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Oral history interview with Thomas Carr
Howe and Robert Neuhaus, 1987 Sept 25

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Thomas Carr Howe and Robert Neuhaus on September 25, 1987. The interview took place in San Francisco, and was conducted by Paul Karlstrom and Peter Fairbanks for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

PAUL KARLSTROM: —an institution. This is an interview—or perhaps I should say a conversation—involving four individuals. Thomas Carr Howe, director emeritus of the California Palace of the Legion of Honor here in San Francisco. His friend, and ours, Robert Neuhaus, who is many things. In fact, back in the late '30s, worked with Mr. Howe. An art historian who's just published a book on Frank Duveneck; Peter Fairbanks, the director of the Montgomery Gallery, who has very generously made facilities here at the gallery available for this session and is promising us a little lunch when we have a chance to break; and then, for the Archives of American Art, Paul Karlstrom, the west coast regional director. We dreamed up this idea, as I was saying earlier, as basically—in a sense, out of curiosity. Both Peter and I have been involved here in the art world in San Francisco for some years now. We are curious people. And we weren't around in the '30s. Both of you gentlemen were here, probably from the early '30s, at least if I'm not mistaken—or mid-'30s.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Not with the museum.

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, not with the museum. But here—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Here, right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —in the area—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: In the area.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —with an interest in art. And that's the key thing. And Peter and I would like to cast ourselves in the role of asking you questions about the old days, try to learn things that we don't know. And not so much specifically about the Legion of Honor or any single institution. But the overall situation here. In—especially in the visual arts. And I suppose we would be interested in knowing about the galleries, to the extent there were any. About the press, any kind of criticism. The artists who were working here, the museums, the collector's galleries, and all this kinds of site [ph]. So without further ado, I thought we might start with each of you giving just a brief description of yourselves, particularly at that early time. You know, just what you were doing. And then we can just begin to chat. Do you want to start Tom?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I'd be glad to.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Uh, I came out here in 1931 after—in the midst of, actually, doing graduate work at Harvard, where I had graduated some years earlier. And I had taken at Harvard, the famous for [ph] museum art course, which was, at that time, responsible for producing the majority of American museum directors.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Major?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: That was the famous Paul Sachs, who was professor at—associate director of the Fogg Museum with dear old fuzzy Edward Forbes, the grandson of Emerson, who was the director. And I remember one time his secretary, as part of this museum course, said, "Well, in the first place"—this is Mr. Forbes's secretary—"a museum director should be a gentleman, either by birth or by training." Which some people took as a direct description, on the one hand, of Edward Forbes, and on the other, of Paul Sachs, who was a member of the well-known firm of Goldman Sachs & Co. People came to him to get recommendations for candidates for jobs. And he recommended me to the man who was then director of both the de Young Museum and the Legion of Honor.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Who was that?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Lloyd Rollins.

PETER FAIRBANKS: I didn't know the two institutions were joined back then.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes, they were.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And he first came out here as director of the Legion of Honor. And then, frankly, the director, dear old George Baron [ph], a curator as I recall, at the de Young—was just a born lush. And he was—he was half-seas over all the time. And he had turned the de Young Museum into an old curiosity shop. Because—anybody who wanted to get rid of something, he'd say, "Oh, well, send that off to the museum in the park." So there were kren portraits [ph], and God knows—fire engines, God knows what all.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Baboons.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Hmm?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Baboons.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh, do you remember that—

PETER FAIRBANKS: No.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: —divine story about Henry Rusk? Henry Rusk was one of the—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Conservatory.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I don't know what you'd call him. He was just a handyman. But he was something of a taxidermist, too. And there was a minor theft at the museum, and [laughs]—you mind my rattling on like this?

PETER FAIRBANKS: No.

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, are you going to tell us about a baboon?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yes, he is.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I'm going to tell you about Henry Rusk and a baboon. Uh, there was an official investigation of just where everybody was when this object disappeared. And when it got to Henry, who was one of the gentlest and utterly most foul-mouthed people I ever knew—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: That pretty well sizes him up.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: It's—yeah, it's curious. Such contrast. Because he was such a gentle fellow. And they said, "And where were you, Mr."—did I say Rusk?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Rusk.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: It wasn't Rusk. It was—I don't know.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Rust.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: It was another guy there.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: It was—oh. It was Rust.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Rust.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yes.

PETER FAIRBANKS: R-U-S-T?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And, uh—"And where were you, Mr. Rust?" And he looked up and said, "I don't know anything about it. I was over there in the corner mounting a baboon." [They laugh.] And that became one of the—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I know.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: —entertaining legends of the place. But Rollins cleared out. He got the job. They threw George Baron out in a nice way. And—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Fleishhacker really okayed him.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Didn't he?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh, I'm sure.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Fleishhacker was, in some respects, the tsar of northern California.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Absolutely.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Which Fleishhacker?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Herbert.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Herbert, who at the time, unfortunately, of the first World's Fair of '39—Golden Gate International Exposition—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: That's when it was.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Uh, he had—he—as a banker, he had control of some very important properties for some French people down in Kern County. And he just sort of appropriated them.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: [Laughs.] That's putting it lightly.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And, uh, so the heirs, who involved—were members of the Lazar [ph] family and several other well-known French-Jewish families—they went after him. And I remember one lawyer here, Mr. Sidney Herman [ph], said, "Don't come to me. I don't want to get any more involved with Herbert Fleishhacker than I am already." They were not friendly. And so our distinguished board president was under federal indictment.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Really.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And he got—he stood to lose seven and a half million bucks. And he was also clever enough to transfer all those holdings in his wife's name.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Now, he was president of a board over the joined museums? Is that right?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yes.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yes.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And the way that came about was because he was a great political power here. But he was appointed by—what—Mayor Rossi, I guess—as, appointed the—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, I think—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Fleishhacker was appointed president of the—a member of the park commission. And then he became president of the park commission. And the president of the park commission—and still today is—an ex officio trustee of both the Legion of Honor and the de Young Museum. Well, he just took over. He knew how to do it.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And so he knocked heads together wherever it suited him. And Rollins went to him and said, "I'll be glad to take on the de Young. But the—it's a case of cleaning out the Augean stables." And he said, uh, "I can't—I need help." So Fleishhacker went back to Cambridge to see Paul Sachs. And, a little more politics than that involved. It was a gal named Katherine Field Caldwell who worked at the museum—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Right.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: —and she—a volunteer, I think.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: She was.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And she was the stepdaughter of old Charles Erskine Scott Wood, who was a celebrated

figure from Oregon.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Portland.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And what happened was she encouraged Mr. Fleishhacker, through her grand—step-grandfather—stepfather, rather—to, uh, mention her as a possible choice. Because she had an idea that that's the way she'd get into the museum world. Well, unfortunately, he—Lloyd Rollins asked me to come out. That just —

PAUL KARLSTROM: Unfortunately, you said?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Unfortunately, yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: For her?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: It quite didn't suit her plans. [They laugh.] And—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Fortunately for the Legion and for San Francisco, but unfortunately—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Well, I—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: But that was 1932.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: That—no, it was '31.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Oh, yeah.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Thirty-one when you came out?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: When I came out. So this was in 1930 that he had gone. He came out here, I think, as director of the Legion in 1929. And, uh, so I came out April 1, 1931. And the big job was getting the de Young straightened out. Get the stuffed birds sent over to the Academy of Sciences—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Baboons.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And I—baboons, too. And eventually the fire engines left. But they had everything in the world in the de Young.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Oh, God. Including a great treasure of pre-Columbian gold. Which was uncovered when I was—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Really?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: When was that? Wow.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: It's in—ensconced in the display cases

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, you mean that which is now in the—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah, yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That goes back all the way—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: That was down in packing—that was still there in packing cases when I came to town.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: You don't mean it [ph]?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yes. As late as—that was '38 or ['3]9 I arrived on the scene. And, uh, I think—who's the man you mentioned who was in charge of the—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Henry Trose. That was the guy's name. T-R-O-S-E.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Oh, that's a different person.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: The baboon guy.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah, that's right. Because I couldn't tie this in with Henry Rust, really.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Henry Rust was a guy who built ship models and did those things that—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: He was a great boat—ship designer.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: [Inaudible.]

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And he pulled himself up by his bootstraps. And—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: He was pretty—ultimately pretty valuable.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Became quite able. And we had to share this one man as a restorer. Because, later on, when they threw Heil out because Mrs. Spreckels raised such a fuss when she learned that he had been Goering's—Hermann Goering's—roommate and a member of the—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: And had flown with him.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Flown with him, yes. I have—I was shown lots of pictures of a less portly Goering. And Walter—I'll say this—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Probably where Goering got his love for art.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: What?

PETER FAIRBANKS: That's probably where Goering got his love for art.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, I think that—

PETER FAIRBANKS: From Walter Heil?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: —that was—I—well, I don't know. Could have been. But I—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I consider that hypothesis extremely unlikely.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I think so, too.

PETER FAIRBANKS: We could start a rumor, then. But anyway, go ahead.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: But anyway—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Goering's art was medals.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I'll tell you this. I admire Walter for one thing. When he went over there in 1937—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: —to organize the Old Masters show for the first World's Fair—that was during—second, really, World's Fair. But first of its kind in 1939. He did not make any contact with Goering to get special favors from the German government.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Oh.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I admired him for that.

PAUL KARLSTROM: When did Heil appear on the scene? I forget.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh, well, uh—you may want to delete this. There was rumors that Mr. Rollins was going to get the exit light. And Elizabeth Holmes [ph], this gal who worked at the de Young, said, "Tommy, you know Mrs. Cameron." That was the oldest daughter of Mr. de Young. "You know her. You better go and talk to her and try to save Heil's job. Because you'll lose yours, too." Well, I said, "That's a nice personal reason for doing it." So I made a date to see Mrs. Cameron. And that was in the old de Young house, 1919 California Street. Originally built for the Crockers. And the de Youngs got them to move out through rather underground means. Anyway, they—oh, the W. H. Crocker family had only been there for about, I think, five—four, five months. And then old man de Young, following his usual tricks, got something on Mr. W. H. that he didn't care to have revealed. And the price of silence was—well, all right. Give us the house, and we'll not say anything about it. That's the way the *Chronicle* prospered. And that's just too—I mean, I—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah, sure it did.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I can't be sued for this, because it's such a well-known fact. At any rate, he, uh—I got my morning appointment with Mrs. Cameron.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Uh, excuse me, Tom. But Heil was at that time at the Detroit Museum—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: He was—he—[cross talk].

ROBERT NEUHAUS: —under Valentiner.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: He was working with Valentiner at Detroit. And then Detroit fell on bad times financially in the early '30s, you know.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: It sure did.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And they had to dispense with William Suhr, their very famous restorer—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: —who later—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Came out here.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Came out here in the summertime, because Heil promised him charming ladies for his own entertainment.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, so we can talk about that later. I'm sure there's—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yeah. But anyway, uh, I told Mrs. Cameron—I said, "Mrs. Cameron, I'm awfully distressed to hear that there's a rumor that Mr."—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Rollins.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: "Mr. Rollins is going to lose his position." And she got up, put a log on the fire, dusted her hands, and said, "Yes. He's being discharged on order of the San Francisco Police Department."

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Jesus.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Oh.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And, uh, this is the part you probably want to erase.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I doubt it.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: It involved his frequenting the basement rooms of the St. Francis hotel.

PETER FAIRBANKS: What was in the basement?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Toilets.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Use your imagination.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Oh, I see. [They laugh.] That's not a—

PAUL KARLSTROM: This is Walter?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: No, this is—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh, no. This is Lloyd Rollins.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Rollins, okay.

PETER FAIRBANKS: This is Lloyd Rollins.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Rollins.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And—

PAUL KARLSTROM: He wouldn't be the first or the last, of course.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Fleishhacker, of course, had no moral scruples about what he did in or out of the museum, except as it affected the reputation of the museum. So he warned Rollins to mend his ways. And, unfortunately, Mr. Rollins did not mend his ways. And through Mr. Herbert Fleishhacker's chauffeur, who was a comely fellow, he heard that Rollins was up—Fleishhacker heard that he was up to the old tricks. So that was that.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: So that's when Herbert Fleishhacker got in touch with Edsel Ford, who was down in Florida—well, on account of the Detroit Museum connection.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Right.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And, uh, Ford highly recommended—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Walter.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Walter Heil. Well, that lasted for two years, because—it lasted up until '39. Because that's when I became director. The—Heil—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, Heil fell out of the good graces of Alma de Bretteville Spreckels.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: That was—the big trouble there was, Mrs. Spreckels found out about the fact that Heil had known Goering. And she said to me in a voice you could have heard to the Farallons out there one day [ph]

PAUL KARLSTROM: That Francophile, Mrs. Spreckels.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: "Mr. Howe, do you think it's right for a man who shot down our boys during the war should be director of this museum?" And I said, "Well, Mrs. Spreckels, it isn't any of my business. I can't make any comments on that score."

ROBERT NEUHAUS: She called me and—I'd been to her boudoir one time. And—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh, God.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: —cut loose on Heil.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Did she?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: And it was no uncertain terms.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: She set up a great big—[inaudible].

PAUL KARLSTROM: Wait a minute. She called you up to her boudoir?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yes, up into her dressing room. She was still in her negligee, and—

PETER FAIRBANKS: This is where she would do interviews.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I don't know.

PETER FAIRBANKS: [Inaudible.]

ROBERT NEUHAUS: That's—I was at the museum with Tom. And—and, uh, she wanted to let me know that—and I reported back to Heil. And Heil almost—well, momentarily went out of his mind. Went, "How could they do this to me?"

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Well, she also came out very often in an elaborate nightgown over a mink coat. And she loves to sit down in one of the main galleries and light up. I said, "You know, Mrs. Spreckels, it isn't customary to smoke here." And she said, "That's why I enjoy doing it." Alma had her quaint side.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: She did. And she also had a nice side to her.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh, boy.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Let me interrupt a bit now. What we're trying to do here—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Is go through the sequence.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —is get you—getting us to get you the director of the Legion, shortly after which—or at about which time, I think, you two connected.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yes. Well, Tom had been there seven years by the time I got there. Seven or eight years.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, but not as director, I believe.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I was assistant director until '39.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Under both museums.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: And Heil and Tom weren't exactly friendly all the time.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So it was the separation then, again, of the museums—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —that established you as the director of the Legion, is that right?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yes. It was—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Do I have this straight?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And it was Mrs. Spreckels's doing. She and Fleishhacker had a blood hatred of each other. And he always said that she was going through that period in life when women behave rather peculiarly.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Which period is that?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Which was kind of ungallant of him. But he was never famous for that. Oh, he thought nothing, for example, of calling up—before I became director, or after—and say, "By the way, Tom, I'm going to bring some distinguished guests out to the museum after dinner. Will you be out there at ten o'clock, please?"

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah. That sounds just like him. He—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And that sort of thing happened all the time.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Well, you were—so you came out in '31, Tom. And then you—as assistant director, or as a curator?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: As assistant director of the Legion.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Of the Legion.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And I've always made a strong point that—although I was at the de Young a great deal because Heil made his headquarters there.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Right.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: That's what irked Mrs. Spreckels. I said, "Well, Mrs. Spreckels, you see, he can't afford to be over there, because he knows he's got me pinch-hitting for him at the de Young—at the Legion." Well, that was shortchanging her museum.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And of course, in a sense, it was. And—

PETER FAIRBANKS: When did you become director?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I—in December of '39. And I was very conscience-stricken about this, and very genuinely so.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Why, Tom?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I mean, to be advanced over the dead body of your predecessor.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Oh, I see.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: So—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Was Heil fired at—by Alma?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh, he just was—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Resigned?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: They had the Legion dropped off.

PETER FAIRBANKS: I see.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Did he then remain as head of the de Young?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh, the de Young people accepted him gladly. And—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Otherwise they might still be stuck together the way they are now. I mean, maybe there would have been no break if it hadn't been for Alma de Bretteville Spreckels's—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: That's possible.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —irritation with--what--Fleishhacker and Walter Heil.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: But it was awfully difficult to try to, you know, it was a—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, you had—you really had to walk a pretty fine line there.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I'm—honest to say, I did.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: You did, too.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: But what happened was I got on a train. It was too early to fly in those days, I think.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Oh, it was, yeah. Well, there was some—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Anyway, it was primitive flying. And I went to Cambridge to talk with my friend Mr. Sachs. I—we all called him Uncle Paul behind his back or often to his face. I said—I told him the situation. He said, "You get on the next train back to California and take that job."

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Hmm. That's interesting, yeah.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: He said, "You've been highly scrupulous about this. Don't have any feelings—[inaudible]—at all."

PETER FAIRBANKS: But what about yourself? What was—how did you get involved in this?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, I had—leaving the University of California, I went back—I had—my goal was to be associated with museum.

PETER FAIRBANKS: When did you finish at the University of California?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, I finished four years after I should have. [Laughs.] No, I—

PETER FAIRBANKS: When should you have?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I left California in '35 and entered Harvard, the graduate school in fine arts under Professor Sachs. Because at that time, I think there was—it was the only real, professional entrée into the museum world.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Absolutely.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: And art history was—at least here on the coast—a rare subject. It was not taught in any of the schools. I think University of California was one of the few who had anything at all along that line.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Stanford had—what—Ed Farmer, as I recall.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: That's right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Not that early?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: What?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Not that early, surely. Ed Farmer? Back in the '30s?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Really? I didn't realize he went back that far.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I don't know. I don't know.

PETER FAIRBANKS: You're thinking of David. They mean Ed Farmer.

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, wait a minute. Am I too—

PETER FAIRBANKS: There's a David Farmer down at Santa Barbara.

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, no. Farmer was—if I'm not mistaken—it can't be. Is—was he teaching as late as the '60s? There was a Farmer teaching at Stanford into the '60s?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well—I don't know—I don't know who you're talking about, frankly.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, well, never mind.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: It had to do with Stanford in—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, art department of Stanford.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: And he was the head of the art department at Stanford?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: He was the main person there.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Oh, could be. I don't—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: As much as anybody was.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And also there was another guy whose name I cannot remember, who was a very good artist, as well.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Mendelowitz?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: What?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Daniel Mendelowitz, do you mean? He was a—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yes, Dan Mendelowitz.

PETER FAIRBANKS: So you had finished at—finished in Berkeley—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well—

PETER FAIRBANKS: —and then went off to Harvard in '37? Was that what you said?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Thirty-five.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Thirty-five.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: The fall of '35 and the spring of '36.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: And while there I met a professor at Harvard who said, "Don't waste your time around here." He said, "You'd better go to Europe and round it out a little bit."

PETER FAIRBANKS: Who was that professor?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, his name was Millard Chapman [ph]. And he and his—another friend back at Harvard—wrote a book on aesthetics. And I got to know him very well.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: And he had been to Marburg University, so he told me that was the place to go. And I spent two and a half—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: He worked with Professor Hallmann [ph] on it, too.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah, with Richard Hallmann.

PETER FAIRBANKS: And which two years were you in Marburg?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, I was there almost three years. And stuck until the outbreak of the war. And I came back in '39. And—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Wow. That's quite a period to be there.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: And I was looking for a museum job. And through my father, I made contact with Walter Heil. And there was some delay, but finally I got a job as a—curatorial job. Finally with a high-sounding title, like educational director. Wasn't that it, Tom?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yes, that's right.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Something like that.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Were you at the—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Both.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Were you working with Heil or with—for both?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Both.

PETER FAIRBANKS: This is before Heil had become just head of the—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Right. I was as much at Tom's museum as at the other, really.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: And we started a program on exhibitions that you had planned. And—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Well, we had a—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Excuse me. Let me at this break turn the tape over.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: All right.

[END OF SIDE 1A.]

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Fleishhacker said, "You're not going to—you're going to jail, Herbert. So we better do something very fast." Those were his exact words. Yeah, I had just—I was outside the door, and this was very quick [ph]. And then I went in. He wasn't disturbed in the slightest. "Nice—my boy, you know, we've got a nice job for you, my boy. And you go to the exposition three times a week, and you show them what to do."

PETER FAIRBANKS: Right. My goodness. I guess he thought he was too big to go to jail.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, he got out. I mean, I never heard this before, Tom. And that's how he managed, by—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yeah, he transferred all—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: But the Lazar [ph] family were after him tooth and nail. And he was—he almost did go to—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Pokey.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Pokey, yeah.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, now—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: So I mean, my background was a little the same as Tom's was.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: We both studied under the—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Same people back then.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Took the same courses, I'm sure.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Knew Agnes Mungom [ph].

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh, I talked to her last night.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Did you really? Is she still?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: She—yes. She's down—she's desperately ill. Had five operations last year. And she got down to 88 pounds.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Oh, dear.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: She's up to 90 now. And she's working toward 100.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Is she now 83?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: No, no. She's—she—as a period when she and I are the same age, but I am six months older.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Oh.

PAUL KARLSTROM: How old are you? Let's—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Eighty-three.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Well, that's what I thought. I—she just—she had her—I remember the 80th birthday was three years ago. It was a big celebration.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You were students with Agnes, then? Or she was one of the—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Agnes took the museum course when I did.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Oh, she did. That's right.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yeah, and boy was she the star of the flock. Because Mr. Sachs—I remember at one meeting—they always met up at his house, Shady Hills—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: That was delightful.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: —occasion. And—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Right where I went to school.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Really?

PETER FAIRBANKS: To Shady Hill

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Did you really?

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah. Edward Forbes was at—we discussed this before, but—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Oh, I didn't know. I didn't know that, Peter.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Elliott Forbes and, yeah, the whole family there. Of course, there was a whole little enclave with Sachs, and then later Rathbone, and Forbes, and—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yeah.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Vermeule [ph]. I mean, there was a little enclave up there.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Let me direct this just a little bit. Because I think we're going to get into some very interesting things. And I want to hear a little bit, too, about your background, what you bring. It seems to me, in a way, you share some experiences in and around Cambridge and Boston. And now find your—the three of you find yourselves here. Obviously different generations. But I would like to—before you—to wrap up your background. Could you tell us a little bit about your earlier years, because you had a very distinguished father in the arts. And I think that this is relevant. You must have grown up in the Bay Area. You must have some memories of that.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I did. But I don't think my father and I hit it off very well. But I started in—in my undergraduate years, I had planned to be an architect, and took a year and a half in the—or almost two years, actually.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I did the same thing.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Did you do that, Tom? But my athletic interests conflicted with these—over the drawing board until two o'clock in the morning. And I dropped that and stayed out of school for a couple years and worked at various jobs.

PETER FAIRBANKS: What did you do for those couple of years?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, I worked for the telephone company. And I worked for PG&E up on the Salt Springs dam. And I—construction jobs. The Caldecott Tunnel and—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: And one—I worked with Standard Oil. They were all big companies.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Right, yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Telephone company.

PETER FAIRBANKS: So how did you find your way back into the arts?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, I came back to school. I'd been injured, and I took a leave, and then decided to stay out a little bit longer. And so I—my class should have been—if I'd stayed with my age, my peers, I should have graduated in 1931.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Because I'm—I'm three years behind you, Tom, actually.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: You're five years.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Five years, really.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You mean the—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: But—

PAUL KARLSTROM: You don't feel, though, that your earlier years, your—the influence of your father—had anything to do with your choice of work?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Oh, very definitely. Very definitely did, surely. I mean, he—he knew Lloyd. And he knew Sachs. And he'd had contacts. And Fleishhacker. And I was floundering around. And he brought up this business of museum work. I owe him this entirely.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, what I'm getting at is you must have grown up in a situation—your—the ambiance of your childhood—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —that was art-oriented. And I'm very curious to know how prevalent that was in the Bay Area. Because there were not the resources—well, anywhere at that time that were quite the same as—same awareness and activity in your field.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, in the—at the University of California, they had an art department. And both the art history and—and studio courses.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You mean Walter Horn had come over and—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: He came—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: No, he—Horn came later.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Because he gets the credit, you know, for opening up art history west of the Mississippi. Is that right or wrong?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, I think that's—

PAUL KARLSTROM: I mean European-type discipline art history.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, that's possibly—I think that's partly true. But there were the classicists. Washburn, who was a Greek scholar, had an art history course in Greek and Roman cultures. And I don't quite—you mean, you wondered what I was—how I got into the art?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, partly that, but—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I was interested in painting, also. I took many studio courses and did quite a bit of painting.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I guess what I'm asking, and it may not be something that can be easily answered is just what was it like here in terms of the arts? What was the—what was it like in San Francisco?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, it was—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh, San Francisco has always been the city of music. At—even from the very beginning of my time here, it was drummed into me that San Francisco—in San Francisco, music is queen. In Los Angeles, art.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: That's partly true. There were—both of the critics in the local papers then were music critics. Al Fried [ph] and Frankenstein. And they were art critics at the same time.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Had to be, yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Sort of a secondary—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —fashion.

PETER FAIRBANKS: I guess what's sort of another way of rephrasing what you're trying to ask, Paul—I guess in my—it's part of my curiosity. I mean, there was—your father was clearly the major force in the art community in many ways for the teens up to the '20s.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, he—

PETER FAIRBANKS: He's in a lot of the books. I mean, I just sort of see it in terms of my historical research.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Right. Well, he was enormously successful with his lectures and his writing at the Panama-Pacific Exposition.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Right.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: And I mean, they—people—to this day, people ask me, you know, this about him. But he—there was very little—I mean, art was way behind the scenes.

PETER FAIRBANKS: It was a real infancy—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

PETER FAIRBANKS: —at the time, I guess. Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: But the department, what's really—Nahl was as much responsible for the formation of that art department as anybody.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Really?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah. That's Perham Nahl.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Is he—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: The son of Christian Nahl.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I didn't know that. I didn't even know he was teaching there.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Oh, he taught there. And he was a—he gave a marvelous class in anatomy. It had both art students and medical students taking it.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yes, he designed that—you have that old program of the Panama-Pacific Exposition with the Hercules pushing of the—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: About how early do your memories go back of the art world of the Bay Area?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, my earliest memory—and curious enough, it has to do with Duveneck [ph]. I was getting lost at the Panama-Pacific Exposition.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, really?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: And being picked up in the Duveneck room—gallery.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: That story—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: That's a kick. You've got to be a Freudian to make any connection, here.

PETER FAIRBANKS: That's a great story. I hope that—we got to get that in the review of the book. That's a great story. [Laughs.]

ROBERT NEUHAUS: And I—as I say—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Took you a long time to get back into it again, didn't you?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yes, a little bit. Two grades in grade school.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What do you remember of the Panama-Pacific—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I remember—I remember two things very well. One was a horse that could tell colors. [They laugh.]

PAUL KARLSTROM: Wait a minute. You can't mean—

PETER FAIRBANKS: And part of the art historical background.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I'm not kidding. This I remember.

PETER FAIRBANKS: It had taken courses at—[inaudible].

ROBERT NEUHAUS: See, I was only six years old.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Six or seven years old.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, a horse that could tell colors.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yes, they had the horse up on the stage. And the—you—you weren't out here at that time, were you Tom?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: When you were six? No, I wasn't here, ever.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: No.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I came for the first time here.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Right, I knew that.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, how did—okay, I'm going to bite on this one. You've got—this may be the only place where this is recorded. You've got to tell us about the horse who could tell color.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Horse was up on the stage, and there was a lineup of ribbons over a rack. Different colors. And, uh, the guy who was handling the show said to the audience, "Just name a color and see what happens." So some guy yelled, "Blue." And the horse went over and picked out the blue thing and dropped it at the guy's feet.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: That's fascinating [ph].

ROBERT NEUHAUS: And then there was another thing I distinctly remember. I was with my father, and they—the treat at the time for people going to the fair were scones. Where scones were being made. In the window of this one place—the chef was there. And on the window it was written, "If you can make me laugh, you will win \$100." And my old man said something to him in German. I'm sure it was a little on the smutty side, because he did elicit a—

PETER FAIRBANKS: A laugh out of him?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: No, and I remember the tower of jewels, of course, and going over there at nighttime.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Well, for example, as I recall, at—in the early days, in the '30s, there was a Courvoisier gallery known as the Courvoisier Gallery.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: That's right.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And there was Gump's.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Really, just two—two galleries?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, there were, uh—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh, no. There were—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Little galleries around, yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yes. There was a fine room—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Even Maxwell had a little antique store.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Who was that?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Maxwell.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Maxwell.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Fred Max—well, it was nothing, Tom. It was just a little joint. But he was beginning to collect and buy and sell things. And I had some dealings with him.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What about Gregory Atkinson [ph]—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, they weren't—oh, yes.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: That's the one I was trying—that was a very fine store. But these were also—they all did training [ph].

ROBERT NEUHAUS: They did. That's right. And he did very distinctive—

PAUL KARLSTROM: So none of them were making it as proper—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I don't—

PAUL KARLSTROM: —art galleries, like—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I don't think so.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh, they had exhibitions. But I—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, Gump's did.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Gump's and so did Courvoisier.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah, right. And Courvoisier also had the Disney operation.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: So I frowned on [ph].

ROBERT NEUHAUS: You remember?

PAUL KARLSTROM: What?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, all the Disney—Disney transparencies—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Celluloids.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Celluloids is what I meant, yeah. And these were selling.

PAUL KARLSTROM: They were selling those in the—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Oh, this was hot stuff, yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So you would say that perhaps the Disney celluloids were—represented the—the highest area of collecting activity in the Bay Area?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, there wasn't much more. I mean, after all—I don't know about the people—Fleishhacker didn't collect anything.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: No, but whenever the museum bought a picture, by the time a guy got through selling the picture, he was so tired he would have taken it—he'd let him have it for \$0.10. But Fleishhacker also demanded his pound of flesh. He—you had—the dealer had to give him a picture if it resembled a picture.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Was there much buying from galleries—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: No.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —in San Francisco by the institutions?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Pathetic. We were an absolute desert in that respect.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Mainly went east—they went east and bought things.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: It was like—no decent high-tone society woman, for example, would dream of having her decorating done here. She went to New York and got Elsie de Wolfe.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Got who?

PETER FAIRBANKS: Elsie de Wolfe.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And the finest firms of decorators, Armstrong, Carter, and Kenyon, they were gentlewomen. And—

PAUL KARLSTROM: They were here?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yes, and they were—exquisite taste. And they charged just as much as Elsie de Wolfe.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I'm sure.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Tell me, who else was in the museum at the time, in these early—during the '30s? What were some of the other players in the museum world at the time?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, Tom mentioned one, Paula DeLucca [ph].

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Paula DeLucca was an Italian girl.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: And whose cousin was on the—was one of the—city council, wasn't he? Or something.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I—but I remember there was another gal who came—the—you see, we—everybody in the area that knew about it was after the collection of prints and drawings assembled by—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Achenbach.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: —by old Moore Achenbach, who was—he made his money with—in the publishing business—the advertising—I don't mean the—what was the firm he was with?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I can't help you there. I don't—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Was it a publishing or advertising business? Or a public relations agency or something?

PAUL KARLSTROM: I can't remember.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: No, it was a public relations—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Walter J. Thompson or something?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: It was that type.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: The man who owned the famous Rembrandt, *Aristotle*, in New York.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Hammer. Hammer? Armand Hammer?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh, no.

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, no.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: No, Armand Hammer wasn't active then.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Armand Hammer bought it.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And he—Achenbach is said to have made his money in glorifying the California prune.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Great.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And he was a crusty old Pennsylvania Dutchman—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: —who drank a quart of whiskey—of scotch whiskey—every day of his life. And by the time I—well, everybody was wooing him. They wanted his collection all over.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: It had—he valued a beautiful calendar just as much as he would Rembrandt's *Three Crosses*. And by the time you get over to see old Achenbach in the afternoon, he was well on the way to being completely pooped.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And, uh, we had a very ingenious and a difficult woman on the staff that time named Jermayne MacAgy, whose husband later was the head of the art school.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, famous couple.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Huh?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Famous couple

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: They were famous, all right.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, good. I like there's a little edge to the way you say that. I would—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, Jermayne was a very willful person.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I'll say she was. And—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: She took over fast.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I'll tell you. I was so surprised to see a picture of your wife by Clyfford Still. I nearly fell off the chair, because—

PAUL KARLSTROM: We should point out, by the way—a little commercial message here—that that was reproduced in the archives journal. That's where you saw it.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Sure.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And have you still got that picture?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, I have it—oh, the painting? Yes. I have it. He painted her twice, actually.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Uh-huh [affirmative].

ROBERT NEUHAUS: The other one, her daughter has it in London.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Well, what happened was, uh, Jerry, she was with Tommy Munro, who was the head of the educational department at the Cleveland Museum back in the '30s—and Douglas was offered a job by Grace McCann Morley.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: That's right. I've forgotten that.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And she brought him out here and expected to run him. And didn't quite work that way. But anyway, Jerry thought, Well, well, well. So she set about wooing Douglas and married him. They came out here together. Grace Morley, I think, was more than a little subtle [ph]. She had hired a bachelor. She got a Benedict [ph]. And—there was no particular love lost there, either.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I'm sure not.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And Jerry was a terrific champion of Clyfford Still.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Right. They both were.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: And I introduced them to him.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Did you really?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Introduced him to them, yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I never knew that until now.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Why don't you tell us about that, if you would?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, it was at a—I can't really remember how it came about. But we all met in a—in—well, it was in the MacAgys' apartment down on, uh—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Hyde Street.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Hyde? Could have been, Tom. I really can't remember.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: It was one that—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: And I'd known Clyfford for already for some time through my friendship with my wife's—present wife's first husband, Earl Blue [ph], who was a musicologist and taught at Stanford later in his life. And he and Clyff had been very friendly up in Washington. So—but to get back to the MacAgys' role in the—in the museum, she—she took over pretty fast.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh, boy.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: You didn't have to do any work after that.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Well, I—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: She arranged the exhibitions. She was a fireball.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I went away. I got in the Navy, you see. And—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Oh, that's right.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And she took over—

PAUL KARLSTROM: So she was in a caretaker position in a sense. Was that what—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yes. And when I went over—that was in—early '45. And then, when I went over again as a civilian, a member of the Foreign Service, Jerry said, no, she wouldn't take the job.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Oh.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And I said, "Jerry, you'll take the job, or you're fired." And—I forget—was Fleishhacker—no—was he our board president then?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I can't tell you, Tom. He could have been. I don't know.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I don't think so. I forget who came—oh, Walter Buck [ph] came along at one point there. Gave \$60,000, and the board president had a hard time surviving the blow. Because the—two Walters here of considerable note. Water Haas and Walter Buck. Walter Buck reputedly worth \$200 million, and—of which every penny, except for that \$60,000, is still in the Buck family handler [ph], I'm sure.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: But at any rate, Jerry was told she had to fish or cut bait.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

THOMAS CARR HOWE: So she did. But she behaved pretty badly. As I recall, I was gone. She went off to Alaska—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Oh, yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: —participated in making a film and all.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Why is she so famous? I mean, she's now one of the legends here in the Bay Area. Oh, the good old days when the MacAgys were here.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: They really dovetailed with the whole movement of Abstract Expressionism.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yeah.

PETER FAIRBANKS: The contemporary art scene in San Francisco.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Contemporary art scene.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: That's—I would say—I'd really lost track of her completely, except through a friend who knew them both. And they were divorced, eventually. He left her, I think.

PETER FAIRBANKS: She put on a number of exhibitions of contemporary art.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Oh, yeah, she did.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh, yes. She put on—we took that show of arms and armor from the Metropolitan. And she devised a giant chessboard.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah, right.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: That was one of the most spectacular setups.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Her installations were really quite remarkable.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I remember the one they had of watches and clocks. He did a—you know, very dramatic lighting in a dark room kind of thing. You see them displayed.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Well, the person who took a great fancy to her was Dominique de Menil.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I don't know—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Down in Houston.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And they asked her to come down and be in charge of this art school—I mean, art gallery place at St. Thomas University or something.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Highly Romanist. And Dominique was absolutely captivated by her. Anything Jerry owned, it was—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, she could sell herself.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: She sure could. And this won't be able to appear on the tape, because although it's a matter of verbatim history—I had organized—I had put together, I thought, a very, nice contemporary, local show.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Right.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And we had a catalogue. And turned out we had one—a place for one more illustration. And Jerry was working on the catalogue. And she said, "Look, we've got another place for one more illustration. I'd like to use the Clyfford Still."

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Well, I nearly threw up at the idea of the Still being in the show. And I said, "Nothing doing." And Jerry just looked at me coldly in the back hallway of the museum and said, "Oh, fuck!" [They laugh.] And I said, "Mrs. MacAgy, you are fired." She walked back to her office, paid no more attention to me as if I'd been a paper on the wall.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did the Still end up in the catalogue?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: No, it did not. And she never forgave me for that.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: To get back to the art climate, I think Tom could enlighten us here with the kind of exhibitions that attracted attention at that time.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah. That's a great idea.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I'm referring back to—well, the one—the exhibition of one painting which drew thousands of people when you put on display at the Legion. *Whistler's Mother*.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh, yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I mean, this shows, it seems to me—I mean, that people were so attracted—art was at such a level that—every exhibition that they put on—this is symptomatic of it. Didn't that—wasn't that the highest attendance of any—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Well, we had to have the floors redone.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You mean blockbusters didn't arrive just with the Van Gogh show and—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: No, that was—

PETER FAIRBANKS: One—one picture.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: The first—

PAUL KARLSTROM: One picture.

PETER FAIRBANKS: One picture. You had a blockbuster with one picture.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yeah, but the first real blockbuster of a—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Sweep of art.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: —of a sweep of art was when Walter Heil talked Alfred Barr into letting us have the first Van Gogh exhibition in 1936.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Wow.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Chicago wanted it. Heil—

PAUL KARLSTROM: So it really was the first blockbuster. But it wasn't the Van Gogh one we remember.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Right.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Heil said that—oh, my God, that was pandemonium.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah, it was. I remember it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What do you think that means about the level of enthusiasm for the visual arts in terms of—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, it surely—

PAUL KARLSTROM: —exhibitions here in the Bay Area? Because it sounds to me like things haven't changed much. It was the same then as now.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, it showed there was an enthusiasm, a dormant enthusiasm there that just needed awakening. But the—Tom, and those exhibitions you put on—we put on—well, first, Heil's big one was—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: English—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: —*Seven Centuries of Painting*, wasn't it?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: No, the first one was an exhibition of English painting, I think.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah. That was before my time.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I was 33.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah. But the—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Though the—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: The big one that was there in my time was *Seven Centuries of Painting*.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh, that was great, because—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: And you put on the baroque—the Italian baroque show.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yeah, I had a Venetian show.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: But the *Seven Centuries of Painting* was a great exhibition—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: It was.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: —because it—they had lots of the things that were stuck here during the war from first and second exhibitions, '39, and '40.

PETER FAIRBANKS: What always surprised me is that there—it seems that there are all these very wealthy, powerful people involved in the museum that have a tremendous amount of money. But I haven't seen any of them really collect worth a damn.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, that doesn't mean they have taste because they have money.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Exactly. But I just—I mean, who were the collectors in San Francisco? I—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: There weren't—

PETER FAIRBANKS: I still—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: The Crocker family.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Who?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: The Crocker family.

PETER FAIRBANKS: The Crocker family.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah, they did. That's right.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I know the Spreckels preferred furniture to pictures.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: But they did buy—they did have paintings, too, didn't they?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yes.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: And they had the Rodin. They did collect—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Of course, the Rodin was—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Spreckels?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yes.

PETER FAIRBANKS: But—so you really just had—you had the Crockers, who had a few pictures.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And they took a fancy to the San Francisco Museum. And these three leading families, Spreckels, Crocker, and de Young—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Right.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: de Young had their own museum. Spreckels had—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: The Legion of Honor.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: The Legion.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Right.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And so the Crockers became principal patrons of the San Francisco Museum.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Now the Museum of Modern Art, which was the San Francisco Museum of Art. But the—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Peter, excuse me. I need to interrupt, because we're going to run out of tape. I don't want to miss you. So let's break now.

[END OF SIDE 1B.]

PAUL KARLSTROM: —Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, a continuation of a conversation with Thomas Carr Howe, Peter Fairbanks, Robert Neuhaus, and I am Paul Karlstrom. This is the second tape, side 1. We were discussing collecting—or perhaps a lack of collecting—in the Bay Area. I thought, though, at this point it would be nice for Peter Fairbanks, the director of the Montgomery Gallery here to tell us a bit about himself and what he does. And he shall, of course, indicate why he has a special interest in collecting in the Bay Area now.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Well, I just want to start by saying my only—my connection with all the—of these two boys that went to Harvard is that I grew up in Cambridge. And my mother—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Did you?

PETER FAIRBANKS: —went to Harvard Graduate School about the same time that you were both there in art history. I believe she was there in '33 and—'32 and '33.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah. Well, right in between us.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Right in between you, yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah, exactly.

PETER FAIRBANKS: And—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: See, my mother was a graduate of Radcliffe, too.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Is that right? Oh. That—I used to work for the Forbeses down there and knew Edward.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Used to chase Edward around on his horse, Horatio. Horse is about as old as he was towards the end of things. Mighty fine—[inaudible].

THOMAS CARR HOWE: He was the classmate of my uncle Edward Cummings, who was the father of E. E. Cummings.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yes, that's right.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And, uh, Edward, he said—my Uncle Edward taught at Harvard.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yes.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Sociology. And was later Unitarian minister at the Edward Everett Hale church.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Oh, in the Yard, you mean?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: No, in Boston.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Oh, in Boston, right. Uh-huh.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: But, uh—

PETER FAIRBANKS: So anyhow, that is really my connection. I—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: That seems to be a rather close one.

PETER FAIRBANKS: And knew Paul Sachs and grew up with all the Rathbone children, which I do know very well.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh, yes.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Of course Perry and—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I know Perry. But I—and that crazy brother of his.

PETER FAIRBANKS: No, I don't have—well, he sort of stays a bit distant.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Well, I think he's dead now, maybe.

PETER FAIRBANKS: I think he may be, yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I think—has Perry gotten the gate at—

PETER FAIRBANKS: I think he is—I keep hearing he's retired.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Well, he called me up and told me.

PETER FAIRBANKS: He did?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And I saw—well, what he told me was puzzling. That he is—he's still going to be an advisor and an appraiser. But definitely there's a change in his status.

PETER FAIRBANKS: I think that's correct. I mean, I think there probably is a change. And he has—not doing what he used to be, but—and I think he's given up the apartment in New York. But I think he's—there was a company apartment that Christie's gave him. And now he's going to get his own. But he and Rettles have their own little—now their own apartment in Cambridge. And—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I know I've seen that when they were not quite settled in.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Peter, were you an art major in school, or did you just come later?

PETER FAIRBANKS: I studied classic—I went to St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland. Did this—studying great books. And was interested in pursuing classical art—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

PETER FAIRBANKS: —and archeology. And was going to do that at the University of London, where I ended up. Instead I worked for a while—or studied at an auction house there, Sotheby's. And then came back. Worked in New York for several—about seven—six, seven years. And then came out—from the auction business world, sort of came out to San Francisco to work with Butterfield's. And got tired of dealing with a lot of paintings, and wanted to just deal with a few good ones. Because if you're in the auction business too long, you start to go blind.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I wouldn't doubt it.

PETER FAIRBANKS: You see so many bad pictures.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah, right. Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yeah.

PETER FAIRBANKS: And so my interest in starting this—being involved in this gallery that we started three years ago—was that I did feel there was a real need in the Bay Area for a gallery that was somewhat trustworthy and that also dealt in some interesting pictures.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

PETER FAIRBANKS: I would say in three years I haven't sold much in San Francisco. But we've done very good business anyway. And which comes back to what Paul was asking. That is, my question about—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Why?

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yes, well who—just sort of—what is the background of the collecting in the Bay Area? Because I look at the Williams—Williamson paintings that are on the walls of the Museum.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Williams?

PETER FAIRBANKS: Williams paintings, yeah. And I see, of course—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: He wasn't a San Franciscan.

PETER FAIRBANKS: As was not—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Was he, Tom?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: No, I'll tell you all about him.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah, go ahead.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Because I can, too.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Right.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: He was—that big forest of white rock and lumber [ph]. And I think they got some sort of stronghold into Baltimore. But it's—Uncle Harry, as he's affectionately known to his own great-nephews and so on, was a genial old bird who Mrs. Spreckels knew in Paris. He and his wife lived in a rather handsome mansion on what was then the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne, now Avenue Foch. And, uh, you know—what happened was Mrs. Williams was born in San Mateo, oddly enough.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And her name was Mildred Bosquy [ph]. And—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Bosquy?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: B-O-S-Q-U-Y or something like that. And when the pictures came to us—that was—[inaudible]—Heil, because the first one came to us the year after he got bounced.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Oh, really? In 1940 then?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: 1939.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Thirty-nine.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: It came on the last ship—American ship—through the Mediterranean. That was Herbert Fleishhacker's doing.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Huh.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And O. K. Cushing [ph] who was a very distinguished man.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Oh, I remember him.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh, nice guy.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah, very.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Had a brother Charles. Mr. Cushing said, "Oh, well, let's not be precipitous about this. We can send them out to a—some repository, say at Rouen [ph], or someplace like that." But Mr. Williams said, "No, I'm very sorry." Because the idea—according to the bequest, which was entirely due to Mrs. Spreckels—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Entirely due to—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Mrs. Spreckels.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Mrs. Spreckels.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: What did I say?

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, no, I was—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: You did. You did say that.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Well, see, Fleishhacker always claimed that he got the collection. And we had a luncheon in his honor at the P-U Club or someplace like that. And he said, "I want to make one thing clear. One person and one person alone was responsible for our collection coming here. And that was Alma de Bretteville Spreckels." And Mr. Fleishhacker was in the room at the time. Must have embarrassed him a bit. And—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Better than going to jail.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Hmm?

PAUL KARLSTROM: I just think better to be embarrassed than go to jail.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yeah. But what happened was, uh, Fleishhacker—I don't mean Fleishhacker—Mrs. Williams had a lot more money than he did as it turned out. Because she was Henry Frick's mistress.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What?

PETER FAIRBANKS: She had been?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Hmm?

PETER FAIRBANKS: She had been Frick's mistress?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yeah.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Oh, marvelous.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And—

PAUL KARLSTROM: I didn't know that.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: He left her half a million dollars. And then just before he cooled off, he left her \$5 million. And that's when Mrs. Frick made some mild noises of irritation.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, I could understand that. It's very reasonable.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, you have Williams to thank for the rediscovery of Harnett.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: That's right.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Absolutely.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Now, wait—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh, that's beautiful stuff.

PETER FAIRBANKS: The rediscovery of what?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Harnett.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Harnett.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, of course we have—I have it from Alfred's experience. Now I would love to hear another—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, Alfred got his experience because I gave a radio talk. We had that *After the Hunt* painting. Remember we had the masterpiece of the month?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: And I suggested putting that down in the—downstairs they had this masterwork of the month. Well, all the museums at that time were having masterpieces of the week.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Wait a minute. You mean downstairs at the Legion by the—[inaudible].

ROBERT NEUHAUS: The Legion of Honor, yeah. Just as you go down there. And that was up. And I was giving weekly radio talks at that time. And was on this. And—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: At one time, I did, too.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, you—I know you did.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Well, I—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: It's interesting because, out of this bequest to the museum, nobody knew of Harnett around here, and very few people in the east. He was, you know, the—

[Side conversation.]

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Well—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: But an old man came into the museum and said, "I knew Harnett." If you read Frankenstein's book, he mentions this and acknowledges that I steered him in the right direction.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Because of the radio talk, you mean?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And somebody was listening to your radio talk—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, and somebody came into the museum to see the painting. And this man, Frankenstein got—eventually got—you know, I have to—I'm on tricky ground here. I don't know. But this led Frankenstein to go east and contact this person whose name I gave to him. And that led to one thing after another. Well, that's an aside—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Well, he's the one who—Frankenstein discovered the difference between Peto and Harnett.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And do you know that I saw a Peto exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum. And it was a lovely little still life. And it was \$150.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And you didn't buy it?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: That's right.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, you got a Thomas Hill from me for \$75.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Hey. Now, wait a minute. Let's hear about that. How did this happen?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: That was a peach of a picture.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: It's one of his very best paintings.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Now, wait a minute. How did this happen? We have to hear more about this.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I was driving through the Broadway tunnel and saw a sign up on the wall. It said, "Art for Sale." Well, it was a little antique shop.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You mean in North Beach?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: And went in and bought this little painting and one other, which I still have. And it was Thomas Hill's *Mill Creek Mill*, over in Marin County.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT NEUHAUS: And I paid \$15 for it.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Oh, now here's the real story. You only paid \$15 and charged you \$75.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Kind of high binding. [They laugh.]

PAUL KARLSTROM: So what happened?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: How—you know, how unschooled can you be. And coming—I had no—despite my background, my father's interest, and all these things, I was caught up in the whole sweep of Impressionism and all of the modern stuff and hadn't paid any attention to the California artists.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Maybe \$15 was the going rate at that time for a—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, \$15—I mean, I wouldn't—I would have had—I was kind of elated, because then I'd started selling a few things.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT NEUHAUS: But Tom, I think, with Williams's money—didn't you, Tom, buy that little painting?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: It's a gem. Actually, you talk to Garzoli. Garzoli thinks—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Even he will speak well of it.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, he says it's one of—you know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Now, were you on staff? Were you still on staff at the Legion when this happened?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: No, no.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Or was it after you left?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: No. Well, no. No, it was after I left, yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Well—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: But that was my first successful sale when I went into the art dealing business.

PETER FAIRBANKS: That's great.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Well, the story about how Mr. Frick's mistress happened to become Mrs. H. K. S. Williams was—she was, uh, very calculating. Oh, I was crazy about her. I only met her once. She strangled on a chicken bone in Los Angeles.

PETER FAIRBANKS: She did. Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And I remember Pamela—or somebody said, in describing Mrs. Williams—[inaudible].

PETER FAIRBANKS: Go ahead.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Well, the story about the acquisition—oh, yes. How she acquired Williams first. She found out where he was lunching one day on Long Island. And she adroitly had her car break down. And Mr. Williams's limousine came by. Obviously a gallant gentleman, wanted to help a lady in distress. And she became Mrs. Williams. But I remember when the papers interviewed me about her when we got the pictures here—well, who was Mrs. Williams? And I said, "Well, I'll have to ask Mr. Williams. I don't know, other than her name is noted. And I understand she came from San Mateo." And I asked Mr. Williams. He said that, "Oh, I don't recall." Well, that isn't an answer that the newspapers cared for. Finally, he said, "I think this was so-and-so." But how he got the Harnett, I think is perfectly fascinating. He was a—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I never heard that.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: —close personal friend of Mr. Henshall [ph], Charles Henshall, who was the head of the—[inaudible]—and he—when he was at—he lived in New York part of the year. And he—went in one morning—say hi to Carl Henshall. And Henshall's charming secretary—and also playmate—Harriet Jensen, a wonderfully charming woman, said, "Mr. Henshall will be back in about 10 minutes. Would you like to sit down and wait for him?" Yes. So he sat down. And there was an easel. And on it was this Harnett. And he called Ms. Jensen. He said, "Ms. Jensen, what is that picture?" And she said, "Oh, that's nothing for you, Mr. Williams. Mr. Henshall was

showing it to Averell Harriman this morning. He thought it might be a nice picture for his summer place. And somehow the manner in which she said it irritated him. He said, "How much is it?" She said, "\$10,000." He said, "Did Mr. Harriman show an interest?" "No." "Send that downstairs, pack it up, and send it to California Palace of the Legion of Honor."

ROBERT NEUHAUS: That's right, yeah.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Huh. Very good.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Why did the Williams hook up with you, with the Legion? I forget. You told me before.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Because Mrs.—they were friends of Mrs. Spreckels in Paris.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah. But the—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Once again, though—excuse me. Once again, they're not San Franciscans.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: No.

PAUL KARLSTROM: It goes back to this point that—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Nor were the benefactors of the de Young. Who was that family that gave the—so much money? You know, the—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: The Oakes [ph].

ROBERT NEUHAUS: The Oakes. Yeah, they just came in cold. I was there in Ira's office [ph].

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah, where were—were they from Minneapolis?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oakes?

PETER FAIRBANKS: Oakes. Where are the Oakes from?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I don't know. Seems to me down south.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I'm damned if I know [ph].

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Were they?

PAUL KARLSTROM: It's probably on Ian's interview.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah. And the Rockefellers.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: But this was just—

PETER FAIRBANKS: You had the Rockefeller collection. I mean, they're not—

PAUL KARLSTROM: The question is—that Peter posed earlier, which puzzles so many of us—why is it when you consider the number of very wealthy families here, old families, supposedly cultivated, all opportunity to experience culture and travel to Europe and so forth—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: But some did collect. I mean, Crocker up in Sacramento collected—

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's true. That's very true.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: And Stanford did—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah, what he collected that was really good was almost by accident.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: It was by accident.

PETER FAIRBANKS: The drawings.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: That's right. Well, you know—

PAUL KARLSTROM: But why is it that the San Francisco institutions seem to reflect, you know, very little support,

gifts, from local collectors and much more from outsiders? We've been describing—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Well, my—I have only one rather lame idea. I think that the fire and earthquake—although I always want to say it turned around. It's the earthquake and fire.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Uh, the earthquake and fire was a terrible deterrent.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: That may be completely—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: No, I think that's a good—I never heard—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Did you hear stories of a lot of people who lost things? I mean, there were major paintings—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Well, there were no major losses because there was nothing major to lose. But the Crockers, for example, had the *Man with a Hoe* and a First Folio, which Will Crocker's son, Bill, left to Yale. Mrs. Crocker and Mr. Crocker went to New York, apparently, every April. And Mrs. Crocker had a premonition that something might—terrible might happen while they were away. And, oh, they had this divine butler, old Louis, who was with them for years and helped Mrs. Crocker form her beautiful collection of oriental rugs. And Louis told me that before she went east that year, she said, "Now, look here. If anything happens if there were to be a fire or something terrible had come along, I want you to take the *Man with a Hoe* and the First Folio."

ROBERT NEUHAUS: That really is—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And that was a premonition.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And Louis very properly did that. But he had a whole room full of Degas, Renoirs, and Pica—not Picassos. Renoirs and Pissarros—burn up.

PETER FAIRBANKS: He left them behind?

PAUL KARLSTROM: And they took the *Man with a Hoe*.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: They took the *Man with a Hoe*, yeah.

PETER FAIRBANKS: I mean, the—didn't they live on Van Ness? They didn't have time to get that out.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Apparently. You never know when the cat's away how much—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Was actually saved. But still that's—that's a remarkable story. I mean, if there was a big repository of artwork, and there was—or just any repository of decent artwork, some of it would have been lost, and some of it destroyed—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, I—to get back to collecting, I think there were several very—I mean, Oriental art, of course, always attracts people. I mean, there were the Grabhorns, and there was Winecuckle [ph], and Berkeley. And they did build up very substantial collections of—[inaudible].

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Worth Ryder, formed a—I mean, Ed Grabhorn—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Grabhorn did.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Famous collection of prints, I think.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: And—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Where did they go?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Where did they go? Well, the—I don't know what happened to the Grabhorn collection.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Is that dreadful woman whom poor Ed married—

PAUL KARLSTROM: It's not here, is it?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: What, Tom? Well, didn't—to get back to—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Who did he marry? That artist.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Who married?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Ed Grabhorn.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Oh. No, I won't—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: She had a terribly nice first husband. Engel? Irma Engel? Yeah. She was the first—second Mrs. Grabhorn.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah. Irma Engel's a very familiar name. I know who she is.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: She did a terrible picture of my daughter.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, there was collecting of the kind of thing that goes on. It's terribly interesting for specialists and so on. Didn't—

[Side conversation.]

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Didn't Alma—what about the porcelain collection, now? Wasn't that really outstanding?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yes. That was Alma's.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: She—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, I mean, she's one of the exceptions. I mean—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Now, she also gave things, a great many things, up on the Columbia River.

PAUL KARLSTROM: The Maryhill. Maryhill?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: To the Maryhill, yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: In Oregon.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah, Oregon.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That was the Loïe Fuller connection?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yeah—no. Uh, her connection was a guy named Sam Hill.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: They were planning the visit of Queen Marie of Romania.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right, right, right.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: That's right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: About which you have spoken eloquently on our other tape.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Tom, but you got—you got to—[inaudible]—couldn't you finally give us a little insight? I was only on the fringes of this, of the man who Alma married who was accomplished [ph].

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh, Elmer Awl.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Awl, I—[inaudible].

PETER FAIRBANKS: Who?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: She married a cowboy named Elmer Awl, A-W-L, who was a gardener—or a supervisor of the ranch of Lolita Armour-Mitchell in Santa Barbara. And nobody ever dreamed that Alma would give up the

name Spreckels. She became Alma de Bretteville Spreckels Awl.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: A-W-L.

PAUL KARLSTROM: No.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And do you remember—there was a wonderful character named Marie Hicks Davis [ph].

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I know who you're talking about.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Who—when she reviewed my daughter's performance in that brilliant role in *Butterfly* with Albanese here, wore a perfectly lovely—I think, Givenchy frock.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

THOMAS CARR HOWE: That was just as much as what it was said about it was [ph]. And after all—Kate Pinkerton doesn't have much to do in that opera. But they—my daughter sang some opera.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: She did some other things. Her last thing there was with Frederica von Stade in *La sonnambula*. And she came on [ph], they gave her a beautiful review.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Wonderful.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Because the second lead is a very important role in *Sonnambula*. And he commented on the fact that she sang this within 10 days of her mother's death. He needn't have been so sentimental, because I don't think she gave much of a damn for either of us. [They laugh.] She'd been so happy since we were gone—since my wife gone. She has all this money.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, it's better than if she didn't have any.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I'll say. And you know what? I'm finally able to get three postcards out of her in the last month.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Where is she?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Oh, good.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Well, she likes to spend—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: She's either got a guilty conscience or she loves you.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: What?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: She either has a guilty conscience or she loves you.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Well, I don't think she ever could be accused of having a guilty conscience about everything—about anything. But—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Go on with Awl and the—I'm—what I'm really leading up to is that great party down there where he was spinning a rope, which I happen to be able to do myself.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, yeah?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: And Alma got a little worried about the—[inaudible]—porcelain.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Oh, he was being roped in the house?

PAUL KARLSTROM: He was in the porcelain?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: In the Legion of Honor.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Oh.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: They were hooting and hollering, cowboy yells. And he was—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Is that right?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Well, Marie Hicks Davis had called me and said, "Tom, how do you spell that name?" I said, "Very simply. A-W-V-L—A-W-L."

ROBERT NEUHAUS: L. Okay. No V in there.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And I said, "You know, like the thing you punch holes in old leather with."

ROBERT NEUHAUS: [Laughs.] That's marvelous.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: We liked that.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: That's very—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Well, I'm going to—because I am kind of curious about this. Why do both of you feel that—I mean, why hasn't there been a lot of collecting? It isn't as—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Oh, I think Tom, early in the game, put—made a very significant remark.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: And that is it's a music—whatever—how you can—

PETER FAIRBANKS: It's a music town.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: There's a very subtle philosophical thing here. It—you know, music is something easier, really, to understand and to grasp the immediacy of it, and so on.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And there were always very ardent patrons of music here.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Whereas there were, oddly enough, no great patrons of art.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL KARLSTROM: Excuse me.

[END OF SIDE 2A.]

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay, this is tape—tape two, side two.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Good.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Please, Peter, go on.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I have every admiration for him. I like him as a person. I think he's totally unassuming, and he's got a voice like 10 bulls.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Oh, my gosh.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Who are we talking about?

PETER FAIRBANKS: Gordon Getty.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Gordon.

PAUL KARLSTROM: As a potential collector, I think the point you were making—but actually—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Well, I mean, I think probably he's—he wants to be non-competitive with what his father was doing. So I think that's understandable. But I—there were other people here, as well. I just see there are people on the—you know, major people who have a fair amount of wealth on the board of the museum, who are not involved in really collecting or reading about the arts. I guess that's probably not unusual for museums. I don't know. But I—it seems—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I think it's shocking that a woman like Ann Getty—who I said was second-rate, because—in many ways she is a terrific woman. Apparently their four sons are being raised impeccably in England. But the big rivalry here—see, Ian naturally wanted to get Ann Getty to be involved with the museum. And she said, "Well, you know, Ian, I already have one museum." And he said, "But Ann, for a person like you, one museum, that isn't nearly enough." [They laugh.]

PAUL KARLSTROM: But the question is a good one. And we still—maybe we won't figure it out. It's one thing to—she, in fact, doesn't have a museum. That's her father-in-law's museum. And it's that money, not their money, that makes that museum possible. That costs them nothing, really, unless they thought they should get all of the money. The point is there is—there's—there's wealth here. There are people on boards of museums, museums that have grown a great deal and in many ways have become distinguished over the years. It doesn't seem to—they don't seem to take the—make the connection. They don't seem to take the—what one would think would be a natural jump to start accumulating or to gathering things themselves. Without mentioning any names, we—beyond the Gettys. This is no comment on them one way or another, but it seems symptomatic of this area that, despite the number of names that are in the Fortune—whatever—of the wealthiest people and all that in the country, you look at a listing of major collecting in America, and the poor cousin to the South dominates the West Coast. I mean, in the extreme.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: You're talking about the conquest [ph].

PAUL KARLSTROM: The un—no, I'm talking about Los Angeles.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Los Angeles.

PETER FAIRBANKS: About the Getty, the Huntington, the—[inaudible].

PAUL KARLSTROM: The uncultured, uncultivated Angelinos have spent a great deal of money on accumulating art.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Why don't we have some of that here? It's very fashionable thing. It's a good investment. What—what's missing—what has been missing here in San Francisco? What is it?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: There wasn't much here to start with. Well, there wasn't much to start with down in Los Angeles, either.

PAUL KARLSTROM: No.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: But this is—

PETER FAIRBANKS: That's not—[inaudible].

ROBERT NEUHAUS: This is how the chips fall—

PETER FAIRBANKS: I mean, this—but this city has—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Money.

PETER FAIRBANKS: —has 70 years, 80 years start on LA. This city had an art community in 1850.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, it happened that Huntington liked art. And he lived down there. Now, if we'd been that fortunate to have—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: He lived up here, you know.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Oh, you're right. You are dead right.

PETER FAIRBANKS: He did live up here?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yes. And my board president at that time—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, there—everything you're saying, you have a—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: —was Bill Wallace, who was married to Anna Claire [ph]. And we're getting to the point where—married to who? Who was she?

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: But at any rate—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: We're not getting to that point. We're here.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Well, yes.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Right.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I was always so afraid, because Anna, I think, was America's most distinguished stylish comedienne at one time. And Bill—I said, "Bill, why did people give such a cold shoulder to"—the guy we were talking about a minute ago.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Uh, the guy we were talking about a minute ago—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: The collector.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Williams?

PETER FAIRBANKS: Williams?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Maryhill.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, Maryhill.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Maryhill. No.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: The guy who was—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Huntington.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: No. The one who was married to—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Alma?

PETER FAIRBANKS: You mean a—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Awl? You don't mean Awl?

PETER FAIRBANKS: Crocker?

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, wait a minute.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I mean, the—

PETER FAIRBANKS: The collector in the north?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: The collector who lived here and then moved south.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Huntington.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Huntington.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Huntington. I'm sorry, I said—yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Huntington.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: No, no.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, you, Tom—excuse me, but, we were talking about Huntington who lived—who formed the collection down in LA, but lived—you said had lived here.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Well, at one time—yeah, because people weren't kind to Mrs. Huntington.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I see.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: But no, I mean—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Simon? Is he Norton Simon? Or I'm trying to think—we haven't mentioned that—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Norton Simon, of course.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Norton Simon lived here. Didn't he at one time?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, he went to Lowell High School.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Sure, that's it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: San Francisco's claim—[inaudible].

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I asked Bill Wallace why he moved south. He said, "That house [ph] rat, it's where he belongs."

PETER FAIRBANKS: You know, I'm just going to say—

PAUL KARLSTROM: What can you say to that?

PETER FAIRBANKS: I've formed a theory just in talking with you today. And I—or just sort of thinking about this. I mean, it's not just a few, but quite a few people have made their money elsewhere. I—in the summers we used to go to Manchester, Massachusetts. And next door to us was where Thomas Jefferson Coolidge lived, Junior.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh, yeah.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Married to Catherine Kuhn. And the Kuhns were all from—the Kuhn family is all from Hillsborough, or San Jose, or down in that area. I always see newspaper clippings from a friend of mine out here who knew my sister, who was Pamela Fairbanks, and about how a Pamela Fairbanks from San Francisco married a—some sort of royalty in France and had a large vineyard and moved out there. And I think it also comes—I guess what I'm getting at is I wonder if it doesn't come from the need for Californians always to have approval in a large metropolitan area. Whether it be Mrs. Gould [ph] going to Paris, and going to France, and getting approval of another culture which is already set. Whether it be the Kuhns who go to—back to the East Coast to marry the Jeffersons—Coolidges. Where they then become sort of—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Or where, before that, people going to England and—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Exactly.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I think you've brought up a very good point.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Somehow getting a rubber stamp someplace else. And that what you basically have is an abandonment—as they make their money and their wealth, they somehow need—they need an—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Validation.

PETER FAIRBANKS: A validation of their position. And they tend to—they—I mean, Pamela Fairbanks wanted to go to Europe to become a Pamela Fairbanks among the French royalty. And somehow that was a validation of that. And the Kuhns—I mean, Mrs. Kuhn all but abandoned her California connection and very rarely admitted to it. I mean, even thought she was great buddies with Patsy Pope and the other bunch down in the Hillsborough area. Hannah—Hannah Carter. I mean, she is—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh, bless her heart. What a—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Lovely person, yeah. But they're all—they're lost—I mean, she's from here. But she's entirely—well, like—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh, she's in Philadelphia.

PETER FAIRBANKS: But she lived in Hillsborough. They had a house in Hillsborough.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: She married a man who was—who owned the—oh, what, the Pioneer store in Woodside?

PETER FAIRBANKS: Oh, is that right?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Treated her very badly.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And I'm so glad she married Ed.

PETER FAIRBANKS: But the—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: —because he appreciates her.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: The point that I think is an interesting one—I gather what you're driving at is the possibility that there's a fundamental insecurity that maybe persists still—I don't know—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I'm sure that's right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —here. And—or we'll say on the western frontier. But it still doesn't answer the question. Why is it that the visual arts have been somehow given—been given short shrift here in San Francisco, in the Bay Area, whereas in other parts of this frontier, West Coast—enormous amount of money and some very, very astute collecting. And money has gone in, and there's been some very astute collecting. I mean, how do you—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, what's happening right now? What about the big money here? And people—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Well, for example, Bob—I'll tell you what happened in one case.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Is that the question?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: You remember when Ian put on that show—which I think was the most monumentally dull thing I've ever laid my eyes on—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Which one's that?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: The Search for Alexander.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, at least Ian didn't curate the show.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah, this is not his personal doing. But yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: National Gallery's doing.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: What happened was that after he had raised, oh, I think over \$100,000—because that wretched show cost a quarter of a million dollars. Dodie Rosekrans, who is a unique type if ever there was one—but she was always something ironical to me. Here is Dodie, a participant in a fortune of about \$200 million, married a poor old Spreckels grandson.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah. Isn't that something?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: But at any rate, Dodie is a fireball.

PETER FAIRBANKS: She is.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: She's lots of fun.

PETER FAIRBANKS: She is fun.

PAUL KARLSTROM: She also does not have—if you go to that home—much of an art collection.

PETER FAIRBANKS: She's got a couple pieces, but—more than most.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Well, all she's got is a stinking—one of the most insignificant—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Picassos?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: —Picassos I have ever laid my eyes on.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah, I guess that's—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: But of course, it is Picasso. Then she's got that horrid little row of Roman glass on the

dining room mantelpiece. But—

PETER FAIRBANKS: I have to admit it. Dodie does not collect art. She collects people.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I'll say.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Although they now collect sculpture. They've got—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Their primary collection is people. She likes to collect people, put them together, mix them up—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, how much of collecting art is collecting people?

PETER FAIRBANKS: Well, collecting—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: A lot of it now, more and more, Peter—I mean—

PAUL KARLSTROM: You mean names?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Oh, well, when I meant people, I meant at a party.

PAUL KARLSTROM: People.

PETER FAIRBANKS: At a—yeah, I meant people people. I didn't mean she's collecting names—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, I did—I did, too.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah. But I think you're right.

[Side conversation.]

PAUL KARLSTROM: So Tom—Tom was, though, telling a story. And I think I know where he was leading. You were talking about Alexander. And the—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —and the funding. And Dodie, then, calling up somebody who's out there in the Central Valley, right?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Dodie walked into Ian's office after he had gotten, really, I think about \$150,000. And she presented to him a man named Mr. Spanos from Stockton. And he happened to be a Greek. And Dodie said, "Ian, Alex Spanos wants to underwrite the show." And Ian, quite honestly, said, "Well, Mr. Spanos, we have raised a fair amount for the cost of the show." He said, "No. My name is Alexander. I'm a Greek. I want to do the whole thing." He did. Now, that's the sort of thing Dodie will do, you know.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Exactly. She's a good Lebanese [ph].

PAUL KARLSTROM: What does that, though, say about the commitment or involvement of this community or this area in the fine arts?

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I mean, because this is what we were—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Well, I think that's an interesting idea. I guess what I sort of think is, in a way, while we have Bud [ph] and Tom here for us, almost—not—I think it's an interesting sort of tangential discussion to go into. But I think in a way, we don't want to miss out on the history of it, which maybe will help us come to that. Because I think that's a—that's a philosophical debate, which has a lot of innuendos. But I think the great—the exciting thing for us is to have somebody here who's been, really in—for 40 years, 50 years, involved in the arts in San Francisco and watched this transition.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, and really part of our history. Because you see we now are professionals, active in this community. It's not a big art community. And one of the questions that I would have—you've been in a position to observe. Do you feel that things have changed a great deal? In other words, looking back to the '30s, and then, of course, looking to what's been going on here recently, do you feel that things have changed a great deal? Or—if so, how have they changed? How do you view—how would you characterize the arts, the support of

the arts, the art activity, here in the Bay Area? Looking back to then, looking to now?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, I can answer in my own feelings. Only I don't think there's been much difference, except it's—there's a great deal more wealth. But what are people buying today? Prints. I mean, the—I'm talking about—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: One thing we've found—you remember Ross Smith had a series of one-man or group shows supporting our—indicating our support of the contemporary art.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: At the Legion?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Found the—

PAUL KARLSTROM: At the Legion, right?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: At the Legion. The people who bought paintings from these shows were young professionals, and more often than not, members of the medical profession.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Really? This is back—you mean back in the '30s, though.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: No.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: No, no, no.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Not that recently, but back in the '50s.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay. In other words, some time ago.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: All the people I know who formed collections—and I participated a little. I mean, probably the best African, pre-Columbian collection in this area was bought by Dr. Kaiser [ph]. Bill Kaiser was a surgeon over at Berkeley. And he built this up into a very substantial thing.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But do you feel—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: But it isn't—I mean, collecting is a—it isn't just collecting people, although an awful lot of that goes on. But it is kind of instinctive. I don't know. Did you collect things when you were young?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I collected everything from milk tops, to baseball players, to cigarette packages, and later on—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Matches.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Matches. And never—birds' nests, birds' eggs. I had a—I can't get my kids—my grandchildren or my two kids to be collectors. They're just—it's not in them.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: What does your family consist of.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, my family consists of my son Robert, who lives here in San Francisco and was working with a young lady who you probably know, Annie Kaiser?

PETER FAIRBANKS: Oh, yeah, yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, he's doing her books, and helping move stuff around, and so on and so forth.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: My daughter Cynthia, who was born about that time I left the museum, because I thought I was going to need a little more income. And she lives in—she's married a second time and lives in Middlesex in Boston.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: And married to a Harvard graduate attorney. And she has three children, my three granddaughters, ranging in ages from 17 down to 13. And they're collectors.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, I'm glad to hear that.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: You want to know how old my daughter will be in December?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, I think I can guess. In 19—yeah, your daughter's going to be 46 or 47. Fifty? Yeah.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Is that right?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, she just—it's—yeah, I was fairly close, though, because—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: She was born in '37.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Let's talk a moment, if we can, because we don't have—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I have to say I really have to leave within about a half an hour.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, that's fine. Because we don't have that much more tape.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I've got to get back on the other side, if you don't mind.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, we don't—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: It takes me a little time to get from here to—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Sure, I understand. Uh, it seems, if I may summarize, that you don't feel that things have changed a great deal from the '30s to now in the art world in the Bay Area. I'm sure you, of course, would acknowledge there are many more galleries. There—but I'm not sure there are many more artists. I won't say that. Because there were—there's always been a lot of artists around here. Let's forget about museums, and collecting Old Masters, or Impressionists, all this kind of money and social stuff. Let's talk about what any community has to have at a self-respecting art center, and that is productive artists, people making art. And hopefully selling it, but mainly making it. Back in the '30s—you mentioned earlier—a little later on, the MacAgys. But you also mentioned Grace McCann Morley. I'm very curious about the connections between—the relationship between the Legion or—let's put it this way, maybe the role of the San Francisco Museum of Art and what was going on there. In other words, the efforts to tie it in with the California School of Fine Arts or the San Francisco Art Association at one time, on the more contemporary lines. And how would you describe the health of the San Francisco as a productive art community?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, I just have one thing, which we're overlooking entirely. After all, San Francisco has supported three museums.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Three significant museums, really. They weren't started by the people who are supporting them, but some of the families are. And I don't know ratio-wise whether this is—fits in with what—with New York or Chicago and the big metropolitan areas that have turned to produce magnificent museums. But it hasn't been totally absent, I don't think, even though there have not been major collections.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. It's true. It's a small city.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah, it is.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Funny town [ph], 640,000.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Thousand people. And you have—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: You have really—

PETER FAIRBANKS: And it doesn't have the 200 years that Boston has on it—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Absolutely.

PETER FAIRBANKS: —which is a similar city.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But you know, I think we also have to get away from that—those excuses about the size of San Francisco. That's the population of the little town on the end of the peninsula. This is the center of a—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Same thing as Boston, though.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —three million-plus—

PETER FAIRBANKS: It's the same thing for Boston. I mean, Boston's a 6[00,000], 700,000 population in the city or within the city of Boston. And Boston is probably a two and a half [million], three million population in the—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Area.

PETER FAIRBANKS: In the area.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, I think this is number four or five—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: But cultural interest, though, started way back, long before—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah, it's got 200 years on San Francisco.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Sure.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, let's—see, instead of trying to find reasons why San Francisco—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Which is why [ph] it began in 1636.

PETER FAIRBANKS: That's right. Well, I guess—you know, if I may interject.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Sure, yeah.

PETER FAIRBANKS: I would also have a question. We sort of talked a little bit of what was going on in the '30s. But I mean, you had the war here in the '40s. I'm just sort of curious what was going on. I mean, what was—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, the '30s you had—we were in depression right up to the outbreak of the war.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I mean, this—this is a factor—you're bringing up something we haven't even talked about.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah. Oh, yeah. There was no money.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Tom was probably—I was making \$135 a month. And you were making probably \$4[00] or \$500?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I ca—dreamer. [They laugh.] I came here as assistant director for \$4,000 a year. I think I finally reached the high 20s or possibly 30—I don't remember.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: And do you know what they're paying this little monkey out here? [They laugh.] \$110,000 a year.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Because that's what he got in Dallas.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: They can only offer him \$100[,000], but they're offering him \$10,000 more in fringe benefits.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: That's—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, that's sort of the going rate for a big museum directors.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well—

PETER FAIRBANKS: I guess so. I mean, that's changed.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I don't—

PETER FAIRBANKS: That much has changed from the '30s to today.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah, but everything else has, too, proportionately. The dollar—Tom was getting \$5[,000], \$10[,000]—between \$5[,000] and \$10,000. You compare with the dollar now, I always put 10 on top of it to make a comparison.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah, I think that what this amalgamation [ph] is the same thing that's going on with universities, with the president of the universities making \$120,000 a year, and the professors still getting \$16[,000] to \$25[,000] or \$30[,000] a year.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah.

PETER FAIRBANKS: So I think there's—there is some inequities here. But to go onto the war years—I mean, you were off trying to find the—where the Nazis hid the pictures.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: That's right.

PETER FAIRBANKS: And getting knighted by Queen Beatrice. Are you a—is it Sir Tom? Were you knighted by Queen—the queen of the Netherlands? Wasn't it Beatrice, or—I mean, I'm sorry, it's Juliana?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Well, I was made officer of the Order of Nassau.

PETER FAIRBANKS: That's right. Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Oh.

PETER FAIRBANKS: That's right.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I didn't know that. Congratulations, Tom.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Francesca used to say to me, "I wish you wouldn't wear that silly little red ribbon. It's more—as Gertrude Atherton said, 'It's more distinguished not to have it, than to have it.'" [They laugh.]

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But let me—before we run out of time—and I think I would be interested to—well, to certainly hear your account of it, and maybe Tom's observations from the wings. But after you left your—you left the Legion. You at one point set up shop as a dealer. You mentioned this first picture you sold. And although I think you had a brief career as a dealer—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, it was very brief.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But it's interesting.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: It was at least, formally, not more than a year, and maybe less than that. Because with the war—I remember going down to Carlisle & Co and trying to buy some elastic bands. There weren't any. The government had already conscripted all rubber. This is shortly after Pearl Harbor. And shortly after—I never would have made it in the art world, I'm sure. I wasn't cut out for it. I was a babe in the woods, really. But I did have a—I did have a gallery on Post Street right above Van Ness. And I did have Clyfford Stills, and George Posts, and Joseph Raffael, the old Joseph Raffael.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh, yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Had his things. And all I could—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Greatly unappreciated, I think.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah. But now very appreciated. And that lasted just that very short time. But I kept up an interest all the way through my war years when I was working for—in the shipyards. And long after that I was, you know, buying and selling. I was, I think, frustrated—I don't know how to define myself. But I was—had such a

variety of interests in things—[inaudible].

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did you know people like Lucien Labaudt? I mean, he was—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Oh, yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —a pretty prominent artist.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I did, too.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Very prominent. And Tom did, sure. And his wife carried on long after—didn't she, after he died?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh, yes. She—

PETER FAIRBANKS: I'm going to interrupt for a second and say, would anyone like coffee?

[Side conversation.]

[Audio break.]

ROBERT NEUHAUS: —there was a sanity in art group that was—remember that, Tom?

PETER FAIRBANKS: Sanity in art?

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Sanity in art.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: The Society for Sanity in Art.

PETER FAIRBANKS: [Inaudible]—or intelligent of—sanity—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: It was really insanity in art.

PAUL KARLSTROM: It started in Chicago.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Yeah, it started in Chicago.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Yes, Mrs.—whatchamacall [ph].

PETER FAIRBANKS: Oh, I can't remember.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: And speaking—going back into the sanity in art and also things that attracted attention, Paul was—I mean, Tom was burdened with the Thorne Rooms.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I mean, this—didn't this attract just a fabulous number of people?

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Certainly it did.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: I don't know where they are today. But it shows—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: I think they're back there [ph] at the Art Institute of Chicago.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Could be.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: But it shows, again, the direction of taste and—

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: We're talking about no collectors. I mean—and it's true. But people like Williams and Oakes, why did they come out of the woods someplace and—

PAUL KARLSTROM: The Oakes came out of the woods, that's right. [They laugh.]

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Sorry.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah, you wonder why they came to here, why they came to San Francisco. I guess what always excited me—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, there were—

PETER FAIRBANKS: —about coming out here is that—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: There wasn't very much in LA, I guess.

PETER FAIRBANKS: All the activity is going on—particularly right after the war here, in terms of the contemporary artists. I mean, you had Sam Francis. You had Motherwell out here, Robert. He was studying—wasn't he studying philosophy or—he was working here initially—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Stanford.

PETER FAIRBANKS: At Stanford.

THOMAS CARR HOWE: His father was president of Wells Fargo bank.

ROBERT NEUHAUS: That's right.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Is that right?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Motherwell's father? I didn't know.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Didn't know that. And I mean, there were a number of artists that all—I mean, you had Parks, you had a number of very excellent artists—

ROBERT NEUHAUS: Well, and this—

THOMAS CARR HOWE: Oh, David Park was a wonderful guy.

PETER FAIRBANKS: Yeah. Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: We're going to have to stop this right now. I want to thank you. And I'd like to suggest that we do a second session sometime.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]