanks?

I said, "No."

He gave him a buck to go and get him a check blank. He made out this check quick like a bunny, and he said, "I want a receipt. I want a bill."

I said, "The check is your receipt."

No. He wanted a bill, so we made out a bill -- twenty-two hundred dollars, and he said, "Receipt it. Here's the check. Receipt it. I'll take the picture with me.

I said, "You're not going to carry this in a plane?"

He said, "I'm staying at the Waldorf, and I'll enjoy looking at it."

I said, "I'll send it up later."

"No. No."

He whistled. A cab came up, and I'm a nervous wreck for a very simple reason. He put the picture facing him in the cab, looked at it, jumped out and kissed me, he was so satisfied with the picture. He called me up an hour later, and he said, "I'm giving a party for you. You finally became a human being. Come up at five o'clock."

I said, "I can't come. I have an appointment."

Finally I said that I would be there at four-thirty. He said, "No. No. I said five o'clock."

I said, "Don't be scared that I'm going to rape you. After all, Little Caesar isn't afraid of a little woman like me."

I went up. He had a big suite there, and the picture was hanging in the drawing room. I plunked down the check on the table, got up on the sofa and started to take the picture off the wall, and he began to yell. He really created the biggest scene. He said, "I'll call the security officer."

We got absolutely hysterical. "All I want to do is show you something. I can't possibly live another minute having done what I did. I've got to take the picture back. I'm sorry. You can hit me. You can do anything you like. I'm not afraid."

I turned the picture around, and there in plain figures was twenty-two hundred dollars. That was the regular price. He said, "Well, I paid that price."

I said, "No wait a minute. I told you that it was forty-four hundred dollars. I was lying to you. You've bored me to death all these months, and I know that you offer half. I know that everybody else in New York offers half. You bought a painting last week, last month, and everybody in town is laughing about it. I don't want to be in that class. I just want to punish you, so come on. I came here at four thirty so that nobody will see the picture and nobody will know about it. I'll keep it a deep secret, and we'll be friends. You don't have to come in again if you don't want to because I bore you as much as you bore me."

He grabbed the picture, and he said, "God, this is worth forty-four hundred dollars."

I said, "Why don't you give me another check."

He said, "Come on and have a drink. I'll never do it again." From then on he did buy, and only once when I moved across the street -- that was 1940 something. I had a dachshund, a little bitsy dachshund named Adam who was about ten years old at the time. He developed diarrhea, and all of his teeth were gone. He didn't have a tooth in his head, and I used to mash all his food. He was perfectly happy. I always had a big show room, a very elegant show room there, and Robinson wanted a Kuniyoshi; as a matter of fact, he did get a wonderful Kuniyoshi. He asked the price, and I said, "Four thousand dollars."

He put his arms around me, and he said, "Three grand, Babe."

Adam bit him. He couldn't really bite him, but he nipped his trousers and Little Caesar jumped about eight feet, and he let out a howl. He was so scared. I said, "You see, even my dog can't stand your bargaining." He didn't know that nobody could touch me when Adam was around. Nobody. When my sister came in and would try to kiss me hello, he'd jump at her. I finally told Robinson about three times because he really believed that Adam couldn't stand anybody bargaining. He paid the four thousand, but it was the dog that scared him, not I.

The characteristic of the collector is one thing I would like to write some time -- the classifications and the motivations. I have that talk about the three kinds of collectors, but that wasn't strong enough. Of course, basically there are those three types, but the consistency among people who are rich with very few exceptions is really something. They always feel that everybody wants their money. They're trained that way. Their parents say, "Everybody knows that you're a rich child, so don't buy more than one ice cream soda. They'll suspect that you're rich. They'll all want things from you."

They just don't have the fun that poor people have. The difference between those people and these young -- not necessarily young people of modest means who really have a great rapport with art. The difference is tremendous -- you know, I just beam when these people come and they'll buy a picture at the regular price and send me flowers. The rich guys have never brought me flowers. These people bought two pictures last week, and the idea that I'll let them buy the [Edward] Stasack. They rushed out and bought me flowers, and Walt, the new man I have, said, "This is unheard of."

I said, "You'll see it again, and so the next day somebody else came in with a corsage, but it's never the upper bracket -- never. You know the presents I get form my millionaire dames -- bed jackets after all it's these little

people who created the atmosphere for what has gone on in American art until this art for investment came on.

DR. PHILLIPS: Was Robinson knowledgeable in art?

MS. HALPERT: Yes. It was terribly important for him because he really had a rough life. His wife was a very sick woman -- you know, she spent a good part of her life in one or another sanitarium. The son was terribly tragedy from the time he was six years old or something. Robinson has had a rough life, and this was a form of vanity largely.

I think after a while he got to enjoy looking it as well as possessing it. The *Proud Possessors* is an excellent title, the book that Aline Luckheim...Aline Saarinen wrote. She wrote it as Aline Luckheim, her first marriage. I think that was excellent, a great title, and we talked about that a great deal. I introduced her to a lot of the collectors when she was working on the book, and none of those people resented it. I don't think anybody resented the title.

DR. PHILLIPS: Maybe they can't read.

MS. HALPERT: They can't understand. They always think you're talking about somebody else -- always and I'd say, "God, I can't bear another rich bastard."

They laugh. They don't think I'm talking about them. But hasn't it always been so.

DR. PHILLIPS: Well, I think they carried the art world for a long while -- didn't they?

MS. HALPERT: They carried a sector of the art world for a long time. I mean Duveen's techniques of guaranteeing to buy the picture back. He gave me a little training too because of Mrs. Rockefeller. I have some letters from him because Mrs. Rockefeller introduced him to me and one time she let me watch his salesmanship which was but fascinating. God, I never thought of that. She said, "Do you want to see a real salesman?"

I said, "Yes."

She said, 'Come down to the museum where you can see the stairway."

I said, "That isn't nice is it?"

She said, "Use your own judgment."

I said, "I'm curious enough to be nice at your suggestion."

I watched it. Four men arrived with a tapestry with pulleys -- all sorts of equipment. I couldn't see. I just saw the tapestry going up right in this flat area in the corridor -- a very wide corridor. It just went up like magic, and suddenly there was a light on it, a beautiful quiet light on the tapestry, and five minutes later there was a commotion and the Lord came.

DR. PHILLIPS: Himself.

MS. HALPERT: In person, and then he became completely ecstatic about this tapestry, ignored Mrs. Rockefeller, and she was standing there and she'd peak at me once in a while, and then she said, "Oh, Mrs. Rockefeller, forgive me. I was so entranced with this incredibly beautiful tapestry that I forgot that I was not alone with it."

I made little notes. I have a bunch of notes of credos of the dealers. She didn't fall for it. I did all of the Rockefeller's buying. When we got his letter, I told her that I couldn't sell to her because I heard that she was anti-Semitic, and she said, "Well, Mr. Rockefeller buys everything from Lord Duveen and isn't he of the same persuasion, Mrs. Halpert?"

After he left, I stayed for lunch and she said, "I thought you'd enjoy seeing how it's done. It's so much more pleasant than your way, Mrs. Halpert. You always beat me down. You never let me feel as comfortably as he does."

I said, "Do you really?"

She said, "Not any more. You've spoiled everybody for me."

Finally she called him up and made arrangements for me to meet him at his emporium, and I remember the flunkies that called out my name. There was a move of some mogul -- well, this was just like I had seen it a short time before. My name was called out by flunky and flunky as I passed through this long corridor and

galleries. I went to his office and sat down. He was connected with the Tate Gallery -- I mean he made gifts to the Tate Gallery, and I suggested that he give an American painting to the Tate Gallery. Perhaps England could get to know something about what our boys and girls were doing. I gave him a long, long sales talk, and I said, "Just in the beginning I think there should be one, but I think gradually it would be nice if there were a Lord Duveen Gallery of American art."

Well, he was a better salesman than I was. I found about twelve letters to him and each time he said he was considering it, but he never came across. He was very pleasant. That Kansas City episode didn't endear me to him. That was considerably later, but the whole plan in his case was a very simple one. He would sell you a tapestry or a Rembrandt, or anything, Italian primitive and guarantee that he would purchase it at any time for a ten percent increase if you thought that you'd like something else, or you might not love it as much, you could always get your money back. Plus the ten percent. What did you have to lose?

DR. PHILLIPS: Nothing -- just nothing.

MS. HALPERT: But the technique was this. He'd sell something to someone and then he would see Frick and say, "What you really need is a crucifixion, a primitive, right over your mantel. Now there isn't anything on the market. There's nothing in Europe. There's nothing anywhere. I have searched and searched and there's nothing."

The next time you saw him, he would say, "So-and-so has a Poussin, I think I can manage to get it from him for a slight consideration." He would go to this guy and buy it back for the original price plus ten percent by suggesting that something else would look better in his context, and he would sell it to Mr. Frick for twice as much. This went on, this continuous rehashing, each time making another profit and making the original buyer exceedingly happy.

Then he got caught in the crash, and the Chase Bank would not lend to anybody. I bought this house, and I went there for a puny five thousand dollars and offered -- this was 1945 -- art as collateral. I had Harnett. I had a number of things. They said that they were burnt once, and that they'd never get burned again. They were stuck with a lot of Duveen art, and he could not pay. He was caught short.

That's when the old collections were made up. Prints would have to sell because a king of an adjoining country was sold the idea of having a so-and-so. It was always that kind of exchange. It was a matter of status, a status symbol. It's just the way English portraits were sold in this country -- not the men, but the women. All the pairs were broken up -- the Lawrence's, the whatnot. Americans bought women as their ancestors.

DR. PHILLIPS: That's an interesting comment.

MS. HALPERT: It was about ten years ago that I was thinking about that. We had all the women and left all the men there, you see, the man had to be the same name, the same family name, and so on; the women could have been collateral relatives, but these were the ancestors. The folk art -- even folk art sold that way for a time -- you know, the early American portraits and so on, but that did not create the right atmosphere. It was not until the smaller guy got into the set that art was being bought with very few -- I mean there were people like Leo Stain. It was Gertrude Stein; she came in later. It was Leo Stein whose response to works of art was real. Hers was too, but he was the one who injected that whole atmosphere of buying experimental works of art.

DR. PHILLIPS: From the point of view of techniques of sales, you told me once that Stieglitz never put a price on a picture.

MS. HALPERT: He didn't sell. You bought. Mrs. Shields gave an O'Keeffe picture to her daughter who was one of the popular actor's wives. Mrs. Shields told me this story herself, that she gave the picture away to her daughter. Well, her daughter was changing her decor, or something and wanted to sell it. I said, "Why don't you have her give it to a museum?"

She did. She gave it to the Santa Barbara Museum. Everybody was happy. She said, "Can she get a ten thousand dollar allowance?"

I said, "No, because they don't sell at that price. How much did you pay?

She said, "How much did I pay?"

I didn't know what was the matter. The old girl was really wonderful. She said, "Like a goddamn fool I walked into Stieglitz's wearing a sable cape. I loved that flower painting. I just loved it. I said to Stieglitz, "How much is that flower?"

He said, "How much did you pay for that cape you're wearing?"

She said, "I told him that I paid four thousand dollars for it, and he said, "Very well. You will pay four thousand dollars for the O'Keeffe. I was so embarrassed that I did it."

His idea was how much is it worth to you. He even did that to me. He was sick. I was still downtown, and my sister was driving me crazy, saying that I should get a fur coat. I didn't have any. I said, "A cloth coat keeps me warm. I don't have time to get cold."

I was selling folk art -- I think it was. Every time she would come to town, she would take the sale of the day -- something that I owned, and she'd save it up. Finally she had saved twelve hundred dollars, and she said, "I know that we can get a simple little fur coat for you."

Stieglitz was at American Place, 515 Madison. We were going to 57th Street, and we passed Stieglitz's address. I said, "I want to get off here a minute."

She said, "You're not going to look at art."

I said, 'Well, Stieglitz is sick and I really should go up for a minute and ask him how he is. It will make him feel better."

We went up. She was clutching my money in her purse. I saw this Marin, and I just went absolutely wild. I said, "Stieglitz, I've got to have that Marin.

He said, "How much is it worth to you?"

I grabbed Sonia's handbag and slipped all the money out, and he took it. He took that twelve hundred dollars for the picture. I resented that a little bit later. I still love the picture, but I thought that he might have made a better price for me because I did this spontaneously, but Sonia said, "This is the most idiotic thing!"

I said, "The picture makes me feel much warmer than a fur coat would," and it did. Each dealer had a technique. That's why I found it so difficult at first because it was so direct -- you know, no bargaining, no schmaltz, no curtsying to the customers, and it was a little tough at first. But being a young woman helped because they felt that arrogance was cute. If I tried it at this age in life, they'd sock me in the jaw. Now that they're used to it, they expect it.

The credo of Vollard is the one that is followed by all the European dealers, and it is now being picked up here. I think I told you that -- never have anything invested. Have the goods but no investment, and not only did he do very well, but other people did very well with things. When I went to see him, he always opened the door. He never let anybody in. One day he expected me, and his housekeeper opened the door. He was busy upstairs on the telephone, or something. There was a door ajar leading to the basement, to the cellar. The housekeeper was watching me. I was very quietly walking along, and she followed me. I just looked down.

He came down, and I said, "What is this?"

He said, "The dogs."

He had some dogs too. He was very honest and forth right about it. His was a perfectly logical, legitimate merchandizing idea, but he didn't tell it to everybody.

That same policy was followed through, but now with such great success by other dealers. They're doing it here -- now that American art is going abroad. They have the most, so it doesn't cost them anything right here. They make the deals like a cartel. All that's going to hurt the market, but I still have faith in the little guy. We're still having a Christmas show. I bought ten wonderful things for the Christmas show -- all under a thousand dollars.

The correspondence that I have that is going to the Archives in addition to this transcript -- I kept very few folders, very few letters, four or five of different characters in the upper bracket and then several folders of letters from the little guys which will give a very good indication of the difference between them because in both cases they're exaggerated. I'm not keeping the general run of letters. They're exaggerated, and I think it will be understood as such, the difference between a proud possessor, the amasser, and even the good ones.

We're pretty careful because very few of our things come up on the market again which shows that they do have some affection for what they buy, but the quality of the letters from these young people, or middle aged people who pay fifty dollars a month, or one hundred dollars a month. Every second or third time they send a check they tell you how much more the picture means to them, that they suddenly saw it in a different light, that it was the most wonderful experience, that they had it out on exhibition and that they have it back and they live again. This is real. They're not selling, and so basically I think that the American art buyer is much more honest and than ever have occurred in the history of the world because there are more people buying here than

anywhere.

The French buy very little art -- you know, except from us. If you look through the history of the modern movement, you'll see that purchases were made by Americans and two Russian places; the Hermitage and the Pushkin Museum, which shows the good judgment they used. These are the earliest things in the movement -- 1916 when the thing stopped, they didn't buy any more. They couldn't bring any more into the country.

There was some German buying, but very, very few French, very few. They waited until things began to click, and then it was a good investment. You know the Germans and their slogan. I kept hearing that in the thirties, in the twenties, whenever, someone tried to sell me anything, and some of them had to eat their words.

DR. PHILLIPS: There's the international aspect that we have yet to go into.

MS. HALPERT: Of course, the first -- this was before my time. I have the catalogue. I heard about it later. Mrs. Whitney sent one show abroad, but the first really important show, an all American show was 1938 -- Conger Goodyear, then president of the Museum of Modern Art, and she sampled a very excellent show with a great deal of help on the part of the staff, and it was an all inclusive show, American folk art too; Mrs. Rockefeller's collection mainly.

DR. PHILLIPS: Is this the show in Paris?

MS. HALPERT: Yes, and it had modern art, 19th century art, the academic art as well as the 18th and 19th centuries, old masters, architecture, movies, and the modern art was torn to pieces. That's when folk art became so hot. They let us shoot Indians on the prairie -- this was okay, but they would not accept modern art. The movies were a very successful department, and the folk art was very successful, a sensation, because it was not competitive. The French had no folk art.

DR. PHILLIPS: It this where the Harnett went over?

MS. HALPERT: No. That came later. They didn't go for that quite as much because that was closer to things they knew. It was just folk art, like *The Peaceable Kingdom* [1833] and their portraits -- they just raved! As a matter of fact, I owe everything to Leger in relation to folk art, because when he came to dinner, he had to go through the folk art gallery to get to my apartment, and he was stopped dead. He was the one who asked for folk art, and they were reproduced in France first. He just went absolutely wild.

Picasso thinks that the rooster is one of the greatest pieces of sculpture. He said that repeatedly. He was quoted on that. They'll forgive us for folk art because that as primitive and completely noncompetitive.

Now, they're having a rough time because their day is over. They're having a rough time because they have produced no great artist since the giants. There isn't one name that has been added. Well, there are a few almost greats, but not quite. They're not leaders as the others were. They're not Brocks, Picassos, Matisses and Brancusis -- you know, they just don't have them, and their atmosphere is changed considerably.

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes. They're not quite as arrogant about their contempt for American art!

MS. HALPERT: I remember the reviews of the show, and so far as the modern art is concerned they ripped it to pieces.

That 1938 show was really, really torn to pieces. Goodyear had Alfred Barr and others to help him choose a good show. It was about as good a show as you could have had at that time, a lot of top things. When I read the reviews I wrote a very nasty letter attacking the French press in one of the magazines because I went to the Modern Museum and read part of the clippings and it was really shocking -- terrible. I was glad that they liked folk art, but I thought the exaggeration of that was utterly ridiculous and the contempt for anything that would step on their sweet old toes!

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32 East 51st Street, New York City

[BEGINNING OF 7 OF 7 REEL A1r]

MS. HALPERT: Where are my glasses? I've got to get this date.

DR. PHILLIPS: That Dove [Arthur Dove] on the wall is so thought provoking that it just jars you.

MS. HALPERT: That -- well, what I feel about his work is that it really has an inner quality. I don't think you get any superficial response to it at all. It hits you inside immediately. This other picture here hits you outside, and then it hits you inside. Dove's picture is quiet because visually you can't describe it. Everything is all in the right place -- that's that, but then there's tonality, and it's so profound. Its profundity is all nature, and it doesn't make comments about the past or the present. It really is a cosmic thing -- all time, and it will be modern five hundred years hence. You can't get any more basic than that. You can't.

DR. PHILLIPS: Davis says -- I think I told you -- that the only change they can make in painting is to stop painting altogether.

MS. HALPERT: They are -- they're doing this "pop" art. How can a museum take a thing like that seriously! I mean the novelty, but you don't do that in a museum. You do it in "Believe it or Not" -- what was his name?

DR. PHILLIPS: Ripley -- it is a side show.

MS. HALPERT: Yes. It's a Ripley thing.

DR. PHILLIPS: That Dove is just great. It's somewhat like the one that used to hang over there.

MS. HALPERT: That yellow.

DR. PHILLIPS: Yes.

MS. HALPERT: I'm in a real spot now because Jim Foster came here. He saw the show at the Corcoran, and he said, "Edith, you've just got to let it come out to Santa Barbara."

I said, "For those queers?"

He said, "The collection is so inspiring that maybe somebody will want to do it for us. I'm not making a bid for the collection. It's one, but it's so inspiring. You've got to let it come here. You always say that there is somebody somewhere who has a response, and all we need is to get one response out here in this area to get something like this. It can't be this, but it can inspire someone to do something of the kind."

Bob Grippey come along and says, "If Jim gets it -- why can't we get it in Hawaii? You've been preaching there, and this is the end product."

That means that the collection will be gone for six months. I need it -- I really need that Marin as an assertion of faith in human nature. I need that desperately, that somebody remembers, that somebody on his death bed leaves something to be shown on Christmas Eve. I think that's a fantastic thing. I need that -- you know, it's important for me. I tend to get depressed lately.

DR. PHILLIPS: These are all old friends too.

MS. HALPERT: They're more than friends. They're faiths -- the thing that I feel lacking today more than anything and especially in relation to my trip to Russia, because that was pointed out to me so, and I'm not talking about their religion, but they are people who still have a faith, a belief, and that's almost nonexistent in America. I'm not talking about the people who have great religious feeling -- you know, or working for a cause.

I'm talking about the common man, about a great many people, and it's there as a faith, that somebody believes in the future and in a better world. It just doesn't exist, and I had to bear it, and in Russia it really affected me very strongly, because it came from all kinds of people; the taxi driver, an artist -- I told you that story about the six portraits. What shocked me about it was that this guy really believed what he was doing. He believed it. I hear Ben Shahn giving me a big line -- well, it isn't so. It ain't so! This was real. I need that badly. I need the Marin for that reason -- so that I can believe in somebody.

DR. PHILLIPS: How did you get involved initially?

MS. HALPERT: Well, somebody from the State Department called on me -- a stranger. He said that I had been selected to go to Russia as the representative of the United States Government as the curator for the art collection. I laughed and said, "This is preposterous! I went there last year on my own. I just don't feel like going again. I don't feel like going for something because something happens. Like the time I went to Europe with a sick sister and came home with an American exhibition. It happened. There wasn't anything planned. I don't like to plan on a certain mission."

I said that it was out of the question. Then I had more people come, more letters and so on with all sorts of coaxing, and finally I said, "This is preposterous! You cannot -- you may not select an art dealer to represent an American exhibition. It gives the exhibition a commercial note. Everybody will scream about it here."

"Oh no," he said, "That was taken up at the meeting."

Well, they have an Art Council for the State Department. The council met including the four people who selected the exhibit. The exhibition had been selected by Lloyd Goodrich, Theodore Roszak, Henry Hope, and two museum people. It was very professionally done. They were all members of the council. I was proposed -- this man told me -- and one person said, "Oh, you can't have an art dealer. That's been mentioned."

I said, "There you are -- forget it!"

He said, "No. Everybody jumped up, and somebody made the statement and everyone agreed that Edith Halpert is not an art dealer; she's an institution."

I said, "I don't want to feel like an institution either. Get the hell out of here."

He left, and then he came back, and I got this letter from the State Department saying that I was the only person in the whole United States -- and I'm afraid I am -- who knew American art, who knew how to run an exhibition, who had run a number of large exhibitions in the past and who spoke Russian.

DR. PHILLIPS: Of course.

MS. HALPERT: And after all it was something that was American, and I should contribute. I broke down and said, "Yes."

That's how it all started. Then I thought about it very seriously -- as long as I did not get paid. All these things I did no matter how desperately poor I was. I then could do what I wanted to do, and nobody could tell me what to do. As soon as you get paid you have to work for somebody. I've been self-employed for a long time, and I decided that I didn't want to stay in Moscow for five weeks. The whole show lasted, I think, five weeks, or four weeks and that they would have to have someone relieve me, and by that time the job would have been well done, the installation of the show, the first series of lectures and all the propaganda would be established.

They told me to pick somebody, and I picked a very unlikely person, and I did make a mistake. However, he got paid, but there was only one fare for the job. He got the fare, and he got paid, and I went on my own. I could be, and I was, independent. I arrived there, and I traveled tourist, since I was paying my own fare. When I lecture I always travel first class, so that the museums and universities don't think I'm a cheapskate. They can pay for it.

Well, I traveled tourist, and I arrived in Moscow, and I was met with a number of other people who arrived earlier or later that day coming through by way of Paris. That was the first year that they had any foreign airline into Russia. The year before I had to get off at Helsinki and get into a Soviet plane, and the year before was when I discovered that I spoke Russian. I didn't know that I spoke Russian, not only spoke it, but I could read, and I learned a great deal.

I was met by an official from the State Department, but I think from the Embassy. They had Embassy station wagons which were admired by hundreds and hundreds of Russians. They stood there, and they admired that car. I got out. I was taken to the hotel. There was a great deal of discussion about my hotel. Everybody working for the fair were taken to two hotels, one for the guides, the Sovietskya, which was a cheaper hotel, and the others went to -- well, I've forgotten the name of the hotel, but I insisted on going to the National where I stayed the year before and liked it very much. I rented a suite, a very large suite which was very expensive. I didn't need that suite. I knew I was working eighteen hours a day, and I didn't need a large suite, but evidently something I had envisioned happened, and it did happen, and I required a good deal of space.

We got to the hotel, and there was a great deal of discussion about my going to the National Hotel because that was only for the VIPs; in fact, the only person who was connected with the fair who was staying there was McClellan who was the director of the entire fair, and his wife and they didn't think that it was fitting just for the curator, the head of one of the forty-eight departments to stay there too, but I got there.

I arrived with a lot of baggage -- Oh God, I paid sixty, or eighty-five dollars extra on baggage because I bought catalogues and books to give away. I know that they all give you presents and you give them presents. Also I brought a lot of food with me having had no food the year before. I brought all sorts of quick stuff -- what's that ghastly stuff to make orange juice with -- well, phony stuff, coffee, everything. The chauffeur took my bags out and the porter came out, took four bags one at a time, turned around and he saw me, dropped the bags including -- well, I had an orange juice squeezer, a glass one. I heard things breaking. I had two gallons of scotch in a plastic bottle and so on. He threw his arms around me and kissed me, and this went on and on as I got into the hotel. Everybody said, "Hello" and kissed me.

I threw down my bags. Everything was still locked, and I immediately asked the station wagon to come back

and take me to the park, and the driver said that he couldn't do it, that I would have to get a cab, that he had various other people to deliver and things to do, and that wasn't on his schedule. I got a cab, and I was taken to the park. I asked where the exhibition site was, and finally I got to an office.

Right on the outskirts was an old building that had been put in use as the temporary office. I went up very pleasantly and introduced myself, and the first person I introduced myself to turned his back on me, and this went on and on and on. Five or six people turned their back on me, and nobody would talk to me. I kept saying, "I am so-and-so" -- this was the American office, the exhibition office, and finally I saw a desk that said "press," and I walked over. I think the guy's name was -- well, I have it all here, Fine, or Finck, or whatever. He was the press representative. He was talking to somebody. I waited politely, and finally I decided that I had to register somewhere. I introduced myself, and he turned on me. Well, I have never heard anybody use such language in all my life. He attacked me violently. He said, "Get the hell out of here! You've ruined the show before it's started," and he went on and on and on. I said, "Who are you?"

He repeated his name -- you know, he was the press man, and I said, "What is this?"

He said, "This is going to make us the laughingstock of the show. You've ruined everything. The idea of attacking the President of the United States. You have fallen right into the lap of the communists. You're a dirty red!"

This was the first time in my life that I raised my fist, and I was swinging. I was going to knock that bastard down! Here I was -- tired. I had traveled a long time. I was greeted by everybody at the National hotel with love and kisses -- the floor girls, everybody rushed out. The captain came down from the dining room. I'd been there the year before, and they all remembered me. The Russians are very, very friendly people, and to get everything but from your countrymen -- you know, everybody turned his back. Then this guy attacked me. Well, somebody grabbed my arm. Finally a man got up and he said, "I am Alexander so-and-so," and he started talking Russian to me. He was a Russian who worked for this government group. He was sort of a liaison man. He quieted me down, and I said, "Where is the exhibition building?"

He said, "The golden dome."

He couldn't walk out. He was working for it. I was leaving -- you know, I said I was going home. "To hell with it!"

I paid my own fare, and I wouldn't enjoy staying in Moscow on my own. Then I kept remembering that people like the Lowenthals, and a great many collectors, refused to let their pictures go to Russia. They were sure they that they would be destroyed there by the "Red" and I coaxed them to lend them. I said that I would protect every work of art with my life, and based on that, there were at least twenty things that would not have gone if I wasn't going with them, so I decided that maybe I'd better stay so I asked where the site was, and he told me that it was in the park. He couldn't go with me, and he said, "Just walk along."

It was about a mile and a half of walking. I was tired, and I was all dressed up to register -- you know, I thought there would be a limousine to take me to the site. I was wearing big heeled shoes, so I walked looking for "the golden dome." I asked about fifty people, and they didn't know what I was talking about in any language. In Russia they never heard of "the golden dome," and it wasn't finished.

Eventually I got there, and it was the worst, most horrible, the most shocking thing. The exhibition was only five, or six days off, and the place was the most unfinished place you ever say, everybody running, screaming. The place was filthy. The noise was ghastly, and finally I asked for George Nelson, the designer. They said that he was there. Well, I chased all over the place. I had met him once and I thought I would recognize him. Finally I did, and he didn't have any time to talk to me. He felt harassed. Nothing had been delivered -- you know, there were a great many things that hadn't arrived. The place was an absolute turmoil, so he finally pointed out where I was to be and I walked -- it was the very end.

This was the most idiotic hunk of architecture, and I love George Nelson, but whoever conceived the idea -- whether he was responsible, whatever -- no one seemed to realize that the temperature in Moscow in the summer -- this was July and August -- is equivalent to the temperature in New York, very high. The entire building was glass. All four sides of it were glass with a metal roof which just hugged the heat and the gallery got to be -- well, occasionally it reached about a hundred and two indoors, and it was really ghastly! I saw this space, and I was utterly shocked. It was so small, and I kept thinking of forty-eight pictures and so many pieces of sculpture -- where in the hell would you put them. Then I looked around. The ceilings were painted a la Mondrian. The ceilings were red, green, purple, yellow which was wonderful for pictures. It reflects the light, so that any picture that is in a monochrome would be brilliant in color.

It was the most dreadful thing I ever saw! The whole place was impossible, the lights -- there were just a few bulbs floating around, and they were all going up. There was nothing to illuminate the pictures. I took one look

and again I was going home, and again I remembered the collectors whom I promised my life practically for the show. I went back to the hotel but in a state I've never experiences. It was the most shocking thing. Then I asked people where the pictures were, where the sculpture was, and everybody pushed me away. Everybody was in a hurry. They were finishing their own booth, and half of the place didn't have partitions. There were lights in certain places and not in others.

It looked as though the show was about six months off, so I went back to the hotel, unpacked, and I stretched out and tried to decide whether I should get in touch with the collectors, send cables, and say that I had to leave, and they could withdraw their works of art. I had never been licked before. I had to fight off this thing. I had to see it through. I went back, and I got Alexander, and I said, "Where are the paintings? Where are the sculptures?"

He said, "At the Pushkin Museum."

He whispered to me. Nobody there spoke Russian, so they didn't understand us. We sort of walked out in the corridor, and he told me where they were, and I said, "What do I do about it?"

He said, "Meet me at nine o'clock tomorrow morning" at such and such a spot, and he wrote out the instructions for the taxi driver. I had to go around in some odd corners and what not. He said, "I will take you there. I will leave a note that I cannot arrive until twelve o'clock."

I met him there at the Pushkin Museum. We walked in, and he asked for the deputy. The director was on his vacation as most of the VIPs were at that time, so I saw the deputy and Alexander disappeared immediately. He wasn't supposed to be seen. He just beckoned to me. He showed me where to go and ask for the deputy. I sat down and talked to him very politely, very pleasantly. I asked him where the crates were, and he said, "They're outside on the portico."

These were enormous crates. They were covered. They were protected. He said, "There they are. They're all yours."

I said, "You mean I will take them on my shoulders. I'm little."

I got feminine as hell, and he said -- if anybody had witnessed this performance! -- and he said, "No. We will have this all done for you."

I said, "Very well."

I watched these men carry the crates and I mean carry -- no dolly, no anything, down a steep flight of steps and trucks arrived. It took several hours to get this thing organized, and they began -- it was broiling hot, and they were huffing and puffing. They began getting these in the truck. Each crate had the weight on it in pounds. Of course they thought this was in pounds, and they were absolutely horrified -- you know, six men were doing all this without any equipment just picking up the crates. I had with me a catalogue with reproductions. There was one, the heaviest of all, and the men looked at it, and they weren't just going to move. I kidded them along, told them that they were the strongest men, that they could knock out every American prize fighter, but I managed. You know, I sort of cuddled up and kidded them. They began moving this thing. They finally had to stop. They said that they just couldn't go on. This crate had in it the Lachaise standing woman that belongs to the Museum of Modern Art, and it weighs -- you know it's over life size. I said, "Oh, it's just a little bitsy woman," that they were silly, that they could do it.

They did get it on the second truck, and they were very unhappy. By this time they were cross as hell. They didn't think it was funny, so I opened up the catalogue and showed them this nude female and they were really horrified. They were so shocked! They were moving this! They were sweating their life blood for this figure! I said, "You know, in America we thought of you, and we decided to strip her. Could you imagine how much more she would weigh if she had clothes on!"

Well, you know, the Russians have a sense of the ridiculous. They have a very interesting sense of humor. Well, that slayed them. They just died, and of course they immediately jumped around, and they hugged and kissed me saying that they thought that was fine. They repeated it to each other, and they yelled down to the public. They explained to them that this would have weighed another half ton if she were dressed, that the Americans sent her naked to protect them. That sort of broke everybody up, and we were fine.

We arrived there, and that was that. I said, "Who is going to open it?"

Nobody in the American section would talk to me. I just didn't exist. Well, the show had to go on. I have a report that I made out for the State Department with all this in it. This isn't anything that I dreamed up. There were a lot of witnesses.

DR. PHILLIPS: You mean you were "Typhoid Mary."

MS. HALPERT: "Typhoid Mary" anybody wouldn't have been aware of. Everybody was aware of me. I had talked back to the President of the United States, called him a moron, or something. "Lady Talks Back, 'See here Ike. Let experts pick our art.'" There are about three hundred clippings here.

DR. PHILLPS: He objected to several . . .

MS. HALPERT: Well, he threw out the Jack Levine. "United States Exhibit Curator Howls at Ike's Criticism." I didn't tell you this? Well, this was a week before the show. I had been working on the catalogue in Russian. Not only were the translations ridiculous, but the material that was used -- the State Department employees, some department, their press department, they did the catalogue. I have all the originals and they are all going to the Archives. The original catalogue of Alexander Brook it said Alexander Brook was once considered an interesting artist, but of course no one thinks anything of him anymore.

DR. PHILLIPS: Jesus!

MS. HALPERT: This is what they wrote, and I have it all. Of course, that was a fine way to run a show. Charles Demuth was a dandy. He was a fop. Well, you can't put that in a catalogue. He also happened to be a great artist, but it started out Demuth was a dandy. I had to rewrite the entire catalogue including material about artists that I disliked intensely, make them sound wonderful, have it translated, and I paid personally for some of the translation. I couldn't do it myself.

In any event, that was one of the great problems, and then I went out to Newtown. I was completely exhausted working actually twenty-four hours a day -- this was during May and June -- to get the catalogue done, to make all the arrangements, and about two days before -- no, it was more than that; about a week before I was to leave for Moscow, it was the third time that I decided to take a nap during the day I was so exhausted, and Albert my house man called me and said that there was a very important telephone call and they insisted that I answer. I crawled down and I was half asleep and somebody said, "What do you think of the President's statement?"

I said, "I don't care. I want to go back to sleep."

This man was very persistent and he said, "I've got to have the actual words" -- well, in any event, this was reported to me. This must have happened on July 1st when I got this telephone call. He said that the president removed the Jack Levine painting. He is critical of the art for Moscow. He calls the Levine painting a lampoon, and he withdrew it. It was a painting called *Welcome Home* [1946] which Jack Levine painted when he returned from the army which he did not enjoy, and it was a takeoff on a general, and a very unpleasant one, a welcome home party with his wife and so on. The President removed the picture, and I said out of a sound sleep, "That moron!"

I said some terribly unkind things about the President. I said that his work was not so hot, "After all he's an amateur painter. He's not a very good president, but he certainly is a stinking painter, and he should stick to his own field and not discuss art," and then I went back to finish my nap. The next morning which was July 2nd, some friends of mine in Dansbury came driving up about ten o'clock and said, "Did you see the papers yesterday? Did you hear the President?"

I said, "How would I have heard the President? He doesn't nudge me." I hadn't appeared in the paper. It was just mentioned in a press conference that he was throwing out this picture. I said, "How could I see the paper? I don't have the New York City delivery."

They brought it, and this was in the *Herald Tribune* with a picture on the front page, reporting that this woman said that the President wasn't very good as an artist, that he should -- "Lady Talks Back. Let Experts Pick Our Art." This appeared in practically every newspaper not only in the United States, but all over the world. I was very amused. We've talked about artists and how careful they are.

Well, I got this telegram from Jack Levine from Italy where this story was printed. I got one from Greece where it appeared. Jack's was very carefully worded: JUST SAW PARIS TRIBUNE. EDITH I LOVE YOU JACK. No surname. The interesting thing was that the president was a very nice guy, and at the next news conference he said that he was wrong, that he really wasn't an expert. You know, it was in the form of an apology. "Lady Curator Tosses a Stinker at Eisenhower the Painter." This was his apology in a way that he should not have said anything about the exhibition, that I was right, that the experts had picked it and forget about it. That was the end of that. Two days later I was leaving.

In between Mr. Walters, Frances Walters, a congressman decided to throw out thirty more works of art because they were community. Nobody did anything about this so I hied myself to Danbury with about fifty dollars in cash and sent a very long telegram to Dillon, Secretary of State, and to Nelson Rockefeller who is very

interested in art. They were both very charming about it.

Well, in any event the show did go. The days before I was leaving for Moscow, I was getting telephone calls and letters with four letter words attacking me. I have a lot of these letters and a few nice ones. Ben Rich sent me a beautiful telegram and all of Houston collectively, the art people there, sent me a telegram, and then I got some of the dirtiest four letter word letters from various parts of the United States. Here are some of them, if you want to read some of them. Some of them were very funny, and some of them were very nice, but that wasn't all. I received a telephone call from a neighbor up the hill, and he said, "Mrs. Halpert? We had a meeting last night at the town hall in Newtown."

It's a very cultural area. We have a lot of television people, a lot of theatrical people, writers, singers, painters, a very cultured group. Suddenly I get this telephone call from a guy who owns a great pharmaceutical collection and kept bothering me for months to help him sell some of them for him, very friendly, but a horrible guy, and he said, "We had a meeting at town hall last night, and you have one of two choices. You either apologize to the President or get the hell out of Newtown, you dirty communist!"

I laughed, "Stop kidding."

He said, "I am not kidding. I am ashamed to be in the same town with you."

I said, "Why don't you get the hell out of it then," and I hung up. Then the phone began to ring continuously. I had Albert answer the phone, and he got absolutely terrified. I wasn't afraid. I have an early American house, a pre-revolutionary house with the original windows and knowing what happened in Levittown, whether it's Jews, or Negroes, or Reds, or whatever, I wasn't going to have my house destroyed, so I called out constable. We shared him with Redding, Connecticut. I said, "Come right over. This is imperative."

So he came right over. I told him about the warning, and asked, "Is it true?"

He said, "Oh yes. There was a meeting at the town hall and you have to get out of town."

I said, "As a taxpayer, as an American citizen and being appointed by the United States Government to go abroad, I demand protection."

He said, "Lady, you shouldn't have done it. You shouldn't have done it."

This was the refrain. I said, "Can you hit a bull's eye with your gun?"

He said, "Sure I can."

"If I came over and told you how to shoot, you'd tell me to go to hell wouldn't you?"

He said, "You wouldn't do that would you? You would. I wouldn't like it, and I'd tell you to get the hell out."

I said, "Okay. I did that to the President. He doesn't know anything about art. He had no right to say anything."

He said, "I guess not, but there's nothing I can do, Lady. You'll have to hire a couple of detectives. This place will be rushed, and this place is going to be ruined, and there's nothing I can do. I'm only half on duty here."

I said, "What'll I do?"

He said, "Call Richfield Barracks."

I called the Richfield Barracks, and I said, "I want protection. I'm a Connecticut taxpayer," and they came right out, and I told the whole story. I showed them the following morning's report with the President retreating completely on this. I showed them some of the letters I had received and so on, and this constable kept saying, "Lady, you shouldn't have done it."

Fortunately at the Richfield Barracks there is a cop who paints. Once I got stuck. The car went dead, and I had to call the barracks. There you have to call the police, or the state troopers, or whatever, this guy came alone, and he was very impressed with the fact that I knew exactly how long my car was. I left it on the road, off the side of the road, two miles and eight tenths from this gas station. He looked up and said, "Good God, Lady, I've seen your picture."

That week I was on *Newsweek*, or something -- Boston, or whatever, and I said, "Oh."

"No, I've seen your picture. Are you an actress?"

I said, "No."

Finally I broke down, and he said, "Do you want to see my painting?"

He picked up the car. He went and got somebody to take care of the car, while the car was being repaired, he took me to his house and showed me his sweet little flower pictures. His wife was charming, and she kept pulling out more pictures. We had a ball, and I said that I was going to have a police department exhibition and I really started it, though the police department here decided that too many of them painted pretty pictures, that they wouldn't be men, and they wouldn't let it go through. In any event, he remembered me and he said, "We'll take care of this place."

I had a twenty-four patrol all the time I was away. They had three shifts of a patrol and watched it day and night. The place would have been wrecked completely.

That was before I left for Russia and then to have that reception when I arrived and these were -- you know, not the lowbrows that went to the town meeting, but our culturini, so it was pretty, pretty horrible.

Well, I came back to the exposition ground. There was no one to unpack, no one to help, no one to put in lights, no lights, no bulbs. There was nobody to paint the ceilings. I couldn't have those colored ceilings. There was no equipment, no nails, no screw eyes, no wire -- there was nothing. Nobody would talk to me, so I went back to the Pushkin Museum and talked to the deputy whose name I forget, I regret to say. I gave him a line.

I discovered that being feminine which I'd never tried before, paid off but good in Russia, and I did read a long article at one time that they had the best restorers, the best conservators in Russia, that they were trained thoroughly and that they were great, great experts, and it's true that they are very good. I've heard that professionally here, so I gave the deputy a big line about that, and I said, "You know, we have very excellent people too -- I don't know who is better -- and you know they forgot to send people to hang the show. After all, you can't expect me to pick up a piece of sculpture, or open crates, can you?"

He kept silent, so I added, "I weigh only one hundred and nineteen pounds."

He said, "Of course not."

I said, "They just overlooked our great professionals who do the hanging, and the placing of all the objects in the exhibition, and I'll bet yours are as good as ours."

He said, "They're better!"

I said, "Do you think you could lend me somebody?"

He said, "How many do you want?"

I said, "Six."

I was hoping that I would get two. He called somebody, and in about ten minutes twelve big husky brutes came up, and he said, "Have your pick."

I said, "All I wanted was" -- well, I thought I'd better stick to my story -- "six. Let them volunteer."

They all volunteered. "I won't select them. You do it. They're going to have long hours. Those who have no wives and children. Don't worry, I'm not going to play up to them. I'm not going to take them back to America with me."

I got six of them, and they came along. Where they got the material I don't know. They had cord, they had wire; they had everything. They didn't have any paint pots. They didn't have paint because I found out where all the paint was stored. Everybody was smearing there. I got hold of some paint. My two guides arrived -- one a boy and one girl, and the girl was very pretty. I said to the boy, "You go and steal the paint."

I said to the girl, "You go and steal the brushes" -- they were very scarce -- "You know how to do it."

Well, I had the whole thing repainted in no time. The crates were opened -- you know, out in the open, and there were a lot of Russians walking through, screaming as the things were taken out. We had to cover everything up because the nudes -- the sculpture really knocked them for a loop. It was either too abstract, or naked. There was nothing in between, so we got some old rags and covered them up before they were placed.

It was funny the way they were screaming, and it was agonizing too. I found out that they had a group of Helsinki workers -- there were all sorts of imported workers there who did the carpentry. There was a

Frenchman who handled the electrical work, and fortunately I had stopped off in Paris two days en route, so I started talking French to this guy, and he got me bulbs. He sent me three guys, and I got bulbs and my lighting fixtures up.

The day before opening everything was in perfectly beautiful order. I typed up the labels. I got a typewriter from -- we had an exhibit including typewriters, so I borrowed a typewriter and some paper, and I typed up the labels. Nobody in the administration did anything for me. I got everything from other people. I went to the Ford exhibition, a car exhibition. Those were private industries -- outside. There were forty-eight departments that we ran -- I mean, the government ran, and then there were all these private places. I got things from everybody. I ran around like mad getting coy, cute, pathetic, and everything! I outdid Sarah Bernhardt to get this stuff, but the place really looked elegant.

Larry Fleischman arrived with his father, and this huge quantity of carpet. His father was in the carpet business, and we were the only department in the entire joint that had carpet. All the floors were foam rubber underneath which made it possible for me to be on my feet all day. The Russians would cut little hunks off. It kept getting smaller and smaller. They wanted to see how it was made. They'd cut little samples.

But really we opened up in grand style. The place looked absolutely magnificent with white ceilings with just the light I wanted. The place was hung. These Russian helpers I had worked with me the night before the private opening, the press opening. They worked right through twenty-four hours. They wouldn't take a nickel. They wouldn't take anything. They were so devoted to this whole idea, or to me, whichever, and then I got three of them to act as cops to keep the crowd out. All of this came from the Russian Administration -- not one person from the American Administration, but nobody! Well, the opening day . . .

DR. PHILLIPS: Didn't anyone in the American administration see what was going on, the changes and alterations that were being made?

MS. HALPERT: They paid absolutely no attention. I could have put on a strip tease troop there, and they wouldn't have known the difference and they wouldn't have cared. Nobody came near the place. I went to see Mr. McClellan, and he refused to talk to me. Nobody would talk to me, and George Nelson was too busy with his problems. They put cement floors -- they put in some kind of cement, and I forget what it was, that created the most terrible dust in the whole history of the world, and everything got black, and poor George was going out of his mind because people were choking while they were getting things ready -- you know, they'd lay out a room of white, and it was black in no time so that they had to redo the floors. Nobody could walk. They had to crawl through little holes. The thing was a madhouse. For American efficiency, believe me, we gave them the most dreadful picture of all times.

Why don't I just take this out of my report which was a very factual report? This is in the catalogue. Here's my cop -- my devoted cop, one of the three that I had. Well, in any event, the day of the private opening came. Before I left we got some sort of a notice. I wrote and called up somebody and asked, "How does one behave? What do you do? What was I to do?"

Nobody told me anything, what line I was to take -- propaganda wise. They all told me to drop dead here, and then, of course, this man, the public relations man, wouldn't talk to me; the Embassy wouldn't talk to me. I wasn't registered, or anything, but somewhere along the line and I don't know whether it was here or there, we were told before the opening we should look very American. We should be very well dressed. It was here. I remember buying a cotton dress for one hundred and eighty dollars, so I should look like a capitalist for the opening, and here I was all dolled up. Everything was ready in the morning. Everything was hung, labeled, polished, carpet ready, and so on, and Larry Fleischman came with his entourage the night before to help, and I just old everybody to get the hell out because my six Russians were incredible. They were absolutely wonderful. I didn't need anybody else. I said, "Get out!"

I didn't have any food for twenty-four hours. I didn't go to dinner with them, or anything, but they were watching and they reported on it to the State Department later, so I'm standing there all dolled up, and three men came in suddenly. I had my police there with ropes so that nobody could break through. These three men appeared, and I got very indignant. I said, "I'm sorry. This is not open to the public until after the rope is cut downstairs, until after our vice-president and your Khrushchev come in."

They pulled out their cards, press, Russian press. That was all right. The press could be admitted, and I spoke English. I learned years ago that it was always wise when you're in a foreign country until you know your way around you pretend that you don't talk anything but English. I did that in Germany when I was arrested, and it worked like a charm. I've had that experience in traveling. I always travel alone, and years ago I had all sorts of experience. I learned that it is best not to know languages, so I spoke English, and I said, "Come in."

So the leader of the group spoke some English, and he said, "You have forty-seven pictures?"

I said, "oh, no. Forty-eight."

I knew exactly what he meant, that the President had removed the picture. He said, "No. No. Forty-seven."

I said, "Oh, no. Forty-eight. I hung them with the help of your men for which I thank Russia, and there were forty-eight."

He said, "No. No."

I said, "Is there anything in particular you have in mind?"

Then they whispered to each other -- I just stood there and said nothing -- "Ask her, where is the painting."

This one asked, "Where is Jack Levine?"

I said, "Oh, gosh, I can't remember where I hung it. Let me think."

He repeated his question, and they were gloating. This appeared in *Time* Magazine later -- this whole story. They were gloating, and when I thought, "This was long enough," I said, "Oh, I remember. I hung the Levine in a less conspicuous place for the very simple reason that I didn't want him to run away with the show."

I gather that somebody had heard about it, that it had appeared in the Russian papers. I hadn't read about it, or seen it, but I heard about it and knew that it had appeared in the Russian papers because at the hotel the Maitre d'hotel said to me, "Oh, you have trouble. There is picture missing."

I didn't know what he was talking about. Well, in any event, I finally led them to the Jack Levine. They had pulled out this clipping, a front page article had appeared in *Pravda* with a big photograph, a reproduction right across the page. I had put up signs because I had noticed the year before that in all the museums the Russians touch pictures, and I didn't want them to touch these. I promised the collectors that nobody would touch the pictures. I put up the do not touch signs, and it was right above the Jack Levine, one of the signs I had, about ten of them, so these three people stared at the picture, and they didn't believe it, but there it was. I said, "You may touch it."

They compared it, and there was no question about it. They looked as though they wanted to die. They started walking off and suddenly this guy wheels around and he says, "Where is woman?"

I said, "In the picture" -- you know pretending that he meant the wife of the general. He said, "No. No. No. No. Woman who talk to President."

I said, "She's here."

He repeats in Russian, and he turns to me and he says, "No. No."

I said, "Yes. She's right here."

He said, "No. No. Where?"

I said, "Right here" -- pointing to myself, and this was a chorus of no' s, and so I pulled out my passport. First the catalogue has my name right in front -- you know, as the curator, full name and so on, and I showed them my passport. It's the same name, and I said, "I'm much better looking than this photograph, but it's really a photograph of me."

He passed it around. I was scared to death when they passed my passport around, and I stood there and waited for it. They looked at me, and I turned around like a model and I said, "My passport, please" and they returned it, and they were absolutely staggered. One of them said, and they got very excited, "How is it possible?"

I said, "What did you think? Did you think they would do this to me? Anybody can say anything they want in America. We all do it every day in the week."

He repeated that to them, and one of the guys said, "Well, maybe there is something to this democracy business."

Then I began to talk Russian. I said, "Yes. Of course there is."

Those three guys practically collapsed. Well, we chatted about it, and they walked off looking very unhappy. My cop came, and he said, "Excuse me, I had to let them in because they were the press."

He looked at me, and he said, "Why were they so angry? What did you say to them?"

I said, "Nothing. I was very pleasant."

He said, "I saw you dancing."

I had made that turn -- you know, and suddenly I was hugged by somebody, and it was some little squirt from the United Press who had overheard this whole thing. That's how it appeared in *Time* Magazine -- this whole story, this whole thing that had happened. He had overheard it all. He was hiding behind something. He also had a press card, and my cop let these people come through. He sent a cable immediately, and they had the whole story which was a little bit unfortunate -- I mean, the Russians didn't like that very much.

The Russian papers later derided the show, of course, but they also said that many people came to see the woman rather than the show -- you know, I had to keep pulling out my passport. Then six months later when I got the medal -- none of these people had talked to me, and suddenly I got a medal with a citation and a letter from George Allen, the most fabulous letter! This all goes to the Archives.

Every letter is in here -- you know, that I did more than anybody has to sell democracy and so on -- you know, six months later. I threw this citation in the basket, and Lawrence who was working for me then, said that it was bad manners. He sent it out and had it restored. I agreed with him that it was bad manners, but I was so mad at the way in which I was treated!

Well, that was the first day, the first morning. Then at four o'clock the ropes were cut, or some time earlier in the afternoon, and we all stood at attention -- me in my expensive dress. We were standing -- everybody, different directors of different departments, and this was the time of the kitchen interview. Actually it was not in the kitchen, but in the TV room which was open. I was on the balcony. The screens were up on the balcony, but it was all wide open down below. I listened to the whole affair with Khrushchev saying the ugliest things I ever heard, and Nixon smiling and agreeing with him. He didn't know a goddamn thing that was being said. Khrushchev never looked up. He was standing there, and someone was translating everything that Nixon said, but verbatim.

Nixon's interpreter would wait until after three sentences when the greatest insults were pulled, and he'd say something to Nixon. He couldn't follow the conversation at all -- poor Nixon, and suddenly somebody, one of the three pressmen -- I don't know who it was, but I was standing right there and watching this performance and being horrified at what was going on. It was really shocking! Nixon was taking this terrible beating because he didn't know what was going on, and Khrushchev kept interrupting. Nixon never completed a sentence. He just kept interrupting him, and one of our press representatives in Moscow pushed aside the interpreter Nixon brought with him, pushed him aside, and he began translating verbatim, and that's when Nixon turned and said, "Shut up!" to Khrushchev, "Stop interrupting me!"

That's when I yelled "Bravo, Nixon!"

I loathe that guy. I certainly didn't vote for him, but I was so pleased that he finally came through.

Well, in any event, the entourage -- the two leaders and the entourage started -- this was on the first floor, and they covered every department, every exhibit down there. They then went up and covered every exhibit on the balcony, on the second floor where I was. I was at the extreme end, and there was a big staircase which led downstairs. They came up the other side, and they were coming in. The photographers and the newsmen backed into the gallery with their cameras ready to shoot them when they came in. As Nixon and Khrushchev got the gallery, suddenly Nixon grabbed Khrushchev's arm, almost broke it, and led him down the stairs with the entourage following and with all of the pressmen and photographers standing there like idiots watching this. Then they followed.

DR. PHILLIPS: They never got to the gallery.

MS. HALPERT: They never came in to see the gallery, and I'll never forget that moment as long as I live -- you know, when I read my report to the State Department, to the congressmen, I almost wept when I told this story. I had hundreds of witnesses. Everybody knew about it later, but they never came in. I stood there like a child having a birthday party -- all dressed up, and nobody coming. Here I was in my elegant dress. I had this terrible morning with these three Russians, and getting all excited because our side was losing -- you know, in the controversy on TV, and here I was all set. The place looked absolutely lovely, and nobody came in. I just couldn't believe it. They had one to forty-seven exhibits and did not come into the forty-eighth.

Well, I just stood there like an idiot, all alone, and that little United Press guy would come -- by that time the department got a little lively. Several of the pressmen saw that they didn't come in, and they came in and said, "What goes? What gives?"

I said, "I haven't any idea. Won't somebody tell them this is the gallery."

I had to use the outer space too. I didn't have enough space for everything, so I used the corridor -- pictures. They couldn't miss it. They were right there, and the pictures were outside the gallery as well as inside with the sculpture. I got somebody to give me some pebbles and some plants. I got that from the planting department, and it really looked lovely. They were right there, and they walked away, so later in the afternoon, an hour or so later, they all made the speeches outdoors. Three men came in, one short, fat little guy and two tall men. They were Americans, and I said, "You can't come in here. The show isn't open."

"Oh, well, we're Americans," they said.

"No American will be admitted during this show! Get the hell out of here!"

I was absolutely wild -- wouldn't you be?

DR. PHILLIPS: This was an incredible chain of events!

It's all published in this report. I'm not making this up. This appeared in *the New York Times* and in *Time* Magazine. It appeared everywhere -- I mean, the story everybody knew, so this fat little man said, "Oh, come on, take it easy. What's the matter with you?"

"The matter with me? Good God, this is the only symbol of culture in this show. Here we are a great materialistic society" -- Oh, Boy! I really got dramatic -- "and the vice president of the United States shies everybody away from it deliberately."

This little fat guy said, "Oh, of course."

Then he looked at the other two men and he said, "Don't you remember" -- what's his first name, Nixon's?

DR. PHILLIPS: Richard.

MS. HALPERT: Dick.

DR. PHILLIPS: "Tricky Dick."

MS. HALPERT: "Don't you remember that Dick said, 'We will bypass the art department because it is too controversial.'"

I realized then that they were VIPs, that they were in the same plane, so I said, "As the President goes, so does the Vice President. Get out!"

I practically pushed them out. They did not see the show. I got my Russian cops. They left. This time another little squirt from the press, the American press, came over. He had heard it -- that's how it got into the *Times*, and he said, "Do you know who those guys were?"

I said, "I don't give a goddamn who they are. I know they were VIPs. They were in Nixon's plane."

He said, "The little fat guy was Allen. I don't know his first name -- the one who plays golf with the President."

I said, "Yeah."

He said, "The two tall guys?"

I said, "Go away! I don't want to talk to anybody."

I was just as ashamed and so miserable -- you know, that they would bypass this department. It was beautiful, and it really was the only -- well, the photography was outside, but this was the only cultural department. He said, "The other two guys are George Allen" -- I haven't met George Allen, but it was he because he came in to see me during the show, later, and the third one, that I'll never know. I was told, but I don't remember, and I can't guarantee who it was, but I think it was the President's brother -- the three guys I threw out. That I was told, but that I have no proof of. But it was the two Allens -- that I know. I remember photographs.

That was the very suspicious beginning, but as the Russian papers said, "Even the sound of the TV didn't drop out the excitement of this exhibition."

We expected five hundred people a day, and we had from ten to twenty thousand. We had the biggest attendances, the most excitement, and that appears in every newspaper, every Russian newspaper. I mean, they said that the show stank to high heaven. The reviews were just ghastly -- they would be. I brought them here and I had them all translated. It was perfectly incredible.

DR. PHILLIPS: It's now midnight, and if I catch the 12:21 . . .

32 East 51st Street, New York City

MS. HALPERT: This will be a little repeat. This is taken from a report that I made to the State Department when I returned, and I'll start with this:

The press photographers backed in with their cameras poised for action, but to their astonishment and mine Mr. Nixon suddenly made an abrupt switch and marched the party en mass down the stairs and out. It was a shocking performance later explained by an American VIP with a glib remark, "But Dick announced to the plane that he would bypass the art exhibition because it was too controversial." It was not only anger that I felt, but shame as well. The Russians and for that matter, practically every other nation had accused us of an utterly materialistic approach. They could not have had better proof than to see our acting head of state deliberately avoid the most vital evidence of our cultural strength. Why do officials consider art so out of bounds? Why starting at the highest level and descending to the so-called un-American committee do congressmen, fed by bitter has-been artists . . .

I was referring to Mr. Williams who was at the bottom of most of this.

. . .use every device to pare the USIA budgets. Why cancel the sculpture show just completed by Andrew Ritchie at Yale University . . .

He worked on it for six months and organized the most wonderful sculpture show, and they canceled it.

. . . Budget-Smudget. I just read that the FBI had its 1959 appropriation increased to one hundred and two and a half million dollars. To land further emphasis to the official attitude, please permit me to continue with my Moscow woes. For the sake of brevity I offer exhibit A, dated July 28th. Exhibit A is a carbon copy of a note I wrote in long hand on a ruled yellow sheet.

It was addressed to Mr. McClellan, director of the American National Exposition in Moscow. He and his wife were at the National Hotel, a floor below mine. At two a.m., as I recall, I slipped on a robe and in my bare feet walked down the stairs in a trance. I slipped the note under Mr. McClellan's door.

Incidentally, as I was slipping it under the door, two of the maids jumped and grabbed me because I was odd in a robe, bare feet slipping this under the great American's door, and I said to them in Russian, "This is just a piece of paper. You slip it under." They wouldn't touch it, but I shook it and proved to them that there wasn't any dynamite in it. I said, "It's a love letter. I don't want anybody to see me hand it to him."

Well, in any event, I got it under the door, and he read it.

Last night I collapsed in my hotel room. As Mr. Staples will tell you, my task has been beyond human endurance, but in recognition of the difficulties everyone here has encountered I've been grateful for little things. However, I feel my responsibilities strongly and I'm keeping my promises to the lenders of the works of art, lenders who were most generous and brave to make this valuable contribution to the exposition . . .

Many of them refused to lend until they heard that I was going to be in charge, and I said, "I'll protect your art with my life."

. . . As you know, the attendance has been phenomenal, comprising enthusiastic professionals and laymen and thousands of well informed, ingrained party members and some hooligans. The works of art must be guarded and unless the following precautions are completed at once and certainly before the week-end crowds, the galleries must be closed and I will be obliged to request that I be relieved of this truly inhuman responsibility at once. I mean today.

1) guard rails installed throughout;

People were being pushed right against the paintings and there were hand marks practically on all the pictures where people innocently got them because somebody was pushing from behind. I'd come there at seven in the morning to wipe them off. I brought Lux with me and so on and very gently rubbed. It wasn't good for the pictures, but I couldn't leave these hand prints. Well, anyhow to come back to this:

2) fans to be installed before the paintings are completely ruined from the excessive heat of one hundred and two;

3) I want at least three guards on duty at all times;

4) a typewriter lent to me at the hotel so that I may complete the explanatory labels after working hours to counteract the need for gallery talk, an impossible and dangerous feat.

The attendance was phenomenal averaging a minimum of from ten to twenty thousand people daily. We were equipped for five hundred. To support this statement the Russian art critic wrote, "The art section is by far the most vivacious, arousing so much commotion that it drowns out even the voices coming from the nearby TV demonstration."

Situated as the galleries were, between two stairways, we had not only the public desiring to see the art exhibition but a large captive audience forced into the galleries by the mob, despite the arrangements to admit the crowds in shifts. The public was pushed against the canvasses, using them as support as they crawled by. Guard rails were imperative to protect the works of art. It was impossible to continue my gallery talks and the two guards were frustrated when I requested them to stop as well. Traffic jams were a menace. Thus I wrote explanatory labels to counteract the necessity for oral explanations.

I closed the gallery for two hours each day, from one to three admitting artists and allied fields so that professional would have an opportunity to see the show, to hear my brief gallery talk and to hold discussions and this practice continued even after we had everything under control. The three small fans helped somewhat, but the heat was so intense what with a metal roof and a huge mass of people that the canvasses buckled and the metal sculptures were about to melt and the guides and I were ready to collapse.

While I got quick action after my hysterical note, it was not until about the very end of my stint that we had permanent metal guard rails, but I succeeded in shutting off one entrance the thereby limiting the flow through a narrow passage well controlled. I was very proud that when [inaudible] arrived everything was in order and we even had a makeshift desk plus two chairs.

If I have bored you with the problems that beset me, I'm sorry, but I feel that it is imperative to stress again and again our official attitude toward the visual arts. While the Soviet press naturally maintained its customary party line in its reports of the show, we had more than sufficient evidence that the art exhibition was a huge success. I wish we could have recorded the enthusiastic remarks each day, the extraordinary effect the show had on a large number of artists, architects, writers, designers, and museum personnel and others during the one to three o'clock period, as well as many layman visitors throughout the day. I know because so many pleaded for additional talks and when I invited them to the hotel, they practically wept in gratitude. Many expressed the belief that the art exposition was the most effective evidence of a free democracy, that it inspired and taught a closer kinship, a deeper understanding of mutual spiritual goals. The conversations were extraordinary.

Despite the soviet propaganda the artists realized that ours was a true people's art enjoyed in people's homes by personal choice, that it was purchased by the masses, by industrialists, and so on, that we had no dictatorship. Of course, some smart cookie would refer to our press report wondering why our officials called abstractions communist art as opposed to their official press which condemned the same paintings and sculptures as symbols of the degradation of capitalism. Alas, now and then they would quote *Isvestia*'s comment in reference to Walter's investigation. As you may recall, the comment was, "Is it possible that the Americans fear their art will convert our people to communism?"

Then I read some of the quotes -- which I won't read now in the statements that people wrote. I finally worked out a system where I tore out each sheet as it was written before either our -- what do you call them, not detectives?

DR. PHILLIPS: Secret Service.

MS. HALPERT: No it's called something else.

DR. PHILLIPS: Counterintelligence.

MS. HALPERT: That's what they are, but they came around all the time. Either the Russians or the Americans would tear the sheets out, so I would stand there behind the person while he was writing and as soon as he returned the pencil to me which I had to hand them so I could be right there, I'd tear the sheet out and I brought them home with me. I translated a lot of them there and brought them home with me. They're all in the State Department. Everything was taken away from me after I was accused of being a spy.

DR. PHILLIPS: This was a book set out to obtain their impressions?

MS. HALPERT: Yes. They had it here when they had their exposition here. I copied the idea. We had people note statements. Some of them were really party line, very, very funny. Others who didn't sign their names, wrote some perfectly marvelous remarks. The thing that really stunned them -- the show was wonderfully selected because it really was a cross section of what was going on. It wasn't just one style of art. We had the

rolling hills of Wisconsin, abstractions, people and we had the sea and every considerable style. Once the labels were on they didn't get mad. At first they got perfectly furious. The Glackens painting was called *Soda Fountain* [1935], and they were furious. They were screaming bloody murder. This was the opening. It was the first picture coming in, chronologically. I hung the pictures chronologically, or it was the second picture, and everybody stopped at the entrance and began to yell. I couldn't understand why because it's a very pleasing sort of Renoir-esque picture with two girls sitting at a counter, very pretty colors, and so on. They were all yelling in very angry voices. By this time I had gotten to recognize angry voices, having been around a good deal, and I had to break my way through -- there were such mobs -- and I said, "What is it?"

In a chorus they said, "Where is the fountain?"

I got absolutely hysterical because I realized why there were so annoyed. I said, "Oh, you expected to see a running fountain?"

I continued, "In a capitalist country you'd have soda instead of plain water. You expected to see a big fountain with soda flying?"

They screamed with laughter and said, "Yes. Yes. Yes."

So I had to explain to them. I said, "You probably read that all our teenagers get drunk and take dope" -- the Russians do believe this -- "but this is what a great many of them do on the way home from school. They go to a drug store, or an ice cream parlor, and they have soda, and they call it the fountain."

I pointed to taps, or whatever you call them and said, "The syrup and the water come from that."

They said, "How do you make it?"

They got very interested, and "Why are there so many?"

I said that they were all different flavors. I couldn't remember, but somewhere I recalled seeing the Johnson sign, thirty-six flavors. I was told later -- some American heard me and said, "Hey, wait. There are only twenty-eight."

They wanted to know how a soda was made, and I explained to them how they dropped this ball of ice cream into a tall glass which was in the picture and from there on -- well, of course, I immediately typewrote a label. I went into one of the other departments where they had a typewriter and typewrote a label. I wouldn't typewrite in Russian, but I had it in English, and then I had someone translate it into Russian. From there on I had someone change all the labels. There was no problem. It was like "Moby Dick" [1955] by [William] Baziotes. "Where Moby Dick?"

Then there was a movie -- which I knew would impress them, and that the character was undersea life. From there on they loved it. It was a very popular picture. You had to us that kind of thing, but it was hellish work! I didn't have a typewriter. I didn't have anything -- just nothing. Well, after that note, I began getting everything, after slipping that note under Mr. McClellan's door. When the papers began to praise the show, talk about the attendance and so on, Mr. McClellan even took me home in his limousine. He said, "You've worked long enough. Why don't you let me drive you back to the hotel instead of staying here to nine o'clock?"

I did that once or twice. I was scared to leave the place. I couldn't leave the place. I was scared to death that they would ruin a picture. Once in a while they would send in an agitator. They did that in the book department. They tore every book. The government sent in agitators, and they broke radios. They did all sorts of terrible things, and then this man came in and said, "Come on. Let us destroy this capitalist art!"

The mobs came immediately and went right at the picture. I got up on a pedestal and said, "Stop!"

I screamed at them and called them names. They're scared to death of any loud voice or order. That big badge I wore really scared them to death. All of us wore these enormous badges. Every symbol of power, and it was really, but there are certain departments that really went over, and I don't see why in the hell the government doesn't take tips from that kind of a show, what the public responds to. The most popular thing was the plastic division. It was a booth about six by six feet -- you know, it was tiny, but you couldn't get near the people. I'd ask them, "What do you like here?"

The women were crazy mad about the plastics, the idea of having a bowl for the baby that he couldn't break, for ninety-eight cents you had a porridge bowl. All the plastic things were unbreakable. Shortly after we made some arrangement with plastic with the Russians -- I don't know just what, but that was about the most popular. The travel bureau which gave them the sense of people, photographs of people getting on planes and so on. It was the minor things that made a great impression because they could associate with it. They could afford

ninety-eight cents and they looked at these model apartments -- you know, hell! They'd be tickled to death just to have an empty apartment. They have nothing, and to show them all these elegant model apartments with all these very handsome and expensive details, they didn't believe that all people live like that. They'd see photographs of Negro huts in Georgia -- you know, and that was so wrong. It's the lesser things that went over.

You know, they sent my report back. Of course, I didn't read the first part because I've already told you about that, more or less, but they sent it back to me stamped "confidential" -- the idiots! I have a carbon copy here. I've never shown the one that's stamped. As a matter of fact, I haven't shown that to anybody, but I did write several articles, sent a cable to Carruthers to have me write something for *the New York Times*, and I did.

The Russians cut a lot out of it, because I talked about the agitators and so on. They cut it out of the cable, but they accepted the criticisms, and then I wrote a long article for *Art in America* and the people in the State Department, or whatever, who can these séances for the public that were them -- we were all asked to report. Why they got so violent about my report I don't know. They should have learned something from it because it was a very factual one. It wasn't a plain gripe. I really accomplished something. I worked eighteen to twenty hours a day.

Actually the embassy gave me a bottle of scotch every day because these Russians wouldn't touch Vodka after they were introduced to the little bit of scotch I brought with me which disappeared completely. The embassy people were very pleased that I entertained every night. They all waited for me -- believe me, Marilyn Monroe didn't have an entourage like that! All these artists would stand in front of the building and wait for me to talk some more. They wanted to know how the artists lived. They wanted to know who pays for the museums, where they get materials, how they can show abstractions, did they show in public places and so on.

Well, it was important to give them that information. It was good propaganda. I wasn't lying to them. I told them the truth. Then the embassy decided that maybe it was a good idea, so every night I would get a bottle of scotch and a roll of toilet paper because the artist would -- that roll would disappear from my bathroom every night. They took it home. They never saw one before. The face tissue and so on, but those are the things that somebody should study. I feel very strongly about it because I know they did a lot of good, and the only other director there who was sold as consistently as I was, how much they appreciated -- I'm talking about the Russians, artists and so on -- was the Negro who ran the Ford display. Of course, that was not government. There were forty-eight government departments and outside were the commercial divisions.

One of the funniest things the first few days was to watch the Russians at the Pepsi cola machine. That was really funny. The Pepsi Cola company was set up these machine and it was so damn hot there -- you see, the building was all glass, a metal roof. The place was impossible! Everybody was dripping, and it was hot outdoors too, so Pepsi cola looked awful good, and they'd take a cup of it -- they took the paper cup home -- a big mouthful and spat it right out as publicly as they could, and of course, we were all assured after a while, and I talked to the Russians, that they were told to do that. Then they'd sneak back and take a long drink. They'd take a lot of cups home and spoons and so on, because there you could get different mixtures. They also had an arrangement where you could put more soda where you could make it less sweet and so on, two buttons. It was so funny the first few days. They were told to spit out that capitalist drink. I'd look out of the windows every once in a while, and I'd see this and then I'd see the same people come back and take a long swig.

But for some reason or other the planning was really pretty terrible. The facilities -- and I'm not talking only about my division and of course being the one out of forty-eight the party did not come to see was a pretty shocking performance. It was, and they all said that later, that that was almost the most important thing -- Circarama which was the great sensation of the entire fair -- you know, seven screens. That gave a sense of the tempo of America. They had a day of a working man, and it was really an incredible and brilliant idea and that -- well, they couldn't all get in. Everybody wanted to see it over and over again, but they only showed the things that people had some association with -- you know, that they too can have this. There's no reason why they couldn't have a Circarama because people would pay admission like going to the movies, or why they couldn't have a plastic porridge bowl, or a plastic cup, or a picnic basket and so on where they could go out on Sunday and take all the stuff without getting it broken and have the same thing over and over again.

I wonder why no one made a real survey of the reaction of the people because they were bored to death with all the riches we have. They were interested in seeing them, but they had no association with it at all, and because of that they didn't believe it existed. This was just a sample. Khrushchev talked about the kitchen -- you know, the idea that everybody had a refrigerator. Well, then it was old stuff. Then I went to a Russian VIPs house, and he hands me a bowl of chopped ice from a big cake of ice -- refrigerator, my eye, they don't have them! A few VIPs may, but for the mass these things didn't associate. I was really distressed at the lack of intelligent propaganda. I don't know anything about international relations -- just the very obvious things, things that I heard because people talked there very, very freely.

The thing that astonished me was how much of the artists knew about our artists. I think I told you about that.

This was really funny. Because -- you see, as soon as the place got cleared out I had these three Russian cops who were dolls; they were devoted to me, and I loved them. They wouldn't take any gifts or anything, and they were right there working like mad -- they would admit the people. We had a big sign -- "Only Artists Admitted," and they would look once in a while at the union cards. Everybody carried union cards, and every once in a while a cop would say, "A ballet dancer?"

I'd say, "Yes, if they're pretty -- yes."

But there were architects, designers, and so on, and they'd come in and we'd sit and talk -- security officer -- that's the name I was trying to think of -- and every once in a while a security officer would come in, and after a while the boys would tip me off. I didn't have the same group twice because they could only get one ticket, but they'd tip me off -- they had a gesture which meant change your theme and I did just as casually as if I had been talking that way. We couldn't always talk, but most of the time we did, but every once in a while somebody would say, "This is a painting by Stuart Davis."

Then they talked about four or five artists with specific pictures, specific sculpture -- Sandy Calder, Pollock, Stuart Davis, and I've forgotten who the fourth was -- another painter and they talked about them and asked why certain pictures weren't there. I got very curious -- this was the first show we ever took there -- and about *America*, the magazine, which is very vital. That's a terrific contribution, but very few people can see it because there are only about ten sold at a news stand with about a thousand people waiting to get it, but when I started inviting them to the hotel, I had a huge drawing room.

I paid a terrific price for it -- I paid my own expenses, an enormous sum of money for my suite with a drawing room, thirty by forty. There was lots of room with a great many fancy chairs, hand carved and so on, and they talked very freely there. That was something I was still puzzled about. Everybody saw them come through the hotel. There was no secret about it, and I'd walk out with them because at midnight all the boys had to be kicked out of the girl's room. They're very Victorian, and at midnight the floor girl would tap at the door, "Time to go."

With that all the men had to get out. Well, the men wouldn't get out and leave the girls there. They wanted to have the same privileges, so I had to go with them, and we'd walk up and down Gorky Street until two and three in the morning.

DR. PHILLIPS: Out in front of the hotel?

MS. HALPERT: Yes, we were right out in front of the hotel. We'd go on talking, and by that time there would only be about eight left, and they'd walk in a circle around me -- they were so greedy for any information. I said, "How in the hell do you know about these artists."

After a while they felt that they could trust me, and they told me -- well, I found out about music the year before when I was on my own -- people approached me. I didn't wear a badge, and I'd sit down in restaurants, particularly in Odessa, because I was the only American there are the time. It was during the Lebanon uprising, and they all knew the last word in jazz, and I'd ask these boys that came over, "How do you know?"

[END OF 7 OF 7 A1r]

They'd look around -- you know, I told them I was born in Odessa, and they trusted me because I was certainly not repeating it there, or anywhere. They permit guides and various language teachers and so on to listen to the *Voice of America*, and quite a few of them have tape recorders. They give a tape to some friends, and then they make a great many copies, or they tape it on a record. They were very familiar with American jazz.

But with art, I couldn't understand it because at the artist's union where they do have catalogues, it's locked. Nobody may touch it. They are just there pictorially. They have catalogues from all over the world, but only the professor may look at one, so one of these boys came up to the hotel with his wife or girlfriend -- I can't remember which -- with the most hideous tooled leather covered affair with Stuart Davis -- it was the most hideous looking thing, but inside was a photographic copy of the Walker Art Center catalogue with color notes. It was all black and white, Harvey Arneson's foreword was photographed. The entire catalogue plus a translation inserted, translated into Russian by this girl friend, and they made a great many copies. This one really made it very fancy with the tooled leather cover, and then they explained that a professor -- you see, only specific catalogues may go into the foreign rooms at the library.

Everybody can go to the library, but for any foreign publications you have to have a different colored card -- you know, scientists, et cetera may go into the science department, and an art professor who has to be an academician and a party member. Some of them cheat because they have those small cameras. They take it with them and photograph the whole damn thing. Then twelve artists will chip in and have them blown up, and then somebody will translate the titles as well, the foreword, everything, and then color notes -- the one I saw

had little scribbling in Russian -- whatever colors would make notes on the margin, one, two, three all the way down from top to bottom on the sides, color notes because they couldn't photograph it in color. They were very familiar with American art -- a very small number of course.

DR. PHILLIPS: Smuggling.

MS. HALPERT: We should encourage that, push that kind of propaganda as much as possible because it certainly -- well, it will never be a cause for war, just a cause of irritation -- that's all. They loosened up considerably. I can tell from the letters that I get now from some of the artists. They are beginning to show some of their more modern things, but at the artist's union only in graphics are they a little freer. I remember the woman in charge of the House of Friendship -- that's for international culture exchange and so on -- I asked her why they don't show the less stilted works of art. I said, -- every once in a while I would hear something -- "I'm sure that artists are painting more modern things."

They are, but they are not shown. The exhibitions are shown by the professor of art and so on. They have to break through their own academy domination. They always had the academy. Why did all these artists leave Russia in the Tsarist regime. They left because of the academy. Why did the artists in this country go to France, or to Rome before that -- the same reason. At this time it seems a little odd because the academies are in reverse -- certainly in this country, so she said, "Well, there's a new show being put on on such and such a date. Come and tell me what you think of it."

I went over there. It was a little bit freer, but most of the things, the freer pictures were still lifes. There was one that was really -- very, very personal. It was cabbage. I came back, and she said, "What do you think."

I said, "Now I have a great Russian secret."

She said -- well she got very angry, upset -- "What is it?"

I said, "I gather that the artists always have to glorify something in the Soviet Union. I gather I have the secret now. The cabbage may be glorified."

That was the best picture, the freest picture in this show, the still life of the cabbage which was really very well done and very free. She laughed. She was very relieved. She thought I was going home with a great secret. It was a very fascinating, a very wearing experience. I never quite had something so wearing and so aggravating. The beginning of this thing was the most ghastly experience, and I ended up with another ghastly experience. I got caught in a spy net.

[END OF 7 OF 7 REEL A2r]

[BEGINNING OF 7 OF 7 B1r]

The year before I brought home a lot of posters. Nobody bothered me the year before, when I was on my own. Everybody brought me presents. This is a regular routine in Russia, some little flowers. They brought me books. I had a temporary beaux, a Georgian who hated Russians like all Georgians do, who took me to ruins and showed me some marvelous, marvelous sculpture that had been just dug up. He brought me two of the most incredibly beautiful icons to prove to me that Georgian icons are far superior, and they are, and a book with the most marvelous -- not manuscript; their illustrations are called something else. It was wonderful, and I had the most beautiful collection. The illustrations were much freer in books, and I bought some very good Russian books to take home with me. All that disappeared the day before I left, and I thought it was very odd. I thought there was no object in reporting it.

I know that there was a reason for it because by this time I got in trouble with the Russians. I was bringing back a modern show from Russia. I sold the idea to a couple of these big shots in the museums. I thought it would be terrified propaganda for everybody concerned to bring back some modern pictures. I knew where they were, and I was willing to stay on a few more days. They would have permitted me to do this, but I saw the wrong guy at the Bureau of Culture. The two chiefs were on their vacations, and I saw the parliamentary one. He took one look at me, and I took one look at him, and there was just hate. I insisted that he let me have -- is there something flying around here, or am I seeing things?

DR. PHILLIPS: There's something flying around. It just went by. I'll get it the next time it passes.

MS. HALPERT: He was so nasty! He started talking Russian to me and I said that I wanted an interpreter. He told me that I was a menace to Russia, that I had perverted the young artist, the youths. I laughed and I said, "That's a terrible thing to say. In America you go to jail for ten years. An old woman like me perverting young men -- I would go to jail for ten years!"

He didn't think that was funny. He got absolutely violent. I had to get permission to take things out. I had them all lined up. I didn't have them in my hotel, of course. I had them all lined up, and I had a wonderful gimmick which would be for their benefit. I explained that I could do it because nobody in the United States could do it, that taxpayers support the museums, that I was a completely independent person, and that I could have any kind of show because this was my property and nobody could interfere. They could break my windows, or they could break my head. That I didn't mind if they didn't like the Russians, but that no museum could do it. I could do it, and I could do it very well.

"I could make it a very small show to show that you're not as backward as your exhibition signified in New York." They had their exposition in New York the year before. I had an ulterior motive which was very good for America. Well, he said no. He was just furious with me, and he kept telling me that I had done more harm, that I was just fortunate that I was not being detained because having been born in Russia I could have been detained there, that I was always a Russian subject, that I was not an American citizen. He gave me all this stuff, and he was very violent about it. He said, "What do you have here?"

I carried those statements everywhere I went. I slept with them. I carried them with me and brought them home -- both the good and the bad. They knew that I was tearing them out. They knew everything I was doing, and I said, "Oh, some love letters that were sent to me from home. They're very sentimental."

I was clutching them. Finally I looked at my watch and said that I had to eat. I was followed. Everything disappeared -- all my precious icons and so on. I was leaving the following day. I was going to stay on. I'm sure that I would have had the show. I can't remember the name of the man who now was the head of the Bureau of Culture. He would have had an entirely different attitude, but he was on his vacation.

The next day I was very nervous for the first time when I found these things were gone, when I found that everything had been gone over, my packing was slightly askew. I was partially packed. I thought I was staying on. I had a number of things hanging, and I still had a great number of my underthings in the closet. I could tell that somebody had been through them, and I thought, "Well, I'd better have an escort going to the airport."

You see, all this time I was on my own completely. This time they let me go there not as a tourist -- I didn't have to have a limousine. I didn't have to have an interpreter. I paid for my room and I paid for my meals wherever I was. I didn't have to buy my meals. I wasn't at the hotel for meals except for breakfast, so I paid for everything separately. I paid my bill, and I got very nervous. I called up -- by this time they were just beginning to like me over at the park -- the American administration, so I called up and I said, "I was met at the airport" -- everybody was met at the airport by somebody from the park -- "and I'd like to be taken there."

I'd been using taxis. I said, "I'd like to have someone escort me to the airport."

They said, "Very well," and they called me back in about ten minutes, and they told me who would pick me up. I was all packed. This was the following day, and I was already to go. I had about an hour to kill. I kissed all the floor girls goodbye and the elevator girls, and I went upstairs and hugged the maitre d'hotel and the porters -- you know, they all liked me from the year before and the fond farewells with tears and all that sort of stuff.

I came down, and there was message that I had a call, and about two seconds later a call came in. It was from the embassy that had ignored me except this one guy who bought me the scotch and the toilet paper every day. This was an official call, not to leave the hotel, but that I would be taken to the airport in an embassy car. I said that I had already made arrangements, that this other man was on his way down. Well, never mind they'd dismiss him, and they'd take care of everything. Then I felt that my nervousness was justified. Didn't I tell you about my trip home?

I thanked them and the two men came. One of them looked like a security officer -- you know, after that one summer one can recognize a security officer across the street. He was a chauffeur, and the other one was talking to me. He sort of shook his head, "You've been a very naughty girl."

I said, "Here too? I thought that I was naughty in America."

He said, "You're a very naughty girl."

I said, "What did I do?"

He said, "Never mind. We'll see you through. Give me your passport."

I said, "Let me see your card, your identification."

That was the one thing I most feared when I traveled abroad -- hold on to your passport. So I laughed and I gave him my passport and my ticket, and he said, "I'm surprised that you didn't take the Russian plane from Helsinki.

You did that last time."

I said, "Air France has an office in Moscow" -- that was the first office that they had admitted -- "I went Air France all the way. I changed planes in Paris, not in Helsinki."

He said, "All right. I know that people do that."

We got down to the airport. They opened my baggage. I didn't even see it. One of them stood with me, and the other one took care of it, checked me in and walked me into the plane, and he said, "Don't get off this plane for any reason until you get to Paris, and if you have any difficulty, call this number."

I was nervous, but I remember the number because 34634 was my D.A. number at Macy's. It used to be. Now they've changed it, so I got on the plane and sat down like everybody else. I was traveling second class, tourist, paying my own way, and I was very comfortable. About twenty minutes before I got to Paris, the stewardess came over and asked me for my passport. I said, "No," in Russian. Then I thought, "I'm not going to talk Russian. I'm going to talk English and stump her."

She was French, and I pretended that I didn't know a word of French. I said, "I'm sorry."

I looked around, and nobody else was being asked for their passport. I was right in the middle. It wasn't the first seat, and I thought that was very odd. I remembered the embassy people telling me to be careful and all that, not to go off the plane, and I said, "Send me the first class steward who talks English."

He came in, and I said, "I refuse to give up my passport."

Meanwhile I looked around and asked several people whether they had their passports taken and they said, no, that they had never heard of it. They wanted my ticket too. I refused to turn them over. This guy said that the pilot had a radio message that my passport was to be picked up. I remembered the number. I was annoyed and I talked loud enough so that the few other Americans there could hear and I said, "I refuse to give up my passport because nobody else had his passport asked for, and I don't want to be the exception. I won't show my passport until I pass the Paris customs."

The man took my arm, and he said, "Give me the passport!"

I said, "I'll talk to the pilot."

"The pilot is busy."

He was waving his hands -- you know, very French. This conversation was in whispers. I said, "I'll go to the cabin."

He said, "We're almost at Orly. The pilot's very, very busy getting us in."

Well, I gave my passport and ticket up. I said, "Well, I'll go down the ramp, and I'll scream bloody murder. There are a number of Americans here," and I turned around, and I said, "You've all seen that my passport was taken and will you please stick with me until I get it back, or report it?"

You know how American are? They didn't say, "Drop Dead!," but they looked it. Well, I got off the plane. I was taken out first. I came down the ramp, and there was a man at the foot of the ramp, "Madame Halpert?"

I said, "Yes."

He took my passport, and he said, "Come with me."

I walked with him, and I kept remembering that number. I forgot to ask him whether I was supposed to yell the number or telephone, or do what with it, and I said, "What is all this?"

He said, "Somebody wants to see you."

So I go inside. Everybody goes through. The baggage is transferred and so on. Everybody goes through and gets to the other gate. I'm taken to the Paris, France counter, and three men jumped and clicked their heels, "Madame Halpert?"

I said, "Yes."

This important guy comes out. He has my passport and my ticket, and he chats very pleasantly and asked me if I had a pleasant trip and so on, and so I asked him, "What is all this nonsense?"

I looked around and all the Americans had gone through already. There were telephone booths around the place so I thought "I think I'll call this number."

It sounded ridiculous. I could just hear myself. I didn't have a French coin with me, and I didn't know what the hell I was going to do. The whole thing seemed utterly silly, but I was nervous, so I walked with them and you know how the bus picks you up and takes you to the plane. I saw the girl taking down the flight number off the plane. The lights were out. There wasn't a soul there in the little waiting room. He had a little car, so I go into the car. I thought, "Well, hell, there's nothing else I can do."

I did say, "Where is my baggage?"

He said, "Oh, that's been taken care of."

He takes me to the plane -- it was quite a long distance in the car. There wasn't a soul around, and I looked up. It was the right number of the flight. Everybody was on, and it was all set and he walks me up the ramp, up the stairs. I'm met at the door, and he gives me my passport, and he gives me a red card, no ticket. I didn't even have my return ticket, just this red card. I had my overnight bag with me and the man greets me -- the steward -- "Madame Halpert" and he takes my bag and hands me a box with a ribbon and -- are you sure I didn't tell you this?

The only people who know all this are Larry Fleischman and Frank Getline, who was in Moscow at that time when my Mata Hari act took place, and I tied it up with this. I didn't know which it was. I was positive I was going to be sent back to Moscow. That's what I was afraid of. I wasn't afraid for my life, but I was sure I was being sent back to Moscow where I did not want to go at the time, so I took my handbag and shook the box. I was sure that there was a bomb in it, and I was sure that all these people on the plane -- you know, would be destroyed. He takes me through the plane, and I passed the second class. He takes me right up to first class. I said, "Wait a minute. I am traveling tourist."

He said, "No. No. No, Madame, first class."

I said, "No," and he showed me the red card which said first class, but no ticket. There it is. Not only that, but I have two seats and I hear somebody yelling in the back. Evidently somebody had been moved into my seat in tourist. I wouldn't touch that box. I was scared to death of it. He fixed my bag, and he immediately rushed about and came in with a tray of champagne. We haven't even started and I couldn't have taken any champagne. My innards were circling,

DR. PHILLIPS: We who are about to die, salute you.

MS. HALPERT: So I said, "Open this box" and this I'll never forget and I have never found out -- it was a red camellia -- no card, no anything. Now there are only two people, only one person in the world -- the other one is dead -- knows that that is my favorite flower. Nobody has ever given me a red camellia, except two people that I knew who know that that was my favorite corsage. I almost collapsed. I shook it. It was real, so I sat down. I had my passport. I had a first class seat, and I had a red camellia and champagne, and the stewards were -- well, the fussing that went on all the way home! I don't get it. I have written to Paris, France -- Air France. I have written three letters asking -- you know, sometimes they do that if they have a few empty seats but this one was not empty. The steward told me later that two men had been moved. It was all directed and all this business about the flowers -- I have never been able to find out why.

Then the FBI came in on me shortly after in relation to my Mata Hari experience, and . . .

DR. PHILLIPS: You mean all this and Mata Hari too?

MS. HALPERT: I said, "I won't answer any questions until you tell me whether it was the American government that changed my flight from tourist to first class."

The guy said, "Are you out of your mind? It would take an act of Congress to pay that difference in fare. Certainly not."

There were three of them here, and the others -- well, they thought it was the funniest thing! They said, "The United States Government? That's impossible! It could never happen because it would take an Act of Congress to get that extra money."

I don't know how much it is, a couple hundred dollars, or something. I said, "Well, who in the hell did it?"

Air France said that they didn't know anything about it. I thought maybe it was a courtesy, or something -- you know. I've heard that odd things happen, but to this day I haven't the slightest notion of what happened and of course the thing that really got me was that red camellia. You haven't heard that in Detroit -- the Mata Hari

story?

DR. PHILLIPS: When you got off the plane, were the people who met you airport officials, or what?

MS. HALPERT: When I got off in Idlewild?

DR. PHILLIPS: No, in France.

MS. HALPERT: They were in uniform -- you know, Air France uniforms. They looked important, but they were sitting behind a desk -- you know well dressed officials, but they were all in the same kind of uniforms that our men wear. It wasn't French. The French had nothing to do with it, or the French people.

DR. PHILLIPS: Why wouldn't they tell you what was going to happen instead of letting you linger in inference and doubt, suspicion?

MS. HALPERT: In doubt? I was a nervous wreck because all I could think of was being sent back to Moscow. I wasn't afraid of being killed, or anything like that. I was sure that I was being sent back to Moscow -- that horrible guy I saw at the cultural bureau. I was sure he had it in for me. That I will never know because after a while the CIA people came to see me here about my spy act which was one of the funniest things. I had all these witnesses, by God. Nobody would even believe it. Larry Fleischman -- "Only to you it happens," my sister Sonia used to say.

This was the day of the opening of the show when they had this big dais out in the park and everybody was there -- Khrushchev and Nixon and of the Americans -- oh, yes, McClellan -- all the big shots. By this time McClellan and his wife got very friendly with me -- you know, toward the end of the show they were very nice, and she asked whether she could take me -- I had to go back to change -- you know, they cut the rope and so on and then the ceremony was to be held later. There was a cocktail party in the park. We had to change -- the note said dinner clothes. I got into a black satin dress. It was the first time I had an opportunity to wear it there but -- I have that as a souvenir. Boy, it sure worked! It was a very simple dress and a very smart jacket with it -- you know, really! I looked around and nobody else was dressed up.

I arrived with Mrs. McClellan, and they wouldn't let us go through. I had to tell the guard that she was the wife of the director of the exposition. She felt very badly because the cocktail party was right in the park, and then the embassy party was being held immediately after, so I finally convinced her that she had to be on the dais. The ceremony started and I looked around and I saw George Nelson and all the big shots and they were wearing corduroy pants -- you know, slacks and nobody was dressed. Here I was in a black satin Carnegie dinner dress and a very chic jacket and everybody else looked seedy, so I said, "What the hell's the matter with you guys?"

"What are you talking about?"

I said, "I was told to dress up."

"Well, we weren't invited."

Only the people who were in charge of this whole thing were invited. I evidently got on the list because of the year before when I was at a party for Stevenson at Thompsons. I realized that I wasn't invited as a director of a department because nobody else was. I said, "I'll be damned if I go. I don't want to be a scab. I'll wait for you guys. I'll take you out to dinner. I know a place where you haven't been and we'll stop off at the hotel, and I'll change. I wouldn't be caught dead in this outfit any other place."

They said, "All right. There's lots of time."

I wouldn't go to the cocktail thing in the park. I wasn't going to be a scab, so we were all gathering there. Meanwhile I saw Larry. He had a car, and I thought I'd stick around, and he would drop me at the hotel. This doctor friend of his from Detroit was there, Dr. Burton. Frank -- you know, the guy I mentioned before.

DR. PHILLIPS: Frank Getline.

MS. HALPERT: Frank Getline -- they were standing there, and so I joined them. I was really burning up. Again I was flipping. I kept getting mad in Russia, and they said, "We'll take you to the hotel, and we'll go out to dinner with you."

I said, "Fine. I want to change."

We were standing there and a man comes over to me. I was too mad to remember very much. I wasn't lying to the FBI because I didn't remember very much, but this man came over to me. He was with a woman, and he came over. He gave me a number of some kind, I was dripping with numbers before I got out of the country,

and he asked me to walk off with him. I did. He said, "You have?"

He spoke Russian immediately. He called me number forty-eight. I think he said, "You have American cigarettes?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "We will now exchange cigarettes. You take one of mine, and I'll take one of yours."

I said, "Fine. I can't stand your cigarettes, but I'll do it. I'm leaving very shortly. I have to go to a party. These people are waiting for me."

He said, "You will take two cigarettes. One you will drop in your bag as you take out your American cigarettes for me and the other you will put in your mouth and smoke. One will extend a little further. That is the one for your bag."

I said, "All right."

Well, the whole thing -- I thought somebody was playing a joke on me, and as I say, I was still mad as hell about George Nelson not being invited. I was paying no attention to this nonsense, and he said, "This has to be at your embassy before midnight. You will take it there."

I said, "Hell, I'm not going to the embassy."

He said, "For the sake of your country, you will take it to the embassy. Do not change your clothes, forty-eight."

So I said, "Very well," and I went back and I was hysterical and Frank said, "What in the hell was going on there?"

I said, "Mata Hari. Mata Hari."

He didn't say keep quiet or anything. The whole thing was so utterly ridiculous, like watching a cheap movie -- you know, Hitchcock. We hung around. Harry's father got lost. He went off with the interpreter and the car, and everybody was hunting him. Finally they found the car, but not the father and the interpreter. The father is a very gregarious guy. He talks Russian very well. He was just floating around having a ball, so we all sat in the car and finally Frank said, "What in the hell is going on?"

I said, "Oh, I have a message. I have to go to the embassy."

I pulled out this cigarette. It was exactly the same as the other -- you know, long stemmed tipped, very long tipped, with a little bit of cigarette. I said, "Gee, there's something in there."

I pulled out this little tissue rolled. I took it out, and there was this long message in hieroglyphics. I didn't know what the hell it was, so I took it out in the car. Nobody could see anything in the car and then I said, "I'm kidding."

I suddenly realized that there was a chauffeur who understood English too, and I was just horsing around, making all sorts of silly remarks -- I said, "Do you want to see a rabbit? I can make a rabbit come out of my handkerchief" and so on, and it sounded very logically like utter nonsense. I said something about too many cocktails and whatnot. We had been rooted in that one spot. We went right to the embassy. I said, "This is utter nonsense."

I whispered to Frank, "I'd like to go to the embassy. Drop me off there and just wait a minute."

I arrived, and Mr. Tuck who was the assistant public relations guy -- or whatever they call them. They give everybody the word. They tell them what to do in the diplomatic corps. He was standing in the door, and he said, "Well, you're awfully late, Mrs. Halpert."

I said, "I'm not coming to your damn party!"

Suddenly [Edward] Steichen -- there walking into dinner, and he sees me and rushes over and kisses me hello. I've known Steichen for a hundred years. Then he introduces me to [Carl] Sandburg, who was with him. They were on the dais. He said, "Come on. You'll sit at our table."

I said, "No. I'm not staying. I'll see you later."

I told Tuck this whole story, and I handed him this paper and I said, "It sounds utterly idiotic, but I was told to bring it here and I'm doing it because the man was very solemn about it."

He said, "Jesus Christ, the stupid little guides know much better than that!"

He was very nasty to me when I arrived originally, so this time he really gave me the works, so I told him a few things that I had been dying to tell him for a long time, and I took the paper, stuck it in my bag, walked out, and I said, "I hope the place blows up after everybody has gone except you" -- or something like that, and I went off and forgot all about it. Then I came home, back to the hotel. It was the opening day, and I was to be there for a week and as I was changing I thought, "That's very strange. Why in the hell did he pick me up? There were a thousand people and more in that park coming and going. Why did he pick me up?"

I was conspicuous as hell, although they were all in party clothes too because they were going to the embassy -- a few women who were in the dais, so I took that paper out of my bag and I said, "Well, just to spite this guy, I'm going to send it to the embassy later on. I don't know what to do with it, because the year before I knew that everything was moved around, somebody came into my room every day -- just general practice. I used to arrange the pencils on my desk a certain way. I always carry different colors for editing something I'm working on, and I'd arrange them, then make a chart, and they were always changed every day the year before, so I decided that I didn't want that floating around so I put it in the sleeve of a robe that I didn't use there because I didn't have to use the bathroom outside, so I never used the robe.

I put it -- it was a white chiffon thing which weighs very little -- it was tissue and I rolled tissue in both sleeves and stuck it in which was the most Mata Hari job too. I thought about that later. I don't know why in the hell I did that, but that was the end of that. I heard nothing further, and I went to a party at Commander Adams who was the naval attaché. In Russia he gave a party, a wonderful party. He told me that I had been followed. This was toward the end of my stay because as -- I'm getting ahead of myself, but in any event, the chief of protocol, the one who was sending me in my scotch and toilet paper was at the party, and he said, "Anything interesting happen to you today?"

You know, and I said, "No, not today. Everything is fine. Nobody got rough in the place and so on."

I thought he was referring to the gallery. I said, "No. I'm leaving in a couple of days. Oh yes, I had something very funny happen, and I had a special desk designed for the purpose, and it worked like that."

I told him about this thing, and we laughed. We were off in the corner, and he said, "When did this happen?"

I told him, and he said, "What did you do with it?"

I said, "Hell, I took it to Tuck. He told me that I acted like an idiot, and I walked out. I told him a few things -- that idiot!"

"What did you do with it?"

I said, "Now wait a minute. I know. I put -- God I remember now it was on tissue -- this thing."

He said, "Can I stop off and get it?"

I said, "No. I'm practically all packed."

He said, "You know, this can be a very serious thing."

I said, "What serious thing? I've been here for weeks now. Nothing happened. Nothing happened that night at the Embassy. It was some cornball."

To that moment I did not remember where I put it. I said, "I put it somewhere. I'll have to think about it."

He said, "Promise me that the moment you arrive in America, you will send it to the FBI"

I said, "Okay."

Then when I was packing and needed more tissue, I had so much tissue in those two sleeves. It was one of those things that you wash and dry. You didn't have to protect it. This thing fell out, and I put it right back in tissue, put it in another dress that needed it more and when I got home I forgot all about it. After all of this other thing, I was a nervous wreck with my red camellia. Then I thought of this thing. I couldn't see any tie up but the whole thing was odd, so I sent it to the FBI I have the copy of the letter that I found later.

They took it to Savard, the head of the USIA. I also sent him some of the statements that they should have. I made copies for myself and then sent the others on. I sent them the originals, the Russian and the carbon copies of the translations. I told them what Tuck had told me, but on the other hand, I mentioned this other guy -- you know, that I should send it to the FBI, so I sent it to him and let him worry about it.

That was the end of that, and then suddenly about a week later I had the FBI here day after day. They were on planes with me. I was going to Minnesota, Minneapolis. Somebody sat next to me, and then I changed planes. I had to get off at Denver for some reason or another -- oh, there was a storm, and then I got on another plane later. I had to wait for three hours, or something. Then another guy got on the plane next to me. Coming home I began to recognize them, and the third one I said, "FBI?"

Then I added, "What's cooking? Why don't you leave me alone? I ain't done nothing except wear a black dress."

This went on. They investigated everybody who was there and of course everybody told me. It's no secret. I haven't told anybody about it, but for the tape, it's okay. We just discussed it amongst ourselves -- Frank Getline, and Larry who called me and said that he had been interviewed. I couldn't remember what the man looked like. I was so completely preoccupied with the stupidity of our administration not to invite George Nelson who designed the building, that I was paying no attention to him. I remembered that he was short. He looked to me like all Russians -- you know, they're squat. "Was he bald?"

"I haven't the slightest idea."

"Did he wear a hat?"

"What did the woman look like?"

I didn't have the slightest notion. They were really getting awfully annoyed with me. Then the CIA men came, and they brought dozens of photographs. They told me that bit was a very, very serious message, and then they said, "By the way, who translated it?"

It was in Russian and in a code. I didn't understand. When I went to Newtown, I had this man from Yale, this guy who teaches Russian, or his wife rather. I had her translate it, and she didn't know what it was, and they said, "God, who are they?"

I said, "They are Russians who live here, but they have no idea what it was."

I had them translate three, or four other things, difficult things that I couldn't do myself, and she thought nothing of it. She just thought it was nonsense. I said, "Some kid gave it to me," or something like that. Then they went out to see her and him. He teaches at Yale. There was a big to-do, and I knew nothing about it. They swore that they had no association.

The CIA men were fascinated with the story about the first class, and they too, said that it was preposterous. You see, Tuck didn't tell them anything about it until I sent the tissue to Savard, and he sent it to the CIA, so the note had nothing to do with the plane trip and the flowers. That's going to be the one mystery in my life. Every time that I look at that dress I get a big kick out of it. Isn't that astonishing! The CIA went all the way to Berlin, Connecticut to see Frank -- a whole crew of them. They were out in Detroit I don't know how many times. They all witnessed this event, and they all said, "That man came and took me off and that they didn't see anything going on."

It was very brief, but I did say something about it in the car -- you know, but I covered up very well. So there wasn't a dull moment, but how I ever came home without being a nervous wreck! The things that really hurts are those two perfectly marvelous icons. I don't know who got them. I had the good sense to give some of the books to friends to bring home, so I got a few of the books. I gave them to them a few days ahead before my stuff was taken away. I didn't give them my rare books, just my lesser books, and I told them I'd pay the excess baggage because I had so much.

DR. PHILLIPS: Is this a case of mistaken identity, or what?

MS. HALPERT: Well, it certainly was, but it took the FBI and the CIA people ten trips -- I don't know how many times they were here for me to convince them that I didn't know. They kept trying to trap me and so on.

DR. PHILLIPS: You were part of a diabolical plot.

MS. HALPERT: Just because I wore that black dress.

DR. PHILLIPS: Picked you out of a big crowd in the park.

MS. HALPERT: And with all these witnesses. Would you think he would have done it more discretely. We were just a few feet away, and all those guys were standing there watching. "What kind of a case is it?"

"Silver."

He opened up a case, not a package, and there was one cigarette that extended just a little further. It was the same size, but he pushed it up a little bit to go in my bag. The whole thing was preposterous.

DR. PHILLIPS: Maybe it was a curved ball.

MS. HALPERT: What's that?

DR. PHILLIPS: A deliberate plant -- Russian citizen, so called, "Take it to the embassy."

MS. HALPERT: But evidently it had some important message in it because they wouldn't have made such a fuss about it later. It was just a foolish little thing. They would have torn it up, as Tuck told me to.

DR. PHILLIPS: Without seeing it.

MS. HALPERT: He looked at it. I showed it to him. He couldn't read it, because it was all hieroglyphics, but it had a few names. It had Molotov in it. That I could read.

DR. PHILLIPS: You astound me. Can't you go to a foreign country peacefully? Did you get any sense of urgency on the part of the embassy about changing drivers, that they would pick you up?

MS. HALPERT: I thought that was a little bit odd, but I associated it with that Russian. I was nervous. I certainly didn't associate it with that hunk of paper. I thought it was sort of courtesy, but when I saw -- you know, the secret policemen and they checked me through completely which was very pleasant. They took me all the way up into the body of the plane and saw me seated in my right seat. I had a seat in the cheap end all the way to Paris, and my baggage went through correctly because it was transferred automatically. I didn't think I'd ever see it again, but I did because I had all these pictures in. I had five paintings in it.

DR. PHILLIPS: The plane out of Moscow was Air France?

MS. HALPERT: The whole thing was Air France, but you have to change in Paris. The year before the Russians didn't admit any foreign planes. You had to come by way of Helsinki. There are three ways you could come in -- but you come in a Russian plane from their border. I didn't remember what line I took -- oh, the S.A.S. I took to Helsinki. That was all arranged for me by them -- you know, I didn't have anything to do with it.

You buy your whole trip and then you change into a Russian plane on Russian soil. Now I think they have more, but in 1959, I think that Air France was the only one admitted, so you went right into the plane there, your baggage was transferred from one plane to another. It was only twenty minutes. We were right on the nose, or a little bit late. There was a twenty minute wait ordinarily. I didn't notice. It seemed like five hours to me.

DR. PHILLIPS: Whatever thinking that was going on about your trip, the only people with whom you dealt were pawns who knew apparently no more than you did.

MS. HALPERT: The radio to the pilot. That Frenchman I'll never forget. He said, "He is busy."

DR. PHILLIPS: All they had was instructions through the pilot.

MS. HALPERT: He got a radio from Paris. I was sure that it was from Moscow to bring me back. That's what I was scared of. I had it. When I was asked to go there again by some other organization -- I said, "Sorry."

While I was there I was asked to defect twice.

DR. PHILLIPS: Really?

MS. HALPERT: Oh yes, by some Russian officials. They thought I was a very good propagandist -- they told me.

DR. PHILLIPS: You were asked to defect twice?

MS. HALPERT: Very gently.

DR. PHILLIPS: No pressure, or anything?

MS. HALPERT: This would be the last bastard I talked to. He told me very bluntly that I could be retained there. That I knew all the time. My mother didn't want me to go on the 1934 trip because she was worried that I would be nationalized in a different way. At that time the American papers were full of facts that all women were nationalized, that any man could have any woman. That's all Mother worried about. Don't you remember that in the 1930s? They wouldn't let me in in 1930. I went all the way to Turkey trying to get into Russia. Other people got in there, but they told me at the time it was because I originally had a Russian passport, and it

indicated on my American passport that I was born in Russia.

At that time I just stuck my hand into the Black Sea and waved. That's as far as I got to Odessa, but the other people were going in at the time, and I kept saying that I could have been a revolutionary at the age of five. I really couldn't, but I did bring down the house with a revolutionary song in Moscow. I suddenly remembered a song that I hadn't known I knew, that I learned on the boat and they did die! It's a very funny song. Actually it's a take off to the tune of a lullaby and practically the same words -- "Sing, Skylark, Sing." It was transposed to "Sing, Nikolitchka, Sing; Port Arthur's no longer yours; Manchuria they've taken away, and they kicked you out; Sing, Nikolitchka, Sing." Well, when I sang this in Russian in Moscow at one of the parties -- after a while I was being feted by the press -- you know, the various members of the press who lived there would invite me to a party, and I sang that song at one of the parties. There were several Russians there and they almost collapsed they laughed so hard at this very funny song. I told them really I wasn't revolutionary, but "Where in the hell did you learn that?"

On the boat -- on a Holland boat from Rotterdam to America. There were a lot of escapees on that boat, revolutionaries. They sang on deck -- you know, and they taught me a lot of songs. I remembered two others, but I didn't remember them as well. They were too long, and my voice ain't so good, but this one really threw them, but the show sure had an impact with the changes that are taking place there. I must say that Lloyd, Watkins, Hope and Roszak did a very good job in choosing it because it gave me a wonderful line. There were seventeen countries that the artists came from, and there were only two artists from one state. They were all from twenty-two American republics -- states; they call those republics -- and seventeen foreign countries.

The ethnic quality comes through in some of the pictures. Boy, did it give me stuff for a lot of gab and they loved it! It was true democracy where everybody can follow through his own background, his own scene, and respond to his own immediate environment and so on -- very good propaganda which I couldn't have had, had these guys not picked the show. I wouldn't have gone with any other show actually. If the Modern Museum had picked the show, I wouldn't have gone because it would have been all very much the same. This really started with the word "corn" -- good corn, the kind of picture I can't stand, but it was very characteristic of that period of rolling hills in Wisconsin. They had such funny concepts. The picture like the one by {Eugene] Speicher, that they absolutely loved. It was a portrait of a blacksmith, and it was called *Red* something [*Red Moore: The Blackmith*, ca. 1933-1934]. I mean his nickname was "Red" Smith, or whatever and they adored it that we permitted the picture to be hung as "Communist" Smith. They translated it.

DR. PHILLIPS: Pizon!

MS. HALPERT: Those titles really were something. Eisenhower picked out the picture he liked best. Did I tell you about the [Andrew] Wyeth? Eisenhower selected the Wyeth, and all these people would come and say, "Look at the hair!"

You know, each hair was painted three dimensionally. That Eisenhower liked -- you see, but the public loved it, and then Stuart's picture -- the remarks were just incredible -- all day long. The artists talked very loud -- you see, and it reverberates, and I listened because I was very interested in what they had to say and the public made very much the same remarks. They were crazy about Joseph Stella, for instance. They hated modern art, but they were crazy about the Joseph Stella. It was a picture of New York, and they'd say, "Ah, New York!" -- you know, where they all want to go and then Stuart's picture -- the public would stand in front of the Stuart Davis picture and say, "Ah Circarama."

They had seen this Circarama, and it would alternate with Americanski Scum." -- American noise, American din.

I told that to Stuart and he adored it.

Did you know that he wrote an article on jazz -- Stuart?

DR. PHILLIPS: When?

MS. HALPERT: Years ago because *Esquire* in publishing it now. They're publishing a book on jazz, and they're using his article. I didn't know which one. They didn't tell me, but they wanted to use a painting of his. I said that it was too bad that they couldn't use that painting -- the one that was in the show, and I told a guy what the Russians had said, "Americanski Scum!" and he adored it. "God I've got to get this in somehow!"

Stuart delivered one more picture today. You know, for our Christmas show. He had one, and it took me two months to get that one, and I said, "Oh, Stuart, that's so cruel to have only one Davis for all these poor little young people who wait a whole year to get a Davis."

He called me yesterday, and he said, "You can send up for this thing, if you want to. I got another ready."

It's here, and he had another one coming tomorrow.

DR. PHILLIPS: When I went over to see him -- it must have been three weeks ago, two weeks ago . . .

MS. HALPERT: They're small caseins that he evidently started some time ago. He certainly didn't paint them at this date.

DR. PHILLIPS: There's another one there.

MS. HALPERT: That Champion [*Visa*, 1951]one?

DR. PHILLIPS: No, a brand new one -- I've never seen it before. This Champion one was there and the one that used to hang in the Whitney Museum which he took back -- I guess it was with the phrase, "It'd don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing."

MS. HALPERT: He took that back?

DR. PHILLIPS: He said that it was a picture that used to hang in the hall in the old Whitney gallery, and he alleged that it was hung out there because Mrs. Force didn't like it, or that he had dropped out of favor. He said that there was something wrong with it -- either the scale of the words didn't fit the picture, or something. He liked the words. He said that there were other things wrong with it, but that he had some ideas about it.

MS. HALPERT: I had a man in from Baden-Baden [Germany]. First I had one from Copenhagen. Foreigners are coming here to get pictures. There's a very strong anti the promotion that's been going on. Even Clement Greenburg came in and said that I had the great hidden horde of all America. This Baden-Baden man came in, and they're doing a show -- the use of the word in pictures, and he said, "We must have a Stuart Davis."

We don't have a single picture. It travels for a year. It goes to Holland -- I mean the show, and it goes on to other places. I have only three unsold recent pictures that I have to hold on to. One is at Brandeis now. I went there -- the opening.

DR. PHILLIPS: To their little gallery.

MS. HALPERT: To the Rose Gallery. They're having -- Sam Hunter brought a selection of the Seattle World's Fair show that he had organized. He brought it to Brandeis to the Rose Gallery, and it's split between the Rose Gallery and the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Coston, so I went to both. Also he asked me to have dinner in the letter.

DR. PHILLIPS: You rate. You just rate.

MS. HALPERT: I love going to Boston because that's the one place where people like me -- you know, I go there and everybody's glad to see me. One fellow who worked here for a short time greets me with a big hug and kiss -- Boris and all along the line wherever I went. I started that line years ago with the theatrical people who used to rub me for good look for the openings. I said, "I'm the Broadway Mezuzah."

Now I say, "I'm the art world Mezuzah."

I have to go all the way to the Rose Gallery to become a real art world Mezuzah because there was a whole lot of people kissing me as I walked in. The show was very well arranged, very well hung and Sam was in grand style, feeling very good. Mitch Saporin was there. I didn't have a chance. He said that he has a new gallery too. What is your friend's name, the guy?

DR. PHILLIPS: Benison.

MS. HALPERT: I've got something he might be interested in.

DR. PHILLIPS: He has something he intends to leave here -- *Folk Art in the Appalachian Mountains.* He found a book.

32 East 51st Street, New York City

MS. HALPERT: It's really very curious because all these things became very emphasized in my mind when I was working on the Marin show, the all oil show. From the very beginning of the gallery we showed oils. A lot of people wondered why I had an all oil show, and you know they'd come in and say, "Oh, did he paint in oil?"

That's preposterous because we've been showing oils, and we've sold a tremendous amount of oils, but there is still that hangover that he is the great watercolor artist. It bothered me dreadfully because if an artist is good and has been painting long enough, no medium evades him. He's good in any medium he chooses. After all his creativity is not bound by technique any more at that stage -- you know, except when he was just learning -- and whatever he uses to express himself, it's equally good, and I always get absolutely violent when someone says, "He's better in this than in that."

Now, for instance, Shahn worked in oil when he was a kid, and he found that the water media were more satisfactory to him, and he hasn't painted in oil. He doesn't like the medium. He likes the fluidity of a water medium. That's all right, but if he liked oil, he could paint just as well in oil. These 1903 panels that Marin did which now everybody recognizes since we had that *1903-1923* show -- God help me, everybody agrees.

Jack Bouer started this talk and everybody else has fallen for the same line that those were unquestionably the first modern pictures produced in the whole world, but they were in oil. Marin started in oil. This was the greatest body of work he did before he went abroad. He didn't start painting at all until 1898, and these were done in 1903. He was studying with Anschutz who was a pupil of Eakins, and he knew how to draw from the nude and so on. He never painted a nude in his life -- oh, he did a couple within a context of a picture, but very few, and he painted these absolutely wild pictures from Weehawken Heights, and they're oils.

Then there was a long gap, and when I was going through his life's work the next oils were 1916, and from there on there was a continuity, but they were never shown, and I was curious about why they weren't shown. It bothered me, and then I realized the time when I was organizing the "Forum Exhibition" ["The Forum Exhibition of Modern American Painters, 1913-1916 "], the first municipal show which was in 1934, and I went to Stieglitz to get pictures by each of the artists for the show. I didn't select the exhibition basically, but I did get the pictures here and there that I thought would be important, so I walked in and said, "I want an O'Keeffe oil and an O'Keeffe water color."

There were no watercolors. She was an oil painter. I said, "I want three Marin -- watercolor, an oil, and a print."

Each artist could show three pictures. "No oils."

I got very angry, and I said, "I won't take the O'Keeffe. I won't take the Demuth, I won't take the Dove. I won't take anything."

I had a hard time getting Dove in the first place. As a matter of face, Stieglitz gave me only a little bitsy watercolor by Dove at that time, but he broke down and let me have a Marin oil and it was the first picture sold at the "Forum Exhibition." It was bought by Bob Tannahill from Detroit who is a cousin of the Fords and who is a very good client. Before the show opened I pretended that I was Cahill who was in the hospital. I wrote a letter in his name and had one of the help sign the letters inviting all the dealers to a preview, to bring clients in the day before, that when Mayor La Guardia got up for the opening exercises on national hookup, he could announce that so many pictures had already been sold which would stimulate sales, and so each dealer brought his clients in, and I brought mine in. I wrote myself a letter as Holger Cahill, and invited a number of people. I telephoned Detroit and so on -- you know, people who would be likely to buy quickly, who didn't have to bring the family in. Everybody was left alone. I mean the collectors went around, and Tannahill came and he said, "I want that Marin."

I said, "Fine."

It was the first oil sold by Marin -- in 1934. He had been with Stieglitz -- well, from 1920 and this was the first oil that had ever been sold. I called up Stieglitz hysterically and said, "I sold the oil by Marin and the watercolor by Dove."

He was perfectly furious. I couldn't understand that because that was a high price. This was the peak of the Depression. That's why I suggested this exhibition, and he was very angry. Instead of saying "Wonderful," he was furious. So I went to see him and he said, "Oh, to whom did you sell the oil?"

I said, "Robert Tannahill."

He had heard of him. He had been buying French art for a number of years and he had been buying American art from me, but he was known as an important rich collector with very, very good taste. I said, "Aren't you pleased, Mr. Stieglitz?"

He said, "Why didn't he buy the watercolor?"

I said, "I didn't know. I wasn't with him when he picked the pictures. There were a number of people there. He evidently preferred the oil, and I was very pleased because I think that's a magnificent painting. Of course,

you've sold oils."

"Oh, no. This is the first oil sold. Do you think you can get him to change to watercolor?"

"Certainly not. I think it's wonderful that he bought the first oil. Maybe it will start the movement in that direction."

Well, he was very cross with me. All these things bothered me -- I mean, the classification of the artist bothered me, and I didn't understand it. I was just distressed -- you know, when I said somebody was interested in O'Keeffe, he invited me up to have lunch with O'Keeffe. It was no problem, and when I sold a number of Hartley's from his gallery he was delighted. When I came with checks for a Dove who was, he always said, sick and desperately poor -- Stieglitz never had a Dove for sale.

As I told you before I felt that Stieglitz punished me because when I was fifteen years old and was hysterical about the other artists, Dove was way beyond me. I thought Dove was mad -- you know, he was much too modern for me. It was a few years later that I recognized the quality of his work and got terribly excited. I thought that Stieglitz was punishing me for being a dope at the age of fifteen, and I kept thinking -- you know, after all, you're not supposed to be so astute at that age, and Stieglitz was a little stupid about it, but there it was. I never -- well, I would come up with checks from collectors. You know, Dove was always dying, starving, so I would come up with a check and Stieglitz never had anything available, and it wasn't so with any of the other artists. I could always buy anything I wanted -- you know, if I wanted a [Charles] Demuth for myself, *The Poppies* [1929] I got it from him, anything I wanted, but a Dove. All this puzzled me for many, many years.

It came up again with the Marin oil show. I remembered reading some letters of Marin's somewhere that had something to do with oils, and I finally discovered it when I was doing the publicity release for the show. I discovered these quotes in the catalogue of the show that Fred White of the UCLA Museum was organizing. He had access to all the papers and all the books and letters we had. McKinley Helm had written about Marin at one time, and so on, and also there were letters that had passed between Helm and Marin and there, very bluntly Marin says that he saw this great wave and he was going to paint it in oils despite the fact that all his oils were relegated to the dark room which was the warehouse -- Lincoln warehouse, or some warehouse in New York. Stieglitz never showed them.

He refused to have Marin represented as an oil painter. After I did this publicity release, I kept worrying about it, remembering all these other things that he never, never would have an oil show. It was only after Stieglitz died that there was an oil show held at American Place over O'Keeffe's body because she ran it. There were other people who worked there, but her ideas dominated, and it was a small oil show. I had been screaming about it all those years. Well, two years after Stieglitz died, American Place had this show, a very small show, and of course nobody went to it. They didn't send out publicity releases. It wasn't run as a gallery, so that it was a show that just died.

When we opened up the Marin room -- you know, we built that Marin room -- we had oils, watercolors and drawings. I couldn't see any separation. We sold a great many oils in all these years to museums, to collectors. We've included them in every show, but this time I just thought it would be nice to have an all oil show by Marin since the 1903 things became so important in our history. I wanted to show continuity, that this wasn't a one shot affair, and in hanging the show I had 1903 with a 1927 New York painting which was a follow through and so on right to the last moment. These early ones foreordained all his life's work in a way. Well, O'Keeffe came in, and I sat there and talked with her about it. I said, "Tell me, why did Stieglitz refuse to show the oils?"

"Oh," she said, "you know, after all Marin was good only in his watercolors. 1921 was his great year."

I said, "So I've heard from many people who surrounded Stieglitz."

This was Stieglitz's circle, all the writers, photographers, and so on, and I said, "That's the craziest damn thing that was ever said about any artist. Good God, the last picture he painted was certainly one of the greatest pictures he ever painted. He didn't hit if off every year. Every picture wasn't a world sensation. The artist never keeps to that even keel, but every year he had a few equally great pictures. There's always a continuity."

"Oh no."

I said, "Look, let's get a few facts straight. You painted those absolutely fabulous watercolors in the 1916-1917 series. We had the first one man show of those here three or four years ago. You were not supposed to paint watercolors. You were supposed to be the oil painter. Demuth was never shown as an oil painter. Marin was never shown as an oil painter. You were never shown as a watercolorist -- right?"

She said, "What are you getting at?"

I said, "I know you'll be perfectly furious, but I am thoroughly convinced -- thinking back, remembering, listening to what was going on, reading -- that Stieglitz was really the focal point of the Stieglitz circle. He ruled everybody. I was too unimportant to rule, so I got away with murder because I was no account. This little squirt walked in at the age of fifteen and was petrified of him, and then I was useful to him because I did sell an awful lot of pictures during a long period of time. From 1926 until he died was kept selling a tremendous number of paintings to museums, to collectors he had no contact with. I want to explode the myth to you. You won't like it, but I've got to get it off my chest. He manipulated all the artists. There were myths."

"One of them -- every once in a while when I would say something about having sold more pictures for you, you like most artists worry about the fact that I'm getting a commission. You're not thinking of what you're getting. You're worrying about the money I make. I'm charging you twenty-five percent because you wouldn't pay any more. You've paid twenty-five percent all your life, and it didn't worry, but my twenty-five percent worries you. Stieglitz's twenty-five percent didn't worry you."

She got very cross, and she said, "He wasn't a dealer!"

I said, "So he always said, so everybody heard continuously that he was not a dealer. He was the entrepreneur. I've told you, and I've told everybody publicly that Stieglitz was the most important thing that ever happened to American art. He advanced modern American art by ten or twenty years -- unquestionably. He introduced most of the first modern shows of European artists as well as African art, children's art. He introduced all these things, and there is no one who has made a greater contribution, but let's get it straight, he also made the greatest contribution of all to Stieglitz.

He could have remained a great man as a photographer. He didn't have to do anything else. He's still acknowledged as the greatest photographer, the greatest artist photographer, but he needed this other too. I'm going to explode a myth with you, and don't hit me because I'll scream and there'll be a crowd. Let me finish."

"I know that every time I sold a picture for Stieglitz -- your paintings, Hartley's, Demuth's, Marin's, anybody -- I made out two checks as he requested. One was for seventy-five percent in the name of the artist, a check made out to the artist. Twenty-five percent was made to An American Place. That was the rent fund. Now when you pay me twenty-five percent commission, I can call that the rent fund too because my overhead is thirty-eight percent. Stieglitz had no overhead at all because in addition to getting twenty-five percent out of every sale that was made for the rent fund, he had all these rich people contributing to the rent fund, and the rent there at American Place was very little. He had no employees. He did no advertising. He did send out a little notice that somebody wrote for him, and usually the one who wrote it would send it out at his own expense. He didn't print a catalogue for which somebody also probably paid.

I pay rent. I have five employees. My overhead is seventy-five thousand dollars a year without my salary. I call your twenty-five percent a commission. He called it a rent fund, and that's phony as hell. Let's get it straight. He charged a much higher commission than I do, than any dealer does, because he had people pay his rent. He had Mrs. Liebman, Richard De Wolfe Brixey, Philip Goodwin -- all these people made large contributions every year for a rent fund. This has nothing to do with getting pictures, so he was a dealer, only he called it a different name. He made it possible for the artist to work -- yes, but he told them what to do. He controlled what they were doing by locking up the oils.

"He made someone like Demuth feel so strongly that he was no good as an oil painter, that when he died under his will he gave all his watercolors and drawings to his boy friend, to his heir, and at the bottom of the will he gave you all the oils, 'since they had no value and you liked them, I'm giving them to you.' Then years later you have them to me to sell, and they sold for three and four times as much as the watercolors. Demuth died feeling that his oils were worthless. Marin might have died feeling his oils were worthless too, but Stieglitz died nine years earlier, and Marin lived long enough to know that his oils were accepted with almost the same enthusiasm. Still there's a hangover. People still refer to Marin as a watercolorist.

In other words, Stieglitz conditioned the artist. He conditioned you. Those watercolors of yours are among the greatest things that ever been done in American art. You never painted another watercolor because Poppa said, 'You will be the oil painter in this gallery. The boys will be the watercolorists.'"

Well, she did get up -- she got so violent. I said, "You're going to sit there until I'm through."

She did. Well, today a man I met at a party once by the name of John Eastman Jr. brought in a letter that he thought I would be interested in because he heard that I kept the archives of all my artist's work. Shall I read the letter? -- sure. This is addressed to John Eastman, Jr., May 19, 1947. This was several years after Stieglitz died. The American Place was continued by O'Keeffe because the artists felt that this was the only thing they ever knew and for sentimental reasons they maintained it, despite the fact that Stieglitz said, 'Close it and turn everything over to Edith Halpert,' O'Keeffe didn't want them turned over, and I couldn't understand it. Well, here's the letter:

Dear Mr. Eastman:

A letter addressed to Mr. Stieglitz by you dated June 21, 1946 has just come in my possession. [This incidentally is more than a year later.] If at a future time you wish to see my work with an idea of purchase, you will have to contact my son, John Marin Jr., at an American Place, 509 Madison Avenue, New York City whereby appointment, work will be shown to you. When Mr. Stieglitz was alive, he usually asked a would-be possessor just how much he was willing to spend which, I think a good way. Most sincerely, John Marin."

This incidentally, and I shouldn't say this about Marin because he's an innocent guy, indicates that another myth can be exploded, that an artist is so unbusiness-like. This is a very good carryover. This is another Stieglitz thing -- he was not a dealer. He did not sell a work of art. Nothing could be bought. There was no price on anything, "How much are you willing to pay?"

Well, I said to Eastman, "Did you go back to buy a picture?"

He said, "Good God no. I wasn't going to be put on a spot like that -- how much would I be willing to pay. I wouldn't dare mention a figure. I didn't want to be insulted, or be insulting, so I never bought anything. I never went up there."

That was another very fascinating idea. I think I did tell you the story about the sable cape and even in my case. Stieglitz was sick one day. My sister got very worried about me because I looked so ratty, and she was in the gallery one day when I sold some folk art. Well, the folk art belonged to me. I mean any money coming in I didn't have to pay out, because they were all bought objects, not like a contemporary picture, because all I got left was the commission which didn't quite cover the overhead. I used the folk art to fill in the gaps, but every time she was in and I happened to sell a folk art object, she would take the money. She saved it for me and finally she had something like twelve, or fourteen hundred -- I don't remember the exact sum; I think it was fourteen hundred saved up. She came to New York. She lived in Philadelphia, and she said, "All right, today we are going out to buy you a fur coat."

She had all the money in cash. She kept getting it cashed each time because the checks were made out to me. I had to cash the check and give her the money. She put it in the bank, and she drew it out in cash carrying it in her bag. We were going, or coming uptown to go somewhere on 57th Street, and I remembered that Stieglitz was sick, so I said, "Look, en route, let's stop off" -- we were in a cab -- "let's get off at 53rd Street for just a minute. I just want to run up and see my old friend Stieglitz. He'll be pleased if I come in and ask him how he is."

So I walked in and right in front of me was this perfectly beautiful Marin watercolor which he might have sold for three hundred dollars to somebody, three hundred -- you know, how much do you have idea. Well, I was so excited about the picture I said, "How much is it?"

He said, "How much will you give?"

I opened Sonia's bag and spilled all the money -- fourteen hundred dollars, and I took the picture home. I gave it to the Corcoran Gallery. This was his technique. Now, he would not have charged that much. At that time that picture would have been sold for about nine hundred dollars, a thousand at the most, except if somebody came in in a sable jacket. I'm sure Duncan Phillips would not have paid anything like that for the picture, but there he was. He shamed me into it. Well, I never regretted it, but Sonia raised -- oh, my God! She carried on so! I had no coat. I was wearing a ratty cloth coat, and I went home in it. I said to her, "Don't worry about it. The picture will keep me much warmer than the coat, don't worry about it."

It did, but that was a very curious technique. This was always the story that Dove wanted from me -- you know, when I started selling his pictures like mad. Dove was the only one who came into the gallery directly after Stieglitz died, but he wanted the story -- how a picture was sold. It wasn't sold. Somebody came in, and Stieglitz's magic worked. He'd talk about this magic all the time. With Marin it didn't matter. With Dove it mattered so desperately that when he wrote me that letter, it was the only time I was ready to burst into tears since I was eight years old because this was the history of his whole experience -- and again Stieglitz made the greatest contribution, on an over-all contribution to modern art, but I still maintain that his artists were good in spite of him.

The things that he got from them! He gave something like eight hundred pictures away, and believe me he did not spend eight hundred dollars on them. O'Keeffe gave all those -- two hundred to the Metropolitan, or three hundred to Chicago, Philadelphia and so on. She gave away hundreds of pictures that belonged to Stieglitz. That was a different kind of faith -- if you know what I mean, and there was a man who was God, and he was dispensing his pleasures in different directions. He did a great deal of good, but he did the most good for himself.

Then I think of O'Keeffe and those watercolors which she did in 1917 and 1916 -- they're stupendous! It was a very, very important medium in her life -- the way she manipulated it, what she could get out of that medium. He stopped her. She won't be bitter. She was very angry with me that day, but I had to get it out of my system to her, and she -- you know, there's always been this thing between us because subconsciously I think we both realized that we knew this. I felt that the time had come for me to get it out of my system. I haven't talked about it publicly. This won't be heard for sixteen, or twenty years, but I think it is important to level off a few of the myths like the one of artists who were so unconscious of money -- the poor dears -- that they cheat the hell out of every dealer, if the dealer doesn't get there first.

I meant her naiveté -- the myth that has been built up about the artist. I love them all -- Stieglitz and the artist -- but I think it should be known that these are facts. This little evidence that came in today by accident I'm sending it to Yale University. He didn't know what to do with the letter, but I'm sending it to Yale, since all the Stieglitz papers are at Yale, in the Yale Library, I think this should go there rather than Detroit. They're all in one place, and I think this should go there too.

DR. PHILLIPS: Did he ever indicate how he came to collect the group he had -- a fantastic group.

MS. HALPERT: That he has told repeatedly -- Steichen introduced all the artists to him. Steichen was a painter originally. The only thing Stieglitz bought before he had a gallery was a painting by Chase -- William Chase -- the Chase who painted the still lifes with fish and so on, very good and a great teacher, but at that time, even then, he was already a little bit passé, but a very good artist, old fashioned. That was the only picture Stieglitz bought on his own.

It was Steichen who introduced Marin, [Max] Weber, all these artists to him, and Weber knew [Jean-Jacques] Rousseau, and the first Rousseau show held in America was a Weber-Rousseau show which Weber brought to Stieglitz, but he said that constantly in everything he ever wrote. Stieglitz always gave Steichen credit, and the books about Stieglitz have, for introducing the artists to him and introducing the idea, and he really started promoting the creative arts. I still feel that his intentions were noble, but that subconsciously he was promoting himself.

DR. PHILLIPS: Was his a critical eye?

MS. HALPERT: In a limited way. He had the best artists certainly, but a very small number. There were other good artists, but he never went beyond the ones he had. He didn't add. He took Gross in at one time -- George Gross had a one man show of his New York things, and then Stieglitz dropped him. He got bored with Weber. He got bored with Hartley, and he ended up with just a few artists -- those were the people he kept.

O'Keeffe was introduced to him not by Steichen, but by a woman whose name I can't remember, who brought in these drawings and he tells that story in every article that has been written -- at last a woman in art and so on. All that sex business that was built up around her pictures -- well, it was an old, old man with a young bride. I'm not being malicious about this remark. I just think that it's factual, and it's funny, that all the sex that was brought into O'Keeffe's pictures by everybody -- he started it. This was an old man boasting of his prowess indirectly. All the photographs he made of her were always of very female parts. You know the story about my getting that photograph from O'Keeffe?

DR. PHILLIPS: No.

MS. HALPERT: Well, from the time I met Stieglitz he wanted to -- well, he certainly wasn't dying for it, but every once in a while he would say, "Let me photograph you."

There was nothing in the world that I would rather have than a Stieglitz photograph, but I thought he had photographed all these great people. I was embarrassed to get into that category, and I said, "No."

Then he did those cloud forms. I used to look at his photographs. I know them very well, and he did those -- well he called them the "equivalent series," the cloud forms. I just went completely to pieces about them, and I said, "I'd like to buy one."

"How much will you give?"

I couldn't have given him ten bucks at this time. This was during the early part of the Depression, when I ate one can of soup for three days. I said, "Someday I would buy one."

Every once in a while he would say, "I'm going to give you a photograph."

This went on for years, and I never got it, so when O'Keeffe asked me to do the estate -- you know, after he died -- to appraise the estate, I was acceptable as appraiser. I spent six weeks of my vacation, the hot, hot

summer I left Newtown, and came down to work on the estate. She was some task master, believe me! She said, "I want you to give so much. I want you to mark so much on it."

Of course -- "I'm not going to mark anything that anybody tells me. If I'm the appraiser, I'm going to appraise it my way." We had terrible battles until one day I walked out. I screamed at her. I said, "Well, look, let's quit. I'm not taking this anymore."

I was entitled to about ten thousand dollars for this job as an appraiser because this was a huge, huge estate. He owned hundreds, thousands of pictures -- you know, these were the things that he owned, and it could be that kind of an estate, but you know, if they went to Park Bernet, it would cost them a minimum of ten thousand dollars. I said, "I'm not doing this for you, spending all this hot summer, in this hot place working, pulling the pictures because you're too gentle to pull them. I'm doing all the work, the physical work, and you're giving me all these arguments," and I said, "If you don't shut up, I'm quitting."

Then she argued about something else, and I said, "I'm through."

I added, "You know, you were an old man's darling and a stinking brat, but I'm not an old man, and I don't have to take it."

I marched out. Well, she grabbed me and apologized, and from there on she was a little quieter about it. When it was finished, she said, "Are you going to send a bill?"

I said, "No, but I would like an equivalent."

She said, "What do you mean?"

I said, "I'd like to have a Stieglitz photograph of a cloud form."

"Oh, I can't spare one of those. I'm giving those to the National Gallery."

I said, "Is that so? Who is going to appraise those?"

I was walking out again. "All right," she said, "I'll give you a photograph."

She pulled out a batch of -- the eighth print of something. I went through them, and there wasn't anything I wanted. I was in a bad mood. Finally I saw one that was done in that abstract way, and I said, "All right, I'll take this Rose."

She said, "That isn't a rose! That's my backside!"

And it was. I ended up with a tree that I don't like very much. I don't have it hanging up. It was. There was the sex. Her flower paintings -- it looked a little but like one of her flower paintings of the roses, as I remember it, so he injected the sex not she, and it's taken me ten years to kill that sex business. Now, when everybody says, "Oh, that's sex," I embarrass the hell out of them, so that's dropped out.

Stieglitz was really a very fascinating personality and had a tremendous influence. He had this coterie of writers at his feet, and he was a brilliant guy. You know, he'd sit there with a black cape looking like a minister of death and so on -- you never saw him. He had white hair coming out of his ears -- way out like this, and this black cloak that he wore in the gallery and outside. He would hold forth, and these people would listen. I think he did a tremendous amount for the writers, and of course the reviews of that time -- if you look back in *Camera Work* and read the reviews -- you know, Hartley writing about O'Keeffe and Marin writing about Hartley and so on, but aside from all those, the writers got a great deal and the artists got a great deal out of that whole environment. It was a very creative setup.

God knows, I got a lot out of it -- you know, hanging around. I'd lean against the door jam. I didn't dare sit down, but I listened to the words of wisdom emanating there, and it was wonderful -- this attitude. I bought a great many pieces for Mrs. Rockefeller by this time -- you know, from Stieglitz, and finally I said, "Why don't you come up there and meet the man? Look at the pictures in the place."

It was a rainy day. He always had his walls painted white, and I introduced her to him. He knew that she had bought a great many things by that time. She must have gotten fifteen, or twenty pictures, except he wouldn't sell me Dove, but she had about five O'Keeffe's, a number of Marins and a great many Hartleys, Demuths and so on, so he knew that she was good goods because that helped maintain the gallery and so on. She leaned her umbrella against the white walls, and he screamed at her. She grabbed the umbrella and ran. Well, this was all part of the personality buildup, and I had to run after her and quiet her. She had never had anybody do that to her, so she said, "You and your friends!"

She was very indignant about it. There was no reason for him to scream at her -- you know, his white walls, but he could do it. It was part of it routine. I'd heard him do that to people, and every once in a while he would come out with a wonderful term which I'm now using in quotation marks always, saying that he was right. I was horrified -- I think I mentioned that about Notre Dame?

DR. PHILLIPS: No.

MS. HALPERT: This was long before I had a gallery, when I was in high school, and I would stand at the door jam and peek, and he'd let me come in and rifle through the cabinets and look at all the pictures -- you know, there were very few Marins that I hadn't seen before, or O'Keeffes and so on. I didn't know who was there, but subsequently I figured out that it was one of the museum directors who was trying to get a one man show of Dove's work, and he kept saying, "But Mr. Stieglitz, how will anybody know about these artists unless they are brought to those locales? Very few people" -- you know, Stieglitz had a very, very small audience. The public didn't dare go up there. It was just a chosen few who had the courage to go up there, mostly ladies, rich ladies, and he said, "Dove should be better known. Nobody knows him outside of New York. Let him have a one man show."

"No."

"Well, let me have something for the exhibition."

He was never shown at Carnegie, or elsewhere. He was never shown in Chicago, never shown outside of New York through Stieglitz. It was that one-man show he had in Chicago in 1912 which now proves that he did paint those things in 1910 and 1911. Fortunately Mrs. Dove had the clippings which I now have here, and they have been microfilmed for all time which proves that Dove anticipated Kandinsky; in any event, this went on. I could hear Stieglitz because he had a booming voice, and every once in a while I would hear this other guy and finally I heard Stieglitz say, "Young man, if anybody wants to see Notre Dame, he goes to Paris. If anybody wants to see Dove, he comes here."

Now I quote him because I've gotten to the same point because I think we've become over-exhibitionistic -- if there's such a word. You know, we're sending -- Good God, we've sent pictures to a hole in the wall which is eight miles away from a big museum. It's absurd! We're really shoving art down people's throats to a point where it's becoming absurd. When people come in here -- you know, those ladies that come from temple, from churches, from charity things -- they ask for pictures and a lot of dealers sent to them. They send them back with holes -- you know amateurs. They don't know how to handle pictures. They want them for auctions for nothing -- all sorts of stuff. I say, thinking of Stieglitz, "If you want to see so-and-so, go to Paris."

If you want to see the *Mona Lisa* [1503-06], you can go to the Metropolitan Museum, and you can save carfare. Incidentally, when O'Keeffe was here, between flights, we had fun. There was a telephone call from a French newspaper in New York for O'Keeffe. She won't answer the phone or anything. She doesn't answer letters. I said, "Well, Miss O'Keeffe is here, but she will not answer the telephone. Would you mind telling me what you have in mind, and I will transmit it to her."

I've forgotten what French newspaper it was, but she said, "I'm here as a representative of such-and-such, and I'd like to get her opinion of the Mona Lisa coming to America."

This was before that picture had arrived. I got absolutely hysterical. "I don't think you'll like her opinion if you hear it, but since she's one of the girls I'll ask her."

I went in, and she said, "What?!"

I said, "Come on. Be a good sport. Go and answer the phone."

I didn't listen in, but she came back, and she was double up with laughter about the *Mona Lisa* coming to America.

I had a wonderful experience with a taxi driver about the *Mona Lisa* which I quoted in Washington the very same night, or the next night. It had arrived in Washington -- that painting. I was going up to a dealer's meeting, uptown, and I can never get a cab, so Bill, the porter, went out and tried to get me a cab. He got it right away for the first time, and I wasn't ready. It usually takes him a half an hour so I told him to sit in it -- you know, to tell the guy to turn the clock on, put the flag up, and I would come right down and not get out of the cab because somebody else would grab it. I came down in about five minutes. I got my handbag and hat. I got in the cab, and the taxi driver said, "Hey Lady, you coming out of that place?"

I said, "Yes."

This was during the Marin show, and we had a very beautiful Marin in the window. He said, "Did you paint that thing in the window?"

I said, "No. That was painted by a great artist."

He talked with a real Brooklynese accent. "Is that so! If my kid done it, I'd break his neck!"

He went on. I let the thing drop. I hadn't heard that one for many years, but I let it drop. He turned around right in front of us there was a bus, and I thought we'd hit the bus. He turned around and he said, "I supposed you like the *Mona Lisa*?"

I said, "Mm Mm."

He said, "Gee, what's all the fuss about! You can't turn on TV. You can't read a newspaper -- full of it, everywhere, pictures, pictures, pictures of her. What has she got? A smile. So who ain't?"

I said, "That's supposed to be a great picture."

He said, "Nah. It can't be."

He turns to me again, and we're practically running into a truck this time. "She ain't even naked!"

I almost fell out of the cab. The next night I went to the Corcoran opening, and I told this to Finley. He made me repeat it all over the place. They almost cracked right open there. There was the National Gallery and a big crowd, but this guy said, "What made him say that?"

"You know it's very easy. It's the same as an old master. He probably knows nothing but Reubens and Titian -- they're always naked."

He couldn't understand why we were making a fuss about this.

I don't know what O'Keeffe said. I know that she practically collapsed when she came into the show room. She said, "Don't you ever give me such crazy calls!"

I said, "You had a good time."

She said, "I did."

DR. PHILLIPS: Has she ever done another watercolor?

[END OF 7 OF 7 REEL B1 r]

MS. HALPERT: She did a couple in 1917, 1919, and they're terrific! There's one being shown at the Whitney that I finally got out of her -- that a young man bought. That's when she made that brilliant remark. One of these days I'm going to write down aphorisms. As I said, we always get along very strangely. She knows that I'm very enthusiastic about her work, that I really reestablished her on the map because Stieglitz frightened all the critics. She had the most terrible reviews after the flower period. She was washed up. She was known as the flower painter, and she was really terrific, but this image of her, his public image of her as a painter was wrong. She was a female painter, a sex painter, and all that sort of stuff.

It took me years to break down that sort of stuff, change their attitude and in her own funny way she's grateful for it because she sold more in ten years than she sold in a lifetime. We got her into about thirty five museums which she hadn't been in, and the others were given to museums for nothing -- you know, the Stieglitz collection, so every once in a while I could say, "I want so-and-so picture" which she has been holding out. She has a group of them in a warehouse with the idea of giving them as a unit to somebody. I convinced her how stupid it is to give them the Metropolitan Museum got three or four hundred pictures, and once in a rare while they hang an O'Keeffe. They're never up. They're in the cellar. Chicago has none of the pictures up. They're in the cellar. Philadelphia has a few. I mean it's absurd! I coaxed her to give them to the small museums where they will be loved and used and seen. She won't do it. Every once in a while I say, "O'Keeffe, you know -- so-and-so."

"How do you know about it?"

"I remember having seen it in the back room."

I thought of this watercolor -- it sort of got into my nostrils lately. It is a very abstract one done in 1919, one of two large watercolors that she did relatively that size, twenty-six inches by twenty-four -- that size. I said, "I don't remember the name of it, but it looks like a snail. It's blue and white, very abstract."

She knew what I mean. Finally, just before she was leaving to go back to New Mexico -- this was just a short time ago, about two months ago, Doris who is a secretary here, brought it in. O'Keeffe had already said goodbye. She was going down to talk downstairs when this young man came in from San Antonio. I was standing there looking at this picture -- just gurgling. It's marvelous, and I hadn't seen it for twenty-four, or -five years. I was so thrilled with it! He walked in, and I didn't see him. He jumped, and he said, "My God! How much is it?"

I said, "I haven't any idea. It just arrived, and I have got to ask O'Keeffe."

He said, "I think I saw someone who might be O'Keeffe downstairs."

I said, "Okay."

I ran down and I asked her, "How much is it?"

She told me. I came upstairs, and he bought it quick like a bunny which broke my heart, so I said, "Look, I have three years control over this picture."

He said, "Okay, as long as I own it."

He said some very interesting things about it. I said, "Just a minute."

I went down, and I said, "Come on, O'Keeffe, come up and talk to this young man. Give him the thrill of his life. He already owns two of your pictures."

I left them alone. Then she came out, and you know, it really touched her. She won't admit it, but it does, so I said, "Aren't you pleased that your paintings are liked by young people?" If they were people of your own generation -- well, it's different. They liked them too. I get such a thrill out of a youngster coming in and seeing an early picture by an artist. This boy almost collapsed when he saw this. He is about thirty years old."

She looked at me as I was an idiot, and she said, "What's so odd about that? Young people like young pictures."

I think that's a wonderful statement. I have some marvelous ones of Marin. Every time he opened his trap, he came through with a magnificent statement like that -- you know, just casually, but they were very, very meaningful. After all this made very good sense. This young man liked her young picture. I thought that was a beautiful statement. I'm going to start writing them down, or Marin saying to me one day -- this was many years ago, before he was in the gallery, he came in, and I said, "Mr. Marin, why is it that your New Mexico paintings are so much more naturalistic than any of your other paints. They're very real, very close to nature as opposed to your other pictures which are the essence of."

Again all these people looked at me as though I was a moron, and I probably was, but he said, "Don't you know why?"

I said, "No. That's why I'm asking you."

He said, "Well, I was in New Mexico as a visitor. I was there on summer, and I went back for a short time the next summer. When I go to a new place I paint what I see. When I'm in Jersey, New York, or Maine, I paint what I know."

Isn't that wonderful! I've got dozens and dozens of these from all the artists, and I think they should be written down. One of these days, I'm going to dictate them -- call them aphorisms -- and send them to the Archives because I think they're important.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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