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Oral history interview with A. Alfred  
Taubman, 2013 June 6 - July 13

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**Contact Information**

Reference Department  
Archives of American Art  
Smithsonian Institution  
Washington, D.C. 20560  
[www.aaa.si.edu/askus](http://www.aaa.si.edu/askus)

# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with A. Alfred Taubman on 2013 June 6-July 13. The interview took place at Taubman's office in New York, NY, and was conducted by Avis Berman for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of Archives of American Art and the Center for the History of Collecting in America at the Frick Art Reference Library of The Frick Collection.

The Taubman Family reviewed the transcript in 2019. Avis Berman reviewed the transcript in 2013. Their corrections and emendations appear below in brackets with initials. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

## Interview

AVIS BERMAN: This is Avis Berman interviewing A. Alfred Taubman for the Frick Collection, Archives of American Art, Oral History Project, on June 13th, 2013, in Mr. Taubman's office at 712th Fifth Avenue. And, as I say, I start the same way with everyone. Would you please state your full name and date of birth?

ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, my name is A. Alfred Taubman. I was born in Pontiac, Michigan, on January 31st, 1924, which makes me 89, and next year I'll be 90.

AVIS BERMAN: All right. Well, you said you had—I can start with the questions I have based on the outline I gave you—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Or you can start with some of the notes, things that are interest of to you.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes. Okay.

AVIS BERMAN: Which would you prefer?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I wanted to do the notes because I've already got answers, which makes it easier for me.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: And so I don't have to, you know—

AVIS BERMAN: Okay.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: —go and look for stuff.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, we could begin with, you know, what was the neighborhood like that you grew up in and some of the important cultural experiences?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, to answer your question, the earlier life as such, and, you know, quotes or events or personalities I was exposed to, that's the question, no?

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, I had an early love of drawing, and I was fascinated by objects, and how they were designed and how were they made. I used to take things apart. And I was always interested in structure and that kind of thing, and I drew. I was pretty good at artistic events, drawing, and architectural drawing, and that kind of thing.

AVIS BERMAN: And how early were you drawing?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Oh, I was drawing very early, maybe six, eight years old. I was—I continued on through my life. I've always been drawing and painting and so on.

AVIS BERMAN: And did your parents encourage this?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, they did, they encouraged it. They encouraged it.

AVIS BERMAN: I mean, were you the class artist in school?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, I was.

AVIS BERMAN: And what were you painting and what did your work look like?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, I did life and I did scenes and so forth. It was pastoral scenes, that kind of thing. I was—I did—I was sort of eccentric sort of an artist. I didn't necessarily—anything that interested me, I would get involved.

AVIS BERMAN: And was—did you have art teachers or other teachers that were encouraging you?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, I did.

AVIS BERMAN: And what kind of a student were you?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, I went up to school. I went up to the University of Michigan after I graduated from high school. And I, as a number of youngsters did, we were there like three months and we went ahead and enlisted. I enlisted and I was 18 years old. I was in the Air Force, and so I went off to war and I was there for three and a half years in the Far East. And I came back to school, it was pretty boring basically because I was already three, four years younger—older than the kids I was in school with. They gave us a lot of credit for what we have done in the school, because I had attended a couple of colleges and so forth that the university had sent me to, so they gave a certain credit. But I was—I wasn't a great student because I really wasn't interested. I was interested in drawing. I was interested in that kind of a thing, but I wasn't interested in the mathematics, which I should have been. Later on, I had to catch up on structure and so forth, which I did, but that could have been a lot easier and just learning it there in school, which I didn't do very well.

AVIS BERMAN: And, at the time, was your goal—your initial goal to be an architect?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, it was, but I had studied—I went out and did something, we didn't have Google, of course, it would have helped, but I studied as to who—I was really interested in making some money, that was one of my interests. And I analyzed in architecture who was rich, and I found only one rich architect in the United States, Nat Owings from Skidmore Owings & Merrill. He'd gotten rich, and he had three huge offices plus the fact it was probably—they were the most popular firm in the United States at that time, and I didn't have any belief that I'd be the most popular architect in America. So I decided to leave architecture and to go into engineering and go into building, which I did. And I went, and I left school when I was three years and I went to Lawrence Tech, and I had enough credits actually to graduate. I never really graduated from Lawrence Tech, and I went back and taught there for a year, but yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Now, in the Detroit area, you know, obviously, we have the Detroit Institute of Arts. At what point were you, you know, becoming aware of that or other cultural institutions or artists?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, I was asked to join the board in 1930—75, I think, and which I did and I was always active, chairman of the building committee and currently I'm president of the Arts Commission, and I have been for 20 years. They won't let me off. And I was always chairman of the Building Committee. I have rebuilt the museum. I selected the architecture, Michael Graves. And I—would you like something to drink?

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, I've got something. Thank you.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: All right. Yes, and so yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I was wondering, though, to start with, as a young man or as a child if the museum and its collections had any effect on you?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, I really wasn't—I wasn't really invited. I lived in Pontiac. That's where I grew up, which is like—this doesn't seem very far today, but in those days, it was—it was a different area, a different world. And I'd go down there to get my knickers is what I would do, but we did—my mother took me to the museum when I was about 16. That was the first time, and I was obviously very impressed with it, so—

AVIS BERMAN: Do you remember what, you know, what came out at you then or what impressed you then, and what you saw?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I was impressed with everything. I was impressed primarily with the old master paintings more than anything else probably at the time, knowing they were 300, 400, 500 years old.

AVIS BERMAN: And, of course, by then, you know, the first thing—at the time, what did you—at the time, if you could recapture it, what did you think of the Diego Rivera murals?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I loved them. I thought it was fascinating. It's a wonderful museum. It's one of the four or

five best in America.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, also, a lot of people who are very avid collectors collect as children, you know, even if it's bottle caps. Did you collect?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes. I collected stamps like other kids and so forth, and I collected house drawings. I collected certain building drawings. I would get a hold of them—collect them.

AVIS BERMAN: So architectural drawings?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Was that—was there a dealer or was there—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No, I—my father was a builder and a farmer. He was a tree farmer, meaning he didn't—he grew fruit and had, you know, young families working on the farms and lived on the farms. He had five farms; they did fruit farming. So I was—I was aware of land. I've always involved in food. I've always been involved in land. It's something I've always been involved.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, when did you—when do you think that art became an important factor in your life?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, when I went away to college, I took a program—I took an elective in art history, and I took an elective in art—in painting and in drawing from a Carlos Lopez, who was a Mexican-American artist, taught—he was a professor at the University of Michigan. And he basically told me I should go into something else. [They laugh.] But he liked what I did. He thought I was creative and so forth. I wasn't commercially a kind of an artist. I was more avant-garde in those days, which was pretty early. That was in the—in the '50s, so—

AVIS BERMAN: Well, did you keep up with him, because I saw that in your collection, you still have a work by him.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: He gave it to me. That's right. He gave me a collection. He gave me a drawing, a very nice drawing of a falconer with a falcon that he did. He also gave me a C because I was out playing golf every afternoon [they laugh] whenever I could instead of working. He knew what I was doing; he was on top of it.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, he did say what he thought you should do with your abilities instead?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No, no, he never really. He was a very quiet, very, very nice man. He never pushed anyone or anything. He just—he didn't—he just—I wasn't there as an—really as an art student. I was there as an architectural student. Although we were in the same building, it was very different in terms of art directions.

AVIS BERMAN: Of course, because, well you—only I'm just asking—I'm just pushing this a little bit because later on in your own efforts with the Taubman scholars, you do stress the importance of drawing for architects so I think that that—you know—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, I think it's important that they learn drawing because there's so much computer work today. I think drawing is the brain thinking, and if they do everything on a computer, the computer doesn't have a brain. And I think—and that's the reason I've always been—I've been involved in architectural training and so forth, and I have the school up in Michigan, and I'm involved, heavily involved in the one at Lawrence Tech, which is an excellent architectural school. And I've always pressed the fact that they should work on a board prior to going on to a computer, which they do. And it's sound because they learn how to think with a pencil, not with a computer.

AVIS BERMAN: And did you—did you take art history courses in school?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: What were the ones you liked?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, I'd take—there was a course in the history of architecture that was very well taught, and I took it and I enjoyed it. You had to be able to draw 30-some cathedrals and recognize all of them. It wasn't easy, but I went to Chartres, I went to some of these in my life, and I recognized them from the fact that I had to draw them. So, yes it was—it was a carryover from the Beaux-Arts. I was still—some of the professors were teaching non-objective architecture at the time like non-objective art. But in terms of dots and that kind of thing and that kind of a direction, but there were still professors that grew up in the Beaux-Arts that were still trying to teach the Beaux-Arts method, which was, of course, teaching the history of architecture, and the details of architecture and so forth, which was good because you'd get a—you—I think you'd get a better background in terms of architecture.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Well, architecture didn't start in 1980 or 1970. You know, it goes—so why should, you know, you're [inaudible]?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes. Well, I was—I was going to school in the '50s.

AVIS BERMAN: That's what I meant. But, you know, it doesn't start—you have—I mean—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, there were some guys that were already teaching non-objective type of arts, but it was—

AVIS BERMAN: Well, just—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: It was more rare.

AVIS BERMAN: You said, you know, in your book, that you were—you were dyslexic. How do you think that affected your reactions to visual things or—?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, I think dyslexia has some advantages and some disadvantages. The disadvantage is it's very difficult in terms of learning because you have a reading problem. Everybody does that's dyslexic. And that's—of course, they didn't know what it was. They thought I was just stupid, but maybe I was. But, basically, you can't—you read words backwards and you can't sight-read. I still can't sight-read. I read a lot of—I read a lot. I read books, magazines. I read newspapers. I read constantly, but I read word for word. I retain probably better than the guy that sight-reads, but I can't sight-read. I can't sight-read a sandwich—a sentence. I'd never get anything out of it, so that's a disadvantage. But the advantage is that you do get some spatial awareness. I think it comes with it, I don't know. Dr. Feldman, who runs my program up at the University of Michigan, in research, she's also a neurologist in addition to being initially an internist, and she's a specialist in dyslexia, and she says I was never dyslexic, so that makes me just stupid I guess. But she says that—she says reverse, that I shouldn't have spatial quality, but I do, so, I mean, I assumed—

AVIS BERMAN: Well, maybe—so you see the world—maybe because you saw the words physically?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I see—I see space very well, proportion of space and so forth. That's one of my things, you know. But anyway, I was dyslexic. I know because I had many, many reasons to believe it. Once I learned what it was, which was 20 years later, when they put a name to it. When I did it, they didn't know. They thought people were just stupid who couldn't read [inaudible].

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Just like with—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: So you're eight, nine, ten years old, you start learning how to read, you can't read up till that time because you see the letters backwards, and you see all kinds of problems in terms of reading, and it sets you back. It hurts you, there's no question about it. I feel sorry for any youngster that grows up with it.

AVIS BERMAN: So I'm just going to do some housekeeping here just for the tape. In 1948, you married your first wife, Reva Kolodney, is that correct?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: And you had three children in the 1950s.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, I still do.

AVIS BERMAN: Good, I'm glad to hear it. And I was wondering how—now you're—you're living in the Detroit area at this point, your family—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I had been for—I moved to Detroit after I got back to school—from school.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: My parents also moved to Detroit, so they retired in Detroit.

AVIS BERMAN: And I was going to ask you, because Barbara Fleischman remembers well the Art Adventurers and she said that you two were—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, actually, it was the Archives of American Art. I never heard of Art Adventurers.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Is that what—is that what Barbara calls them?

AVIS BERMAN: No, there was the Archives of American Art, but she said she and Larry started a group called the Art Adventurers with several couples in which that they would, you know, bring—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: We were one, but—

AVIS BERMAN: They would bring works from, you know, that New York dealers would send—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, Larry would bring works down—

AVIS BERMAN: Right, and—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: —primarily from dealers and we would sell them to raise money to do this Archives of American Art. That was the basis of it.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. Well, that—okay, that's what happened eventually, but I guess what they first started when they would bring the—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I don't remember Art Adventurers. I mean, that's something I know you had in your notes, but that's something I don't have any recall on.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. Well, Barbara just said that—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: You know, that—you know, that you bought some of the early works—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, I was one of the first involved. Larry and Barbara brought me involved, but also Allan Schwartz was involved. There were other guys, Billy Poplack. Bill Poplack was an important person. He always had great taste, bought American art very early on. And I think guys like Eastman Johnson and—that you don't see very often. And, Avery, he was doing Avery, and he was doing—and he was buying Homer. You know, these are artists of that period that your mid-'19th century artists that you don't, you know, you don't hear about too much but they're important artists. Homer is a very important artist.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, and did this start you buying American art then?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes. It was—but I was buying even before, but I was a youngster. I was buying down here in New York. I met a guy by the name of Richard Bellamy, and in all fairness, Bellamy was really the guru of American art in that time. I mean, Henry Geldzahler, who went to run the Metropolitan Museum's Contemporary Art Collection, which they didn't have before him, I mean, he wouldn't step from here to here without asking Richard Bellamy. I mean, Bellamy was the taste-maker, he was a very modest man and he used to ride the railroad on the rails. And he was the one that he would—if the artist was good enough, he would send him to [Leo] Castelli because he lived—his offices were on—I mean, his gallery, if you call it that, that was on the fourth of fifth floor—I forgot—of a building on West 57th Street, one of those loft buildings at the time, may be torn down by now, three or four blocks west of Fifth Avenue. And the elevator would work about one out of five times, I think, so you had to walk up. Well, that wasn't a big encouragement for a lot of collectors who had money, who were older. And they would all, you know, they would all sit on his step and tell them who they should be buying. And he was the one that would—and I saw everybody there first, Robert Indiana, [Francis] Bacon—I never knew who Bacon was, all of the sudden, he shows—they show up. He was doing—he was actually internationally, he knew the artists and he knew the work, and he had the greatest eye probably of any American of this century, of the last century. I don't know if you ever heard of him but—

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, no. Yes, I'm actually thrilled that you're talking about him because—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, well, he had something called the Green Gallery, which wasn't much, so he had a patron, I never learned who it was. It was some woman, some rich woman that was paying the rent. I don't think he made enough money to pay the rent. I don't think he had—and he had painters such as Moskowitz, who you never see anymore, who was an artist at the time, and he liked these artists and he would help these artists. And if he thought they were good enough, like Rauschenberg—I mean, when I—the first time I saw Rauschenberg, I was taken to Geldzahler's apartment on the West Side, by Henry—I mean, by Richard. And I went there to look at a Stella, a Frank Stella, probably the first Stella that he ever did. It was about so high and about so wide and had scratch—it was black with scratches. I think it was number one. And Henry Geldzahler had control of it. It was obviously Richards' idea to use Stella, and so he took me there to buy this. And Geldzahler wanted \$2,000 for it, which was a lot of money in those days, like asking \$50,000 today. You know, this is 1962 or '61, maybe '58 or '9. It's a long time ago.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: And anyway, so I turned it down. But around the walls was Rauschenberg. He had this old apartment. I don't think it had been painted in 40 years. It was sort of a yellowish sort of color that gets after it sits there for many years without being painted. And he and Rauschenberg had gone around and done scribbles on the walls, on all four walls. It didn't have a bathroom. This room was just a room. The bathroom was down the hall. And it was Geldzahler's apartment. Did you know him? Did you know Henry?

AVIS BERMAN: Well, not well, but I met him a few times.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, yes, anyway, so—and he was capable. But his whole thing was what is—what does Richard think of him? Richard was the one. I don't care what they say, I was there and I watched them, and he was the brain of all this. And it was different than it is today. I mean, it's—today, it's Chinese artists and all these guys are instantaneous million-dollar artists for some reason. I don't know why, but yes, and he would select the ones that he thought had the talent to do well in the future. That was where he was.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, well he was—yes everybody spoke about him and—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: You know, I think di Suvero, he pretty much discovered Mark di Suvero and—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: He did. I wanted—it's interesting you mentioned that. He took me to Palamito, California, and that's where Suvero had his—he had his barn he was doing the work in. And it was the chicken capital of the world in those days, that's what it was called. That's what they bragged about, having more chickens there than anywhere, Palamito, California. I don't know whether you knew this. You probably don't know that he came from there, but that's where—

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I thought—I knew he came from—I knew he came from California, but via China.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Pardon?

AVIS BERMAN: But via—but di Suvero came via China. His parents were like missionary. They were—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, I heard something about it.

AVIS BERMAN: —in China, something like that.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Something like that.

AVIS BERMAN: As were Bellamy's.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, anyway, they were friends. He thought—he said that as far as he was concerned, di Suvero was the most talented sculptor in America. And I pushed Russ to buy a major one in—the director of the Institute of Arts, which they did, which we have, because of him. And he was talented, there's no question about it. But Richard was the—was really the one who really made the contemporary, it's hard to believe that one guy like that, he was such a modest guy that he would send an artist, a good artist, he thought, to another gallery that was better because he was ashamed of his gallery. He wasn't ashamed of it. He just—he knew it was modest and was difficult to get to.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, it was also, I think—I think that he really wasn't a businessman.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No, he was not.

AVIS BERMAN: And he kind of—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No, no. That's absolutely correct.

AVIS BERMAN: I don't think he wanted to run a kind of commercial gallery. I don't mean commercial in a bad way, but what would be required.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: I think he almost—I think what he—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No, you're right.

AVIS BERMAN: I think he would have—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: He didn't have a sense of it. You're right.

AVIS BERMAN: He kind of liked to—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, that's true.

AVIS BERMAN: —a bohemian alternative space is what—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, that's true.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, as a matter of fact, I don't know if you know her enough, but the curator, Judith Stein, has been working on a biography of Richard Bellamy for some time.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No, I didn't know that. She should talk to me.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. Well, I may—if it's all right with you, I may—I may—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No, sure, I'd be happy to.

AVIS BERMAN: I may e-mail her about that.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, and I don't know. Maybe I'll give her a different perspective. I don't know who she's talked to. And did she know him?

AVIS BERMAN: Well, she may have because she was a curator at the Philadelphia Museum of Art for quite a while, so she may have met him later on. You know, she wouldn't have known him in the beginning.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, I think that was when it was important.

AVIS BERMAN: Exactly. Yes. Well, also—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: He was important to the whole movement.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, like James Rosenquist he had.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, absolutely. I visited James Rosenquist, I think was doing a huge thing as long as this room. He was on a ladder. Have you ever go visit his gallery, I mean, his studio? It was like almost downtown.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. It's on—it's on Chambers.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: It's still there?

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, it's in Tribeca, yes. It's on the south side of Chambers.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: It was there years ago.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: This is—it's got to be 40 or 50 years ago it was there.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, well, that was when you could buy a building there, so that's what he did.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, anyway, so it was a—you know, it was a—like an old factory building or something so the ceiling was very high, and which he needed because he doing such large pieces. And I was interested. It was beautiful. He's got a beautiful—I said, what am I going to do with it? My house wouldn't have taken it. I didn't have enough house to put it in. I mean, it was a problem in those days. The artists wanted to do big things. And I would—I loved them but yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, the houses were still made for easel paintings.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, of course.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, and he was doing a lot of murals and they were mural size.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, we bought one for the [inaudible] for the Institute of Arts. We hung it up in the, you know, in the rafters, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, so, I mean, did you—I guess I should ask you, is it just from meeting Bellamy that you got really involved in collecting living artists or wanting to do that?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, that was—it was my notion that I couldn't help a dead artist. It was—I said, look, I



want to help the artist when I buy something. I really wanted to buy it from them, but usually they had a dealer somewhere. And Bellamy would arrange it that I could go to the artist and buy directly, which I did a lot. And because I knew the artist needed the money and the dealers would, you know, they would mark this stuff up 50 percent, which they were probably entitled to as they were feeding these guys, you know, different than today.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Right.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Today they're all rich, you know, so no one cares, but in those days, the dealers didn't—were meaningful because now, Richard couldn't do that. He wasn't—didn't have any money. But the other dealers like—

AVIS BERMAN: Well, Leo did. He gave—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Leo did. Oh, no question.

AVIS BERMAN: —gave them stipends.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I bought stuff from Leo. At the time, the guy—what was his name, Katz, I think, was the guy who worked for him—

AVIS BERMAN: Ivan Karp.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Karp, he started the OK Gallery.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, OK Harris. Yes.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, OK Harris Gallery, but Ivan would come in the morning with a paper bag with his lunch, and I would go down there, and I would buy stuff from him at \$1,000 a month for 10 or 12 months or something. That's the way I would do it.

AVIS BERMAN: Most of them did that. You were not alone.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Really?

AVIS BERMAN: Right, because, as a matter of fact, there was a tale of another collector who—they were in shock because—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I was the youngster. You know, I had a reason. I didn't have any money, but I would buy—whatever money I had, I would buy stuff. I bought, you know—

AVIS BERMAN: It was very rare that it was like—I mean, because the secretary told me once in those days, if somebody bought something full, you know, it was like—it was like a holiday because everybody bought on installment.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: But, you know, it was the way—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Really?

AVIS BERMAN: It was the way people did it.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I thought I was like the only one that did that. It's interesting.

AVIS BERMAN: No, no, not at all.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Anyway, so that's the way—yes, the way it would happen.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, usually with Leo Castelli, you almost had to get his attention as a serious customer. You had to work your way up.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, well, I paid him off. I bought an art, which was an amazing piece. Today, my son—I left it with my first wife and she passed away and left it to my—left it to my second son, William, who has it in his house. And it's two pieces, not attached. And it's on a slippery slope but it never falls off. It's a fascinating piece. It's beautiful. It's this size, bronze, and very beautiful. Anyway, I visited—I visited [Jean] Arp in Zug, where his foundry was. I met [Antoine] Poncét there, who is his—who ran his foundry, later on became a sculptor, where he was like half between Brancusi and Arp. He was doing Brancusi basically. And he was an interesting character, Poncét. I think he's perhaps still alive though I—I don't know. It was many years ago.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, it was—it was hard.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I visited Arp and I bought a couple of things directly from Arp.

AVIS BERMAN: Was that—was he someone you could communicate with? Did you—Arp?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Who was [inaudible].

AVIS BERMAN: I mean, I don't know, did you speak French or did he speak—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Enough to get by. Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Do you think—is it important for you to know the artists, you know, that you're buying from if they're alive?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No, not necessarily. In most instances, I'd rather not know them.

AVIS BERMAN: Because?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, a lot of times they're big disappointments. You know, they're not necessarily as intellectual as you think they should be, and they can't explain what they're doing, if you want an explanation, which is usually a waste of time, and—I don't know. I mean, I bought living artists' paintings. I did buy people like Winslow Homer and other people too, don't misunderstand. But I still own four Homers, and good ones, you know. And, I mean, I wouldn't—I don't think I'd buy one of these guys today, maybe I would.

AVIS BERMAN: Are you still buying?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Oh, yes. I bought an Avery [Milton] the other day, a large Avery, which was at sale at Sotheby's, very lovely piece, beautiful. And I bought—I bid on a [Arthur] Dove, which I didn't get. I always wanted—I like Dove, never had one. I'm still—I'm still interested, you know, still—I bid. I will be 90 next year, you know, but I don't care. I'm still interested. It fascinates me.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I bought a Munch, a Munch. Munch? Munch?

AVIS BERMAN: Right, Munch. You didn't—you didn't—you didn't try to get the pastel from—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No, no. I wasn't involved in *The Scream*. Now, I don't buy \$135,000 paintings.

AVIS BERMAN: A hundred and thirty-five million. [Laughs].

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Million paintings, I don't buy that. Yes. I mean, I pay—I mean, I've bought stuff for \$5, \$6 million. I bought an old master, which I loaned to the museum in Detroit. They have 10 of my old masters there. Very good, very good stuff, 10 of the best there, Booton [Domenico di Pace Beccafumi], Booton—16th century, early 16th century, 1525, Booton—famous, famous.

AVIS BERMAN: I'll look it up.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, look it up, Booton.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Look it up. I just bought it and I loaned to—put him on a loan. They didn't have one and I knew that it was a beautiful thing in wonderful condition.

AVIS BERMAN: So are you also—when you're buying—are you at this moment buying with the Detroit Institute of Art in mind?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I buy stuff—well, right now, we have this problem going on. I don't know what's going—I was—I loaned them a [Giovanni Francesco Barbieri] Guercino. I don't—I may have given them a Guercino, I can't remember, years ago. And a drawing of this Guercino came up recently. A dealer had it, and I bid on it and he accepted my price. And I was going to buy it for the museum to keep with the Guercino because it's—you can usually tell if the drawing is the same as the painting. You know if it's something somebody drew after, but if there are differences, you realize that the artist made those changes and it was really—it's really the original drawing is one there on the top by, you know, I can't remember right now, famous Italian artist of the *Last Supper*, which is at the actual—not painting but—

AVIS BERMAN: The [inaudible] or the—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No. The actual—

AVIS BERMAN: The study. The study, the—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No. The sand—

AVIS BERMAN: Rubbing?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No. It's part—no. It's part of a—I can't—anyway—anyway. Anyway.

AVIS BERMAN: We'll figure it out.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Anyway, so it's in the—it's in the—what's the name of the Italian town—F?

AVIS BERMAN: F, Florence.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Florence. It's in Florence in that dining room, the—

AVIS BERMAN: The Medici dining room?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Right, it's on the end of the—that's that painting. That's that drawing. You should look at it. It's a lovely drawing.

AVIS BERMAN: I will when we're—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Huh?

AVIS BERMAN: When we're finished, well, actually, when we're done, I was going to ask if I could get up and look at everything.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, sure. Yes [inaudible] here and there's mostly architectural drawings. That's what I—I have a big collection of architectural drawings. Anyway, so old architectural drawings.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, let's just for a minute—on the Detroit—on the Detroit Museum, is that, you know, is it meaningful or is this a smoke screen what they're talking about now in which they're—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: There are no smoke screens.

AVIS BERMAN: About—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, it's possible.

AVIS BERMAN: That they could sell the paintings?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: It's possible, it's the law. And the paintings, although I very carefully—we spent \$158 million redoing the museum, which we had to do. It was—there were granite walls—granite, two-and-a-quarter inch granite on the exterior of the wall that were falling off, and we could have killed somebody. I put a fence around the place so they couldn't get near the wall and get killed. That's how bad it was because they were falling off, and it's a long structural problem, the way they built this, the two additions, not the original building, they [inaudible]. Very good, anyway so we had to redo it. We had to rebuild the museum. We couldn't leave it like that and we spent \$158 million. I hired Michael Graves, he did a fabulous job. Have you visited it?

AVIS BERMAN: I have to say—I can't bluff. I'm embarrassed to say I have never been to Detroit.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, you've never been. Well, it's worth a trip.

AVIS BERMAN: It certainly is. No, I was—there's a jinx. I was asked to go there twice and twice the trip got cancelled, but I'll get there.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: All right, you should see the museum, it's very nice. Anyway, we had to do it, you know. We did it, but before we did it, we got a new agreement with the mayor on terms of having certain jurisdiction, but you see, we thought we were safe. We didn't mention bankruptcy. We never thought the city would ever go—we didn't know it was \$15 billion in debt, we had no idea. It was all hidden and no one talked about it. No one knew it.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, was this—was this—was this Coleman Young who was at the root of this?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, unfortunately. I know him well. He was there for 19 years, and, you know, look, he was—his whole thing. You know, he'd been a pilot of that black pilots group.

AVIS BERMAN: Tuskegee?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: The Tuskegee group, yes, [. . . -TF] You know, I understood him. I had a very nice relationship. I was probably the only white man that he had really had a relationship with. I used to sit down on Sunday in the back of the Manoogian Mansion, which is the house that the mayors lived in and we used to sit there and talk. He had bad emphysema and he would be dragging this thing up his nose, and, you know, he'd say—I'd say, "Coleman, that's a terrible thing you just said. That's, you know, it's very racist." "Man," he says, "you god damn white people," he says, "you know, you really don't understand what we lived through." And that was true.

AVIS BERMAN: It's true.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: See? So I understood him and I understood why he felt the way he did, but I dealt with him. [. . . -TF] And we had a couple of weak mayors after that. So the governor really did the right thing. He sent in a—what they call an EM [Emergency Manger], which is as a guy that fixes things. He's competent, a fellow named [Kevyn] Orr, very competent. He's African-American, so there can't be any argument that this—that this white man has come in to ruin the city, but he's competent. He worked on the GM [General Motors] deal and he's a bankruptcy lawyer. And they'll probably put the city in Chapter Nine, which has certain reservations built into it, not strong, but it does have certain things that the lawyers have pointed out to us, where we do have a voice, not much of a voice, but we have \$8 or \$10 billion worth of art in that place.

AVIS BERMAN: But it still wouldn't, you know—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: They could go sell it, pay off the \$15 billion. Well, it's, you know, I explained to the mayor and the governor the other day on the telephone, I said, Rick [Scott], I said if you sell one painting in there, we become blackballed internationally. No one will lend us anything. No one will do business with us. We're off the charts if you sell one painting. He said, "well, that's sort of strong." I said, "no, it's not. Check it out, you'll find out it's true."

AVIS BERMAN: It'd be much worse. Well, the National Academy of Design was blackballed for five years for—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Oh, they'll do us forever with us.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, because it's much—you're much more major and you've got better—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Absolutely.

AVIS BERMAN: So no, that would be a terrible thing, but I just wondered if that was an empty threat to get people to pay attention or that it was not—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Oh, it's not for us, it's true. Everything is an asset of the city there—Water Board, they own the Water Board. They own the—they own Belle Isle, which is a park, 500-acre park in the middle of the river, they can sell that. I mean the assets of the city are up for sale. That's what it amounts to. He has to make—a lot of that debt is bonds and that kind of thing. He'll probably pay \$0.10 on the dollar to get rid of that. So there're positives, too. And I don't think in the long run, I don't know, I hate to make any statements that come out sounding stupid later. But I think he understands the value they are missing regarding the city, and I don't think he's going to take it lightly if he—if he starts selling stuff. And I told them there's no secrets. If he sell one object, everybody will know it, everybody. If they don't know it, I'll tell them, so—

AVIS BERMAN: Well, not only will no one do business, how would they ever even get any donations again when you start to—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, people are going to go in there and take the stuff back. I know they can't, but they will.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, exactly. I just want to get back to some of these contemporary artists that you were—that we were mentioning that—was another artist you found or supported early was John McLaughlin?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, you know John McLaughlin?

AVIS BERMAN: Well, not personally, but I certainly know his work.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: And I was wondering if you met him, why it appealed to you—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, it appealed to me. He was the first hard-edge artist in America and probably in the world, and he started painting when he was 50. He died in his 80s. It's a fascinating story about him. I knew a little about him.

AVIS BERMAN: Right and he was out in California.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: West Coast artist, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: So, now repeat, did you have—I mean, besides Richard Bellamy, where there other people advising you or pointing you toward various people?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No, he was really the most important. All these guys I knew, I knew all of them because I bought from them. And I respected them, don't misunderstand, but there wasn't anybody like Richard. I mean he was a guru of all of them. They all came to him. I saw it and I was there. They all came to him and said, wait, what this guy, Rauschenberg, do you think he—oh, yes, he's terrific. Do you think we're going to buy Rauschenberg? Oh, absolutely. I bought Rauschenberg. I have a wonderful Rauschenberg. Anyway.

AVIS BERMAN: And then, then there was—you seemed to have a struck up of friendship or a relationship with Robert Graham.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: How did that—because you have a number of sculptures—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, I do. Well, you know, I—we needed the money so [laughs]. Yes, I have a number of his stuff, but I have more stuff from Schiele and [Gustav] Klimt—

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: —and these fellows, I started—I bought them 40 years, 30 years ago, I was buying Klimt and Schiele and [Richard] Gerstl.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: These people I haven't heard of, but he was also one of the Vienna Secessionists.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, well I noticed—I mean, when I was sitting—when I was sitting out waiting for you, I was in Josef Hoffmann furniture.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, it's Josef Hoffmann. Yes, I have a—here's a Josef Hoffmann lamp. It's a Josef Hoffmann [laughs] my wife, my wife, my secretary has one on her desk, a Josef Hoffmann.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, what—and also in—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I like his things. I love this. I have chairs of his in Detroit.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, also I saw that you had like this dining table with all these chairs of Josef Hoffmann. And so —

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: I'm just wondering what was the—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Did you ever see his house in Brussels? It's amazing.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, I also went to—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I mean, he was—he was amazing, amazing architect.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Well, I also went to the Victor, you know, the Victor Horta house in Brussels—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: —and the house that—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, sure, that's—

AVIS BERMAN: —all that it—at that time—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: His house, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So did—well, I was just wondering as, you know, in terms of other modern furniture that why—why the Vienna—why the Vienna school was—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, I just—I liked what he did, this—I liked it. I liked this style. And I always did. I mean, here's a guy who, you know, 100 years ago was doing this work. He did it for Thonet. He did it for all these people. Thonet I should say.

AVIS BERMAN: So—well, I was wondering also, when you started, the Germans or the Viennese were, you know, relatively unknown. It wasn't like French furniture. I mean, was—did it interest you because it was—

[Cross talk.]

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, I have a Biedermeier piece around the corner there. Did you see it? It's a Biedermeier. I was buying Biedermeier. I was buying, you know, I was always fascinated with these periods. And this is—Michael Graves did this desk, did that table there. And that's [Alberto] Giacometti, that table. And, you know—

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I was just wondering if you also gravitated toward some of this because it was a little bit offbeat or out of fashion or it—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No, I didn't look for fashion. I bought this stuff you see, you know, very early. I couldn't have afforded later on. This stuff got to be too expensive. I wouldn't buy it today. You know, they get \$200,000 or something for a little table like that. I wouldn't buy that, but when I bought it, it was \$15,000 or something. You know, it was all affordable. Nobody wanted it. I wanted it. I loved it.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, well, that's what I meant is that you found it before it was chic, so you must have been—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Oh, sure, I was buying Schiele for \$15,000. Today, they sell for half a million, the million and a half dollars, \$5,000, \$5 million. I sold a couple of pieces when—after—I went in—I was in—I was in jail. You know, they put me in jail for—I still can't figure out why, but I was there for 10 and a half months.

AVIS BERMAN: I know, I read—I read this. Was—that was—that was an astonishing chapter in that book.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, well, it was true, a part of my life. And, yes, and I don't—I don't duck on it or anything. It's part of my life, so, you know. And it was an interesting part of my life. I learned a lot. I learned—

AVIS BERMAN: Well, you took the fall.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Huh?

AVIS BERMAN: You took the fall.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I took—my lawyer said, "Look, we'll keep you out of jail forever. We'll keep—we'll keep this thing open." I said, "Look, you spent over \$10 million of my money," which they took. They had 25 people working on this. They ended up missing the most important part of the whole thing, my lawyers, very fancy New York lawyers that they picked out for me. And I said, "you missed the point where the—one piece of evidence, if you can call it that, was this memorandum, which was a fake." And everybody—if you looked at it, you realize it was a fake because the lines. It was done on a line paper and the lines didn't match up. It was obviously pieces that they put together to make it into a—into a memorandum. And the guy who wrote it, supposedly, said "I never write memorandums." He said "this is not mine." They talked to him on the telephone about it. Said "I never write memorandums." Says I—he says, "What I believe is he got into my office." This was the guy—the government made—a former employer pay them \$8 million to come and testify against me, who I'd never seen and never met. I'm—we're getting off the track. [. . .-TF]

AVIS BERMAN: So you were saying you sold some paintings because—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, because I had—when I got out, the company was in trouble. I had to give the company \$140 million to bail themselves out. But I was the largest shareholder and it was—obviously made sense. If the company'd gone broke, Sotheby's. Makes today a lot of money.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: But it was in terrible shape because it had to pay all these fines and all this debt and all

this kind of stuff. Anyway, so—and I gave them \$140 million to bail it out, and I had arranged that. I didn't have it at the time, and so I sold some paintings.

AVIS BERMAN: I think you sold the Pollock. Would that would have been the Pollock?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, I sold the Pollock for \$35 million. They resold it for \$100 million, I don't know.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, and what were some of the other ones you had to sell?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I sold a Rauschenberg, a wonderful Rauschenberg. It was of the young president and a chopper and the whole thing, it was a—

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, I know that.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: —fabulous Rauschenberg, one of the best probably he ever did. And I sold a couple of Schieles, which were the best, obviously they picked out the best ones. I tried to buy one back. I sold it for \$1.7 million. I tried to buy it back. The guy wanted \$5 million for it. I should have bought it. It was worth it. The best one he ever did, I think. It was a couple in a circle, amazing, amazing drawing. And colored, you know, drawing, amazing. This is what I make for grandkids.

AVIS BERMAN: [Inaudible.] [They laugh.]

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: That's what I'm in the business of. I got nine.

AVIS BERMAN: Congratulations. It's wonderful.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, that's my business—educating grandkids, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, well, you got any in college yet?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Oh, yes, I have. I got—one of them went to Harvard and got his master's degree at Stanford in business. And he's a hedge fund business. He's a—started—raised \$90 million on his own and he's gone out. He's doing well. I got a second, well that's got his doctorate at Berkeley in chemistry and electricity. And he found a guy that was doing the same—he was invited at Berkeley, which is one of the best chemical school in the world. He was invited to do his research in a three—three-year grant there. But he found some guy at the Technion in Israel. He's living in Israel with this guy because this guy is doing the same thing he's doing. They were working on a light project. He found this guy and [laughs] so they analyzed should the guy move to Oakland, California, or Berkeley or should he go to Israel. It was half the cost in Israel, so they decided he went to Israel. And I've got a grandson that's at—graduated from Harvard and he's worked for Goldman Sachs in between. So did the other one, and he's back at Harvard, getting his business degree. So yes, I've got, you know —

AVIS BERMAN: Well, it's wonderful that—that's wonderful that they're all doing so well.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Oh, they're all doing well and none of them, to my knowledge, are on drugs or any of the nonsense. They're all—they're all—you know. You know.

AVIS BERMAN: Let me sort of get back to the collecting a little.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, sure.

AVIS BERMAN: When you, you know, because you had this financial emergency, you sold some of your—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: —pictures.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I don't sell.

AVIS BERMAN: That was what I was going to ask you.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No, I don't sell. But I saw—I mean, basically, when you sell, you sell your best things. I mean, people say they're weeding out stuff. They ended up—they don't sell that stuff. They ended up selling their best things because those were the things that—

AVIS BERMAN: That's what people want to buy.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: That's what they want to buy and it's a mistake. I still have a Pollock because that wasn't

my only one, but I still have a Pollock. I have a wonderful Jasper Johns. I have Lichtenstein. I have wonderful things of that period because I collected in that period.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Yes, and you have—there was something I saw on the video that you said you had a—was a de Kooning.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, I have a wonderful de Kooning.

AVIS BERMAN: There was one that you said that—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: The Whitney wanted it.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, you loaned to them and—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, I loaned to them and I found it in their permanent collection. I said, "What's this doing here?" "Oh," they said, "you're going to give it to us, aren't you?" I said, "Might someday, but not now." [Laughs.] Got it up on my wall. [Laughs.] Anyway, it's a wonderful painting. I also own that de Kooning's sculpture that—the *Clamdigger*. But I had it in Florida, at my house in Florida, and had it outside the window, so that you could see it. It was wonderful, and it got bronze disease. So I indignantly took it back, got my \$66,000 for it. I think one sold for \$23 million recently. That's me. And it was hard to describe, anyway, I took it back. I got my \$66,000 back [they laugh] because it had Lyme's disease. Rather than bring it inside and forget about putting it out in the salt spray, which would have been smart, I didn't do that. You don't do everything right.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, you know, that house at Michigan Hills was—now, did you have—did you build that yourself or—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, I did.

AVIS BERMAN: It was—that looked so beautiful. It's really strikingly. I mean, modern—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, this is it. It's the house I built in 1964 or '65, something like that. Here's the front entrance.

AVIS BERMAN: This is—and were you taking art or sculpture into consideration—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Oh, yes. Here, you could—here's the front entrance and here's the interior. This is the study. This is a—the study. And this is the entry. There's a Tadaaki Kuwayama on the right side there. I still own it. The Arp I described to you is right in the window there. Yes, there it is.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, yes. Yes.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: That's the living room you're going to see. It was a beautiful house.

AVIS BERMAN: It really is. Well, the other thing that's what I found—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Here's more pictures, give you some sense.

AVIS BERMAN: It looks very comfortable, too.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Oh, it was wonderful, marvelous house. This is the room. This overlooked the river.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, no, that's beautiful. The light from the windows coming in.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: There's the dining room. Very beautiful. Here I'm sitting with Chamberlain. Do you know Chamberlain?

AVIS BERMAN: Sure.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: He was a early friend of mine.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, my goodness, well, he was—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: That's a lot of years ago. Must be 30, 40 years ago.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, tell me about him because he was quite a character as well.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, he was. I visited his studio many times. I have a wonderful—one called *Waterfall*—is fabulous. It's in my—here's the house I grew up in with two of my grandkids. We went—we took a day and



visited the houses I grew up and lived in and so forth. I had all my grandkids and we did that.

AVIS BERMAN: Nice pictures.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Huh?

AVIS BERMAN: Nice pictures.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, great kids. Want to give me those back? Anyway, it was a lovely house. I did it in 1961 or something like that.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, when I was looking at the—I borrowed the video and I was very interested in the juxtapositions of how you installed things or how you figured out what was going to go here and where, since you weren't buying for a wall. How did you, you know, how did you figure out—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, I, you know, I have a sense of the way I want things done. And I have a guy that works for me and others in the family that is a carpenter, but he's talented. And I'll mark out where I want the things and he does it. He installs them, but just exactly where I tell him. So I do this myself. I don't want anybody else to do it for me because I have sense of where it oughtta go. And I put things in a very electric way. I don't—I don't put American paintings here and this there. And so—

AVIS BERMAN: Exactly. Well, that was why I was fascinated because it all worked.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, I hope so. It works for me, anyway, so that's what's important.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I mean, there'll be certain things like your drawings will be grouped together. There'll be certain groups—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, certain things are different. Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: —works on paper or a—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Have you been to my house? No, you haven't been there.

AVIS BERMAN: No, no, but you—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: You're describing—

AVIS BERMAN: Well, you made this video of the house.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Oh, you did, you saw the video?

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, I borrowed it from Melinda. I'm going to return it when I'm done. When we're, you know, so—but that was very—that was extremely helpful and mesmerizing really because I could see this went there and I saw the dining room—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: —you know, and all the—I was amazed by the enormous amount of sculpture that you have. Because—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, I like sculpture. It's three dimensional, you know. And you don't need a wall. For a painting, you need a wall and so you don't need a wall. You can put it up anywhere. And I got a lot of sense out of sculpture. I like it. I know they make more than one, which sometimes is bothersome, but doesn't—as long as I could, you know, have a feeling for it. Where was I?

AVIS BERMAN: We were kind of talking about John Chamberlain, whom I imagine would be a hard guy to know.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: He wasn't so bad. He was—we gave him a doctorate at CCS [College for Creative Studies] just before he died. And I acquired one of the—the biggest piece he ever did, which was 21 feet high or something. I did this College of Creative Studies in Detroit. You should see it. It's a wonderful building, and I gave them the money up front that they needed to get started and I built it for them, and helped them to design. I worked with Kahn's office on the design. And anyway, we—I made a hall one of the—I opened up one of the bays. And his sculpture goes up through the bay in the entry, the main entry, and he was thrilled with it.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, so you commissioned that sculpture.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No, it was at the federal building and it was outside and it got rust. And they sent it to—I

think they sent it to National, Tennessee or something, where GSA [General Services Administration] is located, they restored it, and it was going to Seattle, they'd asked for it. So I got my senators and I got everybody working politically and we got it for Michigan. That's how we got it because it was rightfully [inaudible]. It was there at the federal building and they expanded the building and there wasn't room for it anymore, so—plus the fact it was rusty and they fixed it. And we got it inside, so it's not creating any more rust. It'll be fine. And he loved it. He was—he's a good guy, was a good guy, just died.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, right, exactly.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, wasn't in great shape?

AVIS BERMAN: Now, I just want to go also in Detroit, just—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: —because there have been some other really—I want to talk about some of the personalities, some other collectors and—now, of course, I read in *Threshold Resistance* about how you met Milton Petrie, but did you—of course, he and his wife made famous collections as well. Did you ever interact with them as collectors or art patrons or in art activities?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I knew Milton very well because my father had built two stores for him before the Depression. He'd worked for Hudson's in Detroit, J.L. Hudson Company. It's an interesting story about him; I'll put it on the record. That he told me he was a buyer and he was doing really well. It was like double his budget on sales and double in profits and it was doing well. So he went to see Mr. Webber, Oscar Webber, who at that time was chairman and CEO of the J.L. Hudson Company. He went to see him and he said, "Mr. Webber," he said, "I just want you to know I'm doing very well here." He said, "I doubled the gross and I doubled the net." And he said, "I really am working hard. I'm really working for the company." And he said, "I just want to know, could I sit in your chair someday?" And Webber shook his head and he said, "No." He said, "Well, why not?" He says, "Because you're Jew." So he left Hudson's immediately and opened the stores on its own. That's how he got on his own. But it's interesting story.

AVIS BERMAN: It is and to try—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: It's a different attitude today, of course, but that was part of—that was part of the system when I grew up.

AVIS BERMAN: And there was a large Jewish population, too, in Detroit.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, comparatively, yes, very strong one.

AVIS BERMAN: I mean—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Still is.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, but you would—that that—to be cut out—well, it's interesting. Did you use to know Ray Horowitz, you know, Ray and Margaret Horowitz, the collectors of American art? And they were involved in the Archives of American Art, too.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No, I—

AVIS BERMAN: Well, Ray became a very successful corporate lawyer. But he wanted to become—he loved history and he wanted to become a history professor. And he went to Columbia and he wanted to get into history, the history department for graduate school, and they just said no. They weren't going to let him in because he was Jewish, but he could go to the law school. So he did not become a history professor.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: It's amazing story—story of those times.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, exactly, so—but that was even in New York that Columbia University—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, it's hard to believe.

AVIS BERMAN: —that had—I mean, today—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, of course.

AVIS BERMAN: —but it's hard to believe. Well, you know, we believed it for blacks, so we would, you know, and believe it for—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, it's different. That's all.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, but that is interesting about Milton Petrie. But I'm just thinking that there were also from this so many great collectors came out of Detroit, too.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: And did you know Eli Broad when—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, I knew him. He was—went to Michigan State and he became an accountant. And he was an accountant in Detroit as a young man. And he met Kaufman, who was a house builder. And he encouraged Kaufman and helped him. And they became partners. And he left accounting and became a house builder. And he built, you know, and I ran into him because he would come to me with sites. He wanted me to do the retail of certain corners and so forth, so he could get the highest price for his land, you know. And so that's where I met him at first. I got \$1 million for our museum out of him, which was very nice. And I went to his birthday party a week ago, a week and a half ago, in Los Angeles. He was 80 years old.

AVIS BERMAN: A youngster.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: A youngster, absolutely.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right. So—no, because, of course, he—I mean, do you intersect in your collecting at all with the Broads.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No. There's nothing competitive. I mean I never competed with anybody.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I just wondered if you did have any—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I mean, that's a—I don't know where you got that from, but—

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, I'm not—I didn't get it from anywhere. I was about to ask you if you had any collecting rivals at all.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No. I—there's no competition in collecting, not to my knowledge.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, friendly rivalry, I guess I should say because—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No, I don't think it was a friendly one or a difficult one. I know—there's lots of stuff around. I mean, there's oodles of stuff. If I don't get something, I wish them the best and there's a lot of other stuff I can buy. I mean there's no shortage.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, now, another person who seemed to be a friend and associate and fellow art collector was Richard Manoogian.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, Richard is a very good friend of mine, and we, the two of us really support the museum. We're the ones that, you know, it was—the museum just won something that's supposed amazing thing. We got all three counties: Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb counties to agree by vote that they would pay one-tenth of 1 percent on their taxes, so amounts to \$15 to \$25 a year that they pay in taxes that goes to the museum.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, a millage tax.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: A millage tax. That we just got through like six months ago, before all this. And it's amazing that these people out in of Macomb County—I don't know if any of them visited the museum, but it's their same museum. We distributed things all over the state. We're very generous in terms of sharing our objects. And they all know it and they know—we're something in Michigan. We're not a unique thing for Detroit, and most of us live in the suburbs.

AVIS BERMAN: Is that a difficulty?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: You mean hard on us or hard on them?

AVIS BERMAN: Well, in terms of, you know, selling what you need to do for the museum, that you don't live in the city.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No, it's not quite. What we do is all-positive for the city. I mean we work for the museum. I mean we're just helping the city and we're helping the museum. There's nothing negative about it.

AVIS BERMAN: You know, tell me, did you ever work with Edgar Preston Richardson?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Ah, some, he was—I knew him, you know. And he—but he was really before me. He was gone by the time I got there.

AVIS BERMAN: Who were the most effective museum directors at Detroit?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I think Sam Sachs did a very good job for the museum. He wasn't a very great fundraiser, but most of them aren't.

AVIS BERMAN: No.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: And so he—I think he was very good. I think Graham Beal, who now runs the museum, has been a wonderful help for the museum. And—but of course, you got to give credit to Gene [Gargaro]—pardon me, I can't—oh, my God, if he realized I couldn't remember his last name. I'll get it from—

AVIS BERMAN: Okay

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I mean, in a second—I mean, anyway. So—but he runs—he's chairman and he was—he worked for many years with Manoogian, and he's done a marvelous job. He's just—he and—running a museum that, you know, was losing a lot of money and they don't lose anymore. And if we don't lose our collection, we'll be in great shape.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. No, I think also in older days, you know, museum directors were not expect to be, shall we say, the fundraiser businessman type that, you know, they are today.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, they expected to be leading it. I mean, most museum—they hired—the Frick hired Sam Sachs after he retired from the—on the basis that we had raised a lot of money. Now, Sam really wasn't involved, but they hired him and then they found out he couldn't raise money [laughs]. He never did. This takes, you know, number one you have to be a giver to get. That's the first thing. If you're not a giver, you can't really go out and solicit.

AVIS BERMAN: Right because, you know, if you don't believe in it or if you have no skin in the game, you know—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: That's what it is. So—I mean directors don't have a lot of skin in the game, as you say.

AVIS BERMAN: It's not—so they have to have someone, you know, with them or behind them as they're chair.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Because also it used to be that scholars, you know, would be often be hired as directors, too. So I mean—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, well, that's who they really have to be. They have to be scholars because otherwise they won't be able to know what to do as far as exhibition is concerned or acquiring works or selling works or these kind of things.

AVIS BERMAN: You know, I wanted to start—have you got a little more time, I mean, what is your schedule at this moment? What's your next appointment?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: We got about 20 minutes.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay, fine. Well, if you know, if I don't finish, I'd like to come back a second time.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, sure.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay, because what I wanted to start was one thing I thought was really important and unusual and I don't know if you were the first, but about commissioning art for shopping malls.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, I think I was probably first. I don't think anybody else was really interested in doing it. Well, I—the walls are stores. So I can't do anything, I can't hang anything. So we went to sculpture and I commissioned very good artists. Armani as an example—Arman, I mean, you know, Arman's work.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, yes, Arman.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, Arman. He did several for me and he did—I mean, we have a lot of very good artists that have done pieces, and usually in the courts because there's space there. And it's part of decoration and it's part of—and it's three-dimensional because they can walk around or they can see it from different angles. And

the kids appreciate it and the parents appreciate it. I think it's good.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I guess I would say—what models did you look when you decided to do it? Did you look any prototypes in Europe or elsewhere? You know, what made you decide I'm going to do this? You know.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, they would do maquettes, you know.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, no I meant, how did—in other words, did you look at any plazas or anything in Europe or elsewhere as the model for what you were going to do?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No, no, not with that. We were the ones that really started designing centers that were upgraded, you know, in terms of quality. Up till that time, they were trying—it was based on how cheaply they could build things and we invested in the better things. Short Hills is one of our centers. Do you know Short Hills?

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, I've been there. You know, that's very nice.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, that's one of our centers as an example. That thing was a mess when I got there. Did you ever shop there years ago? Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill were the architects.

AVIS BERMAN: I never—I only had been there really since I, you know, I moved to New York.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, when I got there, it was owned Prudential. They had commissioned it and they built it. It didn't work. There're only seven of those stores open and Bloomingdale's and B. Altman was way down at the end of it. And the seven weren't paying rent basically because they had no traffic. It was a mess. And today it's one of the—it's about \$1,400 a square foot, some of the best in the world, one in the top three or four best ones around. So it's a big difference.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, but did you—was it a risky thing to put the sculpture in or anything do you think?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Fall on somebody or what?

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, well or—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Risky in what way?

AVIS BERMAN: Well, that it would be vandalized—that—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No. Center vandalized? We have police there. You know, we have people watching. We—

AVIS BERMAN: Well, that somebody fall into the fountain, that sort of thing?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, they'd get wet.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, I guess in those days people didn't sue at the drop of a hat the way they do now.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I don't—people respect it. If things are clean and neat and managed well, people respect it. They don't mess it up. I never—we never had—I never had anything of that kind.

AVIS BERMAN: Besides the Arman, what do you think were some of the more successful commissions?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I had Robertson. I know he does these pieces, wood pieces of letters and numbers.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, Crutchfield.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Crutchfield, yes. What'd I say? Robertson? I meant Crutchfield.

AVIS BERMAN: Crutchfield.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: He did three or four for me. I like his work because it fits in the center too. It's nice, you know. And I had—Arman, as an example, did a piece at a center in Michigan that was owned by us and Ford Motor. And he wanted to get into the plant. He went to the plant—the different plants and he found these guards for trucks and he did a sculpture 21 feet high in front of Hudson's at [inaudible]. He did violins and that kind of stuff. Remember it?

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, he did this all out of these pieces that he picked up.

AVIS BERMAN: There was another artist, Milton Hebal.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Did you have something by him?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, we did. I mean a number of artists. I can't remember it all, but we—I worked with maybe 20 different artists on these and always good artists and good stuff.

AVIS BERMAN: And then there was, as you said, Antoine Poncét. Was Poncét—did he work for Arp? That was—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No, no, he worked for Arp, but he was European. I didn't know any European artist, outside of Arman, who of course, Arman was French, but—

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, there was—yes, there was a sculptor named David Hayes. I don't know if you did anything with him or not. I mean, I—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I can't remember.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, I went—as I said, I went through your papers in the Archives of American Art and I looked at the artists who had written you letters about pieces and so that's where I'm getting these names from. Yes, there's all these artists between about '68 and '72 who wrote you either thanking you or wanting to do something or this or that or the other.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I can't remember.

AVIS BERMAN: That's all right.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: If you've got names, give me more, so—

AVIS BERMAN: Well, there was a guy named Paul von Ringelheim.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Oh, yes, did you know him?

AVIS BERMAN: I know who he is, but I never met him.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: He was a very good friend of Lichtenstein.

AVIS BERMAN: Exactly.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: And that's—and Lichtenstein introduced me to him. He was a character. Did you know—I bet you did know Seymour Evans? Remember Seymour Evans?

AVIS BERMAN: Sy Evans?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: He was a lighting—

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, yes.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: —sniffed a lot of stuff, you know. But I went to his—he invited me—I was single at the time. He invited me to his house for dinner. I go there. He has this apartment and this big tall Polish girl working for him, who was taller than he was. He was tall, but she was like 6'2" or something. Big, big blonde, you know. And she comes—I'm sitting in the sofa talking to a couple of people. And she comes out and she starts lining this stuff up on the table. I said, "What's that?" She says, "Try it. Here's a straw." I said, "No, thank you." I knew right away then. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: That's the '80s.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: It was.

AVIS BERMAN: How about Roy, did you—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: He died, you know, Seymour Evans. He's very talented. He had like an eighth-grade education, but he was a very talented guy in lighting. He was really the inventor of contemporary lighting. And we did all kinds of things in our centers in terms of lighting. We invented things. He died.

AVIS BERMAN: So you said that Roy Lichtenstein introduced you to Paul von Ringelheim?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I'm sorry.

AVIS BERMAN: You said that Roy Lichtenstein introduced you to Paul von Ringelheim.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, yes, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: How did you get to know Roy?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: That's interesting. He was a good guy, really good guy. Well, this isn't how I met him, but he lives next door—his wife, of course, lives in the studio, which is next door to me in Southampton. They're right behind me.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, so you're near Gin Lane there in Southampton?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, I'm on Gin Lane.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Right ahead of him.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, they are at 50 Gin Lane. That's Dorothy's address.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, well, we're at 48 Gin Lane, which is in front, on the water.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, I see. So no, the reason I say this, my special interest here is I worked for the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Oh, really?

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, and I'm working on the catalog.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Dorothy is a very nice person.

AVIS BERMAN: Lovely, lovely.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Lovely person.

AVIS BERMAN: So—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, anyway.

AVIS BERMAN: So you—did you get to know Roy in Southampton as a neighbor?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No, I got to know him in New York. I can't remember how. Somebody introduced him to me.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, if you were meeting—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I owned a couple of these things. I still do, some good stuff he did.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, you have the painting.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Huh?

AVIS BERMAN: You have a painting of his.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I have a couple, more than one I have got. I've got one—the nude of the blonde—

AVIS BERMAN: The female figure—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: —series.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I got another one of the dining room series or that series he did of—hard to describe—smaller one, good one. I don't know whether it's listed on this, because I think I bought it in the last three years.

AVIS BERMAN: No, the only thing that was listed was the, you know, the one that you bought from James

Corcoran, the painting, the nude. That was the only one that was listed, was that one. So is this small one—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: It's good. It's a good one. It's a good one. I can't remember the period.

AVIS BERMAN: Who did you get it from?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I don't remember. I can look it up.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Right. Now, what—you know, these sculptures that are in the shopping centers, are these —

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Some are still there.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Are these your—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: There was one in Ann Arbor that they—we sold the center in Ann Arbor. And it was one of our early centers, but we sold it. And the people wanted to expand it. And they wanted—this was a center—one of the courts they wanted to work on, they wanted to change it. So we took the piece and we're putting it in a building that I gave to the university, in the lobby of that building. So it's not being—it's a very good piece. I can't remember the artist, but it's a local artist, very good.

AVIS BERMAN: So these—do these sculptures—do they belong to you or the company or the center?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: They bought the company—they belong to the center.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Okay well, I think that this is a good place to stop for today, but I do have more questions because I want to go through, you know, the '80s and '90s and Sotheby's and more on—and also some of the other work that you own here in New York and Southampton. And so I will ask Melinda, you know, when is a next—if I could come back another time, if that's all right with you.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Great, thank you. Thank you so much.

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AVIS BERMAN: This is Avis Berman interviewing A. Alfred Taubman for the Archives of American Art and Frick Collection on July 23rd, 2013, at Mr. Taubman's office in New York City. And I'm just going to pick up—thank you very much—where I left off before on these notes that I gave you. And when we stopped, we had been talking about when you were commissioning arts for shopping malls. And I had one more question was that when you were commissioning it, were you taking the point of an architect or a corporate collector or, you know, what would the customer think? I'm just wondering, you know, what were the factors in how you—

ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, the first factor, of course, was I was doing this for a commercial building. And I had to be sure that it was commercially sound, that it was something that people could sense, feel, which is not easy. Especially at the time, we were looking at new kinds of art because some of this is 50 years ago, and it was different then. And so—and I did pick people like Kenneth Snelson, who did a piece for me. And Arman, Arman, you know the—

AVIS BERMAN: The Israeli.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: The Frenchman.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, the Frenchman, and I did work with him and I worked with some artists, some pretty good sculptors, did large pieces. That was one of the things—the scale had to be very large in order to be circumstantial.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: And it had fit space, so there were, though we did some spaces that fit the art, you know. But it was—it was interesting working with them, so—

AVIS BERMAN: That got to be kind of a signature or a hallmark of your centers?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No, not particularly. It was—we don't have any walls in the shopping—if you do, you're in trouble, but you have to lease the space. So we didn't have any walls, so we had to use three-dimensional



pieces, which we did, and they worked out well, and we did them where the spaces were larger, in the courts. And we wanted something vertical because the spaces were very—the center was very horizontal. And we wanted to break the second floor lines is what we wanted—what I wanted to do.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, so that was a way of your seeing how you saw space too?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, that's how I saw the space and whether it fit the space. So it wasn't—it wasn't—the art was obviously important in terms of its quality and so forth, the materials used and so forth. We also had problems that we had to figure. We couldn't have children climbing on it. They might hurt themselves, hurt the piece so we had to set it up or we had to put it in a mold or we had to do something unusual to guard the piece and to guard the kids, they want to climb on things. So that was something we had to take into consideration also.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I was just thinking, I grew up in West Hartford, Connecticut, so I don't remember did the Westfarms Mall had a sculpture? I don't—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I don't remember.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. That was—that was—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I can't remember.

AVIS BERMAN: It's okay. I just—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Melinda.

MELINDA MARCUSE: Yes.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Do you have any pictures of Westfarm mall?

MS. MARCUSE: Of Westfarm mall?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes.

MS. MARCUSE : Specifically what? The interior?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, some interiors.

MS. MARCUSE: Let me look on the computer. Okay?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, look and see if—it may have.

AVIS BERMAN: In my nostalgia trip, that was our mall, Westfarms.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, it's a nice mall. We expanded it since, put in Nordstrom's and it's doing very well. The center does very well.

AVIS BERMAN: Now, did this commissioning sculpture, did this influence your own private collecting of sculpture?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Not particularly. No, not particularly.

AVIS BERMAN: And we had talked about—extensively, we had talked about Richard Bellamy, and I wanted to ask you about some of the other dealers that you worked with and what they were like. Richard Feigen?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, Richard Feigen was basically an old master dealer and I bought some stuff from him. He was very knowledgeable, very smart, good businessman, and he's been very successful.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, I know. He started—I guess he started in Chicago. Did you patronize him there?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, he's from Chicago. I didn't know him in Chicago. I met him in New York.

AVIS BERMAN: How about Nick Wilder?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I didn't know Nick Wilder.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay well, let's talk about someone I think you're great friends with, which is William Acquavella.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, Bill and I have been friends long before. Yes. He's probably, in terms of the quality of reputation and everything else, probably the best in New York, the best. I don't know of anybody better.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I trust him 1,000 percent because he's honest, he tells you exactly what's going on and he tells you wherever his head's at. He's—I think he's a fine gentleman. You can always call on him for something in terms of his generosity for charity and so he's a—and he's a very, very good, very knowledgeable impressionist dealer. He also has recently with his children, his two sons and his daughter, have gotten into contemporary art and they seem to be doing very well.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, and he has great School of Paris things too, of course.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, he has wonderful Miro and wonderful, wonderful collection of his own.

AVIS BERMAN: And what are some of—what are some of the important pieces that you've acquired through him, do you think are some of the more important pieces?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I acquired a Modigliani, an important Modigliani, one I had at the Jewish Museum. It's probably one of the best around, and I acquired—I can't remember all. I can go back and check it for you, but I can't remember. I bought a half a dozen things from him.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay well, we can—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: And he sold things for me, and so over the years, for one reason or another wanted to sell and you know.

AVIS BERMAN: How about Illeana Sonnabend? Did you ever—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: What?

AVIS BERMAN: Illeana Sonnabend?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Oh.

AVIS BERMAN: Sonnabend.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I met her, I didn't buy anything from her.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: She's a wonderful lady and wonderful dealer, but I went to her gallery many times but I really—I didn't acquire anything.

AVIS BERMAN: I guess you were more involved with Leo Castelli?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, early on I was, you know. Leo, who kept his books in his head, had tried to charge me \$13,000 for something I'd bought at \$12,000 on time. And I brought all the bills to show him all the checks and showed him I'd only paid \$12,000. And then, from then on, I dealt with him, but it was really my loss. I would have—if I'd dealt with him, I'd have gotten a lot of things and he—anyway.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, but, of course, you can't help but being irritated by something like that.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, I got irritated because he was trying to get an extra \$1,000 and it was his mistake. I should have just forgotten it.

AVIS BERMAN: I have a feeling you forgot or, you know, was careless about it.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I don't know. I really don't know.

AVIS BERMAN: Now, did you also deal with Louis Meisel?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I think I bought—yes, I bought a couple of things from him. I bought a—

AVIS BERMAN: Photo-realist something or other?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No, no. An important painting. Melinda?

MS. MARCUSE: Yes.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: What's the painting I gave to the Israeli Museum?

MS. MARCUSE: Which one? Are you talking about Mondrian?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, the Mondrian. I gave them a Mondrian. I bought a Mondrian from him.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, that's—that's an unusual thing for him to have had.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, I know, but he had it.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: As I recall, you know. I don't remember all of this stuff. I'll be 90 next month. You've got to understand.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, you know, I could never answer comparable—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Not next month. Next year.

AVIS BERMAN: Next year.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Even got that wrong.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I'm just, you know, I'm just firing the questions and we just see what happens. So whatever —

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, I understand.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, now, how about James Corcoran, Los Angeles dealer, I think?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I don't think I bought anything from him.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: From her.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I don't think so. I can't remember. I think I bought a drawing or two.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay, yes. Well, in general, of course, the world, you know, comes to New York and you could get things. But did you ever travel extensively for—to buy things for collecting?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Not really, I was in New York, I mean, everything was here.

AVIS BERMAN: Exactly.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I bought from the biggest dealer on Madison Avenue. What's the matter with me?

AVIS BERMAN: You're not talking about Gagosian at the moment?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Gagosian.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I bought stuff from Gagosian over the years.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: He seemed to have everything tied up with [inaudible].

AVIS BERMAN: Yes exactly, and I imagine though you probably bought a lot of things in London too, decorative arts and furniture.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, I bought a lot of things at auctions.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I bought a lot of my collection of auction, probably half of it.

AVIS BERMAN: And that was even before—before you owned Sotheby's, before 1983?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Oh, yes, and after, I bought two things last month from Sotheby's.

AVIS BERMAN: I guess that now—right. I guess that's another question I should ask you. When you were, you know, the owner, the majority shareholder at Sotheby's, what were the rules for buying?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: The rules for buying was I had no information, which I never did, that was the first thing. I had no insider information, meaning that I didn't know what the reserve was or any of that. And, basically, outside of that, I was—I was a buyer, like everybody else.

AVIS BERMAN: A customer. Right, so there were just—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Because that was the most important thing. Did I know what the reserve was? If you know that, you know a lot, see, and I never knew that. I never asked for it. I never got it. I wouldn't have gotten it if I asked for it. Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: You know, are there—in terms of things that you missed out on or didn't get or are there still some that you just really wish you'd bought?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, there was one thing. I had this opportunity to buy this wonderful blue period Picasso, a woman with a hat, and it was owned by a boys' school in England and I wanted to buy it. They'd agreed to sell it to me for \$2 million, which was a lot of money. This goes back around 1985 or something like that, and it was folded under the—under the frame. So I asked them if we could open up the frame, so I wanted to see if I could open it up because it was obvious, the hat, blue hat under the hat. It was a large painting, large drawing, drawing painting. It was drawing but with a certain amount of color, and beautiful, beautiful. And they said, yes, and they got permission. Anyway, and I came back and I was in phone contact with them, and then the guy says to me, "well, I have sad news for you." I said, "what's up?" "We just sold it to Niarchos. He paid \$2.2 million." And I went to Niarchos' island, Spectopoula, in Greece. I went there to have lunch one day, and I walked in—I walked in, and there was the painting, which aggravated me because—

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, because you thought you had a deal.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I thought I had a deal. Yes, but this dealer, he may—may have slipped him \$100 under the table or something, too. Who knows? Niarchos was a very strange, a very strange man. Anyway, I knew him well, but he was very strange, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: In what way?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Huh?

AVIS BERMAN: In what way?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, he—just strange, that's all. I mean, different is probably a better word than strange.

AVIS BERMAN: All right. Well, yes

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: He owned 13 Van Goghs as I recall. It was either eight of 13. I forgot, but I think it was 13, and he had them in his apartment on Fifth Avenue. He had an apartment, I believe 820 Fifth. And one day I'm invited up to meet with him on a business thing. And I look at the Van Goghs, and I know they're not—they're copies. I know he owns them, but they're copies, they're obvious copies. And I said, "Where are the paintings"? So he looked at me strange, like I, you know, disclosed something, something secret. He said, "They're in the bank, in the bank," he says. So he had them copied and put in the apartment, the real ones were in the bank. I guess it's nothing. I think he didn't spend a lot of time there, so—but strange.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, but then to get no joy out of them.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, of course, I mean, what's the point? In his bedroom, he had Polish prints, what was his name, the Polish?

AVIS BERMAN: You're talking about Balthus?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I have a couple of—

AVIS BERMAN: Balthus.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Huh?

AVIS BERMAN: Balthus.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No.

AVIS BERMAN: Not him?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Balthus. Balthus.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: You didn't pronounce it right.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Balthus. Anyway, I had a couple of those. He had a Balthus, a large Balthus with this—it was one of the dirtiest things I've ever seen, this woman, nude woman, is spanking this young woman, very strange. I mean, sort of, yes. I mean, I get a sexual kick out of that, but I guess he—it was in the bedroom, big—you know, big, very well done. I mean, Balthus was good and bad, you know. And so—but it—it's interesting. I used to pass through the village that Balthus lived in in Switzerland near Gstaad. Anyway.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, did you meet Balthus?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No, I never met him.

AVIS BERMAN: Besides this Picasso, was there anything else that you recall that you missed?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I don't—there's—you know, look, I passed up things and I bought a lot of things, you know. You can't own the world. You can't buy everything, and I own a lot of stuff.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, yes. I see the other thing that you do is that it seems to me there are certain artists, when you like them you really collect the depth—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, that's true, I do.

AVIS BERMAN: And, you know, we talked about Schiele and Klimt. You've got Winslow Homer and then Burchfield was another artist that I think you admire.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, I have a lot of Burchfield.

AVIS BERMAN: And then Henry Moore, Picasso, Rothko, futurists, Degas.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, Balla.

AVIS BERMAN: Balla, both Giacomettis.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: And also, I saw, which interested me—oh, Milton Avery and then Reginald Marsh.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, I like Reginald.

AVIS BERMAN: So do I. No, you have a lot of fantastic ones.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, I have an oil, which is unusual, by Reginald Marsh. A big oil, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: And I didn't know there was—when you do this, do you think—oh, you suddenly think I'm fascinated by artist X and then you go after him, you know, when you start collecting groups of artists?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, you know, I don't go nuts or anything. I just—I appreciate it. I appreciate the work, and, you know, I have a sense of what I like and what I don't like. I don't like work that's been worked over. I like spontaneous, more spontaneous work. I guess that's probably one of the reasons I'm a big follower of Schiele. I just bought two Schieles in London and both interesting work. I mean, they're simple, very simple drawings, a little color, but they fascinate me as to the simplicity of what he does. That's one of the things I look for. I look for I don't like things that are worked over. They've obviously spent a lot of time trying to figure them out and change them and this kind of thing. I've seen it. It's not my kind of thing. I like spontaneous things that are well thought out, done, and presented, and that's it, I mean that's my case.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I guess that's another reason you like drawing is because of the freedom.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, I really do like drawing. I really do. I mean, to me, draftsmanship is the ultimate art. I mean, to me, that's the most important art because that's the beginning of art, is drawing.

AVIS BERMAN: That's why you love this Hopper show.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, that's true.

AVIS BERMAN: The joy, although he's not always spontaneous, it's still—it's very moving.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Who?

AVIS BERMAN: I said although Hopper is not a spontaneous painter, it's still very moving.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: He is, I mean, I have drawings by Hopper, which are unusual. I have drawings.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: And I have—I have a half a dozen Hoppers. I wish I'd bought more, but you know, there weren't a lot around.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, no, because he didn't sell them too much. He wanted to keep them. And then, of course, most everything went to the Whitney. So—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, I guess so. They have a big collection.

AVIS BERMAN: Probably, one of the reasons that I asked if you had traveled a lot for collecting is that I noticed at least in the Michigan house that there were a lot of Asian objects, you know, decorative, you know.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I was always interested in Asian art. Again, the simplicity there's something that—Imari has the very simple lines and simple [inaudible]. And the Chinese things always fascinated me. I own a lot of Chinese stuff, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: You know, I was actually—when I was trying to figure out—you, of course, defined esthetic characteristics, you know, that you like or don't like. I was trying to figure out what art you might not have. And I may be wrong, but it seemed to be there wasn't much from Latin America.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Maybe nothing much from Russia.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No, I was the first one to take an auction to Russia in 1985 or '86 or something before [inaudible] where the communist—it's still communist but where they were really in charge and so, of course, Khrushchev was there, and so on. We took, I did, took Sotheby's to Russia and we did an auction. And we went—it was interesting. They gave us a list of artists and we made up a list of artists that weren't the same. And because the ones they had were part of this artist union or whatever it was. They were all terrible artists. But there were some good artists at the time. We went to their galleries or like places they lived and they painted there. And we sold all those. There was only one artist that didn't sell. And these were all local—it was all local art. We didn't take anything in, it was all local. And there was one artist who was president of this union who painted on cotton, velvet.

AVIS BERMAN: Velvet.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Painted on velvet, black velvet. You can imagine. His didn't sell. He was the only one.

AVIS BERMAN: What was it? The loves of a tractor on velvet? [Laughs].

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. His didn't sell. He was the only one. And so we sold everything. And a lot of these people—and the government tried to grab their money.

AVIS BERMAN: Naturally.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: And we put their money in London so the government couldn't get it—gave them their share directly so we controlled that. And we made these artists rich. Most of them moved out of Russia.

AVIS BERMAN: It was amazing that they could get out.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes., that's—yes. They went there on trips and they stayed there, I guess. But, you know, relatively made them all rich, like \$80[,000] to \$100,000 is a lot of money for a Russian in those days. It was successful. But I didn't—I bought one thing and I gave it to a setup that they set up to make the building of contemporary museum, which never was built. Somebody ended up with it. You know, I don't know what happened to it. I made a donation and whoosh it disappeared. But that was, no, I really, I never really bought any Russian art. I wasn't interested.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, right.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: There were a couple of artists that were interesting but they began to do multiples you know. A lot of these artists start to repeat, you know, like the Chinese, you know, they're repeat what they've done, and I don't own any Chinese art either. I own one painting that I bought in China 32 years ago at one of those—it was in Shanghai. Marsha Miro. Do you know Marsha?

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, I spoke to her.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes well, Marsha knew of this place—I don't know what you call it but where the artists got together, and if you went—it was very near the hotel. And we went down this alley, she took us, went down this alley. All of a sudden, this big courtyard shows up. And it was like, you know, like booths along and there were artists there. It was amazing. Primarily they were doing, well, communist art, you know, I mean, political art. That's what I mean. They were doing political art. You know, those big things with the hammer and sickle and all kinds of stuff, but this one guy there that was doing watercolors. I bought a watercolor from him. I still have it, nice little watercolor.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, in general, I don't think you like political art. You know, you haven't bought American, you know social—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No, well, I did own the Rauschenberg that was a wonderful political, I don't know. [. . . - TF] It was early an early Rauschenberg of the young president the [inaudible] you know, the chaplain.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: —and of the war. And it was a political—it was marvelous, wonderful Rauschenberg, one of the best I think he ever did.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Well, that was different, but you know what I mean, this sort of idealized social—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No. No. I don't—I didn't—

AVIS BERMAN: People call it social realism. I call it social idealism.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I'm not into it.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, yes. I mean, I looked—when I was looking at your collection, I didn't see any of, you know, not that kind of 1930s American art in your collection.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: So yes. This—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: There's Schiele, not Frank Schiele, but I got Frank Schiele, too, but the early Schiele, what's his name?

AVIS BERMAN: Egon Schiele you mean?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: What's his name? I got him, I've got some of that work. He was an interesting artist.

AVIS BERMAN: And I guess—I'm not sure. Maybe you don't have Indian art. Would I be right in Southeast Asia as much other than—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No, my daughter-in-law has big Indian art [inaudible]. She has a marvelous collection of Indian art. My son Bill's wife, Helen, used to work for the company.

AVIS BERMAN: Are your children interested in keeping your collection together?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, they collect on their own. They're all collectors, so—

AVIS BERMAN: And what—does Ms. Taubman have a collecting interest?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, she collects.

AVIS BERMAN: What is her collecting interest?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: She has some good stuff. She has a Guercino and she has a Guercino and she has a—she has a number of—a number of very good Old Masters. And she has a big drawings collection, old masters drawing collection, very valuable one, very, very interesting. She has big collection of her own.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay and I—actually this is—now, we've talked about the Detroit museum. And when you were at the Whitney, what were your—when you were on the board of the Whitney, what were your important activities there?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: What?

AVIS BERMAN: When you were on the board of the Whitney, what were your important activities there?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, I was chairman of the building committee and we designed a—I hired Michael Graves and we designed this expansion, which was beautiful because that building is a piece of junk, you know, the buildings are terrible buildings.

AVIS BERMAN: The Breuer Building, you're talking about.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, it's a terrible building. I mean, you know. And he came up with a brilliant design, which picked the building up face, didn't hide it, built around it. And it was a very—because we owned all those houses—those stores next door.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, this is under Tom Armstrong.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: What?

AVIS BERMAN: This is with Tom Armstrong.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, Tom Armstrong. Anyway, so—and I was very enthusiastic about it. I was out raising money for building. It wouldn't have been that expensive in those days comparatively. And anyway, I was very involved with Whitney and—but I.M. Pei decided—he was really jealous that Michael Graves was doing so much work at the time. He had a lot of work at the time. You know, Michael, unfortunately, is, you know he's—you know his—

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, he has—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: —physical situation.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, very debilitating disease.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: His hands, his head, still very good, but it holds him back obviously because you know, he can't move from waist down, sad, anyway, very talented.

Anyway, so we were—and Pei put together a bunch of guys. I don't know where he got them all from, but he got a bunch of guys and they did a real hatchet job on Michael and on the expansion and everybody got—the board got afraid they wouldn't be able to raise the money and everything else, so they killed it.

AVIS BERMAN: I didn't realize that I.M. Pei was behind that because—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Oh, yes, he was the one. He was the—Pei was the guy that did it. He was the guy. He was the one.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I guess because he had such prestige, he could scare other people there.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, I don't know that he had very much prestige. I don't have a lot of—I don't have—I don't care for his architecture, his ability. I've done work with him. I—and for years, he used to farm it out. He didn't do the work. He used to give it to Ponte and Kusaba. Those were two guys from—you can check that out. They did—they all worked for Zeckendorf. And when they left Zeckendorf, Pei set up in New York and they set up in Montreal, I believe. They were—Pei—I mean, Vincent Ponte was a Canadian. Kusaba, I think, was a New Yorker, but they were very talented architects. They did that job in Boston that—

AVIS BERMAN: Was that Faneuil Hall?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No, they did—they may have—no, what they did, they did the church, that famous—



AVIS BERMAN: Oh, yes, the Trinity Church near Copley Plaza.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No, the—the one that doesn't believe in medicine.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, Christian Scientist.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: The Christian Science Church, which is just beautiful. You remember, with that pool in front of it, did you ever—huh?

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, yes.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Beautiful. They did that.

AVIS BERMAN: Now because vis-à-vis the Whitney, I thought that in terms of landmarks preservation, I thought a lot of these Upper East Side, you know, people who lived there were really worried about the building getting bigger and they were, you know, they—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: That's always true, but the building was in the code. We could have done it. I mean, there wasn't anything that should have stopped us from doing it. I mean, the FER [ph] was well and within reason, everything was—the only thing was Pei screaming and howling and making a big fuss over it. I don't know. He was the voice. Look it up in the paper. [. . . -TF]

AVIS BERMAN: So yes. So and also—you were also on the board of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, is that correct?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, I'm one of the founders of the Archives of American Art. And then I—they asked me later on, much later on, they asked me to go on the Smithsonian, which I was on for six years. And I've been on the board of the Detroit Institute of Arts for probably 40 years.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: And actually I'm president of the arts commission. So I'm—

AVIS BERMAN: That's a rough job, especially now.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, I don't think so. I mean I don't believe that they're going to sell anything. No, I don't—I mean, if they did, the museum is dead. I mean, nobody would ever give anything to the museum again.

AVIS BERMAN: No. No.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: And I think they're aware of that.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, I think they actually legally said it's impossible because it's in the public trust.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, no, no, it's not impossible. It's possible. It is possible. Legally, I could tell you it is.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, dear, okay.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: But I mean, I don't want to upset you or anything, but it's one of those things that started by a bunch of Detroiters and they were rich and they went over to England, and it was the richest city in the world, Detroit, in the '20s. And in 1908, there were 8,000 automobiles in United States. In 1929, there were 24 million of them, and they were built in Detroit. So everything in Europe was done by hand. It was handmade cars. And there were 3,000 people in America making cars, but they were all handmade cars. And Detroit was the only ones making manufactured cars. And, you know, so between Henry Ford I and Alfred P. Sloan, who headed up General Motors, they made huge numbers of automobiles, made huge amounts of money. And so those people went over to Europe and things were very cheap over there because they'd come out of World War I. And the Germans and the French were very poor. And they sold all their art and he bought it. And that's how the museum really got its collection. It has a wonderful collection. We have one of the great Bruegels ever, the elder [inaudible]. And we have half a dozen Van Goghs, very good Van Goghs, excellent. We have one of the self-portraits. You know, we have some wonderful—it's a great museum.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, great Whistler, you know, all sorts of things.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, it's great.

AVIS BERMAN: No, I just—I want to ask you just to know the questions, since we have been touching on architects and architecture, which is—which—I guess about the commissioning of Richard Meier to build your

house in Florida.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, I did, my original house.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, that's what I wanted to talk about is that, you know, he—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: He made a beautiful house. I was single and I had three children. I built a one-bedroom house with a four-bedroom detached guesthouse, which was perfect. And they had very good time there. We had a lot of fun there. Unfortunately, the house had problems. Some of the design problems is what it was, and it had leaks. And I called Richard, who I have a lot of respect for. I called Richard and I said, "Richard, you got to get out here. I want—I don't want to do anything to the house till you see it. You're the architect. You're responsible." I had full supervision by him by his office. He hired the guy. And I had full supervision because I wasn't there. It was the year I bought—in 1976, I bought the Irvine Company. So it was the year I was busy on the Irvine Company, you know. And anyway, so I said, "You got to get here." Okay, he makes a date, breaks the date. It goes on for three years. I couldn't get him there. Finally, my brother and I—and my brother was a aero-engineer at Lockheed Aircraft the entire—my brother and I got into—we fixed it. We fixed everything. I said—but the last time I told to him, I said, "Richard, if you don't show up this time, you made a date, I'm going to sue you." He said, "You wouldn't do that." I said, "No, I" I said, "I'm upset enough with you that I would sue you if you don't show up." He didn't show up. I sued him. I knew he was insured because it was part of the sub—it was part of the specs that he had to be insured. And so I sued him. They set up a court for us, middle of summer, in July. So he showed up for that, and he had this lawyer who was representing really his insurance company. He goes down the list. "You own this, Mr. Taubman." I said, "I own that." "You own that?" "Yes, I own that." "You own that?" "Yes, I own that. I own that." Says, "You're a very rich man, aren't you, Mr. Taubman?" I said, "I'm a rich man with a leaky house." And the jury burst out laughing and gave me exactly what—that was it. [Laughs.] Gave me three quarters of a million dollars.

AVIS BERMAN: Why do you think that Richard Meier was so unresponsive?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: I don't know, ask him. I never know this thing, and I see him at parties and everything. He says, "You got to give me some work." I never give him any.

You know, I know he set up properly now, but he still has a lot of leaks. His buildings leak. [Laughs.]

AVIS BERMAN: Well, why—I know this is a stupid sounding question, but why do you think that is after—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, part of it is the design. This house in Florida had a—on the roof had a, out—sundeck. And the roof went down to the sundeck, so it became a sump—

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, a collecting pool.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: It became a sump. It wasn't supposed to be. And he didn't put enough drain to take the water away so water would build up over the—and he didn't put enough flashing in. I ordered—they were all stainless steel flashings, wonderful stashing. But they only went up four inches and they were supposed to go up eight inches. That would have made a difference. And it made a swimming pool. But—and the drains weren't large enough to take the water away. It was engineering. And—

AVIS BERMAN: I'm surprised because he was obviously an experienced architect by then.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, not then so much. This was, you know, 1976. It's almost 40 years ago, 38 years.

AVIS BERMAN: So he was very young when you hired him—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Huh?

AVIS BERMAN: So he was fairly—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, sure, 38 years. He's practically my age. He must be 82 or 83, so [inaudible].

AVIS BERMAN: Well, after—but you fixed the house so that were no more leaks.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No.

AVIS BERMAN: And so—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: But my—I got married and my wife—I thought she liked the house. I was crazy about the house. But there were problems in terms of noise and, you know, there were problems, you know. The bedroom had—we had this two-story glass and, you know, everything—it was a beautiful, beautiful house. And she'd wake

up in the morning and there'd be one of those boats on the lake that's—with a microphone, some of the guy's saying, "That's Alfred Taubman's home." And she's in bed. [Laughs.] Anyway, she ended up telling me one day, she says, "You know, I hate this house." I said, "You hate this house? How could you hate it?" She says, "I hate it." So a friend of mine had a house by—what's the Florida architect—

AVIS BERMAN: Addison Mizener?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Mizener, a Mizener house and terrible shape. And he was—he got [inaudible] chairman of an insurance company and he got in trouble and he had to sell the house. I made a deal with him and bought the house. And I put as much money into fixing it up as I did buying it. Nice house.

AVIS BERMAN: But both of you like it.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Both liked it. I like it. It's 1924, year I was born.

AVIS BERMAN: So it's a Spanish revival. It's a—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, sort of. You know, he's—this is—it's—from one angle, it is. You go through, it's a little Norman and a little this and little of that and—but generally, you're right, generally Spanish.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Are we about winding up here?

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, well, you know, could we have a few more minutes because I haven't talked about Sotheby's, so we have to do a little of that. I mean, I'm really interested in retrospect, looking back, what do you think were the, you know, the most important changes that you brought to Sotheby's?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Oh, man [inaudible]. [They laugh.] Sotheby's was an institution that really didn't care about its clients. It took it for granted that the clients would come and buy. They didn't understand salesmanship. They didn't understand they were selling a consumer product, which they were. And that was—I had to change the way they addressed customers, the way they presented things, their space. The space was all wrong. They were working out of—I changed all the spaces. I made major changes in everything. I structured, restructured the way things were sold in terms of divisions. I could go on and on and on. I mean, it just—we made major, major changes.

AVIS BERMAN: How did you get, you know, more individuals in, as opposed to dealers?

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Well, they—primarily, Sotheby's and Christie's were wholesalers basically for dealers. That's what they really were. And I wanted them to become direct sales to customers, to the ultimate owners. That's what I wanted them to deal with because theoretically, I could get the consigners to get retail rather than wholesale. That was the difference. And to be competitive, we knew that the—when somebody took a painting to a dealer, he'd offer them a wholesale price. He'd give them credit, which they objected to with me giving them a credit, but that's another thing. And consequently they would get up while—what we did, we changed it, but always told them. But if they, you know, if they stayed with the program, they would do 10 times as much business, which they have. They've all gotten rich. There wasn't one worth \$1 million when I took over Sotheby's. And then, they were all worth more than \$1 million because I changed the market. I did. I mean I hate to sound braggadocious or something.

AVIS BERMAN: No, no, I want—I want—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: And I'm sorry if I sound that way, but I did change the market. I changed the way things were sold. I opened up the market. I made it transparent, which it never was. And I mean we made a big difference. Is that what you wanted to hear?

AVIS BERMAN: Well, right, well I was interested. Yes, in—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Huh?

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, exactly, in some of the specifics, but I realize it's so—it's so global that it's pretty.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: It was a global thing. I opened offices all over the world, which didn't exist. Some of them were closed. Most of them are still open. And [inaudible] business change.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, also now—

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: More centralized. On the other hand, Gagosian has 11 offices. I don't know what he does through 11 offices. Must divide the paintings up in little pieces and send a piece to everyone. I mean, I don't know how that works. We couldn't do it with the auction because you can't get enough stuff that people are

interested in.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, usually, if there's a big thing, they travel it to several venues.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, we get bids over the phones and so on, that's correct. That's—I basically started that. You know, that wasn't done before. I started the phone bids.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, well that's really important, too.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, I started the phone bids because that wasn't, you know, I changed, you know, I moved the company over. We built six stories on top of four stories without missing a day's work in the four stories. And we then shifted the four story people up and then built the four stories. And we—I did all this stuff and still ran my business, you know. I was chairman of New York Stock Exchange—two New York Stock Exchange companies.

AVIS BERMAN: No, it's amazing. It's amazing. You had energy. That's for sure.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: Yes, I had a lot of energy. I still have a lot of energy.

AVIS BERMAN: I agree.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: But we're doing other things.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay well, thank you very much. I appreciate this. Thank you. I just couldn't let this go by without having something, you know, something on—say something on Sotheby's.

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN: No, I understand.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]