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Oral history interview with Leroy Davis and Cecily Langdale, 2007 June 26-August 7

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

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Leroy Davis and Cecily Langdale on June 26, July 17, and August 7, 2007. The interview took place at Davis & Langdale Company, Inc. in New York, New York, and was conducted by Avis Berman for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Funding for this interview was provided by a grant from the Widgeon Point Charitable Foundation.

Leroy Davis, Cecily Langdale, and Avis Berman have reviewed the transcript and have made corrections and emendations. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

AVIS BERMAN: [In progress.] [This is Avis Berman]—recording Roy Davis and Cecily Langdale for the Archives of American Art oral history program on June 26, 2007, in their gallery on East 60th Street. And I ask this of everyone, would you each state your full name and date of birth?

LEROY DAVIS: Leroy Davis, October 1, 1922.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Cecily Langdale Davis, July 27, 1939.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. Roy, I am going to begin with you. And you were born in Philadelphia, and could you tell me a little bit about your parents and your background?

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I don't know a lot about them. Both of my parents—my mother died when I was nine and my father died when I was 10, so my recollections of them are not going to be terribly meaningful, other than very personal. They played absolutely no role whatsoever in what I am today, in terms of my interest in art.

AVIS BERMAN: Were their names Davis?

LEROY DAVIS: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: And were you adopted by another relative? What happened?

LEROY DAVIS: My sister and my brother, who were much older than I, brought me up, and my sister probably was the one most responsible for my interest in the arts.

AVIS BERMAN: And why don't you tell me the names of—

LEROY DAVIS: Her name was Sylvia Davis. She was—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS:—and still is. She's alive.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, she was a dancer. She later on went into acting, several movies, a lot of commercials, things of that nature.

AVIS BERMAN: And did she act under the name of Sylvia Davis?

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, she did. And my brother stayed in the family business, which was a real estate business.

AVIS BERMAN: And what was his name?

LEROY DAVIS: Leonard Davis, and he shared no role, again—I was sort of—Sylvia was sort of—was responsible for my interest in arts, totally.

AVIS BERMAN: And I guess I should ask how many years older than you is she?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: So you do need me. Thirteen years older.

LEROY DAVIS: And my brother, a few years more than that.

AVIS BERMAN: So that must have been hard for her as a dancer, also, for them to have that kind of responsibility.

LEROY DAVIS: It was harder for her being married to someone and having to put up with me, because I was a

pretty rotten, terrible kid, and I was moved back and forth a couple of times. And then when I was about 17, I was more or less on my own, and I lived with families that I knew through Settlement Music School in Philadelphia.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, and when you say you were a terrible kid, you'd been traumatized, probably, at nine or 10.

LEROY DAVIS: No, I don't think so, no.

AVIS BERMAN: Anyway, so at some point—now, where did you go to school in Philadelphia?

LEROY DAVIS: Central High.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, the famous Central High School.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, it became more famous when I—toward the very end. I mean, it was a very good school. And Tyler School of Fine Arts [Temple University, Elkins Park, PA], which was a very small school. Have you spoken to Aaron [Shikler] at all? Have you—

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, well, I know him, but—

LEROY DAVIS: You know him.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, and I used to know—

LEROY DAVIS: Aaron and Pete [Barbara "Pete" Shikler] both.

AVIS BERMAN: Pete, I really knew well.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, well, Pete, they both went to Tyler, but Aaron and I came in the same class in 1940, and I guess we were, at the time, the hot guns from the two cities. And Aaron's gun remained hot and mine less so. [They laugh.] But—and we weren't really terribly close at the beginning. We knew one another and we—it was a very small school. There were maybe 60, 70 people in the whole school.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, in high school, did you decide you wanted to be an artist or a musician, or what was the situation?

LEROY DAVIS: I was interested in writing, which I made some feeble attempts at, and I was interested in painting. Then I more or less focused on painting, and I met a man named Marty Jackson, who was the premier young painter at the time in Philadelphia. And he was a protégé of Franklin Watkins, who taught at Tyler until the year I arrived. He and Earl—or was it Earl Horton? I think it's Horter.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Horter.

LEROY DAVIS: Horter, yeah, were both teaching at Tyler, and both left about the time that I arrived; really both, you know, highly regarded men. Watkins, I knew slightly, because I shared a studio with Marty Jackson prior to the time that I entered Tyler, and I met Franklin Watkins there and then subsequently met him a number of years later when I was involved in the framing business [APF Framing] with Bob Kulicke, and I did a lot of framing for him. And he was a highly regarded painter in Philadelphia. I don't know if you know who—he won the Carnegie award.

AVIS BERMAN: *Suicide in Costume* [1931].

LEROY DAVIS: *Suicide*—good for you. Yeah, and the Museum of Modern Art [New York City] owns a portrait of Boris Bly, who was the head of the school, which they never show, and it's really quite a marvelous painting, as I recall, and when he was—you know, he was a natty gentleman; he really was, and one of his closest friends was Sturgis Ingersoll. And his pictures were, for the most part, owned by people of that status in Philadelphia. He made some feeble attempt—he did show in New York and he got a terrible review from the—[inaudible]—and as a result of it, decided never to show in New York again. I mention this because I did get to know him a little bit later on. And Marty Jackson is the protégé and was a very important part of my life at the time.

AVIS BERMAN: Well I want to know how you, since it sounds as if your circumstances may have been rather straightened, how you got the money to go to Tyler.

LEROY DAVIS: Scholarship and then the GI Bill later.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Well, GI Bill, I will—you know, the war, I will deal with later, but you were there, and who were your other—who were your teachers, then, at Tyler?

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, my God. I'm trying to think. [Rafael] Sabatini was in sculpture—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Pinto brothers [Salvatore, Angelo, and Biagio Pinto]?

LEROY DAVIS: No, that was at—

AVIS BERMAN: Barnes [Foundation, Philadelphia, PA]—you're thinking about the Pintos?

LEROY DAVIS: Pintos, yeah.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: They were at the Barnes, right. Sorry.

LEROY DAVIS: I didn't get to know them until then—I didn't get to know one of them until later. I can't remember.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Do you want me to go make a quick phone call?

LEROY DAVIS: Well, Aaron—I mean, Aaron will probably ask me.

AVIS BERMAN: So you were studying—

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, I was a terrible student. I mean, I was terrible. Boris Bly was the head of the school, and I was constantly cutting classes and being threatened to be thrown out. I really was a bad student. I wanted to do my own thing, and I also went, at the same time, to a place called the Settlement Music School in Philadelphia, South Philadelphia, which was an extraordinary school. I went there just before I went to Tyler and then afterwards for a short time, and I can't remember the name of the instructor, but he was way ahead of his time. He was very much aware of what was going on in New York and the beginnings of what then became the great school of—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Abstract—

LEROY DAVIS:—Abstract Expressionism, and his method of teaching in 1940, if you can imagine it, was—well, we did a lot of *croquis* [figure] sketches, but they were done by not looking at the paper at all, just simply drawing what we saw in front of us, no matter what angle—I mean, he was thoroughly embedded in what was happening and knew a lot of the painters.

AVIS BERMAN: So this was an art class at the music school?

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, and a very highly regarded—it was at night, and I met [Albert] Einstein there. He came to class one night. Interesting people came, and there were interesting people teaching music there and teaching dance as well. It was a great—my sister, as a matter of a fact, was in the dance group there. And it was an extraordinary school which—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: May I prompt?

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Or would you rather I didn't?

AVIS BERMAN: No, no, prompting is good.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Okay. You met your best boyhood friend, Arthur Penn.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, I met Arthur Penn there, who became, I guess, very close friends.

AVIS BERMAN: Is this Arthur Penn, the director?

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah.

AVIS BERMAN: Now, just in terms of Tyler, who were the other students or friends you made there besides Aaron?

LEROY DAVIS: Everybody wants to ask these questions. I don't remember anybody's name. Addie [Adeline] Herder, who was leaving at the time. And I greatly admired Addie. She was, again, a protégé of Martin, Martin Jackson's, and was not involved in the things that she did later, which were things like that box. No, all those people came in after the war.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: So in other words, there were two periods of time.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Well, that's what I'm—I'm dealing with pre—up to, before you were—I assume you were drafted.

LEROY DAVIS: Yes, I was. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: I mean, I don't see—you didn't join up. You didn't—

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I would have if I was—I was going to try—I wanted to get in the Air Force, which I—anyway, that's another story.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Stanley Bleifeld.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, no, as a matter of fact, Stanley, I did know somebody named Stanley Bleifeld. He was a painter—

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

LEROY DAVIS:—student sculptor, who I knew very well, and I don't remember when he came in but not immediately. I mean, and a lot of names that won't—they're not—Marty Zipkin—God, Rat—the guy named Ratloff [ph]—Ratlov? Rakov [ph], Rakov, Rakov, killed in the last mission of World War II over in Japan.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Remenick?

LEROY DAVIS: Hmm?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Remenick?

LEROY DAVIS: Yes, Seymour Remenick, good painter. I mean, somebody I represented for a while—[inaudible].

AVIS BERMAN: Also, before you were drafted, you went to the Barnes Foundation, or you studied there; so how were you able to get in there?

LEROY DAVIS: Anybody had a shot at it. I mean, housewives as well. I mean, he [Albert Barnes] was not interested in having painters—

AVIS BERMAN: That's why I'm asking.

LEROY DAVIS:—or art students, no. The whole idea was it's a course in aesthetics. It has nothing to do with teaching art. As a matter of fact—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But how did you—

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I heard about it—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS:—wiggle past that—

LEROY DAVIS:—and I—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS:—that restriction?

LEROY DAVIS: I just applied. It didn't mean that you couldn't be a painter. It just meant that he wasn't interested in whether you were a painter, or if you did paintings, he didn't want to see what you painted anyway. But I applied, and I think Aaron got in, too, and I stayed a lot longer than Aaron did. And I had the good fortune of getting Violette de Mazia as a teacher, and she was my teacher for the three years I was there. And I got to know Dr. Barnes well enough to sit at his feet in the class and listen to him. And he sat in a lot of our classes, because he, well, he had an enormous amount of regard for de Mazia, because, obviously, she was largely responsible for—[inaudible]—and she was a very good, enthusiastic teacher.

I guess what I should say is that at Tyler I benefited most from my relationships with other people and from my exchange of ideas with them. And as a matter of fact, I taught an after-school class on Barnes, with Barnes's permission—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: At Tyler.

LEROY DAVIS: At Tyler. And I made some friends. I mean, I was a good friend of Aaron's but not a close friend, although he did, when I was drafted, he put on a little show of my work in one of the rooms. So I raised some money for it and then I went away. [They laugh.] And that's something that was very sweet. So a handful of people there, I mean, I can't remember the names of—I'm terrible with names—just that the role that they

played is far more important, and most of it was competitive. Hanya Holm taught dancing there. It was an extraordinary school.

AVIS BERMAN: Now, at the—why did you say that you had the good fortune to have Miss de Mazia? What—

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I mean, de Mazia had a thorough understanding of the course itself and what it was intended to—and what they hoped to structure in one's thinking, the way in which they hoped to structure one's thinking. Most of the other teachers were there secondhand and had been former students of de Mazia's. I don't remember their names because I had nothing to do with any of them, but I know that later on—I forget which of the Pintos it was—

AVIS BERMAN: Well, there was Angelo.

LEROY DAVIS: Was it Angelo?

AVIS BERMAN: I think there was Salvatore, also.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, one of them used to visit the gallery—

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: The one who's Jody Pinto's father [Angelo Pinto]; so which one was that?

AVIS BERMAN: I can't remember which—I used to know—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Maybe Angelo—

LEROY DAVIS: He was very sweet, and he was—they were all 12th-grade painters, but they taught there, and they sort of—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, they were kind of party line.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, I mean, well, everybody was, and anybody who taught there was party line.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But she wrote the party line.

LEROY DAVIS: She did.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: With her—[inaudible]—I'm sorry.

LEROY DAVIS: [Inaudible]—because—

AVIS BERMAN: Was [John] Dewey there while you were there?

LEROY DAVIS: No, nor did I ever meet him, but I saw a lot of Dr. Barnes, who sat in on our classes, and most of them, at least, he'd appear at the end of a class. It was the end of the day; he would sit in front of the windows with his dog on his lap, and he would really hold court, and we would—a group of us who were in the class, and there were two classes a week. I think there were about 26 or 7 people in each class, and we would sit around and ask a lot of questions, and this was the time for anecdotes. During the course of the classes, there were none. I mean, anecdotes would be carefully avoided, but Barnes did talk about more personal things and his relationship with some of the painters and the way in which he acquired things.

Oh, I don't remember a hell of a lot about it; I do know that that was a fun time. And the book [Albert C. Barnes. *The Art in Painting*. Merion, PA: The Barnes Foundation Press, 1925.] was used as a kind of a textbook for the course, and I would suggest that people read the book because there are wonderful, wonderful sections of it, particularly the beginning, when there—very carefully structures a common language, which I think is essential to discussion about any art form, that we have a common understanding of what we mean by certain words and —[inaudible]—so our definitions of things like drawing and composition and form—because I think one can get into a very, you know, active discussion with someone on subjects in which those terms are used, and they can mean different things to different people.

So one of the things that I learned at the Barnes Foundation—I think I learned it in retrospect, but by trying to understand what I got out of the experience, I realized that one of the things I got out of it was the need for comprehensive understanding terminology and the avoidance of buzz words like "colorful" and things of that nature, which were easy ways out of explaining why you felt the way you did about a picture, and together with this, the need to be able to justify it, you know, whatever conclusions you came to about it, which were whether it was or it wasn't good, and to be able to do somewhat of a skeletal analysis of the picture based upon the

information that the painter had given—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: For yourself, as much as for other people.

LEROY DAVIS: Absolutely, myself, yeah. It became a kind of phobia, which drove me crazy, because if I looked at something and I said, well, I do like it or I don't like it or hate it or whatever, I would instantly feel an obligation to justify or explain for my own gratification why I felt the way I did, which is a way I tend to talk to people now, and the only way I get away with it is because I'm 84 years old. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: So besides this method of analysis and reasoning, what else from the Barnes interlude has sort of stayed with you or you take it—

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I saw great pictures. I saw great pictures, and I have a very good visual memory of the place and circumstances. There are certain things that you learn, that you pick up from something that's meaningful to you. I still remember what the inside of my airplane smelled like. I know where pictures are hanging. And I guess I formed opinions about various painters. I began to realize something which I certainly have come to a conclusion on in later years, and that is that if there are 10 great painters in a given century, that's a lot, and the way it affected me later on was, well, if that's the case, what the hell are you doing selling pictures?

Well, I do. I sell pictures. I don't sell art, you know. And so it became apparent to me that there was a distinction between the term "art" and "painting" or "art" and "music" or whatever, and that is, "art" for me was a qualitative term, and there was a qualitative term. Then it was a matter of determining, you know, who were for me the people of consequence and why. And there were painters who were very influential, like Puvis de Chavannes, who were not great painters, but there were also people who were great painters who were not influential. I mean, I got to know [Henri] Matisse, and I didn't know him personally, but I knew his son [Pierre Matisse] very well and—I knew Pierre Matisse later on, very well. Great man.

AVIS BERMAN: [Inaudible]—was your attention directed toward a certain kind of American art?

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I saw a lot of American art because [William] Glackens helped a lot building the collection—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He had [Charles] Demuth and he had [Maurice, Charles] Prendergast—

LEROY DAVIS: He did, and I loved both of them enormously, and partly through that experience, I think, in retrospect—but I loved a lot of early Glackens. I loved Demuth. I loved Prendergast. I mean, we're very much involved with Prendergast—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Right.

LEROY DAVIS: It was just the—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Both Prendergasts.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, both Charles and Maurice, and I got to know Mrs. Charles Prendergast very well.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Eugénie, yes.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah. Later on. And, but I mean, the guy that loomed larger than life was Matisse. And there were wonderful things that were taught there. I mean, they would play music while discussing certain paintings like [Pierre Auguste] Renoir and [Paul] Cézanne and—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: [Chaim] Soutine.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, Soutine didn't get music. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: I was just curious.

LEROY DAVIS: Soutine was a very interesting guy because I also got to know Jacques Lipchitz very well later on in my life, and Lipchitz is the one who introduced Dr. Barnes to Soutine. Or Lipchitz told me this story, that he went to Europe with Dr. Barnes and introduced him, took him around to meet Soutine—this was a firsthand story, or a secondhand—and Dr. Barnes went and bought the entire studio, at which point Soutine drove around Paris in a taxicab and celebrated. And Barnes brought all these Soutines, brought them all back with him, showed a number of them. Soutine was somebody I admired enormously. Never did any drawings. I remember asking Dr. Barnes if he ever saw a drawing of Soutine's; he said no. He said possibly the start of a picture on the back of something. But that's my knowledge, that there don't exist any drawings. Interesting.

And then he [Lipchitz] introduced him to another friend of his, [Moise] Kisling. Kisling is a terrible painter, and

Barnes never forgave him, because he bought some of Kisling's as a result of it. According to Jacques Lipchitz, that caused a breech in their relationship. I have a feeling it was much more complicated than that, but that's what I was told by Lipchitz. And Lipchitz is, you know—early on, when he was a cubist—was a really wonderful sculptor and fascinating man, owned a lot of interesting things that I framed for him, which is how I knew him.

And anyway, getting back to the course itself, obviously this was the most influential—served my purposes best, because I had stopped painting at some point, and I started the art gallery.

And, you know, to get back to this business about art and the fact that it's a term which is thrown around so loosely now, and you hear these enormous prices that people are bringing in in auction and the thousands of dealers there are in this city right now, and there's not enough work to go around. And there really isn't, and we're all—we're all a bunch of liars and kidding ourselves if we think that's what we're doing. I mean, I know we represented a group of people and sell a lot of things which I think are wonderful, but sometimes, every once in awhile, one of them rises to the level of what I would consider to be a work of art. But for the most part, what we do is sell pictures and sculptures and objects and things of quality which help enrich someone else's life.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But surely there are gradations within the word "art." I mean—

LEROY DAVIS: Well, of course there are—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS:—people below the level of Matisse are not necessarily not artists.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, no, no, that's true. Well, even if Matisse is one of the 20th century's greatest artists, there are people who are great—Picasso's less great than Matisse—

AVIS BERMAN: Well, so you're saying that, in other words, when you use the word "picture," you're just saying it's not a home run? You're not saying, maybe you mean it's not great art, but you're not meaning it's not art at all?

LEROY DAVIS: Well, yeah, I am.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Some of it.

LEROY DAVIS: Some of it, I mean, yeah—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: You're not saying, are you, that Glackens is not an artist?

LEROY DAVIS: Well, for the sake of terminology, in coming up with a common terminology, has to be referred to as an artist, but so then is your 14-year-old kid who starts painting at the age of 14 an artist? You know, people refer to them as artists. So it seems to me there is an appropriate situation, therefore, to determine that the term "art" was a qualitative term. "Painter," I find much a better term, although I slip all the time making references to art.

And I'm not putting down the fact that there—I mean, a lot of the things that we sell, a lot of things that Cecily and I collect—and we have a large collection—are not necessarily works of art, but they're things that have enriched our lives, because in some way or another, they have determined the way in which we see. And one of Barnes's great phrases was, see what you're looking at, which when—the depth of perception.

AVIS BERMAN: So I guess I would say that you are reserving "art" to be a very, you know, the word, a very strict construction of just—what? The—

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I'm just simply saying that, for the sake of reality, you know, I challenge anybody to name who are the 10 or 15 greatest artists—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But surely you would agree that there are, if you will, minor artists.

LEROY DAVIS: Absolutely.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And then there is a whole category of people, who shall go unnamed, who are practicing professional artists—

LEROY DAVIS: Absolutely.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS:—who aren't.

LEROY DAVIS: Absolutely.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, they're making art. It may not be what we would consider good art, so that's—the question is, again—

LEROY DAVIS: "Making art" is an interesting term. I don't want to get into that but—

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. Making—

LEROY DAVIS: Because a lot of people make art; they mean preconceived ideas as to what will be accepted as art.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay, I think this is sort of a vortex we could get sucked into, so let me ask you a couple more things about Barnes. Did Barnes urge you to go to Europe yourselves?

LEROY DAVIS: Not at all. As a matter of fact, I came in at a time when, up until about 1940, he had been sending some of his students to Europe to study. I was not one of those, because he'd stopped doing it by the time I got there. I don't even know if I would have been chosen for it in any event.

AVIS BERMAN: The war.

LEROY DAVIS: And then there was the war.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, right, right.

LEROY DAVIS: And I'd like to think that he took a kind of, slight fancy to me. I mean, I will tell you, quickly, this story, which will indicate that. I hurt myself badly playing football, and I came to class and used crutches, and that was good. Had I not come, I might have gotten kicked out of the class. But he would—I remember once, he sent me to the back room to take a Renoir off the wall, which was an extraordinary thing. I mean, you know, 19-year-old kid being sent to remove a picture which was an icon off the wall and bring it to the front so we could talk about it. And I remember, Arthur Penn's father—this is tricky—Arthur Penn's father was a jeweler and a painter and a remarkable, remarkable painter—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He had a jewelry store; he didn't make jewelry.

LEROY DAVIS: No, he was a jewelry—

AVIS BERMAN: Jewelry dealer.

LEROY DAVIS: He stored—he fixed watches—[inaudible]—and he'd come home at night, and Arthur and Irving would give him materials to work on, work with, and he'd do some of these most extraordinary little pictures, which looked like little [Pieter] Breughels. They were unbelievable, and as a matter of fact, I picked a drawing out of the wastebasket once and pieced it back together, and made the mistake of giving it to a girlfriend at the time; I never got it back. But you never were allowed to bring anything to school, to Barnes, to show him. Your own work, certainly, that was out of the question.

But I said, look, I know this guy who is really absolutely remarkable, and there were a lot of unschooled artists at the Barnes Foundation that some called outsider artists or whatever. [Horace] Pippin was one. Could I possibly bring something of this man's to show you? And he agreed to let me do it, and I brought one of Arthur's father's pictures to show him, and he was very impressed, I mean, really impressed to the point where he volunteered to help him get in, introduce him to a gallery in New York. That was squelched by both Arthur and Irving, and nothing ever happened after that. Pictures disappeared—nobody knows where they are—but the point is that, you know, he did let me do that-

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He was indulgent for that.

AVIS BERMAN: Now, you mentioned, obviously in learning how to analyze and how to think, were you, the students, did you have to argue among each other? Did you debate? How was—

LEROY DAVIS: Are you talking about at Tyler?

AVIS BERMAN: No, back at the Barnes with de Mazia.

LEROY DAVIS: No, there was no—there was a question and answer period at the end, and most of the questions were pretty silly. I mean, they really—a lot of the people that were there were really awestruck by what they were looking at, and there were very often questions which they refused to answer, which were anecdotal questions.

No, there was no debating back and forth. There were a couple of students who were very rebellious, got kicked

out of the school—out of classes—who questioned Barnes's, for instance, devotion to a Renoir, which was a good point. [Berman laughs.] At least, it was, at a certain point, because it was the later pictures that Barnes was so enthusiastic about, and through relationships of those late pictures to [Peter Paul] Rubens and to a lot of Flemish paintings, which made a lot of sense, except the results didn't justify the attempt. And he did make certain forays into contemporary—then, what was contemporary art, he bought it. From what I am told, a [Jean] Dubuffet, which he later on regretted having bought and never appeared in the gallery.

There supposedly was a basement in which there were a lot of these things. Never saw it; don't know if it exists. But there supposedly were things in the basement which were, you know—and when he came back from Europe with the Soutines, he gave one to each one of the teachers as a present. And de Mazia built a little collection. I mean, you know, their relationship is well known. Her relationship with him is well known, so there's no point in going into that.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And the Mullen sisters [Nelle and Mary Mullen].

LEROY DAVIS: And the Mullen sisters, who were key figures, and they all built collections, mini-collections of Barnes collections, and some of the students built a Barnes collection. There's one in the south somewhere.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Bob London.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, Bob London, who just simply bought one of each as he could afford them, a [Jules] Pascin or Prendergast or whatever—Glackens, [George] Luks. So these were people who I'd assume in a very superficial way, this is what they got or at least thought. They tried to recreate for themselves.

Now, I'm not trying to paint myself above them, but I—I mean, I blame Barnes for my insatiable appetite for collecting things, which I think he would have enjoyed. But what happened happened after I left. And it wasn't as if, you know, I was being taught how to think, or I was being taught how to see, or I was being taught how to structure my language, and so, I mean, when I took stock of what had happened through that experience—a couple years after the war—I began to realize that this is what I got out of it, and I constantly make reference to the little—because chapters of the book—to sort of clarify things, and I find out things that I didn't realize at the time. Cecily and I—Cecily took me to see, in Florence [Italy], an extraordinary mural—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Andrea del Castagno [*Last Supper*, 1445. Sant'Apollonia]. This was a long time ago that we did this.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah. And—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But hardly anyone ever goes to see it.

LEROY DAVIS: Blown away by it, I mean, it was—you know his work a lot?

AVIS BERMAN: I'm not sure if I know this one.

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, my God. Well, it's in the Barnes book.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Where's the Barnes book?

LEROY DAVIS: And I was absolutely blown away by this—

AVIS BERMAN: I mean, I know some of the other, obviously, the [Tommaso] Masaccio, the [Benozzo] Gozzoli, the —

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah. Well, the reason I mention this is because it was a totally new name for me, and I look in the book, and here is a whole analysis of that mural, of that fresco, most favorable. And one of the things that sort of struck me was that it was drawing parallels, I thought, to [André] Derain in the work. One of the things that I learned was, of course, the tradition, the course of events. You know, art is not a stationary thing. That things evolve. And that doesn't mean they get better; they just simply, one thing leads to another thing and so forth and so on. So I try desperately for people to respect them as to realizing that the picture is based upon it, and that will go on happening.

AVIS BERMAN: What do you think of the Barnes collection moving downtown?

LEROY DAVIS: You know, the teachings of the Barnes—the people that are teaching now never knew Dr. Barnes, so they're teaching a dogma. That can be taught in any good museum in the world. You can teach aesthetics anywhere, you know, you really can and—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Would you not rather it stay where it is?

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, in the best of worlds, I'd like to see it stay where it is because, you know, in a hundred years from now, there won't be any of us left who experienced this unique—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But you—it's going to be secondhand if it's moved. In other words—

LEROY DAVIS: Well, it's true. I mean, if you think that the pictures were placed in a given spot because they relate to something else, to some degree that was true at the beginning, but after a while, it was just like in our house—and I'll show you that later—there was, you know, where are you going to put the picture? Well, here's a spot; let's stick it here.

AVIS BERMAN: Always room for one more.

LEROY DAVIS: That's exactly what happened, yeah, and unfortunately, the big Cézanne bathers [*Bathers at Rest*, 1875-76] is on top of the, you know, the ceiling, and it's very difficult to see. And I didn't see it well for the first time until I saw it in the National Gallery [of Art] in Washington [D.C.]. So then I respect that it would be a good idea. I don't like the people that are responsible for this because these people are not aware of the very special nature of that place as a teaching device.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And also as a moment in history.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, that's true. I mean, all that is true. I can't argue against that. We'd like to see it stay where it is, but if it moves, it won't be the worst thing in the world, because most people who go will still go around with these damned sheets listening to—

AVIS BERMAN: Acoustic guides?

LEROY DAVIS: They'll listen to the pictures instead of looking at them, and that's what's going to happen. It'll all end up that way, and that's tragic. He made a big mistake when he left this thing to Lincoln [University, Philadelphia]. It was his play at being—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Showing up Philadelphia [Museum of Art].

LEROY DAVIS:—liberal and he didn't realize that they just were not positioning—he was not in a position to endow the place with enough money to keep it going, and the pictures were a mess. I did an oral history with the Barnes Foundation. Somebody came over, and I made a suggestion that they get the students to all adopt a picture, you know, a work on paper, to restore, because the works on paper were just—Cézanne watercolors were fading. Paintings were okay, because many of them were purchased at the time they were painted or quite shortly thereafter and hadn't had much work done to them, except by a janitor who worked there, but the works on paper were really sad and needed a lot of help. And nobody paid any attention to what I said.

When I—I don't know, somehow or another, something happened to me, and that experience just changed my life forever, because it affected me in other ways, as well. It has to do with my whole thought process, at least as I allow it to, about any judgments I make. If you make a judgment, why are you making a judgment? So it's kind of a formal way of trying to analyze consistently why you feel the way you do. Some things that Cecily and I own that I can—I feel I can justify owning, and they're not works of art.

I'm very concerned about what's happening in this art world. I mean—[inaudible]—comfortable period when there were 25 galleries—[inaudible]—and it just, it kills me to see what's going on. We're members of the Art Dealers Association—[inaudible]—but I finally got into a fight there one day in an annual meeting, and I will never go back there.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, you didn't get in the fight. You did a rant. You were angry.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I did a rant. But, I mean—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I think the rant was wrong; I think the reasons were right.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, okay. Well, all my rants are wrong, and usually my reasons are right. But the point is, I don't know what motivates people—I guess what it is is it's the one profession you can go into without having a degree, and even then, that doesn't justify, or it doesn't determine, whether or not you're good at what you do. It works as a big handicap, not being able to tell people, you must buy this because someday it's going to be worth a lot more money or maybe it will enrich your life or it'll bring friends into your house who will admire you for having owned it. This is going on all—well, you know this; it's going on throughout the city, and every opportunity I get, I try to tell people that if you buy this—look, we are very much involved in an artist named Gwen John.

AVIS BERMAN: Of course.

LEROY DAVIS: Cecily did the catalogue raisonné [*Gwen John: with a Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings and a Selection of the Drawings*. London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987]. We own a number of—a considerable, considerable number. She is very important, and she's a part of—it shocks me that Dr. Barnes didn't own any. Reason probably is because of the fact that his competitor—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: John Quinn.

LEROY DAVIS:—was John Quinn. And John Quinn was the person who supported Gwen—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And bought a lot of Augustus [John].

LEROY DAVIS: And bought—well, Augustus brought him to Gwen.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Right.

LEROY DAVIS: So that having been the case, that would have been a competitive area, particularly as a contemporary artist. That stopped Quinn from owning [Pablo] Picassos, but he certainly didn't get first crack, and it was the kind—she was a kind of an intimist that I would have thought that Dr. Barnes would have admired, and unfortunately, at the time, I didn't know her.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, but John Quinn had—he was her patron and he had first crack at everything—

LEROY DAVIS: Right.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: In other words, he sent her a stipend and she—

AVIS BERMAN: But John Quinn was gone after 1926—

LEROY DAVIS: That's true, but that wouldn't have—that—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And her productivity dropped, plummeted.

AVIS BERMAN: And I actually don't see Barnes collecting Augustus John at all.

LEROY DAVIS: No—

AVIS BERMAN: That wouldn't have been his kind of—so if he hadn't, you know, he might not have gotten to either of those.

LEROY DAVIS: He would have had to go through Augustus, and it would not have been possible.

AVIS BERMAN: And I don't think he would have bought anything by John, especially by then.

LEROY DAVIS: No. But what I'm trying to say is that I adored Gwen's work, and when I painted, I think that I was simpatico with her—

[END CASSETTE 1, SIDE A.]

AVIS BERMAN: So let's go a little bit chronologically at the moment and put you in the Air Force, and you were a fighter pilot?

LEROY DAVIS: No. What happened was, I was—I think Aaron and I were—volunteered at—I don't—we didn't do it, anyway. We were going to volunteer to take a test to get in the Air Corps and cadets, and we didn't do it. I was drafted. I went, I took an I.Q. examination at about three o'clock in the morning in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and I think I got an I.Q. of something like 47. [They laugh.] And when I arrived in Santa Ana in an anti-aircraft outfit, I immediately alienated all my commanding officers. It was a small, you know, small group. They knew that I was a university student. They didn't quite understand what the hell a painter was doing in the anti-aircraft, at least, a painter with a loud mouth and who couldn't—goofing off on a golf course somewhere, at one point.

So as soon as I possibly could, I took the cadet examination, and I did fine, and I got into cadets, which was a holding—it was a thing called College of Training—[inaudible]. It was taking a block of potential flyers and putting them on hold in a college situation—I went to Coe College [Cedar Rapids, IA]—until they could be absorbed into the system.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: You mean, you took courses at Coe College?

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah.

AVIS BERMAN: What is Coe College? C-O-E?

LEROY DAVIS: C-O-E, yeah, it's in Iowa.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Ames, Iowa. It's in crossword puzzles. [They laugh.]

LEROY DAVIS: And so I did very well. I mean, an undisciplined kid who really was a troublemaker—I was a troublemaker when I got in the army—I became cadet officer. I did things that I can't believe that I did. But to make a long story short, when it came time to take the exams, this is my thinking of Barnes, where Barnes affected me in a negative way.

You had to take certain exams which are physical. I mean, you know, get into a trainer, move the stick to the right, the plane goes to the right. It's too easy. Move the stick to the right—[laughs]—makes it go to the left. And it didn't make any sense that it would have been that simple. So anyway, to make a long story short, I washed out of cadets because they didn't—I could have gone into, instead of pilot training, I could have gone into armored gear and navigator, which would have—

AVIS BERMAN: I'm actually surprised as an artist or, you know, that usually anyone who had artistic training, they would put into maps or camouflage or things like that.

LEROY DAVIS: No, no, no. No, there were a lot of artists and musicians who were in the air corps. It attracted a lot of people who just didn't want to get dirty, and so I mean, I knew a number of people who were sort of surprised. Well, anyhow, they no longer needed any more navigators or bombardiers, so I had a choice: go back to my original outfit, or go into a new program for B-29s, which was the big bomber that had been designed to end the war, and into a radio school. And I went into that, and I trained, actually, as long as I would have trained if I had been a bombardier navigator.

I became a radio operator on a B-29. I flew 35 missions over Japan, almost got killed a couple of times—it was very exciting—and even thought about staying in or even thought about possibly working on a merchant marine ship or something like that after the war, and decided not to and went back to school.

AVIS BERMAN: So were you ever in occupied Japan?

LEROY DAVIS: I bombed Japan. I never—when the war ended, I was on my way home. No, I—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: You flew the longest mission in the war, did you not?

LEROY DAVIS: I flew the longest combat mission of World War II. And we were in the air for 20 hours and 15 minutes, bombed Tokyo March 9, the famous fire raid. No, that was what I did.

AVIS BERMAN: And how many other people were on that?

LEROY DAVIS: Ten. There were 11 of us on a plane. And never saw any of them again. Ever. War ended; we all went our way, never saw. Until a couple of years ago, I said to Cecily, I wonder if any of them in my crew are still alive, and on the Internet, we found my wing, my group, my squadron, my plane, my name. I am in close contact with my airplane commander's wife, who—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Widow.

LEROY DAVIS:—widow and her children, who we just spoke to the other day, her—his—children. So after 60-some-odd years, you know, this thing has come together again in an extraordinary way. It was—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Almost like family.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, people, you know, men don't attend those army reunions for nothing, because it was a period of intensity and of youth.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, well, I never went to them, never will. My relationship with my pilot was sort of a strange one.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, he was your boss.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, and there were a group. There were 11 of us who trained together for a year and a half. It was a life-enhancing experience. In many ways, it has a lot to do with what I went on to do later on. Yeah, that's it. That was my war experience.

AVIS BERMAN: It sounds pretty intense.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I guess it was. You know, I relive it now more than I ever did. I mean, I went through a period where I never thought about it at all. As a matter of fact, it was a big joke. I remember we had a big party here once, many years ago, and Pete put on my flight jacket and put my medals on and came down and—[inaudible].

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Pete did that?

LEROY DAVIS: Pete did, yeah. Well, I did, too, but Pete did it, too. It was very funny. I mean, it was, you know—it was not a joke for me anymore. It really isn't, you know.

AVIS BERMAN: So what was your rank when you—

LEROY DAVIS: I was a staff sergeant when I got out, but they were going to make the radio operators officers at the end, but the war ended. That was it. This is a photograph that I got just a few years ago of a shell that hit our—[inaudible]—almost killed us. I mean, it was Iwo Jima, and it took the engine off and took the shell out, but had it exploded, we would have—I wouldn't be here. This thing is a piece of a—[inaudible]—Iwo Jima. It was a fighter plane, a Japanese fighter plane—[inaudible]—flying process, so you see, I've surrounded myself with this sort of thing—[inaudible].

AVIS BERMAN: Well, you came back to Philadelphia, correct?

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah.

AVIS BERMAN: And then you went back to Tyler?

LEROY DAVIS: Right.

AVIS BERMAN: And also, evidently, the Barnes Foundation. Let's deal with Tyler first, because now you were back; you'd been through this. What was your attitude toward being an art student at Tyler—

LEROY DAVIS: I was in a hurry for fame and fortune, and as a matter of fact, I was the first in my group of contemporaries to have a show in New York, in midtown Manhattan, some small gallery—

AVIS BERMAN: While you were in school?

LEROY DAVIS: No, after, right after school. But I was anxious to show. I remember coming up after—well, this isn't quite right—before, when I went back to school, I got my master's, and at that time, at that point, we were all on the GI Bill and we were just using that money.

AVIS BERMAN: Of course.

LEROY DAVIS: And I painted. I didn't go to classes, again, but at this stage of the game, you were allowed to work in your own studio.

AVIS BERMAN: And who was your instructor or your independent advisor?

LEROY DAVIS: I didn't have one. There—I'm trying to think of who was the—

AVIS BERMAN: There was—at some point, Franz Kline taught at Tyler.

LEROY DAVIS: Not when I was there.

AVIS BERMAN: Maybe—[inaudible]—was he there?

LEROY DAVIS: No, not that I know of. Maybe Aaron might know. I don't remember.

AVIS BERMAN: That's all right. If you didn't have—

LEROY DAVIS: Louis Bouché was there. What's the name? The wife of Reginald Marsh?

AVIS BERMAN: Felicia—Felicia Meyer Marsh?

LEROY DAVIS: Was she an etcher and a printmaker?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: You're thinking of—[inaudible].

LEROY DAVIS: No.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Do you want me to make a phone call?

AVIS BERMAN: You're not thinking of Isabel Bishop, are you?

LEROY DAVIS: Isabel Bishop? Was she—I don't know if she taught at Tyler. Isabel Bishop was Reginald Marsh's wife.

AVIS BERMAN: Never. Isabel Bishop was never married to Reginald Marsh.

LEROY DAVIS: Was she a graphic artist?

AVIS BERMAN: He was but—

LEROY DAVIS: She.

AVIS BERMAN: She. Well, she did drawings and prints—

LEROY DAVIS: I don't know who the hell it was, but she kicked me out of her class; I remember that.

AVIS BERMAN: Not Peggy Bacon?

LEROY DAVIS: Maybe it was Peggy Bacon.

AVIS BERMAN: Peggy Bacon, that's who we think it was. She was married once to Alexander Brook.

LEROY DAVIS: Peggy Bacon, she kicked me out of class. I was just totally undisciplined, and I, even though, despite my war experiences, I was in a big hurry to get to the big time, and when school was over and I was married to my first wife, I moved to New York. I went to see Antoinette Kraushaar, who promptly turned me away. Phil Bruno showed my work to Grace Borgenicht, and she was not interested. I had a show at a small gallery and taught in the adult education program and realized that I was not going to make a living from—I illustrated. My father-in-law was a surgeon, and I illustrated a book on urology for him, and God help anybody that looked at the pictures. [Berman laughs.] And then I realized I had to make a living. We started looking for a place to move. Then we started a business. We landed here in 1942.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: No, not '42. Fifty-two.

LEROY DAVIS: Fifty-two. Fifty-two.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, let us stop for a minute, just for housekeeping purposes. I would like to know the name of your first wife, when you were married—

LEROY DAVIS: Terry Davis.

AVIS BERMAN: Excuse me?

LEROY DAVIS: Terry Davis.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay, what was her maiden name?

LEROY DAVIS: Terry Ritter.

AVIS BERMAN: Terry Ritter Davis, and was she a fellow student?

LEROY DAVIS: She came in after the war. There were a lot of people who came in after the war. Mostly a lot of people came—not terribly gifted—I'm not referring to her—but not terrible gifted people. The nature of the place changed totally, from a group of about 50 or 60 students to certainly a larger number, and they ultimately enlarge, and when I went back—I came back years later to give a little talk, and campus had totally changed. Now I gather it's moving down to Broad Street. But Terry, she was interested in pottery, and she was very good. And we started a gallery as a pottery shop, antique shop, showed paintings of people I went to school with, like Seymour Remenick and David and Aaron.

AVIS BERMAN: So David Levine was there with you at Tyler?

LEROY DAVIS: After the war. After the war.

AVIS BERMAN: What did his work look like then?

LEROY DAVIS: Very much influenced by—David was always remarkably deft at drawing, you know; he painted a

lot more then and that's hard.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Aaron was more helpful than you. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: Okay.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He also has a new grandchild, as of yesterday, called Montgomery Douglas Shikler. [They laugh.] He said, you know, the child is this big.

AVIS BERMAN: The name is twice as big.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He said to me, you're not going to be believe this name, and then he said, I can't remember what it is. Okay, Roy. Arbels taught chemistry?

AVIS BERMAN: A-R—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I don't know.

LEROY DAVIS: Arbels taught chemistry, but I did learn how to mix paints.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay.

LEROY DAVIS: I did learn how to do that.

AVIS BERMAN: Is that A-R—

LEROY DAVIS: B-E-L-S, and also—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Boris Bly.

LEROY DAVIS: Boris Bly and [Herman] Gundersheimer.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Gundersheimer for art history, and Rafael Sabatini was a sculptor?

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah. But Gundersheimer is important because—ah, geez, his son is a member of the Century [Association] and—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: His son is an eminent something.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Like head of the Folger [Shakespeare] Library [Washington, D.C.].

LEROY DAVIS: And I told him this story, and I said, you know, many years ago, when I attended a couple of classes in the art history program, which was a big mistake that I didn't attend more like that, I said, you know, I was a great admirer of [Amadeo] Modigliani and there was a book that the library had—Modigliani books were virtually non-existent—and I stole it. I stole the book. And I gave it to a girlfriend of mine to keep when I went into the army.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: The same girlfriend, right?

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah. Also a friend of Arthur Penn's. And she then, while I was in the army, went to Tyler to take an art history course and brought the book to show Dr. Gundersheimer, said she had this book—of course, he immediately recognizes it as having come from the library. And later, years later, when we were on Madison Avenue, he confronted me with this story with a big smile on his face. [Off mike.]

AVIS BERMAN: In other words, the book never went back to the library?

LEROY DAVIS: No. And I think I denied it—[they laugh]. I told his son the story, and he wrote me a very sweet letter, which was not nearly as—he wasn't—he didn't get the humor in this thing at all. As a matter of fact, I still have a Modigliani book here. It's not that one—I thought it was—and it belonged to—you see, it's this thin book—Modigliani, M.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I see it over there somewhere.

AVIS BERMAN: I see it here, yeah. I see it.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I'm going to show you something because it's very funny. I didn't realize this until much

later.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: It says over here.

LEROY DAVIS: It was given to me by Martin. Japanese. Before the war.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, it's from Irvington[?].

LEROY DAVIS: [Inaudible.] I don't know how I got it. Arthur gave it to me, but I didn't steal it.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: So Arthur stole it? [Laughs.]

LEROY DAVIS: So anyway, Modigliani figures large in my life and—[inaudible].

AVIS BERMAN: That sounds like [Henri de Toulouse] Lautrec.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yes. [Laughs.]

LEROY DAVIS: I carried that photograph of him around with me all during the war. But it was a very funny—yeah, that's true. And Gundersheimer actually did not—freed me from going to art history classes, which was a big mistake, because I was going to the Barnes Foundation because we did not learn art history in the—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Chronological—

LEROY DAVIS:—chronological sense that I would have learned it there. I mean, we skipped back and forth.

AVIS BERMAN: Now, where was this—where was Davis Galleries in New York? You didn't try to open a gallery over in Philadelphia?

LEROY DAVIS: We had—David, Aaron, and I did, were going to open up a gallery—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: In Philadelphia?

LEROY DAVIS: In Philadelphia, and the idea was that David's father was going to pay for it—didn't take kindly to that, so we stood on Broad Street in front of a subway, and all three of us agreed it wasn't going to work. We had picked a place—

AVIS BERMAN: Broad Street in Philadelphia?

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah. We had picked out a place in Rittenhouse Square, and David explained in no uncertain words that his father was not going to support this gallery. So I started the gallery here, and David was a member of the gallery—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Here, in this building.

MR. BERMAN: This is where the Davis—

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: You have been here, then, since 1952—

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah.

AVIS BERMAN:—in various incarnations?

LEROY DAVIS: You see the scratches on that window, apart from the dirt? They were there in 1952 and have never been fixed. [Laughs.]

AVIS BERMAN: Are you serious?

LEROY DAVIS: I'm dead serious. I scraped the name of the woman who had it—painted. She painted dishes off the—her name was on the window. I scraped it off, scratched it. Still there.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, okay. So David's father wouldn't support it in Philadelphia—how were you going to support this venture in New York? Or how did this—

LEROY DAVIS: I think Terry's father, my first wife's father—well, I had five dollars left, money that my parents had left me. Five dollars—five thousand dollars. And there were some people who were active real estate people

on the block, who were patients of my then-father-in-law's, who found this building, and it was up for sale for $27,000. Put $5,000 down, which was the money that my family had left me, and we bought the building for $5,000 down, $27,000, and paid it off at something like three percent interest. The owner—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: You skipped a few years. When you came to New York, you lived in Brooklyn Heights.

LEROY DAVIS: Yes, I did. I taught—Brooklyn Heights, taught adult education programs and there were—all of us seemed to move there. David moved back there; actually he was first. Then Aaron moved back there. The Sylbert twins, do you know them at all? Dick [Richard] and Paul?

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, he was a movie set designer.

LEROY DAVIS: Production designer, yeah. Dick and Paul. Dick is dead now. Dick won two Academy Awards.

AVIS BERMAN: He designed *The Manchurian Candidate* [1962].

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: That's right.

LEROY DAVIS: He also won the Academy Award for *Dick Tracy* [1990] and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* [1966]. Paul, however, I think is more gifted, and Paul did the set—and his wife—did the set for *Bad Company* [1972], which was Bob Benton's first—the first movie he directed and wrote. And Dick and Paul were extremely bright and extremely—that's a whole separate thing. They're interesting people.

AVIS BERMAN: But you met them—[inaudible].

LEROY DAVIS: I met them at Tyler. Yeah, they went to Tyler. Paul was going to marry and actually did marry the daughter, step-daughter of—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: What's the name of the clock in Central Park?

AVIS BERMAN: Delacorte.

LEROY DAVIS: Delacorte.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Thank you. So George Delacorte—

LEROY DAVIS: Right, George Delacorte. And George Delacorte came to Tyler to break this thing up, and Paul and I almost beat him up. I think it ended up being sort of—

AVIS BERMAN: Are you serious?

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah. And they got married anyway. He was a jerk.

AVIS BERMAN: George Delacorte—

LEROY DAVIS: Yes.

MR. BERMAN: Not Paul.

LEROY DAVIS: No, Paul was extraordinarily bright. Paul was the one who told me—you've got to read this book.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: You're starting to ramble, Roy.

LEROY DAVIS: I know.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, let me go get this back to—as I said, this is housekeeping, so when did you move to New York?

MR. LANGDALE: Was it right after graduation?

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, about '46, I guess '47.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I'm looking at the chronology and it looks like—okay, it looks as if you got your M.F.A. in 1949.

LEROY DAVIS: Is that so? [Laughs.]

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I dragged this information out of him the other day.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, exactly.

LEROY DAVIS: Then maybe I moved—maybe then that's when I moved; I don't know.

AVIS BERMAN: So in other words, were you here a little while before you founded the gallery? That's my question.

LEROY DAVIS: I lived in Brooklyn Heights, yeah.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, okay.

LEROY DAVIS: For a couple of years. And then moved here—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: You were still painting.

LEROY DAVIS: When I started the gallery, I stopped. I stopped painting.

AVIS BERMAN: But while you were in Brooklyn Heights, you were still painting.

LEROY DAVIS: I was still working, very much.

AVIS BERMAN: And what was Terry doing?

LEROY DAVIS: Pottery.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], and you were—

LEROY DAVIS: And I was helping her. And as a matter of fact, I taught pottery in the nighttime in an adult education program.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: You did?

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay, well, also just for housekeeping, can you remember when you got married and when you got divorced?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He got divorced in 1968, I do know that. And you were married—

LEROY DAVIS: Um, 1946, something like that.

AVIS BERMAN: Had you known her before you went in the army?

LEROY DAVIS: No. She was another one of the ones that came—there was this influx of young women who came from New York City—I'm sorry, but it's true.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Nothing negative.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, and she was one of them. And I met her.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: She was at Tyler when you got back.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, at Tyler.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay, that's—here's another question: did you have children?

LEROY DAVIS: One child.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay, what is that child's name and when—

LEROY DAVIS: Tony Davis. I have no idea where he is. I haven't seen him in 40 years.

AVIS BERMAN: When was he born?

LEROY DAVIS: Twenty-five years—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He was born in—you were married, I think, in 1946.

LEROY DAVIS: Forty-six, '47.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And then Tony was born in '47.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay, that's—

LEROY DAVIS: And when I got my divorce, he went with—I never saw him again.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: That's not true.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, shortly—

AVIS BERMAN: Well, it's strange because he would have been in his 20s, so it's a little—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He's a person who had—and I assume he still has—problems of his—and it's not—[inaudible]—

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. So you opened this gallery. You had some money that was your inheritance. I'm just trying to figure out how you guys survived at this moment as dealers.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I opened the place. I planted the first tree on the street. It was the only business on the street—I think there might have been a grocery store that closed. Seriously, the only business.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But how did you pay for your meals?

LEROY DAVIS: Terry's parents would bring food in, give us a little bit of money—

AVIS BERMAN: But was the gallery a success immediately?

LEROY DAVIS: No, but it—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Pretty quickly.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, I mean, we made a little bit of money selling antiques and things I bought.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, so you had other things besides pictures.

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, it was an antique store, a pottery shop, and frames—Bob Kulicke had a place down on Second Avenue and I talked Bob into letting me sell his frames here—and pictures. And between all of it, we scraped through. I mean, it was a different time.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, because in the beginning, certainly looking in the early '50s, most of the artists that you represented were your fellow Philadelphians—Aaron, David, Seymour Remenick—I did not know who Arnold Abramson is.

LEROY DAVIS: Arnie went to Tyler as well. He's upset that he ultimately became a set designer, and he's retired now—set painter, had his own studio, very successful.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And then Harvey Dinnerstein.

LEROY DAVIS: Harvey and Burt [Silverman].

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Who were slightly later.

LEROY DAVIS: Right.

AVIS BERMAN: Did the artists mind having this sort of setting within the antiques or, you know, with—

LEROY DAVIS: Well, little by little, that changed. The pottery went, and the antiques went, as the gallery became more successful. And I became more involved in framing as a source of income and the gallery itself. And the gallery did fairly well. You know, pictures were very inexpensive, hundreds of dollars. I mean, pictures you saw might have sold for $150—[background noise]. Friends bought pictures, and acquaintances that we met bought pictures. And it went on like that for a while. It was very—definitely a representational gallery. You know, the things were all representative. It happened to be that way; it wasn't by choice.

I also showed somebody named Ralph Rosenborg, who I think was an extraordinary painter and whose work I loved and, of course, everybody in the gallery, with the possible exception of Aaron and possibly—[inaudible]—you know, he was a peculiar man; he was an alcoholic but a lovely painter. And we did a show at one point, and Tom Hess came and reviewed the show. Tom had owned—or was a publisher of *Artnews*.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: *Artnews*.

LEROY DAVIS: And he included it in "People to Watch," a little drawing—a Remenick—and some people who lived at the end of the block saw the review, and it was Minnie [Mary "Minnie" Cushing Fosburgh] and James Fosburgh—you know them?

AVIS BERMAN: The painter and collector—she was a Cushing, right?

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah. And that's the way it all began. The El was still up on Third Avenue. And they owned a little house over on the end, where Jim was painting and playing poor and—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Long since torn down.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah. And all hell broke loose. It was just incredible. I mean, Minnie Cushing had been married to Vincent Astor, knew everybody in Hollywood, and they would have lunches there and have all these people over to the gallery after lunch to buy a picture. So it was extraordinary.

AVIS BERMAN: So this—seeing in the paper, the Fosburghs were the source of your early collectors?

LEROY DAVIS: Oh yeah, they were clearly the way it began. And then I met Ben Sonnenberg, who also was helpful. There were a whole sequence of events in place after that, but Ben Sonnenberg and the Fosburghs were the key people.

AVIS BERMAN: Now, did Ben buy for himself? I knew him briefly at the end of his life.

LEROY DAVIS: Oh yeah, he bought—he bought—I framed every picture in that place. And I was very much involved in the framing business. And I framed everything.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But he certainly bought pictures.

LEROY DAVIS: He bought pictures; he bought a number of David's things and Aaron's things.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But he also had a series of protégés, if you will, virtually always men, like Brendan Gill, Charles Ryskamp, and Roy was one of those and so Mr. Sonnenberg—

LEROY DAVIS: Well, he did sort of take me under his wing a little bit.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Paul Goldberger was working for a while, too.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, Paul was later on. I mean, I was sort of—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Bob Pirie.

LEROY DAVIS: I wouldn't put myself in that—among that group. But there's no question that Ben paid a lot of attention to me and to a certain extent took me under his wing.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, he invited you to go to London with him once, and you wouldn't go without your—he liked people who functioned on their own.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, I mean I—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I'm not implying anything—

AVIS BERMAN: No, no, I know what you mean.

LEROY DAVIS: No, I mean, there's no question that he played very major—I mean, I was down there twice a week.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And his daughter—

AVIS BERMAN: Helen, yeah.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: An intimate friend, yeah.

LEROY DAVIS: I remember I went to him one day. I said, I've got a great idea. We were looking for ways—first of all, he wanted—Aaron was going to get on the map by painting portraits of famous people that he would arrange but Aaron wouldn't get paid for it; he would just get to paint these people. Well, Aaron was not remotely interested in that, and although Ben Sonnenberg couldn't understand that, nothing came from it. But it did

begin my thinking about ways in which we could get attention. We were getting a lot of attention at the time and from all the right people. I mean, I met Mrs. [Barbara "Babe" Cushing Mortimer] Paley, Mrs. [Betsey Cushing Roosevelt] Whitney; I met Jackie Onassis—Jackie Kennedy, Paul Mellon, Jane Englehard—I mean, we were rolling.

That doesn't mean we were making great fortunes, but we were—people would come here and buy presents. And, of course, the guys objected to the idea that their pictures were being sold as presents. [They laugh.] And there was a big uproar about that.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: You should—when Roy talks about the guys, it is a particular group within the gallery of which Aaron was not a member. Aaron was never—

LEROY DAVIS: And neither really was—David objected to his work being sold, but anyway—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But Aaron was the rational one.

LEROY DAVIS: Aaron always—[inaudible]—I said, you know, I got this idea, I think a group of these painters—they're all representational painters—and let them paint in the same places that the Hudson River painters painted. Great idea. So he introduced me to Clay Felker, who was also, at that time, Clay was working at *Esquire*, I think—Clay was kind of a protégé of Ben's.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Wasn't it *Life* magazine?

LEROY DAVIS: No.

AVIS BERMAN: No, he was at *Esquire*, and then he founded *New York* magazine.

LEROY DAVIS: Then he said, well, I know this girl Dottie [Dorothy] Seiberling, who was an assistant art director at *Life* magazine, and I'll tell her about it; it sounds like a great idea. So Dottie thought about it, and her superiors were interested, and I took the guys up—[inaudible]—where we ended up at West Point and Fort Putnam, which is in the—[inaudible]—and they sent along Dottie and a photographer. And the guys were painting—Al Lerner was a member of the group at that point. Al was working for Joe Hirshhorn, later became head of the Hirshhorn Museum [and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.]—Harvey, no not Harvey—Burt [Silverman]—yeah, Harvey was one of those—Aaron, David, Remenick—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Bobby White?

LEROY DAVIS: Not Bobby White, no.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Dick Sylbert.

LEROY DAVIS: Dick Sylbert. And they sent a photographer along and the photographer took some wonderful pictures, which are in the bathroom—and the photographer turned out to be Eisenstadt. Little did I know who Alfred Eisenstadt was. I was the last guy in the world to have a clue. But they never published them—[inaudible]—because I took the wrong people. I should have taken [Mark] Rothko, [Robert] Motherwell, [Willem] de Kooning—that—and seriously, it would have made a lot of sense.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: For *Life* magazine.

LEROY DAVIS: For *Life* magazine, and in general it would have made a lot of sense, because all these people did was paint lovely little pictures in the manner of Hudson River painters. I'll tell you, it was a good idea; it didn't quite work out, but it was a—you know, an interesting exercise.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, actually, since you brought up the abstract painters, let's talk about the climate of—as you say, it just so happened you had a representational gallery. About, as time goes on in the mid-'50s, about the ascendancy of abstract painting and how—

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, I was aware that it was happening and partly because of my interest in the framing business and because Bob was framing for all these people. Bob Kulicke was—framed for the Museum of Modern Art, framed for de Kooning and so forth and so on. You know, with all the people that went to—and all the great dealers at the time were dealing in contemporary art of that nature. So I was aware of it, and I always got into arguments with a group that made up the body of the gallery at the time who just didn't want anybody in the gallery who didn't follow the party line. Party line, and that's a great story, too.

One of the people—around this time, we got a visit from the FBI. And they wanted to know if I knew some of the people like David and Burt. And I said, yeah, I do, and I showed them. To make a long story short, turns up—oh, there was a guy that tended to—they had a studio in Brooklyn Heights and a group of them would paint together there and they worked from a model, and there was a guy from Canada, an older man, who used to come down

and paint with them. And he used to come to the gallery all the time, come to shows, and it was a tall man, very angular. One day—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Whose name was Joe Blow. I mean, it was—

LEROY DAVIS: And one day we—and they caught this spy, this Russian Spy named Abel. Abel was the guy that was exchanged for—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Francis Gary Powers.

LEROY DAVIS:—Francis Gary Powers.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And he was also—

LEROY DAVIS: And he was passing off as a painter.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, he was this guy from Canada who was in the painting class with—and, of course, they were—David was socialist, left-wing anyway, I mean, nothing—

LEROY DAVIS: Well, they shared probably a lot in common in conversation, but this guy was a painter. I mean, he was passed off as a painter. And—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: At least one of them had to testify, no?

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, well, Burt did. And Burt used to say when he got off the stand—he did an article for *Esquire*—got off the stand, he walked past Abel and Abel winked at him. [Laughs.]

AVIS BERMAN: Well, he must have had some rudimentary training because clearly they let him come paint with them. You know, they weren't—if he just—

LEROY DAVIS: I don't even know how they met really originally, but it was a very amusing story.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Though it might have been a little scary at the time.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I guess so.

AVIS BERMAN: I assumed you were questioned; were you?

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, well, not too much, questions more about who I knew of that person of interest. But I met also Bob Benton around that time, too. He was working at *Esquire*.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Film director.

LEROY DAVIS: He was working for Clay—was Clay still there—I met Clay when he already had been with *New York* magazine.

AVIS BERMAN: I think *New York* magazine was founded in the '60s at the newspaper strike time, so they were a little—we were sort of still in and around the '50s during the first years of the gallery.

Yeah, I think this is very interesting about Bob Kulicke. I think of him and the famous Kulicke frames, which I think is simple, but was he doing, shall we say, older, old master, or other less contemporary framing?

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, yeah, sure, he was. He framed for—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Kress.

LEROY DAVIS:—the Kress Foundation. No, he didn't.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: You did.

LEROY DAVIS: He did do something for the Met [Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City] for the—[inaudible]—but I was very much involved. I sort of ran a kind of showroom with him, together with the gallery. The showroom was down in the basement.

AVIS BERMAN: Of the store?

LEROY DAVIS: Right here.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay, the showroom for Kulicke's framing was in the basement of this building—

LEROY DAVIS: Right. And it's very significant because this really was one of my primary sources of income and also, by all means, primary sources of contact, because everybody in the world framed down here. I mean, it was the place to be.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: APF, which was the successor, is still there. I mean, it's a private showroom and our clients frame there.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, but you know, Paul Mellon, I did all the work for the White House, Robert Lehman, Jane Englehard, I mean, all these—this was place, was the place to go to have your pictures framed, and when you're at it, you bought a picture, a little picture. And then a lot of them were given as gifts, which pissed the hell out of the guys because they didn't like the idea their pictures were being given as gifts.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: The integrity, it's sort of analogous of being put over the sofa.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. Now, was Barbara Kulicke involved in the framing?

LEROY DAVIS: No. It was Bob. To some degree, but not any more than Bob could allow. Her family were backers to the business. By this time, Bob had already joined partnership with APF, and one of the partners in the business was a guy named Adair Chambers, who also went to Tyler, who was a very key person in the business.

AVIS BERMAN: Now, how did you meet Bob Kulicke?

LEROY DAVIS: Tyler.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, he was a Tyler—okay, so he was there, too.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Would he have been there before the war?

LEROY DAVIS: I can't remember. He was there after the war, the GI bill—

AVIS BERMAN: And he had moved here before you, or about the same time?

LEROY DAVIS: About the same time; we all pretty much moved around the same time. And he and Barbara—but it was really an extraordinary thing, and while this was going on with the group of representational painters—which compartmentalized a part of my life—they decided to have a meeting in the gallery in which there was a manifesto drawn up in which abstract or nonrepresentational art was out, and it was only to be representational art, the only thing worthwhile and so on and so forth. And I allowed it to be printed on one of the catalogues. And I got a phone call from Jim Fosburgh, who was very upset about it, was very concerned about my—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Doing something so dumb. [Laughs.]

LEROY DAVIS:—saying something so dumb, and also he was interested in the gallery and its potential as it related to him in a certain way. I'm sort of mucked up in—

AVIS BERMAN: Was this having to do with that *Reality* magazine that Raphael Soyer and others were—

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, I'm sure.

AVIS BERMAN:—was it that same manifesto?

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I mean, I—one of my big friends was—I mean, one of my closest friends was—portrait painter—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Oh, John Koch.

AVIS BERMAN: John Koch.

LEROY DAVIS: And John gathered together around him, you know, each week, group of painters. Obviously, I was one of them, and the gallery and the people—a lot of these in the gallery, particularly Aaron and David. And there was a meeting one time, I know, of representational painters, more or less—I forget the exact designation it held, but it was, you know—[Edward] Hopper was there, Jack Levine was there, together with a group—and what's her name?—Peggy Bacon, and a lot of—I was there, David was there, a lot of heavy hitters together with —

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Excuse me, Aaron said that Felicia Meyers never taught at Tyler, that in fact you knew her later?

LEROY DAVIS: Yes—

[END OF CASSETTE 1.]

AVIS BERMAN: This is Avis Berman recording Roy Davis and Cecily Langdale on July 17, 2007.

Roy, I had just a couple of questions left over for you from last time, and I guess when we spoke I was so surprised by, I guess, the drama of your story of your early life that I actually, even though they're not important to you, I just think we should—if you should just give me your parents' names, which we didn't do because you said they weren't important to you.

LEROY DAVIS: David and Ida.

AVIS BERMAN: Davis?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yes.

LEROY DAVIS: Davis.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay, great. Okay, now, that was the easy part. Now, the other part we didn't do, which I thought was an interesting area, you were on the White House Fine Arts Commission during the [John F.] Kennedy and the [Lyndon B.] Johnson administrations, and I think that would—what did that consist of? First of all, how did you get on there? What did it mean?

LEROY DAVIS: Well, it was formed by Jackie to—a group of people who were in a position of influencing and were obviously wealthy, who—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Except for you.

LEROY DAVIS: Except for me, yeah—who would help in refurbishing the White House, which she felt it was in a state of—it was disheveled.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: May I interrupt to ask, is this the first time there was such a committee?

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, to my knowledge. And so she first intended to get Jock [John Hay] Whitney to do it, but because—I think he would have been great, except that he had just come back from being ambassador to the Court of St. James [United Kingdom] and he wanted to run the *Herald Tribune*, which was his baby. So he suggested his brother-in-law, who was Jim Fosburgh. And Jim was married to Minnie Fosburgh, who was formerly Minnie Astor, the first Astor. And—

AVIS BERMAN: The first Mrs. Vincent Astor?

LEROY DAVIS: The first Mrs. Vincent Astor?

AVIS BERMAN: And was she the first?

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I don't know. She certainly precedes—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: She was Brooke Astor's predecessor.

LEROY DAVIS: Right. But I had gotten to know Jim, and I think I told you how.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

LEROY DAVIS: And I don't know exactly how I met Jackie, because all sorts of things happened so quickly at that point in my life that I met all kinds of—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But you had met her years before.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, several years before that. But all kinds of things happened. And anyway, I didn't mention that Jock Whitney suggested—[inaudible]—in the post, and he had been, I think, the head of the National—he may have been the head of the American Academy in Rome, but a painter, and not a bad painter. No, he wasn't, but he certainly was there. I don't know what capacity; I thought he was head, but anyway. And they lived right down the street and I—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But Roy, it was Jackie who named you to the committee.

LEROY DAVIS: I know that.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, but you're not making it clear.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I will.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Okay. [Laughs.]

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah—[inaudible]. I don't remember how I met Jackie. I just don't remember any longer. But I mean, we became sort of—I mean, obviously, our connection was through the gallery, but I think it became more of a friendship of sorts. And I may be exaggerating, but if I am, I'm exaggerating by a day. But I told her about a Maurice Prendergast, Charles Prendergast, show at the Boston Museum [of Fine Arts] and it was coming to the Whitney [Museum of American Art, New York City]. And she was very excited about it. She knew Prendergast's work just a bit and she was—and I told her a fair amount—told her I knew Mrs. Charles and some pictures and so on and so on—[inaudible]—and so the night before—either the night before the inauguration or close to it, we had a lengthy conversation about Prendergast.

Anyway, when the time came to form the committee, the committee was made up of—I have the names of the people somewhere—and she, I guess, asked—I don't know how I found out I was going to be asked if I would like to join. I mean, obviously, I was the one guy who had nothing. And so—but she felt that—it was a gesture—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And well, you also have practical abilities that—

AVIS BERMAN: You also had knowledge.

LEROY DAVIS: She could have made use of—yeah, I mean, much more so than most of the people that were there, with possibly the exception of Jim. So she named me and Ford—[inaudible]—the same day, because, as a matter of fact, the announcement was in the paper the same day. And I got a feeling that Jim wasn't too happy about it, because he felt—[inaudible]—another, Jane Engelhard or another—[inaudible]—you know, somebody like that. Although we were good friends, he very much—I think he—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Wanted to be in control. He wanted to be in control.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, I think he—yeah. There's no question about it. And what did I do? I—as it ended, as it turned out, we ended up reframing a great number of the pictures, and the firm that I was associated with did do the work. But as a result of it, it forced us to design a whole line of frames which were close to appropriate. They were French frames for the most part, and later there were—that changed. I hope that many of the frames have been changed again because there were some—not mistakes made, but there were—and it wasn't quite as bad as Napoleon's sister—was it his sister; who was it? You know, and [Pauline] Borghese [of the Gallerie Borghese]?

AVIS BERMAN: Yeah.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, and well, she framed everything in opulent frames, regardless of when they were done. Well, we didn't do quite that bad, but it was refurbishing the whole—the various rooms. And gifts were given. These people obviously gave money. Henry du Pont was on the committee, and I did get to know him, not well, but I knew him. I knew him later on through a portrait that Aaron Shikler, did of him and I went on a tour with Aaron and had lunch with him down there. But he was very helpful, provided a lot of money. There's somebody on the West Coast whose name I can't remember. Jane Engelhard—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Whitney Warren, maybe?

LEROY DAVIS: Maybe Whitney Warren; maybe he gave them the—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: [John Singer] Sargent. [*The Mosquito Net*, c. 1912].

LEROY DAVIS:—the Sargent, yeah, and very late on. And the Lincoln Bedroom was one of the rooms we worked on a lot, the Red Room. And Jane Engelhard was immensely helpful. She was an extraordinary woman. And she provided money. She provided the means by which a lot of the things were done. I told you the story about the Red Room.

AVIS BERMAN: No, we haven't discussed the White House.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I went down there to do some work one day, and I came—I arrived and Jackie—and somebody told me, "Don't unpack, because you're going right back with Mrs. Kennedy to New York." So it turns out we get into this car and go over to the airport and—it's really a cute story. Her sister, Lee Radziwell, was—actually, I think I knew Lee before I knew her—was sick and I actually—well, she had a miscarriage. And so she wanted to go to New York to see her. So we got into the *Caroline*, which is like a Tinkertoy—[laughs]—you know—

AVIS BERMAN: Was the plane.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, I think it was a twin-engine—[inaudible]—plane and I wasn't—I mean, it was something I was used to, as I flew during the war, and so this was not a unique experience for me by a long shot. But we're sitting in the plane, and I noticed that Jackie was terrified, terrified. And my recollection was that there was like two seats in the center of this plane and this enormous space around us. And I said later on, if this plane goes down, the headline's going to read that Mrs. Kennedy was killed in airplane crash with an unidentified white man—[they laugh]—something like that. You know, and we got to LaGuardia and there was a couple of Secret Service cars there and very—not very disciplined. And so we start riding in the car, and I was suddenly forced in a position where I was next to her. And I had to make conversation, and she was clearly preoccupied. And I said some funny things which I won't go into, but—[they laugh]—

AVIS BERMAN: Why not?

LEROY DAVIS: Well, "Do you care to watch television," which was really meant as a joke, you know. I mean, I wasn't an idiot; I knew that she was—that this was—and so, "We don't have a lot screen time," something like that. And it was like, I can't explain it, but it was a line which I never expected her to take seriously. I kind of hoped she would laugh. But we kept riding and I thought, we're going to go down Queens Boulevard, we're going to cross on the 59th Street Bridge, we're going to right down 60th Street; wouldn't it be great if I could get her to stop off at the Fosburgh house, which she had never seen, and she didn't know Minnie. And Minnie had spent a lot of time at the White House.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: During the Johnson Administration.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah. And so I said, you know, would you like to stop and see the Fosburghs' house? There's a room there which is exactly what you want the Red Room to look like. It's an incredible room; it has an—[inaudible]—desk in it and it was a real gentleman's room. It was a—in the conventional, traditional sense. And she said, Roy, I really don't have time. I can't stop; I don't have the time. It'll just take us a few seconds; we're going to go right past. So she finally agreed. And as we're getting off the bridge right up here, we go down the street, and this is, you know, this is an extraordinary house at the end of the block and—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: [Inaudible.]

LEROY DAVIS: And so she—there's a car in front of us, a car in back of us, we get out of the car, I get up and walk up the circular staircase outside and knock on the door, and I said, would you please tell Mrs.—

[Phone rings.]

LEROY DAVIS:—tell Mrs.—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Fosburgh.

LEROY DAVIS:—Fosburgh that Roy Davis is here with Mrs. Kennedy. So the woman goes back in—the housekeeper—and Minnie comes to the door in a housecoat and we take—I introduce them and we go up into the room and Jackie looked around. She was duly—you know, she was very courteous.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: She was also a very responsive woman.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, she understood what I was trying to say. I mean, I have letters like this from—referring to this whole period. And I remember being very concerned that the place was taking a direction opposite to what we originally discussed and—[inaudible]—except that she wrote me a very sweet note back on my letter saying don't worry, we won't let it happen, or something like that. So anyway, we get—we come down the stairs, and Jackie goes in the car about her business, and I go home up the street. Two minutes later, the phone rings and it's Minnie Fosburgh, and she says, Roy, don't ever do that again. And—[laughs]—what did I do? I mean, I—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: You dropped in.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I mean, I just never—I had never quite connected with the concept that this was—you know, that she was as important as she was and Minnie was as savvy as she was. I mean, I took her to see a Prendergast show at the old Whitney—

AVIS BERMAN: Her Jackie or her Minnie?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Jackie.

LEROY DAVIS: And we went in a plain car, picked her up at the hotel, and she just—[inaudible]—so I called up and I said to—

AVIS BERMAN: That would have been—

LEROY DAVIS: Lloyd Goodrich. Please, do me a favor. I bring her here to see a show, she loves Prendergast, don't make a fuss, can we get—we can come there or we can get there early, because they can't open it for us at the time, but it's not very crowded at the end of the day. So we get there and there's a line-up of the entire staff waiting to greet her, and she freaked out. And we ran through—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Which I'm sure she wouldn't have done a year or so later.

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, no, no no.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: You know, this was so early in her—

LEROY DAVIS: She was very cool later on.

AVIS BERMAN: Was this before she was First Lady?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Just—

LEROY DAVIS: No.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, no, she would have to be, because otherwise they wouldn't have known who she was.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But it was very soon after.

LEROY DAVIS: I mean, later on—[inaudible]—I remember taking her to see the Horowitzes' collection [Margaret and Raymond Horowitz], and we walked up Madison Avenue, and, true to form, the New Yorkers were really very courteous and nobody—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: This was not so long ago.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I used to see her around and heads would turn, but people wouldn't—you know, she was used to it. Everybody would look and stare, but not approach her.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And I'm not sure that she ever had Secret Service with her, did she?

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, she—well, I don't know about that day, but she certainly did when she came to the gallery.

AVIS BERMAN: Also when the kids—probably if she had the kids, she had Secret Service.

LEROY DAVIS: In the gallery, I know that there was one occasion at 60th Street, and another at Madison Avenue, where our gallery was very large, and one guy came, and there was a friend of ours that was a photographer, a highly regarded professional photography—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Saul Leiter?

LEROY DAVIS: Saul Leiter, who was taking photographs of, you know, random. He was very fond about New York —

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He always cameras draped around him.

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, he had a camera around. And the Secret Service agents saw him with a camera and said, would you mind putting that away? And you have to know Sol to realize that, you know, he couldn't have cared less if George Washington walked into the room—[laughs]. But apart from that, she was, you know, she was wonderful. I mean, she was really sensational. The last six months of her life, she bought a picture from me over the phone.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, in terms of art, besides Prendergast, were there other American artists she—

LEROY DAVIS: Well, she was obviously thoroughly immersed in American art because of the circumstances. But, I mean, her favorites were people like Prendergast and Sargent and I guess a lot of the so-called American Impressionists.

AVIS BERMAN: Yeah, well, I guess she must have liked going to the Horowitzes' collection.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, she was, you know, thoroughly blown away. Well, Raymond and Margaret—

AVIS BERMAN: And so were they.

LEROY DAVIS:—were very close friends of ours; I mean, very, very close.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

LEROY DAVIS: And I arranged to take her there and she went there with—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Maurice Tempelsman.

LEROY DAVIS: Maurice Tempelsman. He was a real gentleman and he actually—I shouldn't say this, but, I mean, he paid for many of the pictures, the things that she bought later toward the end of her life. Just as Mrs. Astor—I sold Mrs. Astor a watercolor of the Temple of Dendur by David Roberts on condition that she give it to the Met at the time of her death. I don't know what's going to happen—[they laugh]—but in any event, somebody paid for that. You know, this is the nature of what happens. And Jane Engelhard was one of those people who, you know, picked up tabs right and left.

AVIS BERMAN: When you say Mrs. Astor, do you mean Minnie?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: No, Brooke Astor.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, you mean Brooke Astor. Okay.

LEROY DAVIS: Where were we?

AVIS BERMAN: I was asking you about Jackie's taste in art.

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, yeah, it's people like Sargent and also some appropriate old master drawings and things of that nature. And she and the president had a collection of, oh, my God—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Indian miniatures.

LEROY DAVIS:—Indian miniatures, which were—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Some even erotic.

LEROY DAVIS:—pretty erotic. And—but they were extraordinary. They were really extraordinary.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And she was a big fan of the contemporary artist we represent, Albert York.

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, big, big-time fan.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: She loved his work.

AVIS BERMAN: How about any of the British artists that you represented; was she interested in any of those?

LEROY DAVIS: As a matter of fact, I never sold her a Gwen John. I don't think so. I can't remember too clearly anymore. I do know that she—you know, long before—I don't know if you know anything about Albert York.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: A little bit.

LEROY DAVIS: A little bit. Well, there were the profiles done in *The New Yorker* on him—I don't know if you saw it or not—that Calvin Tomkins did about the artist nobody knows or something like that.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] That's how I know about him, from *The New Yorker* profile.

LEROY DAVIS: Right. And the New York Museum of Modern Art just acquired two pictures. So long, long before any of this happened, she fastened onto his work, as did Mrs. Mellon, bought two pictures.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But he's not conventional. He's not—there are all kinds of undercurrents in his work and she was—

LEROY DAVIS: Very sensitive to it.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS:—sensitive.

LEROY DAVIS: I mean, she really, really loved his work. She owned five pictures, five paintings. And the last picture she bought was when she was sick in bed, and the kids kept two, Jackie and John [F. Kennedy, Jr.]—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Caroline [Kennedy Schlossberg].

LEROY DAVIS:—Caroline. And three were sold at auction, brought pretty good prices, partly because they were hers, but partly because people were buying Yorks and knew what they were. And Caroline has been very generous in lending, you know; I've asked her to. But that was one painter she—if I offered her a picture, she'd buy it.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I mean, it would be a mistake to think of her as having a straightforwardly conventional taste.

LEROY DAVIS: No, she didn't. You know, in the course of framing—a lot of what I did for her had to do with framing, you know, because I was very much involved in the framing business at that time, a very good one. And so I got all the stuff from the White House to frame, I mean personal things. And you know—[inaudible]—take the time to show you, but there are little notes that—[inaudible]—well, I think I'd like to see this framed—[inaudible]—Jack's other thing of this nature. I mean, there were lots of wonderful notes referring to—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But she also called on you for other help. For example, there was one point where Jack Kennedy, I think, owned some scrimshaw and John—

LEROY DAVIS: Big collection.

LEROY DAVIS:—the son, wanted to buy something—is that right?

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah.

LEROY DAVIS: And Jackie sent him to Roy to guide him through that.

AVIS BERMAN: To get some scrimshaw?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, to buy something at auction, but—and I also bought a couple of [John James] Audubons for her—you know, I bought it—I mean, she's kind of scary. There was a sale in Texas somewhere of Audubon prints, and she gave me the catalogue, and she marked a number of pictures she was interested in, and she said, you know, would you bid for me? Well, I mean, I was, by this time, a pretty experienced auction-goer, but I didn't feel comfortable. It was a strange, small house in Texas and so forth. But I did buy her a number of—several—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, there was—do you remember there was one slightly unnerving experience. Roy and I were in London—this is, you know, later on—and saw—

LEROY DAVIS: That was, you know—I mean, I didn't charge her, so that was—and she knew what that name was worth.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: We were in London and we happened to be in Christie's, and we saw a really beautiful Sargent watercolor of the head of an Arab, and Roy told her about it. Am I telling the story right?

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And I guess she saw a photo and she said, well, yes, buy it for me. So we bought it for her, and it was not an insubstantial amount of money for us. And it came to New York, and Roy sent it over to Jackie, and Jackie said, oh, I like it; good, I'll have it. And we thought she had already said she would. [Laughs.]

LEROY DAVIS: I mean, she—you know, she was spoiled.

I told you about Robert Lehman. Well, one of the people I met in the course of this whole thing was Robert Lehman and—indirectly through Ben Sonnenberg—and his representative, who was a man named Charles Lock, who was a mentor of mine and one of several, and he was an extraordinary guy. Actually, he was the guy that I signed to Paul Mellon—before I started doing it. And so he sort of took care of all Mr. Lehman's affairs having to do with art. And there was a show projected to be in Europe and then later on to be in America—I think in Cincinnati—of the drawing collection, which includes extraordinary drawings and including a Leonardo [da Vinci] bear cub, a [Albrecht] Dürer portrait, and [Sandro] Botticellis and Fra Angelicos, unbelievable things. So I got the job to frame the whole collection. And there was much discussion about how to do it. I mean, moving the things one by one. Mr. Lehman had nothing to do with this.

So Charlie Lock decided the simplest thing to do is, let's take the whole collection, bring it over to 60th Street. Now, the significance of this you can't comprehend except the whole block isn't worth what these pictures were worth. And they were down in the basement for an entire summer. In the process, we reframed, and I must say we did a brilliant job. At the Met, when they finally got the pictures, they took all the frames off and used them for other things, and they put the drawings in Solander boxes. But it was one of the funniest things in the world

because Lehman had no idea where these drawings were. He thought they were locked up in a vault across the —

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Would he have cared?

LEROY DAVIS: I think he would have been put at ease by—but you know—[inaudible]—is not a—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, but people weren't quite so fussed about—

LEROY DAVIS: I mean, no temperature control. There were Breughels. It was an unbelievable collection. It now belongs to the Metropolitan Museum. I have a book of the show, and Mr. Lehman never thanked me, but Charlie Lock wrote a very sweet note.

AVIS BERMAN: Is that L-O-C-K-E?

LEROY DAVIS: L-O-C-K-E.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: No, L-O-C-K.

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, L-O-C-K, yeah. He got his name when he was—he was a very wealthy German, and he was a refugee during the war, came over on the ship of fools and was sent back to England, and then came back on another boat to America. And he arrived in immigration. He had a very elaborate German name, and the guy said, what was the name again? And so he looked at his hat and he just bought a hat, Lock the hatter, and he said, Lock, Charles Lock. [They laugh.] And changed his name.

AVIS BERMAN: Did your friendship with Jacqueline Kennedy have something to do with Aaron Shikler getting the commission to paint both the Kennedys?

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, sure.

AVIS BERMAN: I think that's important to describe.

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, yeah, absolutely. I mean, it was commissioned independently, but I think—I certainly had something to do with it; she knew I represented him. But I think Jane had the most to do with it, Jane Engelhard.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I was just wondering how she became aware of Aaron.

LEROY DAVIS: Through the gallery and through Jane and through other things he had done, but certainly, I think the person who probably paid the most important role was Jane Engelhard, who played—I mean, somebody someday should do something on her. She was a moving force behind several presidencies.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And she was exceptionally generous in regard to Aaron. I mean, she got in the habit of giving people who were friends or official friends commissioned portraits. She had commissioned Aaron to do a portrait of the Duchess of Windsor to give it to the Windsors, that kind of thing. And you know, she was, I think, acutely aware of wanting to be of help to Aaron as well. She was a generous woman.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, a lot of these—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But Jackie was—I mean, Jackie was in and out of the gallery a lot, so she was certainly aware of what you showed from the early days, from the '50s.

LEROY DAVIS: I do think that Jane—I had no part in the actual—I have letters from the government discussing the formal procedures in billing pictures and so forth, but—and then Aaron did a whole group, as you know, I guess, of small studies and a small version of the president, which is, I think, one of the most moving portraits that they have there. It's one of Aaron's most successful commissioned portraits.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Right. You know, we said later on that's what led to the Reagans commissioning him, because Nancy wanted to be like—

AVIS BERMAN: Look as good as Jackie, yes.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: And actually she did. I mean, she looked better than I think she—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Right, right.

AVIS BERMAN: But they didn't like what Ronnie looked like, so that was—so I think they asked for somebody else

to do it.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I think he did it for *Time* magazine or something like that. He did a cover—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Man-of-the-Year cover.

LEROY DAVIS: Man-of-the-Year cover, yeah. But I mean, Aaron got along with Jackie very well.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He mostly gets along with—

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, he does.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He's a delightful person.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah. And another person who commissioned him to do a lot of work was Jane and Herbert Allen, who was also a big fan of Aaron's and other galleries and was very—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But Herbert, I think—

LEROY DAVIS: Do you know who Herbert Allen is?

AVIS BERMAN: The name is familiar, but I—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: It's Allen & Company. He's the guy who does these kind of summer camp things, you know, where moguls go.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, yes, right, executive retreats.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, well, it's more than that. I mean, he just had his annual one, and Tony Blair was there and so on and so forth.

LEROY DAVIS: [Inaudible.]

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But he didn't commission—he only commissioned—

LEROY DAVIS: Well, he commissioned several things—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: A couple of things of his children when they were very young.

LEROY DAVIS: And also people that—but, you know, this place was—I told you about the trip up the Hudson River, so—and Ben Sonnenberg's idea was in order for Aaron to get on the map, what he should do is paint some famous people free. Well, it was a perfectly logical idea, you know, except that Aaron was well on his way.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He didn't have to.

LEROY DAVIS: Huh?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He didn't have to.

LEROY DAVIS: He didn't have to.

AVIS BERMAN: You know, I just want to pursue this Fine Arts Commission, because you remained on it through the Johnson Administration and—

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, it sort of petered out.

AVIS BERMAN: Yeah, well, was Lady Bird [Johnson] as active as Jackie?

LEROY DAVIS: No, no. The work was really done, essentially. I forget who then was the curator—

AVIS BERMAN: Was it Clement Conger?

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, probably Clement Conger. And I don't think I had much to do with him, and I think things sort of petered out. My biggest moment was I was invited to the inauguration, which I never went to.

AVIS BERMAN: Johnson?

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah. Like a jerk, but—

AVIS BERMAN: Did you go to the Kennedy inauguration?

LEROY DAVIS: No, I didn't. I wasn't invited. But I was invited to a number of functions.

AVIS BERMAN: But you had known them—you know, you had known Jackie during the '50s while she was a senator's wife. Did you ever meet John F. Kennedy?

LEROY DAVIS: In the White House. I think—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Did you know her before she was married?

LEROY DAVIS: No, I don't think I did. I met Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy]—not Bobby—Teddy [Edward Kennedy] wanted to buy a picture from me and had said it was too expensive, the Boston Statehouse or something. But—no, I met him in the White House. I was working there one day with Jim [Fosburgh], and he came downstairs—I remember he came downstairs. He wasn't wearing a tie; he was wearing a shirt like I am, and he had some folders in his hand and he trotted into the room; it was the East Room. And we were there doing a little bit of work, and Jim called me over. All I heard was he started teasing Jim about getting—his brother-in-law had just written a negative—or in the *Tribune* there was a negative editorial, and he suggested that he might speak to his brother-in-law—his brother-in-law being Jock Whitney.

And then he called me over and he introduced me, and I shook hands with him, and I tried to act as if it was another day at the office. But the most thrilling moment was that trip on the *Caroline*, and that was really special because that was the moment when I thought to myself, God, if my parents could see me now, you know, this would be a killer. It's just like Aaron, I guess, with painting the president and the many things that have happened to him subsequently. But you know, through these people I met endless numbers of people, all of whom were—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, one of the most—I can't remember whether you talked about this the last time, but one of the key people in your professional life was Paul Mellon.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah.

AVIS BERMAN: Probably we haven't talked about it enough, about how that came to happen. You mentioned that—

LEROY DAVIS: I'm not sure I know, exactly. But you know, Ceci and I—when we go, there's nothing, nobody. And we have a fairly significant collection of art, and I say that—things that would be of great interest to museums, and they're not necessarily going to be—they won't be monumental gifts, but they're things that will fill in—I mean, it will make the National Gallery [of Art, Washington, DC] have the largest collection of Gwen Johns, next to the Tate.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: How much larger?

LEROY DAVIS: So things that—and I—we gave something of consequence. Do you know who Ignaz Günther is?

AVIS BERMAN: No.

LEROY DAVIS: He's a—you see the name of that red book right there?

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

LEROY DAVIS: Okay. He is—go on.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I'm not gesturing.

LEROY DAVIS: Go on, you explain.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Oh, well, he was the late—1725 to 1775. He was Bavarian, worked in and around Munich, sculptor. I remember that Sherman Lee would say that he was the second-most important sculptor of the 18th century, after [Jean Antoine] Houdon, and indeed, his work is very rare and it's almost all in Cleveland—

LEROY DAVIS: Outside of Munich—[inaudible].

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But the Cleveland Museum [of Art, OH] has several, thanks to Sherman Lee's efforts.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, one of them happens to be the mate to the one we own, which belongs to Stanford White, and were used as decorations—[inaudible]—on occasions, at parties, and so forth.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: We can show you all this later.

LEROY DAVIS: But it was very funny. One of them I arranged to be sold indirectly to Cleveland. The second one we kept, and since we—circumstances were very funny how we got it, but I won't go into that—we gave to the National Gallery. We keep it for our lifetime, but in Paul Mellon's name. And we've given about seven things so far.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I suppose you could give Avis a copy of that thing.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah.

AVIS BERMAN: So is the National Gallery the eventual beneficiary of your collections?

LEROY DAVIS: The reason being that they will not accept a gift or purchase anything unless they intend to keep it. They are not permitted to sell, trade, or—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: This is a powerful incentive.

AVIS BERMAN: Absolutely.

LEROY DAVIS: And so we know that these things—now, for instance, we lent a very rare Simeon Solomon drawing to a show recently. I don't know if you know Simeon Solomon.

AVIS BERMAN: Very well, yes.

LEROY DAVIS: And this is a really—a very early drawing [*I Am Starving*, 1857]; he was about 16 when he did it, and the remainder of it is in Israel, the remainder of his sketchbook. And it was—we lent it for a show down there, and the placard—Cecily went down there and she said—a gift from Roy and Cecily Langdale Davis to the National Gallery, at which point we pointed out we hadn't given it, and subsequently we said, well, what the hell, you know? [Berman laughs.] But we keep it. So we've given them—we gave them their first piece of Gothic sculpture, and, God willing, they'll get a lot more. And this is all due to Paul Mellon. You have the book inside. So I met Paul Mellon, I don't know how.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Maybe Charles Ryskamp?

LEROY DAVIS: Possibly Charles Ryskamp. And—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: We tried to recreate this and we haven't been able to.

LEROY DAVIS: But that makes a lot of sense. Charles was a good friend of Jane Englehard's. And so he came here and he took a little framing here, and I was—as I said, I was very much involved in the very extraordinary framing business at the time. And he would come in and frame a photograph; he would take part in the process. Didn't matter what it was, he trusted me totally, but he enjoyed the process; he enjoyed being part of it. And he would, you know, bring a [John] Constable in here and take what Mrs. Mellon would refer to as a "dealer's frame" off and put on a very simple little baguette. And there was no mention of what to do with the frames. And I kept a couple of them until finally I said, you know, these frames are worth a fortune; they're original Louis XV and XVI—frames. At least let me send them to the National Gallery and they can someday put them back on the pictures. So we agreed that that would be the case. But he systematically took these fancy frames off and did this—and I had a very nice relationship with him. I'd like to think that he regarded us as friends.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I'm sure he did. He was very reserved.

LEROY DAVIS: I mean, we went to the opening of the Yale Gallery, and I remember when we were standing there alone; we didn't know anybody—

AVIS BERMAN: Yale Center for British Art [Yale University, New Haven, CT].

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, and he came over—he and Mrs. Mellon walked over—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Did she come over to us?

LEROY DAVIS:—and, you know, talked to us. And then we, in turn, went to the National Gallery. He was standing all alone at an opening—and Cecily says it was the opening of the new wing. I don't know that it was—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yes, I think so.

LEROY DAVIS:—but he was standing there alone. People were terrified of this guy, and so we went over and

talked to him. It was, you know, an act in return for—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I'll always remember once at Madison Avenue. He would come in—when he was in New York, he would come in, I don't know, two or three times a week, and it was right before Christmas and we were going to have, you know, four in the afternoon, a Christmas party, which probably involved cheap white wine and potato chips. And he came in that morning and I said something about, you know, if you would like to come back, we would love you to come. And he came. He just—

LEROY DAVIS: He's just an extraordinary, extraordinary man. And I think I mentioned—if I did, stop me—the last time—he became very friendly with John Baskett, who wrote his memoirs. And he—

[Cross talk.]

AVIS BERMAN: We're looking at the—for the tape, the Simeon Solomon drawing called *I Am Starving*. And it also says "In honor of Andrew Robison" as well—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yes, yes.

AVIS BERMAN:—who was a wonderful curator. Okay.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: That's in the current bulletin.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, okay. Thank you. Anyway.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Oh, you were talking about Mr. Mellon's last visit.

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, yeah. Did I tell you about that?

AVIS BERMAN: No.

LEROY DAVIS: John Basket and he became very close, and John—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: John Basket was most certainly his closest friend.

LEROY DAVIS: Despite all the things that were said at the—the speeches that were made at his ceremony at the National Gallery. And John would buy for him in London. I bought for him here in New York. And John did a lot of other things; I mean, John spent a considerable amount of time with him. And you know his greatest loves were his horses, much more than his art. He said that.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, yes, but he—

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, I think so.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But don't downplay his love of art.

LEROY DAVIS: No, but he—he loved art, but his horses were his life. And you know, Cecily would come down and make conversations; he'd start talking about something about a horse—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: About which I knew absolutely nothing. [Berman laughs.]

LEROY DAVIS:—and it would go on for hours. We couldn't get rid of him. But one day he was sick. He was toward the very end; he stopped buying, and he stopped—the last major picture I offered him was a Degas. I told you about that, the millinery shop picture [*At the Milliner's*, 1862]?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: That was a long time before his death, Roy, a long time. [Inaudible.]

LEROY DAVIS: [Inaudible]—did I tell you?

AVIS BERMAN: No, go on.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, it belonged to Mr. Lehman, Mrs. Lehman now; when he died, she owned it. It was on loan to the Met and she decided to sell it. Charlie Lock, who was taking care of her at the time, her collections, was pretty sick, and I think he was in the early throes of, if not Alzheimer's, something comparable—and he asked me if I would—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: It was manic depression, actually.

LEROY DAVIS: Was it?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Absolutely.

LEROY DAVIS: And if I would take over. And so my first step was to inform the—what's his name at the Met?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: [Philippe de] Montebello.

LEROY DAVIS: Montebello that we were going to—that the picture was for sale. And he screamed at me, the Metropolitan Museum is not a salesroom for—you know, despite the fact—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But you offered it to the Met, did you not?

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, we offered it to the Met. And the sale—it's not a salesroom for art dealers. Well, little—before you knew it, five of the major art dealers in the world knew about this picture—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And they knew it from him.

LEROY DAVIS: And they knew it from him—including Gene Thaw and—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Stephen Hahn.

LEROY DAVIS: Stephen Hahn and—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Stephen Hahn called Mrs. Lehman at midnight—

LEROY DAVIS: Mr. Lock—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Called Mr. Lock at midnight to try and get the picture away, you know, not nice.

LEROY DAVIS: So obviously the next logical thing to do was offer it to Mr. Mellon. And a new wing was being built at the time, and it was passed over, had ended up ultimately with Baron [Hans Heinrich von] Thyssen [-Bornemisza].

AVIS BERMAN: Did you sell it or was it—

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, I sold it through the help of another dealer, but we did sell it. But we offered it to Paul Mellon for a million-and-a-half dollars, which today would have been chicken feed. But he said to me, well, I don't want it; the museum doesn't need it, and there's this overdraft for the—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Overrun.

LEROY DAVIS:—overrun for the building, which there was. So it was a very polite way of saying no to what was a great painting.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, I think—Roy, I actually think he did consider it seriously.

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, yeah, of course he did. He had to. So anyway, things were coming to an end. He's obviously sick; he's had—I mean, really sick. And one day he pulled up and he said, can John and I come over, and I thought, oh, boy, this is—he's feeling better, something's cooking and putting in pictures. And he walks in the room; he's not wearing a tie, very unusual—and this was the most dapper man on earth—and John and he sat down—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Downstairs.

LEROY DAVIS:—downstairs and we just talked for three-quarters of an hour, just talked. And then he got up and he said goodbye, and I turned to Cecily and I said, he's just said goodbye; we're not going to see him again. And that was true.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And I think that that was the intention.

AVIS BERMAN: Yeah, he really just came over to see you—

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, that was—

AVIS BERMAN:—as real friends would.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Oh, I think so, yeah.

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, God.

AVIS BERMAN: Now, did you sell him any pictures for the Yale Center for British Art?

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, yeah, I mean I sold them—he almost bought—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Many.

LEROY DAVIS:—many. He almost bought an entire show of—we were very much involved in British watercolors at that time, and we were hands down the most influential dealers in that area here, and I think—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: In a field of one.

LEROY DAVIS: In a field of one.

AVIS BERMAN: But also in British art—I mean, I'm going to get to that a little later, but that was an unusual area to go into for New York at the time.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Sure, sure.

LEROY DAVIS: And we had enough money behind us with my partnership with Meredith Long to be a force in England as well. And no, we sold them; we did a show of—

[Cross talk, off mike.]

LEROY DAVIS: Well, a number of—who are all these—Cox, David Cox—and we did a David Cox show, and he and Charles Ryskamp practically bought the show out—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, Mr. Mellon bought it with Charles—

LEROY DAVIS: With Charles's advice and help, and that was for Yale and—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: We always felt the curator was not best pleased—

LEROY DAVIS: Then the new curator came and found out that—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS:—that these decisions had been made and, yeah—

LEROY DAVIS: And he became a friend, but he was not at all—he was very upset. But he bought a number of [Thomas] Rowlandsons from me.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He bought huge amounts—

LEROY DAVIS: And then a lot of other things.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, he was a serious collector of Gwen John.

LEROY DAVIS: A lot of Gwen John.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: A lot of Gwen John.

LEROY DAVIS: I mean, major—most important collection of Gwen Johns anywhere. And I don't know if you know any about her work or anything, but—

AVIS BERMAN: I do. I've read some of your books, and David Fraser Jenkins is a very good friend of mine.

LEROY DAVIS: Ah, so you know.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And he stays or used to stay in your apartment—

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, correct.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, yeah.

LEROY DAVIS: So you know, this was a key thing, and we even talked very casually about his gift to Yale, what it would be comprised of in terms of Gwen John, and I said, well, you know, we have this collection, and if you do that, then we can do it; we'll give ours to the National Gallery, which is what we were hoping we were able to do.

Did I ever tell you the story about the sketchbook, the [J.M.W.] Turner sketchbook and Paul Mellon?

AVIS BERMAN: No.

LEROY DAVIS: There was a Turner sketchbook sold in London and—the only thing this is all relevant to is my relationship with Paul Mellon. Somebody came in the other day and said—I know, we were talking about Albert York and the name Paul Mellon came up, and I said, yeah, he was my most important client, and the woman said, well, he was everybody's most important client. And I got furious at her. So anyway, someone bought this sketchbook. We were present at that sale—at least I was; it was at Sotheby's. And it was being offered to the Yale Center. Yale got Paul Mellon to pay for it. Paul Mellon went up—he used to go up to Yale once a month to look around, see what was going on—and they all—the curatorial staff lined up and handed him the book to look at. He turned the pages of the book and put it in his pocket and started to walk out—[laughs]—and they absolutely—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: They all blanched—he was teasing. I think he was teasing.

LEROY DAVIS: Yes, of course he was teasing. But then we had this—[inaudible]—Richard Dadd; I don't know if you know who Richard Dadd is.

AVIS BERMAN: Yeah, he was the—he went crazy.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, and made some extraordinary things. And the first Richard Dadd I ever saw Paul Mellon brought in here for framing. It was one of boats. It was just an unbelievable painting. And we sold him several Richard Dadds and—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And we did a Richard Dadd show about 15 years ago, and he would lend pictures to us for shows. I mean, when we did a Prendergast monotype show, he lent us something, and he also—there was a monotype that he had bought and given to a friend, and he organized that loan—I mean, he did not lend to people. He lent to Yale, he lent to Virginia [Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond], he lent to the National Gallery and maybe the [Pierpont] Morgan Library [and Museum, New York City], but he never lent to anyone else. He was very kind.

LEROY DAVIS: But he did—[inaudible]—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And he would hand deliver these things. He would bring the things in himself.

LEROY DAVIS: But he had—well, he and his first wife were apparently analyzed by [Carl] Jung, and so he's interested in—and Dadd was complex, and there is a great collection of Richard Dadd at Yale because of him. I don't think the curator—I don't think Andrew particularly is fond of Dadd, but—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: You do mean Andrew Robison.

LEROY DAVIS: Andrew Robison, yeah. But I think people are very pleased to get artists and not have to buy it themselves. But anyway, there are a hundred million stories.

AVIS BERMAN: That's what I'm here for.

LEROY DAVIS: You know, we had somebody working for us who had friends that they went to school with at Yale who's now teaching at Dartmouth [College, Hanover, NH]. And this friend had a whole stack of amateur English watercolors and wanted to know if they had any value. So they—I said, I'll go through and look at them. So they brought them in and we go through them, one after another, and you know, in the 19th century—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Each work's—[inaudible]—

LEROY DAVIS: Everybody did English watercolor. And one was—they were horrible, one after another, until finally we come to one. I go—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: At the bottom of the pile—[inaudible]—

LEROY DAVIS: The outside of a building with a little tiny picket fence and a little—beautiful delineated figures walking across the path, signed—I think it was signed R. Dadd.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: R. Dadd. It may have been signed R. Dadd, Broadmoor [Psychiatric Hospital, Berkshire, England].

LEROY DAVIS: Broadmoor.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Eighteen eighty [1880].

LEROY DAVIS: So, we—yeah—this was an eye-stopper, and to make a long story short—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: It was—within our experience, that was atypical.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, it was—people walking in front of Broadmoor, and we sent a photograph to—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Patricia Allderidge, who is the reigning scholar—

LEROY DAVIS: Who said it was absolutely right, told us what it was, and we questioned her on several occasions.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, we were so staggered at the luck of this that I think that we wrote back and said something tactful, like are you sure? And she said yes, I'm sure.

LEROY DAVIS: Anyway, Yale owns it now, to make the long story short. And the amusing thing about it is that the guy that owned it was a relative—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: We didn't know that. He did not know—he inherited these from his grandfather or whatever—

AVIS BERMAN: He's a relative of—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: You were telling the story in the wrong order.

LEROY DAVIS: All right, go on.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And he did not know how this had come into the family's possession. Years later a book was published called *The Professor and the Madman* [Simon Winchester. Thornoike, ME: G.K. Hall, 1999]. Do you know that book, about the Oxford English Dictionary?

AVIS BERMAN: Yeah, yeah. Nicholas Murray Butler and—no that's Columbia. It's—Simon Winchester is the author.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yes, and it's about a man whose name naturally escaped me, who was an American surgeon in the Civil War, went nuts—not to put too fine a point on it—and his family sent him to England, where he killed one or two people, and he was institutionalized at Broadmoor.

AVIS BERMAN: But he was the main contributor to the dictionary—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Exactly.

AVIS BERMAN: To the OED.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Exactly. Well—

LEROY DAVIS: They were there together.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: They were fellow inmates. So this is—and whether our guy knew this and didn't want to admit to having had a criminally insane great uncle, I don't know.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, so in other words, he was a relative of the mad—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Of the owner of the—

AVIS BERMAN: Of the surgeon who was placed—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yes, he was a great-nephew.

LEROY DAVIS: Privileged in a situation at Broadmoor in terms of being offered all the equipment they could possibly want—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Very advanced.

LEROY DAVIS: The guy who wrote the book later gave a lecture at the Century [Club, New York City], and I think we went up to him and said something to him, and he was strangely—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He never came around.

LEROY DAVIS: He didn't follow through—doesn't matter—but it was a really interesting story. Anyway, that picture is now at Yale. And—and a hundred more stories, but—

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I have other questions, but I think what I want to do is I want to bring Cecily into the picture, and then I will follow up on these threads eventually, because I think that's a good thing to do.

Cecily, why don't you begin—now did you have a background in the arts yourself? And why don't you start with your parents' names.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: My parents' names were Elizabeth Armstrong Langdale and A. Barnett Langdale, and —

AVIS BERMAN: Barnett with two Ts?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: First name, Abram, which was a family name, which I'm not even sure I knew. I later—I mean I did know, that I had great uncles—[inaudible]—but I looked back and I saw some 17th-century person whose first name was Abram, and I think it just was transmitted without even thinking about it.

I mean, as a child, I was taken to museums and so on.

AVIS BERMAN: And where did you grow up?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I grew up in New York. In Brooklyn, in Park Slope. And when I went to college, I, for part of the time was an art history major—switched back and forth between that and English literature. And then when I graduated, I looked for a job. And I looked in the *New York Times* for a job and found a job in an art gallery, which was here.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, what did your father do?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He was a teacher.

AVIS BERMAN: Of what?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Of English literature. He was a high school—teacher of high school. He was chairman of the English department at Erasmus [Hall High School] in Brooklyn. And then for much of my growing up time, he was not actually teaching; he was working on different studies—educational studies funded by the Ford Foundation.

AVIS BERMAN: And did your mother work?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Not when I was a young child. She started to teach when I was, maybe, 12.

AVIS BERMAN: And where did she teach?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: She taught—well, she—I'm not going to be able to tell—she taught in a public school in downtown Manhattan, which I think was quite a fine public school, and I can't remember the name of it. The principal—of whom was a friend of hers—a friend of the family's—which is how she got the job. And then she rather quickly went to work for the public—the educational television station in New York, the name of which I also don't remember, which was run by a man called James Macandrew, who was a family friend.

AVIS BERMAN: So that would have been WNYC.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I don't think it was either of those. I mean, I can probably Google it. Jim Macandrew, for many, many years, had a Sunday morning TV program [*Camera Three*, 1956] that, at the time, and this would have been '50s and '60s was—'60s—it was the longest running cultural program on television.

AVIS BERMAN: So your parents were both involved in the arts.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Oh, yeah, sure. Absolutely, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Now did you have any brothers or sisters?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: A younger brother.

AVIS BERMAN: And what is his name?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: His name is John.

AVIS BERMAN: And when was he born?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He was born in 1946—uh, '45.

AVIS BERMAN: And is he involved in the arts at all?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He's schizophrenic, so he's not involved in too much.

LEROY DAVIS: No, but it's interesting—he has a Ph.D.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yes, he does.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, that can happen. You know about *A Beautiful Mind* [2001]. I mean—and a lot of people do get it and then it occurs—it comes in the twenties.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, with John it, at least, was diagnosed late-ish.

LEROY DAVIS: I think it's a shame, because deep down inside, I know Cecily would have liked to have gotten her Ph.D., and I guess there was a time when it could have been possible, but—just for the hell of it. Just for her father's sake, it would have been fun.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, you didn't need the Ph.D. to work on books and be a writer.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah.

AVIS BERMAN: So why did you choose Swarthmore [College, Swarthmore, PA]?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, first of all, when I went to college, many schools were off limits to women. I don't know what I would have done had I been a man or had the rules been different. My father, my grandfather, various other people in my family had gone to Wesleyan [University, Middletown, CT], and perhaps I would have done that. I don't know. I certainly was, you know, acutely alert to the quality of schools, and I wanted a coed school, I wanted a small school, and Swarthmore, at the time, was considered—was rated the best school in the country. So that was something to aim for. Plus which I had had a summer at the beach and there were two cute lifeguards who had gone to Swarthmore, and that stuck in my mind, I have to tell you.

AVIS BERMAN: Well that is very typical of the decision of the 18-year-old or the 17-year-old mind, so it sounds perfectly plausible.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yes, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Lucky they went there instead of Muscle Beach State.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yes, exactly.

AVIS BERMAN: So—that's true. So, I'm interested that you went back and forth between English and art history. Was that—what was the reason for that?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, the reason—first of all, Swarthmore is and was a very small school. The art history department, at the time I went, had three professors, one of whom was, I thought, spectacularly good. He was a man called Hedley Rhys—who—

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, yes, yes. He actually was—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Prendergast—

AVIS BERMAN: That's what I was just going to say.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yes, yes, yes, yes. And there's a story I may or may not tell later. The head of the department was a man called Robert Walker, whom I didn't much like. I was just thinking about him the other day, and I don't know, were I to meet him and listen to him again, whether I would admire him more. He seemed kind of dumb to me. And I may really be wrong about that.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, and just for the tape, we're going to say this is not the John Walker who became director of the National Gallery—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Right, it is not. [Laughs.]

AVIS BERMAN: Okay, and then there was another person. Sorry to interrupt you.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, and then there was a third person, who changed from year to year. And what I discovered when I actually—I took art history courses. When I became a major, I discovered that there were certain required courses, many of which were taught by Robert Walker, and I can't even tell you what they were. But I had a semester or so as a major, and then I thought, you know, I'd rather continue taking those courses but go back to English literature, you know, with their bigger department, more courses, and I won't be forced into taking things that I don't think I want to take. So I—I graduated as an English literature major.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, well, also, was that—was your father's influence involved there at all, too?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: You mean in making—in changing the—

AVIS BERMAN: No, in terms of his teaching English or literature.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Oh, sure. Oh, sure. Oh, yeah, I mean he was a highly literate man who'd—

AVIS BERMAN: I mean clearly both were, but since your father was involved in teaching English—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, no my father was very scholarly. I mean, when I was 10, he decided it was time I started to learn Latin. And I remember summer afternoons where, you know, I considered it quite a chore, but you know, that he sat me down. But I mean, he read Greek and he read Old English and, you know, he was—

AVIS BERMAN: As a child, when you went to museums and galleries, was there something that impressed you, or did you have favorites?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Wouldn't have been galleries. Wouldn't have been commercial galleries. Well, one of the things that I think I loved very early—we made a couple of trips to Europe when I was a child. This was not so long after the war [World War II], so—and in 1950, we went to Italy, and I fell for Italy, and I fell for Italian culture, and I fell for Italian pictures then or earlier. So that's been a constant in my life.

AVIS BERMAN: Now, did you draw or paint or have any inclination that way?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: No. None whatsoever. None whatsoever.

AVIS BERMAN: And were there any other people in your childhood who were cultural mentors or, you know, exposed you to certain experiences that you consider important?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I think my grandmother was around, and she was a highly cultivated woman.

AVIS BERMAN: Was this your mother's mother?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: This was my father's mother. I think there was simply an atmosphere—and I'm not sure that I was aware that it was somewhat unusual of the time—of culture. I mean, my father would recite [William] Wordsworth or—you know, or before I could read, I would be read to, and I would be read things like *Le Morte d'Arthur* [Sir Thomas Malory, 1485]. So—you know, the starting fairly high.

AVIS BERMAN: Definitely.

LEROY DAVIS: You're really making me look bad.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, not mainstream U.S. culture. Now were your parents friendly with any artists that you remember?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: No.

AVIS BERMAN: So, you come to New York, and just before we get you here, why did you decide to take a job at an art gallery as opposed to, say, publishing or, you know—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: It was to be one of the two.

AVIS BERMAN:—that the English major would.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: It's what girls—nice girls, you know, did. Typed, and you wanted to go into publishing or into art galleries. And I looked at both, I think. In fact, I had a very brief first job at an encyclopedia. A friend of mine had a job there and she told me about it, and one was meant to write entries, and I was not good at this. I hated it. And I quit after a month or so. I'm not sure—I mean, I think I quit before I—I can't think they would have kept me on, because I was not—and this ad showed up.

AVIS BERMAN: It's amazing, though, that they were going to have 21-year-olds write the encyclopedia entries,

you know.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Sure.

AVIS BERMAN: Can you imagine how great they would have been? [Laughs.]

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, all you did was cut and paste, you know, from other encyclopedias.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, right, right. I guess this wasn't the Britannica we were talking about.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: It might have been McGraw Hill; I should remember this.

AVIS BERMAN: It's okay. So you were—okay, so you must—you were hired as a humble assistant, I will assume.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: And what were your first duties?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, I should think that they were things like typing invoices, running errands, taking a catalogue to the printer, doing mailings, and it was a small gallery. It was Roy; it was his first wife. Then there was the frame shop downstairs of Richard Cowdery, who is still here.

AVIS BERMAN: How—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Cowdery, C-O-W-D-E-R-Y. He was hired by Roy a week before I was.

AVIS BERMAN: To work with frame—to do the framing?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, yeah.

LEROY DAVIS: Since it was Bob Kulicke's showroom.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But it was no longer—no, it wasn't. It was APF by the time—Bob was—

LEROY DAVIS: Bob was a partner.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He was—in no evidence—I'm not sure.

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, yeah, he was a partner. Oh, it doesn't matter. He was a partner in APF at the time, but it was called APF.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay, okay.

LEROY DAVIS: He and the Adair Chambers—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, I certainly was aware of Adair, but I wasn't aware of Bob.

AVIS BERMAN: All right, okay.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: You know, so that one answered the phone, one made coffee, and because it was small and there were about that few people, you know, you met everybody, I guess.

AVIS BERMAN: And what were—in other words, this was the only job you got, but what did you think—you know, coming in, what did you think of the artists? Or what was—in terms of—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I don't know how discerning I was. It was here, and therefore I liked it. I mean, there was a certain thrust to the gallery at the time—kind of contemporary realist art. And in retrospect, I feel, and Roy certainly agrees, that that was a kind of—mistakenly narrow. I mean, I remember having a conversation with David Levine in which he was making fun of I don't know who—

AVIS BERMAN: Probably an abstract painter.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, Mark Rothko or somebody, and I was going along with it. You know, it's really stupid.

AVIS BERMAN: Well did you ever feel that maybe—what did you feel about, say, Abstract Expressionism? Did you know about it when you got—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, I guess I knew about it, but I wasn't looking at it, and because I was in an atmosphere which was dismissive of it, or contemptuous of it—I'm certainly not talking about Roy, I'm probably not talking about Terry, but I'm talking about somebody like David Levine who, to this day, lives in the late 19th century. I mean seriously, he doesn't—I think he probably likes Charles Demuth—[they laugh]. He probably likes that.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, now, the other thing that's interesting about this gallery, because of the size, it was always going to be an intimist gallery, too. Even if suddenly you wanted to break out in—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: In Rothkos—or other—it was too—it would have been small—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Physically, not—

AVIS BERMAN: Not the place for that. Now did—just in terms of the work you were showing, were you ever interested in getting a bigger space in terms of—not—I don't mean moving the gallery, but somehow renting or having a bigger space to show a different kind of work?

LEROY DAVIS: Well, just for a moment to go back, I think you did fasten onto York's work early on. Actually, the first picture you bought was an Albert York, somebody who, later on, started collecting cutting-edge art, returned because it was too dark.

I was—when Cecily and I became involved with one another, and I got my divorce—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But that was not right away. At all.

LEROY DAVIS: Now, she'd gone—already gone to Europe and come back—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I worked here for two years, I think, and then left and had a year in Europe, almost, traveling around. And then they asked me if, you know, when I finished that year, whether I would come back and work for them again. And I said yes.

LEROY DAVIS: And so when things became difficult, I arranged for Ces to go to work for Stuart Feld, who—

AVIS BERMAN: At Hirschl & Adler.

LEROY DAVIS: At Hirschl & Adler. And Stuart was there—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, you didn't quite arrange it, did you? I mean—

LEROY DAVIS: I said, would you consider Cecily for a job? What do you want me to tell you? Yes, except that he was, you know, he was suspicious of my motivations.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well he did say to me—I do remember this very clearly—if I give you this job, are you going to leave? You know, I mean, in essence of things—if it becomes comfortable for you to go back and work for Roy, are you going to leave me? And I said, no, I will not and—nor did I until—I went to work for Stuart in 1968.

LEROY DAVIS: And he just had come from the Met.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yes, I was the first person who ever worked for him.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, yeah. I have here 1967 to 1973.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Okay. Okay.

AVIS BERMAN: So that was six years.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, Roy and I got married in '72, and I continued to work for Stuart, and that was fine. However, in '72 or '73—excuse me—he and Meredith Long—

AVIS BERMAN: Roy and Meredith Long.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS:—formed a partnership. And it became absolutely impossible for me to work with Stuart, because we were dealing in—

LEROY DAVIS: Because it was—[inaudible]—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: We were working—dealing with exactly the same things, and I couldn't, in honor, do it.

AVIS BERMAN: And Stuart was angry.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, he was very upset. He didn't understand why Ces couldn't continue her work.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He wanted to give me a piece of the business, and not big, I'm sure, but a piece of the business and so on and so forth. And I couldn't, in honor, do it. And he never grasped that, and I think to this day, he has not—we are friends, but I think he's a—he remembers things and I remember things—

AVIS BERMAN: But you did stay six years.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: That was a reasonable amount of time. You didn't leave 18 months later.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And I was—I think he relied upon me, so I think he probably—you know, he felt my loss.

AVIS BERMAN: What were some of the important shows you worked on or helped organize at Hirschl & Adler?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Those were compendiums Stuart happened to have. Well, one show I remember, because I think I actually was responsible for it, was a Charles Prendergast show that was making the rounds, and I knew Eugenie Prendergast through Roy. And she was—did you ever know who she was?

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, sure.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, I mean, she was—most people found her difficult, I think, and I did, too, but I liked her, and she liked us and was fond of us, I think. And so I said something to Stuart about, you know, do you think this might be a good show to have? And he thought so, and I went to her and she was very pleased.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, we did—I mean, before this, here at Davis Galleries we did several shows with her.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I mean, I worked on all kinds—you know, whatever show was—

AVIS BERMAN: Well, that was also kind of different, because that would have been a lot of—I'm assuming—19th century or earlier, and probably no contemporary there and then.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Not a lot. Stuart—that was not, nor is it, I think, his forte. He did take some contemporary artists on. One of the people who was the most interesting to work with, I suppose, was Fairfield Porter, and this was really at the beginning of his serious success. So when he came to Hirschl & Adler, he had a lot of pictures that hadn't sold from previous years.

LEROY DAVIS: He was at Tibor [de Nagy Gallery].

AVIS BERMAN: He was a Tibor—what happened?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Oh, I know. Tibor and what's-his-name split up. John Myers. And I think that Fairfield didn't want to make a choice, and he felt the better path would be just to leave. And so I think I worked with him rather a lot, and then there were Ogden Pleissner and Francis Cunningham—do you know Dick Cunningham?

AVIS BERMAN: Now tell me about Fairfield Porter. What was he like?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, I had already known him from Roy. I found him a little scary—very closed in, it seemed to me. I don't know that he really was, but I remember that he would come into Hirschl & Adler and he wouldn't look right or left. I mean, I suppose he made the quick decision that whatever was on the wall didn't interest him, and so he did not engage in it.

AVIS BERMAN: I wonder if that was from the years as a critic.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I think he probably felt that if he looked, he had to say something.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And I think he probably was an honest man who wouldn't have engaged in palliative remarks.

LEROY DAVIS: Can I just—let me check one point. He said something very funny here once. He reviewed a show of guys here—I don't remember if it was David's or Aaron's or several people—and he made some comment about they were just as good as or better than Thomas Eakins. And it turns out, later on he said, in fact, that he didn't like Thomas Eakins.

AVIS BERMAN: Correct. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

LEROY DAVIS: And then wrote a book on Thomas Eakins.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He was, however, a big fan of Albert York.

AVIS BERMAN: But he was very—even in that book on Thomas Eakins, it was very reserved. It was very mixed.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, yeah. I mean he was highly intelligent, and I think I was simply intimidated by him

LEROY DAVIS: We asked him to write an introduction to your catalogue, which he did, and when the York—when the Fairfield Porter retrospective was done in Boston, there was a small show of 20 Albert Yorks in a small room adjoining the big show as a, you know, sort of compendium to—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, well, I mean, this was after Fairfield's death, but it was an acknowledgement of the fact that I think that he had had a special liking for York's work. It was said to us, second- or thirdhand, so it's probably not true, that Fairfield had said toward the end of his life that he thought that York was something like the most significant American painter of the 20th century. I mean, it was some really extravagant—

LEROY DAVIS: Like, you're better than Thomas Eakins—I mean, God knows—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: No, no, no. I mean I think he had said something highly complimentary. I can't remember.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, you know, and there's a collection of his essays—

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

LEROY DAVIS:—and the York thing in there—but that was before he got to know York's work very well.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, he also said when we asked him to do—we had one or two shows, and we asked him to do an introduction. I can remember taking him to a woman who lived within a few blocks of a gallery who owned a certain number of Yorks. And he went to see those. Then, once the catalogue was printed and the show was up and he saw the show, he said, you know, had I seen more, I would have written more extravagantly.

AVIS BERMAN: Let's see. I guess—now—from—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He was, incidentally, easy to work with. He was efficient and not demanding or unreasonable in any way.

AVIS BERMAN: And were you involved with Stuart's enthusiasm of American furniture?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: No. He was not selling American furniture in the gallery at that point. I certainly was aware that—well, Stuart was and is a friend, so certainly I knew what he had at home, and I knew about his travails with his parents over furniture and so on and so forth. And he is an extraordinarily knowledgeable person. You know, a steel-trap mind. I don't always agree with his aesthetic judgments, but I certainly learned a huge amount from him. Huge amount, which, you know, I use to this day.

AVIS BERMAN: So I guess what I want to find out is that while you were gone and—were the aesthetic directions here changing? Because you mentioned Meredith Long and a partnership. You're saying they'd get—did you move to another place?

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, yeah, I just decided that, you know, Terry was gone and the gallery was—several of the painters that I represented had left for various reasons. David, I think, wanted a big Madison Avenue gallery. Seymour Remenick was fed up with the whole thing, and I was fed up with some of the other people, because, you know, it really—they'd caused this manifesto to be written. You know, not show anything but representational painting.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right. We discussed that.

LEROY DAVIS: And Al Lerner was a semi-member of the gallery there, but Al later on became the head of the

Hirshhorn Museum, and he is also a friend. But in any case, I thought, you know, it was time to do something, and there were some inquiries being spread around about the fact that Meredith Long was looking for somebody to run a New York gallery.

AVIS BERMAN: Long was based in Texas then.

LEROY DAVIS: Texas, and he was married to a woman who was rich—mega-rich -and my name was mentioned frequently, until finally we had a meeting and we decided to form this partnership in which there would be—Long resources would fund the partnership, and we would be equal partners in whatever occurred here. Little did I realize that what really were his intentions was that there has been this gallery in New York that would make use of whatever, you know, qualities I may have had and at the same time would serve as independent of the gallery in Texas. And we agreed, not formally, but we did agree that he will be able to, on occasion, show some of his contemporary artists in New York, which was terrible.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: It was God awful.

LEROY DAVIS: And we did some great shows.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Roy came with quite a trousseau. He had Eugenie Prendergrast. He had sold a lot of American Impressionist and so on pictures in the '50s and early '60s—through the '60s—so we had those things to call upon.

LEROY DAVIS: The collections of American art, and as a matter of fact, the first big collection of American art was Joan Patterson, before the Horowitzes, before the Fraads [Daniel and Rita Fraad], long before the—maybe not the Potamkins [Meyer and Vivian Potamkin] in Philadelphia, but—

AVIS BERMAN: [Daniel] Terra?

LEROY DAVIS: No, Terra wasn't even in the picture.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Right, he—

LEROY DAVIS: The gallery on Madison Avenue—I got the space on Madison Avenue—half a block on the second floor on Madison between 65th and 64th—

AVIS BERMAN: From Madison Avenue.

LEROY DAVIS: It was called Davis & Long [Company]. And it was actually the philanthropic offices of Joan Payson, who was a friend and a client, and so I got a sweetheart lease when she pulled out of there, and we paid $2,500 a month for rent. Biggest gallery on Madison Avenue.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And after she died and the building came on the market, it was offered first to Roy and he was—I guess his partnership with Meredith was crumbling at that point, and he felt it would be overcomplicated—and it must be said that neither one of us was a particularly good businessman, so—

LEROY DAVIS: It was a whole corner—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, I mean, it would have been—

LEROY DAVIS: You know, from the corner of 65th—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I mean, we should have begged, borrowed, and stolen to buy it.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I could have bought—today with the people I know, it'd be no problem.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: It wouldn't have been a problem then. You were just scared to do it.

LEROY DAVIS: So anyway—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I was scared to do it.

LEROY DAVIS: We did the first—as far as I know—the first gallery outside of Knoedler [& Company, New York City] to do a loan show from a museum, and we borrowed 35 of the best pictures—American pictures—that the Brooklyn Museum had. And it was our idea, and Meredith immediately brought—decided that—well—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, I think that one of the difficulties with that partnership was that, because Roy was here, physically, and Meredith was not, Roy got the attention. And I think that that rankled fairly quickly with Meredith—that he, you know, that it wasn't really seen to be his gallery. And, in fact, I think all the major shows

that were done were done by Roy.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I did things I could never—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: The first Lucian Freud show in America.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, we did the first Freud show in America. We did a huge Vanessa Bell show, in which the British ambassador to the United States came and spoke at the opening. I mean, there were a number of—we did the Prendergast show that was circulated by—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: In Maryland.

LEROY DAVIS: Maryland.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm. Right.

LEROY DAVIS: So—

AVIS BERMAN: Hedley Rhys.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: No. He was the Boston show in 1960. This was a woman called Eleanor Green.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, right. Right. Yeah.

LEROY DAVIS: And it was a huge show, and—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: As good of a show as the Boston show of Hedley Rhys.

LEROY DAVIS: And we did the first major monotype show—close to 100 monotypes—which was the genesis of Cecily doing the monotype section of the catalogue raisonné for Williams. And then we met Daniel Fraad.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Terra.

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, Dan Terra, who decided to build a collection of monotypes—[inaudible]—monotypes, which we built for him. It was just about that time that our partnership broke up. I mean, Meredith just had had it, you know. It had something to do with my apparent lack of interest in showing his contemporary artists, which was absolutely true, and it was unfair. But he—we just—it was like water and oil.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He's a—I mean, I want to stress it—he's a difficult man.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, of course, it's kind of like he was just giving you the money, and then so you were making most of the aesthetic decisions, and he probably thought he should. But as you say, he wasn't there. It's—

LEROY DAVIS: Well, one of the last deals we made was I bought a half-share of interest in a Sargent watercolor of Venice—big one. Meredith said, "Oh great. Send it down to Texas. Send it down to Houston. I think I got a customer for it." Okay, I was—we were on sticky ground at the time. So I send it down, and the next thing I know, the picture, through the mechanics of the way in which galleries run, was exchanged for a George Inness landscape. And what happened to the Sargent, I don't know, but I still own—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He exchanged with one of his clients.

LEROY DAVIS: A half-share of an Inness, which I've never seen. And now—what was involved was $100,000. Now that Sargent is worth $1 million-some odd dollars. So, you know, that's the way it sort of went. And Meredith, you know, was approving and disapproving of what we did.

We did a Vorticists show with—we did a lot of shows with Anthony d'Offay. Anthony was very, very supportive, and Anthony was responsible, really, for our getting the Freud show. And—but the Vorticists show went to Penn State [Pennsylvania State University, Palmer Museum of Art, University Park, PA] after it left here; there was really—and as a matter of fact, the Museum of Modern Art lent us the [Jacob] Epstein *Rock Drill* [1913-14]. And they bought a drawing from us.

I mean, we did some really significant shows. And we did a benefit show for another museum—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Colby [College Museum of Art, Waterville, ME]?

LEROY DAVIS: And this was sort of groundbreaking. And it was a lot of fun. I'd never done anything like this before. And it was like running a big gallery and—

AVIS BERMAN: It must have been great to have the space.

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, yeah, and I had Cecily, who was—at that point, we did a huge—we did a large Gwen John show. And through the Gwen John shows, through her research, she met—I can't think of—you know—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Oh, I was looking, maybe independently, at a book called *The Man from New York* [*: John Quinn and His Friends*. B.L. Reid. New York: Oxford University Press, 1968].

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, John Quinn.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah. And in it, there was a Gwen John reproduced, and I thought, hmm. And I saw the credit and it was Dr. Thomas Conroy, and I wrote a letter to the author, and I sent it to his publisher, I think.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, Ben Reid.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yes, exactly. And within a week, I got a phone call from Dr. Thomas Conroy. He just picked up the phone. And not only did he own that picture, but he owned, I don't know, eight other paintings. Lived in California. And some drawings. And he agreed to lend them to us. This is all on the telephone. I mean, very trusting. He became a very dear friend.

AVIS BERMAN: He was probably so thrilled that someone else, at that point, had an interest in Gwen John.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, it was—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: It was—

LEROY DAVIS: It was what enabled us to—we did a big show, which included those pictures, and it enabled Cecily to go on and, you know, work out a deal with Yale to do the catalogue raisonné. And I will say one thing, and to give you an idea of what training she got at Stuart's—no question about it, her own abilities and so forth—since the catalogue raisonné was done, the only painting that has turned up that we know about is on the back of another picture, painted over it with white paint. So she did a pretty good job.

AVIS BERMAN: It's extraordinarily thorough for a catalogue raisonné; it's amazing, because there's always—there are always—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, it was a small oeuvre.

AVIS BERMAN: But still, they're all hard to find. I guess one question I want to ask is that you're telling me what you're doing during this point. I don't see why this is the same as Hirschl & Adler. I mean—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Oh, because, well, first of all, Meredith dealt very much in the same kinds of things that Hirschl & Adler did. And we were—Davis & Long was selling Hudson River pictures, American Impressionist pictures, and you know, it wasn't that big a world.

LEROY DAVIS: No, we were there—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And it was absolute—I mean, we were doing other things as well, but it was an absolute overlap.

AVIS BERMAN: Because now, of course, so many galleries sell those.

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, yeah. Well, we were in competition, direct competition, with them for pictures at auction. I mean, it was Hirschl & Adler, Davis & Long, what's his name—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Kennedy.

LEROY DAVIS:—Gallery, and Kraushaar really wasn't as broad in areas as we were, but there may be—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well somebody—Prendergast, you know, the Eight.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, but there were about—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But Kraushaar was never homicidal. [They laugh.]

LEROY DAVIS: Certainly one of the three or four biggest gallery—[inaudible]—in this area, and we were in competition for the same pictures. And not that I was, but I had the money to do this with.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, of course, that was it. Since he was providing the money, he probably thought he should

have been the quote, unquote, power, in the relationship.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Oh, sure. Sure. And I think it's like any—I mean I should think partnerships are always —

AVIS BERMAN: Difficult.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, and marriages. I mean, it's balances that are achieved or are not achieved, and I knew Meredith a little bit from Hirschl & Adler, and I was a little skeptical about all of this, as you know. I mean, I warned you that there were—

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Some rough areas.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, certain personal problems, which were typical to deal with but one of the first gifts that I gave him was—Joan Patterson had gotten a divorce from her husband, and this great collection that I'd help build, including two major [William Merritt] Chases—one was a large oil that was this big—beach scene—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Which Dan Terra ultimately bought.

LEROY DAVIS: Dan Terra owns and still does. And the other one was a large Chase pastel of two girls picking poppies in the field, which was this big. And we went out there and bought those two pictures from Joan, and it was something. It was my first experience with Meredith and we—our partnership hadn't been formed yet, legally, and it was a nightmare. We paid—I'm almost embarrassed to tell you what we paid for the pictures, but —

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But it was not an unfair amount.

LEROY DAVIS: No, I mean, but one of the pictures—the Chase was—if I told you, stop me—years ago had been sold at an auction at Parke Bernet, and it was a big pastel of these two girls. And Joan asked me to go look at it for auction, and I had never been at auction. I told you that story before. And so I said, Joan, it's not really that good. You know, don't bother with it. Well a guy named Max Schweitzer, who was an antique frame salesman, bought the picture for something like $1,300. I mean, it shows you how things have changed.

So he called me up the next day and said, "Roy, would you come over and frame this picture for me?" I came in and when I saw it, I'm thinking, oh, my God, you know, what have I done? So I said, "Mac, would you be willing to sell? How much do you want for it?" "Eighteen thousand dollars." So, I called Joan up and I said, "Joan, I made a terrible mistake." And I explained to her, and she said, "Go buy it." So I bought the picture. I get a phone call the next day from Mac Schweitzer saying, "Roy, I don't know what to tell you, but would you consider selling me the picture back again, because somebody—I can't tell you who it is; a very, very important person"—well, it turned out to be Jackie Kennedy who wanted the picture. She never told me, and I said, "Is it Jackie Kennedy?" And he said, yes. I said, "The Pattersons hate the Kennedys, and they're wealthy people. They hate the Kennedys."

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: They hated Democrats.

LEROY DAVIS: They hated the Kennedys in particular, and—so there's not a chance in the world. So anyway, that's how I got the picture. The picture ultimately—it now belongs to Mrs. Mellon.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, you sold it to Paul Mellon.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And then Jackie later went and stayed there, and I think it was in her bedroom.

LEROY DAVIS: In her room. Chickens come home to roost, but you know—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But that's the kind of thing to which Roy had access and which he brought to the partnership.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Did Meredith Long have anything comparable like that in terms of access?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Probably. I think not in New York, but he had been dealing for some time, and he had Texas collectors. He was very—what sticks in my mind is he was particularly interested in George Inness, so there seemed to be a lot of—

LEROY DAVIS: Well, he did have a friendship with this guy from Detroit who was a curator—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Larry Curry.

LEROY DAVIS: Larry Curry, who was the guy who he assigned to be our—Berenson—choosing the show at the Brooklyn Museum. Well, Larry, very kindly, didn't veto any choice we made, and although, you know, this is what was really—[inaudible]—constantly a burr under my saddle is Meredith making remarks like that. I mean, we had this—[inaudible]—in our midst. Why not make use of it?

AVIS BERMAN: Well, you know what, I think that this is a good time to quit for today, and then we'll figure out—we'll go on from—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Sure.

AVIS BERMAN:—From, you know, kind of—

LEROY DAVIS: Is this—endless?

AVIS BERMAN: No, endless is good. If you couldn't think of anything, then it would be bad. No, no. I'm just going to turn this off.

[END OF CD 2.]

AVIS BERMAN: To begin again, this is Avis Berman interviewing Roy Davis and Cecily Langdale on August 7, 2007, at their gallery on 60th Street, for the Archives of American Art.

Now, as I said, today we'll be talking about some of your pioneering work in British art. But the first thing was, that last time, when we left, you said, oh, there was one more story about Paul Mellon that you wanted to tell. And you said, remind me to tell you about [James McNeill] Whistler and Paul Mellon.

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, yeah.

AVIS BERMAN: So that is what we will do first.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, in the early days of my association with him, I already—I had a relationship, but I don't think it was one of total confidence, at that point, with him and me. Ira Spanierman made a trade of an early Whistler painting, to trade in Glasgow University, which has the holdings of Whistler estate, I guess it is.

AVIS BERMAN: Sister.

LEROY DAVIS: Right.

AVIS BERMAN: The Birnie—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: [Rosalind] Birnie Philip.

LEROY DAVIS: He traded the painting for three watercolors, and he brought them in for framing, because at that point I was still very much involved with Bob Kulicke and framing, and so forth. And I looked at them and said, you know, I think I can sell these for you. So Ira said, great; go ahead and try. And he gave me a price, which was—I gathered—I forget what the price was, but it was pretty steep at that point.

And I called up Paul Mellon in Washington, and I said, I have three Whistler watercolors that I thought you might be interested in. And he said, well, Roy, I'm not going to buy them without seeing them. Now, I'm going to tell you something—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: That is really not exactly what he said; he said, I'm not coming to New York.

LEROY DAVIS: I'm not coming to New York, but I'm not—and I can't buy them without seeing them. He wasn't abrupt; he just was as a matter of fact.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: "If you would like to bring them down."

LEROY DAVIS: You know, later on, this would have been a totally different situation. I don't mean he would have bought them without seeing them, but the whole process would have been different. This is early on.

So I was going to Europe the next day or something like that, so I flew down to Washington, and I showed him the three watercolors, and I told him the price. He said, well, let me think about it. When I was down there, he showed me the Degas room with all of the waxes and so forth. And so it was a—[inaudible]—in Washington proper, there was the, you know—in his offices. And he was very, very sweet, very courteous.

And he called me back the next day, and he said, these are the three most expensive Whistler watercolors—[laughs]—that have been put on the market.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, I think he said it much more gently than that. You know, he was always—

LEROY DAVIS: I'm sure, but essentially what it was, was that Ira was asking an enormous amount of money for them. So Ira promptly—he said, I'm interested in two of them, but I'm not going to pay this much. Now, I will tell you that later on, in all of the years I knew Mr. Mellon, he never once questioned the price, never once. This is the only time it ever happened; it was early on, and I think part of it had to do with trust, and part of it had to do with the fact that I was—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Part of it was Ira. [They laugh.]

LEROY DAVIS: Part of that had to do with Ira. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: I was thinking that.

LEROY DAVIS: So Ira promptly reduced the price and P.M. bought two of the three watercolors. They were quite wonderful. And since then—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: You did one of the smartest things you've ever done.

LEROY DAVIS: And I kept the third one—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: As your commission.

LEROY DAVIS:—as my commission, which we still have. And since—I'm trying to think—God willing, we'll give the third one to the National Gallery some day. It's one of the last things we'd sell, so I'm hoping that it'll still be around. But—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: It should be said that Glasgow very soon after that passed a regulation that they would not part with any of their Whistlers, and quite right.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, exactly. They used to sell the etchings and lithographs. I mean, even when I kind of came on the scene, if I had been a little brighter, I would have bought one of the prints from them.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Right, right, right.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, well, they stopped. And Ira was very much responsible for it.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, they got something they didn't have.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right.

LEROY DAVIS: And probably not nearly—

AVIS BERMAN: But again, no, these days, you could never do anything like that.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But people do it all the time.

LEROY DAVIS: Anyway, that's essentially it. And he should have bought all three, to be quite frank with you, but I'm glad he didn't. But in any event, God willing, as I said—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: They'll be joined together.

LEROY DAVIS: Anyhow, that's the story. Now, Ira, in a way, figures in the other part, the English thing. I forget what year it was, but very early on, I knew Ira when Ira was still working for his father as an auctioneer and—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: The late '50s, probably.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah. And it was reaching the point—I had no capital to go alone, and it was reaching the—so we were running the gallery with contemporary art and an occasional picture I could pick up here and there. Somebody would bring in a picture, you know, a runner with something, and I'd buy it—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: This being Roy and his first wife, Terry Davis.

LEROY DAVIS: Right, you know, go down to Third Avenue and buy something and sell it. But there was no pattern to what we were doing, and American pictures were becoming more and more expensive, not comparable to

what they were to be 10 years later, but still. So I was talking to Ira about it one day and he said, well, why don't you deal in English watercolors; they're very inexpensive, and it's an area, you know, you can probably do very well in. So he introduced me to a guy, a runner from England, who came over to sell English watercolors. And he came in with a portfolio of, oh, I don't know, [John] Varley, [Peter] DeWint, [David] Cox, [John Sell] Cotman—the whole shmear. And the guy spoke impeccable English, so who was to question whether or not he knew anything about English watercolors; he was English. So I bought, and God, I can tell you that a lot of them came back to me later on. [Laughs.]

But as a result of that, my interest evolved and I became more and more interested. I questioned more and more. I learned a lot more. I met people who were helpful and, of course, Paul Mellon, in particular. And then I met—what's his name, died in the '80s—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Stephen Spector

LEROY DAVIS: Stephen Spector, who was a friend and who was also curiously—one thing he frequently bought were watercolors. Stephen was a step up. I mean, he made accessible to me things that I couldn't possibly buy, and, for instance, he decided we were going to do a Rowlandson show, so he went to England and bought a Rowlandson show. And in his flamboyant way, he would go into a gallery and say, I'll take this, this, this, and this. And, but he financed this thing and so—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He had a very good eye.

LEROY DAVIS: Little by little, my knowledge grew and my means grew with it, because I was making money and somebody was bankrolling part of the purchases and so forth. And so we were pretty deeply involved at that point in British watercolors. And when we—we reached a peak when we moved to Madison Avenue and did some really major shows. We did a Cox show, a David Cox show, for instance, in which Paul Mellon and Charles Ryskamp came in when the show opened and bought half the show—

AVIS BERMAN: Mr. Mellon did?

LEROY DAVIS:—half the show for Yale. But these were all—you know, these were good pictures.

AVIS BERMAN: Now was Spector a dealer?

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He was a private dealer.

LEROY DAVIS: And a fascinating guy with a great sensibility about pictures. I'll tell you a cute story about him and Paul—Mrs. Mellon. We sold Mrs. Mellon a Constable watercolor, and in the process of framing it, I discovered that the watermark was about five years after Constable's death, so I said to Stephen what are we going to do about this? And he said, give it to her. So I called her up and I said, Mrs. Mellon, the Constable you bought is not right, and it very possibly could have been his son, Constable's son, Lionel, who continued to work very much in his manner. But that was beside the point; it wasn't Constable and it wasn't signed, but it was in the manner of Constable. And I said we would—Stephen said, give it to her; I said, we would like to give it to you; we won't charge you. And she said, no, I would like to have it. Well, in any event, we gave it to her in any case, but she—God knows where it is now—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Heaven help us, it may still be catalogued as a Constable.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, no, what we sent to her is not a Constable. But it was an interesting—you know, I think it certainly had an impact on our relationship and on the many things—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: You mean a positive impact?

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah. And it was nice; it was a nice thing to do. But we did a lot of British shows on Madison Avenue. I mean, we were at a much higher level than what we were doing over here.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But there was also a shift of—as we got to know Anthony d'Offay—I mean, you worked with Anthony for years and years and years and he—Anthony moved into modern British art probably in the late 1960s, and he really did pioneer in a sense. He tracked down descendants and so on and so forth, and he became the representative for Duncan Grant, who was still alive, Vanessa Bell, Robert Bevan, Spencer Gore. And he was very interested in the Vorticists, which may have been fractionally later, I'm not sure. And he did shows, and we were a wonderful outlet for him here, so we did many of those shows. He also gave us a Lucian Freud show.

LEROY DAVIS: First one here.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah. And then a little later, Stefanie Maison, who represented the Gwen John estate—this gets complicated, but she joined Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox [London], didn't feel that that was an appropriate place for the estate, so she turned it over to Anthony. I think, in retrospect, she probably realized that Hazlitt would have been just fine for Gwen, but Anthony took that on, did a show. And then his interest shifted to contemporary art. So, in essence, he farmed it all out to us, and for years we actually handled the estate, although his name was on—he subcontracted it to us.

AVIS BERMAN: Gwen John?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah.

AVIS BERMAN: Also, let's just also bring your role in here because—as a writer—and also how maybe the gallery shifted some of its emphasis due to your growing influence and then kind of actually coming back.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, I don't know that we've been through this, but I went to work for Roy and Terry, and then I left. I went to work for Stuart Feld—

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS:—which exposed me to high-powered dealing. Stuart was, and I guess is, very energetic. And he was dealing across the board in American art from Colonial to at least Modernism. So I was exposed to all kinds of things that I studied in school but hadn't ever seen dealt in, and I think I learned a great deal. And when I came back—I mean, I don't know how much—

LEROY DAVIS: Well, you came back because of my—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Oh, yeah, sure, no, no, I know, but I guess I brought back some knowledge of Ammi Phillips or whatever that I hadn't had before.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, you brought back primarily the structural way a gallery should be run instead of a sort of slipshot way in which we were doing it.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, I certainly learned how to catalogue pictures there. I think you were always more attentive to provenance and so on than many dealers used to be and perhaps still are. I mean, it seemed important. But certainly, I learned a very structured way of doing it—

AVIS BERMAN: Right, and also I imagine there was always a big research operation over there, too.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, sure, sure, and it's something I loved to do. And I can't remember whether I learned there that I loved to do it or I learned it before. But it's been one of the things that's been most pleasurable to me. I certainly don't enjoy selling pictures. I like it if somebody likes a picture and wants to buy it, but I hate selling. [Laughs.] And so does Roy—doesn't stand us in good standing.

LEROY DAVIS: We're not very good at that, but concurrently we were dealing both in British and American art, and American art because of my association with Meredith Long.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, that's not true. Your interest in American art was a continuum.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, that's true. Yeah, I was still involved. I mean—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And one of the things that happened is you had sold some major things in the late '50s, early '60s, and when you hooked up with Meredith, some of those people were beginning to recycle, so the pictures came back at a higher—more expensively.

AVIS BERMAN: Also, you also began to do some significant writing. I don't know if that started at Hirschl & Adler, where some—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, sure, sure.

AVIS BERMAN:—catalogue introductions or—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Oh, sure, sure, I did all that there. Yes, absolutely.

AVIS BERMAN: But you became—in other words, let's just talk about Gwen John as—did you expect to become an authority on Gwen John, or how did that occur?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, Roy did—I suppose it was the first Gwen John show in America, in 1960—let me

double check that.

LEROY DAVIS: Sixty-five.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Sixty-five.

LEROY DAVIS: Maynard Walker wanted to do it.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah.

LEROY DAVIS: He actually knew Gwen.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But he never—

AVIS BERMAN: He knew her?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He knew her. When he worked for—he was a very young man; he worked for Ferargil [Gallery, New York City]—

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS:—and Fred Price—I don't know how, or I don't remember how—knew about Gwen John, probably through Augustus John, and sent Maynard to Paris, to Meudon [France], to meet her and to talk about a show. And this would have been in the early '30s.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I knew Maynard. He told me about his interest in Gwen John. He said that he was going to do a show and this time—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And he sold things over the years.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah.

AVIS BERMAN: I'm just so surprised because so few people knew about her then or had any sense of her quality.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, not really true, because after 1946, there were all kinds—there were a few wealthy international Americans who bought works by Gwen John out of the first 1946 sale in London, including a woman called Cowdin [Mrs. J. Cheever Cowdin]—I'm going to give you formal names now—Mrs. John Hay Whitney—

LEROY DAVIS: The Fosburghs.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: James and Minnie Fosburgh.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, there's a point we were making the other day, because there's a new stupid book out on Gwen John in which she's referred to as a woman's artist, and it's all based upon a still life which passes on—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: It's a novel; it was reviewed in the *Times* a couple of weeks ago.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, it's really, really horrible. Cecily's name was mentioned, was in the book as a—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, I mean, I think it's condescending to refer to her or Georgia O'Keeffe or whatever as a woman artist. They are artists, good or bad.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, the point that I'm trying to make is that there was a statement made to the effect that she really was—until recently that she'd become accepted or well known. Now, the interesting thing is, of the three major collectors in the world, two of them—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Of her work.

LEROY DAVIS: Of the three major collectors in the world, period. I mean, Paul Mellon, the guy who supported her, you know—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Oh, John Quinn.

LEROY DAVIS: And John Quinn and Albert Barnes. Two of the three collected her heavily, so that this is simply absolutely not true. She was heavily collected by these two men. So that puts a lie to that book and that story.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, I've lost my train here.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, well, I had—I guess we had talked about you—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Oh, oh, okay. Well, I was exposed to her work in 1965. And then when Roy and I became a couple, we would travel to England and I would watch—some of this is while I was working for Stuart, but as we were dealing in different things, I was able to compartmentalize, and Stuart, of course, knew exactly what I was doing. You know, and I met Stefanie Maison through you, and I would watch you buy Gwen John's work. And then when I came back to work for you and Meredith, we pretty quickly planned a large show, which I really did and carefully catalogued. And we tracked down some major pictures that had been John Quinn's pictures, tracked them down, found out where all the Quinn pictures were, which the woman, who, at that point and for many, many, many years, had been working on Gwen John, had never discovered.

Then there was a change in the John family setup. The man who had inherited the pictures died and his children took over, and they were rather fed up with this woman, whose name was Mary Taubman. And—

LEROY DAVIS: Mary Taubman.

AVIS BERMAN: Mary who?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: T-A-U-B-M-A-N, Taubman. And they gave her a deadline; they said, either you produce this catalogue raisonné or we take the papers away from you. And they took the papers away, gave them to me, and, in essence, they set us in a race. She was going to do a biography.

AVIS BERMAN: Did she ever produce anything?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: She did produce when—it became rather competitive. When my book was in production at Yale, she quickly put together and had published a very nice small picture book, a very lovely book.

LEROY DAVIS: Which was against the agreement—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, it was. So be it. And—

AVIS BERMAN: When you say your book, this is the Gwen John—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: The catalogue raisonné, which was published by Yale in 1987. That's right, that's right. And we only actually started to represent the estate a very few years ago. When Anthony decided to close down his public space, the estate was turned over to us, which brings difficulties with it.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, did—were the heirs—turned out to be some of Augustus's many children?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Gwen left her entire estate to one of her nephews, Edwin, who was one of Augustus's many children.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, that was one of either the first or second wife, Dorelia or—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: No, he was a child of the only wife, Ida. Augustus never married Dorelia, although that wasn't common knowledge. Michael Holroyd, I once asked if there were anything he hadn't put in his biography, and he said he hadn't mentioned that because he was fearful that there would be legal difficulties for the family.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, that was why I thought, I guess, he had married Dorelia, because I had read that.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, it was so assumed. Well, there was a nice little anecdote in the mid-'40s maybe, late '40s. It was made known to Augustus John that the king wanted to give him a knighthood, but that he would have to regularize his position with Dorelia. So he went home, this blustering fellow, and he got down on his knee and he proposed to Dorelia, and she said no. [They laugh.] So he never got a knighthood.

LEROY DAVIS: Michael told that story.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Michael told that story, yeah.

AVIS BERMAN: So, and also you became involved with Maurice Prendergast as a writer.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, that's really to do with Roy. Roy, I guess, learned about Maurice Prendergast and Charles Prendergast at the Barnes. And quite early on in your dealing career, you got to know Eugenie Prendergast—

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS:—and you did a couple of shows—

LEROY DAVIS: With her.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS:—with her in the early '60s.

LEROY DAVIS: They were works on paper for the most part. And I sold a lot of Prendergast. I mean, relatively speaking, Kraushaar was represented—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But I think Eugenie had broken with Kraushaar. She was wont to—she was difficult. And then as they got more expensive, she wanted—not with these shows, but she usually demanded that people buy things outright, and they became expensive enough that you couldn't do that. And she came to Hirschl & Adler. And I always got on well with her, and so she started selling things to Hirschl & Adler, did she not? And then there was a major Charles Prendergast show that was making museum rounds, and I thought it would be a rather nice idea to have it in New York. And Stuart was all for that, and Eugenie was, so Hirschl & Adler had—

LEROY DAVIS: That was at Rutgers [University, New Brunswick, NJ] or some place like that.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, I think so. And Boston, probably.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, but then when I became Meredith Long's partner, the money was available and we started buying from her directly, in rather large quantities. We bought and sold a lot of Prendergast, and then around the time we broke up with Meredith, I thought, well, this would be a great idea to do a monotype show. And Cecily, in the course of about three months, managed to locate a hundred.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: All I remember is you walking into my room and saying, if you don't get moving, we're not going to have a show. [They laugh.]

LEROY DAVIS: We were on Madison Avenue. Do you have that catalogue?

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I have this—I have the—

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I'll give you the other ones as well.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I was going to ask you also what it was like to work with Dan Terra.

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, that's a story.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, on this, it was okay. He was, on the whole, a very ungenerous man. But here, he decided he wanted to build a collection. We made very little money—I forget, did we make 10 percent on each sale?

LEROY DAVIS: We did brilliantly, I forget what percent it was.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Roy, I think we made 10 percent on each sale.

LEROY DAVIS: I don't know, but we sold him about 50 pictures.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, but I was able to go out and buy pictures for him, and he pretty often gave us really free rein. And he never undercut us. He did once later. We sold him—what was it, Roy? It was a Sargent. He came into the gallery; we sold him a Sargent that a friend of ours from London had consigned to us. And the friend, I think, had it for a very brief time. We sold it to Dan—whom I always call Mr. Terra—on a Thursday morning, told our London friend that it was sold, then Mr. Terra wandered up town and wandered into, I think, Berry-Hill [Gallery], found another Sargent he decided he wanted more, so he bought that and canceled this sale, which was a little embarrassing.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I mean, that's a little anecdote about his nature, but the truth of the matter is he came in one day after we did this big show in which there—I'll give you a copy of the catalogue—which there was something like 100 reproductions. We didn't borrow all those pictures, but we knew where they were, and it was a genesis of the work that Cecily did for Williams College [Williamstown, MA], because there ended up being only about 150 totally, weren't there?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I think so.

LEROY DAVIS: Because most of them had already been found in a few months. And these pictures had all been sold—curious thing is—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: There were good records—

LEROY DAVIS: Monotypes have always been—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Kraushaar kept very nice records.

LEROY DAVIS: Monotypes have always been in salesrooms called prints, which was very much to our benefit. So people who bought pictures didn't necessarily buy prints, and they missed the monotypes, which were anything but prints; they were just simply a transfer process. And I knew where a lot of them were; I owned a couple. And people, for the most part, paid anywhere from $75 to 150 [dollars], $200 for these monotypes. And we were in a position to offer them considerably more money. And we just simply swept up gobs of these things, and he—because he wanted to build his collection—bought everything we offered him.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I think it's probably fair to say that although I think he was a conniver himself, I think he probably realized that he had a couple of babes in the woods with us and that we were not going to—

LEROY DAVIS: Well, when Cecily did that book, and he asked her to do the book—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yes, this is the *Monotypes by Maurice Prendergast in the Terra Museum of American Art* [Chicago: Terra Museum of American Art, 1984].

LEROY DAVIS: Right. We completely designed the book and supervised the printing of it. Every one of the monotypes was put on the press and the prints made directly from the originals. The design of that book and everything about it was totally ours; nobody else had anything to do with it. And it became time to go to print, to print it, he didn't want Cecily's name on it.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He wanted his name on it.

LEROY DAVIS: And I forget how he—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, we said no.

LEROY DAVIS: We said, absolutely no. So finally, you know—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And I should say, to show—I mean, he had a good deal—I nor we were not paid for this; it was the glory of it that—according to him, it was kind of implicit in our having built the collection—

LEROY DAVIS: And there was an addendum to it. I don't know if you have the addendum—

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

LEROY DAVIS:—but there were a few more that were—right?—added to it, but make sure I give you the first catalogue, which was the genesis of this thing.

AVIS BERMAN: Did you meet the first Mrs. Terra, or was she dead by the time—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: She was dead. Oh, I'm not sure that she was dead.

AVIS BERMAN: Because was it true that it was really she who knew something—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: That's what they said, but I mean, he lived in a world of myths.

AVIS BERMAN: That's why I thought if you knew her that—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: No, we certainly—we met Judith and—who gets to see these transcripts? He did come in one day and he said, I want to talk to you, he said to me. You're married to a man who's rather older than you; should I be doing this and should I be marrying Judith? And my answer was, you shouldn't have to ask me that. [Laughs.] And then he did. And I think she—I'm not sure how she presents herself now, but she certainly had nothing to do with the collection.

AVIS BERMAN: No, not at first.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I mean, I don't know when she did ever. I mean, after he died, but—

AVIS BERMAN: Yeah, that's what I meant.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, yeah.

LEROY DAVIS: He was hands-on totally—this guy, when he paid for something, he paid for it with a personal check—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: You know, a little checkbook like my checkbook.

LEROY DAVIS:—and he brought a check. God knows what kind of records he kept, but that's the way he did business. And he drove his own car, which was a rattletrap. And he was a strange man. But boy, he actually carried us for about three or four years.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He, I think, did love pictures.

LEROY DAVIS: And had an—you know, I'm of the theory that if I have two pictures, in which there's some distinct difference in quality, and I show it to the postman, the postman's going to pick the better picture. There are intrinsic qualities in works of art which are transferable and submittable to almost anybody. I mean, you know, I'm talking about things alike. This guy had the ability to pick out the more desirable picture, the one which had the greatest appeal. He was not a Gene Thaw in the sense that he would go for the quirky.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Who is? [They laugh.]

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, exactly.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But he was assiduous when he was at it all the time—he was highly energetic.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, certainly in the beginning, when he was still around for his museum, he wouldn't let any of the curators buy anything. He was still the only one who could buy anything.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Absolutely, yeah. Yes. He was—I mean, he was notably egotistical.

LEROY DAVIS: There's one great story here. There was a picture he wanted desperately, a monotype. It was a good monotype; not great, it was really good. He wanted—and it belonged to—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Will you let me tell it, because you always put the punch line in there. [They laugh.] David Tunick had personally owned a major Maurice Prendergast monotype. And Dan Terra really wanted it. And, you know, I guess we approached David and he said no, no, no. And then sometime later, David came to us and said, I'm prepared to sell it now; I have serious financial need for something and it's—what was it—

LEROY DAVIS: Two-hundred-and-fifty thousand dollars. Not 150 [thousand dollars], but $250,000 dollars. It's outrageous.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: So I said I would approach Dan Terra. And I called Mr. Terra, and he paused for 10 seconds and he said, fine, get it. So we bought it. And it turned out later that David's serious financial need was for a boat. [They laugh.]

LEROY DAVIS: I remember—it was over on Madison Avenue, and I know exactly. I was standing in the middle of a big room, and I said, well, he's willing to sell the picture, but he wants $250,000. Terra paused for a minute and he said, buy it. I mean, it's just as simple as that. Now, the average picture was selling for—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Seventy-five—

LEROY DAVIS:—between 50 [thousand dollars] and $100,000, and already that was, you know, crazy. I mean, it put us in a position of being able to buy almost anything we wanted—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Which, I think, affected the auction market, because I think people simply knew that we would buy them and so—

AVIS BERMAN: This is the Prendergast market, right?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, so that other collectors just didn't—

LEROY DAVIS: However, I must point out they're still being sold as prints. They're in the prints—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And the prices are not really higher now than they were 15 years ago.

LEROY DAVIS: No, but as long as they remain in print sales, that this is going to happen; people miss them because they don't subscribe to the print sales.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And also, people don't really grasp what monotypes are.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, but also, you would think they would be higher since, because of Terra, so many of them have been taken off the market, from what you're saying—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yes, you would think so. Yeah.

AVIS BERMAN:—there may be 50 left or something, you know. So it's a little—it's different.

Besides Prendergast, were there any other artists that you sold to Terra?

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, yeah.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Oh, sure. We sold Whistler in depth.

LEROY DAVIS: I may have told you this story, but Chase—the first major collector of American art in this area was a woman named Joan Patterson.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, yes, we did discuss her.

LEROY DAVIS: And I bought for her, in this curious way, two major Chases.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I think you told that story.

LEROY DAVIS: So one of the Chases, the big oil of Shinnecock [Hills, NY], which is enormous, he bought [*Morning at Breakwater, Shinnecock*, 1897]. We sold to him. And we sold him a number of pictures. We sold him Homers—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Oh, yeah, a lot of Homers; I mean, a lot.

LEROY DAVIS: We sold him a great Whistler, what's the name of it [*Note in Red: The Siesta*, 1884]?

AVIS BERMAN: Was that the one with the model on the sofa—

LEROY DAVIS: Reclining figure, yeah.

AVIS BERMAN: Yeah, with the red—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yes, the model—was it Jones, Millie Jones—no, no, I can see it; it's all this red.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, so can I.

LEROY DAVIS: It's just gorgeous.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And Margaret and Ray Horowitz never forgave us for—I mean, Margaret saw it—that was the story, wasn't it?—and Ray was in the hospital with something—

LEROY DAVIS: We were committed to sell it to Terra.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And she may have seen it first, but she was distracted, and afterwards I guess she said you probably should have pushed her.

AVIS BERMAN: The wrath of Margaret Horowitz, I wouldn't want to be on the end of that. [They laugh.]

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, we seldom were, I mean, actually.

LEROY DAVIS: She was the bird dog in that pair. She was the one that really found the pictures.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And she was—I mean, they were among our closest friends and vice versa.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, there was a monotype which we sold to the Texas museum—I forgot the name of it—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: [Marion Koogler] McNay [Art Museum, San Antonio, TX].

LEROY DAVIS: McNay.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I'm sorry, that's what it was. It was that picture, *The Flower Market* [DATE?]. I'm sorry.

AVIS BERMAN: *The Flower Market*.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah. It was a Prendergast monotype.

LEROY DAVIS: She hadn't seen the—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And we sold it—forget what I said about Whistler. I mean, I think they were—

LEROY DAVIS: They found out about it—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And they were not happy we hadn't offered it to them first. But *The Flower Market* Margaret saw on her way to the hospital—

LEROY DAVIS: We were on our way to Europe.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS:—and didn't do anything about it and we sold it to the McNay. And as Ray came out of the anesthesia, he realized that that they would have liked it. It would have suited their collection very nicely.

LEROY DAVIS: And we sold a lot of pictures—we didn't sell a lot to the Horowitzes, curiously enough, although I did all their framing. But we sold a number of things to the Fraads.

AVIS BERMAN: What about the Potamkins? Did you—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Hardly.

LEROY DAVIS: One picture. A Chase of a dead fish.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: That was before my time. I'm not sure how—I always had the impression from the '70s on that they weren't really buying anymore, but perhaps that was not accurate, the Potamkins.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, you know, strangely enough, what we sold was not the kind of thing that they would have bought. I guess the next—another large collection that we sold a number of pictures to was the Wolfs.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yes. Erving and Joyce Wolf.

LEROY DAVIS: And we did sell them a number of things.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Very good things.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah. And then there's a collection out in Penn State that we—

AVIS BERMAN: You mean the Westmoreland Museum?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: No, no.

LEROY DAVIS: Somebody connected with Penn State, with the university. But the name—C—

AVIS BERMAN: Okay.

LEROY DAVIS: And they own about 15 or 16 Yorks, among other things, but also Prendergast and other things we've sold them.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I mean, their collection is almost entirely about that.

AVIS BERMAN: No, I find it very interesting because I would have thought it would have been hard, just to return to British art, to sell British art in New York. It's not American and it's not French—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: It is now. It wasn't. In terms of British watercolors, there were a few major collectors. Obviously Paul Mellon. There's a man called Julian Glass [ph]. I can't remember—

LEROY DAVIS: Well, they came out of the woodwork.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: They all died, I mean, within—they were all much the same age, I think, and they all died within 10 years of each other, and nobody younger really came along to pick up the slack. And I think people simply are collecting differently today.

LEROY DAVIS: That's 19th century. I mean, 20th century's another story. There's a big following for—

AVIS BERMAN: Contemporary, I guess.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Oh, sure, right.

LEROY DAVIS:—what do you call it?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Gwen John?

LEROY DAVIS: Duncan Grant—Bloomsbury [Group].

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, I'm not even sure that that hasn't slackened.

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, I'm sure it hasn't because it's very—because the material that's available is of a lower quality and there—

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I would imagine a lot of literary people collected the Bloomsbury art and—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yes, but it was along the lines of souvenirs, really.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But even that seems somehow to, in the last five years or so, to have tamped down a bit, and I think that's true in England, too, not just here.

LEROY DAVIS: I mean, I guess if one had a really great thing, a really great thing, one could sell it—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Sure.

LEROY DAVIS: In the old days, Anthony would get hold of really good things, and they brought decent prices. But at that time, *Reader's Digest* was—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Collecting out of the—

LEROY DAVIS:—collecting from this period. And Yale was building a collection. The original conception of the Yale British Art Center was that it would go up to 1850 or something like that. And I forget who the director was who explained to me—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I don't think you mean 1850.

LEROY DAVIS: Yes, I do.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, then what happened to all Whistlers—

LEROY DAVIS: Maybe it was 1875. Somebody born no later than 1850.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Oh, okay.

LEROY DAVIS: And I don't know that it was 1850, but it was something that would have excluded all 20th century—most 20th century art—with the exception of Gwen John, but Mr. Mellon did not give Gwen Johns to Yale. And the director at that time persisted and he finally got him to break down—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Was that Ted Pillsbury?

LEROY DAVIS: Ted Pillsbury—to change his restrictions, and it expanded until I think it, at this point, it includes—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Contemporary art.

LEROY DAVIS:—contemporary art.

[Audio break.]

AVIS BERMAN: Okay, we're resuming recording. Did you ever meet Lucian Freud, by the way?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Oh, sure.

AVIS BERMAN: What was Lucian Freud like when you met him?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Oh, he's still a friend, so he—let's see, I last saw him 10 months ago.

LEROY DAVIS: We became very good friends.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, very, very, very, very, very intense. Very charismatic. Very intelligent. Very daunting. You can throw in some adjectives here.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I mean—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: We've always had a very good relationship with him. He has fallings out with people.

LEROY DAVIS: What happened was, when we did the show—we may have told you this story—but he decided that he'd like [us] to have, to own a picture. And—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Which doesn't mean give. [Laughs.]

LEROY DAVIS: And he presented to Anthony a picture that he thought we should buy, and it was a portrait of Bella, his daughter, one of his daughters. And Cecily had come into some money and—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Not a lot.

LEROY DAVIS: Something like $27,000. And as a result of it—we are just about to lend [it] to the Museum of Modern Art, as a matter of fact—we bought the picture. And then the next time we went over to England, we arranged to have Lucian to come over to have breakfast with us at the Connaught [Hotel, London]. And he took us back to the studio and that became a ritual.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Was that the first time we ever met him? Can't have been.

AVIS BERMAN: Did he come over here for his show?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: No, no.

LEROY DAVIS: No, no. He rarely comes over here. He came over—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: We met—there was a period where we met a lot of his children. And, in fact, one of his daughters—his daughter, Rosie—came over for that show, and she was 17. And I remember she was punk, and she was wearing leather shoes that had a tie between them so she shuffled along. I really never forgot that. [They laugh.]

LEROY DAVIS: Chained together.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Chained together. A very sweet girl.

LEROY DAVIS: But whenever we came to London, we would invite him to have breakfast with us and we invariably went back with him to his studio.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And once we saw him here, later on. He was having a show at Acquavella, and he came for a couple of days, and we had breakfast with him.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, well, of course, he had that show at the Met.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He didn't come; I don't believe he came for that.

LEROY DAVIS: Now he—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He works all the time.

LEROY DAVIS:—he moves in and—I think he moves more mysteriously. I mean, we don't go over to England as often as we used to. So when we hear from him—I mean, the last communication we got from him I think had to do with our lending the picture to—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, he has an assistant now, called David Dawson, who comes more regularly, and he's become, if not a friend, but he's a friendly acquaintance. And there is a show of Freud prints; it's going to be at the Modern starting in November maybe through the—past Christmas. And it's prints with a handful of related drawings and a small handful, I think, of paintings. And I think Lucian made it known that he would like them to borrow ours.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, he's always borrowed our picture and we obviously feel an obligation to lend it, but he—when the show was done in Venice, he—we said no because I was concerned about it going to Venice and so forth, the air—I think it was worth a few million dollars. So Lucian called and he said he would really appreciate it if we were to—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But he always—nobody has his phone number. I mean, I suppose Bill Acquavella has it.

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, I'm sure.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But I think—

LEROY DAVIS: Maybe he doesn't.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I don't know that he does. I think that now David screens all of that. But if you want to see Lucian, you write him a note and—

LEROY DAVIS: Well, he's written some notes to us which were very funny to me—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Oh, sure.

LEROY DAVIS:—childlike, and on one—which is in the other room, there was—it was done on top of a drawing, very consciously done on part of an unfinished drawing. So we have the letter and this unfinished drawing. Also, Anthony, who was a really thoughtful person—I mean, he was still working through Anthony—he persuaded Lucian to do a little wash drawing in the front of one of the books that he illustrated and gave it to us as a present. Then he gave us an etching. And he's an extraordinary guy, and I love talking to him because I feel comfortable talking to him about painting, although having been a painter, I know enough when to stop, you know. You know, there's a point where you're showing off rather than asking questions that are really of interest to you.

But when you go to the studio and you observe him or you know how he works, you can pretty well—if you're a painter, you can pretty well figure it out. And he's not without affectation. For instance, [Francis] Bacon was the first person to start using the wall as a palette and Lucian picked that up. And I don't want him to know that I know that, but that's a fact. And you know he had a studio, and then he had a house later on.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, he's got two houses.

LEROY DAVIS: And he would work all over the place. He would have one room set up for this and another room set up for that, and he would work all night long. I mean, he was just incredible.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And he still does. I think his energy level has diminished a bit, and I think maybe he has excised some of the extracurricular activities now—

LEROY DAVIS: We're exactly the same age.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS:—and he, you know, he clearly has decided that he's not young, and he needs to paint, and he does it all day, every day.

AVIS BERMAN: Just for the tape, his painting is just called *Bella*, and it's from 1981. Now, it's really a marvelous picture, and he decided that you should buy this. How did you feel—I mean, would you have liked to have had a choice, or were you smitten by this?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I think I was in a daze—actually, in a way, I've always thought it was an easy picture. I think it's a very fine picture, but it's a picture that almost anybody would want to own who might find a naked picture less tolerable. And I wouldn't have minded something grittier, except that it's all the same thing in the end.

LEROY DAVIS: You know, when we did the show, it was very strange—there on Madison Avenue—if I told you this, just stop me. And we knew there was a following for Freud in America, but it was not anything comparable to what exists today. I mean, today when Bill Acquavella does a show, it's a major event—and, of course, the Met had something to do with that, too. But he had not had a museum show in America when we did the show. He had not had a show of any kind, and so we were the first—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And museums were mostly certainly not lined up.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, of course—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: The only museum that was lined up was Cleveland. Sherman Lee.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, Sherman Lee came, and Sherman Lee didn't think he could—he wanted to buy *Man with a Rat* [1977], but he didn't think he could get away with it because *Man with a Rat* was—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS:—a naked man holding a rat. [Laughs.]

LEROY DAVIS: So he settled for something else, and it did get through the board and it did not—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: It was not in the show. It was a picture that Lucian painted right after.

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, is that so? In any case, he did buy a picture from us, a big admirer of his. But when we did the show, two people turned out in the morning. One was Pearlstein, who was having a show—

AVIS BERMAN: Philip Pearlstein.

LEROY DAVIS:—at the same time, and clearly either hated or admired—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, he was the first visitor to the show.

LEROY DAVIS: He was the first visitor to the show, and the second one was Hilton Kramer, who wrote his—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, it was fascinating to watch him look at the show. I could see him physically repelled. I mean, he would move back as if it were a magnetic field from certain of the more stressful paintings, like the *Man with a Rat*.

LEROY DAVIS: And he left after about five minutes, which was a bad sign. And the review, which we have obviously, said something to the effect that like some wine, some painting does not travel well. And then he went on to rip the hell out of it, and then he went on to write a very extravagant review of the Pearlstein show, which was running concurrently. And that's what we had to put up with. Now, John Russell wanted to do the review. John was on the staff at the *Times*, but Kramer was the head of it. Kramer took the review away from John and, knowing damn well what he was going to do, and did a hatchet job. And I remember John apologizing; he was very upset about it.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And 25 years later, there was a show, I suppose, at Acquavella, maybe the Met—

LEROY DAVIS: It was Acquavella.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Okay. And Kramer did a review of it in which he said like some wine, some art travels well. [Berman laughs.] And so Roy sent him a copy of the first review, and, needless to say, there was no response.

LEROY DAVIS: I said, I have a lot of respect for you, I have a lot of columns you write, I admire and so forth and so on, which was true to some extent. And I said, well, I thought it was—you would be amused to see this. Never heard a word from him. You know, he's a member of the Century and he's a troublemaker. I mean, he's—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And he's humorless, I think.

LEROY DAVIS: The guy absolutely—when we were trying to prevent the sale of the William Sidney Mount to raise funds for the Century, he did take a stand against the sale of the Mount, but he managed in the course of doing it to antagonize every member of the Century. He was that kind of guy.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I also think what's interesting is it wasn't so much that he changed his mind, but you probably—what was worse was you caught him being a little bit lazy as a writer.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Sure.

AVIS BERMAN:—he was using the exact same—now, I realize I could never write to a deadline the way he ever did, so sometimes, you know, you recycle yourself, but that was probably more embarrassing to him than changing his mind.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Or irritating, as the case may be.

LEROY DAVIS: You know, it just was a terrible thing to do, and, you know, he was playing games with somebody's career and—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, there were other good reviews. And, of course, there was a good deal of press and a lot of it was, you know, Freudian slip, blah, blah, blah, not very thinking.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, well, at the time, most of the press wouldn't have known who he was, so therefore they would grasp onto the relative—you know, being related to Freud.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Sure, sure.

LEROY DAVIS: But, you know, then there were no more shows until Acquavella.

AVIS BERMAN: Why didn't you carry on with it?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Because, like Eugenie Prendergast, Lucian insisted his pictures be bought outright.

LEROY DAVIS: And we did do a couple—later on we did a couple of pieced together shows with bits and pieces of things—mostly works on paper.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, we keep talking about Anthony d'Offay, but, in fact, Lucian's dealer was a man called James Kirkman, who was a private dealer. And when it was time for an exhibition, James did it with Anthony d'Offay and not—and Lucian had a spectacular breakup with Anthony. And then a couple of years later, he had a spectacular breakup with James. I'm not quite sure why; I think it's just possible he was bored.

LEROY DAVIS: He accused him of not handling his money properly. I mean, we were going to do a joint show with James's help, and Lucian called us up and—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Can I tell the story? Would you mind?

LEROY DAVIS: No, go ahead.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: We went to London, and they had just broken up and James had a number of things he owned. And it seemed to form the basis of a show, and we thought this was a wonderful idea—and we were on our way to Italy—and we went to Italy the next day, and that afternoon, we got a phone call from Lucian: please, don't do this. And he had found out because later that day Matthew Marks had gone to see James—and James was under the impression that Matthew was a good friend—and James told Matthew the story, and Matthew got into a taxi and told Lucian, you know, stir it up a little. So we agreed not to do the show. And a few years later when we wanted to do a show gathered from various sources, Lucian was very approving of that, and, indeed, if you look at his bibliography in some of his catalogues, it's somewhat edited. There are a few shows that do not appear. And our show was a rather minor show, and he made sure that it was in it, so we were still in good order.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, no, he's a great guy. But we also share a common interest in pornography, so—[they laugh]. He's a terrific guy.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And I think a great painter.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, I really think—you know—significant painter of our time.

AVIS BERMAN: You know those paintings of things like *The Kitchen Sink* [1983-87]—I love those shows.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, seeing the show in Venice was a really extraordinary experience, and it's always fun to see your own picture in a show, because it's back in the context in which it was produced and—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And Venice was also an unexpected place to see Freud—

LEROY DAVIS: When are we giving those pictures back? When is the Museum of Modern Art taking them away from us?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I think November. I just got an e-mail about it, as a matter of fact.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, anyway, that was a great, great thrill and, I guess, the highlight, you know, that, Prendergast, Gwen John, those are highlights.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And maybe the thing that's given us the most gratification is representing Albert York. He hasn't painted for 15 years and it's heartbreaking to us. We think he's a great painter.

LEROY DAVIS: He's certainly a painter to be reckoned with. Over a long period of time, we have tried so hard to promote him and—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I do think, were he productive today, he probably would have been snapped up by Matthew Marks or something.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, he would have been taken away—Matthew Marks owns about three or four of them.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But I also think that, aside from his own qualities as an artist, one reason we feel so strongly may be that York himself is so recessive. He doesn't meet people, he doesn't give interviews, none of that stuff.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, he did that interview with *The New Yorker*.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He—so we get all the praise. We are his surrogates, and that's gratifying.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, *The New Yorker* did a profile on him and—which was really very interesting. And he's in a number of fascinating collections, and the Museum of Modern Art just acquired two of his—which is a culmination of—[inaudible]. But that was another high point. And—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, it is.

LEROY DAVIS:—I think that we take great gratification from seeing Aaron's success and what he's accomplished. In the area of contemporary art, there have been a handful—I mean, David Levine, who I don't have anything to do with anymore, but David and I—we all went to school together and watching David—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And you represented him for quite a long time.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, David developing into, I guess, the greatest caricaturist of our time is not a small feat. And—difficult man, but apart from that—so that's it.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, are there any regrets, in terms of artists you didn't handle or things that got away or that you—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, lots got away because we just—we didn't have the money to do it or sometimes the stamina. I think it's—I'm sure you've heard many, many people say this—I think it's become very tough, uncollegial, often dishonest business.

LEROY DAVIS: Can I just say something?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah.

LEROY DAVIS: And you're going to write this off, but it's something that has occurred to me recently, and it has much to do with dealing in general. There's a new area of art dealing today which has to do with art advisors who play a major, major role in determining what does become acceptable and what doesn't, and builds these mega-collections of private collections and, I'm sure, influences museums and so forth and so on. I tried on one occasion to get one of these people to explain to me how come all of a sudden everybody wants to buy a [Gerhardt] Richter; do they really—are they really knowledgeable enough to have made that decision on their own? I mean, if not, how do you go about informing them that this is somebody they should collect?

And we discussed this the other day—and forgive me for sticking it in, but by God, I feel very strongly about it—however these people who are these advisors reach the conclusion that so-and-so is somebody that—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS:—is important.

LEROY DAVIS:—is important and that this hierarchy of collectors should collect. And we know who they are—I mean, they run across the country here, all the way to California. They know what they want. The advisors say, you should have this thing. And suddenly comes into effect something that I've discussed with Cecily, something that I learned at the Barnes Foundation, that that's half the equation, is getting the object. The other half of the equation is what you bring to it. So you may be suddenly the possessor of a Piero [della Francesca], and you will get a visual response to it at a certain level because you know that you should have a Piero or you know that you should have a—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Richter.

LEROY DAVIS: Richter. But you can't tell me that these collectors know—have already done their homework. They know what the top names are, and they are all competitive with one another, and they have built these collections. But the responsibility of the advisors ends with providing them with what they think is the best available work by Richter. But what they don't inform them of is that their responsibility is to complete the second half of the equation, and that is to have a sufficient interest and knowledge of the formal aspects of art to be able to respond to these things in a way in which they bring their human experience to the picture, and it's going to vary according to the individual person, depending upon how much each person brings to it, to the experience.

But the equation doesn't stop with providing the work of art; the equation should stop—should never stop, but part of it is the contribution that the owner of—or the viewer of the work of art—brings to it through a—to all of the resources that they posses and all the intellectual and emotional and human resources that they collect and see it through that experience. And there will be different responses according to the capabilities of the person, but I'm convinced that it stops with, in most instances with, "I have a Richter, I have a this, I have a that."

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I think that the art advisor is hired because the person is so busy or so overwhelmed or making money—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: It's like having a decorator; if someone's dealing you a—

AVIS BERMAN:—they can't do it, they don't know what they're doing, they don't want to get euchred, so they ask somebody. And I would say that I am not defending the art consultants, because a lot of it is absolutely appalling, but then again if you—you know, would Isabella Stewart Gardner have been anything without [Bernard] Berenson?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, I think you really can say that—or [Henry Clay] Frick. I mean, I don't know where Frick started—

AVIS BERMAN: Well, or Peggy Guggenheim without Duchamp. Once he left her, the collection went down.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, of course, or Barnes without Glackens, but I mean, you know, that's not what I was saying. I mean, obviously what I was saying I didn't express well. I understand how these collections are built, and I understand very often that they're advised to buy things or they advise their advisor to buy these things and so forth. But what is never discussed is the second half of the equation. There's cause and effect. I mean, you own a picture and you—you know, it sits on the wall and it's nothing if nobody sees it, nobody reacts to it.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, we don't know because we're not there.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, well, exactly. But the point is that none of these people—their responsibility ends with providing—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Roy, you really don't know some of these people that you—you don't know.

LEROY DAVIS: I'm simply saying that there is this second aspect of it.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, but we also don't know just how responsive Henry Clay Frick was or Isabella Stewart Gardner.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, also—we also know that some of these advisors may provide education and some probably don't. Some don't want them, because they need these paintings because their friends have them, so there's some of that.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, all they really have to do is ask one simple question. Think about why it is that you own this picture. I mean, why did you want this picture? It's a very simple thing, and you suddenly find yourself, if you're really interested in learning, trying to verbalize why it is that you're responsive to what it is you own.

We lent a picture recently to a guy who I have the greatest admiration in the world for. It was an Albert York. He desperately wanted it and we were not going to sell it to him, and we agreed to lend it to him for two months on the condition that he provide us with an essay on why he borrowed the picture. And we got the picture back, but we haven't gotten the essay.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I think we'll get the essay. And he's a thinking person, so—

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, but that's what I'm saying. You know, this whole business—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, one needs to ask oneself these questions also.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, that or avoid putting your position of having to do that. It's fascinating because it has to do with dealing. You provide somebody—this is what we do; we provide the merchandise and it ends there unless we have built some kind of a personal relationship with the people to whom we sell. Now, because of the nature of our business, we do have a close relationship with a lot of the people to whom we sell, and we do, I think, make an attempt to try to encourage them to plumb the depths of their knowledge in the responses to the things that they buy. You know, it's not just simply a matter of selling somebody something. Anyway, just something I thought I'd throw out. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: Well, that's all right because I was going to ask you, you know, you had mentioned the changes in dealing in British art, and I wondered if there were other important changes.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Oh, well, I think the American field is homicidal. I mean, there are quite a number of people in it whom I do not respect, and much of the art that's sold is of, I think, very low quality. And it's a field in which we can't possibly compete except—I mean, very occasionally, we'll get something or we'll get something back, but we can't regularly.

LEROY DAVIS: You have to also understand that, you know, there's American art, there's abstract art, there's Futurist art, there's Symbolism. There is a whole corps of people who collect American Impressionists, and it's a

matter of quality within the area in which they're collecting. God forbid they suddenly discover that while [Childe] Hassam was painting his wonderful flag pictures, Degas was still busy at work. So it's all—it's a self-contained kind of collecting thing. People collect in areas. Very rarely do you find people collecting across the board. I mean, people like Barnes did and people like Quinn did, but I think that most—in the field of American art the people that collect the—people like Demuth and—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: The modern, early American modern—

LEROY DAVIS: Modernism, yeah.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, people focus, because there's—otherwise most people can't be all over the map. It's too hard to really learn that much from those collectors about all the fields.

LEROY DAVIS: It is.

AVIS BERMAN: I mean, it seems to be reductive, but—

LEROY DAVIS: You're absolutely right, except I don't agree with you. I mean—

AVIS BERMAN: Well, also when Barnes and Quinn were collecting, once they decided to do, say, 20th century or late 19th, that's—we're talking about 40 years.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, we're not—

LEROY DAVIS: Well, Barnes didn't collect within 40 years. Barnes collected from the beginning of time practically.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, not much, though.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, and he made a lot of mistakes, but he did own Giorgone—I mean, which is not a Giorgone, but that's beside the point; he thought it was—Tintoretto, El Greco—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: But these—were they not essentially acquired as teaching examples, seriously?

LEROY DAVIS: I can't answer that. I don't think so, because that wasn't just the reason. I mean, he admired El Greco; otherwise he wouldn't have owned him.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: No, I understand that.

LEROY DAVIS: But, unfortunately, what Barnes taught didn't necessarily provide him with the means to make judgments of authenticity. So his safest area of collecting was in the area in which he was dealing, with living artists. But when it came to earlier work, there were some really serious mistakes made, and that was probably due to the advice that he was given. So, I mean, the course that he gave in aesthetics doesn't mean that necessarily it can be applied to determine whether or not an El Greco was an El Greco.

AVIS BERMAN: But the focus was certainly more—I'm not speaking about the iron mongering or anything like that, but the works of art that, certainly, that we know of and celebrate, most are 19th-century modern and 20th century.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: This is true.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, you're absolutely right.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And European and American, but not further fields than that.

AVIS BERMAN: Western.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Western, western.

LEROY DAVIS: You know, one of the people I keep going back is Gene Thaw, who I think is a brilliant collector, dealer and collector. And he's the first person who brought several people to my attention, but I mean, he really collected things of quality. And I don't mean to suggest for a minute that we fall into that category, but we own things that are—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, I think our interests are as broad as his.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, he also made successive collections, too, you know; he would give something, and then he collected in other areas. So he had broad interest, but he certainly had old master interests and Pollock, and

then he went and did American Indian—so, but there were a lot of successive—I mean, he would—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, but I mean, what you call a master may well have ranged from 14th century to 20th century and—

LEROY DAVIS: We have things that are 200 B.C. I don't know whether he—you could almost spot it. I remember we were once looking at a [Georges] Seurat drawing in London and we—somehow it was like $125,000 and it was something you would have kept, so he couldn't very well justify doing it. And sure enough, within—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: It was less money than that. I mean, it almost was reachable.

LEROY DAVIS: And Gene ended up getting it. He had a curious way of dealing. As you entered his offices, there was an entryway in which hung things that he owned that weren't for sale and—magnificent things. So when people would walk in, they would see this incredible collection of art, and they'd go into his office, where he would have a picture on an easel that he was trying to sell. And the question was whether that was counterproductive or not. Then he had—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I guess not.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, yeah, and one of the Herring boys [John and Paul Herring], the twins who are dealers, worked for Gene and did precisely the same thing. And, of course, it was maddening, because they didn't have the savvy that Gene had, and people would go into their place, walk in, all around the room were these incredible drawings, and they had a great collection of drawings and—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Have; it's not past tense.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, have. And they got around it by not selling drawings. That's the way they got around it. But you know, Gene Thaw—I don't really know him well at all. I mean, I think it's too late really to get to know him because he's already retired, but I wish I had—I knew him when he first started the business, briefly, but I never really—I wouldn't have learned anything from him except that I've always been a great admirer of things that he's done, and he's been a great contributor to the Morgan library.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Absolutely, yeah.

AVIS BERMAN: And other institutions.

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, he gave a picture to the Frick—[inaudible]—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He's given various things to the Frick and the Met and the National Gallery.

LEROY DAVIS: I don't know how he did it. One of the mysteries of my life. I don't understand 90 percent of this business; I really don't. I mean, I don't know what the hell we're doing in this business. [They laugh.]

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, it allows us to be around works of art and some—and people who—

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, and there are some good people, and we've met—and most of our friends are people who work or—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS:—connected in some way.

AVIS BERMAN: And that always happens in the art world; mix your life and your work. It's very nice—inter-tangled—because you have this international freemasonry, people who share your interests.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, we went to Nantucket to visit some friends who have built a rather impressive—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, you know them. Heidi and Max Berry.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, yeah.

LEROY DAVIS: They have a—

AVIS BERMAN: I think Max was the one who was kind of adamant about suggesting that you be interviewed. [They laugh.]

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yes, I think so.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, maybe he was wrong.

AVIS BERMAN: No, not in the least, or you only would have seen me one time. [They laugh.]

LEROY DAVIS: So anyway, we go—we went to Nantucket and spent three days with them, and we came back, you know, with one of the most thrilling things we've ever bought in our lives—that just shows you the range of our interests. It was a dealer that Max introduced—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: This was—first of all, it was Roy's first visit to Nantucket and we are both big *Moby Dick* [Herman Melville. New York, Chicago: United States Book Company, 1892] fans.

LEROY DAVIS: And this guy was walking around—this antique dealer was walking around carrying a big—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Framed.

LEROY DAVIS:—framed document and Max asked to see it, and it was—what it was was a 1832, '33 ship's—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Contract.

LEROY DAVIS:—contract, in which the name of the—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: A whaler.

LEROY DAVIS:—a whaling ship. All the seamen wrote their names. Some of them made a mark. The shares were designated on there, and one of the—the captain's name was—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS:—was James Coffin.

LEROY DAVIS:—was Coffin, which is the name which appears in *Moby Dick* all the time. I mean, it was a touchstone to the most extraordinary book I've ever read in my life, and, you know, I don't know what we're going to do with it.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, we wangled it out from under them and the Nantucket Historical Association, but we promised that we would leave it to them.

LEROY DAVIS: But imagine a thing like that. And you know, in a curious way, it's a work of art.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, it's a window to—

AVIS BERMAN: It's a great document.

LEROY DAVIS: So you know, there have been advantages. If I didn't know Max, I wouldn't have gotten this thing—[laughs].

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, knowing Max and Heidi is—

LEROY DAVIS: And we've sold them a number of things.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS:—a great pleasure.

LEROY DAVIS: We've sold them a number of pictures.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, but that's not the point of it.

LEROY DAVIS: No, what I mean by that is, it's how—well, actually, we met them because they were members of Bryant Fellows, which was a support group at the Met, and we were sort of founding members of it before—we were original members—and so it became too expensive and we had to drop out, but that group was made up of, for the most part, of serious collectors of American art, and Max and Heidi and the Horowitzes and the Fraads and the Wolfs were all members of this and still are.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, I remember we were—I was on the advisory committee, or the board, and we were planning, as happens once a year, a trip, and it was to Washington. And I remember Ray Horowitz saying repeatedly, well, we'll ask Max Berry about that; Max will know what to do, and we never met this man. And then we met them. An interesting pair.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I guess, you know, meeting these people, knowing these people, among them, our closest friends are people that have been—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, the Berrys are among our closest friends.

LEROY DAVIS: Paul Mellon, I mean, I don't claim to have been a friend of Paul Mellon's, but I certainly was on very good terms with him.

AVIS BERMAN: Cecily, are you going to be doing any other writing? Are you interested in something else like that?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I have nothing specific. I love research; I don't love writing so much. But it seems to me to take up all my time just to keep the ball rolling.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I'm going to stick my nose in here. We—she's been offered backing to write a catalogue raisonné of Albert York, and she won't do it because he's still alive. But that, I hope, will be a project that happens before I die.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, does he want a catalogue raisonné?

LEROY DAVIS: He doesn't have a clue.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, can't you work on the early work with him?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, we keep good records, which doesn't mean a lot of things haven't gotten lost over the years, and I have long phone conversations with him and I do take notes, for me or for someone else to use.

LEROY DAVIS: I hope that will be something that Cecily will consider doing sometime.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, all I can say is that I hope you can start something while—because there are always new questions that come up that only—if he hasn't forgotten, he can answer.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Oh, sure, sure. Sure. No, that's certainly the case. And he's not in wonderful health, so I feel a bit of pressure.

AVIS BERMAN: Is there anything else coming along that you're both interested in and you might mention?

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, we sort of dabbled a little bit in photography and, curiously enough, through a friend of ours who's a museum curator. And there are a couple of projects we're involved—we got involved with Jones, Charles Jones. Do you know Charles Jones?

AVIS BERMAN: No.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I'll give you a book of Charles Jones. Somebody found in England—you tell the story.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Charles Jones was a turn-of-the-last-century photographer. He lived a very long life. He was a working gardener. And someone we now know who's a photography dealer in London was going through Bermondsey Market one day 20 years ago and found a trunk, and I guess saw the contents and bought it, and they were all these apparently unique photographs by Charles Jones. Plates to this day have not turned up, and it's thought that he destroyed them or used them to protect plants and so on. And little by little, he gained a serious reputation, and I think he's got a number of things right now in a photography show at the Tate Britain [London], which you haven't even seen this, but he was reviewed in the—[inaudible]—and we've been dealing in his work for years.

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, he's extraordinary. Just trying to—there should be a catalogue right over there somewhere. We'll give you one. That's somebody who we're interested in, and we've done very well with him. Also, the same friend of ours put us on to Charles Bentley—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Wilson Bentley.

LEROY DAVIS: Charles Wilson Bentley.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Wilson Bentley, no Charles.

LEROY DAVIS: Wilson Bentley. Go on. I screw these stories up.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He was an American of much the same period, and he was from New Hampshire. And he's the person who discovered that each snowflake is unique, and he learned how to photograph snowflakes with a photo—micro—make microphotographs of them. And a group of them turned up, and we have been dealing—[inaudible]—

LEROY DAVIS: And the curious thing about it is that they've turned up in groups, and when we—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: All date from 1880 to—

LEROY DAVIS: We did a show—all the—you've seen them, the big snowflake that hangs over Fifth Avenue and 57th Street, that's Bentley's snowflake.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Saks Fifth Avenue—[inaudible]—was using them on their shopping bags.

LEROY DAVIS: So somebody knew, through a newspaper or magazine article we—we did have a good article—Midwest [?] bought it, again at a locker, and within it were original Bentley photographs and letters to a person who was doing an article for *National Geographic* back—when was it, in the '20s or something? And we have the *National Geographic* together with—we sold a lot of the pictures, but—and then just the other day, somebody found another batch of them together with letters from Bentley. They were the most remarkable things. I'll show them to you before you leave, because they'll blow you away. They were the most remarkable things in the world.

So it's not photography necessarily; that's because enough photography dealers who are doing a great job, but these quirky little aspects of it—and then somebody again discovered photographs that were taken in a whorehouse in Reading, Pennsylvania, prior to the pictures that were done in New Orleans—

AVIS BERMAN: By [E.J] Bellocq—before Bellocq.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Before Bellocq.

LEROY DAVIS: And we haven't done anything with them yet because this guy is slow-moving; he wants to do a book on the subject. We have brought into the show—[inaudible]—and the reason we know when it was—when they were done and where they were done is because one of the girls is reading a Reading newspaper, and one of the kids who works for him—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And the date is readable.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, you know who you should get to do an introduction is John Updike. It's perfect for him, and that's where he's from originally.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Is he from Reading?

AVIS BERMAN: Yeah.

LEROY DAVIS: Oh, really? Oh—

AVIS BERMAN: And he likes girls.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And art.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

LEROY DAVIS: That's worth remembering. The guy that found these things is going to want to do the book, although there's no reason why there can't be an introduction.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: That's a great idea.

MR. BERMAN: Or if there's a small show, John Updike would be fantastic.

LEROY DAVIS: You know, and that's sort of the thing. I mean, they're not Bellocq's quality, but they are documents of a time. Reading was a steel town and—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, that's what he's also so good at, is—[inaudible]—understanding them from a Reading point of view, besides—[inaudible]—

AVIS BERMAN: So that's—so these are the way that even though you may not be competing in the quote, unquote, homicidal American market, you are—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah, we try to find our way into other byways, yeah.

LEROY DAVIS: And we also have an interest in—do you remember the show that was done at the Met called "Other Pictures" ["Other Pictures: Vernacular Photographs from the Thomas Walther Collection." June 6—August 27, 2000]? Did you ever see that show? Somebody found a—collected snapshots.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, yeah, right, okay.

LEROY DAVIS: Extraordinary show, really remarkable show, and they put it together, and the Met did the show and ultimately bought the collection. And a friend of ours did a—he was a museum curator—was also collecting photographs at the same time. Interesting thing, they put out a book of his pictures. So we sold some of those.

AVIS BERMAN: And who was this friend?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: This is Robert Johnson.

LEROY DAVIS: Robert Johnson. Now, unfortunately, in order to get this book published, he allowed them to print some of these things oversized, and the scale was that—the single most important element in the creative process. If you take a picture this size and you blow it up this way, you're distorting the original conception of the photograph. And it's the initial decision that any artist makes, is what scale to work. And when you alter that, you alter the whole balance of the aesthetic experience. And they blew up a lot of his photographs, so that the book is not nearly as effective as the one the Met put out, which was to scale and they all look like snapshots. It's a brilliant, brilliant book. So that's another thing that's of interest. We have a very close friend, Robert Benton. Do you know Benton?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He's a film director.

LEROY DAVIS: Film director.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I don't know him personally, but, of course, I'm sure if I knew—the name is really familiar—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: *Kramer vs. Kramer* [1979], *Places in the Heart* [1984].

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right. Oh, absolutely.

LEROY DAVIS: Well, I guess he's one of our closest friends, and Bob is an avid collector of photography, and, you know, he also—I mean, we're not going to be serious photography dealers, but—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, we're serious. I mean, we try to be serious in anything we do; it's just a small scale.

LEROY DAVIS: And I could easily be foxed on whether something's a reprint. But anyway—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Well, we try and keep away from areas in which—

LEROY DAVIS: When Benton worked for *Esquire*, somebody came—what's her name? What is her name?

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Diane Arbus.

LEROY DAVIS: Diane Arbus came looking for a job, and he gave her her first job at *Esquire*.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: [Inaudible.]

LEROY DAVIS: And Bellocq—and somebody loaned the Bellocq photographs, came to *Esquire*, tried to sell Bob the original plates, and he wouldn't buy them, so—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And he wanted to buy them, but he couldn't afford them.

LEROY DAVIS: Anyway, it's kind of interesting. So all this is—

AVIS BERMAN: So you're just going, as you say, through byways that turn out not to be.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Yeah.

LEROY DAVIS: Only that we did—I'll tell you what, I mean, if you look around the room here—things are over there—you can see a little bit of—here, take a look over here. Do you see the keys and everything? I buy this kind of stuff all the time and much more varied than this, than keys in a box, but there are some spears, ice-fishing spears. And so at Christmastime, we did a couple of shows called "Objects," which were essentially based on Duchamp, you know. It wasn't meant to be, but it turned out that they were things that were created for one purpose, which had aesthetic merit, which, presented in an art gallery context, became works of art. For instance, a pair of 19th-century shears—diagonal, triangular-shaped, put them on a block of wood and it became a piece of sculpture. And we did these shows a couple of times, and they were big successes. I mean, we made about $25 on the show—[laughs]—but—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: He's not joking.

LEROY DAVIS:—it was a lot of fun. And that's something else. I mean, because there is inherent in these things, work, quality, and, curiously enough, subconsciously it stems from the Barnes experience.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I was certainly thinking that when I saw the keys and the plumb bobs—over there, definitely thinking of the Barnes experience.

LEROY DAVIS: All this stuff is stuff we've bought. We don't have room for it in the house, so I just keep piling stuff up.

AVIS BERMAN: But no, to be able to see these—the aesthetics of these things is the important thing.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: If you have time, do you want to take Avis downstairs and show her?

LEROY DAVIS: Yeah, you ought to see—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Do you have time?

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, no, and I think we're just about finished. Is there anything else that you would like—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Nothing that I can think of.

AVIS BERMAN:—that you would like to make a statement?

LEROY DAVIS: This is important, is this thing I just mentioned, and you'll get more of a sense of it when we go downstairs. But our interests are really quite varied and it's a question of—I guess in a way, the greatest thing that I think we've accomplished, and I certainly include, not only include Cecily, but she's a primary reason for it, is I think we serviced as teachers of sorts, and that's the greatest reward I've gotten from this whole miserable, 50-some-odd years of being in this business, is the satisfaction that in some way or another we may have enlightened a few people.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: And ourselves.

LEROY DAVIS: And ourselves in this process.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: That's for sure. The funny thing is whoever—it's like being in college all the time—

AVIS BERMAN: Exactly, yes.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS:—writing papers, that's what we do.

LEROY DAVIS: We did a show of these. These are ice-fishing decoys. We started collecting them, and they were used in the Great Lakes—cut a hole and then they would dangle these things down, attract a fish, and they would spear the fish. But for the amusement of the people that would carve these things, who were essentially folk artists, they varied the nature of the bobs that they made. And we did a show in which we hung—

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: Thirty or 40.

LEROY DAVIS:—a bunch of them from the ceiling, dangled them, and you'd walk in the room and see the shadows against the wall because of the lights. We also did that with ikebana baskets on Madison Avenue. We kind of got fascinated by ikebana baskets. You know those—

AVIS BERMAN: Yeah.

LEROY DAVIS: And we hung those from the ceiling.

CECILY LANGDALE DAVIS: I think you're talking Avis out, really.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. No, I think we've come to a natural conclusion. So thank you very—

[END OF INTERVIEW.]