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Oral history interview with Eleanor Sayre, 1993 April 19-1997 January 10

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Eleanor A. Sayre on April 19, 1997-January 10, 1997. The interview was conducted by Robert Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose. This is a rough transcription that may include typographical errors.

Interview

ROBERT BROWN: An interview with Eleanor Sayre and Robert Brown, the interviewer. If we could talk about maybe some childhood recollections.

ELEANOR SAYRE: All right.

MR. BROWN: To begin you with, you were born, of course. And that was where and when?

MS. SAYRE: I was born in the Philadelphia for--

MR. BROWN: In Philadelphia.

MS. SAYRE: --for a very odd reason. My grandmother feeling that--when she was pregnant--that her husband needed more time to--time off to--free time to work on his book. She announced that her first child--that no child is properly born in the North. My grandfather was teaching at Bryn Mawr at the time and so she goes over to Georgia to have her child. And my mother followed that migratory practice [inaudible]. She--my parents were living in Williamstown during the first years of my life.

MR. BROWN: Was your father at Williams at that time or--

MS. SAYRE: No, he was teaching at Williams.

MR. BROWN: Teaching at Williams College?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and then he'd wanted to go into the government, but then when he married my mother, he didn't want to give her father a son-in-law in politics. And so he went--he began teaching instead.

MR. BROWN: Your father?

MS. SAYRE: My father.

MR. BROWN: Well, why were you born in Philadelphia? Your mother was on route to Georgia?

MS. SAYRE: No, she--but she had--there was an obstetrician whom she liked there and my oldest brother was born in Washington: and myself and younger brother both in Philadelphia. But I'm not a Philadelphian.

MR. BROWN: You were just there briefly in passing.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And your family, your grandfather, of course, on your maternal side, right, was the President.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Woodrow Wilson. And do you remember him somewhat?

MS. SAYRE: I do. Basically, the one really clear memory that I have of him, because we lived up here and he was down in Washington, you know, was--

MR. BROWN: This was by the time--he'd had his stroke by that time. Is that right?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MS. SAYRE: We stopped on the way back from California in Washington and we children were taken in one day into see him and my younger brother was then four and rather naughty. He looks at Grandfather and he says, "Grandfather?" And Grandfather says, "Yes?" And so then he tried a joke on him, what he thought was very funny at that age which is one person answers and then you say, "Nothing." And Grandfather looked at my little brother very sternly and he says, "Woodrow." And I remember trembling in my boots, fearing what might well happen. Grandfather shakes his finger and he says, "Something." [Laughter] Which seemed to us, at that age, three times as funny.

But he had that kind of humor. And understand, people don't credit him, really. But I remember once when my--his second wife was really very ill and I used to go and [inaudible]. I used to go to see her quite often. And it was a wonderful experience, because she talked about my grandfather as he was when he was young and she first met him. And one of the things that she most loved in him was his humor. It's rare that you ever get a chance to see a grandparent like that.

MR. BROWN: Was this an experience that you took, going to the White House as just something that occurred; right? Because you were very young at that time.

MS. SAYRE: Yes. We just did. And apparently, the one the one thing that I know about myself and the White House is that I fell in love with the silkscreens. And my grandfather gave them to me when we got aboard the train and my mother didn't think he had any right to give them to me. And so she took them. I remember that she took them when I fell asleep from my hand and then sent them back. But whenever I've been to the White House since, I've looked at the--

MR. BROWN: With envy.

MS. SAYRE: Not envy, but some--

MR. BROWN: No, but--

MS. SAYRE: --at least two of them are really mine.

MR. BROWN: Really yours. So your very early years, then, were largely spent in Williamstown.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And your father taught--what did he teach there?

MS. SAYRE: He taught--I'm not quite sure what he taught at Williams, but then by the time I was--just before I was 3, he moved to Harvard and taught--was a professor of law there. But I just found this year that my mother sent a--the poem to my grandfather that I wrote when I was 5 and he liked it and wrote a letter back about it and all these letters have been published. And they published the poem, too.

MR. BROWN: Very nice.

MS. SAYRE: Which is--it's really surprisingly long for a 5-year-old's poem.

MR. BROWN: Did you spend a good deal of time as you recall writing or drawing or what were your activities, say, even before you went to school? Were you--

MS. SAYRE: Well, I learned to read from watching--I mean I don't know the alphabet either. It's because I learned to read by watching my older brother who was being taught. And then one day I asked for a book and they looked at me skeptically. Because I was just a sister. I mean, they put it in my hand and I can remember to this day what it was. It was *The Little Red Hen*. And I began at the beginning and I got all the way through to the end, because I wanted to know what happened. And I've always felt the way of teaching children, "I can jump. Can you jump?" is so misguided. Who would want to learn?

MR. BROWN: That's right.

MS. SAYRE: If that's what they gave you.

MR. BROWN: So you were able to take advantage of your brother's education.

MS. SAYRE: When my brother, Woody was--

MR. BROWN: Woody is your younger brother.

MS. SAYRE: My younger brother, and he was christened, and I guess that--and I was put for safekeeping, to be

kept out of trouble with my grandparents. And this I do remember that I insisted that we hold the book way down here so that I could read it, too. And what they read, I read. And the minister had to stop the service so it could be explained to me. I had no right to be reading it. My younger--or my brother, Woody, never really forgave me for illegally becoming a godparent.

MR. BROWN: Of course, he was in actuality far too young to have remembered the day; right? When he was being christened that very day.

MS. SAYRE: Oh, no. I do.

MR. BROWN: No, does he remember the day? He wouldn't.

MS. SAYRE: No, he doesn't. Well, he could have because he was just able to walk and the poor minister had a traumatic time, because it was not only me. But then Woody got bored of being held and squirms out of his arms and heads towards the door and has to be fetched back.

MR. BROWN: And was this in Washington that--no.

MS. SAYRE: In Cambridge.

MR. BROWN: In Cambridge. So your father came here then to teach law?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And what aspect of the law do you recall he--

MS. SAYRE: Criminal law and labor law.

MR. BROWN: Had he been a practicing lawyer with a firm earlier?

MS. SAYRE: No, but I think he had--I think he had been in the district attorney's office in--at some point. Not in--not here.

MR. BROWN: What about your mother? Had she trained to do anything or been brought up for any particular--

MS. SAYRE: She was a very remarkable woman in that she wants to be a missionary, but because she'd had polio and her health wasn't really all that good they wouldn't take her. And this person wanted to be a missionary, had taken two Thai boys. We'd come to know their families in Thailand and they came back to be educated in this country.

MR. BROWN: This was somewhat later when you lived in Thailand--or they lived in Thailand.

MS. SAYRE: Yes

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MS. SAYRE: And they came back to Cambridge and my mother, she wanted them to know what Christianity was. So they came to church with us. But she felt they were all sort of--how do you take it--two Buddhist children which she ought return to their families two Buddhist adults. And so she insisted that they keep reading and when they didn't understand things, she was able to explain them to them. And nothing was ever--it wasn't until I grew up that I saw how remarkable that was.

MR. BROWN: I see. So she, herself, must have studied Buddhism quite a bit.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, because she was there, she wanted to learn about it and understand what people there believed.

MR. BROWN: But from--she was quite a young woman when she wanted to be a missionary.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: I mean, this belief went right through her life.

MS. SAYRE: She was also the kind of woman who--when I ask her, "What does ‘civilized' mean?" I was 10 about then. And she says, "Well, I'll tell you. When you're a tiny baby, the only people you can think of as "we" is yourself and whoever looks after you physically. That might be a mother, grandmother, nurse, whatever. You get a little bigger and you run about the house and add to your circle of we your father and brothers or sisters, any uncles or aunts, or servants in the house. And then you go outdoors by yourself. And you add the neighbors

and the postman, and the garbage man, and in my day the lamplighter. Then you go off to school in the beginning. The only children you think of as "we" are the other children in the first grade. But by the time you get through school, you think--are able to think of every child in the world as "we". "Then," said my mother, "the really civilized person is the person who is able to think of every human being in the world as "we"."

And I said, "Does that mean you would love me to even if it was hard for me to love my brothers?" "No," she says, "Only God loves everybody. But we must try." And I came to see that even when we might fight with people, we can't do to them what you can do with people if you think of them as they. You cannot do it if you think of them as we. And if we thought of Indians--American Indians, there would have been no massacres. Vietnam and Mei Lei would never have happened. The Holocaust wouldn't have happened. What's being done to the Palestinians now. And at about the same age, she said, with so much firmness that stuck in my mind. "When the United States shall elect a black woman as President, then I will know that we're a democracy."

MR. BROWN: Where came this independence of mind? From her father perhaps? Partly?

MS. SAYRE: I think so.

MR. BROWN: Because he was able to leap ahead in vision and wonderfully.

MS. SAYRE: But she had also an incredibly, sort of, intuitive understanding of people and I know that--again, I must have been about 9, 10 and I became--one summer I became very angry with the whole household, because I was much more obliging than my brothers than with my parents and we always had lots of other people staying there all summer long; uncles and aunts and friends and the like. And one person would ask you to do something and I began to do it and along comes person--came person number two who wanted you to do something else immediately. I brought along the first project and then a third one come with an even more pressing project and number two and then number one comes back and is angry because I haven't finished theirs.

And I thought it was totally unjust and I always thought I would no longer live in that house. And I went to my mother and told her that I was leaving. And she offered to help me pack. And I said, angrily, she could if she wanted to; it was nothing to me. And so we got together all the things that I thought I would need. I took a blanket and a sweater and my doll and some books and some food. And then I set out. And--but it was a very hot day and after a while I sat down to rest and then I reflected that I hadn't remembered that we were on an island and I thought that they might let me stay lost for about two or three days, but then they would begin looking for me. And I never--intended never to go back. And so I thought the only--I must go to the mainland on the ferry and that's when I remembered I didn't have any money and so I thought that I would make little dolls out of pine needles themselves for people in the village and thus get enough money to go across.

MR. BROWN: This where the--where was the island?

MS. SAYRE: Martha's Vineyard.

MR. BROWN: Oh, Martha's Vineyard.

MS. SAYRE: Oh, but as I--it was hard to do it without anything to tie them properly. The grass didn't work all that well. And I thought in doing it when I became less angry and I finally decided to go home and do so and my mother says that she's--what she says is that she's delighted to see me because she really needs somebody to make a lampshade for her. And I [inaudible] liked the sound of that and I refused to make it. And my mother did something which I think was totally extraordinary.

The next day every adult in the house except the cook left for the long weekend and I was put in charge of the household. And I remember counting the laundry and putting it back and talking to the cook about the meals and asking what is more expensive or less expensive. And by the time they had come back I was completely restored. Wasn't that an extraordinary thing to have done?

MR. BROWN: Indeed. She was a pretty extraordinary mother.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Did you perceive that your brothers were left--allowed to be a bit freer and more on their own? You alluded to it a couple of times.

MS. SAYRE: Well, they--I think they were more demanding than I was. So they got more--they were allowed--I was by nature more obliging.

MR. BROWN: But your father, what role did he play? Or was he away a good deal?

MS. SAYRE: No, he wasn't. At least not when I was growing up and he was a wonderful man for bandaging your cuts and for playing games with you, for teasing you.

MR. BROWN: Was most of your earliest years then lived in Cambridge after you moved there from Williamstown?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, the first--the very--we spent about two years, I guess, and during the War in New York. And I think that perhaps the earliest datable memory that I'm sure that I have and it wasn't something that somebody else told me about was the armistice. And I was--because I was born in March 1916. So there wasn't--I wasn't three yet. And--

MR. BROWN: What do you remember--of the armistice?

MS. SAYRE: Well, I'll tell you what I don't remember. That when the noise began, my mother and the nurse came in to see whether I had been waked up by it as I was and then I stood up in my crib and I said the war over, which impressed them that--but I remember something completely different. I remember walking in the street with my mother and my older brother, Frank, and I remember the noise and the confusion around me.

But I also--I can still remember the feeling of the great height of the buildings and that my mother and I were both just so high and I can remember feeling, looking way around my mother at my brother on the other side and I had a horn in my hand. And I tried to understand why I'd been given the horn, because it wasn't somebody's birthday and nobody asked for a horn, but I--they gave me a horn. And I remember giving up the problem and just blowing it.

MR. BROWN: You said that you were always filled with curiosity and not a little skepticism even as a child.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: You mentioned the time when you were perhaps five or six about a cat. Maybe we could hear that tale a moment that's very instructive.

MS. SAYRE: Well, it struck me that grownups were always saying silly things and if you thought about them they couldn't possibly be true such as that my great aunt was older than my father because, well, she was much smaller than my father. It couldn't be.

And so when somebody told me that cats had nine lives, I thought that this was just one of the many silly things that grownups would tell me and I thought that, well, I will see. And our cat liked to jump up on windowsills and I told him--and I remember thinking about it very carefully. I thought, "All right. He's got nine lives. And if I--and I'm going to take one, but he'll still have eight left or maybe he might have lost two or three, but he still has a lot more lives left than I do." And so with no compunction, I pushed him out the window. And he landed on all four feet just the way I believe that cats are supposed to do. I went down to the back door and let him in. He didn't connect me with what had happened to him, but shot past me into the house and he only thought that it was something about windowsills and he never got up on one again.

Presently the grownups began noticing that he was no longer sunning himself on the windowsill or watching the birds. And they wondered why aloud and I knew quite well why, but I thought it prudent not to say.

MR. BROWN: You would keep secrets?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: So and perhaps it's true of all of us, maybe. But as a small child, there was a we and they, or me and they--they, the world of grownups, right?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, that's true.

MR. BROWN: And despite the fact--your parents were obviously very involved with you and your brothers and warm and caring, but there still was--

MS. SAYRE: And loved one another, too. Very much so. So there I was enormously fortunate.

MR. BROWN: How long did you stay--you started school while you were still here in Cambridge; didn't you?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And you started at the--

MS. SAYRE: Buckingham.
MR. BROWN: Buckingham School in Cambridge.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and then we went--when I was seven, we went to Bangkok, because my father was made advisor to the king in foreign affairs and that was a--you couldn't ask for a nicer life for a child than our lives there.

MR. BROWN: Describe that a bit; will you? Where did you live and what sort of a regime was it?

MS. SAYRE: We lived in Bangkok, and Bangkok, in those days, was still something like Venice, that most of the travel was done by--on canals called khlongs and this whole part of the city that never left the canals. They were born, died there.

And the--for a child, one of the things that the--that I most loved about it was that nobody ever treated me as a categorical child, but always as a person. And they had incredible delicacy in dealing with children so that one of the--we used to go to a palace of one of the princes for--my parents would be given tea and we would be given a cookie and then taken away by a footman and be taken to a room where there were incredibly marvelous toys to play with. You could pick any one you liked and play with it.

But then when you left, there was the inexorable moment when you had to put the toy back. But to soften that moment, out came another footman with a tray of little tiny toys and you could pick any one of those and take them home.

MR. BROWN: Very different from life in the United States.

MS. SAYRE: Very, very hot so that my younger brother used to wake from his nap with his head lying in a pool of sweat. It was so hot that the windows were never closed and when I took my nap I could--I was entertained by the--watching for the birds flying in and out of the house from the room across the ceiling. And lots of snakes and frogs and toads and lizards and we weren't allowed to capture snakes. Because some of them were very poisonous. And we weren't--we couldn't catch the lizards because they were just too quick. But we caught a lot of frogs and gave them to the man who was collecting fishes for the Smithsonian whom we admired very much.

MR. BROWN: And this is a man you met while you were there?

MS. SAYRE: His name, appropriately enough, was just Dr. Smith.

MR. BROWN: Dr. Smith.

MS. SAYRE: And I think later he kept all the frogs that we caught separate from the ones that he caught and gave them, in our name, to the Smithsonian. That was my first gift [Laughter] to your institution.

MR. BROWN: So the frogs were not just food for the fish; is that right? They were being collected as well?

MS. SAYRE: Yes. And--

MR. BROWN: Was there schooling while you were there? Did you have--

MS. SAYRE: I did and there was a small group of English and American children and I had a dreamy time, because if I didn't want to do anything--it was divided into two groups and I fitted in, in between. So it came that I was too old to do what I didn't want to do or too young. [Inaudible]

MR. BROWN: I see. What were some of your early interests and studies at this time? Do you recall what--

MS. SAYRE: Oh, yes. I loved reading.

MR. BROWN: Just poetry, history, anything practically?

MS. SAYRE: Well, I don't think--

MR. BROWN: You were just seven.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, I must have read at that age some of the Arthurian poetry, because I began a sort of Arthurian cycle in poetry that I found a part of one day about knights anyway.

MR. BROWN: When you were in Thailand, did you travel at all do you recall? Did you--

MS. SAYRE: No.

MR. BROWN: You stayed in Bangkok with your--

MS. SAYRE: The father of the king was buried while we were there after being--and I remember feeling very sad about the king having lost his father. Although, actually he died five years earlier and his body had been kept in a jar before it was cremated, which is customary for a king. And both my brother and I wrote letters. My brothers' were sent and we received an invitation to help light the funeral pyre. But my mother never sent my letter, because--I can't altogether blame here, because at that age, I thought of death as a tremendous event that should be celebrated by poetry. But I didn't think that anything I wrote would be good enough. And so I put down the one poem that I knew about kings which was, "Old King Cole was a merry old soul," and so on. My mother didn't think that he would understand.

MR. BROWN: But your brother was allowed to help light the funeral pyre. Did you go to the--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: --ceremony? Can you describe that? What was that a--that must have been a huge, large throng of people or--

MS. SAYRE: Large--Yes. A lot of people, a lot of color. One of the things that--I don't remember quite so much about the ceremony itself excepting the feeling of sadness about death.

MR. BROWN: Did your father--I suppose you were a little too young, but did you have some idea of what his work entailed?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and we knew that he had to go to--wear knee britches when he went to court, but he would never let us--

MR. BROWN: Oh, formal dress.

MS. SAYRE: He never let us see him in the knee britches. I think very embarrassed about them.

MR. BROWN: I see. Was this the very time when the English woman was tutoring the king's children in--a bit earlier--

MS. SAYRE: She was--that was earlier. She was one of those English people who saw only the respects in which the Thai and the king, in particular, were not like an Englishman. And she never saw all the marvelous qualities that they had.

MR. BROWN: In terms of their own ancient culture, yes.

MS. SAYRE: Or their present being.

MR. BROWN: I expect a number of the westerners in Bangkok probably kept themselves somewhat isolated except for whatever their duties were; right? From the people? But you as a small child had a--

MS. SAYRE: We had an entrée through my father, so--

MR. BROWN: Entrée through your father, but I mean as a small child, also, you were much more open and--to absorb impressions and all that.

MS. SAYRE: Well, my best friend was the--what was the daughter of our nurse. And my mother--I heard a noise in a room in the house once. I went up and there was this little girl. And my nurse not knowing--not having any place to leave her during the day had hidden there. My mother was very cross, not that she'd hidden the child, but that she hadn't dared tell my mother that the child was a problem.

So after that, she came everyday openly to our house and we played together and we played dolls. We'd go to the swings together, technical things like that. She didn't know a word of English and I never learned more than about 20 words of Thai, because everybody spoke to us in English. But I had no difficulty whatever in understanding what she said. Nor she me. And I came to see, because of this, that you can understand what anybody says in another language if you want to and if you think you can.

And so that when I--I'm 13 and we're in Brittany. I go to my bus all by myself. I get lost. I stop at a cottage, knock, and first speak to them in English. Down comes a curtain between us. I'm sorry, if I speak to them in French--

MR. BROWN: In French.

MS. SAYRE: --down comes the curtain between us because they're ashamed of not knowing French and not understanding it. But if I speak to them in English and say, "Can I come in?" Then they invite me in and we talk about this or that, they in Breton and I in English and presently I would tell them that I was lost and ask them directions and I never had any difficulty whatever in following their directions. And I've gone on talking to people that same way.

And I think that we let ourselves be brainwashed into thinking that we can't understand if we don't have a mutual language. But then the other side of the coin is the man and his wife who both speak English, which she doesn't understand a word he says and he doesn't understand a word that she says, because they don't really want to.

MR. BROWN: You were there about a year in Thailand.

MS. SAYRE: Not a whole year. And then my brothers were--also, he came home early. Oh, and I should tell you that I did once disobey my mother. I saw this enormous snake.

MR. BROWN: This was in Thailand still.

MS. SAYRE: This was in Thailand.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MS. SAYRE: And I thought how pleased my--Dr. Smith would be if I took him around. It didn't really occur to me that it might object and I saw myself dragging it like a garden hose to the hotel where he lived. But luckily, it was so big I couldn't quite get up my courage to punch into the hole in the woodpile. I went and told my mother about the big one that got away and she didn't altogether believe me, but she sent the gardener to check. And they found that it was a python.

MR. BROWN: And there might have been some danger from him; right? If he'd tried to coil about you?

MS. SAYRE: He wasn't hungry, luckily.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MS. SAYRE: He had eaten and was probably on his way home.

MR. BROWN: What was your reaction? You mentioned the heat, but also just the abundance of flora and the fauna. I mean, as a small child, this must have just been--

MS. SAYRE: I loved it and I loved the temples and I still remember the--

MR. BROWN: What did you like about them?

MS. SAYRE: I was impressed by the Buddhas that I saw. Particularly, one giant one in one temple.

MR. BROWN: A seated figure, or--

MS. SAYRE: No, he was recumbent. And then, you see, he wasn't in very good repair and some of them would decorate him with little bits of brightly colored pottery and pick up a flower or leaf or something like that and take it home with them.

MR. BROWN: What do you suppose it was that you liked about them, those temples and, particularly, that one Buddha? Was there a quiet--a peacefulness about it? A gaiety?

MS. SAYRE: There was a peacefulness for one thing. And it was a--but it had an impressive--a power that impressed me.

MR. BROWN: Were they islands, so to speak, in a very congested and noisy environment? I mean, the temple precincts. Were they--do you think you remember that--

MS. SAYRE: I don't remember about that part of it, no.

MR. BROWN: What were your parents' attitudes toward the local culture?

MS. SAYRE: They were--they both of them had my mother's ability to look at people the same or to accept them. And my father would be--was to be given a title. He was made a phraya or something between a duke and an earl and they gave him the Thai name which means, "Beautiful in friendship." The title was because he then spent the second--he realized that some of Thailand's difficulties was because they had given away so

many rights, the ex-territoriality and import.

MR. BROWN: Given away rights to foreign--

MS. SAYRE: To all the nations in Europe. And my father spent the following year going from nation to nation in Europe and persuading--he managed to persuade every single one of them to give up all these rights for nothing tangible in return, but for a potential goodwill. My father really believed in innate goodness of people. And they would respond to it.

MR. BROWN: That was very important--a long term consequence for Thailand then.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: When you were there, there were still these European concessions and monopolies on much of external trade.

MS. SAYRE: And also just as a Frenchman committing a crime in Bangkok had to be tried by a French court in Bangkok, but how--

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MS. SAYRE: How objective were they going to be?

MR. BROWN: So you're saying that, in fact, your father and your mother were very much at home, so to speak, in the culture and saw its great virtues and--you perhaps weren't aware just then, but did you come to learn--what was your father's actual job as an advisor and was he sort of a tutor? Would he have long discussions with the monarch or with his ministers?

MS. SAYRE: He must have, yes. But he never spoke very much about it.

MR. BROWN: You were there only a year, but a little less than a year.

MS. SAYRE: It was less than a year.

MR. BROWN: And then you were where?

MS. SAYRE: And then the next year we were stationed--he had Paris as his headquarters when we spent that year going around making treaties.

MR. BROWN: And he was working, at this time, for our State Department?

MS. SAYRE: No.

MR. BROWN: No?

MS. SAYRE: Still for the Thai Government.

MR. BROWN: For the Thai Government.

MS. SAYRE: Persuading people to give up what they had taken.

MR. BROWN: So he and--was it possibly your mother were--traveled a bit while you were based in Paris.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: So you and your brothers then were farmed out or--

MS. SAYRE: No, we--

MR. BROWN: With a relation or what?

MS. SAYRE: We had a French governess and she was, in that year, a total contrast to Bangkok. And in the--I can remember only two French adults ever speaking to me with any kindness whatever. And--

MR. BROWN: Because you weren't French or because you were a child?

MS. SAYRE: Both because I was a child and because I was an American. There was kind of great anti-Americanism. And my mother explained to us why that was.

MR. BROWN: What was that right then?

MS. SAYRE: They borrowed a lot of money from the United States and Americans went to--were going to France and were throwing their money around and lighting their cigarettes with franc notes and so on. And it wasn't surprising. But I learned firsthand what it was to be a scorned minority.

And at school I was regularly stood up by our teacher in front of the class and made fun of because I was an American. And at recess, we were divided--we divided ourselves into two sides and likely because American children fight with their fists and could aim fists better than feet. We had the edge on them in fighting, but they scorned us for using our feet--our fists and we scorned them for using their feet. And some of the smallest French boys deserted under our sign, simply because we were better fighters.

And I remember that one of the great unalloyed triumphs of my childhood, no mercy whatever for the enemy this way. A little French boy got too close to the dividing line and was seized by one of the French and dragged across it. And I knew that I would have to go and rescue him. And I was really frightened because he was much bigger than I. And I raised my fist to hit him and he practically ran away. [Laughter]

MR. BROWN: Well, this was a fairly rough school in that sense at least.

MS. SAYRE: Yes. Even worse was the place where we went to have lunch. [inaudible] one time my brothers and another little girl and her brother and my brother and I all ate lunch there, because it was too far to go home. And I remember that we were being threatened by our brothers and we decided to evade them by going home by a different route. We got lost and she had--the little girl all distraught. And I say that--I remembered what my father said that when you're lost, you find a policeman and he helps you and looks after you. When I tell her that, she's skeptical. And I dart out through the traffic, amidst all the busses and I come to a policeman and I say, "Please, sir, we are lost. Can you help us?" "Go away, little girl. I'm busy."

So then we just wandered hand-in-hand through the streets until, by chance, we came to something we recognized. We got back--school just seemed to be a bit--you don't feel as though you've been gone hours, but we were very late. And I amazed them. And my parents never saw the place where we went to eat and--because one man went there and ate there, too, and I hated it because he used to make me sit in his lap and turn me upside-down. And I knew that there was something very wrong with this, but I was too innocent to know what it was, only that I hated him. And after lunch, we would rough-house, because there was no books to read, no toys to play with, nothing to do.

MR. BROWN: This was where you went to eat lunch.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Which--what kind of a place was that? A boarding house where you went to lunch?

MS. SAYRE: It must have been a boarding house.

MR. BROWN: And it was fairly near the school?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and one day Madame came in and said, "You must be very quiet, because there's an old man upstairs and if you make any noise, he will die." And we really tried, but at that age you don't really remember all that--

MR. BROWN: No.

MS. SAYRE: And the next day when I came, I don't know why I came, but I had to eat all by myself and found the house draped with black. And I realized some disaster must have happened and I asked Madame. And she said the old man died. And I realized that it was I who had killed him. Because in our house, being more responsible than my brothers, I would stop rough-housing there before the furniture actually got broken. And before the curtain was torn. I've killed a man and that was--could I have done this? Would they let me go on living with them? And if they--and if not, where will I go in this city where everybody hates us? And so I never told anybody. And I used to wake at night weeping from this. I never told anybody until I finally got old enough to realize that you couldn't--can't possible have killed him in that way. But--

MR. BROWN: You would have--the fact that you had to live with this.

MS. SAYRE: That was good.

MR. BROWN: In what way? Discipline for you or the--

MS. SAYRE: No, because it taught me that whatever evil you have done, you must learn to come to terms with it

and to live with it. That's a marvelous thing to discover.

MR. BROWN: Your brothers didn't have to share this. Is that right? Because they didn't--

MS. SAYRE: I never told--

MR. BROWN: You never told them about that.

MS. SAYRE: I never told anybody at all about it.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MS. SAYRE: Until I knew it wasn't true.

MR. BROWN: And when you went back the Madame was altered in her relation to you or the way she talked with you? Do you recall?

MS. SAYRE: She didn't really have any relations with us anyway.

MR. BROWN: Oh, she just--

MS. SAYRE: So I don't know that there was any difference.

MR. BROWN: What about the schooling in France? Was it pretty vigorous or rigorous, rather?

MS. SAYRE: Yes. The first day I was asked to write my name on the blackboard and I printed in my best printing only to get a tirade from the teacher about the bothersome Americans that didn't know how to write. And as I understood perfectly well that there was one other child that perhaps they didn't know that it was not necessary. I could understand what he said. And--

MR. BROWN: But you'd had some tutoring in French?

MS. SAYRE: Virtually none.

MR. BROWN: No, but you were picking it up in your--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, I did. But the--but I made--early on, made a mistake in the--when you're dictating something, un petit garçon avec du, and I didn't know whether this could be two or some and I wrote down d-e-u-x and then it goes on [inaudible] cheveux [inaudible], and I forgot to go back and change it. And we never had one dictation again, but when he stood me up in front of the class and asked me whether or not I was going around about with any more little boys with just two hairs.

And history was something you learned word-for-word and so was geography. Drawing was taught--it was incredibly depressing. You couldn't just draw as I was used to. But you had to copy geometric designs without benefit of a ruler or a compass.

MR. BROWN: Simply to train control of the hand.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Your drawing you'd had before this had been more freehand and--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, with colors and [inaudible].

MR. BROWN: You were speaking--with teachers or just on your own you were given colors?

MS. SAYRE: Just on my own.

MR. BROWN: Yes, so that was depressing, because it was seemingly dry and mechanical.

MS. SAYRE: It was something which I had loved and it was kind of bit of--what I had to do then was soulless.

MR. BROWN: It sounds like the whole regime there was, at the least, dry, at worst, rather cruel and unfair.

MS. SAYRE: No trees that one could climb, no grass to run across.

MR. BROWN: And your parents never saw this school? This was one suggested to them and then--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, when I was at--it has a very--had a very good reputation. It was called école Alsacienne,

because it was one of the best in--

MR. BROWN: Alsacienne?

MS. SAYRE: Yes. And Parisienne. Some--I forget now some diplomat went there, too, and went back to visit it as I think I would never have done.

MR. BROWN: How long were you in France at this time?

MS. SAYRE: Then less than a year and then we had after that a marvelous summer in Switzerland. Another boarding school where there were lots of trees and grass and people were nice to us.

MR. BROWN: A very different type of school; was it?

MS. SAYRE: Totally.

MR. BROWN: Presumably.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and I looked like a--I was allowed to run about like a little barbarian with my hair scarcely combed, wearing a pair of red shorts and some berries around my neck. And there we divided up--great many children from different nations, and we divided up according--between the Europeans--what we considered to be Europeans and the Americans.

Some Philippine children we liked very much who became the leader of the--the Greeks predominated and the leader of the Greeks said that the Philippine Islands were in the middle of Europe. We asked him where and he pointed to a--he got up and gets out the atlas and this little black misprint in the middle of the--and I said it was the Caspian Sea and he said those were the Philippine Islands and we all believed him.

English children, on the other hand, could be on our side because George, this boy, proclaimed that and they all believed that they were islands not far from the United States.

MR. BROWN: Would you have fights or rivalries of some sort at this school?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and again, because I mean, we were good fighters, but some of the smaller Europeans deserted onto our side, too. And I remember that there were all kinds of childish competitions amongst us and George became very angry, because I dared climb a tree higher than he did. And so he swore that I was not a girl, I was a boy. And I--there was no way open to me to prove him wrong. MR. BROWN: And what was the--this was simply one summer you were in Switzerland; is that right?

MS. SAYRE: One summer, Yes.

MR. BROWN: Yes. Was your father involved with the League of Nations or anything of that sort at that time?

MS. SAYRE: No.

MR. BROWN: No, they were--

MS. SAYRE: It was still that same summer working for the king of Thailand--or Siam as it was called then.

MR. BROWN: Siam? Yes. Well, after the summer in Switzerland, was it back to Paris?

MS. SAYRE: But one--

MR. BROWN: Sorry, go ahead.

MS. SAYRE: No, back to America. But the one really marvelous thing about Paris was, which certainly marked me for good, was that Thursdays were holidays and we would be taken to the Louvre, which was my first art museum. And our governess would let us pick which section we wanted to look at and then we would be deposited in that section. You couldn't leave the section, so that she could find you again. But the wonderful thing was that we were allowed to wander around in that section completely alone and looking only at the things that you liked. There was nobody to tell you what to like.

And it's one of the things that I do with--every now and then my brother or a friend deposits their child with me or deposited a child here with me in the museum, but I was busy working. And so I would go to the sales desk with them and I would buy 10 details of things. And then I would strap my wristwatch around their arm and I would send them off to find those things by themselves and they were allowed to ask what section, but not precisely where the thing was. And they were--they would--they were allowed to keep any object that they

found.

MR. BROWN: Keep?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, the postcard of it. And they still remember this. But it was because of that--what happened to me at Paris. I can still remember on which walls some of things I loved were.

MR. BROWN: You had a rather remarkable governess at that point. It sounds as though you did.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, she was one of the only two French people that were kind.

MR. BROWN: Do you recall what sorts of things you seemed to gravitate toward? Do you remember you began to pick--

MS. SAYRE: I liked the Italian paintings.

MR. BROWN: In general, sort of.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: You mean, Trecento or early Renaissance or Quattrocento?

MS. SAYRE: I liked the early Renaissance ones, which, you know, you can grasp at that age. And I liked the Greek statues, too.

MR. BROWN: Did you then talk about them later or when you returned to the governess or when she gathered you all up, would you--you would just--

MS. SAYRE: No, we would only--all you needed to do was just look and absorb. You would get tired of looking at one thing and then you would go and look at something else. It's the way people should go to museums. When, because of my profession, people would very often ask me--they're going to the Prado, particularly, in Madrid and what they should see. And I will never tell them. I would tell them what some of the great collections are, but I tell them not to take a guide, but to go in and wander around and you decide what you like. But that really goes back, I think, to that--my childhood in Paris.

MR. BROWN: This was a high point, the holiday day each week for you?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and the Louvre was the most memorable of those outings. But I know that, in general, such was my experience with France that when we came back to this country, you happened to hear the word, "Boycott." And I asked my mother what it meant. And both my brothers and I, from that moment on, boycotted everything French. We wouldn't speak it. We wouldn't wear any of the clothes that had been bought for us there. We wouldn't read it.

MR. BROWN: And why was that? Because by and large you'd--

MS. SAYRE: We were so ill-treated. It took me years before I instinctively trusted French people again. Thank God I'm well over that. But as I said, the good aspect of it is that it gave me a first-hand knowledge of what it's like to be a scorned minority.

MR. BROWN: It's not unrelated to the lesson your mother gave you when she talked about what civilized means.

MS. SAYRE: It is.

MR. BROWN: It was a hard school, but it was a good one in the long run, I mean.

MS. SAYRE: Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: That year in Paris, Yes. Did you come right back here to Cambridge or Boston or--

MS. SAYRE: Came up to Cambridge to go back to Windsor School some more.

MR. BROWN: You went to--

MS. SAYRE: I'm sorry, to Buckingham--

MR. BROWN: Buckingham.

MS. SAYRE: --School some more.

MR. BROWN: Was that--that was girls; right? So--or were you separated from your brothers at that time or not?

MS. SAYRE: A boys and girls up to the sixth grade. And then my brothers went off to different schools. And then, when I was 12 or 15, we went to school in Switzerland. It was a very strange school.

MR. BROWN: Really? What sort was it?

MS. SAYRE: Well, I got to wondering whether or not I could really be remembering right. But we--it was called an "école nouvelle" and they believed, for example, that you should spend one day grating raw vegetables. And I did, one day a week this was. And you had to grate them past the safety points so that there would be little bits of my fingers in with the carrots or turnips or whatever it was.

They believed in--you had to get up at--before sun--just at sunrise and run a mile through the snow to see the sunrise over the Alps. I've never looked at another sunrise since of my own free will. And then we came back and we did an hour [inaudible] exercises. And then you took an ice-cold shower and then you went up into your--into the dormitory and the windows in the dormitory were never closed. You got dressed and you made your bed. There was--you had to turn the mattress every day before making the bed.

MR. BROWN: Is that to keep it bowed and firm or something?

MS. SAYRE: It was Swiss.MR. BROWN: For the discipline.

MS. SAYRE: And I had--I was so cold and my fingers, I felt as though they were sticking to the sheets. And I kept a pair of mittens just for making my bed. One day this was discovered and I thought I'd be thrown out. Being a degenerate and doing the thing that I was doing. And then I got something to--they played some piece of music for us and then we sang a song and then we got breakfast, which you had to eat every mouthful of, including the oatmeal, which I loathed. And--but nonetheless, there were good elements at the school there.

The headmistress was a woman whom I liked and I learned things that they--one thing we were forced to consume was coffee and I was indignant about that, because I had been taught that coffee--how bad coffee was for you as a child and so I remember going to her and saying that it was so and I didn't want to drink it. And I was therefore allotted one glass of milk a day instead. They didn't believe--

MR. BROWN: Oh, they didn't? But you always have and still do.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, I do.

MR. BROWN: You're having some now. Did you ever come to find out where all these theories came from?

MS. SAYRE: No.

MR. BROWN: No.

MS. SAYRE: And another nice thing that happened was that I used to go in--I was taking music and I would go up to some piano in her own house rather than the school. And the one place that was reasonably warm and there was sun coming and she had a brother who lived with her and he was one of these feeble-minded and insane or not quite [inaudible]. When I played something that he liked, he would come with this wonderful warm, broad smile. He didn't say anything and I would smile back.

MR. BROWN: Was music your first artistic accomplishment, would you say? I mean, you had been drawing for years to some degree.

MS. SAYRE: I think poetry and drawing, probably.

MR. BROWN: Preceded it.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Is music something you stuck with for quite a while; the piano or other instruments?

MS. SAYRE: No, later on I began playing the flute. But that was when I was through college.

MR. BROWN: So what was the--was there a core to this school? Was there an academic core you were following. You were around 12 you say when you were in Switzerland.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and I was the only person who--child who took Latin. And so they got the--a minister from the village to come and teach me.

MR. BROWN: To take--to do Latin? Had you had some before you came?

MS. SAYRE: One year before and he did--there was nothing but grammar and just dreary. It's about on par with the geometric patterns that I had to copy at the school in French--in Paris. But I began reading *Caesar* with him. We never just mentioned the word grammar excepting when it stood in the way of translating something. He taught me the whole art of translating; to just read the whole page first to see what it was going to be about and then to go back and do the individual sentences. And he kept insisting that this was a book and it was about things and he talked about anything that came to our minds in connection with the *Caesar*.

We spent actually very little time doing the Latin, because I had to do it in French because I didn't understand his English. And that spring I was able to speak a little Latin with a priest from Rome and my last year of school in this country, I've never had to think about it because I could just read it. But even more than that, he taught me to be aware of the beauty of learning. To teach a child that age, that is--was a great gift.

MR. BROWN: What do you suppose there was in what he was teaching you that impelled you to get the whole story in the case of *Caesar*?

MS. SAYRE: Because we talked about it.

MR. BROWN: The talking about it.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, anything that came to our minds in connection with what we were reading.

MR. BROWN: That's a rather wonderful experience; isn't it?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: For a child to have had?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Back at the school where your--for example, were you or your brothers being similarly excited or open to things?

MS. SAYRE: They liked their school. Their school was a--

MR. BROWN: Oh, they were in another school.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, not in my school. So harsh physically that they came once to visit me and refused ever to come again. And I sympathized with them.

MR. BROWN: But you--your intellectual curiosity, then, or love of learning began or at least accelerated from that time with the tutor.

MS. SAYRE: But it began I think really properly--I think it began much earlier than that when I was just a very small child--

MR. BROWN: Well, you mentioned, yes, this love of reading and wanting to see what's going to happen--what lies ahead.

MS. SAYRE: Yes. But he was the first man to make me conscious of it.

MR. BROWN: Do you recall how he demonstrated that it was a wonderful thing? Do you recall any anecdotes he told or any observations? Do you remember?

MS. SAYRE: It wasn't a matter of anecdotes or observations, but I think part of it must have been that he took what I said seriously, too, so that as I did what he said. So that they were discussions.

MR. BROWN: Did you really not want to leave Switzerland at the end of that year or with the--

MS. SAYRE: No, what got me through this life at that school was that we would be taken off to hear--to a concert somewhere or to go swimming in the [inaudible] Lake Geneva or bathing off Chateau de Chillon. [Inaudible] Other girls in the school wanted to--found Thibault and Cortot enormously romantic and wanted to write notes and asked me to whom I was going to write. I was disgusted by their attitude and I said I'm going to write to Kazalis [phonetic] who was short and fat. And they were shocked that--so shocked that I remember I think they never sent off their letters either.

And during their Easter vacation, we were taken to the Lake District in Switzerland and--at least those of us who

couldn't go home. And we put up in a--what had been a boys' school and become a monastery and slept on straw mattresses with all the dirty army blankets in a circle on the floor and--

MR. BROWN: The Spartan regime continued even when you weren't on the premises of the school.

MS. SAYRE: Even more Spartan and twice a day getting out to take ice cold showers down in the cellar of the school where the water--the pipes over troughs, which is what the boys had. And then about every foot there was a little hole out of which some water would trickle. It took a long time to get your washrag even wet with this.

But the worst feature of it was that the monks never failed to walk through to watch us bathe. And, you know, at that age, you don't know how to tell them that you don't like their being there. Because it was their house. And I know that the plumbing that we had was--consisted of a big pitcher--coming in a pitcher that was put in the center of a circle of pellets and this whole thing really seemed to me so depressing that--well, it wasn't in the summers.

There was a Halloween once--happened, because I remember that I thought that if I had a jack o' lantern, I would feel better. And you're allowed virtually no money at that school for an allowance. And--but I managed to haggle with a woman in the market. I got it priced down to something that I could pay and buy myself what looks quite like a pumpkin, take it back; borrow a knife from one of the monks, which he didn't like doing. I got a candle from him, too. And I know it's good that I had to get a candle from him and I carved the jack o' lantern and I put the candle in and when I went back to the circle I put the pumpkin in the middle of the circle. It completely restored me.

MR. BROWN: Were your fellow students--had pretty much the same reactions to the regime of that school do you think?

MS. SAYRE: I don't know.

MR. BROWN: What were they--were their backgrounds? Do you recall?

MS. SAYRE: There were a lot of children of divorced parents, I think. And I know that many of them would weep at night. And I know that I began to comfort them. Some of it must have been really rather like an African prayer meeting where people wept and shouted and so on. We were allowed to do it.

MR. BROWN: In fact, do you suppose the school authorities might have hoped that would happen?

MS. SAYRE: I have no idea.

MR. BROWN: It's hard to know, but you--they weren't cruel, the school authorities?

MS. SAYRE: No, they weren't.

MR. BROWN: It's just the physical conditions were deliberately harsh.

MS. SAYRE: And they--and the discipline was harsh, too, some of it. For one week each year at a time, we would have to--every day we would have to go to clean up the mess in the shower that people had made; scrub the floors. And one time I was asked to do it when it wasn't my week. And I said so and another person who was supposed to do it wasn't there and I was ordered to do it by an Englishwoman who was one of the teachers. And I refused. And I went up to my room, got into bed, and she said at one point as she harangued me that it was very simple. I shall just, it was then that she told me about *The Charge of the Light Brigade* in hopes of my duty to--implying it was my duty to do this. And I said, "Nope, I still won't do it." And she said, "Well, it's very simple. I shall just sit here until you do." And I said, "All right." And I still didn't do it.

In the end, she gave in. The headmistress, instead of punishing me, I was never--it never became my week again to have to do it. But--where she was really understanding was that [inaudible] spirit that there was never one--weren't two minutes during the day when you could decide what you wanted to do, that everything was controlled. I went to her and told her how hard that was for Americans, because we were used to having the freedom of choice. And she then decreed that every American child could have one hour a week free. But I didn't get it, because I was--they were preparing me for some college entrance exams, something like that, that I had to take in Geneva. But knowing it had existed made me feel--

MR. BROWN: So, if you pushed them, if you stood up to them, it was really a rather remarkable – an accommodating system within the [inaudible].

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And maybe perhaps it was a brilliant idea of extreme discipline and harshness-- discipline.

MS. SAYRE: It didn't hurt me.

MR. BROWN: [Inaudible] I wonder what happened to those children, however, who were--felt bereft and alone and--so this was a long year, I would think.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: It must have seemed a very long year.

MS. SAYRE: My parents had gone to India to investigate--they were interested in Gandhi and his movement. My father had a sabbatical.

MR. BROWN: Sabbatical from the law school? The Harvard Law School?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And did he, what, sort of study the mechanisms or the--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: --effectiveness or lack of it of the Gandhi movement?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and when--they didn't become followers of Gandhi, but they were profoundly impressed by him.

MR. BROWN: You never complained to your parents.

MS. SAYRE: [inaudible] anything in the Paris school, because they had taken the position in--here in America that when you complain of something the teacher had done that the teacher was right. And they supported whatever governess we had too. And I think rightly so, but this is why it just simply didn't occur to me. And my parents tried to help us to conform and they bought us black aprons for us to wear. We saw them as sissy. And I remember putting them away in one of the closets and hiding them in the closet in the school.

MR. BROWN: This was when you were--where were you?

MS. SAYRE: In Paris.

MR. BROWN: In Paris.

MS. SAYRE: But they hated us for not wearing them. And I scorned those French boys because their trousers were too short. And they scorned my brothers because their trousers were too long. [Laughter] It's the beginning as a gang warfare; isn't it?

MR. BROWN: Yes, I'm sure you can see it's the kernel of it right there.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: That's the seed. [Laughter]

[Interruption to interview.]

MR. BROWN: Continuing the interview. This is May 3, 1993. And I understand that it's your school in Switzerland you talked about considerably. But you also, among other things, had an introduction to the history of art.

MS. SAYRE: The formal teaching of the history of art. And needless to say I loved it. And then it was made even more, sort of, marvelously alive when we--because we spent the--we spent our spring vacation in Florence and in Rome and saw the-- a lot of the things firsthand. And I had these little pictures up in my dorm. And then--

MR. BROWN: Did you go with the other students or with family or what?

MS. SAYRE: That was with my family. We had spent the year in India, because they were very much interested in Gandhi and they wanted to--my father had a sabbatical from the law school and they wanted to see what his ideas on governing were and religion were.

MR. BROWN: And at some point you met them and had a journey to Italy.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, rather [inaudible].

MR. BROWN: Yes, about that same time.

MS. SAYRE: And then they were the kind of parents who let me--because they stayed on in Italy and I was allowed to travel from Florence back and crossing the border and back to my school by myself.

MR. BROWN: And you were only about 12 or so at that time?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, 'til 13. I had my 13th birthday at that time. And that summer I was with my father in England. And I wanted to go--did I tell you about wanting to go the British Museum to see the drawings?

MR. BROWN: I don't recall that, no.

MS. SAYRE: And my father was in no way interested . He said, "Well, if you want to go, you can, but you've got to go by yourself." So I set out to the British Museum to look at drawings. It was a rather scary proposition at that age. And I thought if I have something to eat first, it's going to be easier to do it. And so I stopped at a tea shop and it was the wrong time for tea, but I must have looked so crestfallen that they said, "Well, we could let you have something to take out." They asked me what I would like and I said scones, because I had read about them. And so they gave me some. They gave me scones, but eaten cold and without butter, they really weren't much good. But having paid my scarce pocket money for them, I wasn't going to stop eating them.

So I got--there I am walking on the street eating scones, but it seems that everybody looked at me as I was eating them. And I thought, all right, in England you don't do this. And so I looked for a nice, quiet alley. I retreated down and I still felt exposed. So was pleased that at the end of the alley, on the left-hand side of it was one door that was slightly ajar and I pushed it open and found myself in what now I presume to have been the locker room of a club with a swimming pool. And I listened and well knowing how voices echo in a locker room, it was perfectly silent. So I felt quite safe sitting on the edge of the swimming pool and finishing off my scones.

And also, I must have left afterwards, it seemed prudent not to tell my father. And then I went on to the British Museum and I think I knew that the drawings would be in the print room. And I found the print room and what was so marvelous about that was that in those days, they simply let me in at that age. Even more wonderful was they made no to-do about it at all that it was odd that I'd come by myself and simply asked me what I had wanted to see. And at that age, I wanted to see the drawings of Michelangelo and Botticelli. And if they'd looked at me in any way as though it was odd, I would have instantly have fled. Instantly. And it would have been years before I ever went into a museum again. And when I grew up and I was becoming a professional, I thanked them for it. By then they had changed the policy and didn't let young people in even when accompanied by an adult.

MR. BROWN: But then you were straight forward and they behaved--reacted in a very straightforward manner.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, but really because of that, when I became curator, it seemed to me that I should take--that one should take any child who has--who comes and asks to look, at a Dürer or whatever it might be, you should take him seriously. And children, I've found, almost at once handle the works of art far more carefully than the worst category which is artists, because they feel that they can make it themselves. Just about equally bad are art historians who thought that the material belongs to me, because I know about it. But children--there's no problem with children.

MR. BROWN: What are your--do you have recollections of those drawings that you saw at the British Museum?

MS. SAYRE: I think I do, but it's hard to tell whether I'm remembering what I--

MR. BROWN: What you'd later saw--got to know. In Italy, did your parents, either one, your mother or your father, take you to places? Did they encourage you to look at this or that or were you pretty much on your own--

MS. SAYRE: Pretty much.

MR. BROWN: --within--

MS. SAYRE: Reason.

MR. BROWN: --reason considering your age. What about the lectures in Switzerland at school? Do you recall those at all? What--

MS. SAYRE: They were far from outstanding but we had a book we could read and it had pictures in it.

MR. BROWN: Did it interest you? Were you--didn't you say it--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and I really looked and remembered.

MR. BROWN: What sort of art did they particularly stress in that time, would you say?

MS. SAYRE: I think I might still have that book.

MR. BROWN: Here, I'll--

MS. SAYRE: Did I tell you about the marvelous Latin teacher that I had?

MR. BROWN: At the Swiss school? No, I don't recall.

MS. SAYRE: Well, I was the only child that--I was studying Latin. [inaudible] at a school in this country.

MR. BROWN: It wasn't required at school in Switzerland?

MS. SAYRE: Girls just didn't learn it.

MR. BROWN: They would learn French. French would be--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and--or German. And or Italian we were taught, but not Latin. And so they got a minister from the village to-- hi.

VOICE: Hi.

MR. BROWN: Now, I think you may have said something about the priest or the minister from the local village in your--I think you did tell me a bit about that. It was--

MS. SAYRE: But [inaudible] was never mentioned?

MR. BROWN: That's right.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, then I won't again, but by the end of that--by spring, I could even speak a little Latin and did with a priest in Rome.

MR. BROWN: What were memorable things to you at that age in Rome or Florence? Do you recall buildings, art, easel painting, sculpture, everything?

MS. SAYRE: And I loved St. Peter's, of course. And the conversation with the priest was up in the round, gold ball at the top where you used to be able to go.

MR. BROWN: Oh, yes, of the top of the drum where--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and I climbed up the ladder and there was this big, fat priest lying at the top, wouldn't get out of the way. So I addressed him in Latin and asked him to move. He was so astounded of any Latin coming out of this young female that he immediately rolled over and sat up.

MR. BROWN: He'd found a place to spend his days away from his official duty.

MS. SAYRE: I suppose so. And then--I think he was sightseeing probably and then he would--he couldn't believe that a girl could speak Latin. And then I went also to my grandfather's--or my great uncle's church in Rome, which is the first protestant church which was allowed to be built inside Rome.

MR. BROWN: Which church was that? Is it St. Paul's, not the Anglican Church.

MS. SAYRE: It's St. Paul's, Yes. And I think it was called St. Paul's. But it got an immense amout of money to--because it was the first protestant church. I think it was Burne-Jones who had designed the mosaics with American heroes going up the aisle, including Lincoln I remember. I knew enough to realize that the whole thing was--I mean he'd wanted it to look Romanesque, but it was a travesty in Romanesque strictures.

MR. BROWN: Did this uncle show you around and--

MS. SAYRE: No, he had died.

MR. BROWN: Oh, he had died by--

MS. SAYRE: My father's father was born in 1824 and he was pushing 80 when my father was born.

MR. BROWN: So that brings up something. You're considered the niece, so to speak, of a family member and here transmitted an oral history that went back over a hundred years, I suppose. Almost, I mean--

MS. SAYRE: Well, I never knew him, of course, or that grandfather.

MR. BROWN: But within your father's side - -

MS. SAYRE: Yes, it does bring it very close to me when you think of the people who were still alive in 1824.

MR. BROWN: It must have also--when in Europe, though much older, you could see yourself back over a hundred years very easily; couldn't you?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, I could.

MR. BROWN: You weren't an American who was just astounded by antiquity, because your family tradition, in sense, carried you back at least several generations in direct recollection.

MS. SAYRE: [inaudible] a number of things, too.

MR. BROWN: This was the minister at the church--the priest.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: What was his last name?

MS. SAYRE: Nevin [phonetic].

MR. BROWN: Nevin. Was this in the middle of your year in Switzerland that you had this Italian break?

MS. SAYRE: And then also in Florence, one of the things that I knew, one of my brothers got sick and we stayed there longer than we would have otherwise and we would go walking on the [inaudible] hills. No tourists other than us and we seemed like ordinary people.

MR. BROWN: Which--that you were able to talk to some degree; right? With the--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, I did.

MR. BROWN: --peasants.

MS. SAYRE: And in my Swiss school we were given Italian lessons. But because I never got enough sleep in that school, I used to [inaudible] evening I fell asleep regularly, so they threw me out of the lessons. And then--

[Interruption to tape.]

MS. SAYRE: Before sunrise, you had to run a mile through the snow to see the sunrise over the Alps. Never looked at them since of my own free will.

MR. BROWN: Well, after you were there about a year--one school year. And then did you come back to--

MS. SAYRE: Then I came back to this country and--

MR. BROWN: --to this country? And did your father resume his position at the Harvard Law School and--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And you went to--then to--still to Buckingham School or--

MS. SAYRE: Let me--no, when we came back, I went to Windsor School.

MR. BROWN: In Boston.

MS. SAYRE: And I think that they--Buckingham was a good school for me, too. But so was the Windsor school which they would give me--if you were good in a subject, they gave you a lot of extra work. And it was--[inaudible] absolutely approve.

MR. BROWN: And what were you becoming good in?

MS. SAYRE: [Inaudible]

MR. BROWN: So at Windsor, your special--

MS. SAYRE: I was good in English and--

MR. BROWN: Meaning writing as well as--

MS. SAYRE: And reading.

MR. BROWN: Reading.

MS. SAYRE: I'm good in French. And there it always seemed to me a perfectly normal thing to do, but you had to write--read books during the summer and review some of them. One of them was we had to read one book in French and I wrote the review the French. But then nobody could read it. Could see the ordinary [inaudible] couldn't.

MR. BROWN: Was the--

MS. SAYRE: The Latin teacher was appalling. And--

MR. BROWN: You mean just couldn't teach? Couldn't connect?

MS. SAYRE: Well, she had these--said these very rigid ideas and we were reading *Virgil* and it never once occurred to her that Virgil was a poet. And that what he was writing was beautiful. But you couldn't kill that knowledge in me. And every week we were given a test whereby she would take random sentences that had been taken from the text. And you were given a choice of five words, three of which would scan and a different three would make sense. And you had--but you have to remember which particular word that he used and then at the end of the month, you had a union.

MR. BROWN: Which was?

MS. SAYRE: Exactly the same thing that it covered a month's worth of reading. And I became incensed by that. And I went to the headmistress and told her that I couldn't take those tests, that I thought they were wrong. And I was allowed not to.

MR. BROWN: Were you able to substitute something else?

MS. SAYRE: I went on taking nothing.

MR. BROWN: Taking--you could--

MS. SAYRE: But I didn't--I never prepared it beforehand, because, thanks to my good Swiss man, I could read it at sight. Just look up a few words while I was sitting in class just to keep ahead.

MR. BROWN: Was the Windsor school otherwise fairly progressive and--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: --and liberating--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Did you have art instruction or anything of that sort at Windsor?

MS. SAYRE: I didn't take it there, no. I got very involved in politics, because I was one of four democrats--

MR. BROWN: Oh, I see.

MS. SAYRE: --in the school. So that was during a Presidential election. And so that--I had always represent--I was one of two people who had to represent the Democratic Party. And I--and that way you really learned quite a lot.

MR. BROWN: What form did it take, your involvement in politics at school?

MS. SAYRE: Well, there were debates and I would do the debating and then, because it was during the first Roosevelt election--

MR. BROWN: From 1932 or so.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and I remember that--coming home on the subway that I would watch some who had dropped something and the I would pick it up so that I could fall into conversation with her and then I would ask her for whom she was voting, and I would explain to her precisely why she should vote for Roosevelt. And I would convince them that--until, of course, they got home and their husbands told them quite firmly to do otherwise.

And the Republican--the candidate for Republican government came to the school to speak and to represent the Republican side. And I was so naive that I expected them to know about things like trade agreements and foreign policy and so on, too. Because he's just doing it on the basis of just kind of latent Presidential candidate that knew all about Harvard football. They knew that would please the young ladies. And I asked them these questions in perfect innocence and they couldn't answer them. And I didn't realize what--how embarrassing he was becoming until the headmistress took him away so I couldn't go on questioning him.

And he then--he was a very nice man really and he would use this as a graceful--he went around to all the boys' schools giving partisan talks, too. And he would use this as a very graceful introduction to the boys about how he would--he had come to the Windsor school and how he was defeated by a young lady and he, unfortunately, named me so that whenever I went to a dance and I'd meet a nice, young man--and he would ask me my name after we'd been dancing [inaudible], and oh, yes, there was a--he came to my school and I blushed crimson totally--got a little bit tongue-tied.

MR. BROWN: So you developed, very early on, a reputation--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: --political realm. Is this an interest you carried on to a degree beyond that election?

MS. SAYRE: Oh, yes. And when I went to college, I planned to major in politics and economics, because I also loved law. Because my father used to try his criminal law cases out on us before the exam to see whether or not we could understand them given that if we could, his students could. And then as we were older we were allowed to argue with him, not on the basis of law, which we didn't know, but on the basis of justice, for which children have a very acute sense. And I was having a--I really loved it. But then by the time I was a sophomore, they--

MR. BROWN: In college. A sophomore at college.

MS. SAYRE: A sophomore at college, then the difficulty for me was that my father had become an Assistant Secretary of State and every time any of my professors said something about foreign affairs, I could see him eying me and wondering whether or not I had inside information. And I did, because my mother had died and my father, knowing that I was very much interested and also that under no circumstances did I repeat to anybody one word of what he said, talked to me with total freedom and I was allowed to read all kinds of confidential papers, too. Because he knew that it was safe to let me do it. But then I thought--and then finally he was very embarrassed--embarrassing having people look at me like this, that I also thought--they think you're doing all this at home. And therefore you're wasting all of his money by majoring in it in college. And so I switched arbitrarily to history of art, because I didn't know anything about it. And then found that that was what I loved.

MR. BROWN: Your father, apparently, did continue what he had done before you went to college, testing cases. He would discuss foreign affairs with you.

MS. SAYRE: Foreign affairs, yes.

MR. BROWN: Did he with your brother and sister the same? Did they discuss it?

MS. SAYRE: The law cases, yes. Not the foreign affairs, because of my father's (sic) death, he depended on me as he had my mother.

MR. BROWN: And your mother died when? When you were just in college?

MS. SAYRE: No, in school still.

MR. BROWN: Oh.

MS. SAYRE: And when I was 16. And died really of--she went to have an operation which wasn't very serious. But they used a--the doctor used an anesthetic on her that she proved to be allergic. And she never recovered consciousness. And I grew up much to fast then.

MR. BROWN: You became the mother so to speak in the household.

MS. SAYRE: Yes. I tried to replace my mother in what ways I could as my father's life.

MR. BROWN: So that your discussions of foreign affairs with your father you enjoyed--

MS. SAYRE: It's what my mother did, yes.

MR. BROWN: --but at the same you realized you were carrying a burden that perhaps was a bit beyond--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Was your father fairly possessive. I mean, would he want you to spend some time talking to him?

MS. SAYRE: He desperately needed the attention that I gave him. He was so lonely. And we would meet every night and I couldn't comfort him.

MR. BROWN: Even the job in Washington or--he had time from time to time--

MS. SAYRE: Yes. And when I was--

MR. BROWN: Or perhaps particularly the job in Washington.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, he wanted me to move down with him in the middle of the--my senior year in Washington and I felt very, very guilty that I wouldn't--that I had refused to do that. And I tried to--my mother had this incredible gift with people and it was she who kept the cook and the maid friendly to one another and she brought out the best in my brothers and I tried to do this and I wasn't old enough and didn't have the--

MR. BROWN: No.

MS. SAYRE: For one thing, I didn't have the same talent for it that she did. So I felt like a total failure.

MR. BROWN: So that was an additional burden then, of course, that you felt that way?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Were your brothers fairly compatible with you or were they--

MS. SAYRE: They were siblings.

MR. BROWN: They're siblings, but were they rambunctious adolescents by then.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and then we still had one of the Thai boys that grew up with us.

MR. BROWN: Who had come back with you from Siam?

MS. SAYRE: They were sent after we got back to this country by their fathers who wanted to have them have--be educated in this country. And then also an American came to us for a while. His parents were missionaries in Bangkok.

MR. BROWN: You mentioned just aside a bit earlier, your parents going to India to observe Gandhianism and all. Was this an abiding interest of theirs; naturally peace and--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, it was.

MR. BROWN: --pacifism?

MS. SAYRE: Peace and pacifism and although my--they were not formally pacifists as my--oldest brother was.

MR. BROWN: He was--even as a young man?

MS. SAYRE: Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: A pacifist?

MS. SAYRE: During World War I. And despite the fact--despite my mother's marriage to a--to the president and, from his point of view--no, I admire him for sticking to it, too. And he felt very grateful and the nation allowed him to be--became head of an organization called the Fellowship of Reconciliation, which wasn't just for peace, but it was for reconciling groups of people, too.

MR. BROWN: And this was your--an old--

MS. SAYRE: My father's brother.

MR. BROWN: Your father's brother.

MS. SAYRE: Uncle Nevin. And he was the kind of pacifist that made me long to be one, too. But I couldn't. I thought there were times--sometimes when one had to fight.

MR. BROWN: Were there long discussions in the family of these matters?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: You were children that had demanded or asked for explanations of everything from your parents I would think.

MS. SAYRE: Of course. But again, one of the good things in my family was that there were all these people with a variety of opinions. Some of them had sort of really clashing opinions.

MR. BROWN: Did you go down to Washington after your father went there.

MS. SAYRE: I did. But one of the marvelous things about my mother was that she had wanted to be a missionary. Wasn't taken because of her lack--they felt that she wasn't physically strong enough, plus two Buddhists in our house. It wasn't until I grew up that I saw how remarkable what happened was. She wanted them to know about Christianity. So they came to church with us. But she felt that having brought--taken two Buddhist boys into her house, she should return two adult Buddhists to their homes. And therefore, she insisted that they read their literature and when they couldn't understand it, she would explain it to them.
MR. BROWN: Your mother, herself, knew a good deal about--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: --Buddhism.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: When you had lived in Siam, had she made a point of schooling herself to some degree?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, of course, she wanted to find out.

MR. BROWN: And she did.

MS. SAYRE: Did understand it. And she respected it in a lot, too.

MR. BROWN: Was she, when you were in this country or, say, in the Boston area--was she involved at all in Buddhist or meditation groups or anything of that sort.

MS. SAYRE: No, she was very much involved in the--what was it called--the Christian housing; one for women and one for men. I'll think of the name in a moment.

MR. BROWN: Okay.

MS. SAYRE: She also was very much concerned with all the foreign students, had been appalled as a graduate at Princeton that one foreign student, a theology student, stayed on during the Christmas vacation and died and nobody knew it for about a week because he was so decimated. And so always at our house there were foreign students that were--we had them for lunch and particularly for Christmas dinner and Thanksgiving dinner and often on Sundays, too.

MR. BROWN: Were a good many of these non-Europeans? You mentioned the two boys from Thailand. But were most of them--

MS. SAYRE: Well, the ones that they befriended were from various places. There was one Afghanistan whom we loved.

MR. BROWN: What was he like? Do you recall?

MS. SAYRE: Rather tall and wanted to know whether or not--wanted to get some shoes for my mother and so I remember taking off myself--taking off my shoes and standing. He took this other piece of paper and he drew around our feet and eventually came back with these marvelous--

MR. BROWN: Oh, the curled toed--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, braided in gold. And he told us--one wonderful story that he told us was of fighting a tiger barehanded and wrestling with him. It may or may not be true, but--

MR. BROWN: Yes, but a wonderful story. Well, when you finished Windsor School, did you, in fact, go down to be with your father a bit in Washington? Did you--

MS. SAYRE: During vacations.

MR. BROWN: You would?

MS. SAYRE: Then I went off to college.

MR. BROWN: Was Washington a place that you felt at home in or not really? I mean, you'd only been there occasionally, but throughout most of your life--

MS. SAYRE: What I found, at that age, very hard to bear was all the emphasis on rank, who sat next to whom at meals and I would--I was also taken by my father to diplomatic dinners. And my father would look to see by whom I was sitting. And then he would tell me that I would have to--you must be very nice to this man, because he and I haven't been agreeing. I suppose a lot like that happened. Presumably it was a senator or something like that. And so I'd sit beside him and I would--at that age, I would be wrong to talk about foreign affairs with him and have to pretend to be so nice: a female teenager whom he could patronize.

MR. BROWN: I'll take it that role did not particularly appeal at that time.

MS. SAYRE: No, I played it, because I had to.

MR. BROWN: Did you find some of these people quite interesting or not?

MS. SAYRE: I wasn't allowed to, because that--

MR. BROWN: It began and ended with polite conversation in a formal setting.

MS. SAYRE: And they, of course--and I realized that they didn't want to talk business. They wanted to relax a little bit.

MR. BROWN: Sure. But you were a very intense young person.

MS. SAYRE: But out of patriotism, I did it. I remember the very first one when I went off with my father on a brief cruise. And we stopped at--in Denmark and there was a dinner given by a minister and I remember that my father was cross with me, because I took my time getting ready and he was worried about being late. He explained that you cannot be as much as five minutes late to these. And then as we drove there, he explained to me that I was probably going to be the ranking lady and, therefore, no one was going to be able to leave until I left and I was going to have to leave precisely at 11:30. But I didn't have a wristwatch.

When you're 16 years old, you don't know how to break up a party of adults. Let alone, if there's no way of telling time. Luckily, Mrs. Vincent Astor was there and she was considered to outrank me. And the grandson of the king was there and I was--remembered being scolded by him, because instead of curtseying to him, I shook his hand. But I--that didn't cow me actually, because I thought, well his grandfather is king, but mine was President and I'm an American and I don't have to curtsey.

MR. BROWN: Right.

MS. SAYRE: But I sat beside him for a while, because people get moved around in this sort of formal ballet. I rather scorned him, because all he wanted to talk about were Western novels and he wanted me to tell him about every one that I happened to have read.

MR. BROWN: That was your introduction to royalty or not the first?

MS. SAYRE: My introduction to royalty began with the man whose son became king of Thailand, came over to this country to study medicine, to study public health, which was a very unusual thing to do. And my first encounter with a future king was changing his diapers.

MR. BROWN: Oh, I see.

MS. SAYRE: But even before that, I think that I didn't meet him directly, but there was the relationship with the

king of Thailand. Did I tell you about that?

MR. BROWN: You may have [inaudible].

MS. SAYRE: No, okay.

MR. BROWN: Were--these times with your father, I mean was he, generally speaking, quite low-keyed and you had a great deal to talk about? It was only when these--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: --formal occasions emerged that he would become--he was probably a bit nervous himself and wanted everything to go smoothly; didn't he?

MS. SAYRE: I think so.

MR. BROWN: So art history you jumped into then?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Just out of some defiance or in reaction to or--

MS. SAYRE: No, it was because--it seems silly to major in something that I could learn at home and I couldn't learn about art history at home. So I just switched to that. It could have been in anything else. And then I came to see that I liked it and was much as nobody in my family ever really does things by halves, in the spring vacation of my sophomore year, I went to the Fogg to see if I could be a volunteer during the summer. In New York. And talked with Mr. Sachs and--

MR. BROWN: Had you ever met him before?

MS. SAYRE: No, I might have through my parents, but I didn't really know him. So it was a scary thing to do, but I did it and he finally said, "Well, I think we could use you. I think we could use you in the department of the prints. And how would you like that?" I couldn't think of anything more revolting, because prints to me were steel engravings of George Washington and public buildings with these dull English etchings that people, including my family, hung in their bathrooms.

MR. BROWN: Hunting scenes and things of that sort?

MS. SAYRE: No, landscapes.

MR. BROWN: Oh, yes, landscapes.

MS. SAYRE: But as to me, I am proud and shy and I didn't ask for the job to say that I didn't want it. I lied, I'd absolutely love to come. It took all the guts I had to turn up that first day.

MR. BROWN: How had he struck you that first day when he asked if you would like to--was Sachs a very forthcoming person or what was your early reaction?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, I liked him.

MR. BROWN: So you did turn up.

MS. SAYRE: I did turn up and in about two weeks I was hooked.

MR. BROWN: Why is that do you think?

MS. SAYRE: I know exactly why it was. I saw what they were like, how exciting they were.

MR. BROWN: They weren't dull.

MS. SAYRE: By no means.

MR. BROWN: They were a lot more than George Washington or English landscapes.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: What was your job? What was that--a first summer.

MS. SAYRE: Well, as you know, in general--intern and I was allowed to get out things for people since I knew where they were and, of course, I--naturally, I would look at some of them myself. And just to avoid--Laura Dudley was the head of the print room.

MR. BROWN: Laura Dudley.

MS. SAYRE: And she was very much interested in the Browning Society and wanted me to do all kinds of correspondence for that that I refused to do. It's okay.

MR. BROWN: And Laura Dudley--had she been there quite a while or--

MS. SAYRE: She was. Something of a maiden lady, I must say, and for as much as there were prints that she--reproduction of prints that she didn't think that anybody should see including a few Rembrandts. And so she pasted pieces of--they were matted, but she pasted pieces of paper over them so nobody could see them.

MR. BROWN: And as an intern you peeked occasionally?

MS. SAYRE: You couldn't. They were pasted down.

MR. BROWN: Oh, all around. I see.

MS. SAYRE: And I didn't care. So later on, when I came here, Henry Rossiter was far more enlightened about such things. But his policy was to--he withdrew from the collection anything that he thought that might shock people if they came on it unawares. And they were in a drawer in his desk. And when he retired and I became curator, then he formally gave me the key to his drawer. And again, anybody who asked to see any of those particular ones was allowed to see them. And we talked about them and looked at them and we both roared with laughter because we couldn't see anything that people would find offensive. And so we began, even then, putting back on their own.

MR. BROWN: Did Laura Dudley, in a manner of speaking, teach you that summer or did she now and then talk to you about techniques or quality in prints or things of that sort?

MS. SAYRE: Told me about the techniques of prints, about how to tell an etching from an engraving and a woodcut and so on. But I was allowed and wanted to be able to simply look, too, which was good. So I'm grateful to her.

MR. BROWN: Was this a job that you performed that--

MS. SAYRE: And then that was part of my job. And the other part of my job was helping Jakob Rosenberg with his English. He was a refugee. And he brought out his lectures, then I was to correct them for him. But a couple of things on his lectures, they were so much nicer than the proper English that I left them such as a Rembrandt drawing of *Saskia Ill in Bed* to *Titus Crouching Around Amongst the Pillows.*

MR. BROWN: *Titus Crouching Around Amongst the Pillows.*

MS. SAYRE: Much nicer. Or another Rembrandt became *The Philosopher Looking Down at the*--I do think what you see from below, looking up at what he called the *Pleated Staircase*. That was infinitely more graphic.

MR. BROWN: *Pleated Staircase*.

MS. SAYRE: I didn't tell him about that one, either.

MR. BROWN: You could help him because you had some German did you, yourself--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Did you--were you around Paul Sachs to any extent at that point?

MS. SAYRE: Later when I came back as a graduate student.

MR. BROWN: But not as a beginning.

MS. SAYRE: No, took his museum course.

MR. BROWN: Would--

MS. SAYRE: And I think Forbes was there, too.

MR. BROWN: Was he there that summer--that first summer? What was he like--

MS. SAYRE: He was the director--
MR. BROWN: Your early recollections.

MS. SAYRE: I was really very fond of him. He was--I don't know a more diffident man that I used to--walking across the yard, I would sometimes hear this panting sound behind me. And he would say, "Would you mind very much if I walked with you?" The director, himself. And I'm nobody. And I would be invited to his house where he would--was that--I played the recorder and he liked to play trios or duets with me with the harp, and had a special coat that he wore, I remember, to play the harp. It was sort of a marvelous East Indian thing that had never been washed, I think.

MR. BROWN: Had great sleeves or--

MS. SAYRE: It had a real patina. And he was the kind of man who goes off to Europe. In those days, he went by boat and one time he says to someone in Europe, "You know, I'm so sorry I didn't bring my harp." And next time he brings his harp.

MR. BROWN: Did you have course work with him later, or--

MS. SAYRE: I didn't, no, but he was--it was he that was responsible for having bought the lab there.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MS. SAYRE: And it was a new kind of--new attitude toward conservation.

MR. BROWN: More scientific to begin with?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Did you meet some of those people connected in the early years with it?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Like Alan Burrows?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Was he still there? Yes.

MS. SAYRE: And I took at least one course in it. In those days, you were--I was at Radcliffe and for that--

MR. BROWN: As a graduate student?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, technically, I--and Radcliffe students and Harvard students were not allowed to take exams in the same room lest we seduced the men while they were taking their exams--of all the idiotic notions. We were much too busy for that. But I was the only girl who was taking this course.

MR. BROWN: In conservation or this particular course.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, in conservation. And so I was always put in this small room by myself. They had a proctor just for me on the second floor--and on one floor. And I then had to take the exam at the--in the Fogg building, because part of it was examining a painting or a fresco that had to be brought back and forth between the two. The painting and the fresco was carried forth between us by my own proctor. He was obliged to show them to me separately.

MR. BROWN: You went into the graduate program. You said you didn't intend to go for a PhD.

MS. SAYRE: Well, I did in the beginning. But then, as I said, I had to choose between learning what I wanted to learn and getting a PhD. And so I thought it over very carefully. And did I tell you this?

MR. BROWN: No, not yet.

MS. SAYRE: And I thought if I'm any good, I'll get somewhere without the PhD. And if I'm not any good, then I won't, but then I would deserve it--I wouldn't deserve to. And so I decided to learn what I wanted to learn. It was an incredible decision to have made at that age, because from then on, I never thought in terms of a career of making it--always of this excitement of learning. And therefore the things that were done to me, the discrimination against me, was like water off a duck's back. I literally didn't care.

MR. BROWN: You'd already--you decided right there that it was the --

MS. SAYRE: Right there and then.

MR. BROWN: Because for the excitement of learning that you were doing this and the setbacks, the hurdles and so forth, were secondary.

MS. SAYRE: Absolutely.

MR. BROWN: Also, I suppose at that time, women were largely discouraged from going on. Or was that not true at Harvard?

MS. SAYRE: No, it wasn't true at Harvard. They certainly weren't encouraged as much as men, but--

MR. BROWN: You also said--told me at one point that, in some cases, the wrong people taught the good courses instead of the--or was this perhaps a case of--

MS. SAYRE: I meant that they were the wrong people in that they weren't the ones that were going to be examining me for a PhD exam, you see. And the right people gave courses, many of which I already had.

MR. BROWN: Was your program at Bryn Mawr quite intensive before you got to Harvard?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, it really was and I think old Georgiana Goddard King's still there like this – got to wave with her hand and pound with it. And she would stand in front of you and say, "Speak to the picture." And you would have to.

MR. BROWN: What was it? Formal analysis you were asked to deliver yourself of when she said, "Speak to the picture"?

MS. SAYRE: Yes. And then Harold Witheru [phonetic] was also there and [inaudible] because he tried to--he rigidly applied the Harvard system of going through the photographs and the reproductions and learning the whole--all the relevant works of art by heart and having to remember them with slides.

MR. BROWN: That was at Bryn Mawr at that time? Or he was here briefly? No, he was at Bryn Mawr--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, he was. And he--if you didn't have the photographs, it didn't really make any sense. And I rebelled against that and many of my friends would learn to recognize, for instance, the *Apollo of Melos* because there are no legs; the *Apollo of Melos*--Milos by fig leaf. Or this cathedral where there's a woman selling postcards, but I wouldn't. And I tried to analyze them as best I could stylistically.

MR. BROWN: And were these expectations very mechanical ones as well?

MS. SAYRE: Very mechanical.

MR. BROWN: Well, he must have been a fairly young teacher at that time.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, he was. Yes. And he didn't last all that long at Bryn Mawr. He then went on and he gained more mature and a much better professor.

MR. BROWN: Was art history a fairly common area of concentration then at Bryn Mawr? Would it have been--would you say it was one of the principal things? By no means?

MS. SAYRE: No, it wasn't.

MR. BROWN: And when you left Bryn Mawr, did you immediately then go onto graduate study at Harvard. You had determined that you wanted to--

MS. SAYRE: I knew I wanted to work in a museum.

MR. BROWN: In the museum, I see. Not in the classroom. You didn't--

MS. SAYRE: I'd fallen in love--I was in love with the objects. So when I--Mr. Rossiter hired me, he asked--he particularly asked me only one question, "Do you like prints?" He could see that I really did. He didn't want any letters or recommendation, wasn't interested in anything like that. But he was right.

MR. BROWN: And that's why you went into school. That's why you pursued this career. I mean, that's why you went to graduate school?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: It's wonderful. So you mentioned earlier, of course, that Harvard then, with a museum career in sight or as your goal, you took then the courses with Paul Sachs.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Maybe we can--could you describe them a little bit as you recall them?

MS. SAYRE: It's not really--he collaborated with Mr. Forbes, too. And one of the games that they played when they were travelling together on the trains was they would say, "Well, let's do the National Gallery." And that meant telling one another picture by picture by picture in the right order exactly what was in the first room, what exactly was in the second room, and you were expected to do that with the collections which we were taken to see. And you can do it. I think, again, a turning point in my life was when I went to Russia with my father and--

MR. BROWN: Was that about this time, too?

MS. SAYRE: It was when I was still in school and we went to the Hermitage at a time when the rector of the museum was pulling things out to--in the collection, having to decide which things to sell and which not to raise money for the government. And there was a whole table full of [inaudible]. It's a mixture of gold and silver work. And for the first time in my life, I was allowed to handle a work of art in a museum. And I looked so hard at it that years later I happened to see one of these for sale in New York and recognized it.

MR. BROWN: So on a larger scale and more systematically, that's what you continued learning under Sachs and Forbes.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Would they typically in a--would you have a formal class session and they would bring in a certain number of objects or what was the average class like as you recall?

MS. SAYRE: This course was given principally by Mr. Sachs. So there were a number of visits to other collections. And then in class an object might be brought in and you would have to tell them, you know, sight unseen what it is, whether or not it was right, and why; always and why. And Mr. Forbes's conservation course, I had to--they gave gold leaf which had just sort of [inaudible] did a little painting on it. They had done the gold leaf--[inaudible] as the needs may be--and tried to do a bit of fresco. And I think it was an invaluable thing to learn for an art historian.

MR. BROWN: And was the style of Paul Sachs quite different than that of Edward Forbes?

MS. SAYRE: Completely. There's a--he was more extroverted man and a very dominant personality. And I remember this one wonderful story, oh on European art historians who had met him and he goes round to look at the American museums and ends up at the Fogg. Mr. Sachs tell this himself. "Then he looked at me. He looked me up and down. He said, 'Now, I know.' And I said, 'What do you know?' He said, 'Now, I know why all the paintings in America are too low.'" They were all his students. And he was small.

MR. BROWN: Therefore, it was a good--

MS. SAYRE: They would have them at his eye level.

MR. BROWN: His eye level. But he was all in all a very thorough teacher by his method by the classroom and the visits to collections.

MS. SAYRE: I don't think we had much contact with the collectors, but one thing that I thought was really good on his part was that he made sure that we did not underestimate the knowledge of dealers; that they have great expertise, too, in their own fields and that we should be aware of it and take advantage of it. And one should not look down on dealers, but respect them.

MR. BROWN: Were they helpful to you as a student? That is, were dealers occasionally?

[Interruption to tape.]

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MS. SAYRE: What one of the trustees at this museum, Arthur Fishbaugh [phonetic] [inaudible].

MR. BROWN: Up here with the MFA in Boston.

MS. SAYRE: The MFA, yes, and he threw together all--I think it was he who threw together all the seven deadly sins. Every one of them but one is extremely well represented. If you--I'm sorry. When you throw together the collectors, dealers, the museum people, all but one of the seven deadly sins are extremely well-represented. Do you know which one?

MR. BROWN: No.

MS. SAYRE: Sloth.

MR. BROWN: Oh, I see.

MS. SAYRE: And it is true.

MR. BROWN: But that lay a bit ahead your really--the extensive acquaintance with dealers.

MS. SAYRE: [Inaudible]

[Interruption to tape.]

MR. BROWN: Continuing the interviews. This is May 17, 1993. I thought we'd talk a little more about your time at the Fogg. You were there. Why did you get a doctorate? Is there a story behind that or was it--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Was that never your intention?

MS. SAYRE: Because I told you how I had gone to work as a volunteer for the Fogg.

MR. BROWN: Through Paul Sachs.

MS. SAYRE: Through Paul Sachs. So that I knew when I went to the Fogg that I wanted to not only take historyof art, but that I was going to want to work in a museum, because I'd fallen in love with prints and objects and--though I didn't know it necessarily that it would be prints. And I thought about it and I could see almost immediately that if a took a degree, that I would have to take courses with people that I'd already had, because--

MR. BROWN: You mean teachers you had already had or courses you mean?

MS. SAYRE: Courses that I'd already had, because the right people gave them who would be examining me when it came to be PhD time. And I couldn't take the courses that I thought would be useful to me in a museum and drawings, for example, or in connoisseurship or in museum work. And I thought about it very carefully and I thought--I don't think--even to my saying to myself, "Because I'm a woman, it's going to be harder for me. But if I'm any good, I'll get somewhere. If I'm not any good, then I won't." But then I wouldn't deserve to either. And so I resolved then and there to learn what I wanted to learn.

And it was an incredible piece of luck for me, because from that moment on, I never thought in terms of getting on, of making it, of a career, but always of the excitement of learning. And therefore, later on in life, of course, being a woman, I was discriminated against. But I couldn't--it was like water off a duck's back. I just didn't care, because I knew what I wanted.

MR. BROWN: It was just overwhelming all else was this intellectual determination to--

MS. SAYRE: Curiosity.

MR. BROWN: So courses that you wanted to take, you couldn't take or you had already or--

MS. SAYRE: Well, I took--

MR. BROWN: --you want to clarify that?

MS. SAYRE: Well, for instance, I'd had some classical art at college, but I would have had to take a course in it, because it was one of the things I was going to be examined on and the right man would give it.

MR. BROWN: Were there some notable teachers, do you recall, outside of Sachs and Forbes whom you have mentioned?

MS. SAYRE: Oh yes, there was Jakob Rosenberg, who was a refugee, you know, I came to know even as a--when I was a volunteer in the Fogg, because my job was to read the lectures that he was going to give and correct the English for him, but one or two mistakes that he made were so much nicer than the real thing that I couldn't bear to correct them. Such as Rembrandt of *The Philosophers* with a circular staircase above him, which he called *The Pleated Staircase*.

MR. BROWN: The pleated--

MS. SAYRE: Or again, a Rembrandt drawing he spoke of *Saskia in Bed, Titus Crouching Round Amongst the Pillows.* It was so much more graphic.

MR. BROWN: So you let those things stand.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, I did.

MR. BROWN: Was he quite an affable sort or approachable or how would you characterize--

MS. SAYRE: Very much so.

MR. BROWN: --Rosenberg?

MS. SAYRE: And I'd gotten interested in the problem of Jews when I was--from the German refugees from having spent the summer in Germany when I was still in college. And--

MR. BROWN: Was this after you decided to go into art history or before even?

MS. SAYRE: Before.

MR. BROWN: Before.

MS. SAYRE: And I ran an awful experiment in international living, chose to live with a Nazi family, because I didn't know what they thought and why they thought it and I--it seemed to me at that age, that one of the great ills that they did to Germany was to take away all responsibility for their own governance from the Germans. So they proudly told me that--I mean, even the mayors, they didn't have to vote for them anymore. And I could see then that for a nation to develop the right kind of government for itself, it had to do those things as take responsibility.

And Frau Schmidt [phonetic] with whom I lived was an ardent Nazi. I believe that there was a great Christian gentleman and I remember that I'd find a summer dress, bring it home, try it on, and for her, for Frau Schmidt. And, "Yes, it's very becoming. How much did you pay? A good price. Where did you buy it?" And I'd tell her. "Oh, she says," Frau Schmidt, "That's a Jewish store." And I'd say, knowing the score full well, "Are you not allowed to buy in a Jewish store?" "Oh yes," she said, "I am, of course." But I'd persist. And I'd say, "Would you buy something in a Jewish store?" "Yes," she says, "If I saw something that I liked."

And even at that age, I could see two things. One was that she was never going to like anything that she saw in a Jewish store. That if I had said to her, "Frau Schmidt, you're anti-Semitic," that she would have been genuinely shocked. And I saw how people can divorce things in their mind. So--

MR. BROWN: She might excuse herself from being--saying, "I'm not anti-Semitic," do you think?

MS. SAYRE: She would have been shocked if I had suggested that she was, because she couldn't put the--she didn't put the two things together, which is human I came to see later.

MR. BROWN: Yes, it's not unlike racism in many classes.

MS. SAYRE: No.

MR. BROWN: No. Particularly where different races have lived together, and then suddenly someone will say something without thinking or--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Was that a time of study or mostly travel when you were in Germany?

MS. SAYRE: There was travel and we did some studying in Weimar, saw Goethe's house and--

MR. BROWN: Did you see things like, in Weimar, the Bauhaus, the buildings or any of that?

MS. SAYRE: No, not that. Looking back, I regret it that I didn't--

MR. BROWN: Yes, sure. But was there evidence of a--was it fairly sinister? Was there a sinister quality at all that you feel as a young woman there or--

MS. SAYRE: To me, yes. As I said, the anti-Semitic--I was aware that Jews were leaving Germany and I tried to help them when I was still--when I was in college, too. But I did not know and I don't think the Germans knew anything about the concentration camps. And which is why, to me, we know about the extermination of the Muslims in Bosnia and still do nothing and I think it's worse than what the Germans did.

MR. BROWN: How did you--in some way, any way, help the Jews when you were in college? Were there--

MS. SAYRE: It was really more in graduate school, but I--

MR. BROWN: Graduate school.

MS. SAYRE: But I met a couple of other people who had to get a--I think we got a scholarship or at least some money for a Jewish student and then I came to know friends of the Rosenbergs because I house-sat for them and--on the condition that I would let these other people live in the house, too, which I was more than willing to do. And I know they had a relative that they wanted to get out here. I--they wanted me to vouch for their support, which was one of the terms of getting a--

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MS. SAYRE: --a visa. I didn't have any money to do that, but I did it anyway.

MR. BROWN: You were never called in to prove--

MS. SAYRE: No. They knew that I didn't, but the--I wouldn't. But if it came to support, they wouldn't be able to help them themselves.

MR. BROWN: Do you suppose our officials also realized that once someone was over here, that somehow that person would be taken care of?

MS. SAYRE: I think they may have learned that, yes.

MR. BROWN: So this was a whole sort of substratum of emotion and involvement at this time in the late '30s when you were in graduate school.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, life was never really simple.

MR. BROWN: No. Then those years, do you recall also, was there a good deal of stress as between those who were isolationists and those who were saying, "Let's"--American's who were saying, "Let's get involved against Fascism"?

MS. SAYRE: I think people who thought they should be involved against Fascism was--I'm sure that they were right. I don't think they were upset by the isolationists. They weren't upset emotionally.

MR. BROWN: Were there divisions among you students in these years?

MS. SAYRE: No, and I think that when the war started, I know that my friends--the men that I knew went eagerly, feeling that it was something that they should do. And I know that when I had to make a choice--but this is all really later, but when I had to make a choice between--that year that the war had begun, my friends wanting me to do intelligence work as they were doing and I was, in fact, offered a job. In the end, I didn't--I turned it down, because remembering how people had been discriminated against in World War II, I thought that if I was a granddaughter of a President, openly going on seeing Germans, it can help. And it wasn't necessary from that point of view.

MR. BROWN: But this was still during the war?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Yes. You were at--doing your graduate study through what, through about 1940, '41 at Harvard?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, 1938 through 1940, for about two years. And--

MR. BROWN: What led you to leave, because you were saying, of course--

MS. SAYRE: I was offered a job.

MR. BROWN: You were offered a job and you weren't going for the highest degree by then, you determined. So how did the job offer come about?

MS. SAYRE: One of the courses that I took was, as I say, was Paul Sachs's. I just want you to know a little bit about the professors. It's best I tell you about them.

MR. BROWN: Yes, I'd like to hear about them.
MS. SAYRE: Chandler Post was there and the Spanish scholars, as we know. And I did start to take a course with him and not in Spanish art, but in--I think it was something Medieval. But then--no, Renaissance, I guess. But then, when I was still trying it out that first day in class he asked, who was pope when Pico della Mirandola was 13?

MR. BROWN: And?

MS. SAYRE: And I didn't think that was a course for me. I'd be way out of my depth.

MR. BROWN: So he was a clever man, at least.

MS. SAYRE: Well, he was. I came to know him personally and really like him. And later when I went to Spain, I was much impressed in the fact that--was it true that he was really an American. And they said that they could not believe that he's American because he knows so much about Spanish art. Here was a man, as you know, plunged into the early Spanish art.

MR. BROWN: He was exceptional; wasn't he? In his generation, he certainly was.

MS. SAYRE: Oh, yes. Yes. Absolutely. And Koehler was there. He was a Medievalist. And a wonderful one, too.

MR. BROWN: Lectures mainly or with some of these you had--

MS. SAYRE: I had a seminar with him.

MR. BROWN: Seminar.

MS. SAYRE: And I must admit that I was really very tempted by Medieval art, but what kept me from going into it was I realized that when you look at a work of art, you have to put aside everything that you are so that your own ego--and I use that in a broad sense--doesn't get in the way of seeing it. You have to plunge into it. And I thought that if I plunge into Medieval art, it was so far in the past, that it would be a bit difficult for me to come out.

MR. BROWN: Somehow you'd lose your footing?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: But visually and in terms of imagery, it captivated you, I take it.

MS. SAYRE: Well, I think lots of different kinds of art did. It wasn't just Medieval, but I did find the images beautiful and exciting and I loved--I must admit that I loved all the symbolism connected with it to why they did things the way they did.

MR. BROWN: And were iconographical studies picking up steam at that point?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: I mean, they were--

MS. SAYRE: Very much so.

MR. BROWN: --very much emphasized; weren't they?

MS. SAYRE: And then Jakob Rosenberg was a--his specialty was, I believe, the connoisseurship of drawings, which is--I'm grateful, really, for what he taught me.

MR. BROWN: How did that--was that distinguished from what Paul Sachs may have taught?

MS. SAYRE: What Paul Sachs taught was much broader and good also about--it was a various thing that one

needed--was going to need to know in order to run a museum. The connoisseurship was only part of it.

MR. BROWN: Of course, for Rosenberg, this was a principal--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: --part of his teaching.

MS. SAYRE: And one of the bits of what had impressed me was he realized that one drawing was--one 15th century drawing was completely false, because--or 16th century, I guess, was completely false, because the armor was drawn so that the man couldn't move in it. And I realized then that you really have to know to look, to think.

MR. BROWN: How did he teach? How did Rosenberg teach? Just put material in front of you and ask you to sink or swim or was he a fairly formal lecturer or--

MS. SAYRE: No, he wasn't. [inaudible] sometimes he would give you lectures about various artists, especially Rembrandt, whom he loved. But I didn't get profound understanding of--and I think in those days, if a painting was going to be criticized, because of his emphasis on really looking at the work of art and of the importance of the object in itself and I think about 15 years--it could have been years ago that I became something that was scorned and people got to be interested only in learning about the--what was the social surroundings of the work of art or--what was this--what was the history of it.

And the difficulty--I felt strongly really that through art that the connoisseurship is not in itself enough; that you need to know about the surroundings and the whys of it. But if you don't concentrate on an object, but only on this peripheral part, then you may come out with all kinds of theories about works of art without--many of which are not going to be by the artist, which will throw your whole theory off.

MR. BROWN: Indeed.

MS. SAYRE: It seemed to me anyway. And I think that both are vital.

MR. BROWN: And with connoisseurship, if you proceed with common sense, with study, and with a very intent looking and trying to figure out every meaning, anything that puzzles, try to pull it apart and learn how contemporaries may have regarded it, you're going to come pretty close to--many times, at least, what the artist, perhaps, had in mind?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, I think you have to know--certainly, you have to understand the iconography of it.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MS. SAYRE: But you can--this is one of the things that comes to light with some of the Goya theories that people don't really look at the work. And I say that I just brought a--the Getty Museum, for example, paid 15 or 16 million for a bull fighting scene and I can give you what I wrote to somebody about it, if you like, but--

MR. BROWN: You could summarize what you said.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, but stylistically, for one thing, it isn't like Goya's work, of course, but it in a way, there's something in common with Mozart's. It visualizes the whole thing. And every single brush stroke, every tonality of color is going to be--is going to have--play an inevitable role in the integrity of the whole. And this didn't have that.

And for another, when I looked it, I realized that the picador--as he was in the [inaudible] completely unlike anything that was used either then or now as some [inaudible] who doesn't know anything about bull fighting. And--but the bull doesn't have the incredible strength and the ability and intelligence of this breed of fighting bulls. It looks more like a male cow as it stands there. And the horse has got a wound in its stomach that is so--the blood is literally pouring out of it onto the ground, and yet the picador still expects him to move into place against the bull. No horse could. So, you know, the feeling it's painted by somebody who saw bull fighting as a cruel and bloody sport, very hard on horses.

MR. BROWN: So your point here is that they--apparently, the people authenticating it had not known what they were looking for or looked very carefully.

MS. SAYRE: Didn't know anything about bull fighting.

MR. BROWN: Whereas Goya did.

MS. SAYRE: Goya was incredible for creating bull fights or the bull fighting of his day.

MR. BROWN: And likewise, a Jakob Rosenberg would have instructed you long ago in--

MS. SAYRE: To look at the pique.

MR. BROWN: Look at the pique, right. Or the equivalent for Rembrandt; right?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Try to discover as much about Rembrandt as you can, as well, I suppose.

MS. SAYRE: But also if it's going to be a bull fighting scene, then you need to know something about what bull fighting is really like.

MR. BROWN: Certainly.

MS. SAYRE: I was terribly loathe to go to a bull fight the year that I spent in Spain, but I knew that I couldn't really work on Goya without looking at one and fortunately I came to know a great deal about it beforehand. So that when I finally went, I, who find it difficult to kill the slugs in my garden, loved it--found it extremely beautiful. Because it's the battle between two equals. And the man can't just kill the bull. That's what afterwards is done in the slaughterhouse, but you have to play him first with great skill so that you can--you're going to be able to when the moment comes. And then when you kill him, you have to do it--or as you fight him, you have to do it with grace of spirit. And it's that grace of spirit that's beautiful to see. And that's what Goya shows in his set of bull fights. But that's what I mean about the surroundings of the work.

MR. BROWN: So you got good grounding early on.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Do you think a good many of your fellow students equally profited, would you think, as you look back? Was it a--

MS. SAYRE: I think this is impossible to judge.

MR. BROWN: To judge entirely, yes.

MS. SAYRE: Just don't know.

MR. BROWN: Yes. Were there other teachers who stood out in your memory?

MS. SAYRE: At the Fogg?

MR. BROWN: At the Fogg, yes.

MS. SAYRE: Those were really the ones.
MR. BROWN: The ones, yes. Well, had you--by the time you got your job offer, had you done a--what--an M.A. degree by then or--

MS. SAYRE: No, because this was during the war and they didn't give M.A.s in those days. And they'd accept them just a prelude--in that department they didn't. Some of the other departments they did accept them just a prelude to PhD. So I don't have any M.A. degree.

MR. BROWN: Well, back to--how did you get your job and how did this come about? You were going to--

MS. SAYRE: I think it Mr. Sachs recommended me to Yale. And off I went.

MR. BROWN: And Yale was looking for what? A curator of prints at--

MS. SAYRE: No, no, no, no.

MR. BROWN: No?

MS. SAYRE: They didn't have a curator of prints, but they--I was what really amounts to assistant to the director for which I was paid $1,200 a year. I was in charge of the--had to do all the exhibitions for them and I was in charge of the carpenters which is an odd thing to put a young female.

MR. BROWN: But you had to do all the exhibitions. I mean, you planned them and--

MS. SAYRE: Mm-hmm.

MR. BROWN: What did the director do if--

MS. SAYRE: Well--

MR. BROWN: Who was the director at that time?

MS. SAYRE: This was Tubby Sizer.

MR. BROWN: Theodore, Tubby, Sizer.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, who--it was really his wife who pushed him into the job. And she was known by us as Lady Macbeth. And Tubby was ardent and erratic. He was the kind of man who once when I was in charge of how the galleries looked, too, and I was in charge of all conservation and the moisture in the air.

And I remember going to him once and saying that--we had a period room that I thought that--I was going to suggest that we have a just very simplified little map of the state of Connecticut and we could show people where [inaudible] it was the little town from which this room had come. "Splendid, splendid," he says, "That's a splendid idea. Go at once to the bureau of surveys and get a map. Get a detailed map."

MR. BROWN: He was a bit over his head; wasn't he? Would you say?

MS. SAYRE: Oh, totally over his head, I think. And he did give a course in--he gave a course, I think, in prints and--at least I think it was in prints. But he was--but he handled the material so badly that we did one exhibition with books, which some Rennaisance books were going to be used for--did it at Panofsky's behest and I went to the library and they refused to lend any of their books, unless there was an absolutely firm understanding that he would not handle one of them; that I would be the one who did it.

And he would lecture and I remember that one famous occasion he got to pick out all the slides, about three boxes, at a time. He brought the wrong box of slides once to a lecture and he was halfway through it before he realized that the slides weren't right. He storms out of the room.

MR. BROWN: Was he rather embarrassing to work for? Would you have to cover up for him?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, we spent--I felt exactly like as though we were in--is it the red queen in *Alice in Wonderland* or *Through the Looking Glass*. I forget. But we spent all our time painting the red--the rose trees red, because he said that they were red --trying to make things happen. And I did work on prints, but whenever I got a chance to sneak away into it.

MR. BROWN: And what were some of the exhibitions you pulled--put together. You've mentioned the Renaissance books. Were there others that--

MS. SAYRE: Well, this was an exhibition of Renaissance art and I remember that there was--that we did one of Chinese scrolls. I think they were basically flower paintings, because it seemed to me that nobody really knows what Chinese flowers were like and the real varieties. And so I persuaded him to let me do a Chinese flower show in connection with it. And we got the Bureau of Grounds at Yale to select all the varieties of things which would be used. And then there were various ladies that I got hold of garden clubs and got them to volunteer to do arrangements and they wanted to do the--of course, they wanted to do the--of course, wanted to do Japanese ones, but then I brainwashed them a little bit out of that.

MR. BROWN: Did you tell them that that was anti-patriotic at the time or--

MS. SAYRE: No, no.

MR. BROWN: You know, it wasn't Chinese.

MS. SAYRE: No.

MR. BROWN: I'm joking.

MS. SAYRE: But I wanted to get them in the mood for Chinese arrangements. I remember taking them to New York and making them eat in Chinese restaurants with chopsticks, too. And it was--there was a tremendous division between town and gown at Yale in those days. Many of these ladies had never been in--I think none of them had ever been invited into the Museum before so that they were enormously pleased by this. They would have used their own vases instead of things that the museum supplied. And I said, well, they could do that, but then they would have to guard them, because the museum couldn't supply guards.

So they did and they would sit in the two galleries that we used--space that was used for this the whole afternoon and then I brought--I always took pains to drop by and explain to them--tell them something about the museum and why they should support it. It was also a time that was--when the rich professors looked down on the poor professors. And they would have looked down on them--there were very few Jews and I don't think any Negroes that I saw amongst the students and that shocked me.

MR. BROWN: Because in Cambridge, there had been somewhat more--

MS. SAYRE: Much more.

MR. BROWN: --variety, yes.

MS. SAYRE: And it seemed to me that they kept looking over their shoulders to see what Harvard was doing rather than being proud of the things they did that were better than Harvard.

MR. BROWN: Were there things in the fine arts that they did quite well at Yale?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Apart from Mr. Sizer and his gallery?

MS. SAYRE: Well, John Phillips was there.

MR. BROWN: And that would be decorative arts and--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, the American decorative arts and silver and furniture and he was a man that I really respected in light, too.

MR. BROWN: Why so? What was it that he did that--

MS. SAYRE: He's very--extremely knowledgeable. But as a--there was a museum that was full of tempers, in an extraordinary way, that the registrar used to have a tantrum about once a week. Tubby Sizer had them more frequently than that.

MR. BROWN: Was the museum seen much by the public?

MS. SAYRE: No.

MR. BROWN: Was it--it was mostly just for use--sort of somewhat like the Fogg as an adjunct to teaching was it?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Who were some of the teachers there, at the time, that you can recall. There had been the recent French presence of Focillon and Aubert.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Were they still there at those years--that year you were there?

MS. SAYRE: Focillon, I really didn't have much contact with him. The dean was Meeks, who was a foolish Victorian in some ways. I know that one of the exhibitions that I did was--they wanted me to exhibit the work people in the school were doing. And the school was very much, in those days, totally under the influence of the pre-Jeromes. They went in regularly.

MR. BROWN: Yes, the Beaux-Arts.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, but I remember asking one of the professors of architecture about--was it about Frank Lloyd Wright. They couldn't tell me anything whatsoever about him in those days.

MR. BROWN: Sure, and Wright had been around active for over 40 years by then.

MS. SAYRE: He just wasn't interested in it; just this pre-Jerome kind of building.

MR. BROWN: Did you several--or occasionally show in the gallery work by the students or faculty--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, well I had to do an--

MR. BROWN: That's customary?

MS. SAYRE: I had to do one exhibition of student work. And somebody warned me that I'd better not have any nudes, because the dean doesn't like them. And so I asked if there were any female nudes, and I tell him that I would like to show some of the life class drawings, because it's very much a part of the school. Would that be all right? "Oh, yes," he says. And I said, "Can I use some female life studies?" "Oh, yes," he said, "provided that they're not erotic."

So I looked through the students' work and I picked out five or six or maybe it was about a dozen perhaps, nudes, in which it was obvious that the only thing the student had in mind was getting the anatomy right, the lighting falling on it in which you could see that it didn't really occur to them that they were female. And I bring them to the dean and he looks at each one; erotic, erotic, erotic.
MR. BROWN: And you couldn't overrule him?

MS. SAYRE: No. And I could see also that he was genuinely upset by them, but it told me a lot about what was going to happen under Jesse Helms, for example.

MR. BROWN: Years--

MS. SAYRE: I think that eroticism is very much in the mind of the people who look at the work. Not always, but it can be.

MR. BROWN: And someone like Dean Meeks simply brought that baggage to his looking at practically any figural work.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, even my male nudes.

MR. BROWN: Did he teach as well?

MS. SAYRE: He may have done, but I wasn't aware of it.

MR. BROWN: Who were the chief teachers as you recall at that time?

MS. SAYRE: I don't really remember too much about them.

MR. BROWN: And in the art school, you weren't as closely--

MS. SAYRE: No.

MR. BROWN: --associated with them as with the art historians.

MS. SAYRE: No. I don't really remember anyone teaching at the art school.

MR. BROWN: The--well, some of the art historians that were very young at that time. I think, people like I suppose, Kubler. Was he on board yet, George Kubler or--

MS. SAYRE: I believe he'd just come, yes.

MR. BROWN: Just beginning, yes. These people were just beginning.

MS. SAYRE: And I liked him, but didn't really know him all that well.

MR. BROWN: Well, you were kept quite busy; weren't you? In fact, very busy, weren't you?

MS. SAYRE: Indeed I was. And I was--looking back on it, I think I was somewhat hard on Tubby who shocked me from--for instance, because they would put up labels in the gallery on paintings which they knew weren't really by the people, but just to please the owners. And that shocked me and I let them see it. And then, because it was during the wars, it was very hard to keep any of the men working for you and we had two carpenters who did the hanging, one old one and a younger--very arrogant, younger one. And they both knew that they were both paid far more than I was, and the younger one would come two or three hours late in the morning and I wanted to say something to him about that; was forbidden to by Tubby.

MR. BROWN: On what grounds?

MS. SAYRE: He might leave. He scorned me for it and I didn't blame him for scorning me. When it came time--he wanted to retire the old one, he didn't have the guts. The old one had been there for I don't know how long and did pretty much whatever he liked when he--he would make the secretary address envelopes for him, write letters for him and used her as though they were his personal secretary. She had a hard life, also, because Tubby thought that the stamp--postage stamps didn't adhere. So if a postage stamp was put on a letter, she

was obliged to sit on it so that it bonded well. It was a truly unreal existence. And when we hung exhibitions, I'd arrange them. And then Tubby--the carpenters would be called in and they were standing there ready to hang. And then Tubby wanted to try things in a different way and then we would go back to doing it the way that I just laid them out, because Tubby thought they looked better that way. That infuriated me. The carpenters [inaudible] until it was on the wall. So he could see how it looked.

MR. BROWN: You mean Tubby you locked out?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Well, he was sort of a--he couldn't make up his mind or he just loved to be assertive now and then or--

MS. SAYRE: Liked to be assertive, liked to dabble in this or that, but not really knowing what he was doing. And even when the war came, he was put in charge--he was on commission for listing and keeping track of monuments.

MR. BROWN: Yes, the monument service, so to speak.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and I happened to know somebody who was--he was in the same [inaudible] that he was in Washington for a while and told me how he--she could hear him pacing the floor and saying, "I can't do it. I can't do it. I can't do it, but I must do it." Pulled himself together, but he couldn't. As I say, he was pushed into the job by Mrs. Sizer.

MR. BROWN: Is that because she was--had Yale affiliations or she so admired academic positions or what? Did you get to know her at all?

MS. SAYRE: Not particularly, no.
MR. BROWN: She must have been a fairly formidable person.

MS. SAYRE: She was.

MR. BROWN: Was the printer to the university still around?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, Carl Rollins.

MR. BROWN: Carl Rollins?

MS. SAYRE: And when I first went there, I lived in their house. And enjoyed it and then I left and took an apartment with another person, a woman who was working in the museum. Only two people who--well, I guess John Phillips didn't lose his temper either, but I guess it was quite common. One day, I remember we just couldn't--

[Interruption to tape.]

--left our hats and coats there and went to the movies. And then came back in before the museum closed and picked them up again. And I can't tell you what it did for me. I don't remember what, in fact, the movie was.

MR. BROWN: And perhaps no one knew you'd gone; is that right? Who was this other young person that--

MS. SAYRE: Peggy Hartt [phonetic].

MR. BROWN: Peggy Hartt. And she was likewise an art historian or--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and she married--she was Peggy Lieder [phonetic] then, but she married Fred Hartt.

MR. BROWN: The Renaissance scholar? Well, all in all, was it--what about the students? Did you have much contact with students at that time?

MS. SAYRE: No, I'm sorry about that, because I liked students. And I liked teaching, too. Oh, and another person in my life was really used by Tubby. He was a refugee who did a great deal of the research on his book on [inaudible] for him, some of the writing, too, I think, and never got credit for it. But I don't think he - he wasn't the kind of man who realized it wasn't all his own work.

MR. BROWN: What had Sizer's background--was he--been; do you know?

MS. SAYRE: I don't remember.

MR. BROWN: But did--Sachs must surely have known of his quality or lack thereof, Paul Sachs.

MS. SAYRE: Possibly not, because he hadn't been at Yale all that long. The museum is right next to the Skull and Bones Club. And it had no windows on one side of the building. So we couldn't overlook the garden and see what was going on. And one of the games amongst the young members of the staff was to lie in wait for the two men--the men going into the Skull and Bones Club on their compulsory evening. They had to go two by twos wearing top hats, so they were easily recognized. If anybody spoke to them, they would have to go back to the starting point and begin again. So we used to speak to them and watch them turn around. But the whole Skull and Bones thing at that age, it struck me that they were just like little boys. And yet, in a secret society, they really haven't grown up. And yet this was the society which completely ran Yale in those days. You couldn't have any kind of important position unless you had been a member of it.

MR. BROWN: That was surely a contrast from where you'd been before; wasn't it?

MS. SAYRE: Oh, yes. Eventually, Tubby asked me to leave and in a way--I remember looking back on it--I don't altogether blame him, because I think I was hard to swallow.

MR. BROWN: You were speaking up?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, I did.

MR. BROWN: He had at least one tantrum on your account or because--

MS. SAYRE: No, he never had a tantrum with me, I'll have you know.

MR. BROWN: At the time he asked you to leave, were you chagrined or surprised?

MS. SAYRE: I think I was quite happy to leave actually, because I didn't see how I could go on there.

MR. BROWN: That was what? About 1942 or 3 or something like that?

MS. SAYRE: Well, let me see. That was--it all began while I was working there.

MR. BROWN: And you mentioned earlier, you had this offer about then of intelligence work for the government.

MS. SAYRE: That was after I left Yale.

MR. BROWN: After you had left Yale.

MS. SAYRE: I didn't take it.

MR. BROWN: Did you go immediately to another position or take some--

MS. SAYRE: I went very shortly to the Lyman Allyn Museum. But my--calling my stepmother and one stepbrother were in the Philippines by Pearl Harbor. Spent three months in [inaudible] and no one whom I knew got bombed . My friends at Yale were all saying, "If you've never been drunk and this is the time to do it." And I remember considering it and then saying to myself, "No, I'm going to--I've got to face it. I've got to face this sooner or later. I would rather do it with a clear head." And didn't. But what did happen to me was that I developed a fever. And I realized that it was because I wasn't letting myself worry on the outside. But it was suppressing me. I went to see a doctor when I had the fever about a week and he didn't know what it was. But I can remember I knew and I remember thinking to myself, but not saying out loud, "I can tell you." And it's a fever that a lot of people are going to be having. You'd better learn to recognize it, you medical men. And I knew that the moment I heard when [inaudible] safe, that the fever would leave me and it did about three months later.

MR. BROWN: Had you been out? Had your father been out there long by that time--at that point?

MS. SAYRE: I guess about two years.

MR. BROWN: What, as ambassador or--

MS. SAYRE: He was the high commissioner to the Philippines then and they were--

MR. BROWN: Of course, they were part of us.

MS. SAYRE: Well, they had become free.

MR. BROWN: And he had remarried since your mother's death evidently.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, a widow with two sons. And one of them was still out there. The other one--older one had come home. I wanted to go out there. When it was--it was right before I went to Yale that I spent really an incredible summer--at least, my father believed in working so that every summer from the time; I was about the time I was 15, I'd done something useful. And I was tired because of moving around and all the things that had happened to me. And I decided that I wasn't going to work that summer. And I found that--through a friend of mine, I found that I could stay in a farm in Canada for $5 a week.

And so I went up there and lived with the peasants. And I loved it. They never spoke any English. So--and they couldn't understand my French, so I had to convert to Canuck. And ended up with far more respect for the French Canadians than I did for the English. Found out some good things, such as I learned how to weave. I would--I learned how to use troubles. There was only one book in my house. Nobody had any radios, excepting I think there may have been one in the village. But within 24 hours, they knew all the principal events of the war. And I saw how it was done that, the grandpère of my family would sit and in the day would rest beside the hedge and the man from the neighboring farm would sit on the other side. And it would get repeated.

They were fascinated that I had lived in Germany. And they wanted to know--I would be asked about one question each day, "Did they plow with horses or are they oxen?" "Did they have porches to sit on when it's hot?" And so on and then I could hear these--I caught this information being relayed and I saw that you really--you don't--you think that people don't know when they don't have newspapers and radios, but they do and quite fast. And saw the heavy hand of the church.

MR. BROWN: Did you? In what ways was it heavy?

MS. SAYRE: The cash income that the people in my farm made was $100 that they got from crops and another $100 that the women made from spinning and weaving.

MR. BROWN: This is annual income?

MS. SAYRE: Yes. And I paid them more than the $5, because I soon saw that they were buying food especially for me and they couldn't really afford it. And they--the brightest of the young people were sent off to church schools, and then tremendous pressure was put on them to join the church afterwards. And one of the boys in the family had become a monk and came back, once or twice to the farm and that's where he was really, really happy; brown boots and work in the fields. And the daughter--this particular daughter fell in love and gets married and feels so guilty about doing it, she writes a letter of apology to the church for not having gone into the church instead. She had been very bright, had won a prize at school and in a house where literally this was the only other book in the house other than the prize that she was given, was a prayer book. And what they gave this child was the minutes of a Catholic meeting.

MR. BROWN: That was her prize.

MS. SAYRE: This was her prize. It was a minutes of a congress.

MR. BROWN: And what possible interest to--

MS. SAYRE: None. And the priest knew that people needed to read.

MR. BROWN: It was as though it were something obsolete they didn't need in their library.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Gave it--

MS. SAYRE: As a prize.

MR. BROWN: --prize. So the church was seemingly--seem to you to be quite arrogant and --
MS. SAYRE: Yes, but nevertheless, it seemed to me that on the whole, it was a benign church in that the priest really came from the church to visit the people on the farm. This is totally unlike anything in Spain that I saw afterwards. And the church building was the one rich building in the area. But it was also acted as a meeting place, because people talked after mass and passed the news and saw one another.

And then it meant enough to them so that the--there was a district thing to--pilgrimage to Saint Anne de Beaupré. And I went with two members of their family. They had saved up to do it and they went by train. And then they bought [inaudible] saw Saint Anne de Beaupré by the [inaudible] and all the trinkets which were sold--little trinkets. And two of them were brought back to the children. And these were then, in the families, were the things that they most loved and had most meaning for them of anything. And when the church has that much meaning, say what you will and criticize them as you will, it isn't altogether bad.

MR. BROWN: There were two trinkets that they brought back from the shrine?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, that had been blessed. There was another member of the family in Montreal who brought them a couple of presents too while I was there, but it was those that really mattered to them. I helped about harvesting flax. It took six of us adults a week to harvest one acre of flax. You had to pull it up--like it was pulling up bunches of grass. So almost, not quite blade by blade, but nearly and then you had to lay them out in a row so that all the roots came in the same place. So that as it rotted, it would rot evenly and you would then get good thread. And that's only the beginning of the spinning and the weaving. But I've never in my life been able to use a piece of linen in the same blithe way knowing what it costs.

End of the summer, grandpère says to me, you don't know much, but you learn quick. You want me to get you a husband and settle you down here. And there's a part of me involved that would have loved it and longed to do it, but I told him that although however much I wanted to, that I needed books and it would be unfair to any husband to marry me, because I would keep him impoverished by buying books. But I don't think I've ever had a greater honor than that. I've had a wonderful life.

MR. BROWN: Where was this village?

MS. SAYRE: It was halfway between Québec and Rivière-du-Loup. And the--I would see every now and then the English people who--the English Canadians who had found me the place and probably to get a bath once a week and probably to read the papers, too. But the English Canadians' solution to the problems of the French Canadians was that they should all learn French and they should all become Protestants. That seemed to me so incredibly ignorant long before the Catholics switched--the French Catholics wished they would switch.

MR. BROWN: They would switch?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, because Catholicism had real meaning to these people despite what it did. And they wanted people--this didn't happen in my district, but in one nearby where--which I heard later about there was a plague of something or other. And the crop farmers found out that for about $100, which is, you know, a big sum for them, that they could have their crops sprayed and get rid of this pest. So then they told the priest about it and the priest said, "No, you give me the money and I will bless the crops and the pest will go away. And they did."

MR. BROWN: And it did?

MS. SAYRE: No, of course not.

MR. BROWN: And the English simply felt that was ludicrous; is that right? The English Canadians; things like that?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And their idea was to make them--get them to speak English and to become Protestants?

MS. SAYRE: Mm-hmm. And then they'll want to go into the army, because it was during the war, you see.

MR. BROWN: Were the French somewhat loathe to join the Canadian army?

MS. SAYRE: I think that – yes, because to them what was important, at least in my area was farming.

MR. BROWN: It was hard to spare the young men.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Very hard.

MS. SAYRE: Particularly, because a number of them were siphoned off by the church.

MR. BROWN: Did they speak openly to you about their feelings toward the English Canadians?

MS. SAYRE: No.

MR. BROWN: None of that was very much in the air at all?

MS. SAYRE: I never heard any of that from the French Canadians; always from the English.

MR. BROWN: So you almost stayed. But then you came back and that year, I forget which one, you said--was that when you came back to Yale or was this before?

MS. SAYRE: That was when I was still at the farm.

MR. BROWN: At the farm. Did you say you went out to the Philippines at all while your father was there?

MS. SAYRE: No, the Japanese beat me to it. I was slightly reluctant to go, because I didn't want to go out and live the life of the daughter of a high commissioner.

MR. BROWN: How were they released?

MS. SAYRE: And I wouldn't have made a very good--I wouldn't have done it very well, because I would have been shocked by the treatment of the Philippine people by the American people that then I would look down on them.

MR. BROWN: Did your father speak of that?

MS. SAYRE: No.

MR. BROWN: No.

MS. SAYRE: But my father was one of those instinctively good people who didn't look down on anybody himself and just assumed that everybody else--that nobody else would either.

MR. BROWN: Are you suggesting he was possibly sometimes blind to abuse or was he a reformer from within, would you say?

MS. SAYRE: I think he saw some of it, but he was certain that if only things could be explained to them that then they would change and in this sense, he was very much a man of reason.

MR. BROWN: And you weren't always dealing with people of reason--

MS. SAYRE: No.

MR. BROWN: --in colonial situations.

MS. SAYRE: And when he was--his job before that had been making [inaudible] for the United States and he did extraordinarily well at it, because it never occurred to them that we didn't just put it to people if they wouldn't--no, I don't know what was so much the point of this, but he was raising money for [inaudible] afterwards, that if you just told them what the need was that, of course, they were going to give. And he raised unbelievable sums. He had a complete faith that they would do it.

MR. BROWN: This was after the war?

MS. SAYRE: Yes. His nickname was "The Boy Scout of the New Deal."

MR. BROWN: Is that right?

MS. SAYRE: I never told him that myself. But--

MR. BROWN: I see. He stood out even in those times--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, he did.

MR. BROWN: --when there was quite a lot of idealism; wasn't there?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: How did he--why did the Japanese let them go after three months?

MS. SAYRE: They escaped, because Roosevelt didn't want to have either MacArthur or my father captured and so MacArthur got out, I think, in a PT boat. And my father was about to be in a submarine right below the battle of the Coral Sea on his way back to America. And got a lot of the gold out--gold and treasury notes – gold doesn't burn, the notes were burned. It could be that somewhere and soon. He was afraid that the people who had helped put the it in the sea would be captured and tortured until they told where it was. And so it was put into the sub as ballast. And the sub had orders to go proceed directly to the--home. And I know that my father and my--by chance, I met one the men who had been on one of those subs and on a train and he told me about his frustration at one time coming up to recharge that they saw an absolutely perfect Japanese target and couldn't fire.

MR. BROWN: Because they were similarly on a--

MS. SAYRE: Because they had to get the gold back.

MR. BROWN: That must have delayed your father's departure, though, getting the gold. But that was a very important part of the mission.

MS. SAYRE: Yes. But when he got [inaudible] he cleared everything out of the banks that was portable. And my stepmother--they had brought only one small bag of things and my stepmother took a fruitcake, because it was--Christmas was coming. She took a football as a present for my stepbrother. It was totally unreasonable.

MR. BROWN: But your father was allowed to bring a certain amount--well, the gold and all. These referring--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, but--

MR. BROWN: --the Japanese didn't know he was doing it.

MS. SAYRE: --virtually no clothes.

MR. BROWN: Yes, but he sort of--he had to sneak the gold out, too. He had to--

MS. SAYRE: To the--I don't know whether or not he had to sneak the gold under [inaudible]. But whether or not it was still able to get on [inaudible].

MR. BROWN: Well, did you see them as soon as they got back or very soon thereafter?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, but I didn't know for three months where they were and when I went to apply for the job in intelligence, three separate officers told me something about--and I wasn't going to ask, but three separate officers told me something about [inaudible] so I knew that that was where he was. But I never told anybody including my brothers.

MR. BROWN: The intelligence office--you got an offer then to work with intelligence.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, I did. The one I thought I would be good at--I don't know whether or not that's what they would have given me to do--would have been analyzing maps, because I was trained to look, or analyzing photographs.

MR. BROWN: Did you decide, instead, to take the position at the Lyman Allyn? Was that about this time?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and did. I think I'm getting tired.

MR. BROWN: Yes, let's--

[Interruption to interview.]

MR. BROWN: Continuing the interviews. This is June 1, 1993.

MS. SAYRE: Before we continue, can I--

[Interruption to interview.]

MR. BROWN: You've mentioned during or early in World War II, you were being approached, the possibility of your undertaking certain intelligence work. Can you describe that and how did that--what resulted?

MS. SAYRE: I had some friends who were doing it and one part of me wanted very much to do it and I thought that in the military--so I wanted to do military intelligence. One thing that--one kind of work that I would be very well-equipped to do would be to analyze differences in photographs and maps, because I'd been trained to pick up very small differences in prints. But--and I was interviewed by at least three high-ranking intelligence officers. Each one of them apropos of nothing told me one fact about Corregidor. And so that I knew that A, I was not going to ask whether or not they knew where my father was and whether or not he was still alive. The fact that each one of them gave a--one piece of information about Corregidor, being intelligent enough to go into military intelligence, I realized that's where he was. But also I told nobody, not even my brothers understanding that it was confidential.

MR. BROWN: Were they, either of them, in the service, your brothers or at that time?

MS. SAYRE: They both did go. My older brother was a chaplain and my younger brother as a soldier. To everybody's amazement, he got a good conduct medal for tidiness. [Laughter]

MR. BROWN: Which hadn't been characteristic of him to that point?

MS. SAYRE: No.

MR. BROWN: Well, what happened finally with your interviews apart from the way you learned indirectly of your father's whereabouts?

MS. SAYRE: They did offer me two--in fact, offer me two jobs, but I didn't go, because I had been involved with German Jewish refugees and having heard about how the conductor of the Warsaw symphony was ostracized, for example, by--for not--for being of German origin and how some German music wasn't played that I thought the best thing I could do because of enough people were aware of my grandfather's position, but the best thing that I could possibly do was to go on seeing refugees publicly.

MR. BROWN: And to continue that work rather than get into intelligence work?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, though, I was wrong, actually. Because I think the Germans were not discriminated against in the same way Japanese were. But--

MR. BROWN: In other words, even German Jewish refugees were discriminated against.

MS. SAYRE: They weren't actually.

MR. BROWN: They weren't.

MS. SAYRE: But I was--I thought they might well be. And so because of them, I decided not to go. And then heard about a job in New London.

MR. BROWN: This is as you were leaving Yale.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Yes.
MR. BROWN: And it was a really a man that I liked and respected a great deal, Winslow Ames, he was head of the museum then. And didn't stay, actually, as director all that long, because he was a pacifist and he wanted to do some kind of social service during the war and resigns and so that he could. But I was hired to help him with the translation of [inaudible] and techniques of drawings. And then also the--I arranged an exhibition for him. I started writing--the first time that I wrote for the newspapers for him --I don't know what we were having then. We were starting an exhibition, the work of women artists. And it was not a very good exhibition. But what he directed me to do was, without saying that it was the only way he could, to arouse people's curiosity so that they would come to see it, which was--

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MS. SAYRE: I think he was dead right and very good training for me. And then I spent a lot of my time--I was the--he was head of the--or just a high-ranking member of the Antiquarian and Landmark Society.

MR. BROWN: In New London?

MS. SAYRE: Yes. And they'd acquired a 17th century house, the Hempstead House, which hadn't been--before they were able to take it over, had been in the courts. Nobody had owned it and it really had gotten rather rundown. And it was in an area where the--it was by then a good deal of property. And absolutely the only place for any children to play was on the grounds of the Hempstead House. And Winslow's idea was that the only way to keep boys from damaging the house was to hire them to work on it to get them interested. And I was to be the foreman of this gang--the forewoman.

MR. BROWN: And you'd never done this sort of thing before; had you?

MS. SAYRE: No, but I'd been in charge carpenters at Yale. Did I tell you about that?

MR. BROWN: Mm-hmm.

MS. SAYRE: So it really worked very well, because I was able to get them interested. But of course, [inaudible] and I also got interested in them. I would give them one of the things [inaudible] was that the children during vacation time and children worked all day, that few of them got them even in the middle of the day. And so I would advance them some of their pay and some of them--told them to go off and buy whatever they like. Better to eat something than not eat at that age. And I got interested in them too as individuals, not just [inaudible] particularly one. Because when I first began seeing what little chance children living in those places-

-in those areas where we have to develop.

The house was filthy dirty, and so I wore some old and rather ragged clothes. There was no running water, so I couldn't wash. I would be there all day long and we'd have to go out to get something to eat. And the only place that I dared go was to a Chinese restaurant. Everybody else would scorn me. I didn't even dare go--come home on the bus afterwards, because I was so--my face and hands were so dirty. And occasionally a neighbor would--one of the Negroes would take pity on me and invite me into--for a wash or if I needed to go to the toilet, I would go up and ask. And then they would see me, insist that I strip down to my waist and wash myself down to there, because I was really filthy. And I was wearing these most likely ragged clothes that I kept just for that purpose.

And the unanimous consensus of the neighborhood was that no self-respecting woman would do the things that I was doing, like putting in windowpanes and adding shingles to--repairing – re-shingling part of the roof. Therefore, I must be Winslow's mistress.

MR. BROWN: This was a rumor that got back to you at the time?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, from the questions that they began asking. I could see that that was plainly what they thought. There's no really good way of explaining that I wasn't. He was a very happily married man and, again, one of my jobs was that I had to change the diapers of his children when they occasionally got left at the museum. I had to reupholster furniture when it needed doing.

MR. BROWN: I gather you learned just a good deal of everything or a bit of a great deal.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: What was Winslow like to work with? You said he was a pacifist. Did he sound like he was very liberal in a practical way?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and intelligent. One of the--to me, the most imaginative things that he did was that the staff was just fairly small and he had the guards double in doing maintenance work so that nobody got too tired physically and nobody got too bored.

MR. BROWN: That sounds very sensible, but it was something not done elsewhere?

MS. SAYRE: I've never seen it done anywhere. And I think it would be good.

MR. BROWN: So the--you were there about six months, I think; something like that, right?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, I forget exactly how long.

MR. BROWN: It wasn't very long, but there was this one exhibition, then, on women artists, which you said was just so-so.

MS. SAYRE: Less than so-so.

MR. BROWN: Less. But were there other projects or acquisitions or things of that sort that he was making at that time?

MS. SAYRE: He didn't have a great deal of money to do it. And I remember that he got one of the universities interested in sending one or two people there. I think--I wouldn't swear to that, though.

MR. BROWN: Was there a proper museum building? There was a fairly new museum building at that time--

MS. SAYRE: And it--all the labels were honest, which is one of the things that had disturbed me so at Yale.

MR. BROWN: There were a great many wishful attributions?

MS. SAYRE: Well, they didn't even believe in them themselves, which, at that age, horrified me that they wanted to please the owner. So they put it down as anything. And I think that certainly--Tubby must have felt my disapproval. As I say, I don't really blame him for getting rid of me.

MR. BROWN: Yes, you made fairly apparent your opinion of him or your estimation of him.

MS. SAYRE: I tried not to.

MR. BROWN: Try not, but it seeped out somehow.

MS. SAYRE: And I didn't fawn over him. And he might not have liked that.

MR. BROWN: Winslow didn't require fawning; did he?

MS. SAYRE: Absolutely not.

MR. BROWN: Wasn't he very much a self-starter and--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and we dealt with one another as two equals, which I think is really the most efficient way to treat a staff. So I got complete responsibility for working with the kids and doing the repairs.

MR. BROWN: Did you get pretty far along on that project at the Hempstead House?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, we did a bit. But I can remember that as I was walking from the bus to the museum in my--before it even got quite so [inaudible], they looked at us as so disreputable. And the hearse came by and the driver came down and offered me a lift. I took it. And Winslow was the kind of man who was delighted he had a big Epstein nude in the garden at the museum of rather ample proportions. And the Coast Guard who happened to be nearby had a view of it from the rear. They trained all their guns on it at the front door.

MR. BROWN: Winslow was a bit of a collector even then; wasn't he.

MS. SAYRE: And a good one.

MR. BROWN: I know Lachaise was another artist he liked at that point, probably.

MS. SAYRE: Well, that was a Lachaise nude.

MR. BROWN: I think it was.

MS. SAYRE: I think I remember about that.

MR. BROWN: Did he and--did you and he talk a good deal about plans and the art world or museums and so forth?

MS. SAYRE: Not as much perhaps. And also one of the interesting--in a way, one of the good things in New London was that there was no cultural life, so that whatever you did, you made for yourself. And I took to playing the recorder seriously then. Read a lot.

MR. BROWN: The Connecticut College right there, did it have much--it didn't have very much in the way of cultural programs at that time?

MS. SAYRE: No. I suppose it may have when the war wasn't on, but it certainly wouldn't then.

MR. BROWN: What year was this or years? Roughly around 1942 or 3 or something like that?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, '42 probably, but--'42 into '43.

MR. BROWN: Well, did you leave because Winslow left? Did he--had he --

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and left it with great regret.

MR. BROWN: Were they cutting back when he left? Did they sort of cut back in their--

MS. SAYRE: I don't know what they began doing then, but he--as I say he left through reasons of conscience, as I respected in him. I would have like to have been a pacifist myself, but I couldn't.

MR. BROWN: There was something that said one must resist from time to time.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, how about you?

MR. BROWN: Yes, the same here. So did you leave with another job in mind or in hand?

MS. SAYRE: It must have been--it was--it must have been about then or soon after that, I think it was when I was still at New London that my--just before Corregidor fell that my father and stepmother and stepbrother were brought out of Corregidor by submarine. And I went down to meet him in Union Station. And I remember that he had something that he had to give Roosevelt and didn't have much in the way to wear, but I think--we stopped and I can't remember if we got him a haircut or we bought something for him to wear. And then the museum would have been absolutely willing for me to spend the night there which I expected to do, but father

was so worried about my leaving my job and in a moment I was packed off.

MR. BROWN: You didn't get to stay with him.

MS. SAYRE: I understood my father, too. I saw that I must do it for his sake.

MR. BROWN: Did he resume his career at the State Department then?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and then he--I don't swear that it was when I was still in New London that that happened. It could be just at the beginning of the--no, I think it was still when I was in New London. Yes, it would have been.

MR. BROWN: So you went down to see them when they reemerged.

MS. SAYRE: And I had a car at Union Station to meet him.

MR. BROWN: Were they pretty worn and had it taken quite a toll on him, the internment.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, they didn't get enough to eat. They weren't interned. They were one of the lucky ones, because they were in Corregidor.

MR. BROWN: I see, which was just beyond the reach of the--

MS. SAYRE: But my father came home before my stepmother and stepbrother [inaudible] came, or more slowly.

MR. BROWN: But then the--

MS. SAYRE: But when my father disappeared, I was still in New Haven and I began having a fever--

[Interruption to tape.]

--doctor. I had it for about a week and he couldn't find anything wrong and I knew what it was. I knew what it was, because I was worried about my family. I wouldn't let myself think about it openly and worry was coming out of my body. And I remember thinking--but not saying it out loud, because you don't say those things to doctors--"You'd better learn to recognize this, because you're going to see a lot of it." And the moment he was safe, the fever left. As I knew it would. And then I heard about a job in Providence and Gordon Washburn was then the director and the person that I interviewed with was the--I had to go into the education department, because they didn't really have any curators in those days.

MR. BROWN: Director and then not much else .

MS. SAYRE: In the education department. And--

[Interruption to tape.]

--and very much of a person. And to her we had to talk--really imaginative education projects. And of course, whenever I could do anything about prints, I did it. I became sort of de facto curator of prints.

MR. BROWN: Had you known Gordon Washburn or you knew of him?

MS. SAYRE: I knew of him, but didn't know him. And he called her Ma Powell [phonetic].

MR. BROWN: Ma Powell.

MS. SAYRE: Because there was the--not out of disrespect, but there was something very--sort of innately motherly about her. And one of the things that was undertaken was we talked to the people in the school department and we got together the exhibitions of real material, where you take it out and set it up in all of the junior high schools in a classroom and then we would give two--assembly talks to the two sections of the school. And then we would cover the classes, as many of them as we could. And those that we couldn't cover--the schools had different methods of covering it themselves and one did it through training other teachers to do it and one really brilliant principal had--a sector principal, I guess, would be an even better word--he had the class presidents do it.

MR. BROWN: And by cover what do you mean? You mean carry on with the lessons or--

MS. SAYRE: We'd go in and talk to as many of the students as we could.

MR. BROWN: In the assembly, yes, or--

MS. SAYRE: Well, everybody got covered in the assembly. But then we would give individual classes and the technique that we used was to--not to lecture to the children, but to talk with them and get them talking, and looking, and thinking for themselves, which is the only way, really and the only sensible way, rather.

Then one boy, who was president and the most of a really intelligent class not only remembered every word that I'd said, but he imitated my manner of conveying information by doing precisely the same thing, getting them to look and asking them questions. And then I happened by chance, I also got through the president of a very backward class. They were still having trouble with the hat and the cat came back, I suspect. But he taught me a great lesson. He stood in front of the class and he looked at the first object and he thought hard and long. And then he beams and he says, "This is all made by hand." And every child in the room looked at it very impressed. And then he went onto the second object, the same thing; the long look, finally, the beam, "This is all made by hand." And so we went object to object, but he--I saw that he conveyed more to these children than I would if I'd been doing it. They've gotten to see the excitement of something that to--I could never have done.

MR. BROWN: Were these children then or some of them then brought back to the museum? Was there a--

MS. SAYRE: Well, we had children coming into the museum, too.

MR. BROWN: But that was something else, yes.

MS. SAYRE: But one of the things that we saw by--particularly from the children in the museum was that a child thinks that anything in the museum must be good and, therefore, the people who made it must be good.

MR. BROWN: You mean, good ethically as well as--

MS. SAYRE: Honorable people.

MR. BROWN: Honorable people.

MS. SAYRE: And so one of the things that I loved to do was to show them what the children [inaudible] and we'd talk about [inaudible] about who it was and the kinds of things that he believed and then I asked them whether they liked the statue. And it was a very impressive marvelous one. Unanimous, they all did. And then I would say, "Did you know that this was Japanese?" And they were very taken aback and then I could say to them that even people who then we were fighting are capable of making beautiful things and great things.

And so one of the exhibitions that we did was--is the scorned group. Part of the population in Providence were the French Canadians. And so [inaudible] and I were--and somebody to French Canada to buy things for the exhibition. Then we also had made some--one of the exhibitions we had was American Indian Art and we put in some of those, but also things made by French Canadians. And did I tell you about living in Canada one summer?

MR. BROWN: You did, yes.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: So you had some acquaintance already with the rural culture--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.
MR. BROWN: --of Quebec.

MS. SAYRE: And somehow or other someone in this party attached this--was attached an English Canadian journalist who allegedly kept proclaiming about how much he loved them. I always thought that the French Canadians were [inaudible], but she had--she [inaudible], but she had never taken the trouble to learn French. And I remember one time we went into a house and you can't just bring up the subject that you wanted to. It's like a diplomatic dinner or a diplomatic--not dinner, but a diplomatic conversation that you have to go through all the preliminaries first and then you can get down to business and then you have to withdraw slowly in the same way. Otherwise, it's considered very, very rude. And so each visit would take, you know, about half an hour. And we sat in the living room of the house and there was a fantastic brand new electric stove in their sitting room.

MR. BROWN: And in the sitting room - -

MS. SAYRE: This was a place where there was absolutely no electricity in the whole area and this English Canadian sits there for half an hour and never notices it. That alone was significant in that you have it and then you want people to see it. So that a toilet was very apt to be in the living room so that people would know that you had it.

MR. BROWN: Even though you might not have running water?

MS. SAYRE: Well, you did have running water for a toilet, but they wanted you to know that they had it.

MR. BROWN: And so it was installed.

MS. SAYRE: Yes. You can see why.

MR. BROWN: Did you--were these places you went, you had some idea, or someone had indicated that there might be examples of--so and so was an excellent craftsman or--

MS. SAYRE: I suppose we must have had some hints, though I don't remember them particularly. And one way to get at it, of course, is through the--by seeing what they sell. So we came into an area where and we'd ask what--as I said, the cash income of these farming people would be $200 a year; 100 made by the women spinning and weaving and things like that and 100 by the men from the crops, which ain't much.

MR. BROWN: Did you find--did Lydia Powell [phonetic], Ma Powell--she had some knowledge of what might be up there herself?

MS. SAYRE: She knew--she used to go there during the summer, but knew only the English Canadians.

MR. BROWN: So she didn't really know French culture. You're the only one with experience.

MS. SAYRE: No, I was the one who knew.

MR. BROWN: In fact, did you find quite a few--

MS. SAYRE: We did find some things that we really liked, yes.

MR. BROWN: Not only weaving, but other things?

MS. SAYRE: Mm-hmm. Some carvings, too.

MR. BROWN: And you were able to purchase them fairly easily after these negotiations?

MS. SAYRE: Well, they were delighted to sell them. They desperately needed the money and we wanted something good for the French to use.

MR. BROWN: And there had been no such shows; had there before then that you knew of in museums? At least--

MS. SAYRE: I don't think there's ever been done since then either. And I'm sorry.

MR. BROWN: But how did it go over in Providence?

MS. SAYRE: It went very well.

MR. BROWN: Did the--

MS. SAYRE: Despite the backwardness of the school department in general. It was because I was doing this that they invited me once to a special session that they were having to teach teachers to teach about art. There was absolutely nothing about art in it. It was how you stood in front of them, the reproduction of the painting or the painting and the importance of standing frontally so people could see your face and--all on--absolutely on that level.

MR. BROWN: Really. Were the French Canadian objects shown at the museum?

MS. SAYRE: Well, what we did was to have--put up the kind of exhibition where there would be some things that they could--were too valuable to go out on exhibition like that. And you could encourage them to come into the museum and look at. And then I was really impressed, because the materials taken and set up in the classrooms and the children were allowed a certain amount, but nothing got broken. Nothing got--nothing was stolen.

MR. BROWN: And this--would this be one of the first times that French Canadian culture was stressed at all either at the museum or in the school system?

MS. SAYRE: I'm sure. Absolutely. It was well worth doing.

MR. BROWN: At that time, the French were looked down upon, were they, in much of New England?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Or at least certainly in Providence.

MS. SAYRE: Well, because they came as--because they'd come down as immigrants from these farming regions and probably to make a little money and then go back and get married. And they worked for very little, because it still seemed--it must have seemed like an enormous salary from their point of view.

MR. BROWN: Sure. Did your director, Gordon Washburn--did he support you and Ma Powell in these--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, very much so.

MR. BROWN: What was he like? He's a well-known figure. What was your experience of him at that time?

MS. SAYRE: I liked him and I liked the things that he was interested in doing. Another thing that we had was a children's room. And where children in the city could come in and draw, paint, do a little--some handicrafts, too. And another part of my job was manning that. One thing that really interested me was that--talking about was that the black population in Providence wasn't all that big. During the war, there was going to be a discussion about whether or not it was fair to treat the men who had fought--were fighting in the army as second-class citizens.

MR. BROWN: You mean black men?

MS. SAYRE: Yes. And I think the fact that there was all this discussion of it in one sense was good. But to have one very bad effect--but when I first went there in this room, black children and white children, I saw them as best friends and they intermingled and they sat down at a table. But when the subject came up at home, obviously, the parents asked themselves, "Do we like blacks?" "Hell, no," is the answer in no uncertain terms. And spontaneously, the black children sat on one side of the room and the white children on the other side of the room. And I never saw the two who were best friends again.

And I saw the--again it was more cogently the problems of children that--was it one boy that didn't have any water at home and he created a sensation, because he used to go into the men's room and wash himself. I always felt that, you know, it was something for which he ought to be commended. You know, he stripped to the waist and gave himself a scrub. There was one boy--there was another boy who took to coming into the museum at hours when you would have expected him to be in school.

And so I talked with him a bit and I found out that he was afraid to go home, because he was afraid of being beaten. And, in fact, one day, it looked as though, quite obviously, he had been beaten. And his father had gone off to--his father was in prison and his mother had disappeared. The grandmother ran a whorehouse and didn't want any children around there during the daytime when she was having customers. And so he was just thrown out and he got the--we'd gotten one of the social services department interested in him. And they arranged for him to--enabled him to go off to a summer camp. And then the grandmother's permission was asked and the grandmother was furious and said that, "Don't you dare go. This isn't really a camp. It's an asylum for the insane. And they think that you're insane." And so he never came to the museum anymore.

And because it was during the war, people in charge of these services kept changing and then they first got interested in and then moved away somewhere. Then there were two or three others--and just completely fell through the cracks; had no chance in life.

MR. BROWN: Well, then you had a good deal of contact with the children who were essentially unwanted, I would say, right?

MS. SAYRE: Yes. They're the ones who tended to come in by themselves. And I must admit, that's one of the things that has made an ardent pro-choicer out of me. The unwanted ones don't have a chance.

MR. BROWN: Was the museum a pretty important factor in the lives of some of these kids? Not necessarily the boy who disappeared, whose grandmother forbad his coming in anymore, but--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, it was one nice thing that they could do. And also I think that the--I think the people who--taking art into the schools like that, real objects, I think that was a very important thing to be doing, too.

MR. BROWN: And by and large the school system accepted this and was welcoming of it. Even though, a good many of the teachers were rather inept themselves, you worked with them on that.

MS. SAYRE: And again, one of the surprising things that I learned was how much difference the principal makes and--there was one school a little bit better and another one a little bit worse, but otherwise, the teachers were moved around and the population of kids was pretty much the same. And yet the school's bearing widely like

the one where the principal saw how important it was to have the kids doing it and the other extreme was the principal who ran it like a reform school. You had to have written permission to be out in the corridor, and when you went to the assemblies, it would take the teachers something like 10 minutes to quiet the kids so that they could listen to what we were all saying.

And it was hard to teach those children, too. Nobody--I was--it was really sad--I talked to one even more backward class and they could scarcely read at all. And I rather liked it, too, because they were like little--when they suddenly understood an idea, they would twitter like the birds and be very excited just because they understood. And--but the person who taught them had absolutely no training in teaching retarded children. And this was a job they were supposed to do with the weakest and least able teachers usually.

MR. BROWN: Were some of those slow students rather hostile or not really?

MS. SAYRE: No, not in the slightest, no.

MR. BROWN: Not really, no. Did you mainly teach by showing them and trying to draw them out as you've said already?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: So this was, in a sense, a carry through from the techniques and connoisseurship you would have learned from Paul Sachs and the like or your own education at the Fogg; right?

MS. SAYRE: I think my own--

MR. BROWN: Or would it have gone back much further?

MS. SAYRE: Much further, I think, to being allowed to look by myself in the Louvre or even earlier in the Peabody Museum when I was seven. We were allowed to wander around by ourselves looking at what we wanted to see.

MR. BROWN: And your parents merely trailed along if they trailed around at all?

MS. SAYRE: That year, I had--myself and my brothers all got whooping cough and then we all got the chicken pox, then we all got the measles. And as we were--became well enough to be about, but were still contagious, then we were taken to the galleries of the Peabody Museum. And they knew that there would be nobody and we could just wander with complete freedom around that. It was just must smaller than the [inaudible]. And the two things that I loved were there; collections of stones, at that age, and also the Indian villages--the models of the villages.

MR. BROWN: This is at the Peabody Museum at Harvard; right?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and I still have a sharp memory of not so much of the individual stones and all, but of the--[inaudible]--the villages and what the Indians were doing in them.

MR. BROWN: And unconsciously perhaps, but this is what you were trying to do with the students you were working with in Providence.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Pretty rewarding work, then, was it?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, it really was.

MR. BROWN: But the museum itself was a different experience and very few of them would come to it; is that right?

MS. SAYRE: No, the classes came.

MR. BROWN: Except for the classes, yes. Who taught the classes? Would the instructors at the school of design assist in that?

MS. SAYRE: No, we did. You know, like the children's groups that come into this museum and take them to this section or that section or perhaps some more general view.

MR. BROWN: Was the museum then arranged by periods and with ancillary material to suggest, say, the color--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: --or the size of a Roman interior or a Medieval interior?

MS. SAYRE: No--

MR. BROWN: Had that begun then, because--

MS. SAYRE: No, it hadn't really begun. Although, we did have some--they were quite strong in American art and they did have some really quite good Indian things. So that one of--in order to increase the Indian collection--this is, again, one of the exhibitions that we did was in Indian art. I was allowed to go to the Hyde Foundation in New York, which was selling an awful lot of duplicates.

And it was--oh, it was absolute heaven, because I--needless to say, before I went down that I courted them, any collection that I could get to so that I could see what they were as I read. Then I was allowed in the store room wearing blue jeans, which impressed them. But on the other hand, I had to--in order to see the things in the storerooms, I had to climb up on top of the shelves and to be rather more delicate I had on trousers striding two shelves. And I could pick out anything I liked and then they would see whether or not they would sell it to us. And they were very impressed, because they thought that I knew so much.

MR. BROWN: Did you find it helped to indicate that or to suggest that you knew a great deal?

MS. SAYRE: Oh, no. On the contrary.

MR. BROWN: But you acted fairly confident, because--

MS. SAYRE: It wasn't a case at that--there was a marvelous man who was in charge of the store rooms who, if he had been picked by himself, would have been a cowboy. And I used to be given--in the middle of the day, he'd say, "Want some coffee?" And then he'd go and I'd say yes. And he'd go into the kitchen where he lived. I don't know whether his family was away or whether he lived there by himself, but very much a bachelor's living arrangements. So that I would get much more than coffee. I would get even some lunch, too. And then I would always offer to do the dishes. And these were done in good cowboy fashion and we'd put a can of water on the stove and some soap was dunked into it. Then I had to put the dishes in that and we just boiled up the whole thing. Invariably, you never sat with your feet anywhere else but on top of the table.

MR. BROWN: Well, this was an extraordinary opportunity you had to select material.

MS. SAYRE: Oh, absolutely.

MR. BROWN: Did you feel reasonable confident in it? Did Washburn give you some considerable--

MS. SAYRE: I had total authority.

MR. BROWN: He was a liberal in that way; was he?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, he was. And I would certainly say that I knew it more than anybody else on the staff about it.

MR. BROWN: Couldn't have been easy to learn, though. There wasn't all that much written at that time; was there?

MS. SAYRE: Oh, yes --

MR. BROWN: Did you look at the ethnographic reports? Is that what you--

MS. SAYRE: There was marvelous reports--government reports on the Indians. Just full of what were really interesting information and of pictures and they also as I say, looked at the [inaudible] museum and looked around and I went to the--I didn't get--I probably didn't get down to the Smithsonian, but I did get to New York and went to the Museum of Natural History.

MR. BROWN: Was the--later a very large Rhode Island collection of American Indian artifacts--the Haffenreffer collection--was that underway in any way--sense at that time?

MS. SAYRE: I didn't really know about it in particular, no.

MR. BROWN: Maybe it was simply private--very unknown collection at that time. How many things would you say, roughly, you acquired.

MS. SAYRE: Oh, that's a silly question to ask a curatorial person, because then it's never enough.

MR. BROWN: I see. Well, of what sort? Were there some significant early paintings in the --skin paintings or--

MS. SAYRE: No, not--I didn't get any skin paintings, but--

MR. BROWN: --quill work?

MS. SAYRE: --I got some good Northeast Coast carvings. And some good Eskimo material, I remember.

MR. BROWN: Was installation quite important to Washburn at that time? I know Alexander Dorner, who, I guess, was just before this time--

MS. SAYRE: He was just before.

MR. BROWN: He would put a premium, I believe, on, I guess--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and the--I think the installations were, on the whole, well done where what didn't exist in Providence was--in those days, was a--we didn't have any registrar so that nobody knew what--in their storerooms, they would come upon marvelous things. Nobody knew where they came from and I truly knew that I was honest when I saw a viola da gamba there and didn't take it. Nobody wanted it. Nobody knew to whom it belonged.

MR. BROWN: I wonder why provenance or ownership didn't matter that much. Do you suppose because that museum had a history--was that--of one or two families; wasn't it?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and a lot of them did, in fact, use it as auxiliary attics for anything that they didn't want.

MR. BROWN: Were, in your time there--were some of the members of the Danforth or the families--

MS. SAYRE: Absolutely, yes.

MR. BROWN: --omnipresent? Or at least--

MS. SAYRE: Absolutely thought that they--and the Sharpes.

MR. BROWN: And the Sharpes, yes. Did you know Henry Sharpe? You got to know them a bit and Mrs. Sharpe?

MS. SAYRE: Slightly, yes, I did.

MR. BROWN: Well, that--their taste in collecting at that time was rather modern, as I recall, in terms of French art, for example. But the Danforths--the Mrs. Radica [phonetic], she was a presence there.

MS. SAYRE: And they were--the families were quite dictatorial how they wanted the museum to be conducted, it seemed to me at that age.

MR. BROWN: Did you get to know faculty at all at the school? Were there some--

MS. SAYRE: Not all that much, no. And the faculty--I think rather scorned the museum people. And the dean at the school was really the man who was in charge of the museum, too. And then what--the big change came and Gordon took another ambitious man into the education problem. So as I say, education meant everything to him and the curatorial side didn't. And another--one good [inaudible] was [inaudible] Schwapps [phonetic], who had been at the Albertina.

MR. BROWN: He was a refugee and landed here?

MS. SAYRE: Mm-hmm.

MR. BROWN: So did he become an effective curator?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and because he and I liked each other, then that was another way that I got a lot of curatorial work to do.

MR. BROWN: What did he concentrate on?

MS. SAYRE: Prints and drawings. So basically, it was just really what I liked. And he had a wonderful Hungarian mistress, whom I also liked very much Bergie [phonetic].

MR. BROWN: Bergie?

MS. SAYRE: Bergie lived--was in New York and I remember stopping off to see her one time on my way to Europe and she said that at least I give her a telephone call just before I took the boat and she said, "Come around to my hotel. Because Heinrich will be there." And so I did and there were the two of them seated on the sofa. And they said, "Well, we've been thinking about getting married for some time. And as much as you're here, we thought that we might as well do it today and want you to come and witness." And I said yes, and so we get in a cab and set out for the justice of the peace who did a very impressive ceremony. He must have been marrying people all day, but he managed to do it as though they were the only people who were getting married.

Bergie and Heinrich were terrified. And each one sat as far away from each other in the cab as they could get. And if I hadn't been there, it never would have come off then. They would have been too afraid. And afterward, Bergie and I [inaudible] and Bergie bursts into tears and is afraid that she's--it would ruin their relationship. When I got back from Europe, I thought everybody would be talking about this marriage at the museum. But they couldn't bring themselves to tell anybody about it for something like six months. And of course, it was a good match, too.

MR. BROWN: Having him there, then you could talk a great deal about prints and drawings. Teach each other or--

MS. SAYRE: Oh, I think he taught me more than I taught him.

MR. BROWN: But Providence, otherwise the relation with--you mentioned with the Danforths and those people. What about relations with others in Providence at that time? I mean who were sort of leaders in the cultural or the academic community?

MS. SAYRE: There was--because Henry Wriston's daughter, who was a lecturer - -

MR. BROWN: Barbara Wriston.

MS. SAYRE: I used to go to their house and see him and just--in some ways, he looked a little bit like John Silver, I suppose.

MR. BROWN: Oh, really?

MS. SAYRE: I don't think he had the temper tantrums, but he knew his family [inaudible] or that he was going to be President. [Inaudible]

MR. BROWN: He had really marked ambitions beyond Brown University --

MS. SAYRE: Yes. He was the kind of man we--people who went out by the house--if there was a crack of light under the shades, "Oh, the Wristons must be having a party.". They were so--there really was something so forbidding about their household.

MR. BROWN: You mean, they would pull the shades down and--

MS. SAYRE: Yes. I, myself, lived on Benefit Street, which in those days was just an upper-class red light district. And I remember once or twice a policeman propositioning me. And before I got an apartment, I lived with a marvelous 80-year-old, who at the age of 80 wants to write her first book about her experiences in Labrador [inaudible].

MR. BROWN: [Inaudible]

MS. SAYRE: Didn't like the way people typed it, so she learned how to type herself and finished it. And through her--she was one of the few older people who wasn't really sort of dead behind the ears in Providence. The younger people--intelligent people tended to move away. And even the bishop called people living there "BIPs," meaning born in Providence. Because they thought that that was all that was expected from them in life, unlike the Bostonian people on Beacon Hill. And they--the town and the gown and the museum, they didn't mix with anybody else in the rest of the city. I would lead them through my work and find that they were as intelligent and often more intelligent, better read, than the people up on the hill.

MR. BROWN: You mean, people at the--or people in the city; other people?

MS. SAYRE: Yes. And I was sorry about that real division. It must have been very hard to break through it.

MR. BROWN: This was a division between the university and the people not associated with it?

MS. SAYRE: No.

MR. BROWN: No, museum.

MS. SAYRE: Just the--it would be like the difference between the Beacon Hillers not having anything whatsoever to do with anybody living in Cambridge, Belmont, Arlington.

MR. BROWN: And that's the way the upper crust of Providence--old Providence looked down its nose at--

MS. SAYRE: At everybody else. To them it was considered a journey not lightly undertaken to go up--go as far away as Boston. They were incredibly ingrown in those days.

MR. BROWN: What about the university? Wasn't Wriston in the midst of transforming it into something less ingrown, something--

MS. SAYRE: I didn't know too much about them--really about the inner workings of that.

MR. BROWN: But you did see him as a rather--I think you've mentioned a rather autocratic and arrogant person.

MS. SAYRE: Very autocratic and arrogant.

MR. BROWN: Did the museum ever have things to do with the university--with Brown? Were there ever--

MS. SAYRE: I don't think we did particularly.

MR. BROWN: I suppose being wartime, there weren't large exhibitions or openings and that sort of thing; were there?
MS. SAYRE: Not so much, no.

MR. BROWN: No.

MS. SAYRE: And then what really caused the whole institution to come apart was we used to see--so it seemed to me, was that Gordon hired a man called Max William Sullivan for the education department. He was very ambitious and ruthless and he took over the museum and pushed out all of them. And that kind of--that's not the kind of man who likes me. So, obviously, he asked me to leave, too.

MR. BROWN: But you had had to work with him for a few--what, a matter of months or so.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, or longer.

MR. BROWN: What was his background? Was he--did he bring a certain training or mainly simply ambition?

MS. SAYRE: I don't know. Mainly ambition and also he managed to get very, sort of, in with the school and I don't know whether or not he got in with the city fathers who were very suspicious of Gordon, because Gordon had bought a Modigliani or exhibited it and they commanded him to get rid of it.

MR. BROWN: The city did? Why? On the grounds it was bad--

MS. SAYRE: Indecent.

MR. BROWN: Indecent.

MS. SAYRE: Though it wasn't.

MR. BROWN: Sullivan seemed--perhaps was able to toady to these hypocritical, censorious tastes.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: So you were happy to--

MS. SAYRE: And all the good things--he was supposed to be in charge of education, but all the good things that we were doing were stopped and he wouldn't let us begin anything else.

MR. BROWN: What were you left doing then?

MS. SAYRE: Nothing--[inaudible] tutorial work really. I think there might have been still a few lectures to people coming in and the women's clubs and that kind of thing, but--

MR. BROWN: But pretty superficial and reduced.

MS. SAYRE: I made them as interesting as I could and--but playing any trick on them I could to make them really look and think.

MR. BROWN: At the time you left, who was there? Were there any other curators? Heinrich Schwarz stayed on?

MS. SAYRE: He stayed on for a bit. At least, I think he did after I left, but he was the only--about the only curator. And Max even got rid of [inaudible], got rid of--

MR. BROWN: But then she went on eventually to the Metropolitan.

MS. SAYRE: To the Met, yes.

MR. BROWN: Led a distinguished career in decorative arts education. Were there curators--I know they have an interesting collection of textiles. Were there curators of such or people who were--

MS. SAYRE: There were. It was--there were two little sisters who knew only about the textiles and then one, I can't think of the name of the person, who it was who gave the textile collection. And--

[Interruption to tape.]

MR. BROWN: --at least they were, what, researching then and cataloguing them or--

MS. SAYRE: I don't think they were researching them, but they were cataloguing them and caring for them. They were nice.

MR. BROWN: The relations with the curriculum of the school, the Perkin School of Design were almost nonexistent. I mean, for example, I know that--there was a traditional strength in design, particularly jewelry design, so forth. Was there an analogous--

MS. SAYRE: There wasn't any real relationship at all and I tried to get--also I thought the design was important, because we hadn't--[inaudible] silver manufacturers there, too.

MR. BROWN: Gorham.

MS. SAYRE: Gorham, yes. And I thought that we ought--I would have liked to have seen us acquiring prints with designs in them to a much greater extent or exhibiting them.

MR. BROWN: But little was done. Washburn--it wasn't a particular interest of his?

MS. SAYRE: I think he would have been. But then, as I say, Max William did him in.

MR. BROWN: Well, I take it Max William is not a person you kept up with after that.

MS. SAYRE: Nope.

[Interruption to interview.]

MR. BROWN: I thought we'd talk this time--maybe begin--

[Interruption to interview.]

MS. SAYRE: The Lehigh Valley Railroad--

[Interruption to interview.]

MR. BROWN: So uncle became from a loch keeper--

MS. SAYRE: No, this is uncle's father.

MR. BROWN: Uncle's father became a major industrialist in Bentley in Pennsylvania.

MS. SAYRE: And I think what was [inaudible] is particularly the Lehigh Valley Railroad that he was involved with, which is why there are a number of towns called Sayre. Because when they branched out, they would be named after him. And my uncle and my father had a little branch tracks that worked by gravity with a couple of cars on his property. And he also, as he became--as he acquired money and status, he was, of course, like these 19th century people involved in--

[Interruption to interview.]

MR. BROWN: So your grandfather Sayre, his first name was--

MS. SAYRE: William.

MR. BROWN: William.

MS. SAYRE: William Heysham Sayre.

MR. BROWN: And became a wealthy man.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And out of that came your father with his notable international career and your uncle--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: --who became a clergyman and a--

MS. SAYRE: More than that, actually. I mean he was a patriarch in the old sense of the word.

MR. BROWN: Your grandfather?

MS. SAYRE: That grandfather. He married his first wife and had, I guess, about something like six children, maybe. And then she died and he married. His second wife died. And remarried and the third wife died. And when he was pushing 70, he marries again and this time into the Nevin family and produces three more sons; so my father, my uncle, and another child who didn't live. And one of the things that I like about that family is that I remember once going to a reunion.

And there was such a vast difference between the children of the first marriage and the children of the last marriage that they tended to speak of them as Sister Ruth and Brother Bob and never just as plain Bob and plain--or plain Ruth. And at the reunion, they told me--one of these children told me about a--or grandchildren, I guess, about a rhyme that went round amongst them which I didn't quite like to repeat to my father or my uncle. "Grandpa lies in his first wife's bed. His second wife's pillow was under his head. His third wife's coverlet is over his hide. And his fourth wife lies there at his side." But I loved coming from a family that can do that.

MR. BROWN: Wonderful. Do you remember grandfather? Was he--

MS. SAYRE: No.

MR. BROWN: I guess he was up in years when your father was born.

MS. SAYRE: He had a long--there's a picture of him. I can show it to you, as a matter of fact, in that--Robert Heysham.

MR. BROWN: Is this he? Robert here with a couple of his--with Evelyn and Sarah; this is from--

MS. SAYRE: The children of the first--one of the earlier marriages.

MR. BROWN: This is from the Sayre genealogy?

MS. SAYRE: I think--yes.

MR. BROWN: And here he is again. So what do you think was imparted to you--let's say, your uncle by this tradition of--

MS. SAYRE: I think for both of them probably an independence of mind and spirit.

MR. BROWN: And your uncle was involved with--was this in World War II, the Fellowship of Reconciliation?

MS. SAYRE: Mm-hmm. And I don't know whether that actually began during World War II.

MR. BROWN: Probably it was before.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And he headed that at one time.

MS. SAYRE: Headed the American side of it anyway. And marries an English woman who was very much a

pacifist too, and a vegetarian, and believed in never using sprays in her garden. So that didn't work so well for him, but--[Laughter].

MR. BROWN: But they--he and your father were considerably close.

MS. SAYRE: And she was half-German and half--yes. She was half-German and half-British.

MR. BROWN: And they were--were they married after World War I?

MS. SAYRE: I think so.

MR. BROWN: But your father and he, would they see a bit of each other? You described a game of bears that they played with you children.

MS. SAYRE: Oh, yes. Yes, he came quite often to visit and they came--he and my – Kathleen came after their marriage, too. And even then you can't say that he settled down and was a completely well-behaved man, because if Kathleen came late to a meal, he would rise from his chair, pick her up bodily, and march around the table with her chanting, "Oh, bag of bones. Oh, bag of bones." And she'd say, "Put me down, Nevin. Put me down, Nevin."

MR. BROWN: Well, great fun was had right within the family; wasn't it?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: It's a wonder you--you hardly had to look beyond the family for a considerable amount of entertainment.

MS. SAYRE: No, that's true.

MR. BROWN: Although, I suppose, as you look back, everything's telescoped. I mean there must have been many times when your uncle was not there and so forth.
MS. SAYRE: Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: Your father's own temperament, now, a law professor and the like, but he was still a man of considerable sense of humor?

MS. SAYRE: Well he was a--not as good as my uncle's; about as acute as my uncles, which I think my younger brother, Woody, inherited his feeling of humor. And my father--that grandfather was also involved in music. And one of--some backers of the Bach Choral Society and my father inherited a lot of the same idealism and independence of mind, too. And he'd wanted to be a--go into public service. Then didn't want to.

He married my mother during the war and he didn't want to give my grandfather a son-in-law in politics. And so he began teaching law first at Williams and then was appointed to Harvard. In Harvard he taught criminal law and labor law and was asked at one point whether or not he would defend Sacco and Vanzetti. Ideologically, he would have loved to have done it, but he wasn't accredited to the Massachusetts bar so he couldn't. Or was it in Massachusetts that they were tried?

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MS. SAYRE: Am I right about that?

MR. BROWN: Oh, yes.

MS. SAYRE: But one of the--

MR. BROWN: Definitely--

MS. SAYRE: One of the earliest public events that I can remember is when they were executed and I remember weeping. And my father, because he was in the law school, was asked by the king of Thailand to go out and be advisor in foreign affairs. And Thailand didn't like the British, because they took one big hunk. And they didn't like the French, because they took a big hunk of the other side. And so they turned to the Americans. And they'd had--somebody else from the Harvard Law School liked him and so they asked my father to come. And I told you about that wonderful life in Bangkok, yes.

MR. BROWN: Oh, you have. You have.

MS. SAYRE: And then he comes back in this country, goes on teaching law and he--through teaching criminal

law--he was the man who invented the way of teaching students by using cases. And one of the things that we loved as children was that he used to try his exams out on us. And we were then allowed to argue them. Of course, we couldn't on the basis of law, which we didn't know, but on the basis of justice for which children have a very acute feeling.

MR. BROWN: Wonderful.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, it really was.

MR. BROWN: Oh, yes.

MS. SAYRE: And he invented one, sort of, marvelous case where there really isn't any answer, where two or perhaps it was three men go out into the--three men go out together into the desert and two of them hate the third and the first man decides to kill him by emptying his water bottle so that he will die of thirst. But unbeknownst to him, the second--the other companion had already put poison in the water. And so it's a marvelously ingenious case, because obviously,

both were guilty of attempted murder. But can you prosecute either of them for murder? Because if you pick the man who put the poison in, except that he didn't drink it. If you pick the man who poured the water out, but he saved his life. Isn't that neat?

MR. BROWN: These mental gymnastics were a fairly frequent thing when you were around your father?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And these continued after you were an adult as well; is that right?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: I mean, to a degree. You saw a great deal of him--well, you were in college, but after your mother's death, particularly, you saw quite a lot of him.

MS. SAYRE: Particularly, I did.

MR. BROWN: And then after his return from the Philippines--

MS. SAYRE: But even before the Philippines, he--because of his experience in Bangkok, he was asked by Roosevelt to go down to Washington to make trade agreements. And there he acquired the nickname of the boy scout of the New Deal.

MR. BROWN: Why?

MS. SAYRE: Because he really believed in the good--genuinely believed in the goodness of people. And the people with whom he was treating so responded to this and--so that later on the--when he had the job of raising money for the United Nations Relief Organization, he got fantastic sums, because it never occurred to him that everybody wouldn't want to give it.

MR. BROWN: I see. So he plunged in on every side and--

MS. SAYRE: Yes. And my father had the wisdom, I think, to see that it had fortitude for one thing, so that--he had the wisdom to see that whatever he was able to accomplish in the trade agreements, whatever he wanted to do was going to be cut back by what the other nation was willing to do. And that would be further cutback by what the Secretary of State was going to agree to. And that would be further cutback by what the President was willing to agree to. And that in turn was even further sacked by Congress, which had to vote for whatever treaty was made. And my father knew that with the first change in the administration, that the treaty could well be swept--these treaties could well be swept away. And yet, he never wavered, because he told me firmly that it's better to do the small thing that you can do than not to have done it. And that was his spirit.

MR. BROWN: And he did put through a great many of those?

MS. SAYRE: Mm-hmm.

MR. BROWN: [inaudible] which held up.

MS. SAYRE: I think a lot of them did, but he was willing to do it anyway. And then when McCarthy came into office--not in office, but--

MR. BROWN: Into power or into influence?

MS. SAYRE: Into real power, the--luckily my father was in Europe at the height of it when he was going to name the chief of the spies in the State Department. And I was here. Now, I read, of course, of the day-by-day accounts of--see, he would give one hint a day. And they were pointing at my father directly. And then all of the sudden, they changed. And he named somebody else. And I was told by friends who were in Washington in government in Washington then that it was because Taft, who had been backing him, in fact, really longed to be elected President himself. And Taft finally voted at the thought of my father's being named and said, "If you name Sayre, I will stop backing you." And so McCarthy switched. And I think that's true. Nonetheless, my father was met by marshals when he got back to this country to see whether or not they would arrest him and here too, he never wavered in his feelings that what he had done with his life was right. And I admire him profoundly for that; my mother equally. You know, in her own ways, equally principled. I told you about her; didn't I?

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Yes, and distilling that in you children at a very young age. Well, your father's United Nations work, did that begin shortly after he returned from Asia or from the Philippines?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And he was to--what was his role at the United Nations?

MS. SAYRE: He was ambassador to the United Nations so that--I remember going to see him and going to the United Nations with him on the day that Israel was voted a nation. Nobody knew whether or not it would happen. And I watched the Arabs walk out afterwards--because it was not a fair division, really--white with anger. And I saw that there would be trouble. But yet, I was sorry--I couldn't be sorry that they had been made a nation, though, I would rather have seen a more equitable division of land.

MR. BROWN: Your father then with the relief--with the United Nations Relief Organization.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, after that.

MR. BROWN: Did they carry a great many travels still and--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and that was when he raised so much money by not being able to believe in the--

MR. BROWN: That anyone would ever turn him down.

MS. SAYRE: No. It was inconceivable to him.

MR. BROWN: Did you see him pretty steadily during those years, because--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, particularly because I felt responsible for him. And even after he was married, then I always kept again and--he still needed a daughter.

MR. BROWN: Did you, at this time, just think about perhaps going on some other line of work yourself? I know you've said that any time in your life, you've been prepared to possibly make a sudden switch in your career.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Because when things, as you've described to me last time we talked didn't work out particularly well in Providence, once again, you said, "Is this where I want to be; what I want to do?" Or did you--

MS. SAYRE: Not in that same sense. No, I always knew that I wanted to work in a museum, but I thought of--when I was there, I had gotten very much interested in Native Indian art and had an advantage over some of them--an odd kind of advantage over some of the--over the anthropologists, because I was trained to look at works of art in a way that they were not--that they're not. And one of the wonderful things that happened was that I went off to buy Indian works of art from the warehouses in the Hyde Foundation. Did I tell you about that?

MR. BROWN: You did.

MS. SAYRE: Okay.

MR. BROWN: You went down--

MS. SAYRE: I won't tell you again. They thought I knew much more than I did, because I picked up such good

material.

MR. BROWN: Why do you suppose you made such good choices? Your eye had been trained?

MS. SAYRE: I'd been trained.

MR. BROWN: If not on that sort of object, at least--

MS. SAYRE: In any object.

MR. BROWN: --universally applicable connoisseurship.

MS. SAYRE: No, I had no doubt for what I wanted to--when I left Providence, that I wanted to go into prints. And I heard about two possibilities; one in the Metropolitan and one up here and backed by Lydia Powell who had gone by then to the Metropolitan. I went down there and met Bill Ivans who liked me, but would not take me because he was convinced that a daughter of a famous man wouldn't work.

And so then I went up to Boston and I met--I was interviewed by Henry Rossiter who was a remarkable man. And he asked me only two questions, or really only one question. "Do you really like prints?" And he could see that absolutely, there's no question whatever. And with no more ado, he hired me. Just wonderful in looking back on it. And he was a man who had been--he was born in Canada and he had fought in World War I and is in London before he's sent off to the continent to fight in the trenches. And he went into [inaudible] and he explained to them that he would really be able to bear it much better if they would lend him a print to take with him to have there and they did. Isn't that incredible on both sides?

MR. BROWN: Yes. So what was your first impression--what did you know of him before--by reputation, before you had even--

MS. SAYRE: Not much.

MR. BROWN: Not much? Did you know much of Ivans? William Ivans?

MS. SAYRE: Ivans was far more visible, yes, partly because he had written much more than Mr. Rossiter.

MR. BROWN: Well, your first impressions of Rossiter, what were they? It sounds like he was very forthright and--

MS. SAYRE: Forthright and sort of a plump man and when I first knew him he smoked a tremendous amount. And then one day, without a word, he quit. And when we finally realized that he was no longer smoking--and I remember saying something about it--he said, "Tax is too high. Didn't want to go on paying them." And he was one of those men who believed in--that whatever he wrote ought to be understandable to any intelligent person who was not an art historian. So he wrote well. And I was able to emphasize that of my part, too. And he had what was almost an infuriating habit to us.

I remember the public would bring something in and he would--we would take it to him, thinking that he would be very interested. "Don't like it. No." And wouldn't say why. And we would look at it some more ourselves and we would realize that's why it was that he didn't like it and that he was right. And he had an incredible intuitive eye for things, the quality. And he had great courage in buying them. Maxim Karolik had made them--given to the museum the 18th century things that he owned. Did I tell you about Maxim?

MR. BROWN: No, I don't think so. No--

MS. SAYRE: Maxim is a--was a fantastic Russian tenor who was later to say that he didn't sing as well as Caruso, but that he sung--his voice wasn't as good as his, but that he was more musical.

MR. BROWN: He was a modest man.

MS. SAYRE: Very modest man and he insisted on making the staff of the museum sit through paired --a concert of paired records with himself and Caruso. And Maxim had married a--there was a Boston lady who had gone--no, it's Providence, I guess she was. And she had gone off to--a good New England lady anyway--gone off to--goes off to Europe and her mother and father finally die and everybody--she was enormously wealthy. And to everybody's horror, she comes back married to a penniless tenor--Russian tenor half her age. And her--needless to say, her trustees had him in to examine him. And they say in trustee fashion, "I presume you don't already have a wife in Europe." "Oh, yes, several," says Maxim.

Maxim was the kind of man who would--there were few women in the museum whom he didn't try to kiss. And it was very difficult to avoid his kisses, because he happened to have a long neck and he was rather tall so that I remember when it happened to me likening him to the, you know, in *Alice in Wonderland* what was the creature

that had a very long neck?

MR. BROWN: Was it a mongoose? No.

MS. SAYRE: I forget. And all right. That was--he would grab me and he would kiss me. All right. In one sense, that's sexual harassment, but I didn't mind it really because it had no more reality to it, no more seriousness to it than a French candy box cover. And so that I didn't resent it any.

He came in a great deal to the museum, because he and his wife gave their collection of furniture, and then he started--of 18th century furniture. And then he started a collection of 19th century American paintings. Nobody was interested in them, particularly the primitive ones either. And he was willing to pay for anything that the curator wanted. He wanted to have it in the collection.

But anything that he wanted the curator liked would not be in the collections; can't have a fairer deal than that. And Constable who was the curator of paintings just gave him--was very rude to him, I thought. And then he decides that he wants to collect American drawings and watercolors. And that was an even less highly regarded field than the paintings. Very little was known about it and he comes to Mr. Rossiter, brought up in the British tradition, knows a lot about British watercolors and proposes it to him. And Mr. Rossiter, then about 60, plunges into this brand new field and with a good spirit, too. Learns about it, writes a catalogue of it. I have one of the--one of my jobs was to help him check things for the catalogue and to go over what he'd written.

MR. BROWN: Was this a fairly--one of your fairly early jobs for Mr. Rossiter?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and he would--he was the kind of rich man who loved to do all his telephoning at the museum, because it was free for him. And he wanted to come and be entertained by a person--you know, anyone who would listen to him. And I had an unspoken deal with him that when I was busy, I would say, "I'm busy." And he was very--wasn't hurt--very meekly go away. And then--but once a week, I would really listen to him, not just half listen. So that he liked me very much.

MR. BROWN: So you, in fact, set aside a certain time for him each week.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, it wasn't always the same time, but--

MR. BROWN: Did he--he spent a good deal of time here then; did he?

MS. SAYRE: Oh, yes. We were his home away from home as it were. And I remember one time that Mr. Rossiter's principal assistant was an interesting person, Anna Hoyt who had been almost literally brought up in a closet by an elderly aunt and uncle, not allowed to go anywhere, to see anybody, to do anything. And she was still--and the age of about--in her 50s, they would still spank her. And she was--Mr. Rossiter so rightly depended on her a great deal, relied on her for many things. And she was afraid this new, young person coming in was going to steal his affections. And I finally persuaded her that I was on her side and then things were all right between us and she stopped being jealous.

MR. BROWN: She did the office managing, the office work and all that?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and a lot of research for him, too. And she was so innocent that, once she came in when Maxim Karolik was kissing me and she was very excited about that. And she thought that he had--was absolutely certain that no man ever tried to kiss a woman unless he wanted to marry her. And she felt it was my duty to marry him, because by then Mrs. Karolik had died, and keep all the money in the museum.

MR. BROWN: That was your duty, yes.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.
MR. BROWN: Certainly, you knew that by then, yourself. She, too, married you said. You told me once.

MS. SAYRE: Eventually, yes.

MR. BROWN: When she was in her 60s or something.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, goes off and gets married and does have, in the end, a fruitful life.

MR. BROWN: You told me an anecdote at one point of a--when she told Gertrude Townsend the curator of textiles, what was that--

MS. SAYRE: She kept a--she was rather shy about announcing her engagement when she was getting married. And we told her that--the only other person that she perhaps knew even slightly in the museum was Gertrude Townsend. So she calls her up and she says, "Would you like to come and a see a wedding bonnet?" And

Gertrude's voice then, which I could hear, "What period?" Voice from Anna, "My period." And in the beginning, when--well, I think she thought it was also for my own good that she didn't want me to learn and that I would get the books and take them home at night and go on learning anyway, because nothing could stop me.

MR. BROWN: And by books, you mean publications or the records of the department or--

MS. SAYRE: No, publications. Whatever it was--the problem it was that I was trying to solve. I would stay in the department late to do it.

MR. BROWN: For the Karolik catalogue of American prints and drawings, I mean, you were really blazing a fairly pioneering trail; weren't you? I mean there wasn't much in--

MS. SAYRE: There was very little. And Mr. Rossiter got--managed to get a hold of a lot of the papers of the artists and read them and go through them.

MR. BROWN: Do any particular discoveries stand out on your part or things that particularly delighted you?

MS. SAYRE: Well, the field came to--I didn't know anything about that field. No one taught it. And I was delighted to discover it. But I also was impressed by a man who could undertake to plunge into a new scorned field at that age and understand it.

MR. BROWN: And it was scorned at that time; wasn't it?

MS. SAYRE: Absolutely, yes.

MR. BROWN: The American study of art--American art; one of those--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: For example, the director, at that time, was a renaissance man; wasn't he? George Edgell?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, George Edgell. I privately didn't think I had much in the way of brains. And he thought of the museum as his own club so that he would come in with his dog, which would sleep on the sofa of his office. And because he didn't really have enough to do, he would--we were sometimes asked by his secretary whether or not--we'd gotten some letters that he might be able to answer and we had to provide the information that he would need to answer the letters. Just imagine.

And somebody--he once gave a--was going to give a lecture, and he wanted to know the difference between an engraving and an etching was. And we'd had--for a decade or more, there had been in the print corridor, an exhibition on the techniques of etching as to how to tell them. And I don't know how many times a day he had walked by it, but he had never looked and therefore has to ask me. And I'd tell him without--very, very politely.

The dining room was, in those days--the female staff ate with the public, although, we did have a table reserved for us. And only men were allowed to eat in the director's dining room. And so that when I became curator and I had an assistant that I, you know--foreign colleague, who was important that came to see me and I wanted him to meet the other curators. I had to send him in with one of my assistants.

And another change, which was first wrought by Mr. Rossiter, was--however, was that in those days, in the whole of the west wing, there was no toilet for women either upstairs or downstairs. There were three for men, but nothing for women. And I would have to go to there from the print--leaving the print department to a somewhat remote part of the building when I needed to use it and I couldn't go unless there was no member of the public there in which case--because I had to be able to lock the door. And one time Mr. Rossiter comes back and finds the door locked, and when I return he's very angry and he wants to know why I had the temerity to lock it. And so I explained to him although I did the best that I could, that every now and then, I did have to use the bathroom. And, "We'll see about this." And within two days, it was decided that the--downstairs there were two toilets and one was for the guards and the other was for the maintenance men. Never for the curators. And the second floor, there was just for guards. And the one that was--Mr. Rossiter persuaded the rest of staff that males of both--of all ranks could use the same one and the females should have the other.

MR. BROWN: He was very good. He stood up for rights--

MS. SAYRE: Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: And he was angry with you initially, because he wanted the print study rooms to be open--

MS. SAYRE: Open to everybody and--

MR. BROWN: Was that fairly unusual for that time to be so liberal with--

MS. SAYRE: I think it was. I was absolutely in sympathy with that, because of my early experience in the British Museum when I had been allowed to come in and look as a child by myself with no grownup. And I think also because the study room was open to the public, that we acquired gifts and pieces that we never would have acquired otherwise. So that, for example, one time--a lady turns up at the--a lady turns up at the door and she says, "I found this drawing up in my attic and my sister wants to throw it away, because she says it's junk, but I like it and I want to know what you think." In the end we got Mr. Karolik to buy it. It's one of the great early American drawings or watercolors that we have. But it never would have happened.

MR. BROWN: Well, you seemed to work very easily with Mr. Rossiter. He treated you, despite the age difference, as a full colleague--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, he did.

MR. BROWN: --from right on.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: He, himself, was self-taught; wasn't he?

MS. SAYRE: In prints? Yes, I would think so.

MR. BROWN: Most people of his generation certainly would have been.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And you had done, on the other hand, had some formal--well, certainly as an understudy at the Fogg--

MS. SAYRE: But most of it you do, in the end, have to teach yourself. And he was outward going in another respect that a promoter from Israel came with some Israeli prints and wanted Mr. Rossiter to exhibit them and Mr. Rossiter thought that it would make a good exhibition. And then the promoter says, "But I don't want to just lend you the works. I want you to give me the names of prominent Jews who might be interested in buying some of these." And Mr. Rossiter did and the deal was that they were--Mr. Rossiter got the names on the understanding that when they bought the prints that they would have to lend them to the exhibition. And Mr. Rossiter wanted to invite them to have a very small show opening and invite the visitors to our department and also the Jews who had lent to the exhibition. Edgell wouldn't hear of it. No, can't have Jews.

MR. BROWN: This was his general thinking?

MS. SAYRE: No, it wasn't omnipresent at all. And I think he--I think Swarzenski managed to get the oldest ones--managed to get into the museum under him, but we don't make--we don't invite the Jews socially, because the Bostonians won't like to mix with them. Just completely wrong. I never forgave him for that. I should also say that Edgell--one of the things that he loved to do was to cook hotdogs for people in his office, because he had time.

MR. BROWN: What, he had a little brazier or ring or something?

MS. SAYRE: Something like that, yes. I guess because he liked them himself. And he refused to open the museum in any way to other groups of people. Mr. Rossiter was completely different. Unfortunately, for--

[Interruption to tape.]

MS. SAYRE: The curatorial staff was to set each one of them up as a sort of separate duchy with very large powers.

MR. BROWN: You mean, over acquisitions? Over--

MS. SAYRE: Over everything.

MR. BROWN: Everything. There wasn't much review of acquisitions once--

MS. SAYRE: No, I think he didn't want to be bothered by all of these things.

MR. BROWN: No.

MS. SAYRE: And so they were really quite free to do what they wanted. And with a good curator like Mr.

Rossiter, it was an admirable policy. But they weren't all good.

MR. BROWN: Perhaps you could say something about the other curators when you came at that time. You'd mentioned William George--or W.G. Constable, curator of paintings. He'd come over here about 1937, I think, from Britain.

MS. SAYRE: And--

MR. BROWN: What about him? What would you say of--

MS. SAYRE: He was one of those--to me he seemed one of those curators who thought that he knew vastly more than, in fact, he did and was unwilling to learn. And somebody offered us, for example, a Goya tapestry design and it was just all-around frustrating that it was taken up--sent up to the lab and the--

[Interruption to interview.]

--bits of pigment that shouldn't--that Goya wouldn't have used. And so he nixed it and there were actually--I saw one of these tapestries by somebody else and when they--they get rolled up in the loom, depending on--they're two kinds of looms that are used and for one of them, they get rolled up as the weavers do it, which is extremely hard on the cartoons. So that when they acquire them, it had been said--and I can believe it--that they were very much--they were in very bad condition and were--much were restored. And one that I saw by--not by Goya--but by somebody else, there was at least a quarter of it was missing.

So there never really would be these--and I happened to own a--to have bought a book in Spain by then that had been--that had come up along the tapestry cartoons and I wanted to show it to him, but he said, "I know it." But he couldn't possibly have known it. It was--

MR. BROWN: An obscure or new publication?

MS. SAYRE: New--I think if there were two in America, I would have been surprised. There certainly wasn't any in this museum. So we lost that one.

MR. BROWN: But in your opinion, it could very well have been a Goya?

MS. SAYRE: Yes. And it is accepted, too. Though that doesn't mean all that much, because an awful lot is accepted as Goya's work that is not.

MR. BROWN: W.G., then, was not particularly a congenial colleague. He was very--had a very good opinion of himself or--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and was--he wrote a catalogue of watercolors and the moment it was printed, he turned all the watercolors over to the print department as they hadn't been. That was a bit--of course, it makes a lot of sense that they should be in our department rather than the painting department, because we know how to look after works of art on paper. And--but then, we therefore had all the labor of getting them out for all the many, many people who wanted to came to see them when they saw things that interested them in the catalogue. We did, though.

MR. BROWN: So he had the fun of writing the catalogue, and you had the later labor.

MS. SAYRE: We did the dishes.

MR. BROWN: Of love, yes.

MS. SAYRE: And Mr. Rossiter, I think, was admirable not only in his willingness to plunge into the Karolik collection, but also in his real interest in Goya's work and his willingness to buy a very important collection that came for sale and to fight for it. It was the acquisition of that collection that made us outstanding in Goya.

MR. BROWN: And this is what, in effect, led you or you were already well into your Goya studies by this time?

MS. SAYRE: By then I was really pretty well in. Got in through completely by chance through Phillip Hofer who also had a good collection of Goyas. And he stored them with us one summer and I, though lowly, Eleanor has to make out the receipt for them. And I got frustrated, because I couldn't tell from the extant literature really much about what I was looking at. And I also got--I was puzzled by the titles--the captions of the *Caprichos*, because I could see that they made absolutely no sense as they were translated. And this is how I began learning Spanish, not learning it consciously, but trying to translate for myself what the titles might mean. And then would get hooked and got a fellowship from the American Philosophical Society to go over to Spain for a year. I think I'm getting--

[Interruption to interview.]

MR. BROWN: We're continuing the interviews on October 22, 1993. And we were talking last about your beginning to work on the prints of Goya. And that you got involved with in the collection of Phillip Hofer. And these were--were these materials here at the Museum of Fine Arts or were these elsewhere? And perhaps you could say a bit about Mr. Hofer as a collector.

MS. SAYRE: Mr. Hofer was one of those good collectors who bought what he liked. And so by and large, they're the people who make the most interesting collections, because they don't give a fig for fashion, but buy out of passion. So later on in case--what some of them buy, of course, is going to be--it doesn't always pan out, but at its best, they will form collections that the museums haven't even dreamed of forming as yet and will teach the museum something.

And in general, I'm so strong a believer in buying because you love something that I know that very often people would come into the print room and would want to know whether or not something that they were thinking of getting would be a good investment. And I would give them my nicest smile and I would say, "Why don't you go down to the racetrack?" And I would explain that you can't really tell whether or not, excepting the work of a major artist, whether or not something is going to keep up its value. And that you ought to buy only because you really loved it and wanted to live with it. And, of course, in Phillip's case, when he began, his chief collections were books and also Holbein drawings he began buying, too, when he could buy Holbein.

MR. BROWN: Would that have been maybe in the '30s before you knew him?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, before I knew him. And although I had--I think I'm remembering right, but when I was still in school, I had to do a long paper. I wanted to write one on illuminated manuscripts, but there wasn't anything in the Windsor School to tell me much about illuminated manuscripts. And so my mother took me to New York and we went to the library there to look at illuminated manuscripts. And I think it was--I think I'm right. I remember this Phillip Hofer who showed us. My mother had met him and knew him and, therefore, got hold of him. So if that's true, this was an old relationship.

MR. BROWN: Wonderful. Did you then see him when you were at Harvard? Was he around there at that--
MS. SAYRE: Absolutely, yes. And by then he'd become head of the rare book section. And as a matter of fact, I couldn't swear that he hadn't been as early as that. But certainly, by the time I came back to Boston, he was in charge of the rare books at Van Holten.

MR. BROWN: The Van Holten Library?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and believed in them and loved them and I think that the university, on the whole, behaved very badly towards him. Knowing that he had money, they made him pay for everything himself, made him establish money to pay for a successor to be in charge of the rare books.

MR. BROWN: Did you begin--you were already now on staff here at the museum.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: But did you begin looking at his collection or meeting with him or how--was the relationship rather informal or--

MS. SAYRE: Not until here. And the way that--what he did when he went off one summer was to bring all his Goya working proofs and fine things into the Museum of Fine Arts for us to look at over the summer. And as the bond person in the print department staff, I was the person who had to make out a list. And two things happened. One was that I couldn't tell which dates they were because a lot were under scribes states. And I got interested and wanted to know and began looking at that aspect of it. But, also, I was, like so many people, fascinated by feeling that these were about something that mattered enormously to the man who had done them. And I wanted to know what it was that he was trying to say. And when I read the translations into French in those days--the Deltay [phonetic] translations of the titles of those prints, they made absolutely no sense. And so--

MR. BROWN: Deltay [phonetic], were his translations primarily very literalist and--

MS. SAYRE: Yes. And without knowing Spanish, I got hold of a dictionary and looked at what else they might possibly mean. And then I got--so more and more, I began wanting to know what they really meant. And then having fallen into the Goya trap, I never really scrambled out of it.

MR. BROWN: Because you didn't have any particular prior great interest in Goya or--

MS. SAYRE: No.

MR. BROWN: --things Spanish, particularly. Had you some acquaintance with things Spanish?

MS. SAYRE: Not all that much. The Spanish art that was taught at Harvard when I was a graduate student was mostly the very small old masters who had been rediscovered by Chandler Post. And--

MR. BROWN: Late Medieval and that--

MS. SAYRE: Yes. And identified and I started as a graduate student, I remembered to take a course with him. And then when we were asked, I think almost the very first section, who was pope when Pico della Mirandola was 15, I dropped out of that one.

MR. BROWN: I see. Chandler was a very demanding professor.

MS. SAYRE: Well, later on, I became great friends with him. And also, I had heard that one of the papers that he designed in 19th century American art course was the trouser in American sculpture. But later, as a graduate student, I came to--I did come to know him and liked him very much, and I think he liked me, too. But that was the sum total of, I suppose, of what I really knew about Spain.

MR. BROWN: When Hofer brought these here that one summer, was this in the early 1950s, something like that?

MS. SAYRE: Or earlier, perhaps.

MR. BROWN: Did he talk to you about--he just left them or did he tell you about--

MS. SAYRE: No, he just left them and I had to make a list. And the other thing was that when one looks at Goya's prints, one can--it was possible to see the *Caprichos* as Goya meant them to be seen and the tauromachia. But you can't really understand the bullfighting prints unless you know something about bullfighting.

But it was in no way possible to understand the other two sets of prints; the *Disasters of War* or the *Desperates* or *Follies*, because, he was not--for various political reasons, he wasn't able to print them during his lifetime. And they weren't printed until about 50 years after his death by the Academia de San Fernando, who had gotten hold of them. And then they were printed partly in a 19th century manor with a lot of ink on them, because that was considered beautiful in those days. And then also, because some of the plates had been--become--gotten erosions on them from time, they restored them according to their 19th century traditions. And what you see in those editions has little or nothing to do with Goya.

And in order to understand what Goya means you to see, you have to see the print in all its original balance of lights and darks. And when you see it like that, then he focuses your attention exactly where he wants it to go. And for example, this one print of people who are--the men who are burying dead bodies and putting them--shoving them into a common pit and that's all it is when you see it in the ordinary impression that I had known. But when you see it one of these working proofs without all this gum on top of it, then you see the figure of--the faces of the men who were doing the shoveling as dark against a light sky and you see that, to them, these dead bodies are nothing more than cordwood. They have ceased to be human.

And then you can see in the working proofs how he experimented with whether or not--in the ways in which it was printed, whether or not to make it look sort of a lowering sky or just a hot sky so that you began to sense the stink of the bodies and settles for that. And when you see these war prints as he meant you to see them, it becomes true of them what is true of--I think of great art and I'm including music as well as pictorial art that the great man can make something which is horrible and ugly, but at the same time extremely beautiful. But in this mid-19th century printing, all you see is the ugliness. So it seemed like that was a revelation to me.

MR. BROWN: Were you able to--then you were beginning to try to figure out the sequence in which he may have tried one thing and then another?

MS. SAYRE: You could tell that, because there would be changes in the plate, but I know that--my brother Woody was teaching at Tufts and giving a course in Philosophy--he was a philosopher--in the philosophy of aesthetics. And he was the only man teaching that to whom it occurred to bring the students in the museum to look with me at some things. And one of the things I showed them was another one of the *Disasters of War* with a dead body, which has been hacked up so that it's lost some of its limbs and stuck up on a dead tree. And the French soldiers are practicing saber charges against it. And I got them to see that that could be beautiful, too, in the hands of a Goya.

MR. BROWN: Beautiful in what sense? I mean, technically and--

MS. SAYRE: That it will have an abstract beauty to it, which makes it possible for you to absorb the horror of it,

instead of just rejecting the whole.

MR. BROWN: Whereas in the re-strikes or the reworked ones, it was just, "Look, this is horrible." You reject it and turn the page, so to speak.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, next time you come, I'll show you the difference if you like.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MS. SAYRE: Would you?

MR. BROWN: Sure would. But this--even that first summer, you began sensing and getting excited about--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, I did. And I wanted to go off to Spain and look and I was able to get a fellowship from the American Philosophical Society to go and look at the *Caprichos*. Because I was trying to find out why they were made and what he was trying to say. And luckily, I didn't write a book immediately, because I know so much more now and I never could have written it then. But when I went off to Spain having learned all my Spanish from trying to read Spanish books about what the Spanish had to say about these prints and what--from trying to translate Goya's titles, my Spanish was on the whole very dirty. And it's literally true that I knew only two words for food when I landed in Spain; bread and meat. But I could give you six for prostitute. And I didn't dare say any word that I knew lest the meaning might have changed in the 18th century.

But in those days--because by then Chandler Post's influence had faded at the Fogg--and I know that I was roundly criticized by people I knew at the Fogg for reading anything in Spanish about Goya. Because during the--under Franco, the Spanish scholars weren't able to import, to subscribe to foreign periodicals, or import foreign books on art. It was very, very difficult to do it. So they didn't know the recent scholarship, and I think they did make a lot of mistakes about European art. But the virtue of the Spanish scholars when they were writing about Spanish art was that they went to the archives. And the Spanish archives are fantastic. Nothing was ever thrown away. and you could--again, reading, for instance in the--did a lot of reading in the archives of the Academia de San Fernando and I came across such things as how much they spent for putting sand down in the streets so that when they had a meeting, the coaches wouldn't make too much noise. This was still kept.

MR. BROWN: This might be needed again.

MS. SAYRE: Well, they just didn't--somehow or other didn't throw anything away and it was also--came upon a marvelous account of--the nude models had died or the one that they had had died and they had to get--pick a new one. So people were asked to come in and pose [inaudible]. No women, only men, before Acadamian and they couldn't choose which one they liked. And so they decided they would go down and see what they looked like under the conditions under which the students were going to draw them by that kind of light. So they all trooped downstairs and they still couldn't decide between two of them, so they hired them both. And this is how you can--reading things like that helps you to grasp a period, too.

And one of the things that I thought was very important to do was to see if I could see what Goya's handwriting was like, because I wanted to be able to decide for myself whether or not the inscriptions one saw on drawings really were by him or were not by him. And the letters were held very confidentially; the famous group of letters that he wrote to his friend, Zapater. And when I was in Saragossa, I found that they were there; at least not the originals, but there were photographs of them.

And I was able to persuade them to let me read them, basically, because my Spanish wasn't all that good and they thought that, you know, I'm an American and a woman and women can't be scholars anyway. And they thought that it was perfectly safe to let me read them and I was given three days to read something like 70 letters. And I not only read them, but I made copies of every single one of them.

MR. BROWN: Handwritten copies?

MS. SAYRE: Handwritten copies. I took in a whole batch of pencils with me all sharpened so I wouldn't have to waste time.

MR. BROWN: These were letters of Goya's--

MS. SAYRE: That he wrote to his best friend. And I got--I wanted to--as I explained, I wanted to have a feeling for how they--how he phrased things, how he spelled things, as well as what his handwriting looked like.

MR. BROWN: And then the question of--did he--his hand in the inscriptions--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, they did.

MR. BROWN: You would begin to understand--

MS. SAYRE: And the phrasing, the way things that were spelled so that I became certain that these really were written by him.

MR. BROWN: Did you discover that he had a rather idiosyncratic ways of--for his time or did that only--later, I suppose, as you broadened your study of the era or was he very conventional and--

MS. SAYRE: No.

MR. BROWN: --in those ways?

MS. SAYRE: No, and one of the things that surprised me was the wittiness of the letters so that, although they were written to the same best friend, they almost never ended the same way twice and can be very insulting. So he's apt to say, "Goodbye, full of shit."

MR. BROWN: This was right following or shortly following your first acquaintance with Goya's--through the prints of Phil Hofer.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Did you then soon just begin discussing them with Hofer? Was--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: What was his acquaintance and knowledge of the same? Was it mainly that of an enthusiast who would say, "I like this," and begin collecting these proofs or had he--

MS. SAYRE: More so and I think he relied on me to help him and advise him, too. And we became great friends and we took to signing--to writing to my--one another as, "My dear ally," and signing--this was our relationship.

MR. BROWN: So he was a considerable scholar, himself, wasn't he, if not of this?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and he bought some of the--some Goya plates and had a small printing of them made and asked me to write just a--this was a little bit later--a small introduction to them. And I think he expected about a page or two and after I wrote this long something with God knows how many footnotes. He must have been very taken aback by that.

MR. BROWN: But you--did you find he was easy to work with and a bit of enthusiasm?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, we really understood one another.

MR. BROWN: What would you say his--you said he got things which he liked. Did he have any--was there any other approach that you could discern? I mean, any particular outlook that he was trying to satisfy or curiosity?

MS. SAYRE: I think he was also trying to make the rare book collection even better and certainly did by buying some wonderful things.

MR. BROWN: Well, now the Goyas, though, eventually were steered here to the MFA, his collection.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and that was because he--later on, he wanted to establish a trust fund for his wife. And so he decided to sell his collection of Goyas.

MR. BROWN: And you had to raise the funds for the sale; is that right?

MS. SAYRE: I was given first chance. And I think it was a total miracle that I was--I raised $828,000, I think it was. I had three months to do it in. And I couldn't buy everything that I wanted, but I bought almost everything that we wanted.

MR. BROWN: Was this somewhat--some years later after you'd first worked with Mr. Hofer?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, it was.

MR. BROWN: Well, by then you would have known a number of people who had taken an interest in the collection or--

MS. SAYRE: Well, the only way to do it was, there wasn't time to apply for any grants, you see. So I got hold of a list of people who--business people who might be interested in giving some money. And I found that if I--either

our secretary or somebody pretending to be the secretary called the head of any corporation and said that the curator of prints and drawings at the Museum of Fine Arts wished to speak to them that every single one of them did, except one gave us a little hard time, but only one.

And then I had a--I could, knowing that they were busy men, in something like three minutes flat, I could tell them why this collection was important and I could tell them that it was the kind of thing--I could tell them truly that it was the kind of material that appealed to all kinds of people, that I had shown it to black freshmen in Texas and that they got--were completely turned on by the Goyas and I would ask them whether or not they would be willing to come and look and they did. And one of them came with a check for $5,000 or $10,000 in his pocket and without even seeing them.

And they would say, "Is it usual for a curator to call up like this?" And I said, "No." But it was--I've always rather--I tried in vain to persuade the museum that an enthusiastic curator can raise money that professional fundraisers can't. Because their enthusiasm for the works or for the department is catching. And I mightn't have made it excepting there was a foundation which had given a good sum to the museum and they hadn't--they were very slow about spending it and the foundation people got mad. And they gave me, I think, 3 or $400,000 for the purchase and so we did it.

MR. BROWN: Well, that's magnificent, though. I mean, considering, let's say, the average was 5 to $10,000 or so. It would take a great deal of that. And you were able--

MS. SAYRE: Now, some gave more than that.

MR. BROWN: But you were able to do this--did the fundraising--the central fundraising look the other way and said, "Go ahead and try this"?

MS. SAYRE: I told them that I would--what I did was to get hold of people who were not on their list. I didn't call up anybody that was on their list. There were plenty of people they didn't know about.

MR. BROWN: About when was this or roughly?

MS. SAYRE: Oh, I could--it was in the '70s.

MR. BROWN: Because by then most institutions want to have everything centralized, the fund raising, the--

MS. SAYRE: Oh, yes, they did and they never gave me so much leeway again. It never occurred to them I could do it, you see, for one thing.

MR. BROWN: Your point that the curator--the individual enthusiastic curator can often be more effectual than--

MS. SAYRE: Well, that's a part of it, but also people would rather give money for works of art than for running institutions. And they don't allow for that. They want to make it possible to do both.

MR. BROWN: This was after over 20 years or so working through this collection and, I suppose, augmenting it for the museum. Considerable more time in researching Spain and--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and also there had come up--Mr. Rossiter bought the Harris prints. Although, I did--I guess, he found--no, not the Harris prints, the Stirling Maxwell prints and Stirling Maxwell was the great English scholar of--19th century scholar of Spanish art. And I think a lot of things that he bought simply because he wanted--those days you didn't buy photographs and you didn't buy reproductions of things or prints that people did. And it was an incredible collection and thank God the British Museum was willing to let it come out of the country. And we got it.

MR. BROWN: And was this in the same--the 1950s or so? Something like that?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, or '60s.

MR. BROWN: So you--Goya was becoming--

MS. SAYRE: We, thereby, became, I think, certainly one of the two most important collections of Goya prints anywhere.

MR. BROWN: The other being what?

MS. SAYRE: Being the *Biblioteca Nacional*.

MR. BROWN: In Madrid. The--in your early trips over there, there was the occasion when you went to

Saragossa.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And maybe you can say a little bit about that. This was perhaps the same time or another time when you read all those letters and copied them, but it's rather revelatory, it seems, of your early introduction to Spain.

MS. SAYRE: I don't think anybody ever had more delightful introductions to Spain than I did and I've--did I tell you about going to see Goya's birthplace?

MR. BROWN: Well, it would be good to hear about it.

MS. SAYRE: There I am in Saragossa and I thought, "I have to go and see." And so I asked my hotel whether or not they would get me a taxi to take me there, because those taxis cost little or nothing. And I stipulated that it should be one that was in reasonably good condition so it wouldn't break down in the middle of nowhere. And right on the dot when I wanted it to be there, there it was. And I asked the driver whether or not--the driver asked me whether or not I would be willing to take a friend of his who lived in Fuendetodos, this little town. And, because there was not bus service and he had no way of getting there, and I said, "Of course, we'll take him."

So the two men sat in the back--sat in the front seat talking and I was there by myself in the back and just drinking in the countryside, which just looked sort of like the--a little bit like the West. And then you come suddenly to Saragossa, which--coming to Fuendetodos, which is--it doesn't have walls around it, but it has the effect of being a walled town and sort of hemmed in, contained. And about--at this outskirt, the passenger hops out and without a word to me, no thanks, no nothing, disappears. And then the driver says, "Would you be willing to go and look at that--look at a school." And I thought I would be very much interested in seeing what a country school looked like. And so I agreed to do that and I'm asked to speak to the children. I do so.

And get in the cab again, and then the driver says, "Well, before we go and see the house where Goya was born, would you be willing to go to the house where the teacher lives, because she has a brother who's a priest and who lives in America." And I agreed to do that, too. And the detour at this school was so that they could assemble all the important people in the village and also some food. The priest was there and there was the wine of the village which is as strong as schnapps and they had bought these store cookies, about a half dozen of them. And these store cookies had certainly been in the store for, I think, a good--for a decade and virtually inedible, and the priest managed only one and I bravely downed two.

And then I found out why it was that I had been kidnapped like this, which was no other word for it--gentle kidnapping. It was because the priest--the brother had gone to America and taken a course at Columbia and been given a degree. And he'd sent the degree back the village and everybody wanted to know what it said. And once they had an American, they thought, "Oh, we're going to get her to read it for us." And of course, it was in Latin. But I didn't--knowing what these priests--what some priests were like, I never let on that it was in Latin and I pretended that it was in English and translated it as best I could.

MR. BROWN: I see.

MS. SAYRE: And then--

MR. BROWN: So they were most honored and amazed.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, they were amazed that I could do it. And they--and the Latin isn't really that good, but you know, those documents always say the same things so that I could read it out with sounding authority. That's what was needed. And then I was taken to the house where Goya was born and even then, I did look at it with slight skepticism, because a long time ago, I went to see the house where my grandfather was born in the South and was taken around by one of these--some ladylike guides who dehumanized everybody by referring to them as "the father" and "the mother" and I did my best to be polite.

And finally, we came to the house where--we came to a room where she told me that he had been born. And I was interested in that and said, "Well, how do you know?" She was completely taken aback, starts, and says, but it's the best room in the house to be born in. So I've always looked at these places very much with that in mind and that this is what I thought of the Haydn house, for example. And I was shown the room where he was born and sure enough, eventually I learned, that an artist and the father of somebody that I met in Spain had been to Saragossa looking for the house where Goya was born. Nobody knew which one it was. So they picked out the house that they thought would be the best one for him to have been born in, purchased it, and set it up as a museum.

MR. BROWN: Well, did all this--these visits to his birthplace and Saragossa and all, did these enlarge your

perspective or what did they add--

MS. SAYRE: The visit to Saragossa did, because you saw what--only to a small extent because you saw what--the place where his mother had come from. But he was--he didn't grow up there, which is what people forget and they think of him as growing up in a village and going to a village school and having very little education. And nothing could be further from the truth that he was--he grew up in Saragossa.

His father was a master guilder, which means that he was a professional man and far from going to a village school, Goya went to one of the Escuelas Pías, which was a school system that had been founded about--in the first years of the 16th century by a man from Saragossa, had gone to Italy and was shocked because--by the ignorance of the street boys that he saw there. And so he founded the first of the Escuelas Pías there, got people to teach, took the position that any boy who really wanted an education should have an education. Any boy who wanted to learn Latin should learn Latin. It was unheard of then.

And also he--when he chose his teachers, he picked men who would--who were not only of good character, which was important to him, but had a real knowledge of what it was that they taught, which was not done in school systems. And the system of the school spread throughout Europe. And one of the things that he established was that the boys should not learn by rote, but should be taught to read, to observe, to think for themselves and it couldn't have been a more perfect school for Goya. So that when he becomes a religious painter or when he paints religious subjects, he thinks about what is this--what does this event mean fundamentally? And then comes up with the most astounding painting so that, for example, when he paints the *Agony in the Garden* and there's so many examples of the *Agony in the Garden* where a man is--where Jesus is upheld by the angel, where you see him kneeling and praying or lying on the ground and praying.

But Goya picked the moment just after he has accepted the sacrifice and he no longer is looking at the angel, but he turns towards us and flings his arms out in our direction towards the people for whom he is making the sacrifice. It's an extraordinary way of painting it. I don't know of any other like it. And then people think that he was virtually self-taught. But here everybody went there too, there was a man who was called Lusan [phonetic] who had an academy and--

[Interruption to tape.]

--19th century legends that he drew with a stone.

MR. BROWN: The first cave man or something.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, or drew charcoal, perhaps, on a stone and what he has seen is observed by somebody who then takes him off and then trains him to be an artist, which is just poppycock.

MR. BROWN: And when you began these studies, there was still a great deal of that myth surrounding him.

MS. SAYRE: Still is.

MR. BROWN: Still is, yes.

MS. SAYRE: Still is.

MR. BROWN: You've mentioned this, I mean, your contemporary Spanish art historians as being isolated under Franco, but in terms of your Goya studies, were they fairly down-to-earth or--

MS. SAYRE: Much better than the English and American ones who swallowed a lot of this nonsense.

MR. BROWN: So one of--among other things in your earlier searches was just, sort of, finding out where was he, what did he do, what was his operating--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, I think I didn't really find out about the school until much--

MR. BROWN: Much later.

MS. SAYRE: Much later than that and got somebody to--paid somebody to go to Saragosa where the--because I went to Madrid to see if I could find out what they were reading. And found that the books at the libraries had been destroyed between the wars. So I got somebody to go to Saragossa and came and researched a number of things. So when they learned--when they began Latin, for example, they began reading the--began reading Aesop and instead of just learning grammar, which is how my school in this country started to teach me. And they--it was translated into Spanish down below and there would be numbers above the words in Latin and they would correspond to numbers, not for every word, but for the words that a boy might not know.

[Interruption to interview.]

MR. BROWN: 1954, I think, is when you had your American Philosophical Society fellowship.

MS. SAYRE: And later I got a--I got a Ford Foundation later, too. And then I went when I could. You can't learn about Goya in America. And one of the marvelous things that happened to me early in the Prado was the kindness of the Sanchez Canton. The Prado had a director then who was--who taught watercolors or taught painting, at least to Franco's wife. And his way of running the Prado was to go there two hours a day and sit in the big rotunda and receive his friends. And there was only one professional art historian, Sanchez Canton, in the whole of the building. And I wanted to look at the drawings and examine them and they were--in those days, they were all hung up in the third floor in full sunlight and they were in wooden frames with very often nothing between the sheet of paper and the backing. They didn't realize what it was doing to the drawings.

And I finally, when I could--and I had to do it without--so that nobody lost face at all. But I was able to persuade them that, if they would let me open up the drawings, these frames, that I could put some good paper in back of them that would protect them from the acids. And they let me do it. Now, I think everything's changed. I've got--

MR. BROWN: But Sanchez Canton, himself, didn't have the authority to overrule the others while the director was someone else--

MS. SAYRE: Oh, the director did. And the only restorer--nobody there knew anything about paper. And at least in a professional way. They had some restorers, but they were simply painters who filled in little chips and whatnot in the paintings. And this was done in the same room where the packing and shipping went on. And when I gave first aid to the drawings, I did it in that same room, too. And I bought the best bond typing paper that I could to put behind them. And then I bought stamp hinges to hinge them to this paper. Because there wasn't--you couldn't buy in Spain anything else in those days. And once I wanted to see whether--how something was done and I asked if I could look at it through a microscope and there was an embarrassed silence, because they didn't have a microscope. And things have changed just profoundly since then in the Prado.

MR. BROWN: Was it a factor of, sort of, gentlemen amateurs in charge at that time? Was it also, though, the regime itself, indirectly?

MS. SAYRE: The regime itself, yes.

MR. BROWN: So--

MS. SAYRE: And somebody later on said to Franco, "All this pollution is really bad for the works of art," and that--and Franco said, "Okay, why don't you do something?" But nobody had the slightest idea of what to do. So somebody said--wanted to say, "Well, what will we do?" And he was told by his superior, "Dig a hole." So they dug a hole. I don't think that anybody knew what to do.

MR. BROWN: Dig a hole--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And the polluting elements would go into the hole?

MS. SAYRE: I don't know what they had in mind, but they wanted to see action and, of course, digging a hole was action.

MR. BROWN: Did you in your years, you know, until mid-'70s when the Franco era ends, did you run up against any other examples of the regime in general?

MS. SAYRE: Oh, yes. And for one thing, it was frightening to see what the effect of total support of the church for the state and the state for the church--what it did not only to the systems of the country, but also to the church. It completely corrupted it. It was so rare ever to see any monk or nun or priest doing anything for anybody that on the two or three times that I saw it, I would offer them money. And under Franco, if you wanted to--in Madrid, if you wanted to keep a job, you had to be seen going to mass. And so people went at the hours when they knew that the informers were going to be there. But I like to, you know, when I'm in a Catholic country, I like to go to mass. But I couldn't pray in a building like that. I can and do pray in synagogues and Buddhist temples and--but not there. And the priest would go, "Blah, blah, blah, blah." That was their way of saying mass. They--the pope had just decreed that there should be sermons during the mass. And so they had them. But they were broadcast from a recording while the mass was being said.

MR. BROWN: Wow.

MS. SAYRE: Which is just shocking to me. And I heard examples of them--the kind of repression that was leveled was that the son of somebody I knew who was a student at the university was given a question on Thomas Aquinas says, "Thus, thus, and thus," but in my opinion he's wrong for the following reasons and definitely suspended. I heard from another friend, I heard of--about a relative who was in prison and who saw the communion being forcibly administered to prisoners who refused to take it. And I know that I was shocked to find, after a while, that--come to the realization that if I had been there during the civil war that I would have burned churches too on the grounds that they had been so desecrated by the people looking after them. They cared a lot about form so that I couldn't go into a church when there's no service of any kind going on to look at a painting unless I had sleeves down to my wrists, something over my head, and, of course, a skirt, rather than slacks, you couldn't wear, let alone shorts. But it was only the forms that mattered to them.

Any good man who really cared about the people was banished out into the country. Now, in the country I did hear a couple of good masses and met a few men that I really respected. And the miracle to me is that the church in Spain is now changed completely. And I can worship at mass again--can and do there. And in the--I stay with friends, usually, in Madrid and the church where I go with them and there would be people playing the guitar and a young lady in bluejeans and a sweatshirt reading the lesson. Nobody wears hats anymore. They didn't wear hats, they wore things over their heads. But nobody bothers with that anymore. But it is a church where the--to which the spirit is returned.

MR. BROWN: The, in fact though, the Franco regime must have had--bore certain resemblances to that Goya experienced--

MS. SAYRE: That was the good thing about it.

MR. BROWN: --at one time or another and so it--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, I could never have understood it otherwise.

MR. BROWN: Yes, you could begin fathoming what, in some cases, he was getting at.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Just how repressive and so forth things could be.

MS. SAYRE: And disgusting. So that what he attacks again and again and again in drawings and in prints are the vices of the clergy. And to do that, you see, you mind what they do only if you yourself are profoundly religious, as I think he was. Otherwise, you don't care.

MR. BROWN: This has been an important attraction and lasting love of yours for Goya's work.

MS. SAYRE: Yes. Not because of that necessarily. But it's because--I think in part because of the passion with which he fights for what he--the things of which he believes and against what he scorns in us. And in part for his humanity. In the *Caprichos*, for example, the second part of them, you very often see people in the forms of witches. But what he does is to--if you look up the word "witch" in the 1611 dictionary, you can read that there are people who believe that the witches rub themselves with ointment and fly off to the Sabbath and do unspeakable things. And then it goes on to say that other people believe--don't believe that they really fly, but that the ointment makes them fall into a trance and that they imagine that they've done these things. And then--but then it goes on and says that the other people who believe that what witches really are are people who give themselves to evil and to Satan.

And this is plainly what Goya believes. And what people saw this work that he does on the *Caprichos* as a profoundly moral work. And I think one of the reasons is that he shows how if you indulge in the sin deeply enough, that it changes you into a witch, but he also shows us that we all of us have the soil within us in which witchcraft can take root--in which our witch-selves can take root.

MR. BROWN: He had a tremendous power of engaging the understanding of the viewer.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, he does. And though, like Mozart, he conceived something in his head first and then does, of course, make changes as he puts it down, but he doesn't need all those preliminary sketches that Beethoven, for example, needed. Because he has the idea in his head. And then when he puts it down again, like Mozart, every tonality, every line, every brushstroke is related to every other one in the image so that you can't really change one of them without altering the whole of the image.

That's true of Dürer, too, and his engravings. So you can see the [inaudible] and really--that's why it's important to see both Dürer's work and Rembrandt's, Goya's work and really find early impressions so that you see them as he meant you to see them. But it's the inevitability that every detail in a work, that I think is like Mozart's

music where every phrase has got that same inevitability and unexpectedness often, too.

MR. BROWN: And yet in the prints, there are these working proofs where he is checking out one contrast with another, one relation with another.

MS. SAYRE: Oh, yes, because as he works he does--and his mind keeps on--

MR. BROWN: But this probably was a rather rapid and smooth process.

MS. SAYRE: Very and very quick. And when he paints a portrait, he paints it in--he does it very, very fast and does not build up the tones beforehand, but paints alla prima usually. So when you take an x-ray of them, there's not much to be seen. But--and again, as he paints the portrait, he would make changes. And he doesn't always bother to cover them up, because what he wants you to do in the painting--he's not painting the reality, but he paints clues to the reality that when--if you look at it in the right--in the light that he intends you to see it in at the height that he intends it to be seen, you will put those clues together with your eyes and it will look like reality to you. And we do him a great disservice by hanging everything so low down in the museum in this bright, intense light.

MR. BROWN: How do we know or how can we approach knowing what--the way he wished something to be seen?

MS. SAYRE: Because we know, for example, that religious paintings would have been seen in churches by--limited by candlelight, that the paintings in private houses, that the time when people entertained was in the evening. So they were going to be seen by candlelight, too. And I finally had an experience of going to a function that was lit entirely with candlelight. It can be very--it can be quite bright; much brighter than I expected. And we know from the way--the kind of furniture and the way--the architecture of the rooms, that the portraits were apt to be not invariably--and you can tell when you look at it, but were apt to be quite high. Not the way they're--above eye level rather than at eye level.

I remember once going to a--I think it was in the Prado. It might have been when they were arranging an exhibition in--and there was an English scholar who didn't think that some painting was by Goya. I don't remember what museum it was and so I said, "Well, you're not looking at it right." He was standing on the floor then and I made him lie down flat on the floor and look up at it. Along comes one of the workmen, is stunned and so he wouldn't be embarrassed, I lay down beside him. And along comes a workman who is astounded to see us like that. And so I explained to him what we were doing and then I had him lying down, too.

MR. BROWN: So and he allowed for this to some degree, then, through perspective or through the overcompensating in terms of size, say, in a portrait. The head, say, a little larger if it's to be seen from--

MS. SAYRE: It could be a little bit, yes.

MR. BROWN: And candlelight.

MS. SAYRE: But it's not all that. This isn't going to be all that great so that you don't have the feeling of it as being very large. It's not as though it were sort of up on the ceiling there.

MR. BROWN: No, it's moderately above eye level.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And candlelight he would accommodate by--

MS. SAYRE: Well, one of the--we know from one of his contemporaries that he liked to add the last touches to a painting by candlelight. And I think that's why there's a wonderful little portrait of him wearing a hat, which has got a place for candles in it so that he can fade in and can have that candlelight.

MR. BROWN: It's a wonderful technique.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Well, by this time, you were thoroughly a Goya addict, you might say.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, addict is the right word, too.

MR. BROWN: We want to, sort of, toward the end of these interviews, go over them and some of your recent comments and interpretation--perhaps some examples of those in considerable detail.

MS. SAYRE: I think I'm getting a bit tired.

MR. BROWN: Yes, I think we should--

[Interruption to interview.]

MR. BROWN: Continuing interviews and this is August 5, 1994, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. And today we want to talk something about your acquaintance with this institution. And today I think we can perhaps talk about the earlier--your earlier years here. What was the museum like at that time? You came here--what year was that?

MS. SAYRE: I came here in 1945 and I found that I knew by then that I wanted to go into prints and I went--I was introduced to Ivans, the curator of prints at the Metropolitan.

MR. BROWN: William Ivans.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and he liked me and I think he would have taken me but for the fact that I was the granddaughter of a President and he thought that grandchildren of Presidents don't work. And so he wouldn't--

MR. BROWN: Oh, I see. He thought you'd be the wrong sort or you--

MS. SAYRE: That I wouldn't work.

MR. BROWN: --wouldn't stick with it. Or you wouldn't work.

MS. SAYRE: I would not work and would just sit around and then I came up to Boston and talked with--Henry Rossiter was then the curator. And he was a very remarkable man. I come into my office and he asks me only one question, "Do you like prints?" And from the bottom of my heart, I said, "Yes." "You're hired," and that was that. And that--I think looking back on it is--

MR. BROWN: Indeed.

MS. SAYRE: He was really good and he was dead right.

MR. BROWN: He was a very direct, decisive person.

MS. SAYRE: Yes. And he was Canadian and the kind of person who had--he enlisted during the war and had--finds that he's going to be assigned to the trenches in Germany. And he decided that he really couldn't bear it unless he could have a good print to take with him. And so he goes to Carl Auge's [phonetic] in London and he doesn't have any money at all and he asked them to lend him a print to take in the trenches and they did. They gave him a good Dürer.

MR. BROWN: Dürer?

MS. SAYRE: Sure.

MR. BROWN: A patriotic contribution?

MS. SAYRE: I suppose so, but that's the kind of person he was.

MR. BROWN: Wonderful stuff. Well, he was a man, then, of style it seems.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and decisiveness. And in those days, then, curators had a good deal more leeway in that they were--each curatorial department was run like a kingdom and it had its own ladders and tables and could do pretty much what it liked as long as it had the money with little or no supervision. And for an able man like Mr. Rossiter, it was ideal. But though, of course, not all the curators were that gifted.

MR. BROWN: He was.

MS. SAYRE: He really was. And not to be too shy about naming names and Hipkiss was then an architect and--

MR. BROWN: Edwin Hipkiss, yes.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: The American decorative arts.
MS. SAYRE: He becomes curator of American Decorative Arts and really--virtually nothing happened in that department.

MR. BROWN: You mean, he just sort of presided over--there were period rooms and so forth and--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, he presided over them pretty much and he was rather somewhat narrow-minded in that even on a Monday, he couldn't stand it, but he would sometimes encounter me whistling in some of the corridors where there was a marvelous echo. The whistle sounded really wonderful. And he looked at me severely and said, "Don't you know that whistling girls and crowing hens always come to some bad end." He was that kind of a man.

MR. BROWN: I see. He was very.

MS. SAYRE: And Constable--very much out for Constable. Not knowledgeable.

MR. BROWN: Not knowledgeable.

MS. SAYRE: No, although he pretended that he was. Probably more knowledgeable about English painting, which was his field.

MR. BROWN: But beyond his immediate field, he was not--

MS. SAYRE: No. And he was unwilling for the museum to buy any painting really after--that had been done after 1900.

MR. BROWN: Really? What was his justification for that?

MS. SAYRE: We weren't in the modern art business. And Mr. Rossiter, without any real money for buying modern art went and would go ahead and do it anyway. But he was the only curator in the building that did. Hipkiss certainly wouldn't in those days. And Hipkiss's department was saved by the fact that we got one very able refugee, Georg Swarzenski and then also his son Hans came and worked for the museum and both of them were knowledgeable and good and hardworking.

MR. BROWN: Wasn't Georg here for a few years?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, he was. And Hans began in the painting department and eventually goes into the decorative arts department and begins buying some really good things for them, too. Because Hipkiss was only interested in American.

MR. BROWN: And rather antiquarian? Were some of these people collegial? I mean, did you--were some--you suggested that Hipkiss was a rather severe almost prissy sort. But was Constable a more approachable man? You could--

MS. SAYRE: Well, I wasn't really the person to judge, because I was--

MR. BROWN: You were very junior.

MS. SAYRE: Very junior and also female.

MR. BROWN: Female, and that counted for a great deal with that generation.

MS. SAYRE: So that the--there was one curator of textiles, Gertrude Townsend--

MR. BROWN: Gertrude Townsend.

MS. SAYRE: Who was very good, but she wasn't allowed to eat at the same table as the men or in the same room as the men, but had to eat out in the general public with the rest of us. And I think that, in part, was because she loved to talk to--to be fair to Edgell, it was also because she loved to talk about heraldry and genealogies and I think the men got bored, because she was fascinated by the whole thing. But Edgell was the kind of--Edgell was an amateur, really. Although, he did know something about Siennese art and had--I think he may have taught a little bit at Harvard.

But in those days, he ran the museum as his--in a way, as his private club. He had a long siesta after lunch and because he didn't have enough to do, he would cook. He liked to cook hotdogs in his office and give them to the favored people on the staff. And the secretaries used sometimes to come and ask whether or not I could give him a letter that he could answer and together with the answers to the letter so that he would have something to do. Isn't that an incredible difference?

MR. BROWN: Oh, yes. But he wasn't interested in planning or in--

MS. SAYRE: No, and he was singularly uncurious about the works of art and I was horrified on the one day when he said that he was going to give a lecture on prints and he wanted me to show him the difference between an etching and an engraving. Now, in our main corridor that he had passed--gone through I don't know--countless times, we had an exhibition permanently on display of precisely that with etched plates and engraved plates and woodcuts and so on so that people could see the difference for themselves. But it never occurred to him to look.

MR. BROWN: He never--

MS. SAYRE: No, never.

MR. BROWN: He didn't even go look at the work very much or the collections.

MS. SAYRE: No.

MR. BROWN: Particularly prints. I once heard him and we had a particularly good exhibition in our print galleries and he said--in those days, the Fenway door was open and so people stopped in and said, "Where's the art?" And he points upstairs.

MR. BROWN: Where is the art?

MS. SAYRE: Because prints aren't art. And they weren't to him. There was absolutely no attempt made in those days to attract the public to the museum, which was thought of more as the private reserve of the director and the good, old families of Boston. And in one sense, that was very bad, because we were beginning to get into a period where the old families could no longer support it because of the difference in tax situations there so that we--it was obvious that we were going to have to change. But it could never have happened under Edgell who thought of it--conceived of the museum as a sort of a private club.

MR. BROWN: Was there just enough money to keep it going and plus--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: What about acquisitions? Were they--

MS. SAYRE: There we were better off than--we were--at least in my department, we were incredibly well off and for two reasons. One was the good aspect of it was that instead of being businessmen, the trustees were, almost all of them, collectors, themselves so that they had an idea--some idea of what a museum could and should be, which was very, very healthy and much better than--I think than nowadays when most of our trustees are businessmen and they see the museum in terms of a bottom line rather than of an art institution. And I think you do need some balance, but I think they've gone much too far in the other direction now.

MR. BROWN: These collectors were willing to--they didn't see something as extravagant if they thought it was justified by quality--

MS. SAYRE: No, they didn't. And looking back in this annual report and I'm amazed at the acquisitions that Mr. Rossiter was able to make. And nothing like it has happened since. And now another reason, though, for the quality--the incredible quality was because after the war, a lot of material came on the market in Europe or was brought to this country by refugees and it was over before I got there, but one of the things that Mr. Rossiter and Paul Sachs tried to do was to by the contents of Albertina and they pretty nearly did it.

MR. BROWN: Did they--I know Sachs didn't--he went over to Vienna; didn't he?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, so did Mr. Rossiter.

MR. BROWN: And Rossiter as well.

MS. SAYRE: Yes. And somewhere or other, there's Mr. Rossiter's--Mr. Rossiter's account of it that you should try and get from the print department--

MR. BROWN: An account by Mr. Rossiter of this.

MS. SAYRE: And I couldn't help but feel sort of slightly glad that it did fall through simply because I think that it would have been a tremendous blow to Austria if they had been sold.

MR. BROWN: Mr. Rossiter had a vast knowledge of collections in Europe? I mean, did he travel? He had personal connections there?

MS. SAYRE: He was good about that and also he had an incredible eye, too. And again and again it would

happen that we would bring him something that had been brought into us and, without being able to tell you why, he would say, "I don't like it." And we first thought, you know--some might be startled by this, but when we looked into it, we could--and he was all, I think, about 99 percent right instinctively.

MR. BROWN: Did he discuss these matters with you? I mean you would ask him questions, I'm sure.

MS. SAYRE: Sure, yes.

MR. BROWN: And he would come back and you began to learn what his--was his way of judgment or looking at things different, say, from Paul Sachs or Philip Hofer?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Two men you'd worked closely with.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and both of those men looked more slowly and they would consult with people and Mr. Rossiter's knowledge was more intuitive and very, very sound and came from long experience.

MR. BROWN: How would you say it affected you compared with your experiences till that point; Sachs or you had mentioned, I think, others like Winslow Ames, other people you'd already encountered, but particularly Paul Sachs and--was it a very easy, casual learning process for you--

MS. SAYRE: Well, the thing that I think taught me an awful lot was that we had--that we really kept the study room doors open for people and I believe, of course, absolutely in this. I think I told you about going to the British Museum. And looking at the figures, we would get--most of the years that I was there, we would have 2,000 visitors who would be wanting to see things. And then we would have--would average about 140 people who would bring in works of art for us to tell them what it was that they had and to be forced to do that, to show a person why what he had wasn't good, made you plunge--you had to get out the material to show them the difference between what they had and the way it ought to be. But it got you into a lot of areas that you never would have gotten into otherwise. And it built up a broad, deep fund of knowledge, which is very, very healthy. I am ashamed to say I was never able to persuade the people under me after I became curator how good it was that they gradually just have gotten out of that.

MR. BROWN: They allowed that to atrophy and discouraged it?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, don't really do it.

MR. BROWN: You, and I guess Rossiter as well, felt you were custodians--you were holding things in trust.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And part of that is discussing things with the public--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And expertising.

MS. SAYRE: And it seemed to me very wrong. Mr. Rossiter went along with this, too. That when somebody would bring something in that I should just, "This is no good." That I thought it was important to get out two pieces so that they could see for themselves why I said what I said.

And later on the fact that I was doing that became vital because we weren't--after I became curator, we went through a period where the lawyers wanted to stop our giving opinions on things unless we had--you have a signed permission to giving them an opinion on something and I said, "No." And said that, "I've got a--I don't really know who owns the piece, whether it's a dealer's doing it for somebody else or the real owner is and they're certainly not going to tell me. So it's not possible to do it." And I persuaded the lawyers that if I took time to show people for themselves why I was saying what I was saying, that the chances of my being sued were not big. And I also said, "If they're not able to ask us, to whom can they turn?" There isn't anybody else who was going to be objective and not try to cheat them.

MR. BROWN: So you effectively persuaded the lawyers who had been--

MS. SAYRE: I don't know whether I persuaded them, but I prevailed anyway. And I never was sued.

MR. BROWN: When did this begin coming up, this concern with lawsuits? Even fairly early or--

MS. SAYRE: As a matter of fact, no, there was one very early case that we were told about as graduate students

when there was a lady, I think, in St. Louis it might have been and she a [inaudible] she wanted to bring out, needed money. And so she had an Italian portrait and she believed it was a profile portrait by Leonardo. And so she offers it to the museum and there was a lot of publicity about it. Of course, an unknown Leonardo turns up. And somebody called a dealer who was knowledgeable in the field in New York. Long distance woke him up, because he was asleep and asked him whether or not it was genuine. He said, "Of course it isn't." And the museum did not buy the painting. And of course, it's problematic whether or not they would have anyway.

But she brought suit against the dealer on the grounds that he had interfered with a sale and also you can do it legally by--you can defame not only a person, but property and can be sued for that. And it makes me sneakily wonder what would happen if suit were brought in Clinton's behalf of some of the statements that have been made about him. [laughter] And the Fogg Museum became very much involved in the trial and they supplied--they x-rayed the paintings. They had got hold of x-rays of genuine Leonardo paintings. They did analysis of paint samples.

MR. BROWN: This museum here did?

MS. SAYRE: No, this was the Fogg Museum in Cambridge.

MR. BROWN: Oh, Fogg.

MS. SAYRE: Which is where I first heard about it as a graduate student. And the--it came to trial, but the only person who knew anything about painting was a house painter and he knew only about painting houses. And all of this expert information went over the jury's head and the critic lost and had to pay and this was always held up as a warning to us, which is, I think, why I took such pains to tell people--let people see for themselves why I was saying what I was saying.

MR. BROWN: Rather than make pronouncements.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MS. SAYRE: But I would have anyway, because I think a part of me is a born teacher. And nowadays the law has changed so that if you give an opinion within the area of your competence and without malice, you may be sued, but it would be very hard for anybody to win, which I think is as it should be. Well, it was pretty much single-handed that I had to keep the study room open and serve these 2,000 people a year, because Mr. Rossiter had his office across the way and his principal assistant, Anna Hoyt--

MR. BROWN: Anna Hoyt.

MS. SAYRE: --was working with him mostly and wasn't in the study room so much and I was the real manner of it. And I remember one time that I couldn't lock the door unless there was nobody there because you didn't want to lock anyone into the study room with the prints so that I had to wait until there happened to be nobody there before I could lock up and go off to the john. And one time, Mr. Rossiter came out of his office and found the door locked, nobody there, and he was absolutely furious. And he called me into his office the moment I got back and--we weren't running out of tape? And so I explained to him that although I did do the best I could that every now and then that I did have to use the facilities. And in those days, in all of the Evans wing, there were three toilets for men, one for the guards and one for the male workmen and one for the male curators, but absolutely nothing in that whole part of the building for any of the women there.

MR. BROWN: And that's almost half the museum, yes.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and we had to go and use the public toilets and wait in line for that and I didn't mind, but it was about 15 minutes. And Mr. Rossiter's response, "We'll see about this." And in nothing flat, it was decided that the men could all share in two of the bathrooms and women could have one of them.

MR. BROWN: So he was a man that could be brought around even if he were frosty in the beginning.

MS. SAYRE: Oh, yes, he was a very extraordinary human man.

MR. BROWN: Much more--it sounds as though you felt he was much more well-rounded than most of his colleagues.

MS. SAYRE: Oh, very much so.

MR. BROWN: And 2,000 people a year is quite a good number; isn't it? To come to study--

MS. SAYRE: Of course, some of those were classes which we can't really take in the same way. But--and it's a loss.

MR. BROWN: I believe it is. Now, the collection itself here, how would that have ranked, say, in the 1940s and '50s in the United States comparatively?

MS. SAYRE: Just about top.

MR. BROWN: Oh, top.

MS. SAYRE: I think ourselves and the Metropolitan probably were rivals and for each of us we were better off in some things than in other things.

[Interruption to interview.]

MR. BROWN: MFA, continuing.

MS. SAYRE: And one of the first things that happened that--in that first year was--that all the watercolors used to be in the painting department and Constable decided that he didn't really want them and so they were turned over to the print department, which makes much more sense. And also, they had theoretically turned over all the chalk drawings to us, but what this really amounted to was that if he liked it, it's something he said it was a pastel and he kept it. And if he didn't like it, he said it was a chalk drawing and my department had to have it. And--

MR. BROWN: Was Constable someone you would talk to now and then and--

MS. SAYRE: You couldn't really talk to him. He was very conscious that--he thought of himself as the great Constable. And here was I, a female nobody.

MR. BROWN: In fact, did he have a fairly wide reputation in that era?

MS. SAYRE: I don't know. I had so little respect for his knowledge, though he pretended far more knowledge than he had. And during those years, we had a chance to be given one of the Goya tapestry cartoons, which had been somewhat restored, and I knew that it was--when it turned up, I was able to tell that it was right, because I had really read about the tapestries. And I knew which ones were woven in which directions. So I knew which direction it ought to face. And the tapestry itself had survived, though not the cartoon for it.

And it was in the right direction, it was the right size, and it had--there were signs in it of something mixed which were not 18th century pigments, but on the other hand, the method of weaving them and the particular kind of weaving that was done for this given tapestry cartoon was to put the painting through the loom, which weighted it a good deal, and when all these tapestry cartoons turned up, they were in very bad condition. And I saw some by somebody else. And I bought a quarter to a third of them. The paint surface was gone so that you would expect there to be a good deal of repaint.

And I happened to have--when I began working on Goya, nobody was reading anything in Spanish on the grounds that the Spanish didn't know anything. And they didn't realize that, although they might make mistakes about foreign art, when it came to Spanish art that they had access to and were using these incredible Spanish archives. And this particular book on the tapestries was based on archival research. And it was the only copy in the country. And Constable took the position that he knew it, which couldn't have been true. And I offered to lend it to him so that he could see. Oh, no, he knew all about it. He read it.

MR. BROWN: And he couldn't have. There was no other copy.

MS. SAYRE: No. And we lost the painting.

MR. BROWN: Were you involved with Mr. Rossiter in--did you have a good many exhibitions, special exhibitions?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and was allowed to--very nice free reign in the kinds of things that I was allowed to do. The exhibition lists, unfortunately, aren't there. But I remember doing--my idea was to get people liking prints, you see. And so we had a particularly violent--I remember one time I did--there was a corridor that I could use, in which I could put, sometimes, changing subject exhibitions. And I did one called, *There's Always Been Weather: Bad Weather in Other Times.*

And I think not then, but later on when young men first began wearing long hair and my father was absolutely horrified by this and it seemed immoral to him. And I said to him, but, you know, father, your own father had long hair, because my father's father was born in 1834. He was an old man when my father was born, but my father couldn't--wouldn't admit that that could possibly be true. And so I decided I would do an exhibition called,

The Hair of Our Fathers. And with one exception of a portrait--a self-portrait by Dürer where it's plain that he hadn't combed it in a week or washed it in a month, I had only good types like the nobility and bankers and people--solid citizens.

And there were only two periods where men had short hair: One in around 1600 and the other one in 1800 and one of the drawings that particularly delighted me was one of a man who's just appalled because he's had to cut his hair off. And the son is poking his finger at his father and laughing at him, because he has long hair. And one of the things that delighted me was the number of middle-aged ladies who would poke their heads shyly in the door and say, "I just wanted to tell you, you know, this makes me feel so much better about my son."

MR. BROWN: But that's a show you would have done somewhat later in your time here around the '60s maybe or something like that?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, then when I would have done it in the '60s.

MR. BROWN: I know you've gone through the reports a lot. Maybe you want to talk about some of the other things you discovered from looking--about your early--say, during the time that Edgel was director.

MS. SAYRE: Well, one of the things that struck me was that in 1946, he gives attendance as just under 500,000, but almost 100,000 visitors went into the print galleries. And that attendance--that proportion was maintained throughout those years. And I think it was because of the kinds of exhibitions that we'd put up.

MR. BROWN: And you would have a--you had a prominent role in that from the--

MS. SAYRE: Sure.

MR. BROWN: [Inaudible]

MS. SAYRE: I had to do them. And--

MR. BROWN: You wanted things that would teach people, that would reach out and appeal to the intelligent public.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, but I also thought, you see, that--I believed firmly that the public was capable of leaning anything that you wanted to tell them, provided you did it in words that they knew. And therefore, I couldn't--do one exhibition on, where I let them choose for themselves which was the forgery or the copy and which was the original. And then they got a little thing in the end so that they could see it. I rebelled against Mr. Rossiter's notion that--and Anna Hoyt's notion, that all the labels should be in foreign languages, because I wanted people to be able to read the labels.

And I finally--I beat them because I showed them one label that they couldn't read themselves in French, but that I could and I said, you know, "The public doesn't have any dictionaries." And after that they conceded and I got to translate them all.

MR. BROWN: And until then, they insisted they have the title--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and it wasn't necessarily the title the artist had given it, but if it was catalogued by so-and-so with a title in French or had only a title in German, that's what was put on the label.

MR. BROWN: It was the way it was to be. It was an artifact in itself, I guess, essentially.

MS. SAYRE: Probably.

MR. BROWN: A foreign object.

MS. SAYRE: And--but Mr. Rossiter would let me do those things and I think that one of the--[inaudible] I really want to mention a few of the incredible things that were bought then. Oh, another exhibition I should tell you about that he got me to do was he said, "I want you to do an exhibition of Christmas poetry and prints on the same subject." And I just got fascinated by reading it and I used material in that room in French and German and Spanish and translated them into English. And this was about the time when they first began putting up all those horrible, gross statues on the common. And when it became--Christmas carols would blare throughout stores in order to make--it had to be in order to make people buy more and more. And so I did this exhibition in a--not really in a nice spirit, in the defiant one. And I thought, "I will put in only the things that I think are really good and are worth saying or worth doing. And if three members of the public like it, fine."

But it turned out to be one of the most popular exhibitions we ever did. And even the cleaners in the museum were stopping to read them, because--which was a foreign language and I did give a translation. If it was early

English then, then I would modernize the words in parentheses so people could read them. And the *Boston Globe* wanted a series on it and then a book publisher came along and wanted to do a book using them.

MR. BROWN: And they did. It was done.

MS. SAYRE: It was done, yes.

MR. BROWN: Why do you suppose it became--was popular? Because it touched something that people really wanted?

MS. SAYRE: Well, because the literature that we have on Christmas compared to what once existed is abysmal. And they didn't write in the terms of this pretty, little baby that everybody would love. But the baby had to be such that he is going to change me and my way of living. And it comes out in their poetry. For them--nobody feels--nobody felt that they would have welcomed this unknown, pregnant woman who was just about to give birth when she turns up in Bethlehem. And there's a whole cycle of carols on how badly Joseph and Mary were treated when they came to Bethlehem and refused lodging by this person or that person. Joseph is accused of seducing this 15-year-old. And they understood far better, I think, than--what the meaning of all of this really was. And when the shepherds come, they're hungry and poor themselves and they're not sure that they really want to give any of their gifts to the child and they're real peasants. And one of them says, "I knew that man wasn't really the father. He didn't look like him."

MR. BROWN: No.

MS. SAYRE: And then there's one incredibly beautiful one where one of the great debates was whether or not the--in the Middle Ages was whether or not the baby was a fetus like other fetuses. And they came to the conclusion that it would not have been and that the moment that the angel announces the birth, that the child--the fetus must have been fully formed. And this is why you sometimes see this little well-formed human figure coming and tearing down the ray to the virgin.

And that's why you see sometimes in statues of the pregnant virgin, some of them were made open and you see the child standing up in the womb because it could. And what this did in literature was--this was also why we think that when we see these early pictures of the virgin and child and the child looks so mature, they didn't know what babies looked like, which is idiotic. They did, but they were depicting where the child where the moment it was born could and did hold these incredibly beautiful conversations with its mother, and one long one about--where the baby--child predicts everything that is going to happen to him in his life. And I've been addicted to the--those early Christmas carols really in a sense. That's all due to Mr. Rossiter.

MR. BROWN: It's no wonder that show had a real impact.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And the poetry and the prints that were used to illustrate aspects of it.

MS. SAYRE: Turn that thing over to see if I have a book, Schongauer.

MR. BROWN: We're looking at Schongauer, a nativity, the poem--
MS. SAYRE: The poem is Spanish written in the early--

MR. BROWN: About that same time, the late 15th, early 16th century.

MS. SAYRE: And in English it says, "We should not sleep through the Holy night. We should not sleep. The virgin wonders to herself what she will do when the King of endless light shall be born, whether she will tremble before His divine essence, or what she might say to Him. We should not sleep through the Holy night. We should not sleep." Or--

MR. BROWN: And the Schongauer's image is very--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: --evocative of this. Yes.

MS. SAYRE: Or here's another short one and this is a--from a German book, 1491, with a--how the planets were at the time of Christ's birth. And the whole heavens are being held by a hand.

MR. BROWN: The hand of God.

MS. SAYRE: And I won't read the--there was a Latin verse which I won't read, because it was translated in the

15th century into English. "With hath wonder that reason [inaudible] maidenous mother and God as man. Leave thy reason and believe in the wonder. For faith is above Him and reason is under."

MR. BROWN: Charming.

MS. SAYRE: You want one more?

MR. BROWN: Sure. And this you did about, when was this done?

MS. SAYRE: Well, the book appears--it took, you know, a little while before the--'66.

MR. BROWN: '66. But you'd have the show a bit earlier.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, I did. Well, there's another one by this wonderful John Donne, too. I don't care--

MR. BROWN: Of the nativity, yes.

MS. SAYRE: Or there's one even on the slaughter of the innocents, is material for carols.

MR. BROWN: So the impact we're seeing in this book where you have a powerful image and then this pungent poetry was more or less echoed in the show itself. You had one juxtaposed with the other.

MS. SAYRE: Yes. The one I'm looking for is there's a--carried it through the flight into Egypt.

MR. BROWN: So you began with the genealogy of Christ and then the flight into Egypt, yes. Well, this kind of show, it was didactic. It was also entertaining, but it was mainly to tell something, to educate people who wished to learn something?

MS. SAYRE: No, I didn't do it didactically. I really did it in honor of how these people saw the nativity; contrasting it in my mind about what we were doing to it, the popular--

MR. BROWN: So your aim was to be--to resurrect, in a sense, the way people in that time, late Middle Ages and so forth, had seen the nativity?

MS. SAYRE: Or I didn't start out with that aim, because I didn't realize how much we had degenerated. You couldn't write a--this is a poem where--I used a few real objects in the book, which we didn't really have in the prints, but as angels' refrain, "Marvel not, Joseph, and Mary mild. For sacred not, though she be with child." Joseph, "I, Joseph, wonder how it may be. I, Joseph, wonder how it may be, that Mary wax great when I and she have ever lived in chastity. If she be with child, it is not by me." The angel, "Marvel not, Joseph. Marvel not, Joseph. The Holy Ghost with merciful distance and her hath entered without offense. God and man conceived by His presence and she a virgin pure without violence. Marvel not, Joseph." Joseph, "What the angel of God to me doth say, I, Joseph, must and will humble obey. Thus privily, I would have stole away, but now will I serve her till that I die." "Marvel not, Joseph. Joseph, thou shalt her maid and mother--," this is the angel, "Thou shalt her maid and mother find, the Son, Redeemer of all mankind. Thy forefathers have pained to unbind. Therefore, use not this matter in thy mind. Marvel not, Joseph."

MR. BROWN: Wonderful.

MS. SAYRE: I won't read all this one, because it's too long, but it's--

MR. BROWN: But this is a good example, you know, of the--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, it is a wonderful lullaby and I put with a Mantegna. And the refrain is: "Lullay, lullay, la lullay, my dere moder, lullay. As I lay upon a night, alone in my longing, me thoughte I saw a wonder sight, a maid and child rocking. The maiden wolde withouten song, hire child aslepe bringe; the child thoughte she ded him wrong, and bad his moder singe. ‘Sing now, moder' seide that child, ‘what me shall befalle hereafter whan I cum to eld, so don modres alle.'" Mary, "Ich a moder treuly that can hire credel kepe is won to lullen lovely and singen hire child aslepe." Jesus, "‘Swete moder, fair and fre, sithen that it is so, I preye thee that thu lulle me, and sing sumwhat thereto.'" Mary, "‘Swete son,' seide she, ‘whereof shuld I singe? Wist I nevere yet more of thee but Gabrieles gretinge.'" And he describes that and how Elizabeth will have a child.

MR. BROWN: He foretells.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and, "Ther, as he seide, I thee bare on midwenter night in maidenhed withouten care by grace of God almight. The shepperdis that wakkaden in the wolde herden a wonder mithe of angles ther, as they tolde, in time of thy birthe." And then takes him through his life and he says, "‘Shamefully for I shall die, hanged on the rood, for man's ransom I shall pay my own hearte blood.'" Mary, "Alas sone,' seide that may, ‘sithen that

it is so whorto shall I biden that day to beren thee to this wo?' 'Moder,' he seide, 'tak it lighte. For liven I shall ayeine and in thy kinde, thoru my might for elles I wroughte in veine. To my Fader I shall wendee in my manhed to Hevene; the holy Ghost I shall thee sende with his sondes seven. I shall thee taken, whan time is, to me at the laste to ben with me moder, in blis: all thiss than I have caste. All this werld demen I shall, at the dom rising; swete moder, here is all that I wile now singe.'" And, "'Certeinly this sighte I say this song I herde sing as I lay this Yolisday alone in my longing.'" We don't have anything remotely like it.

MR. BROWN: No. Was that point made at the time? Did you make that--

MS. SAYRE: Didn't need to.

MR. BROWN: Didn't need to. It was just that people were already reacting or certain people against the belittling and shallowness of the--

MS. SAYRE: Well, they just--they were fascinated by it.

MR. BROWN: --temporary celebration. Fascinated by it.

MS. SAYRE: People of all kinds. And I think it was--it may well have been the most popular exhibition that we did.

MR. BROWN: Well now, you're saying that prints attract about a fifth of the entire and during the '40s, '50s, '60s that the entire audience at the MFA at a given year.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: So this meant this was potentially or was, in fact, reaching a great many people.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Was that unusual in American museums? Or let's say compared with the Metropolitan. Can you--do you have any idea what their visitation figures were?
MS. SAYRE: No, I don't.

MR. BROWN: No.

MS. SAYRE: But I think that traditionally that my department has believed more in education than they do.

MR. BROWN: Theirs is more the private world of connoisseurship or something in that order or--

MS. SAYRE: Well, they think to be over the heads of the New Yorkers and I don't believe that for a moment, because the marvelous thing is that just as the *Globe had me* do not just this series, that it had six or seven series for them.

MR. BROWN: Oh, the *Globe* sponsored.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, a series of articles at Christmas and Easter and I could talk about--there was nothing in it that I couldn't say as long as I said it in words that people knew.

MR. BROWN: You were speaking earlier. You were going to say something about acquisitions during this time.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Maybe we--

MS. SAYRE: We should.

MR. BROWN: And then we'll go back and forth to exhibitions, because I think one is related, of course, to the other. And those were the two--your two principal activities, really.

MS. SAYRE: The--oh, one of the things that happened was that the--there's Mr. Rossiter getting older and he's thinking about--so we take on Peter Wick as possible successor.

MR. BROWN: He was a trained--he'd been where before he was here?

MS. SAYRE: I think he did something at Harvard. I can't remember particularly what. And then it was thought that we might get Jean Adhémar as the--as curator of prints. And he came over to give a series of lectures. And because I knew French, I was given over to him to help. And I was shocked by how little he knew. And luckily,

he was not taken. That means Mr. Rossiter became aware of it, too.

MR. BROWN: But was Peter Wick, for example, he was brought on to be looked over possibly?

MS. SAYRE: Well, he was brought into the department and he was immediately made an assistant as I wasn't, but just--that didn't really bother me, because, as I told you, back in the beginning that I made that choice that all I really wanted to do was to learn and I didn't care about making it or getting on as long as I could do things like that Christmas exhibition, I didn't care.

MR. BROWN: That was your priority.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Adhémar then turned out to be [inaudible]. With Adhémar, Rossiter did think of--toy with him as a possible successor.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and he was brought over so that we could--gave some lower lectures on a Wednesday series of lectures. Or maybe that was the lower lectures. I'm not quite sure.

MR. BROWN: Highlights of acquisitions you were going to talk about for a moment--

MS. SAYRE: Right, then also--

MR. BROWN: --during those years.

MS. SAYRE: There was--there were the Karoliks and Maxim Karolik was a penniless Russian tenor and he meets a Bostonian lady with a lot of money and when her mother finally died, she goes off to Europe by herself and comes back to the horror of the trustees with--married to a penniless Russian. And the trustees had him in, ask him whether or not he already has a wife. "Several," he says and they dropped that line of questioning.

And Karolik was the kind of man who--there were very few women in the museum who he didn't try to kiss. And because he had a very long neck, it was impossible to prevent his kissing you. But I didn't really resent it, because the kisses were--had no more reality than a candy box cover. And I took it as such. And I think it makes a great difference, the spirit in which men try to kiss you. And one president of the museum grabbed me in his arms forcibly. And that I did not like. Mr. Rossiter would sometimes kiss me, but always with respect on both sides.

No, Karolik just, as I say, it was like a candy box cover. And it had absolutely no more reality than that. And he--one of the things that I found so really rather sweet was that after his wife died, for one whole week at least, he didn't try to kiss anybody in the museum so far as I know. Because he would invite other women to concerts and theaters and so on. I went to--been to one of them, but he always asked her first. And it was one of those curious marriages that really worked. And even her friends admitted that he made her very happy. It shouldn't have worked, but it did. It's what they both needed and he was genuinely devastated at her death.

And one of the things that he loved about her was that she got him interested in American things. And they gave, together, the collection of American furniture. And then they began giving--then he turned to American paintings and Constable was so rude to him throughout--so completely uninterested in American paintings that very few collectors would have persisted in giving them and would have said, "Oh, the hell with you. If you don't want them, I'll give them to somebody else." But they did, because they felt that the museum--the institution was more important than the donor, which is very unusual. And then after Mrs. Karolik's death, he began to think about doing a logical sequence, which is a collection of drawings and watercolors. And this was a--in those days, was a total unknown field.

MR. BROWN: So neither you nor Mr. Rossiter were able to advise him, at least in the beginning of his field?

MS. SAYRE: No, but Mr. Rossiter, brought up in the European tradition as he was, turns to--sets out to really learn about it, gets hold of archival material on these people, letters and so on. And writes the first really good catalogue in American drawings and watercolors. He was that kind of man, too. Also, when I knew him, he smoked all the time maybe about two or three packs a day.

MR. BROWN: Rossiter?

MS. SAYRE: Rossiter, yes. And one day we noticed that he didn't seem to be smoking. And I said something to him about it and he said, "Really? Finally noticed?" And he's the only person that I know who didn't say anything to anybody, but just stopped and his reason for stopping was he said, "I got mad at all those taxes."

MR. BROWN: All those--

MS. SAYRE: Those high tobacco taxes. "And I decided I wouldn't pay them anymore." And so he just quit like that. You can see why I'm fond of him.

MR. BROWN: Yes, so he--in the case--this Karolik case, Rossiter very quickly boned up, prepped himself, in fact, even wrote, as you said, important early study.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And so was in a position to discuss and advise.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, well the--Karolik had a very unusual deal. He said, "I can propose anything I want to for the collection, but unless you want it, it will not be in the collection." This is pretty damn good. Wasn't--none of this, "You take everything, because I chose it." And his egoism came out a completely different way. He didn't like being charged--he stayed at the Ritz, I think. But he didn't like paying for the telephone calls that he made. So he would sit in Mr. Rossiter's office and do all of his telephoning there. And he also thought of us as a place that should--in which he could--it was his home in which he should be entertained. And I had a--most people really couldn't stand him and they wouldn't listen.

But I had an unspoken agreement with him that when I was really busy, I would tell him to go away. And I would signal to him to go away. But every now and then, I would wholeheartedly listen. Not just half listen, but really listen. And he liked that and went away meekly when I--on the other occasions. Some of the wonderful things we bought was this early Italian print of a stag browsing. He bought--he buys--he was able to get the very early German woodcuts.

MR. BROWN: This would be just after the war--after World War II?

MS. SAYRE: Yes. That was in the '50s.

MR. BROWN: Were these coming out of private collections that were being broken up or--

MS. SAYRE: A lot of them were, yes.

MR. BROWN: Often new to the market.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, although, some of them were refugees--dealers who had brought things over. And in 1950, I was looking at the--we have 112,208 visitors to the exhibition, 2,331 visitors to the study room. I examined--it would have been principally me--examined 137 objects and Mr. Rossiter notes, "There was one stray child," to whom we gave pencil and paper to draw until his family was located. But he was the kind of man who would put something like that into his annual reports. And Karolik begins giving his watercolor collection in 1951.

And then also throughout, there's the wonderful Russell Allen gifts. And Russell Allen was, I think, Mr. Rossiter's best friend, probably, and made a lot of his collection with the museum in mind. He bought the modern things that we couldn't afford, bought chiaroscuros in which he was interested. And we were, too, of course. And we bought--again, in 1951 this incredible collection of early Duvets, 16th century French, and a really fine Rembrandt, a really fine Dürer and a dotted print and the Goyas.

MR. BROWN: The Goyas that you'd catalogued?

MS. SAYRE: [Inaudible] Yes, and the Stirling Maxwell *Disasters of War*, the Duvet *Apocalypse* from d'Arenberg, *Maximilian's Triumphal Arch*, one of the most beautiful known impression of the Rembrandt St. Francis drypoint and a dotted print. And these--nothing of the kind was really done [inaudible] in these later administrations. And I think it's partly because these collector trustees would back it.

We didn't have the--the department didn't have the money for buying them. And he also--he bought--not only did Rossiter accept modern art, but he bought it. We bought the Chirico colorgrams and [inaudible]--an etching by Pieter Bruegel.

MR. BROWN: These collector trustees in those days, can you single out one or two of them or--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, give me the--Edward Waldo Forbes, Henry Lee Shattuck was very much interested in art, Thomas Jefferson Coolidge, William Truman Aldrich, Alvan Tufts Fuller, I don't think he was--wasn't so much a collector.

MR. BROWN: No, the former governor, I think, Fuller.

MS. SAYRE: Charles Donovan McGuinness [phonetic], don't know about him. Samuel Cabot was. Richard Cushing Paine was. Paul Joseph Sachs was. William--W.G. Russell Allen was. William Henry Claflin; I don't think

was. Robert Baldwin, George Peabody Gardner certainly was. Philip Hofer was. Bart Hayes [phonetic] was. Nelson Aldrich; probably less so. Mrs. Henry Bliss; don't know about her. And Mrs. Roger Hallowell was interested in art, too.

MR. BROWN: So the majority were interested in art, had experience as collectors, and you found that this translated often into considerable support?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

[Interruption to interview.]

MR. BROWN: August 9, 1995 with Eleanor Sayre. Robert Brown, the interviewer in her office at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. I thought we'd just pick up on your long tenure with the Museum of Fine Arts.

MS. SAYRE: We'll do that then instead.

MR. BROWN: And let's--I know you've been looking recently at annual reports and other bulletins and so forth in the museum. And I think there are a number of things that you would like to bring out. First you wanted to talk about the W.G. Russell Allen bequest. About when did that--

MS. SAYRE: That--about 19--he gave gifts all along and--

MR. BROWN: Well, the exact date isn't too important.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and--

MR. BROWN: Had he been a long-time supporter of this department?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and he and Mr. Rossiter were friends. And I think it was he with whom Mr. Rossiter was involved in the--and Paul Sachs were involved in the great caper of buying the whole collection of the Albertina after the war.

MR. BROWN: Yes, after the First World War.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MS. SAYRE: Which, in the end, fell through and Austria bought it and I secretly am a little--you can't help but have torn feelings about it, but I think that it was proper that it should have stayed in Austria on balance. But it was the great moment in their lives that all the negotiations about it and the hoax. And Allen was a very wide-ranging collector. He bought modern prints and he bought old prints. He liked chiaroscuros.

He bought some minor French prints that people weren't interested in at the time. And he always had a--one of the things that I liked about him was his warmth and his humor. And he would have a great deal to say about people who didn't make wills. And then, funny, he went to a hospital for an operation that wasn't supposed to be very serious and he realized that he, himself, hadn't made a will and so it was drawn up and he looked at it and said, "That's not the way I wanted it. That's not the way at all." But then he died before he could change it. And--

MR. BROWN: Was he a lawyer himself by training or--

MS. SAYRE: I don't know whether or not he was. But one of the things that it did was to leave the museum a choice of modern prints. And there is no definition of a modern print. And luckily for us, the co-heir was a niece of his and she was willing to--we had long conversations with her and she was willing to do two things. One was she was willing to call modern prints anything that was produced after 1800. And feeling that, as I did, that that probably what he would have himself would have considered modern prints. And we were given also a choice of books. And also a--the niece was willing to give the museum any old print that we really wanted which was marvelous, too. But I had some incredibly funny conversations with the lawyers who had never been faced with the idea of having to decide what was modern and what was not modern.

MR. BROWN: Can you recall any of those?

MS. SAYRE: Not in detail.

MR. BROWN: In general.

MS. SAYRE: Except that I discovered that you could be firm with lawyers.

MR. BROWN: That they'd back down.

MS. SAYRE: They would back down and they did.

MR. BROWN: Was Allen someone you'd gotten to know--

MS. SAYRE: Well, the other thing that was not defined is there's no definition of a book. And, for instance, a set of *Caprichos* was bound. Is that a book or is it not a book? They're intended to be sold as a set. And again, luckily we were allowed to decide these things with Lydia. With the Goyas there wasn't a problem, because we got left the Goyas anyway, but there could have been and Lydia was willing to agree that anything that had covers on it was a book. But then you come to the problem, supposing that it has paper covers like a portfolio of prints. Is that a book or is it not a book?

MR. BROWN: And the niece was Lydia?

MS. SAYRE: Lydia Tunnard.

MR. BROWN: Tunnard. And she was, in general, very liberal in her--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, because she knew well what his intent really was.

MR. BROWN: Which was that--to be very generous with--

MS. SAYRE: He wanted his collection to be preserved here.

MR. BROWN: Had you gotten to know him pretty well or his--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: What was he--what was his personality?

MS. SAYRE: If I had to sum him up, warm and honorable and he had a good curiosity, too. Adventurous in as much as he loved that whole caper as much as Mr. Rossiter did.

MR. BROWN: You mean, finding things and--

MS. SAYRE: No, of the caper with the--the material at the Albertina. And one of the things that his material would come into the museum. You know, we wouldn't want to store something that would go out and in and out and in and out and it became extremely tedious keeping track of it. And so I invented a system whereby we gave them all AL numbers. Allen loan numbers. And then you just could put down the Allen loan numbers coming in instead of having to do a description of each print each time.

MR. BROWN: And did--were these being loaned to exhibitions elsewhere or--

MS. SAYRE: Well, that he brought them in here for storage or whenever--occasion something was brought in and then was sent off on exhibition.

MR. BROWN: Did he maintain--

MS. SAYRE: And I made Allen loan cards for them, too, I think.

MR. BROWN: You did? Did he have quite a place to display things in his home?

MS. SAYRE: No, he didn't.

MR. BROWN: Nothing like that.

MS. SAYRE: No.

MR. BROWN: Did he live rather--how did he live? Elegantly or simply or--

MS. SAYRE: I don't know that I ever went to his house. At least, I suppose I must have done at some point, but I don't remember it particularly, because I always saw him here.

MR. BROWN: So you would account him one of your--the principal benefactors.

MS. SAYRE: Absolutely.

MR. BROWN: Was he also a trustee of the museum?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And you've spoken very highly of the old line of trustees here, that he would be a good example of that.

MS. SAYRE: Very good example. Another man--I don't know whether or not he was ever made a trustee, but an interesting collector was L. Aaron Lebowich, who was, I think, I can't remember whether they had a pharmaceutical business or something of that kind. And liked not too outrageous modern prints, but modern prints. And he was pleased when we found something that was done by a Jewish person.

MR. BROWN: And he was a good supporter?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And this is someone--do you recall him at all to some degree?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, I didn't know him as well. But--because he was a busy sort of man. Then there were other trustees who weren't always quite as--of the museum. All of them weren't necessarily admirable such as one trustee who owned a 19th century American drawing that we very much wanted. And he came with the proposition that he should give it to the museum, but we would sign an agreement that at his death we would give it back to the estate so that his children could have it. It's an example of having your cake and eating it, too. We wouldn't go along with that.

MR. BROWN: No. Did the drawing, by the way, ever come to the museum?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, it did.

MR. BROWN: It did.

MS. SAYRE: And then another man who--this time, I fought just--I don't think I was--I may not have been curator then. But he wanted to give us something that we--a watercolor that we very much wanted, but he--and he came just about the, you know, during the last week of the year. And he wanted to give it to us, but he wanted a guarantee that it would fetch a certain sum before he gave it. And I tried to get hold of the one person in New York who could give a valuation. He wasn't there. And then he wanted me to give him--the museum to give him a written guarantee that it would fetch that. I refused.

MR. BROWN: Did that ever come then to your collection?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: It did?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: So these were fairly hard dealing collectors then. Were they the exception would you say?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, I think so. Though, as somebody once said that when you throw together the people who--the collectors and the museum people and the dealers, that all the seven deadly sins save one are exceedingly well-represented.

MR. BROWN: The one being --

MS. SAYRE: Sloth. And indeed, I will confess to you that we got one of the best Goya drawings through lust. As the museum had bought a wonderful early Italian drawing for us. And if they got us one drawing a year, then we were--considered ourselves very fortunate. We had--to this day, we still don't have our own drawing fund. And along comes this marvelous Goya drawing and I knew that it was hopeless for us to get it. There was no way. But I remembered that there was a promoter in New York who said that--who had come up one time and said, "If ever you see a Goya that's right and you tell me about it--the museum can't get it and you tell me about it, I will leave it to you."

And so I asked Mr. Rossiter whether or not I could investigate this and I call him up and I ask him whether or not he would like to see it and he wants me to bring it to New York. And I get permission from the dealer who already was in New York to take it back down there and take it down on the train with me. And we don't go and

see him in his house, but in a hotel room. And I very soon see that whereas I want the drawing, he wants me. And thus we came to an impasse. But I do have a certain amount of inner toughness and what was very interesting was that--as interested me throughout with these--with people who collect, that some of them may be not very nice as people, but if you are able to see the bit of genuine good that still remains in them, they're enormously grateful and they will do things that they wouldn't dream of doing otherwise. Only because you saw it and because I saw that bit of good in him and he was aware of it you see, then we went on having a different kind of relationship.

So that whenever I went to New York, for example, I was--from then on, I would be--I would call him up and tell him that I was coming and he would ask me what I want--what theater thing I wanted to see and there would always be two tickets there for me, me and anyone else I cared to bring. I come back and I report what happened to me, about the drawing, though, bringing it back with me. And Mr. Rossiter goes and tells the trustees about it and they feel so sorry for me that they bought it. [laughter] One of the best ones we own.

MR. BROWN: Wonderful. You'd gone well beyond the call in their opinion.

MS. SAYRE: But I wasn't hurt by that. Do you think?

MR. BROWN: No. And you were able to find the best qualities even in some of these rather obsessive personalities?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Was Rossiter quite a person to, so to speak, train under in dealing--

MS. SAYRE: Couldn't have been better.

MR. BROWN: What was his own manner like, would you say? You presumably observed him day after day for a long time.

MS. SAYRE: He was the kind of man who--did I tell you about his being--going to the trenches in World War I?

MR. BROWN: You may have.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and how he got one of the dealers to lend him a German 16th century print to take with him?

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MS. SAYRE: And he had an instinctively perceptive eye and we would come in sometimes with--somebody would bring something in. We might be excited about it and we would take it to him and we would--he would say, "I don't like it." And he wouldn't say why, but would know that it wasn't right. And then we would take it back and we'd go into it in front of the--I think there was no occasion in which we didn't find that he was absolutely right about it in his opinion. And he believed in the growth of the people under him, which is rare in heads of departments and was proud of what we learned or were able to do and I told you about the incident about the bathroom?
MR. BROWN: Yes, the liberation of the--

MS. SAYRE: That's absolutely characteristic of him.

MR. BROWN: Did you have a feeling, perhaps, because of his wartime experience, that he was a rather big person; I mean, a man of--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Much of the routine was trivial and not--and to be kept in perspective.

MS. SAYRE: Yes. I don't know whether it was because of that or not, but he certainly had it. And also, there's a great deal of talk about men--the relationship between men and women in business. And, yes, a couple of times he kissed me, but it was always with a respect. He would never have done it against my will, but always respecting the person that I was and my freedom so that I didn't mind.

MR. BROWN: Did you--when it came near his retirement, you thought you would be the successor? Had he given any indication?

MS. SAYRE: No.

MR. BROWN: You mentioned he'd encouraged you--

MS. SAYRE: No, but Perry Rathbone, who was director, was determined not to have a woman. Did I tell you about that?

MR. BROWN: You've mentioned to some degree that?

MS. SAYRE: Then we won't go into it again.

MR. BROWN: No. But other--you had a number of other points that you pulled out from--browsing through some of the earlier published reports.

MS. SAYRE: Judging from--I think I must have mentioned writing the articles for the *Globe*, didn't I?

MR. BROWN: You had done some of that or all or at least the collaboration in your exhibitions--your Christmas exhibition.

MS. SAYRE: But I wrote--began writing a series of articles at Christmas and Easter for them.

MR. BROWN: No, you did. Based on--not on prints or drawings, but you mean in general or--because I don't think you said much--

MS. SAYRE: No, it was--they wanted something--sort of an Easter series or a Christmas series. And they were difficult to write, because I knew that the people at Harvard were going to read them, so it had to say something new. But I had to say them in words that our cleaners could understand, because they were going to read them, too. And I had to write about it without offending people who were Catholics or people who were Jews or people who were fundamentalist Christians. Yet I had to tell the truth. And I think what was marvelous from the point of view of the *Globe* was that they--I remember when I was writing about the *Passion* prints that I wanted --I didn't think that my Jewish friends would read them and then I found that, yes, they did. So then I realized that I was going to have to really know what the Jewish law was. And went to the seminary and got a marvelous commentary so that I was able to--I forget which series it was, but for one of them.

MR. BROWN: And these were generally based around Christmas and Easter?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And based on what prints to--and explain how they illustrate--

MS. SAYRE: Prints or things in the museum. And I can--I think some of them my stepmother put in an album. It's up there if you want to take a--

MR. BROWN: This was not simply based on particular works of art, necessarily, but on explaining some of the religious stories?

MS. SAYRE: The concepts behind them.

MR. BROWN: And this was not your typical--

MS. SAYRE: Read this one.

MR. BROWN: Oh, this is called--well, it's on the tree of Jesse; a tree of the prophesy. "A curious picture of a vine or a tree is not likely to make us think of the birth of Christ here in the 20th century. But it would have in the 15th century, when people were fond of the device." And so then you put things in perspective. You point out that history--people's perceptions of --

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and--

MR. BROWN: --are utterly different from our own or were.

MS. SAYRE: But then I go on and I say that it's not only the ancestry of, as it were, biological ancestry of Jesus of whom--that he was descended from Jesse. But also it could be the spiritual ancestry of Christ. So that you could have the--that could even be Asiatic philosophers in it and it could be as small as that little print there, or it could cover the whole ceiling of a cathedral. It's a wonderful concept.

MR. BROWN: Oh, yes. What was the response?

MS. SAYRE: Oh, people really liked them.

MR. BROWN: Was this something fairly typical of your career here? You would be writing this sort of thing. You have mentioned the other things you did, the exhibitions ...

MS. SAYRE: I think it was the--I have--the [inaudible] part of me that believes--that is passionately interested in the growth of people. So that I loved, for example, that there was instituted seminars that the curatorial staff gave for the--which were open to the colleges and universities in greater Boston. And I did two of them on Goya. And during the first one there was a Goya exhibition in Hamburg and I wanted very much to have the students see it. And I managed to raise enough money to take my students to Hamburg for a week, put them up in the youth hostel.

And then the next time I did it, I took them to Spain. Made them really work. Told them in the beginning that the only thing that would marked on would be a long paper and would have to be publishable. That didn't mean that they had to get it published, but it had to be basically publishable. And that scared off the weaklings.

MR. BROWN: Yes, so it was an intense thing. They had to do a good deal of preparation before they went abroad or were in the seminar.

MS. SAYRE: And then I remember I was so astounded that I got enough money to take them that I wasn't going to let anybody waste one, single minute. We arrive early in the morning in Hamburg and before we get off the plane I explain to them that either they can go to bed the first day, or if it was a short trip, then it's better just to keep on going and just as fast as you can to the different hours. And this--and as much as we had so little time, that's what we would do. And so in the morning we walked around the town and then they opened the exhibition especially for us to see it in the afternoon and we began walking around it and then I made the great tactical error of saying, "Why don't we sit on the floor while we talk about some of these works." And we did and one by one, just like the apostles, they nodded off to sleep. [laughter]

MR. BROWN: Well, this interest in the growth of people goes back to your earliest work in museums or among the earliest. You mentioned, for example, in Rhode Island, working with various nationalities and ethnic communities and this persisted throughout your --

MS. SAYRE: Absolutely. And it affected my teaching and it certainly also affected the kinds of exhibitions that I put on, too; such as we did a Rembrandt and a Dürer exhibition, which required the public to look closely at the prints. The Rembrandt, it was how Rembrandt experimented using different kinds of papers and different kind of inks to get different effects. And we rented the catalogue and we made available magnifying glasses to the public; a huge success.

Then in Dürer, we did--one of the things that we wanted people to see was the difference in the quality of impressions. And that exhibition drew as many people as the--I think it was as--I should look and see which--precisely which exhibition. But I don't know that I can find it that quickly, but a French exhibition with things in color.

MR. BROWN: You mean, to talk about color and prints? These were prints?

MS. SAYRE: No, I mean another exhibition that the museum had. But the public was as drawn to this, because they could understand.

MR. BROWN: And in the Dürer, the--you enabled the public to see differences --

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: --in the quality, for example.

MS. SAYRE: We did it through the labels, but then, to some extent, a little bit--but then we also, because they were able to rent the catalogue so people could see. And then another [inaudible] marvelous device which --

MR. BROWN: You said, "Rent the catalogues."

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Yes, they could borrow the catalogue.

MS. SAYRE: They rented it.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MS. SAYRE: And I had some that were--that had painted covers so that the guards could spot them. And if you decided that you wanted to buy the catalogue, then the rental money was taken off the price of the one that you bought. So we did sell quite a number of them by that means. And, in fact, one bright, young guard used to lend the catalogues to some people even without the--the students particularly--even without the rental fee, because he said he found that then they went and they bought catalogues from him, too. The people want to

learn.

MR. BROWN: And this made it easy--brought them to the point where they were beginning to learn and to continue their education they should, for example, buy the catalogue.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Or look very carefully.

MS. SAYRE: And another thing that we did to make it all more palatable--and this was the idea of a very good designer--was to have very big panels with windows cut into them so that all you saw was the print and you didn't see the frame. And the public thought--would comment afterwards that they thought that they--there was one of them--because you would get so close to the prints not realizing that you couldn't get any closer than you could ordinarily. But you had a feeling of intimacy. And when one of these exhibitions went up to Canada afterwards and the--they didn't use that device of the panels, but you saw the frames, it was very tiring to look at it. So, visually.

MR. BROWN: The exhibition--thinking--your thinking was always. "How do I convey what I feel is important to convey."

MS. SAYRE: No, there was --

MR. BROWN: As best as possible.

MS. SAYRE: No.

MR. BROWN: No?

MS. SAYRE: What I wanted to do was to make what they were looking at accessible to them.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MS. SAYRE: So they could see for themselves.

MR. BROWN: You would never preach.

MS. SAYRE: No. But it's helping people to look. And children are much more open-minded and looking than--as a rule than grownups are.

MR. BROWN: Did you have anything to go on? Was there anything, not necessarily written down, but were older people in the field able to comment and give you ideas as to how you might do this or is this something pretty much--you pretty much developed on your own?

MS. SAYRE: I think I developed it on my own just because--and these *Globe* articles were a help in that too, because they taught me that the general public could understand these things--the very general public.

MR. BROWN: You were--when you were at the Rhode Island School of Design museum with the German-born figure there, Alexander Dorner, was that him?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: At the beginning of --

MS. SAYRE: He'd left.

MR. BROWN: He'd left, but his installations were--what could you call them today? Maybe even environmental. [inaudible] with the "context" --

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: --I think is the word they use at the moment.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Did you admire those? Were those effective in some way?

MS. SAYRE: I'm not sure. I didn't evaluate them at the time. But going back to what the public can do, I was struck at--with the Goya exhibition. There was a version of it in the Prado and here and in the Metropolitan. And

in the Prado, they--

MR. BROWN: You mean, the one--the "Goya in the Age of Enlightenment"?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, they had just the briefest possible labels for the prints and the drawings and the public didn't really look at them at all. It was partly because they were in another room, too. And they spent--all the public was concentrated on the paintings. When we did it, we tried to make the public--to make the prints and drawings understandable to the people who were looking at them. Just--but it always had to be done very briefly. Do you want to see how it looked?

MR. BROWN: Sure. [Inaudible]

MS. SAYRE: Donkeys and wearing masks.

MR. BROWN: You were talking about some of Goya's *Caprichos.*

MS. SAYRE: Yes. Now, this one is--as a matter of fact, is--all right. Let me get a *Capricho* then, yes.

MR. BROWN: It doesn't matter, really, but as an example of the clarity and the effectiveness of the labels. And this is something you took great--you worked on in great detail yourself; is that right?

MS. SAYRE: I didn't write all of them myself.

MR. BROWN: But --

MS. SAYRE: *The Childish Man*: Some nobles have been so spoiled that they continue to behave as babies even when they are grown men and need lackeys to take them about with leading strings. They consume food by the cauldron-full. And, as Goya indicated by placing a commode to the left of the cauldron, they produce nothing better than waste. And people can understand that or --

MR. BROWN: Now, we've talked earlier about the multiple meanings and the arguable interpretations of money in Goya's works. Here would you sometimes say it possibly means this, it possibly meant that or would you try to be as clear --

MS. SAYRE: We tried to be clear based on what the people who wrote the commentaries agreed on. This is the *Coming of Justice.*

MR. BROWN: Another caption.

MS. SAYRE: Another--of a drawing.

MR. BROWN: Another drawing.

MS. SAYRE: This is an allegory of the arrival of Justice symbolized by a scale following the adoption of the Constitution of 1812. Those welcoming Justice are illuminated on the left. Those who have the most to lose in the new constitutional order, a friar or a monk, a nun, and a priest are on the right. Or let me get you one on the *Disasters*.

MR. BROWN: *The Disasters of War*.

MS. SAYRE: *Heroic Feat Against the Dead*: Goya did not ignore barbaric acts committed by Spanish guerillas. This image may have been suggested by accounts of a Spanish general murdered and then mutilated by his own soldiers who suspected him of treason. And luckily, the Goya exhibition people--I did politely say to our administration that I thought it might be a popular exhibition. But they didn't believe me, luckily.

MR. BROWN: Why do you say that?

MS. SAYRE: Because then there were no tickets. And that meant that people could come back as often as they liked. And one of the things that I was doing during the--on the weekends when there were enormous crowds was that I would tell people, for one thing, that it was really worth the wait. And every now and then one would say, "Oh, I know. This is the fifth time I've been there. I couldn't take it all in one sitting."

And the other thing I did was if I saw anybody who was--looked as though they had difficulty walking or anyone with a small child, I would ask them if they would like to go in ahead of all the line. And then I would--I was wearing a Goya t-shirt that I had. I would say to the child, "As we walk in, walk as though you were in a parade. And you're going to lead the way because it's because of you that you're mother's going to get in first." And then so that the people wouldn't feel upset at other people getting ahead of them, I would say, "This is the Goya

escort service in action." And people loved it.

MR. BROWN: Did you do a lot of--many of your exhibitions in all in great sense of play and fun?

MS. SAYRE: Oh, yes. And I think that the one that really, from that point of view, made the most difference was probably the Peter Rabbit exhibition.

MR. BROWN: About when was that? Some years ago?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, that was just when Jan Fontein--his first year as director. And we'd been through a very bad period with a business man who had made himself--was the president of the board of trustees who put under himself a man who didn't have the experience to be the head of a big museum like this so he could run it himself. And the Brown Museum got--went down further and further and further and finally the public was aware of it. And I would go to take out money out of a bank and the tellers would ask me about it even.

And somebody had asked us to do--whether or not we'd be interested in doing a Beatrix Potter exhibition because she was a very good--in addition to writing all the children's books, she was a very good watercolorist. And she was also a mycologist of note. And one of the nice ideas that they had was to tie twentieth century copies of the books to the cases so that people could sit and read them, which we did. But then I thought to myself, "What a pity that so many children living in the city don't know what these animals look like."

And so I called the Franklin Park Zoo to see whether or not they'd be interested in setting up a branch zoo in the courtyard. And I never had permission to do any of these, because Jan couldn't make up his mind ever about anything and he wouldn't say yes and he wouldn't say no. So my technique was just to--keeping him informed about what I was thinking of. And then finally we would come to a point where it was too late to do anything about it. And we--I thought also that there should be a birthday party because it was the 75th anniversary of the publication of Peter Rabbit.

MR. BROWN: So this was in the 1970s then?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and so we had--I made the tactical error in announcing this of saying that no adult would be allowed to come unless accompanied by a child. And this got huge media attention needless to say. And so--so much so that although we'd thought of people having--making reservations for this birthday party. We saw that that simply wasn't going to be done. And I knew two things: One was that we'd have to have a birthday cake and it would have to be enormous. And it was so big that it took two trucks to bring it.

MR. BROWN: It was in two parts I --

MS. SAYRE: In two parts, yes. And for the zoo, I had--we had ducks, and geese, and a rabbit, and I thought of having a cow because I thought it would be wonderful to look out the window and see a cow. But then I thought that that might be pushing things, but I knew that we had to have pigs and goat--and pigs and sheep. At first I thought that was going to be all right. And then the zoo people said, "No, you can't." And I said, "Why not?" And they said, "Because there's a law about animals with cloven hoofs and you can't have them in a public dwelling place." And I said, "But nobody really sleeps here. I almost do sometimes, but not quite." And they said, "But if we lend them to you, we can't take them back."

And so I borrowed some sheep and the zoo--arranged for the zoo that--and we--they bought two pigs and fattened them up and at the end of the exhibition they sold them at a profit. As far as the rabbit was concerned, we had the most enchanting housing including a mouse house, for example. And --

MR. BROWN: The zoo provided this?

MS. SAYRE: Oh, yes. And did a very nice job. And then had arrangement with zoos whereby anybody who belonged to the zoo was allowed into the museum free and vice versa during the period of the exhibition. And the day of the birthday party it was raining slightly. And the zoo--the two young people in charge of the animals came into my office looking very shamefaced and they said the rabbit has escaped and we spent an hour trying to catch him and we can't. That's all right I said because anyone who has read the books is going to think it's quite proper that Peter should be naughty on his birthday. And if they hadn't read the book, they won't miss him. And the rabbit had a marvelous time. It would--when it got bored, it would sniff at a child's foot. The child takes off after rabbit. The rabbit runs and when it gets tired of being chased, hides under a bush. Begins again on another a child when it gets tired of sitting under a bush. And food and water and so on were put out for it during the day. Two days later, there was a piece in the *Globe* about--some picturing the staff of the museum chasing the rabbit through the corridors of the museum.

That was on a Saturday. And on a Sunday, there was an editorial about--also in the *Globe* about whether the propriety of a museum having a live rabbit. And I'm glad to say they came down on the side of rabbits. But then

on the Monday I saw one of the zookeepers with another rabbit in his arms. And I said, "What are you doing?" And he said, "We're going to give you this rabbit instead and take the naughty one away." And I said, "But I like the naughty one." And he said, "But we don't want to be criticized." And so they left the good rabbit and I never really liked it.

MR. BROWN: It just sat there. That's wonderful.

MS. SAYRE: Well, maybe not--

MR. BROWN: Do you to say a minute about--more about--a little bit more about the Goya exhibition labels.

MS. SAYRE: We'll do that later.

MR. BROWN: That's fine.

MS. SAYRE: But the--no, I want to say now that the Metropolitan didn't want to use our labels because they wanted to do everything themselves.

MR. BROWN: Oh, really?

MS. SAYRE: Fine. But they didn't take the same pains to make the material understandable to people and I was very interested that in New York the public did what they did in Spain. They looked at the paintings, but not the prints and drawings because the Metropolitan watered down the material in their labels. And they took the--their position was that you can do this kind of thing in Boston, but we have a different kind of audience in New York. I don't believe that for a moment, myself. I think people are people. They could have done it, too.

MR. BROWN: Is that an assumption, do you think, that people in Boston are more likely to want to read things and the like?

MS. SAYRE: They're not a bit. That's --

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MS. SAYRE: That's nonsense. The public can understand anything you care to tell them provided you say it in words that they know. And they get excited.

MR. BROWN: And you save the special and professional words for --

MS. SAYRE: For publications, but I don't think--I think you should be sparing with them there, too.

[Interruption to interview.]

MR. BROWN: Continuing the interviews. This is September 7, 1995. I thought we'd talk a bit about--we've talked already somewhat about your being in Spain, your great familiarity with it. Perhaps we could talk now about some--your general observations on the era in which you primarily did your work in Spain, which was under--in the Franco era. You mentioned a bit about the Catholic Church at that time and its relation to the people, the closeness between church and state. And why did you mention those? Are those things that were pervasive or that affected your own work or your perception, say, of Goya, for example?

MS. SAYRE: For one thing because it did help me understand Goya a lot better, because I saw how power and money and state support corrupt a church. And it was so rare ever to see any monk or nun or priest doing anything for anybody, that when I did, I would offer them money. And in the year I spent in Spain, I think that was three times.

MR. BROWN: This was--your first year was in '54.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: When you were over --
MS. SAYRE: That's when it was really bad. And when I went to--I liked going to the service of the country where I live and--but I was hard put to it to pray at all at mass in Spain because in Madrid you could keep a job only if you were seen--any kind of job in which the government could put pressure only if you were seen going to mass and the informers noted that you were there. So it was a building that was filled with people. I couldn't pray. The priests mumbled through the mass as though none of it had any meaning whatsoever to any of them. And they had begun having--it had been decreed that there should be sermons, which were not customary in Spain at mass.

And so they had them, but they were broadcast from a record and they were broadcast while mass was being said. And which was profoundly shocking to me and also to a lot of Spanish people. And every now and then I would go to the British church, which in those days couldn't look like any church, but like an ordinary building. It couldn't have a cross on the outside of the building. And if I thought I was going to be late, I would take a cab.

And if I took a cab, I invariably was late because the taxi driver would say, "Are you Protestant?" as we got nearer and he got up his courage. And I'd say, "Yes." "Is it true that your clergy marry?" "Yes." "And have children?" "Yes." "And then they behave the way Christian fathers ought to behave instead of here where they just have children." And I said, "They're not all good, but at least they do try." And not once did I take a cab to the Protestant church without going through that conversation with people.

And I remember once trying to get a--some friends of mine bought a car, which is a tremendous thing to do in Spain. It would be like buying a super deluxe limo here. And I wanted to get them a St. Christopher medal. And I knew that it should be--in order for it to really count, that it should be blessed. And so after buying it, I stopped as I'm going to the--on my way to the library and I stopped at a lot of--I think three or four churches. Not one was open. And don't know--finally I found one that was and there was a priest who was just standing in the entry. And I asked him whether or not he would bless the medal explaining why it was important at this time. "I'm busy. Go away."

So I would go away and then I finally remembered that there's always a priest reading in the reading room in the *Biblioteca*. And so I look around for one who looks more benign. And I say, "Are you very busy?" "No." And I say, "Would you be willing to," I explained about the friends and how important it is to have a good blessing and ask him whether or not he'd be willing to bless the medal. He said, "Well, I would, but I don't have my missal with me. So I don't know--I can't do it." And so I looked so disappointed that he said, "All right." And then he said, "Here. Blessed." And that was no kind of blessing to me.

And I go home for supper or to change before going out for supper with these friends and explained to my landlady. And she said, "Oh, look in the newspaper, because they will always tell you which churches are open and you could go to one." There was a choice between the Dominicans and the Jesuits. And as the Dominicans ran the Inquisition, I thought I'd pick the Jesuits despite any mistrust I might have had of them. And--as a good Protestant--and she'd explained to me that it counted more if the priest were in his vestments.

And so I go to mass and ask about – at the door about having a medal blessed and I'm told just go to any of the confessionals and the priest will do it for you. But I could see what would happen if I went to the confessional, that we would immediately get off on the wrong foot because I wouldn't say the right things. And so I thought it best that I go through mass first. And it was a reasonably well-said mass. And I nabbed me a priest still in his robes, but just in case, I held the medal in my hand and I asked God myself to bless it. And that was its second blessing. And then I asked this priest to bless it again and he gave a so-so blessing. That was the third one.
MR. BROWN: But such are the lengths you would have to go to in those illiberal times.

MS. SAYRE: I could read any book I wanted to in the library, but if I had been Spanish, I would have had to had a church permit to read anything on government as well as anything--naturally, anything on religion I couldn't have read without a specific church permit. One of the people that I knew had been--was at the university, was given a question on Thomas Aquinas and says--Thomas Aquinas says that he tests this and this and this and this, but in my opinion he's wrong for the following reasons. He was suspended indefinitely from the university for saying--for writing that.

MR. BROWN: So it was order and conformity at all costs?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: How did this affect the atmosphere in which you undertook--you were studying Goya's *Caprichos* at that time?

MS. SAYRE: Well, it --

MR. BROWN: Did it--

MS. SAYRE: It taught me a lot and one of the things that--it taught me really sort of even more about the Spanish Civil War and I saw that these--not the--so later on I saw that if I had been in Spain during the Civil War that I would have burned the churches, too, because they had been so desecrated by the clergy. And to me, the greatest miracle that I have ever beheld is how, due to Pope John, the church in Spain changed. And mass is really mass now.

MR. BROWN: The sermons you spoke of when you first went, which were on records which were just played, --

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: --were they politically--fraught with political --

MS. SAYRE: I don't know because I didn't listen to them.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MS. SAYRE: It was just a recording and I brought my own thoughts.

MR. BROWN: Difficult to hear I would think if the mass is being said at the same time.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, I concentrated on the mass instead.

MR. BROWN: But after the reforms of Vatican II and so forth, then things began to change.

MS. SAYRE: Before the reforms, for instance, I couldn't--if I went to look at a painting in a church with no service of any kind going on, if I didn't have sleeves down to my wrists and a skirt and something over my head, I couldn't--I would be immediately thrown out of the church. And now I go there and you see people with no hats and girls in blue jeans and girls singing in the choir. But the Spirit is there now.

MR. BROWN: Do you think that there was a parallel between the Spain you first knew in the 1950s and in Goya's day?

MS. SAYRE: Yes. And I think another thing that it made me see was the importance of separating church and state. And I know that in Nazi Germany when I was there that it was thrilling to go to church because it was something that the Nazis didn't like people to do. So it took courage to go. And the people who went, went because it mattered so much to them. So it was marvelous. And then I go there to Spain where I can't even pray and I remember what I'd read in England about how corrupted the church was when it--there were too many of these easy livings that you could inherit. And what it made me see was that any church that had to depend on the respect of the people to that extent--for its support to that extent was going to be a better church. And to this day I'm absolutely opposed to any kind of church aid--government aid for church schools or any crossing of those lines.

MR. BROWN: Well, when you first--when you went to study the *Caprichos,* did you bring--you were--daily experience while you were in Spain was informing and affecting your interpretation or your looking?

MS. SAYRE: Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: You came from having looked at a great deal of them already; hadn't you? I mean the purpose of going there ---

MS. SAYRE: I wasn't working so much in the beginning on the *Caprichos* as on the drawings. And also I'm trying to read as much as I could and understand everything that I could. And the Spanish people whom I knew were really marvelous to me. And I have such profound gratitude towards men like Lafuente Ferrari. He was a great scholar and a wonderful person.

And I liked old--in the Prado when I first went there, it was a very much of a 19th century institution so that the director Sotomayor came an hour a day and sat in a big rotunda and held court. Then he went home again. And all the work was really done by Sanchez Canton who was the only curator that they had. I wanted to look at the drawings and he was very nice about allowing me to do it and allowing me to unframe them--a lot of them, too.

And I was horrified in the beginning because all the drawings were hanging in very strong sunlight up in the attic galleries. And many of them are against the wooden frames and I realized how they were being destroyed by the acidity of the wood and combined with the heat of the sunlight. And bit by bit, because I could only--what could be done could be done only if I didn't cause anybody to lose face or seem to be critical in any way. But I gradually managed to get permission to open up some of them and give a little first aid. And a lot of them had newspapers in back, too. It was deadly. And I took out all the newspaper and I bought good--the best typing paper I could find and put that in behind. And I bought--some of them needed to be rehinged and the only thing that I could find was stamp hinges that seemed to be safe. So I used those.

MR. BROWN: What kind of hinges?

MS. SAYRE: Stamp hinges, which I could I buy. And the place that I could do it was the same room where the big, huge room on the first floor where the painting restorers were working and also where any cases were made--boxes were made for things to be shipped. But I kept it as clean as I could and it worked.

And gradually, one of the things I was proud of was that I got them interested in having somebody in Spain learn about the conservation of paper. And then it didn't work out as well as I would have liked because it seemed to me that Americans were always going in and telling people what to do and how to do things and that I should--they wanted me to pick the person and I said, "No." I thought that they should. And the person that they picked wasn't good and did come to this country, but then got homesick and didn't stay for more than a month or two and went home; thought he knew it all; did some dreadful things.

MR. BROWN: But at least you got them thinking--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: --in those terms. And eventually, did they come around to professionalize--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: --these matters?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: So after you had done this conservation work of your own, would they put--immediately put them back in the sunlight or you were able to suggest that that wasn't the way to do it either?

MS. SAYRE: I don't think--I didn't succeed just--I might--I probably did say something about it then, that perhaps they might be rotated or-- because you can't go to a country and tell people that everything they're doing is all wrong.

MR. BROWN: So they treated it really--them just as artifacts, as --

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: They liked them. I mean, they were proud to have them, I suppose, but --

MS. SAYRE: Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: But you also worked that first year, did you, in the Academia de San Fernando?

MS. SAYRE: Yes. But again, going back to these men who really taught me and helped me. Sanchez Canton who almost never smiled and when he did then, it was as though the sun had come out. And it was the Spaniards, in those days, who really knew about Goya, who--because they had access to all the archival material.

MR. BROWN: And was he very--he enjoyed explaining and teaching?

MS. SAYRE: Not that so much, but he would give me a chance to really look and learn--made the material available to me. And I remember one of the things that I wanted to know, for example, was what happened to prostitutes in connection with the--this was in one of the questions in connection with the *Caprichos* and what the laws concerning prostitution were. And so I asked my landlady. And she said she knew just the person in the Department of Justice to ask because she had ruined him--ruined herself during the war trying to get a better cell for her husband and her son.

MR. BROWN: Trying to get a what?

MS. SAYRE: Better cells for her husband and her son when they were imprisoned and she was glad to get something back from him. And so she calls up and has arranged that I shall go to the Department of Justice and be allowed to look at the material. And I am met at the door, escorted through the building and I'm displayed as the niece of the great President Woodrow Wilson and I tried to look sort of--put on some sort of suitable expression for that and didn't tell them that wasn't what I was quite. And then we get to the office of the minister and in as much as he was quite certain that women didn't know anything, he got a friend of his to write the whole history of prostitution in Spain, one little six-inch piece of writing paper on both sides and I thanked him for it and left.

And coming down the stairs, these long stairs--this used to be--it had been one of the great luxurious monasteries. And to my horror, I saw Sanchez Canton coming up the stairs and I thought he must be wondering why I'm there in the Department of Justice. And all I could think of to say was, "I've come to find out about prostitution." [laughter]

MR. BROWN: What did he say?

MS. SAYRE: He was always a gentleman.

MR. BROWN: But he was most helpful in --

MS. SAYRE: Yes. And I would tell him things that I discovered, too. And he did like me and took me out several times, too. And we would be in a car with a fascist flag on it, but never mind.

MR. BROWN: Someone of that sort would not discuss political matters with you, probably, in a --

MS. SAYRE: I didn't--

MR. BROWN: --or very little. He wouldn't --

MS. SAYRE: I wouldn't anyway.

MR. BROWN: No.

MS. SAYRE: But he was marvelous during the--he was the kind of man who--during the civil war, the fascists dropped a bomb on part of the Prado. And he had to write a report on it. And what he said was, "On such and such a day, there fell a bomb upon the Prado," which you can say beautifully in Spanish.

MR. BROWN: The principal place you did research, then, was the National Library and the Prado?

MS. SAYRE: And Academia of San Fernando and the--yes, and the Prado.

MR. BROWN: And how was working at the Academia? Was it--

MS. SAYRE: They were wonderful to me, too. And they let me just--they would get out the archives for me and you can read in the archives--because nothing was ever thrown away--how much, for example, they spent--when they had a meeting, how much they spent for the sand to put down on the street for the--to keep the coaches quiet so it wouldn't disturb them at the meeting. And there was a wonderful account I found of how they--their model died and they--in Goya's day. And they took job applications and they couldn't decide which of the males that they liked and so they voted, all these academicians, to go down into the gallery and into the drawing rooms and have them pose there by candlelight so that they could see which was the better man. And I think of this picture of them all trailing down to examine them is a wonderful one. And they couldn't decide. And so they hired them both.

They didn't have any female models. And that was why one of the--which in a way was a very good thing, because about that same time, it was decided that--somebody brought it to the king's attention that he had all these scandalous nudes and to get rid of them. And they were to have been burned. And the director of the Academia said, "Well, that would be pity because we could use them for teaching." And so the great Titians, nudes, and the great Rubens and about something like about 30 marvelous paintings were taken to the Prado. And the deal was that they had to be kept locked up in the closets excepting when they were actually in use. And from then on you read about them that--you read in the minutes about how they kept creeping out of the closets.

MR. BROWN: But this suggestion to the king was what? In the late 18th century or --

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And that was the --

MS. SAYRE: And even catch some little glimpses of reflections in a couple of them in Goya's work, too.

MR. BROWN: And so again, the era--the Franco era was a great one for understanding the hypocrisy --

MS. SAYRE: Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: --a hundred and fifty years before.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Many parallels. Did you after that--were you there for one year that first time?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, but then later on--this is out of order, but one of the exhibitions that we did went up to Canada afterwards and the minister--the Spanish minster to Canada, ambassador to Canada, invited me to come and see him and I did and then he asked me whether or not I would be willing to accept a decoration. And I thought with the speed of light because on one hand, the last thing in the world I wanted was any decoration from

Franco.

But then on the other hand, I saw full well that if I turned it town--I mean, I saw two things: One was that they weren't giving it to me for my political opinions, but because of what I'd done to help them preserve their art and I realized that I could no longer go on doing that if I turned down a decoration. And I thought the works of art are more important than I am. And with no perceptible hesitation on my part, I said I would be--I accepted. And the moment I said yes, I realized it was the right thing to do and was proud of it and happy about it.

MR. BROWN: Did you go to Spain for this or did you--was this given you here?

MS. SAYRE: It was given me here. Still have it.

MR. BROWN: And this was the--how do you suppose that had come about? Sanchez Canton or someone of that sort had mentioned what you'd done and --

MS. SAYRE: It must have been, yes.

MR. BROWN: The –

MS. SAYRE: And I feel, I do love Spain, too. There are so many good qualities in it which I realized even then under Franco of the--I loved it that if I were to offer a taxi driver who was--might be half--certainly might be half-starving--a choice between being given a tip or thanked as a human being, he would choose to be thanked as a human being. And I loved that in them.

MR. BROWN: Because they gave you a receipt and were you not to tip them?

MS. SAYRE: No, no, but I always did, because there's no reason why you shouldn't do both, but to be seen as a human being, the kind of pride that that engenders in a person mattered more to them--much more to them than the money. And that certainly isn't true in Italy or in France or in this country.

MR. BROWN: Do you suppose--was that a factor of that era or do you think it's inherent in Spanish culture?

MS. SAYRE: I think it was inherent in the culture. And only in one city did anybody try to cheat me. I was in the south, which is more than you could say for this country.

MR. BROWN: Did you travel quite a bit on those first visits?

MS. SAYRE: A certain amount, yes.

MR. BROWN: You've described, I believe, going up to Goya's home region around Saragossa.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Would you go also to a number of private collections to see things?

MS. SAYRE: I did, yes.

MR. BROWN: Can you recall some of those?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, there was one man in particular--a marquess who had an incredible collection of unretouched Goyas. Really marvelous to see.

MR. BROWN: Was this a collector or his ancestor had been a considerable collector?

MS. SAYRE: I don't know how he had happened to get them.

MR. BROWN: Were many of the--except for their portraits, were many of the Goya paintings and other things held by the nobility or had a good many by then already gotten into the hands of the banks and [inaudible] the institutions? The paintings--

MS. SAYRE: The paintings, a lot of them were in museums. A certain number were in private collections. And one way that I got into a lot of places was that they--there was hardly a chamber music anywhere in Spain other than up in Barcelona. And I went to the opening of an exhibition in the city hall and I guess it was before it opened that I was allowed to go and see it and I heard the sound of a flute. And I--and some chamber music and I was drawn to it and stood there listening and listening and listening. And there was somebody else who was really listening, too, standing in the doorways. It was a private rehearsal.

And so then we got talking and I was invited to a special--to the opening of this and met a lot of the marquesses

and duques. And because I was considered a novelty, I was invited to the house of one or two of them to look at their Goya. And they loved it that I stood up on a chair so that I could really look at the paint surface closely after taking off my shoes, of course. And so then I became famous amongst the nobility as the scholar who stands up on chairs and really looks at your paintings. And so I got invited to a lot of private houses to look at paintings.

MR. BROWN: In general, if you can generalize, were they for them, they were simply things that had been in the family or did they --

MS. SAYRE: A lot, yes, and --

MR. BROWN: But you surely caused some of them, then, to begin to look more closely --

MS. SAYRE: They weren't all--I didn't think they were all by Goya myself, but my policy is never to tell somebody unless they really want to know. If they do, then I tell them the truth. Otherwise I can--I say it's awfully nice to have or --

MR. BROWN: And by then your expertising abilities were quite great; were they by the '50s and ‘60s? I mean, you had seen a great deal by then.

MS. SAYRE: Getting better, yes.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And were you relying on principles that you'd learned on--for example, when you were at the Fogg years before with Rosenberg or people like that and --

MS. SAYRE: Somewhat, but I think that one of the things that was very helpful to me was when I went to an exhibition, I would take notes in my catalogue in the margin of whatever it was that I saw. And it made me look harder.

MR. BROWN: And it was simply an accretion of that sort of experience.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: It just derived from within yourself. I mean, you have this --

MS. SAYRE: Well, I am--this is how I'm going to begin.

MR. BROWN: This is--

MS. SAYRE: The thing that I'm giving at the Met which is on this whole problem of how to tell a Goya.

MR. BROWN: This is for a seminar at the Met in conjunction with an upcoming exhibition.

MS. SAYRE: And all-day thing. Let us pray that I survive it all. And I was going to say--begin by saying it is possible to comprehend a work of art by another person only to the extent that before examining it, we're able to set aside what we ourselves have become. The clarity of our perception will depend on how well we succeed in doing so. And that's tough to do. And nobody succeeds completely.

MR. BROWN: Well, this was, in Goya's case, simply knowing the--when we get to the prints and drawings or perhaps a number of the paintings as well, but the very meanings of them has eluded a good many modern commentators.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And you've spent a great deal of your time of study of Goya in trying to decipher the meaning or the meaning intended by Goya.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, because I got fascinated by it and I got fascinated--I got hooked way back in the beginning when Philip Hofer sent his marvelous collection of material in to be stored one summer. And I looked, particularly with the *Caprichos*. And the--but the catalogue that everybody used then was in French. And it seemed to me that the translations into French of the Spanish made absolutely no sense. I got mad and wanted them know. I think I told you that; didn't I?

MR. BROWN: I think you've mentioned that at least.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: But that--so it stems from some of your very first work --

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: --you were beginning. And so how --

MS. SAYRE: To look and to think.

MR. BROWN: You began to think. You began to search for contemporary accounts, commentaries --

MS. SAYRE: That--they were a help, but also you have to keep looking and looking and looking. And it isn't always I that sees something. For instance, I was just showing you the *Capricho* of the man being lifted up by lust. And I hadn't noticed that he isn't wearing any trousers until I saw this hand-painted copy where the man who painted it realized that he didn't have any trousers.

And then another thing that, for instance was, in one of the witchcraft scenes, there are two witches who were flying on a--riding on a broomstick. And there was an 8-year-old who pointed out to me that the broom was the wrong way around. That was on purpose, because Goya wanted you to realize that they're not true witches, but people who have given themselves to evil, which was one of the 1611 definition of what witchcraft was, a person who gives himself to evil and to Satan rather than as against somebody who flies off to the Sabbath to do unspeakable things.

Or in one lecture that I gave out in the Midwest, somebody asked me what it was that--an old woman in a print where there were little--this basket full of baby corpses and then this monk-like figure and an old woman and asked me what the old woman was--what was wrong with the old woman--what the old woman was holding in her hands up to her mouth. And I had never really noticed it and I thought to just take--not looking carefully, I had thought that she just had an unusually thick lip. I looked again and I find that what she's sucking is the lower limb of one of these little infants. And the title of that particular print is *There's A Lot to Suck*. And they were sucking the profits of illegal abortions after the--during the third trimester. In Spain in Goya's lifetime, it was perfectly legal to have an abortion in the first two trimesters. And the reason this old woman who procures and the monk are so evil is because they're doing it beyond that point when the fetus is fully formed.

MR. BROWN: So much of the interpretation has come from people's questions.

MS. SAYRE: Some of it, yes.

MR. BROWN: Some of it has.

MS. SAYRE: But then I--with those babies, I wanted to--I wondered why it was that the babies were so fully developed. And I don't know what inspired me to go and read the laws on abortion in Goya's day. And I found I couldn't believe my eyes, that it was all right then. And needless to say, Spanish law followed Catholic teaching very closely. And according to the law book, it had been--this was the law from the very first centuries excepting for a period of about six years when one--in the late Middle Ages when one pope came along and said it made no difference whether or not the child could move by itself. Abortion at any point was a sin--was a mortal sin. And within six years along comes another point and they go back to the old way which was still in force in Goya's day.

MR. BROWN: So the interpretation is often, I'm sure it's often taken you a very long time to come up with some of the--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: --answers.

MS. SAYRE: It does and some of them, of course, I want to come up with and I will miss.

MR. BROWN: But the pursuit of these answers--of the meaning has become one of the great pleasures of working on Goya.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Is it perhaps even why--I guess you like Goya best of all of all artists or at least of those you've spent a good deal of time on. I know you and your department have published on Rembrandt and Dürer and others.

MS. SAYRE: Well, it's--there's so much more to find out in a Goya. And I'm only really still at the beginning of what there is to be known.

MR. BROWN: Have you spawned, to a degree, a growth and a growing interest in Goya, in Goya scholarship? Do you feel you've had a pretty direct impact?

MS. SAYRE: I have gotten some people interested, yes. But I think Goya doesn't--people tend to be anyway because the marvelous thing is that they look at his work and they don't understand it, but they feel that something very important is being said and they want to know. I'm talking here about perfectly ordinary, non art historians.

MR. BROWN: And that is really the other reason that Goya so appealed to you. Wasn't it his great power of --

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: --expression even if you're not quite certain what he expressed?

MS. SAYRE: That something was being said.

MR. BROWN: Because we were looking a bit earlier at what may not be a Goya and what is and the intensity of the emotion, composition, interrelations within the painting among, I think, four figures is in great contrast to what's probably simply a copy or another--a variation.

MS. SAYRE: And in the--in Goya as with Mozart, you have the feeling that not one fraction of it is by chance; that it's all part of an intellectual whole for each man, for each of them: that nothing is extra, that each has its purpose.

MR. BROWN: You're now working--continuing to work on unraveling the meanings of various drawings and prints.

MS. SAYRE: Particularly the *Caprichos*. That's like writing a book with 80 chapters and you have to keep pausing to find out all kinds of things that you never of your own free will would have investigated, such as the sexual habits of frogs.

MR. BROWN: Yes. You're talking about the so-called mirror--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: --drawings. Do you think that you will--you'll never run out of things in Goya alone--

MS. SAYRE: No, never.

MR. BROWN: --to work on. The time in '54, that American Philosophical Society fellowship in Spain that followed with additional times – then you had, I think later, a Ford Foundation Grant.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: To study Goya's drawings. This was to rove around a bit more throughout Europe --

MS. SAYRE: Well, also I was the person who--people had realized that there were a series of drawings. But nobody had realized until they began examining the paper and the watermarks that these--that they were albums of drawings that Goya had made, not just series and that you could identify some of them that had even--that had lost their numbers by the kind of paper and watermark that you found.

MR. BROWN: And that had apparently not occurred to previous scholars.

MS. SAYRE: No.

MR. BROWN: You also pointed out that these albums are almost visual journals because of the--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And to understand a single image, you really need to know its neighbors.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And thus the extreme importance of reconstructing the sequence--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: --in the case of these albums that have been not only pulled apart, but the numbers --

MS. SAYRE: The albums now have been pretty much reconstructed.

MR. BROWN: Pretty well reconstructed.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Is that exceptional among artists that--to be such an interwoven, tightly knit interrelation?

MS. SAYRE: I think so.

MR. BROWN: And that's further--an extremely fascinating element; isn't it?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Are the journals--the journal albums were to some degree--are leading studies for paintings or series of paintings?

MS. SAYRE: No.

MR. BROWN: Not for the time he's doing those; is he? That's--

MS. SAYRE: They're not intended--he may take something from something that he's done earlier--take an idea, but he doesn't really make studies for paintings excepting for the religious paintings there will be sketch or for a tapestry cartoon there will be a sketch because he has to get an official commission to do it and he has to show somebody something. But for his own purpose he doesn't bother.

MR. BROWN: Thence perhaps allow some of the--an attractive aspect of his paintings; is that right? That he moves right into them?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: He--not a labored quality?

MS. SAYRE: He doesn't --

[Interruption to interview.]

MR. BROWN: Resuming interviews on--after a lapse of some time. And this is July 26, 1996; is that right?

MS. SAYRE: I think so.

MR. BROWN: We're going to talk today-- you came to the museum around 1945 to work with Henry Rossiter. You succeeded him, I think, in 1967. About in the mid-'50s came a new director to the museum, Perry Rathbone, from the St. Louis art museum. And I thought perhaps we could talk about some things that you feel are worth calling attention to, about the museum and your own programs during the time he was here which was from the mid-'50s until about 1970, '71.

MS. SAYRE: Yes. To me Perry was like a breath of fresh air which the museum sort of rather needed, because it had been--when I came, Joel had been director and Joel didn't believe in appealing to any other groups of people. I can still remember how he wouldn't let us--we had an exhibition, the work of a Jewish artist. We weren't allowed to have a party for people who had been generous to this exhibition because he didn't want Jews in the museum. That certainly shocked me. He was the kind of man who didn't have enough to do so that his secretary used to ask us for letters to write that he could answer and to get all the answers that we would give him.

MR. BROWN: And the kind of people he wanted here were the old families --

MS. SAYRE: Old family things, yes.

MR. BROWN: --the established patron.

MS. SAYRE: And it was--he saw it more or less as a clubhouse for the wealthy, I think, in Boston. And Perry was genuinely interested in getting into the museum all kinds of other people. And one of the things that he did was to--we had begun having--at some point, we had been having--begun to have a ladies' committee. And he gave

the ladies' committee--increased their number and gave them an enormous amount of power.

And I remember being absolutely horrified because I thought, here are these ladies that are going to be let loose like a horde of ants in the museum and they won't--of termites in the museum and they don't know anything about the museum or how we--what's possible to do and what isn't possible to do. And they will want to tell us what to do and will be angry if we don't do everything just they way they want. And within a few days, some come into the print department and they have an idea and I tell them why it won't work.

And to my great surprise, they meekly go away and they come back with a second idea. And the second idea wasn't altogether feasible, then they come back with a third idea, which was a brilliant idea. And they weren't taken aback by being turned down in the slightest. And it took about two weeks, all told, for me to become one of the great backers of the ladies' committee.

MR. BROWN: What was it, do you think, it accomplished?

MS. SAYRE: All kinds of things that the staff didn't have time to do for the museum, so that they were the first people to run a film program. They arranged flowers in the museum. And this has blossomed out into the "Art and Bloom Festival" that we have every spring. And they build up membership, because they appeal to all the people in the various areas where they live. They were also marvelous at--extremely helpful at running all the festivities that we had at parties and openings. And they also doubled as auxiliary guards--I mean, auxiliary guides in the museum. And a group of them came into my department and talk, of course, of prints and then were able to show people about prints in the museum.

MR. BROWN: Was the professional education department itself very large at that time?

MS. SAYRE: It was fairly--not as big as it now, I don't think.

MR. BROWN: It was already fairly established --

MS. SAYRE: Yes, but they didn't have time to do as much. And by and large the ladies were intelligent and hardworking and they were--at the time when they began, women didn't have to have jobs as well as their husbands so that they had the time to do it. I've been their great backers ever since. When I have foreign visitors I--if I can, I take them from other museums. I take them into the room where they--into their headquarters to meet some of them and explain what it is that we do.

MR. BROWN: So that was an innovation that Perry Rathbone made.

MS. SAYRE: And a second thing that he did was to--again, he cared about the public coming in whereas Edgell really didn't, because it was a--to him it was a sort of private club.

MR. BROWN: And what were Perry's grounds? Did he express them to the staff? When he got here did Perry go around to see staff or bring you all into a meeting or --

MS. SAYRE: I wouldn't have gone, because at least at the beginning, I was one of the lowly people in the print department. But he probably did with the curators. And he--it was he who decided, for example, to have a TV program that we did with channel 2. We hired a man called Brian O'Doherty and I think that brought a lot of people into the museum. And some of the things--one or two of the things that he did weren't really quite as good. So that when we were having a Civil War exhibition, I remember that he would borrow some cannon which we placed outside of the museum. And he and Hans Swarzenski couldn't resist setting one of them off which broke some windows in the building opposite and also lost him all credibility when he was complaining about the widening of the--putting a highway through--the pounding would be bad for the works of art.

MR. BROWN: He did?

MS. SAYRE: Yes. And--but in the end what was to bring him down was the appointment of George Seybolt as the trustee. That--I think that was--actually, that was only a part of it, because also Perry began the major reorganizations of the collections. And one of the things that he felt was important to do was to take a lot of the study collections off exhibition; that the galleries were much too crowded and I think that was true. And that the curatorial department should establish areas where people could come and see them. With the print department, there had never been any problem because we have something like a million prints and you can't--and drawings, you can't put them all up at once anyway. And then I think another thing that got him into trouble--

MR. BROWN: But that was okay that he'd done that? Because it was crowded, you thought, but on the other hand people could no longer see these things.

MS. SAYRE: They could always ask.

MR. BROWN: They could always ask.

MS. SAYRE: And go and see them, but--

MR. BROWN: But you feel that it was not a good thing to have done in the beginning--

MS. SAYRE: No, I think it was--

MR. BROWN: Oh, it was okay.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, because I think people can look at only a certain amount without getting what I call museum feet or a--it's a mental overload. And I think to cut down the number of objects that they look at, it doesn't hurt at all. And the people--the scholars can always see them anyway.

MR. BROWN: But then he went a little further with reorganization?

MS. SAYRE: Well, he decided to reorganize the way the galleries looked and also the different departments had sort of taken space more or less in a somewhat haphazard way and he reorganized it all in a much more logical way and I think that needed doing. But then, of course, in the end, because he himself was enormously interested in everything. And he didn't really want a strong curator of paintings because he wanted to be involved himself together with Hans Swarzenski who was the curator of Medieval art, but also interested in painting and in modern painting. And I think that you cannot really be a successful director and a successful head of a curatorial department at the same time. And I think that mistakes were made in the purchases; most notably, the Raphael.

MR. BROWN: Around 1970.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, which was to have been acquired for the --

MR. BROWN: Centennial?

MS. SAYRE: For the Centennial. And he, again, sort of--because there was a part of him that remained a little boy, I think. That is found for sale and Hans Swarzenski goes over to get it, but they don't really wait until they get all the export licenses. And then Hans brings it over, carries it himself on the plane. And then because he arrives on the weekend, he doesn't want to leave it in the customs over the weekend because a Medieval piece which had been left over night had cracked right before we'd bought it. And that--because this was on wood, I think, that it would have been--this would have been disastrous. And so he simply brought it to the museum. And then when --

MR. BROWN: You mean, bypassing customs?

MS. SAYRE: Yes. And which in itself wasn't necessarily so bad because we--the museum did declare it to customs, but then it was a part of the pattern of something which had come up without a legal permit. And then had come into this country somewhat illegally also. And then when it turned out that people--a number of people doubted its authenticity and thereto, if Perry had not--Hans was full-time curator. He was a full-time director and he didn't have time to look into it as they should have done with a major purchase and done a lot of research on it first. And it was not accepted. And it was--what got him into a lot of trouble with the trustees was that he--the trustees found that financially that they personally had been responsible for any fines levied on the museum.

MR. BROWN: That certainly gave them pause very quickly, right?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and particularly because with a man like George Seybolt, the very first day --

MR. BROWN: Now, he was head of the trustees, in fact, at that time.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and just after his appointment I meet him in the corridor and he says to me, "There's nothing in the rules of the museum--the rules of the--that says that I--that the director cannot run the museum himself and I intend to do it." And he did. But he didn't know--he knew absolutely nothing about art or museums really. And so it was often since that he makes the--all the curatorial staff sit through a film that he's done on how--the selling of Underwood ham. And it took about an hour.

MR. BROWN: What was his point in showing that? Did he state it?

MS. SAYRE: Luckily, I missed it. But nobody ever was really quite certain. He was also the kind of man who could – you know, I've been kissed by people. And I told you about being kissed by Karolik and how unreal it really was. But it was very different when George Seybolt grabbed me in his arms and kissed me, because he's

wanting to show his power over me. I didn't--and that is hard to forgive.

MR. BROWN: He meant to be in charge.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: What, meanwhile, was Rathbone able to do once Seybolt came on the scene?

MS. SAYRE: Things became much harder for him. And eventually, I think--Rathbone gave Seybolt a great pretext to fire him and take over himself and appoint a man who would do his bidding completely. Perry also did a lot towards the physical remodeling of the museum including building a new restaurant. And that was to have been--it was designed so that the men would eat in one part and the women would eat in another part. And an intelligent architect put in some folding doors so that it could be made into a single room.

And it happened Perry and I went to the same church. And it happened that one time there was a sermon on women's lib and he asked me how I felt about it. And my feeling about women's lib is that I believe in equal rights for all people and I don't care whether they're males or females or children or grown-ups or elderly or black or white or anything. I believe in it for all people. But I said to him--I told him that. I said also that not all the people in--women in the staff feel this way. And if you open this separate but equal, you're going to have trouble. And when it--the day before it was opened, I would ask--asked if I would go and eat there. And I didn't know that the men--no man ever came to eat for lunch until 12:30 and so I arrived promptly at 12:00. No waitress would come near me.

And finally some men came in and they were very nice and said they were glad to see me there. And finally the waitresses then asked me for my order. And it came, but I couldn't eat it. And I knew so well how people felt when they were integrating the lunch counters. Perry also didn't want to--on the other hand, Perry did not want to have a female curator. We had had one. Did I tell you about that?

MR. BROWN: No, I don't think so.

MS. SAYRE: All right. Gertrude Townsend was the --

MR. BROWN: Textiles.

MS. SAYRE: Textiles. And textiles was all right for a woman to be--because there was no money to buy them and textiles were--they all--the trustees thought them mostly people's underwear anyway. So it was quite suitable for a lady to be in charge of them. And they never realized that she was one of the great world experts on tapestries. And she had been allowed to--way back in the old days, to eat in the directors' dining room, which was a matter of invitation. And--but only--excepting for her, only--after she left, only males were ever invited so that when I had a distinguished foreign colleague and I wanted him to meet some of the other male curators, I'd have to send him down by an assistant, which I thought was funny.

MR. BROWN: Elsewhere, these things were already breaking down; weren't they?

MS. SAYRE: Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: You're talking now about the '50s to the '60s.
MS. SAYRE: And separate, but equal has already been declared-- when he was planning to do this segregated restaurant, separate but equal had already been declared illegal.

MR. BROWN: Was there a side to Perry that was very conventional and real conservative?

MS. SAYRE: It wasn't his most important side, but it was there. And I think there was something about it that made him uneasy so that he really didn't want to have a woman curator. And I truly didn't hold it against him. And he asked me whether or not I'd be willing to serve under a man. And I said yes, provided he's as good as I am or better. And so then a couple of men were proposed and I would have been content with either one of them. But they wouldn't come.

And then the quality of people that were proposed got lower and lower. And finally I was asked [inaudible] came to me in a staff--"I've got the solution. I'll appoint a man and you'll train him for two years and then he will be made curator. Would that be all right?" And I said, "No, because you can't put the baby in charge of its nurse. It doesn't work." And I was thinking of all the places that I could go.

And I thought of going to the--how fun it would be to go to the British Museum where they didn't have anybody working on prints. I wasn't sure they'd take a foreigner, but I was going to investigate. And then I thought that another place I would have liked to go was Texas where there's lots of money and I knew Mrs. Dominie [phonetic] and I thought it would be fun to see whether or not she might want to have me build up the

collection. And to build one up from scratch would be exciting to do. And then --

MR. BROWN: Did you actively approach each of these?

MS. SAYRE: No, I was going to, but then one of the maintenance men stopped me in the gallery one day and he said, "Congratulations." And I said, "For what?" He said, "You've been made curator." But Perry could never bring himself to tell me. And I don't think it was ever announced in the bulletin or anything like that either. But I thought it was funny.

MR. BROWN: Very.

MS. SAYRE: No, I mean, I was amused by it. I wasn't really offended. Men are what they are.

MR. BROWN: And you'd certainly knew him reasonably well by then.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: You say this --

MS. SAYRE: I knew him and I liked him anyway.

MR. BROWN: --this attitude toward women and behavior with them, though, was a secondary characteristic of Perry.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: You mentioned earlier his bringing in the public and his fostering of a vast volunteer apparatus in the form of a ladies' committee were quite important.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Are there other--were there other things that you feel he undertook or tried to get underway?

MS. SAYRE: I think he made a very real effort in many ways to make the museum something for the public. And he did like the public, unlike Edgell who felt that they were coming into the club.

MR. BROWN: Were you able to--now, you were then finally--not being told by Rathbone, but in--was that 1967 that you became the curator?

MS. SAYRE: I'll have to look and see.

MR. BROWN: I think it was something like that, but we can--

MS. SAYRE: It might have been '67 that I became it, but I'm listed as being the curator in '68.

MR. BROWN: '68.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Did you have plans to change things from Rossiter's time or continue or did you have certain exhibitions or research projects you wanted to get underway?

MS. SAYRE: They're were some that I did as--I talked about the kind of Dürer and Rembrandt exhibition that I did and how--I still feel it's important that--to remember that you can get the public interested in these small differences and excited about them. And I think too often people look down on the public.

MR. BROWN: Were you thinking of a--did you have a staff? Was it reasonably adequate? Or --

MS. SAYRE: Oh, it's never big enough. And we had--I think I jotted down even the number somehow somewhere. But we served 35,000 people in the print room.

MR. BROWN: This would have been when? In the '60s or '70s?

MS. SAYRE: That was 1971.

MR. BROWN: Wow! 35,000 people?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Would these range from the most casual visitor to the person who worked there for weeks?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and at one point, one kind of person that we would get in were, there was a psychiatrist who was sending--thought that art would be good for his patients. And somehow or other he realized that we would be nice to them in my department. So we got a number of those. And I thought that he didn't really know enough about art when he was sending them because, for instance, the kinds of things that they looked at, it seemed to me, were feeding whatever their psychoses rather than counteracting them.

MR. BROWN: What would they actually do? They would just sit down and stare at the works and look at them very carefully and take notes and--

MS. SAYRE: Yes, or wanted to talk with us about them which is how I realized. But for instance, one of them didn't--seemed to be quite unwilling to deal with reality. She wanted to look at Gauguins, for instance, where people were escaping off to a completely different world. The only unbalanced person that ever worried me was one of the people that stopped in the galleries and wanted to--when I had a Christmas exhibition and thought that one of the virgin and child was obscene and that we must take it down.

MR. BROWN: A few tense moments then?

MS. SAYRE: No, I say that I will consider his request. And I go in and I call the security and tell them to keep an eye on this person because it's one step to see something as being obscene, but it's not so far from there to try to destroy it.

MR. BROWN: But such a person was an exception to the --

MS. SAYRE: Well, when the entry fees were much lower and there was more free time for people to come in, then we got a lot more of them. And there was one lady who always had to--sort of walked around the museum with a handful of some kind of bush to keep away anything evil. And she didn't hurt anything or anybody.

MR. BROWN: Was your department in the same quarters that it had been for most of the time you'd been here? Or did it get--have larger spaces or --

MS. SAYRE: We had--when I came we had better space and then that space was taken when--during the rebuilding of the museum. And we've been really in temporary quarters ever since. But we had--this is one of six tables that we had in a study room for people.

MR. BROWN: This large table?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: It's quite large, 12, 14 feet long.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and one of the things that I loved and I think was very important in those days was that we had a lot of university classes that came in and we'd get out material for them and frame it up and let classes be given there. And also, anybody could come in and look at things. And I, having--in as much as the British Museum had been so nice to me when I was a child and wanted to look at a Michelangelo drawing, so they'd let me.

MR. BROWN: Oh, had they?

MS. SAYRE: That I felt that any child who knew enough to ask to see a Dürer should see a Dürer and they did. And on the whole, I thought--found that children handled things--they were so impressed by what they had that they handled it with great care. The people you had to be careful about were artists and scholars. Scholars felt they owned them and the artists felt that they could do as well.

MR. BROWN: They might wish to trace on them or things like that?

MS. SAYRE: Well, they just--to them it was just a piece of paper. Do anything that they liked.

MR. BROWN: Once you were curator, were there certain large sectors of emphasis that you placed in your acquisitions or the things that you --

MS. SAYRE: Yes, I --

MR. BROWN: [Inaudible]

MS. SAYRE: One of the things that I did was to--we had had no funds for 20th century--really contemporary

prints and drawings and Cliff Ackley was a young man who had come into the department who was very much interested in them. And so I set aside one fund and I told him that he could buy whatever he liked out of it. And he said, "But you'll tell me and you won't let me buy anything that I like if you don't like it." And I said, "No, I will not approve nor disapprove of anything." And it was a good way to do it. It made him very careful. And also, to me, all art is--consists of various languages. And in order to know whether something is good, you have to know the language. And he knew more 20th century languages than I did.

MR. BROWN: And he later succeeded you.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: He came--did he bring to his job--I mean, he came to the museum already considerably trained and experienced in looking?
MS. SAYRE: To a certain extent, but he hadn't had that much experience. But he was able to learn. And as curator, one of the things that I believed in very strongly, and this is something that I think that women tend to be able to do better than men--I looked at the people under me and I tried to see what they were good at and what they really liked doing and then I molded their duties insofar as I could to fit it. And also it seemed to me very important inasmuch as museum work pays less well than public school teaching, the only way that you can keep people in a museum is to give them a feeling that they're learning and growing. And I ensured that my people had that feeling by giving them the opportunities to learn and to grow.

MR. BROWN: Are there other aspects of this era that you might wish to talk about?

MS. SAYRE: Well, it was Hans Swarzenski had this incredible --

MR. BROWN: You've mentioned him several times. You might talk about him a bit.

MS. SAYRE: Well, he really began in the painting department, but his real interest was in Medieval art and he gradually sort of wangled his way into the European decorative arts department where he didn't, in fact, belong. And he'd been a--he was a German refugee and he married rather late in life. And the most surprising possible marriage, he married a movie star, an actress, who was as famous in Germany as Greta Garbo is in America and who was a marvelous person.

And people by and large--it says a lot for her that by and large people in the museum knew that she was an actress, but they had no notion of the category of--to which she belonged. So that anything in which she performed--scripts were sent to her beforehand to see whether or not she wanted to. And I remember once going and staying with the Swarzenskis in Germany and --

MR. BROWN: This was after he'd retired?

MS. SAYRE: After he retired and they took me to the airport and she was immediately recognized. And so we were snatched to the door and conducted in a special VIP room as I waited for the plane. But she was also the kind of person who--I got a very bad nerve damage in my neck and had to wear a brace for a long time. She comes to see me in the hospital and she sees that after that I have my neck in a brace. She leaves immediately and comes back with links of cloth and pairs of scissors and makes me these marvelous neck cloths to wear, which were extraordinarily good and for two reasons: One was that they kept the brace from chafing against your neck, but furthermore, they made you look like a human being again. And I had to wear a brace for about a year and she, because of these neck cloths--I went out and bought some more of them myself--a lot of people never noticed that I had a brace. And many people thought that it was a part of my dress.

MR. BROWN: Then she was a very solicitous kind of person.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and imaginative, too. I don't know of--I have never seen--after this, I am very conscious of course of--when I see people wearing braces. And I've never seen one that makes--that does that.

MR. BROWN: So it sounds as though the Swarzenskis were dear friends.

MS. SAYRE: Oh, they were.

MR. BROWN: What was his--what was he like as a curator or as a person?

MS. SAYRE: He always reminded me, in a way, of the father bear, a voice way down inside him like this even further than I can do.

MR. BROWN: He had a very deep voice.

MS. SAYRE: Very, very deep voice. And they had a house in Cambridge. I used to go and see them quite often.

I think the disaster of the Raphael was a great tragedy in their lives as well as Perry's. Brigitta was also the daughter--not only was she a famous movie star in her own right, but she was also the daughter of one of the great psychiatrists, too.

MR. BROWN: What was the last name? Do you remember?

MS. SAYRE: Wait a moment, I'll just think --

MR. BROWN: Were there other close friends you had among colleagues here at the museum?

MS. SAYRE: They were probably the closest friends that I had on the staff.

MR. BROWN: Were you doing a lot of traveling? By the time you became curator, were you setting aside time? I know you had various --

MS. SAYRE: Yes, one of the --

MR. BROWN: --times you went abroad and special projects.

MS. SAYRE: One of the things that I did was to--it seemed to me that we really--that exchanging of knowledge of how you do things as a curator could be very healthy. And so somehow or other I managed to get a grant so that I could exchange with somebody in Europe. And I exchanged with a man at the Ashmolean. And it cost very little to do it because each museum continued our salaries, because he was much higher paid in this country than in the Ashmolean.

And I did very well, indeed, in London--I mean, in Oxford. And we exchanged houses. And I got them--nobody in Oxford was working on the really marvelous collection of prints that they have. In fact, nobody in the British Museum was interested in prints anymore either. And I got them interested in prints as a field and they got some money together to begin training people as print people. And also I got them interested in paper conservation and they swiped my best conservator to come over to England, but it was worth it. And the man who came over here catalogued all our Italian prints and drawings--our Italian drawings for us.

MR. BROWN: But he was a drawings man, whereas you brought to them print expertise.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Was this a policy? Were you able to do this periodically or --

MS. SAYRE: I was sorry that it didn't go on as I think it should be done. England was an incredibly cold place to live. At least, it was in Oxford.

MR. BROWN: Cold?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, they didn't--when I came into my house at night I could see my breath. There was no central heating. You would turn on a couple of things which helped somewhat, but the prospect of raising the temperature in the dining room to a reasonable degree was so impossible to even conceive of that I used it as an extra refrigerator instead. And for the most part I got used to it. You wear more clothes in England.

And I remember that one time in the print room, they had--Barbara Shapiro from this museum came over to do some work and they looked and the thermometer had gone up to 62 degrees and they said, "Oh, it's much too hot in here," and flung open the window. And I've never seen such a look of incredulous horror on somebody's face. She couldn't believe it. But by then it seemed perfectly normal to me. What I did mind was that--and I must admit that Hugh had sort of carefully selected the time when he would be absent.

MR. BROWN: So this was Hugh --

MS. SAYRE: The Englishman--so that I would be there during these completely sunless months. You literally don't see the sun in Oxford from the end of October till the middle of, mid-spring. And I didn't know what it was doing to me. Luckily my father flew me over to the Caribbean for a week. And I had--sort of drank in the sun and I realized how deprived I was because you need sun.

MR. BROWN: So perhaps this was a program you didn't wish to repeat at least in --

MS. SAYRE: Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: --northern climates --

MS. SAYRE: No, because I--you adapt to those things. And I had to change my--completely change my English because you don't say--if you say, "Would you like to wash up," that means would you help with the dishes. And I had to learn to say "cooker" rather than "stove" and a "point" rather than a "plug" and so on.

MR. BROWN: But all in all it was a good thing for you. I mean, you --

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

[Interruption to interview.]

MR. BROWN: Resuming our interviews of Eleanor Sayre. This is Robert Brown, the interviewer at her office in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. And this is January 10, 1997.

MS. SAYRE: And our office is still messy.

MR. BROWN: Messy office, well. And I wanted just to ask some further questions regarding some of your publications and other projects. And the first was, in 1969, a project you and your staff did with Morgan Library, I gather, on Rembrandt, *Rembrandt: Experimental Etcher*.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: I wonder if you could talk a bit about that and how did that come about?

MS. SAYRE: I think it was that we both thought more or less at the same time of a Rembrandt exhibition. And also, they had good Rembrandts and so did we. And we decided to collaborate. And what people hadn't really investigated was the--in any depth, was the way Goya seems to have experimented with using different kinds of papers--I mean, Rembrandt experimented --

MR. BROWN: Rembrandt.

MS. SAYRE: --using different kinds of papers for different effects. And so what we did was to gather together really fine impressions that were printed in different ways on different kinds of papers so that people could appreciate these differences for themselves.

MR. BROWN: This goes in line with what you said earlier about your exhibitions so that people could readily understand.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and I think there's a great move on nowadays to dumb down exhibitions, whereas we have found that the public wants to be raised up, wants to become involved, wants to look, wants to learn. And we did a similar--an exhibition that--the similar point of view for Dürer and--in which, again, we wanted people to see--to learn how to tell which was a good impression of a Dürer and which was a bad impression of a Dürer. We put them up side by side, about four or five. And we had a--in both these exhibitions we would rent the catalogues to people so that they could read them and look. And then if you wanted to buy the catalogue afterwards, you--the rental price was taken off from the main thing. But this kind of an exhibition with Dürer, not a well-known name, out-drew the--an exhibition--I think it was of Cézanne watercolors in the museum.

MR. BROWN: And that was about 1971, I think, that Dürer show.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Were you astounded? Or did you have a hunch that people would respond?

MS. SAYRE: I knew that people would respond. I didn't know-- I was surprised that they responded to that extent because I had watched them in our own galleries and I think when I first came there that exhibitions were put up primarily for the staff. And I being the youngest person on the staff, I had to type the labels. And I--which were quite apt to be in French or German or other languages or whatever the catalogue happened to be. And I began translating them into English so that the public would at least know what the titles were. And in the beginning I was reproved for that.

MR. BROWN: By Mr. Rossiter?

MS. SAYRE: Well, particularly by his chief assistant who--they felt that the public really ought to know. And that one I fought on the grounds that you couldn't expect the--luckily I was able to catch them out on not being able to translate one of the titles themselves. And I said, "Well, if you can't, how can you expect the public to without even having a dictionary in their hands?" And so then I got permission to do what I had been doing surreptitiously anyway, putting the titles into English. And this is how I began understanding that you can teach people anything that you want to.

MR. BROWN: And that was one way. How did you convey the different papers that Rembrandt had used and--just by showing them and pointing out certain characteristics of them and then --

MS. SAYRE: We would talk about the effect that it had on the pattern that you saw. And I forget now whether it was the Rembrandt or the Dürer exhibition, but the British Museum, at the same time, had the same--did the same kind of difficult exhibition for their public. And their public was equally enthusiastic about it. And one of the things that--the odd devices that helped make it possible for people was that because we borrowed some of the Rembrandts and because the Rembrandts were so valuable, the problem was how to keep them from--to really protect them on the walls of this museum. And so what was done was to have panels made with windows. And then the windows were cut just to the size of the mat opening, so that you--and then the panels were put up so that you couldn't take down an individual print without taking down the whole panel--this protective panel, which was a very safe way of doing it.

But what I didn't realize was, and noone else realized was that by getting rid of the frames, that you got rid of a psychological barrier for the public. And in the comment book that we have, again and again people would say, "It was wonderful to get so much closer to the prints than I ever did before." Actually, they weren't any closer, but --

MR. BROWN: No, but they sensed that--the effect was --

MS. SAYRE: The effect was.

MR. BROWN: And this was something you couldn't anticipate, but --

MS. SAYRE: No.

MR. BROWN: --thereafter, did you try to do that with other print and drawing shows?

MS. SAYRE: Did it again. It's fairly expensive. We had to do it so you couldn't do it too often, but other museums copied it. It was called "doing a Boston."

MR. BROWN: Doing a Boston. Well, a show like that or the Dürer show, would this take months and months of preparation from you?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and --

MR. BROWN: They were ones that you had had in mind for some time as well?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: I mean, Dürer and Rembrandt are two major figures, of course, in printmaking.

MS. SAYRE: And one of the things that we did was to--I think it was the Rembrandt--we got in touch with every print room of any importance and asked them to give us a list of Rembrandts and also to give sort of comment on any particularly interesting impressions that they might have. The only museum that refused to do this was the Metropolitan. They said they had too many. And we thought that it might have been--I thought in the beginning that it might be worth--might be interesting to publish a census of Rembrandts in America on the basis of this, but then we found that we couldn't because the smaller print rooms weren't really certain whether or not what they had was genuine and would ask us. And in fact, they weren't always genuine.

MR. BROWN: But they were fairly straightforward about that.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: But the Dürer show was in '71 and then you followed through with a --

MS. SAYRE: But one of the rarest of the Rembrandts one of the museums said they had, we went to see it and found that it was just a facsimile, but they didn't know the difference.

MR. BROWN: Oh my. Would that occur today? That was a little over a generation ago, but would--do you think it could as easily occur today?

MS. SAYRE: Probably, because it takes a long time to--a lot of experience to train a good print person. And the smaller museums don't always have the money or the personnel to do it.

MR. BROWN: Did you have people in training or --

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: --the whole time you were in the department?

MS. SAYRE: We did to a certain extent.

MR. BROWN: And would they function also--well, was the understanding that they would stay on staff or were some of them encouraged then to go out and--after they learned what they could?

MS. SAYRE: For the most part, they went off and we were often sometimes so very sorry indeed to lose them.

MR. BROWN: How would you teach a person? I mean what--can you rehearse a little bit of that; how you function as a teacher of someone else who is going to be a specialist?

MS. SAYRE: The same as you do it for somebody who isn't a specialist. The best possible way and one of the riches of this print collection in this museum is that we do have more than one impression of great prints. And so that when somebody--a member of the public, for example, brings something in and they think they've got a rare masterpiece and it may be just a facsimile, then we can get out an original and the facsimile and show them the differences so that they see it for themselves.

And at one point, the lawyers got very agitated that we were giving opinions on prints and they wanted signed documents from people saying that--to get signed documents from people saying that they were the owners. And we said--explained that that really wasn't possible, because some people were thinking of buying these impressions that they brought in. And they wanted to know whether or not they were good. And we finally got the lawyers to see that we don't tell them this is good or this isn't good, but we teach them to see for themselves and they permitted that.

MR. BROWN: The lawyers were concerned that if you were not--if you were giving evaluations, that would be another matter.

MS. SAYRE: No, even that you can't say that something isn't right, because then you can be sued for interfering with a sale. But nobody ever did sue us.

MR. BROWN: Would you say you were exceptional in the way you brought people to see the differences and got them to learn for themselves. Or one of your colleagues, were there others who were more didactic or more--a little overbearing about these matters?

MS. SAYRE: Well, I think in those days, I mean, we welcomed the public coming in. And one of the odd things that turned out to be an advantage, I thought, was that we were sometimes made to go into areas that you never would have of your own free will. But this increased your overall knowledge and made you a broader, better person. But I think that the other people in the department didn't really accept this other than they were very glad when we lost our big quarters to shut down the --

MR. BROWN: Oh, you had to go to smaller quarters.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and couldn't just take all comers.

MR. BROWN: But you've said when you began, this was an important thing to you, the accessibility of the print room --

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: --to anyone.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And you held those principles. So was this before you retired that they were--moved the department? It was moved to smaller quarters?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Yes. Simply, it by and large became more difficult to accommodate as many visitors.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and usually we simply left the door open and that became impossible.

MR. BROWN: Did you regret that?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, I did.

MR. BROWN: So would you say that teaching and sharing things--overworked word--but share with other people and with the public were as important to you as connoisseurship as your own searches?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and therefore when the *Globe* asked me to write a series of articles for them at Christmas and Easter--

MR. BROWN: Yes, you've mentioned those.

MS. SAYRE: I did.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MS. SAYRE: Or when I was at--gave lectures, then the important thing was to make people without the background that I had, to make them see, too. And it's exciting when people--you can see people grow. And so often you can.

MR. BROWN: This was balanced, then, this life as the teacher against your life as a researcher.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And your researches that we know of have been heavily into the subject of Goya for quite a long time.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And one of the last or latest major contributions of yours was to the show in 1989. It was that "Goyaand the Enlightenment"; right?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And can you talk about your participation in that and what was the significance of that as a show?

MS. SAYRE: Well, for one thing, institutions are always asked to borrow their--by people to borrow their very best works of art. And for the most part, they're going to say no. And in order for you to be able to borrow the works of a really important artist, you have to come up with a scholarly idea that makes it worth lending. And this is the way we would respond to the--at least, I believed in responding to people who asked for the loans of our material that I didn't care about the stature of the institution so much as about whether or not the exhibition that they were doing would add to the sum of knowledge. So that even to an important museum, I would be very loathe to lend to them, for example, the Goya *Flying Man* print to an exhibition on flying, because that was just subject matter.

But if somebody were doing something serious on Goya, then yes I would lend. And the Prado museum and ourselves came up with the idea of doing an exhibition on Goya as a thinker. And a specific area that we intended to investigate was his liberalism. And the original title of our exhibition was to have been "Goya and the Birth of Liberalism". But I knew that--Reagan was President then--that we couldn't get any funding for any exhibition with the word "liberal" in it. So I changed the name to "Goya and the Enlightenment". And they didn't realize it was exactly the same thing and gave us good funding.

MR. BROWN: This was the funding for the venue here.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and Spain had far less difficulty because they get very good funding for exhibitions. And going back again from when we went to the theme of the publican exhibitions that--in this exhibition there were paintings and there were also prints and drawings. And the prints and the drawings are a particularly area which is particularly rich in what Goya thinks. And in the Prado, they put up the prints and drawings with sort of little labels of the title and the medium and nobody really looked at them particularly.

In this museum, we put up--we wrote labels so that the public could see what it was that, to help people to understand what it was that Goya was saying in this drawing or that drawing or this print or that print. It had to be short because you don't want people reading rather than looking. And whereas in Spain, when I went to see the exhibition there, there's almost never anybody in any of the drawings. It was a reverse situation here. But it was the drawing and the print galleries which were jammed with people. And luckily the museum didn't realize that it was going to be a--the administration didn't realize it was going to be a popular exhibition. So they didn't have--didn't charge. And I politely told them I thought it would be, but they didn't believe me, luckily.

And the lines were so long, particularly on the weekends, that I would--people were having to wait an hour or so to get in and so I went and would pull out of the lines anybody with small children or anybody who was--looked as though they had difficulty standing. And in those days, you could say, "This is the Goya escort service at

work." And I would say it in a loud voice so that people would see me coming in and it would relieve their tension. And I would also tell people that it was worth the wait, too. And a lot of the people whom I spoke to said, "Well, this is the fifth time I've been here or the sixth time because I couldn't take it all in one look."

And some high people from the Metropolitan came up to look at the exhibition and--because I think they had heard about them and how hooked people were on these. And they read the labels and I offered to lend them to them but no, they wanted to write their own. And they wrote just very short little brief things. And then I went to see the exhibition in the Metropolitan. Those galleries were almost empty as they had been in the Prado. And that's what I mean about people's ability and eagerness to learn if you will only give them a few hints.

MR. BROWN: Yes, it's--did it astound you that other institutions didn't do that or they were indifferent to it?

MS. SAYRE: The Metropolitan said that it was--the Boston public was different and that up here that people would accept something like that and down in New York, they wouldn't. I don't believe that for a moment.

MR. BROWN: No. So you're--the exhibition, particularly the prints and drawings, were viewed by many people and repeatedly.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and they were jammed. There's no other word for it.MR. BROWN: Your contribution to the catalogue, can we talk about that a minute?

MS. SAYRE: Wrote some entries which I signed. Did give information to the people here working under me. And so that I think I had a very big influence on much, though certainly not everything. They come up with some contributions of their own, also.

MR. BROWN: Now, that exhibition, though, is just in a sense sort of a blip on your Goya screen; isn't it? I mean you had been and you're continuing to do --

MS. SAYRE: When I think of the two contributions that I made it was, I was the first person to realize that--people knew that the drawings had been done in a series. But I was the first person to realize that they--each drawing in a--each series had its own paper and that they were like journal albums that Goya had written of ideas. And this made it easier for people to tell the copies from the originals, for example.

And then the other thing that I did that--Perry Rathbone wanted to buy--one of the miniatures on ivory came up for sale and he wanted to know whether or not we should buy it. And nothing could have been written on the miniatures. And I found the earliest exhibition of any Goya miniatures that had been miniatures by Goya and also miniatures by another man working in the same style. And their subject matters were very often identical. And the sizes were the same. And so therefore I realized that I was going to have to find out how Goya painted them. And I did; that he--I think I might even have one of those I could give you. What? You wanted me to stop?

MR. BROWN: No, go ahead.

MS. SAYRE: No.

MR. BROWN: [inaudible] briefly.

MS. SAYRE: He was in Bordeaux with his mistress and their little bastard daughter, who wanted to go--was about 10 and wanted to go to Paris and learn to be a miniature painter. And I think her mother didn't want her to go because--realizing that she might lose Goya if she lost the child. And probably said that--to Goya, "You can teach her yourself."

But doing a miniature wasn't the kind of thing that Goya would like, because it takes about two days to make a miniature, because you have to wait for every single brushstroke to dry because if it isn't completely dry, then you put on another one, it lifts up the old one. And Goya being Goya reverses the process and invents a way of painting miniatures that you can do in half an hour. And what he did was to cover the whole thing--they vary somewhat, but one way to do it was to cover them with lampblack and--wash with lampblack and then with a dry brush, he would do the whites. And then he might take a sharp tool and scratch some more little highlights. He might add a few little wisps of color and was done. Whereas the other person does the little--Lucas, who did the other miniatures did it the way you would expect with lots of little --

MR. BROWN: Little pointillists.

MS. SAYRE: Little pointillists; little blobs of color.

MR. BROWN: And Goya was just clearing the path and then applying the --

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and the amount of it related, actually, do doing an aquatint or a lithograph.

MR. BROWN: And no one had realized that before and this enabled one to identify Goyas as opposed to nearly identical contemporaries.

MS. SAYRE: And on that basis, I identified a certain number that I thought probably were by him. But also being a scholar, I realized that on one of them there was a fingerprint. And I thought that--and I knew that on some of the working proofs of the *Disasters of War* that we had fingerprints, too. And I thought that either those are Goya's fingerprints or the printers. But there's a fifty-fifty chance that they're Goya's. And so I called up for the police to see whether or not they'd be willing to examine fingerprints for me. And they were--they wanted to know whether or not it was--they were delighted to do it. And when I came, they wanted to know whether or not I had brought all ten fingerprints certified and I explained that I wasn't able to do that because the suspect had died in the 18th century.

But I also took somebody else with me because I didn't want their fingerprints added to the ones that we already had. And I found that we'd been overestimating what people can do with fingerprints, that you have to have 25 identical points before you can say that it really is the same fingerprint. That is where lines intersect or little pockmarks in the skin, things of that kind and I didn't have them. So when the police failed me, that was when I set to and found out the process.

MR. BROWN: And whereby would these have been a Goya, the one with the fingerprints on it?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Because --

MS. SAYRE: Our publicity people heard about it and they wanted to use it as publicity, but I wouldn't let them because I think it would be awfully confusing to the public to feel that the only way you could tell whether or not something was genuine was from a fingerprint.

MR. BROWN: And this accorded with the fact, he painted very quickly, his miniatures.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And they weren't all dry and a finger could intrude on the whole --

MS. SAYRE: Well, bring me the--

[Interruption to interview.]

MR. BROWN: --at the detail, it shows portions?

MS. SAYRE: Enlarging you can see how little pigment there is. And when you compare it with the detail of an ordinary kind of miniature, there's a thick paint and tiny little brushstrokes. It's a world away.

MR. BROWN: So his is really very, very thinly painted by comparison.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and that was one of the things that made me wonder about it when I first saw it was because with Goya, characteristically, it's the--the principal figure has the most paint on it and the background is rather thin. Whereas in this miniature, it's on the background that the paint is thicker and there's very little paint on the figure itself. And it wasn't until I found out how it was done --

MR. BROWN: That this began to make --

MS. SAYRE: That it made sense.

MR. BROWN: --sense.

MS. SAYRE: And he was in his 80s.

MR. BROWN: He was forever innovative; was he or could it be --

MS. SAYRE: The same age makes the --

MR. BROWN: --that that's when he --

MS. SAYRE: --that does the first great lithographs. This is an experimental one, but a brand new process.

MR. BROWN: And quickly shows some considerable mastery of a new medium.

MS. SAYRE: Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: What do you think could have attracted him to the new medium of lithographs where you could simply draw on a stone?

MS. SAYRE: Same thing that did--

MR. BROWN: The same reason you say he liked the lithograph as --

MS. SAYRE: Because he gets the effects that he wants very quickly. And when he painted people's portraits, he did it in an incredibly short time. And I think that when he does the aquatints, that's quicker and easier than etching the lines and hatching as he tried to do it in the very beginning. And lithography was really invented as a way for amateurs to do--to make prints to record things without necessarily having any real artistic training. And if you can just simply draw on the stone as freely as though it were on paper and then print it, why wouldn't he like it?

MR. BROWN: Right.

MS. SAYRE: And he did some experimental lithographs. And then he did the four first really great--I would say really great lithographs that he thought of selling in Paris, but sends them to a friend wondering whether or not they will sell and the friend said no. And partly, I think, because they were bullfighting, but partly also --

MR. BROWN: Because they were --

MS. SAYRE: Because they were bull fighting and there wasn't a public for bullfighting in Paris.

MR. BROWN: Not yet.

MS. SAYRE: No, but then also, the extraordinary thing about those--that particular set of prints is that when you hold them in your hand, they don't make sense. But when you hang them on the wall a little above eye level, suddenly everything comes together. And the same thing is true of his paintings, that you have to look at them from the height at the angle in the kind of light, often candlelight, as he painted them to be seen and then they come alive. But he paints--long before the word was invented, he was an impressionist.

MR. BROWN: Did you happen to come across this yourself or discovered this yourself?

MS. SAYRE: That aspect of it?

MR. BROWN: The vantage point? Yes. Or sharing the --

MS. SAYRE: I'm sure that other people must have seen it, too, but I don't think anybody is as conscious of it as I am.

MR. BROWN: Have you been able on many an occasion to look at that particular angle?

MS. SAYRE: And it was not me who discovered--it was a Spanish person who first discovered that the prints have to be--the lithographs should be seen on the wall. I'm ashamed I didn't.

MR. BROWN: You mean, from just below in many cases or just above eye level?

MS. SAYRE: About like this. For you it would be about like that.

MR. BROWN: I see.

MS. SAYRE: And I think --

MR. BROWN: So it was a fairly good angle.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and I think that maybe what--trying to explain the difference to myself is that, in Spain, prints weren't very much collected, or drawings. Whereas in France, they were. And I--so that I wonder whether when he went to Paris and to Bordeaux, he didn't see framed prints hanging on the walls of people's houses and got the idea of them being seen like that rather than being held in the hand.

MR. BROWN: They were more characteristically decorative elements in French households than was the case in Spain.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Is this true of his earlier--of earlier prints by Goya --

MS. SAYRE: No, it isn't.

MR. BROWN: But it was paintings for some time, they were hung by candlelight?

MS. SAYRE: But it is true of the paintings, yes. And that's--they're meant to be seen by candlelight. And that's why in the famous self-portrait of him wearing a hat you can see that there's a, in the crown of the hat, that there's a place for four candles so he could--as he painted he could get that particular kind of effect and see his painting as it would be seen.

MR. BROWN: What did that require in the painting process itself if it was--he intended it to be seen by candlelight?

MS. SAYRE: To me, Goya is often compared with Beethoven. But the composer that I think he's really like is Mozart. And Beethoven, for example, had to have many, many little sketches for the things that he wrote--writes. Mozart composed them in his head and then put them down on paper. And Goya does the same thing with his paintings and his prints. But he composes them in his head and then puts them down. He may make some changes as he puts them down, but the vision of it is strong and detailed.

MR. BROWN: In technical terms or something like it, the paintings to be seen by candlelight, painted often in candlelight, how --

MS. SAYRE: The finishing touches were done by candlelight according to his son.

MR. BROWN: But how would he adjust color and intensity?

MS. SAYRE: It was an intellectual process that I have to put on my canvas the colors in such a fashion that when somebody looks at it, they're going to have this illusion. And he was an incredible illusionist. And when you look at portraits--unfortunately, they're all too often--they're restored by people who don't understand what he was trying to do. But when you're lucky enough to see one that hasn't been really restored, you see how he uses even the grounding of the canvas as a color. And for instance in a little sketch--Goya's sketch of the annunciation that the museum has, the you see the angel's hand--it's only the top of the hand and a couple of fingers that are painted, but you think you see the whole thing. And the angel's gown, it's about--there are two or three folds of the cloth that he paints, but you imagine that you see the rest.

MR. BROWN: In his age, he was exceptional in this.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Or do we have to wait well into the 20th century before we see --

MS. SAYRE: I don't think anybody has matched him in that kind of illusionism. And I know that, for instance, I think it might have been at the Prado they borrowed one of the--a painting that was supposed to hang quite high up in the church of a saint sitting on the floor. And an English scholar comes along and says, "That can't possibly be by Goya." I said, "Because you're not looking at it right. Lie down on the floor." And I said it with such force that he lies down on the floor. And so he won't feel badly, I lie on the floor beside him. Along comes one of the guards wondering what's going on and I explain. And I said, "Try it." And he lies, so there's a third body lying on the floor. And when you lay on the floor and looked at it like that, then it suddenly comes together and makes sense and you see that it is Goya.

MR. BROWN: So he was superb in adjusting for where something would be placed and--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: --how it would be seen and the conditions.

MS. SAYRE: And we have a contemporary account of his wanting to go and see the site before he begins to think about the project.

MR. BROWN: Was that unusual from when the --

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: --say mural painters?

MS. SAYRE: I don't--it's hard to know how unusual it is, but I don't think that--I think he was unusual, the lengths to which he painted illusion. And he--there was one--he received a commission for some of the ceiling paintings in Saragossa and got up to his brother-in-law, a man who became Francisco Bayeu, who forced him to repaint some of the figures. And I suspect that the basis of the--and he was incredibly indignant about it and felt that, because he was a full-fledged artist by then that his brother-in-law, Francisco Bayeu, had absolutely no right to do this to him. But the brother-in-law was able to do it because he--the commission had come through him and because he had clout with the cathedral chapter. But I suspect that what Goya may have done was to--up there on the ceiling to paint the illusion so that the illusion would work from down below. But when you saw it when you were standing up high and you saw it from up there that it wouldn't make sense, that the brother-in-law might well say this is no good. But that's nothing that can ever be proved.

MR. BROWN: It's a likely reason, though. It's more likely than others.

MS. SAYRE: I think it's possible, yes.

MR. BROWN: Was Goya notable for trying to stand by what he wished?

MS. SAYRE: I guess so, yes, In that he was incredibly brave about him publishing the *Caprichos*. And persists in doing the *Disasters of War* even though he doesn't dare offer them for sale. And one thing that, again, I saw a painting that he did of Fernando VII who came in after the Peninsula War and had spent the time in France busily trying to marry in to the Bonaparte family. People in Spain for the most part didn't know this and thought of him as the desired one who had longed for--comes down at the end of the war to constitutional Spain. The night before he gets to Madrid, he declares it just to be as though none of the events of the war had ever taken place. And the constitution is dead. The Cortes is abandoned and Goya gets a commission to paint him for Saragossa. And the incredible thing about that painting is that--you want to get--

MR. BROWN: So the *Caprichos* then are your major study right now.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And the visual puns, which you've been trying to unlock, and beginning by looking at the remarks of contemporaries or --

MS. SAYRE: I look at the remarks of the contemporaries and the first thing that I do is to--which is how I really got into it in the first place--that I broke my right wrist very badly. It was extremely painful to learn to write again. And I thought that if I began translating these into English, it would be short and interesting.

MR. BROWN: Something that wouldn't require a strenuous amount of handwriting.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, so I began doing it. And then because my Spanish isn't all that good, I looked up words that I wouldn't have looked up if I'd been Spanish. And I saw it would seem that there were about three or four meanings. And I would pick up the print to see which one to pick. And then I would see that I could perfectly well pick two or even three in some cases. And this is what gave me the clue. Because the English language is rich because we have --

MR. BROWN: Language has multiple meanings for a given word, but Spanish --

MS. SAYRE: And we love to play with different shades of meaning. But in Spanish it's the other way around that one word could mean three or four completely different things. So that in one sentence you can make two contradictory statements. And in Spain, people like to play with that. And I think a small number of the puns had been caught because they turn up in the titles, like *Ya Van Desplumados*.

MR. BROWN: Which means literally --

MS. SAYRE: It means--one of the literal meanings is that "there they go plucked." And in fact you see these little birdlike figures who are being swept out of a room by two young women. And then behind is another woman and a second figure--an older woman and a second figure and--but desplumado can also mean "there they go without their hair, there they go bald." And you see that these birdlike men who don't have any feathers that indeed they've lost most of their hair and unless you think that maybe he just didn't bother to do their hair, then you remember that desplumado is the same--can also mean that when you don't have any hair, that's one of the symptoms of advanced syphilis. And you look and you see, as the commentary has noted, that one of the men is limping. And advanced syphilis affects your joints.

And then they also noticed that one of them--that on this lame leg, that there's a tight bandage. And the word--that word also can have two meanings; that the man is impotent or it's the bandage itself. And advanced syphilis affects your impotency. So when these men no longer have any money and can't perform, then the

prostitutes sweep them out. And then comes the question of who are the two people.

MR. BROWN: The two women or the two --

MS. SAYRE: No, one is a woman, but the--my helpful manuscripts saw one of--the other one as a monk and that he has--or at least they don't--I'm not sure that they say specifically there's a monk, but he has a double rosary hanging from his waist, which is what monks do. And then you can read in the literature of the time, for example, that monks also acted as pimps. And that the advantage was that they could get you young ladies of any class. But the disadvantage was that you had to listen to a sermon. So what Goya's saying, in effect, is that these men who should be guiding us towards eternal life, instead guide us towards a life which will end in our death through syphilis. And it's on the basis of prints like that or plates like that in a set that people--that some people at the time thought of it as one of the great marvel works of all time.

MR. BROWN: This is--some of this work must take a great deal of time.

MS. SAYRE: It does.

MR. BROWN: Unearthing the multiple meanings of words. Do you have recourse to contemporary dictionaries and --

MS. SAYRE: Oh, thank God, I own three. And I couldn't possibly do it without them.

MR. BROWN: Is your aim in the--have you gone through most of the *Caprichos* series now and --

MS. SAYRE: Well, I've got about at least a quarter more that I have to write, perhaps a little more than that.

MR. BROWN: Do you expect that by the time you get to--have done them all, that there will be revelations about interconnections and the like and patterns that you don't even know?

MS. SAYRE: I'll bet there are. Oh, yes, that's one of the interesting things is that, for example, in the one that we were talking about of the woman who was stealing the teeth of a hanged man, that comes just after a print of highwaymen. And highwaymen are men who would --

MR. BROWN: Well, that print --

MS. SAYRE: That one comes right after a print of tobacco smugglers. And the trouble with smuggling tobacco is a relatively mild crime, particularly because of the price of tobacco was kept so high by the government. But the trouble was that the people who did it were very apt to become highwaymen and Goya shows you, not only the men sort of cutting tobacco and enjoying it. But also hidden by their feet, you see guns and also ropes to tie people up so that they--their crime is that they prey on other Spaniards. And by putting the print of the women stealing a hanged man's teeth directly after that, you're forced to ask yourself which one is worse; the men who plunder other travelers or the woman who steals one of the few things left to a hanged man, his teeth and does it because she's in love with a man.

MR. BROWN: Are there in the series various pairings like that?

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and also another sort of big major difference is that one of the commentaries, for example, says--talking particularly about the second half of the set, "These are the witches of Goya." But the witches that he represents are the follies and vices of Madrid. And when you look in the 1611 Spanish dictionary, if you look up the word "witch," you can read that there are witches that fly off to the Sabbath and do unspeakable things. And then--but it says that there are other people who believe that they don't really fly, but that the ointment with which they put on themselves makes them fall into a swoon and they think that they've done--they do these things. But then it also goes even further and it says that there are other people who believe that what witches really are are people who have given themselves to evil and to Satan. And I think that's what Goya believed. So that when we commit to evil to a great enough extent, then we lose our human aspect.

MR. BROWN: This was a commentary for contemporary--

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: --on contemporaries. Or on contemporary types or --

MS. SAYRE: That--which one?

MR. BROWN: Well, the series itself in general, but including the witches.

MS. SAYRE: Oh, yes. And they understood them infinitely better than we do.

[Interruption to interview.]

MR. BROWN: What do you expect your product will be when you've finished--completed this study?

MS. SAYRE: Long and unwieldy.

MR. BROWN: And the summary thereof you can't--you can begin to outline, but you can't know exactly what your conclusion will be.

MS. SAYRE: There never was--it's an incredibly fascinating set. And the sins which concern us today turn up there, including even the clergy sodomizing little boys is the subject of one of them.

MR. BROWN: You've--apart from your researches and exhibitions and so forth in the museum world and the scholarly world, you've been concerned with various ethical and moral things today; haven't you?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And done what you can to from time to time. Can you talk a bit about some of that just briefly? I know you've mentioned being a medical volunteer.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and there's so much that needs doing in this world. And I think the only solution is to do the small bits that we think we can, when we can, as they come up and that they do matter. And one of the little things that--this part we better keep quiet for the time being, but the--no, you can do it. But it shouldn't be made public, is that in this reorganizing of the museum under the present administration, there's a lot of very, very unhappy people, partly because of the arbitrary downsizing with no warning and really good publications person in the museum for 25 years thrown out with two weeks' notice.

And in general, it's the women who lose their--important women who lose their jobs. And one of the things that I did was to go around to people and tell them that I had worked under two directors who didn't like intelligent women and I'd been forbidden to do this, this, this, this, this, this, this, this, this, this, this and I never did a single thing that I was told not to do, but I also realized that it was as though they had tried to cover me with concrete, but the concrete gets cracks. And if you're a hardy weed, you can come through up the cracks in the cement and go right on flourishing.

And so what I've been doing is to create in this museum what is known as the Royal Society of Hardy Weeds. And I explain to people that it's not a society against anybody and it isn't. But each person, it says, as a human being you matter. And however much crap they throw on you, if you want to flourish, you still can. And as one person said, "Well, after all, crap is really manure." And I invented a sign by which we know one another which is the hand sort of coming up and bursting into bloom. And it's extraordinary as I go through the museum how I'm received. It has helped.

MR. BROWN: Because it had become pretty brutal; had it and brutalizing?

MS. SAYRE: Yes. It doesn't stop the things from happening, but what I can do is to give people fortitude.

MR. BROWN: You see this? This is in the museum, a very professional kind of institution or place.

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: How do you compare that say with when you were in Colombia as a medical volunteer? I mean, is it simply a matter of degree? Or are they quite equivalent, the --

MS. SAYRE: I think all these--there's an equivalency to all these things, that as I say, you have to keep your eyes open for what needs doing. And then there's not very much that you can do, but some of the small things you should and must.

MR. BROWN: And perhaps in Colombia, but at least here you can see an appreciable effect --

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: --in the spirits of people.

MS. SAYRE: Very much so.

MR. BROWN: A sense that there are options in ways of privately flourishing.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, and that the dictatorship under which we live doesn't mean that they can't still do some things

anyway.

MR. BROWN: You've always felt pretty strongly about the liberal life as opposed to repression; haven't you?

MS. SAYRE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Which were practically ingrained in you as a child by your family and your family examples and the like.

MS. SAYRE: And also temperamentally. But for instance, I know that in school I really tried to be good. And I never--I didn't do things that I was told not to do, but yet years later I had about two or three weeks between jobs and I heard that they needed somebody at Buckingham to teach and I --

MR. BROWN: The Buckingham School in Cambridge, which was then a girls' school.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, to teach science and don't ask me why I thought I was qualified to do this, but I went and applied for the job. And the person who was then head said, "Yes, I remember you. I remember you very well. You were the naughtiest child we had in school. And I think you should be very well equipped to keep order." She was quite right, because I could smell trouble a mile away.

MR. BROWN: You brought a certain experience.

MS. SAYRE: Yes, but I hadn't thought of myself as being a naughty child.

MR. BROWN: Do you think your perception of yourself is fairly accurate or is that an example of a --

MS. SAYRE: No, but I think that from the school's point of view, I certainly was. And I know that in my school in Switzerland, we had an English teacher who wanted to make me do something which was clean the washrooms when it wasn't my turn to. And I refused. And she said--she came up to the room and I was lying in my bed then and she said it was very easy, that she would just sit there until I did it. And I said, "I'm still not going to." And she began about the--telling me about the *Charge of the Light Brigade* and I said I felt that they had been rather silly. And in the end--and she well, it's very simple that I would--for the rest of the year I would never have any desserts and I said, "All right. I'm still not going to do it." And I didn't, but never got any punishment either.

MR. BROWN: You think there was a merit, then, in standing up--standing for what you really felt.

MS. SAYRE: I wouldn't say merit, no.

MR. BROWN: Looking back, are you glad you went into art museums as your work?
MS. SAYRE: Yes, it's a--it challenges every part of you. And one of the jobs--as part of my professional life, I have put in glass and windowpanes. I have painted furniture, changed diapers, done research. You name it, there's --

MR. BROWN: Is this what you thought it might be?

MS. SAYRE: No, but I think that I fell in love with museums is when I was seven and used to spend my time in the--then in the Peabody Museum when I was in quarantine for various things. And they thought--my family thought that the galleries were a place where I couldn't infect anybody, because they were pretty empty. And I still remember the things that I saw and loved then. I guess I was six, not seven.

MR. BROWN: This is at Harvard.

MS. SAYRE: Yes. And then when I was eight and we were in Paris and on Thursdays, which was the equivalent of American child Saturdays, we went to the--we would go to the Louvre and we would be allowed to choose which part of the museum we wanted to look at. And we couldn't leave that particular section and then we were allowed to look around by ourselves and I know which walls some of things that I most loved were hanging on, because I looked so hard.

MR. BROWN: What do you think it was that so early first at the Peabody Zoological Museum had been and then at the Louvre?

MS. SAYRE: Certainly, the idea stimulated me of what I saw and I think one reason that I--in fact, I know that the reason that I take the children seriously is that when I was 13, I was in London with my father and I wanted to go the British Museum and look at drawings and my father said I could go by myself. Did I tell you this?

MR. BROWN: No.

MS. SAYRE: And so I set off. It was a little scary going to the British Museum for the first time by myself and I thought if I have something to eat, I will feel braver. And I remember stopping at a--I saw a place that had tea, but it was the wrong time of day for tea. And so I looked so crestfallen that they kindly sold me something anyway and I took it with me and began eating in the street and I soon realized that people didn't--because everybody stared at me. And I thought well maybe in England they don't eat in the streets. So I retreated down an alley, still felt exposed, found a door that was slightly open, and go inside and I think now it must have been the locker room and swimming pool of a club. Sat on the edge of the pool and finished off my bun and thought afterwards I probably shouldn't tell my father about that. Go onto the British Museum and find the print room and they were marvelous.

Instead of looking at me as though it was odd I had come by myself, they just asked me what I wanted to see. And at that age, it was Botticelli and Michelangelo. And they got them out and I looked. But if they had made any kind of to-do about it, I would have instantly fled and it would have been years before I came into a museum again. But what it made me understand is that any child that came to our print room who knew enough to ask for a Dürer or whatever it might be, should be allowed to see them. Nowadays, it's pretty hard for children to get in because the print room doesn't have the kind of quarters where we can be open like that. So a child can't come in as easily. And the British Museum also decreed after that that you had to be 21 years old before you could see anything.

MR. BROWN: That was a step backwards --

MS. SAYRE: Yes, I think so. And I found in our print room that the children handled works of art with great care. They're so awed at being allowed to look at them. And the people that you have to watch like hawks are A, artists, because they feel they can make them, too; and B, scholars in the field who feel that they own them.

MR. BROWN: Do you think you function a bit as a missionary or is that saying too much. Are there a number of your colleagues who likewise love to share things and who are delighted with children's interests and at the same time the rigorous scholarly life?

MS. SAYRE: I think probably less than me, but on the other hand, they didn't have that--there are some, I think. There must be.

[END OF RECORDING.]

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