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My Life in The Art World

by

James Thrall Soby

Part 1

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Childhood and Adolescence

On several occasions I was tempted to suggest to my good friend, James Thurber, a caption for one of his cartoons for the New Yorker. The drawing would depict a languid young man slouched on a sofa in an elaborate living room, while his mother explained to a dowager friend, "Poor Cecil had a very happy childhood, so he's never amounted to much."

I never mentioned the caption to Jim Thurber for the very good reason that, unlike some New Yorker cartoonists, he always invented his own captions, and they were an integral part of his visual humor. Nevertheless, the drawing and caption have somehow recurred to me because my own childhood was happy and untroubled, so far as I can remember.

It's true that I did have some sort of nervous collapse when I was about seven or eight. My mother and father had enrolled me in Miss Wheeler's Outdoor School for Boys and Girls near our house in Hartford, and I had spent a month or more trying to learn the three Rs on an unheated porch. Hartford has not yet rivaled Nassau and Montego Bay as a tropical winter resort, and as protection against New England's autumn cold we students were encased in very heavy, woolen Eskimo suits, with hoods for our heads and thick mittens and boots for our hands and feet.

I've never known where Miss Wheeler got the idea for our uniforms, though I suspect it came from an article in the National Geographic on Alaska and how the seal-hunters kept warm. The only trouble in relation to school work was that the uniforms we wore were impossibly cumbersome, and it was hard to move around.

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This difficulty was magnified for me in that I was left-handed, and the inkwells on the desks were all placed on the right, I assume to protec t us against growing up left-handed and therefore likely victims of what the Italians call "the Evil Eye". In any case, on cold days the ink froze, and on one such day Miss Wheeler stood over me, pointed her unbelievably long and bony finger at my face and asked why I hadn't finished my lesson when all the others had written theirs long since. I tried between sniffles to explain that I was left-handed and that anyway I couldn't break the ice in my inkwell. Miss Wheeler was in no mood to deal with southpaw spastics and she bellowed at me, "You finish up in ten minutes or stay after school until you have." Suddenly the trumpets of riot and rebellion blared back and forth in my head. I not only didn't stay after school, I fled the premises at once and took refuge on a vacant lot near our house on Forest Street. My father, warned by Miss Wheeler of my disappearance, found me there in an hour or so and lugged me home, his face flushed with anger and relief. The only thing he said to me on the short trip was,"For heaven's sake, what have you got that ridiculous Eskimo suit on for?" Then my tears really let go.

My mother met us at the door, saw that I was covered with light autumn snow and promptly phoned Dr. William Porter, who lived down the street and had taken care of everyone in the neighborhood, including Mark Twain. Dr. Porter always wore "morning" clothes, had a white goatee and was in general a man of immense dignity and kindliness. He assured my mother that I wasn't

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coming down with pneumonia, gave me some pills and ordered me to bed. I had stopped blubbering at the sight of him, and I was even more cheered when I heard him advising my family not to make me go back to Miss Wheeler's. Dr. Porter was a mild man, yet his voice was almost angry when I overheard him say that he thought fresh air was good for people, of course, but in limited rather than daylong quantities.

I knew, with profound gratitude and relief, after Dr. Porter spoke, that that was the end of Miss Wheeler's Outdoor School for Boys and Girls as far as I was concerned. But I would hardly be allowed to give up education entirely at the age of seven or eight and my parents took a dim view of the only public school nearby. A solution was found when our neighbor across the street, Arthur Day, found a tutor at Hartford's Trinity College for his son, Pomeroy, and myself. Pomeroy was my age, and we have remained friends all these years. When I wrote him recently to ask in what subjects we'd been tutored, he replied that he thought "only in French." I trust Pomeroy's memory more than mine, but I think we must have been taught other subjects, too, since I was admitted to Kingswood School when it opened its doors in 1916 on Farmington Avenue, a block away from my family's house. I remained there, except for a two-months' stay at Lawrenceville, until I graduated in 1923. They were the best school years I can remember.

Perhaps Kingswood would have accepted me if the only subject I knew was French. The scholastic training and requirements of the other students were equally specialized, and there were only eight

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or ten of us the morning school opened, though others streamed in throughout the day. Our ages ranged from about eight to eighteen, the oldest nearly ready for college, the youngest, like myself, just past learning their ABCs, though presumably Pomeron Day and I could already converse fluently with the ghosts of Racine and Voltaire. The headmaster, George R.H. Nicholson, an Englishman, taught all of us with one assistant. I've no idea how he managed it, but he was in every sense an extraordinary man whom all of his students revered and will revere to the end of their days. He had been brought to Hartford by Mr. and Mrs. Richard Bissell to tutor their sons. They had been so impressed by him that they had decided to let him open a school, named for his old school in England. He had the ideal temperament for a headmaster; it combined awe-inspiring authority with warmth, fairness and affection, effortlessly. I think none of his students will again see his like; I know I will not.

As is so often true of adults trying to remember their childhood, my brightest memories are of summer vacations. Late in June my father, mother, older brother and I would set off in the family's mammoth Packard touring car for Woodmont, some ten or twelve miles south of New Haven on Long Island Sound. Since my father had rented a farm for the summer season, he seemed to think it only natural that we would take with us in the Packard's back seat a small Shetland pony for my brother and myself to ride and for my mother to drive in a handsome wicker carriage. My mother, being a sensible woman, was frightened to death of the little beast.

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She used to try to placate its savage instincts by letting it wander into the Woodmont dining room and eat butter off the plates. This freedom was obviously bad for the pony's cholesterol and hence bad for its disposition. Though I rode the pony around the farm comfortably and without fear, my mother drove it only once, with my brother and myself aboard. She began screaming for help almost as soon as she picked up the reins. The pony looked back at her with loathing and broke into an uncontrollable gallop. We were rescued by the first of a series of my father's chauffeurs, and the beautiful little carriage was put in permanent storage, to my father's intense disgust and sorrow.

My brother and I roamed at will around the farm and up and down the beach. Woodmont was near New Haven, as I've said, and this fact, plus my father's interest in the building of the Yale Bowl, probably accounts for my youthful passion for Yale University. One day at Woodmont I was running full speed across a field yelling "Hooray for Yale" at the top of my lungs. I suppose I thought this performance needed some climactic effect, because I turned a somersault - right into a newly deposited cow-flop. It was a grisly business, to put it mildly, and my head was scrubbed for hours. Years later my mother would recall the incident and say of it, "That's probably why my son still has more hair left than most of his contemporaries." I don't think Frances Fox has caught on to the treatment yet.

This was not the end of my troubles with Yale, and I might as well finish with them here. When I was about eleven I was

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desperately in love with a Forest Street neighbor, Timmy Robinson. To impress her, I one day ran down her porch like a madman, again yelling "Hooray for Yale," and fell down the porch steps breaking my arm in three places. Miss Robinson was even less impressed with me than before, I'm sorry to say.

Today I have the greatest respect for Yale University but my troubles with Old Eli have continued in milder form. Soon after World War II, A. Whitney Griswold, the new President of Yale and an old friend of mine, asked me to join the Board of Governors of the Yale University Art Gallery. He told me that I was his first appointment and that he thought they needed new, alien blood on the Gallery's Board. I was flattered and accepted at once, though I did ask why they didn't stick to Yale men, a number of whom were distinguished art collectors. Anyway, I drove up for meetings faithfully from New Canaan and enjoyed myself very much, especially since the discussion was always about art and was seldom side-tracked by questions of finances and policy as so often happened at Acquisitions Committee meetings at our Museum. I was particularly impressed by the late Chauncey Tinker, especially when he was not leading the conversation to the careers and works of Tennyson and Browning, two poets whose claim to eternal fame has always baffled me.

After three years of this, however, I was just pulling out of our driveway, bound for New Haven, when I suddenly thought I should check with the Yale Art Gallery on the time of the meeting, it being the first of the fall season. A cheerful voice answered,

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told me that the meeting was at the usual time and then, almost as an afterthought said, "Didn't anyone tell you that the Board now consists only of Yale men?" Of course no one had let me know, nor did anyone remember that I had proposed this restriction in the first place. Anyway, a short time later blessed Paul Sachs asked me to serve on the Visiting Committee for the Fogg Museum at Harvard. I served for a comparable length of time and then had to resign because of the pressure of work at our Museum in New York. Harvard thereupon sent me a handsomely engraved cigarette box in leather as a token of thanks. I'm not trying to make a qualitative distinction between two of this country's greatest universities. I'm merely saying that if a son of mine needed to learn good manners, I'd buy him a ticket to Cambridge rather than New Haven.

I seem to have digressed from the subject of Kingswood School, one of the new country day schools in this country at the time. In the fall of 1918 the school moved out of its inadequate little house on Farmington Avenue to the very large house which Mark Twain had built and lived in during his Hartford years, until financial reverses had forced him to find a smaller house in a much smaller Connecticut town. The Twain house is on Farmington Avenue and was part of a large property which Mark Twain and his literary friends had acquired and named "Nook Farm". Its eastern boundary was Forest Street where I was born and grew up and where, more notably by far, Harriet Beecher Stowe had lived in a fine, early Victorian house and been plagued by the riverboat language of her illustrious

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neighbor, Mark Twain. I remember that as a young child I used to hear neighbors talking about Mrs. Stowe in her senility, walking up and down the street and singing incomprehensible songs.

Both the Twain house and the Stowe house have been skillfully restored in recent years and are open to the public on certain days and hours. Neither house has been allowed to fall into decay with the passage of time: Mr. and Mrs. Richard Bissell had bought and lived in the Twain house for some years after Mark Twain departed; the Stowe house was constantly being repaired by Miss Katherine Day, one of Mrs. Stowe's direct descendants. And now both houses attract many visitors each year and are prospering as long-overdue public monuments to Hartford's literary past.

Since Mr. and Mrs. Bissell had discovered Kingswood's headmaster, Mr. Nicholson, in the first place and had been among the most influential of the school's founders, it seemed appropriate that Kingswood should move into their house when the Bissells moved to nearby Farmington. From a selfish point of view, the new location was ideal for me. I had only to walk through my backyard and past the house of Mark Twain's Hartford friend, Charles Dudley Warner, and I was on the school's property. Besides, I felt very much at home in the Twain house because I had gone there every year for Christmas parties given by Mr. and Mrs. Bissell. The enormous Christmas tree in the living room was lighted by real candles -- and this despite the facts that Mr. Bissell was president of the Hartford Fire Insurance Company and that burning real candles on a drying Christmas tree was such a hazard that almost

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everyone else had begun to use electric bulbs. I think that I knew best the glass conservatory in the Twain-Bissell house. Harriet Beecher Stowe had designed it and the Bissells' older son kept there a small, live alligator, presumably brought home from Florida by his parents. I also went to the Twain house often to court (unsuccessfully) the Bissells' daughter, Anne-Caroline, who had the most beautiful, very long, brown hair I had ever seen or have ever seen since.

Down a hill to the west of the school's new quarters there was a flat section of ground which the school immediately converted into a football field. The field was only ninety yards long, a fact which didn't bother the headmaster, Mr. Nicholson, in the slightest, since he had never even seen American football played. And since nearly all of us on the first team were about my age and size, ninety yards was quite long enough, especially since our opponents were usually larger, older and deeper of wind.

The field was bounded on the south by a meandering, dark brown, incredibly evil-smelling river known as The Hog. I swam across this river once to retrieve a football and the therapeutic benefits were not quite equal to those of the volcanic mud baths at Ischia in Italy. But The Hog was an appealingly sinister river, the rats scurrying along its banks as big as groundhogs, the filth indescribable. A classmate of mine, John Cooley, tried to give the river dignity by rowing to school on it from his family's house on nearby Woodland Street. It was an uphill try, not helped at all by the city's euphemistically re-naming the

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river The Park, as though anyone could believe he was walking in a park near that unbearable stench. Finally, the river was almost entirely covered over by a concrete road. But I think the Hog River is still alive, that Bill Bissell's alligator, now fourteen feet long, lies gurgling in its mud and that one day it will break free of its concrete coffin and there will be dancing on its banks. It was a strange, unforgettable river, very like some women who are so ugly that they sometimes appear beautiful.

On my way to school by the back way from Forest Street, I always walked by a large building which had been Mark Twain's coach-house and was now used by the school as a locker room. The building had not, however, entirely lost its original purpose, for in it was stabled a small stallion named Handsome Dick. The horse belonged to the school's superintendent of grounds, Professor George W. Brown, who had driven the horse from Catalina, California, to Coney Island, New York in 1917, alone except for a faithful dog. I assume that George Brown had awarded himself the title of professor on completing this long journey which he claimed (and I tend to believe him) no one else had ever tried. Or perhaps he earned the title by writing an account of his exploit, entitled From Coast to Coast, a book of which I proudly own a copy inscribed by the author. Even if he had driven Handsome Dick only across the street, I think Professor Brown was entitled to some sort of scholarly distinction. He was without any question the most fluent master of obscene oaths and language I've ever known. He was fairly tolerant with members of our school teams. But when visiting

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football or baseball squads arrived and littered up the locker room, he would let go a string of expletives which can best be described as gorgeous.

Next to the converted stable was Mark Twain's squash court. We played basketball in the tiny space in the winter and in the spring we played baseball on another field on the Twain property, just across the Hog River from the football field. I seem to have played on all three teams and to have been captain of all three at different times during my seven years at Kingswood. My classmates tell me I was a good athlete. I suppose I must have been because I won the prize for general athletics at Kingswood and later at Taft School, where I went for one year after graduating from Kingswood. But this physical prowess, if it existed, is difficult to remember and the effort to do so makes my present-day arthritis flare up miserably. The one thing I remember clearly and with amusement is that the football coach at Taft wrote that I played well "because he loves the game." The truth is that I loathed football except when we were playing other schools. The practice sessions seemed to me an utter bore, though I liked practicing basketball, baseball and track. I have no explanation for the fact that the game I played best apparently was the one I liked least.

During the years Kingswood School was occupying the Mark Twain house, my family abandoned Woodmont as a summer retreat, since it was slowly being engulfed by the expanding city of New Haven. We spent the summers instead at various houses my

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father rented in a small resort community called Neptune Park, a few miles south of New London on Long Island Sound. My father insisted on being right at the shore and most summers he rented the house belonging to Walter Garde, whose family owned hotels in Hartford and New Haven. There was a clean little beach in front of the house and I spent much of my time swimming and diving and occasionally paddling our canoe down to a sort of miniature Atlantic Beach which was called Ocean Beach. Ocean Beach now belongs to the city of New London and has been made into a highly respectable park area. In those days it was a honky-tonk little amusement center, especially during the years of World War I. There were hot-dog stands, games of chance, bowling alleys and shops and always, during the war, sailors and their questionable lady companions. The young at Neptune Park were allowed to go there almost at will, strangely enough, but we had to go home early, usually walking back through a tiny park where the ground at evening was strewn with seamen and their temporary loves.

At Neptune Park I made one friend who became closer to me than my older brother. His name was Robert Storrs and our friendship hasn't dwindled over the past fifty-five years. There was also a pretty, extremely bright girl named Peggy Sullivan, and we were constantly together. I don't remember what she and I did all day and most of every evening except that as time went on whatever we did was naggingly harmless and chaste.

After my father died in 1921, my mother rented another house in Neptune Park and my grandmother and grandfather Hazlewood came

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down to spend the summer with us so that my grandfather could use my father's speedboat which he had bought from the estate. I remember vividly that one day Peggy Sullivan, Storrsy and I were walking along the bank of New London's Thames River and suddenly out in the harbor a speedboat caught fire and exploded. Peggy, brighter in eye and mind than either of her two male escorts, knew at once that it was my father's former boat and that my grandfather must have been steering it at high speed. She was right as usual, and very soon we saw a figure in the water, swimming the breaststroke to shore. My grandfather clambered ashore almost at our feet, cursing wildly and blowing water like a whale. I offered to run for a doctor and this proposal, said my grandfather, was ridiculous. For him it was.

Grandfather Hazlewood had been one of the leading experts in the country on the quality of cigar tobacco, had brought back from Cuba a pocketful of seed from which many of the tobacco fields in the Connecticut Valley have grown, had a little Connecticut town named for him in thanks, and abruptly at the age of forty had retired, to my grandmother's abiding disgust. He spent the remainder of his long life buying and tinkering with boats, in Florida in the winter, on a lake in Canada in the summer. If by some chance one of his boats was running well, he invariably banged it into something or it blew up, like the one in New London's harbor. I remember that once in Canada he ran into the only other boat afloat on a lake 31 miles long. The skipper of the other boat was not only equally elderly but stone deaf and he carried a

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hearing aid as large and very like the old Victrola amplifiers. When the two men were arguing about whose fault the accident had been, my grandfather held the otehr man's trumpet up to his ear instead of bellowing into it. I therefore think the argument ended in a futile draw. I know the two elderly men never tried to speak to each other again, though they had been friends for thirty years.

Each fall I went back to Kingswood, of course, and today, in my sixties I tend to think, as I've said, that my athletic career there is entirely fictional. Yet it couldn't have been because it caused a rather unpleasant interruption in my peaceful life. The father of a crony of mine at Kingswood was a nice man named Russell Lee Jones, an ardently devoted alumnus of Princeton University. Most Princeton men I've known are hooked on the subject of their alma mater, but Mr. Jones was a hopeless addict. His only son, Graham, slept under a Princeton blanket and knew as soon as he could walk and talk where he would eventually go to college. Mr. Jones thought I should go there, too, so that I could play football under the only decent auspices, and he once took Graham and me down to meet Mr. Roper, Princeton's head football coach at the time. I doubt that at the age of thirteen or fourteen we made much impression on Mr. Roper but to clinch a victorious alliance in the future, Mr. Jones arranged for Graham, myself and a third friend, James Butler, to be sent to Lawrenceville School from whence the students went on to Princeton almost automatically.

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I really don't know why I so disliked Lawrenceville, though relentless homesickeness was probably the main reason. In any case, I didn't last there long, because in December, just as I was to take my term exams, a very strange thing happened. One night I had a frightening nightmare in which I dreamed that my father had been killed in an automobile accident. The dream didn't evaporate in the morning, as dreams usually do; it stayed with me all day, grew constantly in intensity and came back with blinding reality the second night. I didn't even take my exams but sat in my room, brooding and melancholy and more and more convinced that my dream had been true. On the second morning the kindly headmaster called me into his office and told me he had bad news for me. Before he could say more, I blurted out, "Yes, I know, my father was killed in his car driving to New London. I must go home at once and I'm nearly packed." The housemaster looked at me in utter astonishment and then said quietly, "I'm afraid your're right. Your father wasn't killed in an accident. He drove to New London to look at a house he wanted to rent for the summer, caught cold in the unheated house and died of pneumonia the day after he got home. Someone is here to take you back to Hartford on the train." I've never in my life believed entirely in ESP or any other occult experience. And yet those last few days at Lawrenceville School are as vivid to me now, fifty years later, as they were at the time.

A week after my father's funeral, I returned to Kingswood School. Many of my friends were still there and the greatly

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expanded faculty was young and extremely able (my favorite was the late John McGuinn, who taught mathematics, a subject both he and I knew I could never possibly learn). Mr. Nicholson, the headmaster, was still very much in charge of everything and he and I progressed to addressing each other as "Nick" and "James", a familiarity which we at times found strained but wouldn't have given up for anything. I spent my afternoons encased in athletic equipment of various kinds, depending on the seasons, and through my English teacher, Harold Gleason, I became deeply interested in literature and began writing deplorable pieces for the school magazine.

During the school's four years in the Mark Twain house, before it moved to West Hartford and its own buildings, there was talk in Hartford of converting the house into a Mark Twain Memorial. For some reason I've never quite understood, Nick was very much opposed to the idea and pointed out that Mark Twain's later Hartford years had been miserable because of his daughter's death and his mounting financial troubles. He did unbend to the extent of allowing a bust of the great author to be placed on the school's lawn, but the bust was always being stolen and ending up in the junk shops on Hartford's Mulberry Street. I wonder to this day whether Mark Twain's recurrent and magic colloquialism was too much for Nick's classical education to take.

The years went by quickly, as they do in youth. I continued to brood about my father's death, especially after I was reminded of it painfully a year after he died. In those days far more

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frequently than now estates were published in the local newspapers when they were filed in Probate Court. I had never thought of my father as being at all rich. But one day I was stopped on Forest Street by a neighbor a little older than I whose family's politics were known locally as extremely left-wing. His name was Toscan Bennett and he

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My father was intensely interested in baseball and for some years was president of the Hartford Baseball Club, a minor league team on which the immortal Lou Gehrig was later to play briefly. His store on Main Street was a meeting place for ball players, according to no less an authority than the great Connie Mack, and his interest in baseball led indirectly to a turning point in his life. One of Hartford's rabid ball fans was a man named William Gray, an inventor by profession and a heavy drinker by preference. Gray had invented the inflated chest protector for catchers and umpires; he had sold the patent for a small amount of ready cash to Spaulding and Co., the sporting goods people, when his thirst was plaguing him unduly. He then invented a machine which allowed anyone to make phone calls by depositing coins in a phone box when making a local or long distance call. My father was both alert to the possibilities of this invention and determined that William Gray would not once again be bilked. He built a factory in Hartford, gave a sizeable amount of stock in the business to Gray and started the Gray Telephone Pay Station Company, for many years the only such company in this country, the machines being rented rather than sold to customers in all the cities and towns from coast to coast.

Coin boxes of various kinds and for various purposes had been known in Europe for some time, though none, I think, had been used for telephone service. Oddly enough, the most difficult problem William Gray had to solve was how to return the coin to its owner if a wrong number or no number at all was reached by the depositor.

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It seems strange that implacable rage would ensue if a person saw his small coin disappear in a box with no result except dead silence, but this seems to have been especially true of pay telepones. The same emotion is aroused by other pay machines, as all of us have seen in watching customers trying to jiggle and bang machines back to life in games of chance or candy and cigarette vending contraptions. But a silent phone when you've paid your money is apparently the most serious criminal of all. William Gray solved the problem by inventing a device through which the phone office could short the connection if the call didn't go through -- don't ask me how -- and the coin would be returned to its depositor.

Its patents being unique, the Gray Telephone Pay Station Company prospered for some years after my father's death. It became more and more apparent, however, that no one could run the business like my father, though my older brother tried very hard and so did several of my father's banker friends. By the early 1930's it was apparent to members of the Gray family and my own that we should get out of the company. I remember that as a preliminary move in this direction my brother and I sold fairly large blocks of stock; my mother refused to join us on the touching but mistaken notion that any business my father had founded would prosper forever. Finally, the gigantic American Telephone & Telegraph Company made what seemed to me a fair offer to all stock-holders, for all outstanding shares. I don't really know why this deal fell through, though probably because a few minor stockholders held out. In any

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case, my family later sold the rest of our stock at reduced prices and eventually Western Electric began making its own machines. Before my brother died of a heart attack some ten years ago, he and I used to commiserate with each other over the number of pay phones appearing on almost every block throughout the country. I stubbornly think there is a great deal of emotional good to be had from crying over spilt milk.

In the autumn of 1922, Kingswood moved from the Mark Twain house to its new buildings in West Hartford. The buildings and the entire campus had been designed by the well-known Boston architect, Edwin Dodge, of whom his erstwhile wife, Mable, once wrote one of the most enigmatic marital comments on record. "Edwin Dodge," she said, "has a very New England back." I've no idea what this means and some of her other comments on life puzzle me still. Apparently, I'm not alone in this regard. Once she and her second husband, the painter Maurice Sterne, were approaching Taos, New Mexico, and the former Mable Dodge couldn't conceal her excitement. "It makes me feel so near," she exclaimed and to this comment Sterne quite sensibly replied, "Near what?" So naturally she divorced him, too.

I met Edwin Dodge once when Kingswood's new buildings were being constructed. But my memories of him are dim whereas I remember vividly meeting the famous Mable Dodge in New York many years later. She had decided to give a soiree to introduce her new, Indian husband, Tony Luhan. I don't know why I was invited, but I was, and all we guests were warned by Mrs. Luhan on arrival

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not to interrupt her husband if he felt impelled to speak, which I gathered was a rare occurrence. It seemed so that evening. For almost an hour Tony Luhan sat motionless in his Indian blanket. And then suddenly he addressed us all in a gruff voice. He said, "I want a new Buick," and went back to smoking his pipe. Not everyone has had the privilege of being present when such a metaphysical pronouncement is made, and I'm grateful.

My last two years at Kingswood went by swiftly and soon I was making a very bad commencement address, being given a prize for athletics and a gold medallion from my classmates which I treasure deeply.

I had passed all my college board examinations except the one in geometry -- a truly incomprehensible subject and because it was thought I was a year too young for college, I became a member of the senior class in Taft School, in Watertown, Connecticut. I've only two clear memories of the year at Taft: that from October to June I was encased in athletic equipment of various kinds; and that my first roommate flunked out at Christmas and was replaced by a character named Philip Cushman Barney, who has remained one of the unfailing delights of my life. Since the only subjects I needed to take in preparation for college were geometry and American History, most of my classwork consisted of reading modern literature with my Kingswood friend, Arthur Shipman, under the informal supervision of a bright and sensitive faculty member named Rollo De Wilton. Mr. De Wilton introduced Arthur Shipman and me to a great number of books by contemporary poets and novel-

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ists and he was certainly the only person alive, except for my Grandmother Hazlewood, who thought I should try to be a writer rather than an aging athlete. This struck me then -- it strikes me now -- as an uphill task. But Mr. De Wilton added a word of warning: "You must find something to write except fiction. You're too bad a liar to write novels." I must have taken his advice, for the garrulous number of books and articles on art I've written are really his fault, not mine.

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College; Paris

Almost all my classmates at Taft School went on to Yale University, but I decided to go to Williams College, my brother having gone there before me. I also suppose a secondary factor in my decision was that, on visits to my brother, I had liked the town of Williamstown and the surrounding landscape of the Berkshires. I remember little about my freshman year at Williams except being initiated into the Alpha Delta Phi fraternity, playing on the freshman football team and, after mid-years, diving on the varsity swimming team and going out unsuccessfully for the varsity track team in the spring. I liked nearly all my fraternity brothers, but a number of my closest friends belonged to Sigma Phi. I also began to write deplorable poems and short stories that year or the next for Williams' literary magazine, the Williams Graphic. The only talented writer for the Graphic was Gordon Washburn, long since a co-worker in the art museum field and an admirable man in every respect.

I spent the summer after freshman year at my Aunt Edith's house in Menlo Park, California, and fell in love with her daughter, Kay. I had been told to run four or five miles a day to get in shape for football in the autumn. I did so faithfully, until one day my eyes blurred and I fell flat on the track. I got up by myself, but the blurred vision and trembling would not go away and by the time my mother and I got back to Hartford in September, I was in a state of full nervous collapse.

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The kindly Dr. Porter was again called in. Dr. Porter was unusually stern. "Some nerves in your head have been affected after all the times you've been banged around," he said, "and there'll be no more football for you, ever." I took the news calmly, since I was sick to death of athletics.

Dr. Porter didn't want me to return to college at all. But after a month of lying in bed, I decided I'd never get over trembling if I didn't go back. I never regretted the move because I had a good room in West College, one of Williamstown's older buildings, and a very bright roommate from Albany named Ernest Miller. We got along famously, and we formed a small band of cronies to spend weekends at a broken-down speakeasy and hotel called "Pop" Carroll's halfway to Albany and Troy. I also worked quite hard preparing for classes, especially for classes in French literature, since I liked the teacher, Professor Metour, and used to see him and his family quite often. I treasure his memory because when my final spring exam was due he said: "Don't bother to take it. Come over to the house this evening and we'll talk about Baudelaire."

I got more and more depressed by the decorations in my otherwise pleasant room. They consisted mainly of banners from various colleges. One day I replaced one of the banners with a largish color reproduction of a painting by Maxfield Parrish. It showed a young girl, nude but sensibly misty, on a swing a few feet above an Arcadian terrace. I was spellbound by the picture and its carefree, mild eroticism, and I bought three or four additional

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Parrish color prints from the local junk dealer. Ernie Miller, my roommate, glowered and swore at them. And then one evening, to my astonishment, I joined him in his curses. "They're sentimental and lousy," I said. "There must be something better and more real I can get." I certainly couldn't get anything better from the Williamstown purveyor of secondhand furniture and bric-a-brac and on weekends I began dropping in at Curtis Moyer's gallery in downtown Hartford. Curtis Moyer was an elderly, nice and sensitive man who had an unmarried daughter to support, as every New England widower seemed to in those days. He handled the works of a number of Connecticut artists, from Hartford's Gedney Bunce to Mystic's Charles Davis, the latter his great favorite. I don't think I bought anything from Moyer while I was still in college, but he taught me the difference between a hand-painted oil by Charles Davis and a kodacolor Parrish reproduction. Later I bought two Charles Davis landscapes from him and quickly tired of them, too.

I think the turning point in my esthetic awareness -- a flattering term for blundering curiosity -- took place when I became interested in illustrated books. There were a great many such books on the market, illustrated by famous American artists like Rockwell Kent. I liked them, but after awhile they seemed heavy and forced, at least by comparison with the illustrated books Ambrose Vollard was publishing in Paris. By autumn, 1926, I'd made up my mind to go to Paris to see what was going on instead of returning to college. Luckily for me, my mother had never been abroad and wanted very much to see Paris, too. We sailed in October

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on the old SS Majestic.

I met no artists on that trip, not knowing how to manage an introduction. But it seems curious to me in retrospect to remember that the painter I wanted most to see was not Matisse, Picasso or Derain -- they were very much the Big Three at the moment in Paris, London and New York -- but Pierre Bonnard. I suppose this was because I owned and treasured a book illustrated by Bonnard. In any case, I didn't meet Bonnard until many years later and then only for a moment, though I remember clearly thinking he was the wrong size for an artist because he was tall and artists were supposed to be short. Still, my early enthusiasm for Bonnard may account for the fact that I still own a still life of grapes by him which I bought in 1932. I'm not sure that's the entire truth, because I've learned over the years that the Bonnard still life can knock any painting off the wall it hangs on, not necessarily because it's a better painting, but because it's a born firecracker and a few firecrackers in art are born, not manufactured.

Once in Paris, I spent most of my time prowling the streets and peering into the windows of art galleries, seldom getting up courage to go inside unless I could see that the rooms were already crowded. I bought nothing except more books illustrated by artists of what was then called "The School of Paris". I bought these mainly from bookshops because their prices were marked, and I had little money to spend. Nevertheless, toward the end of my stay of several months in Paris, I got tired of my own timidity, and began walking into the galleries, crowded or not, to see what was there. I even

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learned to glower at over-zealous salesmen, a defensive technique I've long since brought to a giddy perfection.

When not wandering the streets of Paris on both banks of the Seine, I spent most of my time in the Louvre Museum, and very gradually some rough sense of art's long chronology got settled in my mind. It was naturally easier for me to like the work of 19th century French painters than those of earlier schools and I developed a passion for the paintings of Gericault and Delacroix which has not yet left me. (There were extremely few pictures by the Impressionists to be seen in the Louvre at that time, but those I saw, I like enormously). I sometimes wonder whether it was my youthful admiration for French painters from Jacques Louis David to Courbet which ten years later led me to accept a commission from one of the most powerful American publishers to write a book about French Romantic painting. I know that I spent about three years working on the book, that it turned out to be about 1,200 pages long and that I thought such a book was needed to balance the overwhelming attention being paid by publishers and collectors to the Impressionists, the Post-Impressionists and their followers. My publisher didn't agree. He wrote that he liked the book, but was disappointed to see that there was no mention in it of Renoir and Cezanne! I had made the field covered by the book completely clear in the beginning, and I was so disgusted by the publisher's reaction that I threw the thick manuscript into an old suitecase and have never touched it since except to extract a chapter on Delacroix which the now-defunct Magazine of Art pub-

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lished in 1944 after I'd revised it. I think now that I really wasn't well-enough trained to write the book when I did. But I had worked for ten hours a day writing it and doing research. The book broke the back of my indolence; it owes me nothing whatever.

The winter of 1926 had been unusually cold in Paris, and my mother and I took a motor trip to the Riviera to get warm, but the weather there was even worse, my mother was desperately homesick, and in another month or six weeks we sailed home. The winter sea was horribly rough,and every day my mother asked the captain what made him so sure the boat couldn't possibly sink. It was a most uncomfortable trip, whereas going over had been pleasant, in good part because the elder G.F. Heublein, a friend of my family's, was aboard, and we had cocktails with him every evening..They were made with liquor which Mr. Heublein had moved to his tower on Avon Mountain, west of Hartford, when he had sold control of the Hotel Heublein and its mammouth cellars. This was during the first onslaught of the prohibition years, let's remember, and most American tourists were jamming the boat's bars. We went instead to Mr. Heublein's cabin, since he assured us that the liquor on the boat was too new and raw to drink. Campared with his, it probably was, but it seemed odd for someone to take his own gin, Bourbon and Scotch to Europe and back, when rum-runners were trying to land on every American beach, from every foreign port.

A year after we got back to Hartford, I married a Hartford girl named Elmina Nettleton whom I'd know for some time. She was just eighteen, and I had had my twenty-first birthday a week

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or so before the wedding. Our chief problem was for me to find some occupation, since both our parents had told us a man with a wife should work, whether or not he made any money at it. I finally came up with a solution which was quite possibly the worst of a lifetime perforated with impulsive solutions: I decided that I would become a playwright. I'd never been interested deeply in the theatre, a shortcoming which which remains true to this day, and I'd never been near the nearby Yale School of Drama, in those days presided over by Professor George Baker. Still, there was no point in delaying things unnessarily, so my new wife and I rented an apartment in New Haven, a few blocks from the Drama School. When we were settled, I ambled over to see Professor Baker. I disliked him intensely, especially when he told me he wanted to put me to work painting scenery, whereas I dreamed of writing immediate and long-lasting successes for Broadway. There's nothing more unbeatable than the arrogance of the very young, and I promptly told Professor Baker that I was not a painter but a writer. Precisely what this statement was based on, other than a few pieces in the Williams Graphic, I'm unable to say. But it brought a prompt reply: "everyone who comes here wants to write plays," Professor Baker said, "and at the moment I need people who can learn to paint scenery."

I left Yale School of Drama at once and never went back. That part was easy and I'd already trained for it as Miss Wheeler's Outdoor School for Boys and Girls years before. I had no remorse,

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because if Professor Baker couldn't recognize an incipient Shakespeare when he saw one, the burden of guilt when faced with future generations was his, not mine. Getting rid of the apartment was a more difficult matter. I though I solved it skillfully by buying a small, old house on the Main Street of Farmington, but my grandfather Hazlewood refused to let me sign the final papers, he being by then positive that my father's business instinct had not been passed on to his younger son. I ended up being under foot all day in a little apartment I rented in West Hartford, so to relieve the traffic and my wife's nerves, I got a small office in West Hartford Center where I could at last settle down to writing.

The only trouble was that I had no idea whatever what I wanted to write about. The days were rather long and only the visits of my lifelong friend, Robert Storrs, relieved the tedium, though he very often deepened my gloom by asking me what in God's name made me think I was an author and adding "an author of what?" When it got dark he and I would walk down the hill to my apartment and make Martinis out of bathtub gin. They were like amber on the tongue.

Since the Muse of Literature was being so hopelessly recalcitrant, there came a bitter moment when I thought there was nothing whatever I could possibly write about. In despair I accepted a job offered me in a Hartford stock brokerage firm by a man I knew and liked. I lasted in this job precisely one week and it was a most embarrassing week for me and especially for my broker--

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friend. I was always on time in the morning and I never left before the office closed. But the hours in between were a nightmare of fretful lassitude. I've never in my life been able to understand figures of even the slightest complexity. Balance sheets, of course, are the basis of stock brokers' opinions and prophecies. I fumbled around with sheets of paper when one of the bosses came into the office. As soon as he'd gone, I would resume lecturing another young man on the staff on the importance of Wallace Stevens, assuring him in a muted voice that Stevens wasn't a local poet because he lived in Hartford, but an international figure of first rank. At the end of the week, I got up my courage to tell the friend who'd hired me that I thought he'd made a mistake. He was a nice man and there was no bitterness in his voice when he said, "I quite agree." There was no dip in the market when I terminated my services.

By then I'd inherited my share of my father's money and my wife and I began to build a house in West Hartford. It was designed in the French Provincial style then so popular and it had a bar in the cellar, then even more popular. The bar was reached by a very narrow circular staircase from the living room, and we held many parties there during the first years I was working in the Wadsworth Atheneum.

Soon after we moved into the West Hartford house, I began to buy paintings and at last had adequate wall space for them. I bought them at first in New York only and from dealers who handled the contemporary Parisian masters. But that is another

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story. A bookshop at 27 Lewis Street, Hartford, in which I bought a third interest came first.

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27 Lewis Street

In the very early autumn of 1929, I bought a third interest in the bookshop Edwin Valentine Mitchell had started ten years earlier at 27 Lewis Street in Hartford. The house in which the shop was located was one of several two-story brick houses built on that short street toward the middle of the 19th Century. It was a beguiling location in downtown Hartford, and doubtless it had been chosen by Edwin Mitchell because it reminded him of places where bookshops were found in London, a city he revered. He had stacked new books from the creaky floors to the high ceilings on the ground floor; upstairs were the diminutive offices and wrapping counter and, later, a rarebook room presided over by a knowledgeable antiquarian, Crampton Johnson. The staff consisted of a highly experienced oldish bookseller, Lewis Stedman, whom Edwin had lured away from another Hartford shop, a very bright and energetic young woman, Elva McCormick, a bookkepper, a package clerk, and a pretty young Irish girl to run the lending library.

When I joined the bookshop, Edwin already had one partner, Cedric Smith, a likeable man who had belonged to the same fraternity as I at Williams College, though eight or ten years before. Poor, blessed, elegant Cedric had been gassed in the First World War and had developed TB. He became steadily more ill and soon after I began to work in the bookshop, was sent up to Saranac for a cure which, alas, never took place. Like Edwin he was a passionate Anglophile, and neither of my partners

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could understand why I preferred Paris to London. I drove up to see Cedric at Saranac as often as I could. This was in the days when TB was thought not to be infectious, and I remember vividly sitting around small rooms while Cedric and his fellow patients smoked, drank and coughed incessantly, all of them unbelievably cheerful. Cedric was obviously the hero of the colony, since he knew celebrated people and spoke with an English accent which was not in any way affected but the result of his having spent so much time in London and his fervent wish that he had b een born British.

Cedric was in every way a marvelous man, but he never made it back to the bookshop. The last time I saw him was when he somehow got down to New York, and I met him in the Hotel Algonquin. He was both drunk and terribly ill that day. I put him to bed and tried to call a doctor for him, but he flatly refused. Instead, he insisted on getting up and taking me upstairs to see Dorothy Parker, an old friend of his who had once been married to a Hartford man. Mrs. Parker was then at the peak of her fame as a quick and ruthless wit, and I was struck dumb with awe and fright. I need not have been. She saw at once how ill Cedric was, made him comfortable on a couch and was extremely nice to both of us, though I kept on drinking as a precaution against a sudden Algonquin Round Table outburst which never came. We stayed a long time, and then I put Cedric on the train back to Saranac. I never saw him again, though we phoned back and forth several times a week, chiefly to discuss the bookshop's mounting financial woes which were worsened by the fact that in 1932 the

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shop's bank closed like many other banks as the Depression hit hard. Our bank never re-opened.

As I think back on it, Edwin Valentine Mitchell, Inc. was a very good bookshop. Hartford had long since passed its literary prime, of course, though leading writers like Sinclair Lewis lived there for a brief time and the internationally known poet, Wallace Stevens, was esteemed locally, not as a writer, but as an especially ruthless lawyer at settling insurance claims as a vice-president of the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company. There were lesser resident literary figures such as Robert Hillyer, who taught at Hartford's Trinity College, and Wilbut Snow, who taught at nearby Wesleyan University. Moreover, authors on lecture tours usually made their way to our shop and camped for hours on the two chairs in the back of the main room. They did, that is, if they got there before Edwin Mitchell's father and my grandfather Hazlewood were ensconced for the day to review older and better times and to shake their heads at Edwin's and my utter lack of business ability. I think I remember best the visit of the Irish poet AE (George Russell) because Edwin had told him I was interested in contemporary painting and AE spent three hours explaining to me that modern art was expiring from the strains and guilt of incest. AE was an imposing man, and I didn't have the nerve to tell him that I thought two of our time's most moribund painters were himself and D.H. Lawrence, both dying of incestuous relationships between art and literature.

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Whatever its decline as a literary haven since the days of Mark Twain, Hartford was still known in the trade as "a good book town." There was no real reason why the gookshop shouldn't have prospered. I think it would have if Edwin hadn't had such a passion for publishing books rather than for selling them. This passion had been whetted beyond control the year before I joined the shop. In that year Edwin had published a biography of the great 15th century poet, Francois Villon, written by the late D.B. Wyndham Lewis (not to be confused the the writer-painter and founder of the Vorticist movement in London, Wyndman Lewis). The book had been selected by the Book-of-the-Month Club and had also sold widely on its own, since Villon was and remains one of literature's most romantic figures. Another factor in the book's success was that only a very few people knew many accurate facts about Villon's Bohemian life. Presumably D.B. Wyndham Lewis did know the facts, though I am not the one to judge. In any case, the book's wild success prompted Edwin to publish a number of other books, some of them written by himself, which cost far more than they earned.

In compiling his own books, Edwin developed an idiosyncratic and incredibly swift technique. He would hack out long passages from earlier writers, whether or not these passages were printed in rare, old first editions, and add a running commentary of his own. He encouraged both Cedric and myself to add to his list of publications. Cedric did a conscientious job of reducing the famous and still slightly scandalous magazine of the 1890s, The Yellow Book to a one-volume anthology, and Edwin got

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me to write a ong foreword for a reprint of a story in Sir Walter Scott's novel, Redgauntlet. The sotry within the novel was called "Wandering Willie's Tale", and Edwin insisted that I begin the introduction by claiming that it was the second-best short story in the English language. I goggled at making so dogmatic a statement, but I said, "O.K., Edwin, but what is the best short story in the English language?" "That's just the point," Edwin replied blandly, "No one knows, so you've got the customers coming and going." I think "going" was the more accurate verb, since the little book sold only about 200 copies. "Don't worry," said Edwin cheerfully. "Times will change." I doubt exceedingly that they will change enough to make "Wandering Willie's Tale" a runaway best seller.

Edwin's choice of subject for his won books was unpredictab le, to put it mildly. He wrote a book about beards, though neither he nor his close friends wore one; he wrote a book about the joys of walking, a form of exercise he loathed as much as any other form; and finally he wrote a series of guidebooks to various states in the Union. One of the last of these was a book on Pennsylvania. During its brief course of preparation, Edwin asked me how I would rate the Philadephia Museum of Art. I replied without hesitation that I thought it one of the top art museums in the country. "That's good," said Edwin. "It gives me something to write about, because I've only been in Pennsylvania once and that was on a night train going through."

As a publisher, Edwin took a special delight in issuing

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books of poetry because, as he said frankly, they took up less print and fewer pages of paper. We published a book of poems by a far from negligible English woman named Muriel Stuart and another by a local woman whose name I forget but whose frequent visits to the shop to supervise her brainchild invariably sent Edwin down to the cellar to hide. I tried and tried to get him to see if any unpublished poems by Wallace Stevens were available. I think Edwin did try once by phone. But Stevens was a gruff, lonely and difficult man. He almost never came to the bookshop but he often spent his lunch hours visiting Hartford's extraordinary art museum, the Wadsworth Atheneum, where I was presently to work. Stevens told me once that some of his poems were directly inspired by paintings he'd seen in the Atheneum. Encouraged by this shared interest, I later asked him if he'd like to come to my West Hartford house for a small party in honor of Carl Sandburg. He replied tersely: "I will come only if Archibald MacLeish isn't there." This made things difficult in that MacLeish's wife, Ada, was a Farmington girl adored by everyone in the Hartford area. But I somehow managed and Stevens sat quietly in a corner while Sandburg strummed on his everlasting guitar.

Edwin's rather oblique regard for poetry led him to turn the shop over to the local poetry club once a month in the evening. But then he discovered that old Lewis Stedman, the mainstay of the shop, was not only running the meetings but had begun to write sommets himself. "That does it," Edwin told Mr. Stedman,

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"if you write any more poems, you're fired. Writing poetry has a very weakeneing effect on people, and you won't be able to work the next day." In this abrupt way America lost an incipient poet and regained an experienced bookseller, with a prodigious memory for the titles of books, their authors' names and their dates of publication.

I think Edwin Mitchell's middle name - Valentine - was especially appropriate, not b ecause February 14 had particular meaning for him as a day on which to express ardor, but because I've never known a man who so constantly, helplessly and hopelessly fell in love. There was nothing seasonal about this affliction, though it usually flared up in warm weather, presumably because he was aroused by the murmur of breasts under summer silk. But he was in love in winter, too, with various young ladies who came to work for us during the Christmas rush. He was usually chasing these ladies around the premises like a doubly berserk Harpo Marx, and he plied them with presents, bought on his frequent trips to London and consisting of leather cigarette cases too large and cumbersome to fit in any woman's handbag. He finally sensed that his generosity was not inflaming female passion properly and asked my advice. I told him to get something feminine in Paris, preferably perfume or costume jewelry. So on his next trip he came back proudly with a French cigarette case in suede, but that particular romance didn't survive much longer than the others.

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Like every retail store, we took inventory at the end of each year, and it was a tedious chore to list thousands of books. On New Year's morning we all pitched in. But by noon Edwin was bored with the task and retired to the cellar to drink gin by the pint and make hideous mating calls up the stairs in the hope that the pretty girl in charge of the lending library would join him. When this hope dimmed he would ask me to join him and bring along some of the bookshop regulars, like Frank Donahue, the box-office manager of Hartford's Parsons Theatre, whose dapper clothes were an unmistakeable reflection of his previous years on Broadway. We would emerge in the late afternoon, when old Stedman and Elva McCormick had done all the work.

The shop's financial condition got steadily worse, and Cedric Smith and I reluctantly decided on the phone that we had to close up or get Edwin out. We hated to take the latter course, not only because we were both fond of Edwin but also because he was a born bookseller. Over the years he had developed a dazzling number of sales techniques. For example, he always persuaded customers to inscribe books they bought as Christmas presents so that these books couldn't be returned or exchanged when the holiday hysteria had passed. I remember that once the American Booksellers Association sent up their top credit man to see why we were so slow in paying our bills. Edwin promptly discovered that the man was a Norwegian and just as promptly sold him four copies of a book on Norway we had just published. It had been

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written and illustrated by a local sculptor, Dudley Talcott. We saw the credit man only once again, and I'm not sure the Booksellers Association wanted to see him that often.

A year or so before our financial situation became acute, Edwin had been publishing a magazine called Book Notes. It was described as a bi-monthly periodical because, as Edwin explained to me slyly, many subscribers assumed that they would get their copies twice a month instead of every other month. Most of the magazine's contents were written by Edwin himself, and when he used outside writers he went as short a distance as possible to find them. Thus when Book Notes reviewed a new book of poems by Robert Hillyer, the review was written by Hillyer's wife, Edwin's excuse being that the person best qualified to judge a man's poetry was the woman who slept with him. The magazine's masthead became more and more elaborate; it finally listed offices in Singapore, Hong Kong, London and other faraway cities. Once, I remember, an elderly lady came back from a cruise to complain that she couldn't locate our Singapore office. "Naturally," said Edwin, "it was an Oriental holiday, and the office must have been closed."

Now at last in 1931 the beguiling game had to be brought to an end or the rules changed and Edwin forced out. Since my lawyer and lifelong friend, Arthur Shipman, was a bookshop regular, I didn't want to involve him, so I got another leading Hartford attorney to handle the case which friends assured me might be difficult. It was the opposite. Edwin and I continued

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to lunch together as we'd done for some years, a fact which so puzzled my lawyer that one day he blurted out: "Do you really have to see Edwin Mitchell every day while this suit is going on?" I replied that naturally I did, because otherwise neither Edwin nor I could keep up on news about current books and on the gossip about our customers. "Jesus," the lawyer said and walked quietly away. He won the lawsuit for me,and in 1932 we changed the listing of the shop, dropping Edwin's name. So far as I can remember, this was the only change which took place. Edwin still came to work most days. As a young man he had taught law in a university out in one of the Dakotas, and he now spent much of his time lecturing any lawyers who came near the shop on their disgraceful ignorance of their profession.

It cost me a lot of money to be Edwin Valentine Mitchell's partner. I don't regret a penny of it.

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Chick Austin

The first time I saw Chick Austin and his wife, Helen Goodwin Austin, together was late in 1929 or early in 1930, when I went to the apartment they had taken at 379 Farmington Avenue, Hartford. The apartment house was not hard for me to find, since it had been erected on built-up land over Kingswood School's former football field on the Mark Twain property. I remember being amazed by the quality of the furnishings, some of them bought from an exhibition of contemporary decorative art which Chick had held in this apartment in 1929. The Austins had been married in Paris during the summer of 1929, and they were building a house at 130 Scarborough Street, Hartford.

Their house was a daring gesture in that only the Colonial and, grudgingly, the Greek Revival styles were respected by Hartford's citizens as authentically "old". The house the Austins were building was à copy in wood of a Palladian villa that they had seen on the banks of the Brenta, between Padua and Venice. Hartford had learned to tolerate a few Victorian-Italianate villas, though it tore them down as soon as their inhabitants died. But a house in the manner of Palladio was too much for many Hartfordites to take. The Austin's property was down a steep hill, and even had a river on it, but it was the Hog, alas, not the Brenta. I remember one elderly citiaen telling me how glad he was that the Austin's house was set far back from the street. His comfort in this fact was not shared by Russell Hitchcock, who would arrange beforehand to have his car towed up to the

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street late at night when all of us went to one of the Austin's many parties. In winter Russell knew he would get stuck in the driveway, and there was no point fooling around with the problem.

Chick and Helen Austin had chosen as architect the well-known Leigh French. Mr. French, however, was always the first to say that the Austin house had been designed by Chick, not himself. There would have been little point in denying this, because every building Chick lived in or used carried the strong imprint of his taste, whether it was a tiny cottage on the lake at Windham, New Hampshire, or the houses he had in Hartford, and later, at Sarasota, Florida. The interior of the Hartford house is truly remarkable. Its living room walls are covered with fine 18th century panels on canvas; its dining room includes a niche of large size and delicate detail in the Austrian rococo style. Yet however much Chick admired rococo decoration, he was eager to prove that our own century had evolved its own elegance. The bedroom suite in his Hartford house was entirely modern, and so was the bar in the basement to which one edged cautiously and from which it took time to emerge.

Since I'm dexcribing household details, this seems the place to say that Chick was a superb cook and that no matter how many servants started preparing meals, Chick always took care of the final touches. This was true to the end of his life. I remember that once, a year or so before he died in 1957, he and I were doing a talk on art together in Sarasota. Beforehand he took my wife and myself to an exceptionally fine restaurant. In

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the old phrase, the food was fit for a king. But not for Chick. The proprietors were friends of his, and they were delighted to let him take over their kitchen to prepare our dinner. "If I could hire him I'd make a fortune," the lady manager said when we left for our lecture. Perhaps the excellent dinner gave us strength to face a rather hostile audience, made up largely of disgruntled, local artists.

I hadn't known Chick in 1928 when he first began to present a series of brilliant exhibitions at the Wadsworth Atheneum, and indeed I'd been abroad much of that year. But in the autumn of 1929 his show, "Selected Contemporary French Painting" had left me spellbound and was surely a factor in my decision to buy works by members of the School of Paris. By 1930 I was spending more and more time at the Atheneum and less and less at my bookshop on Lewis Street. Late that year I began taking an active part in the preparation of Chick's forthcoming shows of the Neo-Romantics and the surrealists, I working mainly on catalogues and labels, he hanging the shows with his usual rare taste.

Russell Hitchcock, Paul Cooley and I had become his principal allies in the struggle to convert the Atheneum into an important museum and a brilliant showplace for the allied arts. We were joined later by Eleanor Howland, and we were never without the support of such nearby museum directors as Jere Abbott of the Smith College Museum and Agness Rindge and John McAndrew from Vassar College's vaculty. But it was Chick's courage and

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energy which kept the struggle alive despite public mistrust and trustee caution.

From the very beginning of our association, I knew it was my function to back up Chick in his many activities, and we worked together against conservative opposition whatever its form. I remember that one day two of the Atheneum's elder statesmen tried to break up this unholy alliance by carting me off to luncheon in New York. I had known both men and liked them for years, their sons having been classmates of mine at school. But when they tried the old, tired technique of telling me that I had been behaving like Chick's stooge, I could only reply, "You flatter me." The luncheon broke up in a morose silence.

I think the only thing I ever scolded Chick about was his lack of interest in reading. The fact is that he was too restless to read much, though he was constantly poring over the illustrations in art books. There was one long book, however, which I persuaded him to read from cover to cover. This was Mario Praz' The Romantic Agony which appeared in English translation in 1933. It was the Italian critic's brilliant study of the Romantics' delight in pain, sorrow and self-inflicted malaise.I gave the book to Chick one day at lunch, and he not only read it from cover to cover but made it the basis for a number of lectures he gave on the dark side of Romanticism's coin. The lectures were given with Chick's customary legerdemain and witty eloquence.

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One of Chick Austin's favorite fields in art history was that of the Baroque in 17th century Italy. He was not alone in this preference, since the Sitwells in England and a growing number of scholars on the continent shared his belief that Baroque art had been overshadowed by that of the Renaissance on one side, the emerging rococo style on the other. But in this country at least, Chick was the most effective champion of the dramaturgy proposed by painters of the Counter Reformation. In this field, as in others, he had a quick sense of quality. I remember that once he bought in Italy a large image of Saint Catherine by the Genoese painter, Bernardo Strozzi. When only half the picture had been unpacked at the Wadsworth Atheneum, Chick took one look and said angrily, "That's not the painting I bought in Italy; it must be a copy." He was absolutely right, and after considerable wrangling the right picture was sent on to the Atheneum.

At one point in the earlier 1930's, Chick and I learned that the great art historian, the late Erwin Panofsky, was giving a series of lectures in New York on the Italian Baroque. The lectures were to be held in the auditorium of the Metropolitan Museum of Art under the auspices of New York University, and they were to be held once a week. Chick and I promptly enrolled in the course and drove each week to New York. Chick insisted on driving his car at terrifying speed even in rain, snow or sleet. The trip from Hartford to New York was then far more complicated and strenuous than in this day of throughways, and I have a vivid

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memory of our trips, always thinking that we and the car would end up in as convoluted a composition as anything devised by the most committed Baroque artists. But Chick was a skillful if reckless driver, and we always made the lectures on time. In later years when I was taking courses on Flemish painting under the incomparable Panofsky, I missed Chick's company badly.

Neither Chick nor I ever forgot the day Panofsky came to the Wadsworth Atheneum, took one look at a large painting by Piero di Cosimo which Chick had acquired and said firmly: "You've got the wrong title for this picture. Its subject is not Hylas and the Nymphs but The Finding of Vulcan." Panofsky's reasons for the change of title were promptly disputed by an eminent British art historian, but Panofsk's rebuttal was a masterpiece of logic, and the English critic was made to look foolish. The painting By Piero di Cosimo ever since has been shown and catalogued as The Finding of Vulcan, and Panofsky's argument for the change in title is as exciting to read as the best detective stories of Georges Simēnon.

In addition to his vast erudition, Panofsky possessed a fast and variable wit. In his opening lectrure on the early Flemish painters he began by saying that he had been brought up as a lawyer. He added that that profession had proved too abstract for him to understand, and he had turned to "the factual, precise and tangible study" of art history. I remember even more clearly the night Iris Barry, her husband Dick Abbott and

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I took him on his first visit to a New York nightclub. The floor shows were elaborate in those days, and Panofsky stared spellbound at the long row of girls dancing on the stage. Suddenly he whispered to me, "I think the third girl on the left used to be a pupil of mine." I asked him how we could possibly be sure, and he answered quickly, "Go ask her if she knows Durer's exact birthdate. If she says "yes", she's no pupil of mine." I'd never b een backstage in a nightclub, and I had no intention of beginning with such an introduction. Nor did I share Panofsky's belief that the girl looked like a fine-arts graduate student. She looked more like an expensive member of the Oldest Profession to me, and I thought she might assume I was asking when her illegitimate child had been born. When and if it was born, I'm quite sure she hadn't named it Albrecht.

In 1931 Chick Austin and I had put on the large surrealist exhibition at the Wadworth Atheneum. In that same year Salvador Dali and his countryman, Luis Bunuel, collaborated on what must surely be one of the finest and most scandalous films of its time. This was a full-length film called "L'Age d'Or" and was the second film the two men had made together, the first being a short production entitled <u>Un Chien Andalou</u> which had achieved a certain notoriety because it showed what appeared to be a human eyeball being dissected by a razor blade (actually the eye was that of a dead pig).

Because of the interest in our exhibition we naturally were

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anxious to show L'Age d'Or in Hartford. But the Avery Memorial Wing of the Atheneum had not yet been built, and there was no other auditorium which could possibly be persuaded to show a film which had caused such a furor in Paris that one of its principal backers, the Vicomte de Noailles, was very nearly excommunicated by the Catholic Church. In 1932 or 1933, however, Chick and I decided to show the film privately and, since the living room in my West Hartford house was larger than his, we showed the movie there, I having hired a professional projectionist and invited a number of friends, mainly from New York, whom Chick and I thought might be interested.

I don't think anyone knows to this day precisely which passages in the film were invented by Dali and which by Bunuel. Nevertheless, my own belief is that Dali contributed the ideas for two major sequences, both especially lurid. In the first, the leading lady commits fellatio on the bare, big toe of a sculpture of a pope. In the second, a group of priests clinging to a rocky hillside are suddenly transformed into praying mantises. The reason I believe in this attribution is that Dali was then obsessed by sexual allusions. Also, he had written, or was about to write, an article in praise of the praying mantis, an insect which has the rather disagreeable habit of killing its mate as soon as its marriage has been consummated. I never got the true story of which of the two men created which parts of the scerario. I couldn't get it even from Luis Bunuel, whom Iris Barry of the Museum of Modern Art's Film Library had hired to keep Dali from starving during World War II and who spent an hour

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or so each day in my small office at the Museum telling me what a worthless charlatan Dali was. In the beginning Bunuel had come to see me because he knew I'd done Dali's one-man show at the Museum in 1941, and he wanted to protest. But gradually Bunuel and I became friends, and we used to talk endlessly--about everything except the two films he and Dali had made together. He would say crossly, "Dali doesn't understand films at all." Bunuel obviously did and does, and today is honored throughout the civilized world as one of the great film makers of our time.

In any case, the night we showed L'Age d'Or my living room was jammed with people sitting on funeral-parlor chairs. The audience seemed spellbound; there was loud applause at the end. Russell Hitchcock, a very old friend of mine, had introduced the film with a brilliant speech on the surrealist esthetic or anti-esthetic which ended grandly with the words, "It is that I have already said too much." And then he sat down to watch the film.

The evening went off smoothly with two exceptions. The projectionist became terribly nervous as the film wound on, and kept looking at the front door as though he knew the police would soon arrive and take us all away and his license as a projectionist with us. The second mishap occurred when some of our Catholic friends had become rather tipsy drinking in the bar below the living room. As the Prohibition liquor took hold, they became belligerent and began shouting up the stairs that

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if we didn't stop the film they would come up and destrop it. Fortunately the winding stairway from the cellar bar was narrow, and it took only one reasonably fat person to block it entirely. I knew we and the film were safe, but the threatened revolt made me angry nevertheless, though I must confess that in general I dislike anti-religious manifestations of any kind. Still, I was fascinated by the imagery of the movie, and I wanted to see it through. All of us did see it to the end, as the battle cries below subsided to faint growls and snarls. The projectionist scurried out the door for home, elated by what he had to tell his wife.

In 1942, when I moved to live and work in New York, Chick and I had our only quarrel, though neither of us ever mentioned it to the other. He had held a large exhibition of Eugene Berman's paintings in the main hall of the Morgan Memorial wing of the Atheneum. I had taken photographs of the exhibition with a large view camera. As I developed and studied these photographs I became more and more convinced that the show would have been better if Genia Berman hadn't surrounded the pictures with a number of plaster casts from the Atheneum's cellars; he had marbleized them or painted them as if for a stage set instead of an exhibition of paintings. I told Genia this, word got back to Chick, and he was reported to have called me two-faced because I had told him I liked the show. I had liked the paintings; I hadn't liked the clutter of distracting antique statuary. Anyway, despite the valiant efforts of

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mutual friends, the quarrel, if there ever was one, evaporated, and soon Chick and I were lecturing together in Sarasota, Florida, and I was writing a piece for him about the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art of which he had become director in 1946. He was the first professional director of that museum as he had been of the Wadsworth Atheneum.

It so happened that I had visited the Ringling Museum of Art some ten years before Chick's appointment. I had found the large main building, conceived in the Italian Renaissance style, in an alarming state of near-ruin. Water was almost literally cascading down the interior walls, so that many of the paintings escaped total destruction only because the rain bounced off their heavy frames. There was a man at the street gate to sell you a ticket; otherwise I didn't see another human being, let alone a trained guard, the whole time I was there.

It was only much later that I learned (probably from Chick) about the idiosyncratic standards which controlled John Ringling's taste in buying paintings: he wanted them to be large and showy; he liked to buy a number of them at once on his trips to Europe in search of acts for his circus; and again, because of the circus, he liked paintings with animals in them. The result was that he bought chiefly paintings of the Baroque, since they tended to be large, more plentiful than works of earlier or later periods, and their iconography quite often included wild animals. If these curious standards or preferences led him to acquire capital works by Rubens, for example, they don't account for the

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fact that John and Mable Ringling also bought smaller, less flamboyant works of first-rate quality. I always think first of Piero do Cosimo's The Building of a Palace; this picture does have horses and an ox in it, but is otherwise inhabited only by workmen. There are also fine still lifes - usually, but not invariably, the least dramatic of subjects - and landscapes and figure pieces, sometimes relating to the theatre, sometimes not.

In any case and whatever their esthetic standards, Mr. and Mrs. Ringling would, I'm sure, have approved of Chick Austin as the Director of the Museum they had built. Had they still been alive, they would have known that another brilliant showman had taken over their art museum's future. Only this time it was a man with a highly trained as well as an inborn taste. What Chick achieved with the Ringling Museum of Art in the short span of eleven years was a miracle, no less. The buildings were put back in order and their leaks repaired, the grounds cleared of underbrush and weeds and, naturally, of the few surviving rattlesnakes, one of which had been unpleasant to me in the mid-1930's when I had walked across the gardens. To understand how all this could have been done in so short a time, it was necessary to understand both Chick Austin's incredible energy and his gifts. I like to think I understand both as well as anyone with the exception of his wife, Helen. Becuase she was a Goodwin, he was always describing her as "Miss Hartford". He adored her and vice-versa.

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I think the two exhibitions on which I worked hardest with Chick were the one called Literature and Poetry in Painting Since 1850, held at the Atheneum in 1933, and the big Picasso retrospective show of 1934, for which I compiled the catalogue. Oddly enough, the former of these two exhibitions was a more difficult and courageous venture than the 1931 exhibition The Newer Super-Realism, a good part of which had been assembled in New York by Julien Levy's gallery. Besides, as early as 1931, surrealism had a limited recognition in this country as an avant-garde movement in Paris, though few people here or abroad yet understood that the movement was at first dominated by its literary figures and that Andre Breton, Paul Eluard and (for a brief time) Louis Aragon had recruited painters mainly to illustrate their premise. On the other hand, it was sheer heresy in 1933 to suggest that literature and poetry influenced painting after 1850, the approximate date when Courbet's Realism had sought to outlaw all literary, religious and allegorical subjects in art.

The Literature and Poetry show was Chick's idea, as all his shows were. But it was also up my alley in that literature had been my first love, and I was still immersed in it. In any case, Chick, Russell Hitchcock and I labored long and hard to find literary influence in painting after 1850, though we were aware that a new wav e of abstractions in painting was about to hit the shores of England, Europe and America and was attempting to wipe out the last vestiges of previous literary excursions. The fact is that even some of the most fervently non-objective painters

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were more deeply influenced by poets and writers in general than they dared admit, since to call a painting "literary" then was to condemn it utterly. The object of the exhibition was perhaps to relieve all the arts of shame in their intimacy. Today it's hard to believe that such a situation could have existed; today a leading artist like Francis Bacon openly avows his debt to T.S. Eliot's The Waste land. It would be hard to think of Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth, Sandy Calder, Mondrian, Gabo or Pevener making the same admission in 1933.

The Picasso show of 1934 was sheer delight to work on, but there were days and days when only a handful of people came to see it after the excitement of the opening subsided. I remember how panic-stricken all of us at the Atheneum were when there was some sort of civil uprising in France which threatened our loans from Picasso's dealer in Paris, Paul Rosenberg. And then Rosenberg's telegram arrived, and we all relaxed. The telegram said "Journaux exagerés. Soyez tranquils." I remember the words because "soyez tranquils" became a kind of password for the Atheneum's staff. We all needed it; it was a nectic time.

When I look now at the catalogue of the Picasso show on which I worked day and night, it astonishes me that there were so few books on Picasso to which I could give plate references for works not reproduced in our own catalogue. Since 1934 literally hundreds of books and articles on Picasso have been published; then there were very few and only the first volume of the late Christian Zervos' catalogue raisonné had been issued.

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Still, I feel a sense of pride in the show itself. It was, I think, surprisingly complete for that date, even though subsequent research has revealed a number of gaps. One has to begin somewhere, and I'm glad that Picasso's American fame took its first stride forward in any public museum anywhere in Hartford's Wadsworth Atheneum.

Being involved with Chick at the Atheneum often led me into contact with the other arts. In October, 1933, George Balanchine and Vladimir Dimitriev arrived in Hartford to found a ballet company based in the Wadsworth Atheneum. Chick had met them with Lincoln Kirstein and Eddie Warburg at the boat in New York, and there had been some delay in their landing due to passport difficulties. I met them all in Hartford, and we spent the first few days discussing plans for an American School of Ballet. The next day Chick told me that Lincoln and Eddie disapproved of my presence at these discussions because I obviously knew little about ballet. Their objection didn't constitute a rude exaggeration but a glaring understatement. I'd never been interested in ballet and had gone to the now-famous "Ballets 1933" in Paris for the simple reason that I wanted to see the stage sets and costumes by two younger painters I admired, Bérard and Tchelitchew. But Chick, always loyal, told Kirstein flatly that if I didn't attend the discussions about a possible ballet company in Hartford, he wouldn't either, and that settled the matter.

A day or so later I drove Balanchine and Dimitriev around

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Hartford and West Hartford, looking for a place for them to live. We couldn't find anything they liked, and finally Balanchine in his mild, gracious way told me that what they really wanted was an eighteenth-century apartment. It was rather difficult to explain to him in French that people in Hartford did not build or live in apartments in the eighteenth century. I added that I doubted whether there were any to be found in all America unless a few glorified boarding houses in Boston would come within his definition of an apartment. The two Russians were in a glum mood when I got them back to Chick's office. Their pessimism deepened when an announcement appeared in the local papers that there would be no tuition in the ballet school they proposed to open. This announcement brought all the professional dancing teachers in Hartford down on our necks. They were led, alas, by a cousin of mine, Walter Soby, whom I'd seen only once or twice in my life. I knew his name well, however, because my father had always been irritated by Walter's chosen profession. I couldn't see anything wrong about this profession so long as it made Walter happy, which it did, and so long as he made money at it, which he most emphatically did.

I think Walter eventually became president of the Dancing Teachers Association of America or some other equally high-sounding group, and he knew Arthur Murray, in those days a sure sign of eventual immortality. He was thus in a position to be one of the leaders of the local revolt of dancing teachers against the idea of a ballet school in the Wadsworth Atheneum at which no tuition

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or fees would be charged. As I remember it, two hyperthyroid sisters were also leaders of the revolt (I can't remember their names but I do remember that Chick charmed them into becoming regular patrons of his theatrical productions in the Atheneum.) The protest became so heated that Chick had to announce to the papers that the ballet school would only take two dozen pupils at most and that these pupils - God knows why - would come mostly from Boston and Philadelphia. This statement to the press didn't quite do the trick, and I had a few more angry phone conversations with my cousin Walter about the impieties of Russian free-loaders.

After discussions Chick reluctantly agreed with Balanchine, Dimitriev, Lincoln Kirstein and Eddie Warburg that Hartford was not likely to become a world center of ballet, and the group took off for New York, a city also lacking in 18th century apartments but abounding in eager pupils. In January, 1934, they founded there The School of American Ballet which years later developed into the New York City Ballet Company, with Balanchine and Lincoln Kirstein still very much in charge. Chick Austin was bitterly disappointed, but his boundless energy was soon absorbed by making plans for the First Hartford Festival, to be described later.

As a gesture of gratitude to Chick and others in Hartford who had paved the way for Balanchine and his associates to enter this country, Lincoln decided to give the new ballet company's first performance in the Avery Memorial Theatre of the Wadsworth

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Atheneum. These performances took place on December 6,7 and8, 1934. The program included four ballets of which only the one called "Mozartiana," with sets and costumes by Bérard and Mozart's music, had been performed before (at the "Ballets 1933" in Paris.) The second ballet, "Alma Mater," had a witty scenario by Edward M.M. Warburg, music by Kay Swift and sets and costumes by a leading cartoonist of the period, John Held, Jr. The third, entitled "Transcendence," had Lizst's music orchestrated by George Antheil and sets and décor by the Philadelphia painter, Franklin Watkins, whom all of us admired greatly as a painter and as a human being. As I remember it, Chick Austin actually executed many of the sets and costumes for Bérard's "Mozartiana," the originals having been badly damaged, and helped Watkins with the execution of his sets and costumes. I remember that I was fascinated by the visual effects of both ballets. Perhaps I was also slowly getting over my sense of inferiority about music.

I've no accurate way of knowing how good a musician Balanchine was except through friends and through one occurence after the final curtain came down on one of the ballet performances in 1934 in Hartford. On that occasion, Balanchine and his friend Nicolas Kopeikine (the subject of some of Tchelitchew's finest portrait drawings) sat down at the two pianos in the orchestra pit and began playing "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf," a tune made wildly popular by one of Walt Disney's films. They played the relatively simple tune in so many styles, with so many variations, that even I could realize I was listening to a tour

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de force of the first order, and I remember that all of us in the small theatre cheered ourselves hoarse for half an hour.

Considering that the Balanchine-Kirstein ballet company started in a studio at 637 Madison Avenue with a small group of pupils and is now known and respected around the world, I think we should have cheered even longer. Its accomplishment has been a bold, brave fact in an era of tattered compromise.

The events which took place in the small theatre of the Avery Memorial Wing of the Atheneum after that annex's completion in 1934 made clear Chick's gifts as an impresario. He got first-rate people to work with him, and he did so with limited funds, often supplied from his own pocket. His heart had been won by the theatre during his childhood, when he began giving performances of magic. These performances grew more and more elaborate as time went on. In retrospect I think his most impressive recruit was a local escape artist named Clevedore, a man who got out of boxes and chains with an ease Houdini might have approved. I never knew how or where he discovered Clevedore, but it should always be remembered that Chick was anti-snobbish to the core of his being and was as much at home in Hartford's ghetto as on Prospect Avenue. His climactic performance was a production of Hamlet, with himself in the title role. All of his old friends were in the front rows, and all of us began to turn gray prematurely for fear that he would collapse in this difficult role. He did nothing of the sort. He bellowed to the

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wings when he forgot his lines, and he turned in a creditable performance to a nervous but nevertheless mesmerized audience.

During the winter of 1957 I was staying on Casey Key in Florida, waiting for Chick to arrive for a lecture to art students we were to do together. A phone call came early one morning from our mutual friend, Kirk Askew. I knew that Chick had been ill but thought his illness only minor. Kirk told me that, on the contrary, Chick was in a coma and not expected to recover. In a few days he was dead, and the art world had lost one of its most talented figures and I a great personal friend and comrade in arms in the endless art wars.

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Four Saints In Three Acts

On the evening of February 7, 1934, a dress rehearsal of the now-famous opera, Four Saints in Three Acts, was held before an invited audience in the auditorium of the newly completed Avery Memorial wing of the Wadsworth Atheneum. Virgil Thomson, the opera's composer, had arrived a few days before and promptly collapsed of exhaustion in Chick Austin's office on a chaise longue designed by Le Corbusoer. Thomson and Chick had been briends since their years at Harvard and had kept track of each other's activities, chiefly through a third Harvard friend, the eminent architectural historian, Henry-Russell Hitchcock, who edited the handsome program for the opera.

When the opera's production was first planned, after some seven years of gestation on Miss Stein's part and Virgil's, Thomson decided to use an all-Negro cast. His reasons for doing so were made clear in an interview with a New York newspaper reporter. "When you're saying something which doesn't seem to mean much, you must say it with a great deal of authority." In defense of his decision and choice, he added: "There have been no intellectual objections to batter down, as is always the case with white people singing or reciting Miss Stein's work. There has never been a titter, a smile, or a demand for explanation from those Negroes...they're satisfied with the pure beauty of the sound of the words and the music, even though

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the words tell no story." Oddly enough, most members of the dress rehearsal's white audience seemed only mildly confused by Miss Stein's libretto, though few of them can have understood exactly why Miss Stein's powerful cadence and leger-demain with repetitions so strongly influenced younger American writers, especially Ernest Hemingway. Besides, the singing was magnificently sonorous, and American audiences were used to hearing operas sung in foreign languages which few could translate.

There had been a brief time during the opera's tryouts in Miss Eva Jessye's brownstone house in Harlem when Thomson thought of putting on his opera with Negro singers in white face. The idea would have been a welcome retribution for the practice inherited from the minstrel tradition, of using white singers in black face in the American Theatre. But as Thomson watched Miss Jessye train her Negro singers he must have realized that the superb resonance of the Negro voice would lose authority if it issued from a Caucasian face. It should be remembered, too, that the early 1930's constituted a period of deep interest in Harlem among white intellectuals in New York, among them Carl Van Vechten and Muriel Draper who attended the Stein-Thomson opera's dress rehearsal in Hartford. Even in less gifted circles, private parties often ended up in Harlem nightclubs. Negro jazz music had of course been highly regarded for some years by serious musicians throughout the world. Yet it could be argued that the Depression years saw a heightened interest in Negroes'

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cultural attainments as a whole. One might have thought that during that better period our sympathy would have focused on Harlem's peverty; instead it centered on the Black Man's arts. I don't think this fact can be put down to callousness on our part but rather to a rising tide of esthetic awareness which the Depression somehow couldn't turn aside.

Anyway, the audience at the special dress rehearsal in Hartford was distinguished, enthusiastic and raucous. The Avery Memorial's auditorium holds only about 300 people, but at least a third of them were eminent figures in the worlds of art, literature, music, politics and what we vaguely think of as "society". They had come up from New York by car or on the already moribund New Haven Railroad. Many of them stayed with Hartford friends, the overflow stayed in the distinguished but sadly decrepit old Hotel Heublein, only a few blocks from the Atheneum.

This audience was given the ultimate accolade of what was then called cafẽ society by the society's gossip-in-chief, Lucius Beebe, in an article for the Herald-Tribune. Mr. Beebe wrote with his usual high-powered admixture of sugar and apice, this time with a liberal seasoning of snobbery becuase the event was taking place in Hartford rather than New York. It must be admitted, I think, that Beebe wrote this sort of piece with more fire and a more highly trained insensitivity to the arts than

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anyone has done since. He wrote: "It was an invasion that Tamarlane would have applauded and a subsequent massacre of the bourgeois proprieties that would have given the late Oscar Wilde the vapors....as a Belamite flag-raising, it took all sweepstakes, Calcutta, Irish Hospitals and Canadian Veterans' hands down. Armed with a jargon which included the entire voc-ab ulary on the modernist technique, the participants put the nutmeg capital to the torch with volcanoes of blazing indis-cretions."

The truth is naturally that the jargon consisted in what Mr. Beebe mistook for elegant prose in his own writing. There may have been indiscretions, but I was at every Hartford performance of the opera and at all the parties held in its honor. I saw nothing more serious than widespread jubilation - and this in a city which everyone from the early 20th century immortals down to Al Jolson, after playing the now-defunct Parsons Theatre, had described as "a bad show town", meaning its audiences were diffident and not easily aroused.

The people of Hartford, many of them rich, live and enter-tain well. But in the 1930's at least, they did so at home and no nightclub and few good restaurants survived there for long. This was more nearly a matter of conservatism than of thrift, though I remember with mild horror the day an especially wealthy elder statesman told me firmly that anyone who didn't live on the income <u>from</u> his income was a spendthrift and headed for disaster.

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Hartford's main business was then - and perhaps still is - insurance, a business planned to instill a certain caution and sense of foreboding. In cultural matters the city, halfway betweeen New York and Boston, turned north for guidance. It was from Harvard's Fogg Museum rather than Columbia or N.Y.U. that the Wadsworth Atheneum acquired its first professionally trained director, Chick Austin. Perhaps Lucius Beebe was right in claiming that the production of Four Saints in Three Acts forced an unusual enthusiasm on its audience, though I've already said that many of those in attendence were from New York.

Since the remarkable program for the Hartford performances has long been difficult to find, it may be useful to summarize its contents here. The program was designed by Henry-Russell Hitchcock, who was always seeking out flamboyant examples of Victorian and early-century type and ornament in the store rooms of old printing firms. The program's covers in "shocking" pink combined a poem by Richard Crashaw in honor of the opera's chief protagonist, St. Teresa of Avila, and a photograph of Bernini's famous sculpture of the saint in ecstasy, a work of art already the subject of widespread Freudian interpretation. There was also a musical portrait of Miss Stein by Thomson and an oil portrait of her by Christian Bérard; there was a prose portrait of Thomson by Miss Stein, and there were two easel portraits of him, one by Bérard, the second by Kristians Tonny, the young Dutch artist who later decorated with murals the walls

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of the Avery Memorial's auditorium, where the opera was held. The fine photographs of the opera's directors and its cast were taken by Lee Miller, originally a disciple of the great expatriate photographer, Man Ray, and now the wife of London's most valuable champion of advanced contemporary art, Sir Roland Penrose.

The opera's scenario was somehow put into actable form by Maurice Grossern, a long-time friend of Thomson. Its music was conducted by Alexander Smallens, who had made a name for himself as the conductor of the Philadelphia Symphony concerts. Frederick Ashton (now Sir Frederick) had come over from London to arrange the opera's staging and choreography, with long experience in the London Ballet Society behind him; the production as a whole was planned by John Houseman, who later went on to become one of Hollywood's most sensitive and courageous film directors. And Finally, the sets and costumes were designed with marvelous originality by the late Miss Florine Stettheimer. Of all these people, perhaps the ones whose names are least often heard today are Miss Stettheimer's and Maurice Grosser's, though in 1946 the former was given a one-man show of her paintings by the Museum of Modern Art. To be truthful, Miss Stettheimer's name was never known to a very large audience. Nevertheless, she had been fervently admired by a circle which had included Marcel Duchamp of Nude Descending the Staircase fame and the one truly perceptive art critic of the time on a New York newspaper, Henry McBride.

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The people responsible for the opera's creation were indeed a remarkable lot, and the marvel is that Chick Austin was ever able to get them together in a bitter Depression year. But then, as I have so often said publicly and in private, Chick Austin was a born impresario. The theatre was deep in his blood. As a very young man he had begun performing as a magician in improvised theatres, and eventually he had given such performances to much larger audiences under the stage name of "The Great Osram".

Chick's one handicap as an impresario was the one which haunts all impresarios, whether their ambitions are large or moderate - lack of money. He had inherited some money from his mother, a strong woman whose principal extravagance was buying houses in the capital cities of Europe and America (at one point, I am told, she owned houses in Paris, Brussels, London, New, Boston and Philadelphia). Obviously her love of houses was inherited in full measure by her only child, Chick.

I really don't know where Chick's love of the theatre came from. But from the moment he got the idea of producing the Stein-Thomson opera he was determined to get the best people possible to write, stage and act it. He wanted, as he always did in buying paintings, the best and not necessarily the most celebrated artists available. Moreover, he knew how to make different people work together in harmony, as Diaghilev had done before him. Unlike Diaghilev, he calmed dissention by a kind of

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magic, quiet persistence rather than by rage. Everybody in the opera's production seemed to know what he meant by the best, and they gave it to him without stint.

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Love Song to a House

In the summer of 1935 I was driving through Farmington, Connecticut, on my way back to my farm at Canton Center. For some reason I turned north on Mountain Spring Road, perhaps to see again the house where my Taft School roommate, Phil Barney, had lived and where I'd visited his family several weekends while at Taft. Just after I passed the Barney house, I looked up and saw an extremely handsome Greek Revival house which I'd never noticed before. The grounds were overgrown, and the house itself badly in need of paint and repairs. But the moment I saw the "for sale" sign out front I knew I would buy it. And I did within two hours, to the understandable irritation of my first wife, who thought she might have been consulted. I think she was right. I also think you don't consult anyone when you fall in love, and I was in love with that house.

Naturally I'd gone inside the house before buying it, though I doubt that this was a deciding factor. It had been rather difficult to get in. I knocked for a long time, and finally a very nice woman let me in and told me that she and her brother owned the house and that it was too much for them to manage. She also told me that her brother's name was Duncan Hooker and that a soman lurking in the background was her niece, the daughter of Brian Hooker who had made the standard English translation of Rostand's Cyrano de Bergerac.

I was told to look around the house by myslef. Like most

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collectors of paintings I was especially delighted with the high ceilings and I was peering up at them when suddenly I fell over a heavy, soft object. I scrambled to my feet and looked down to see what I'd bumped into. It was the niece, a woman of about forty but obviously retarded mentally. I made my apologies to the sad woman on the floor and to her aunt and raced off to the village drugstore to phone the real estate agent and offer the asking price. Since I didn't even know how much land was included (there were six acres, as it turned out) this was perhaps a stupid thing to do; I really don't think so. Anyway, the agent phoned me back to say the house was mine, and I drove home to Canton Center in a state of almost intolerable excitement.

I knew the house was in need of major repairs. I also knew that it needed a new, large living room, since the four squarish parlors typical of Greek Revival houses were too small to take large paintings and sculptures. I thought about the problem all night and by morning had come up with a solution I've never regreted for a moment. My friend, Henry-Russell Hitchcock, was then teaching history of art and architecture at Wesleyan University, but I had implicit faith in his judgment and taste, and I couldn't see why he couldn't supervise the alterations and design a new wing, with living room below and bedroom, dressing room and bath above. I phoned him, and he said he'd be delighted to take on the job. The only question he asked was whether the house had exterior clapboard or sheathing? I had to tell him I

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really hadn't noticed in my excitement. I drove by the house again and reported,to Russell's relief, that the answer was flat, wooden sheathing. Russell said he'd be at the house in two days, and I got hold of the best builder I knew of in Hartford and asked him to take the job on a cost-plus basis, both because I think to this day it's the best way to build anything and because it avoids the long delays involved in drawing up comtracts and sub-contracts.

At first the workmen were awed by bearded Russell's knowledge and dignity and to the very end they called him "professor". But they found out soon that he knew precisely what he was doing, and the job went forward efficiently from beginning to end. It was not quite finished in January, 1936, but we moved in anyway and in February gave a large house-warming party in honor of Chick Austin's "Friends and Enemies of Modern Music," which was really a group of Chick's friends and allies.

Soon after I'd bought the Farmington house I discovered that there was a dug sell just behind an enlarged dining room and terrace which Russell designed. Since both Russell and I had known and admired Sandy Calder for some years we decided to ask him to design and make a tall mobile to serve as a wellhead. I remember the wellhead construction very clearly. First Sandy made at home some rough sketches of what it would look like and how it would balance. It was to be about 25 feet high,and I think it was the first mobile on that scale Sandy had created. At one end of a long, horizontal metal pole there was a very heavy circular form, at the other a bucket which Sandy told me had been inspired

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by the elbow pieces on suits of armor he'd seen in the Metropolitan Museum's great collection. In between the large circle and the bucket various other, much smaller circular forms rode vertically and moved around in unpredictable but uncannily precise balance as the big circular form was raised to lower the bucket into the well. It was neither a surprise nor a dissappointment to Sandy or me that the bucket seldom hit the well dead center. The real point was that the mobile was gay and hypnotic to watch as the outdoor breezes set it in motion.

Like several artists I've known, Sandy had a magic hold over workmen. He had found in downtown Hartford the firm called the Fuller Welding Company to make the piece under his direction. I remember that when Sandy and I showed the sketches to Mr. Fuller, he looked at us as though we were stark, raving mad but added that he would make anything out of iron so long as he got paid for it. I tried to get him more interested in the problem than that. There was no point in trying to give him an art-historical discourse, and there was no point in using the word "mobile" which very few people understood in those days. I fell back on the phrase which has served me and others well when trying to explain the inexplicable. I said the sculpture was "modern art". Mr. Fuller nodded affably, as though at last I'd had sense enough to make things crystal clear, went to work with his assistants and did a fine job. He also developed a deep pride in the mobile. Whem I returned to the Farmington house after living in New York

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during World War II, I found that the mobile had been badly twisted by autumn and winter storms. I phoned Mr. Fuller for help, and he was at my house himself in half an hour. When he had delivered the mobile he asked me sternly why I hadn't put it indoors while I was away. I tried to point out that the mobile was twice as high as the ceilings in the house. "You could have put it on its side in the living room," he said crossly. I thought it useless to say that the metal tripod on which it hung was sunk in concrete and that the mobile was not what Ernest Hemingway referred to as a movable feast.

I did move the mobile, though, when in 1953 I most reluctantly sold the Farmington house and moved to New Canaan, some fifty miles nearer New York. In the latter place my wife and I found an excellent couple to work for us, the wife the cook, the husband as gardner. They were wonderfully nice people. The grounds hadn't been properly taken care of for some years, but the gardner had a green thumb and restored the lawn and the planting. He was unfailingly good natured. He was, that is, except when he grumbled about the mobile which he thought a completely idiotic object. One day in despair I cut off one of his vendettas with the mobile by saying, "Alright, alright, Louis, but after all Calder is the most famous American artist, internationally speaking, since Whistler." The words, extravagant or not and I think they were not, must have sunk in. Some five years later an especially brutal windstorm hit the mobile. Afterwards Louis and I were looking at it in its damaged state, and I told him that none of the local welders wanted to try fixing

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it and that therefore I'd have to store it away in the cellar for a time. "Why you can't do that," said Louis, "Don't you know Calder is better known around the world than any artist we've had since Whistler." I gave up, somehow got the mobile repaired, and it still waves proudly on my New Canaan lawn.

During the sinter of 1936, while Sandy was assembling his mobile on the lawn of the Farmington house and tindering with its balance, a very different kind of artist was working in the dining room. This was Eugene Berman, whom I'd commissioned to paint a series of five panels for the dining room walls. I'd known Genia Berman and admired his pictures for six or seven years, and during that time he'd sent me a number of his pictures in exchange for modest sums of somey I sent him at intervals to Paris to help him live and paint. He was the younger of two brothers, both painters, the elder being widely known as simply Leonid. The two brothers had grown up in their native Russia in great opulence and after the Soviet Revolution had become what someone (I think it was Julien Levy, their dealer in New York) had called "les nouveau pauvres". In 1926 in Paris the two brothers together with the Russian Pavel Tchelitchew, the Frenchman Christian Bérard and the Dutchman Kristians Tonny held an exhibition at the Galerie Druet and were promptly christianed the Neo-Romantics by their principal champion at the time, the critic, Waldemar George.

All these artists were dissatisfied with the collective title given them, as I know from repeated conversations with each of the four men. But no one seemed able to come up with a better word

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for their attempt to replace the more or less abstract art which had preceded them. They wanted to replace it with a new, representational painting in which the emphasis was on a lyricism of mood, circumstance and place, overtly and recognizably expressed. There were several other artists in their group but they, and Kristians Tonny, too, have faded from sight. In any case, "group" is too strong a word for the Neo-Romantics. They held only this one exhibition together and then went their separate ways. Some of them were admired for a brief time by the extremely influential Gertrude Stein, but after a while she abandoned them in favor of a marginal artist, Sir Francis Rose, and a fading revolutionary, Francis Picabia. I'm a very great admirer of the late Miss Stein as a writer and a force. Yet I think no one can fairly deny that her taste in painting became less and less acute or even reasonable as she grew older, and she always admitted that sculpture bored her. To start collecting Matisse and Picasso and end with Sir Francis Rose is a very long downward slide indeed, at least in my book.

It was a curious experience faving Calder and Eugene Berman working at the Farmington house at the same time. They got along perfectly well personally but their backgrounds, preferences, aims and style could hardly have been more opposite. Sandy Calder represented the third generation of sculptors in his distinguished family. He is about as American as you can get, especially as to blunt strength and mechanical ingenuity, though he has lived

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a good part of his live in France. His heroes in the history of art mostly belong to the 20th century or to pre-Renaissance times and the modern ones he likes are all abstract Mondrian, Duchamp and, most notably Mirõ, his elder by five years. The work of today's realist artists doesn't trouble him at all; he simply thinks they're wasting their time.

If Calder belongs to the New World wherever he lives, Eugene Berman was reared in and will always belong to the Old. A man of almost scholarly erudition in the art of the past, his taste is rooted in Italy's vast art history, though it encompasses such rather untypical French masters as the Brothers LeNain and Georges de la Tour. Perhaps since he likes so many 17th century painters, regardless of nationality, it would be more accurate to call him Neo-Baroque than Neo-Romantic. Yet he talks of Uccello and Piero della Francesca more reverently than he does of, say, Bernini or Poussin. The sculpture he collects and displays in his apartment in Rome isn't classical or Baroque but Etruscan and Pre-Columbian. The breadth of his taste gives him the kind of support Sandy Calder finds in the very narrowness of his. It's some indication of their conflicting heritages and temperaments surely that Berman admires Sandy's work enormously and Sandy finds Berman's cluttered and useless - "it needs fresh air," Sandy used to say, spinning his big around like an overheated fan in a tropical saloon.

I was very fond of the Berman panels in the dining room and I had no intention of leaving them behind when I wold the house in

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1953 to Harriet Barney, the niece of my old Taft roommate, who had grown up in her father's house next door. It cheered me to think of the house belonging to someone I knew and liked, and I almost changed my mind and left the panels on the walls for which they were designed. But Genia Berman had been very close to the Wadsworth Atheneum, and it seemed appropriate to give the panels to that institution, including their frames which a local Danish housepainter had marbleized with extraordinary skill, having learned this difficult art in his native land thirty years before. No one since his youth had asked him to marbleize any object and he undertook the task with such fervor that I came home one day to find that he'd gone on to marbleize the legs of half the chairs in the rest of the house. It broke his heart and mine to tell him he had to stop, and every so often even now I come across a piece of furniture he'd turned to marble when my back was turned.

There were other details about the house which I liked inordinately. Russell Hitchcock had discovered in England that the old studios of William Morris, the great late Victorian designer, still turned out limited runs of wallpaper in Morris' original designs,and we covered a small section of the downstairs corridor with it. I often wonder whether it is still there. Since the entire Barney clan are old friends, it would be easy to find out. Yet every time I drive past the house, I keep going, knowing that it is disastrous to fall in love with the same person or object twice.

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I once did drive into the Barney's driveway and peer over the fence to see how the trees were doing. They are all still there and growing except for a mammoth tulip tree at the south. I have endless snapshots of friends sitting in its shade and a few, painful ones of it as a toppled ruin. I look at the latter photographs seldom for obvious reasons. They always remind me of a day when the incomparable architect, Le Corbusier, came to the house and insisted on clambering up on the roof of the wing with the flat roof which Russell had designed. The lawn then stretched out to the golf course of the Farmington Country Club, and its planting had been handsomely designed by a landscape architect, Christopher Tunnard, then teaching his art at Yale. But all this verdant splendor meant nothing to Le Corbusier. He stood on the flat roof and said with his usual conviction, "You should make the garden up here on the roof. I will design for you a tree house, with a concrete ramp leading from the roof to the big tulip tree." Whenever I look at the snapshots of the tree's corpse on the ground I wonder about Corbu's practicality; I've never for a moment doubted his genius.

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The First Hartford Festival and The Paper Ball

The First Hartford Festival was given by the Wadsworth Atheneum from February 9 to 16, 1936, in collaboration with the Friends and Enemies of Modern Music, Inc. I've previously explained that the latter organization was merely a collective name for those who supported or grudgingly admired Chick Austin's activities as Director of the Wadsworth Atheneum (1927-1945). I was deeply involved in the Festival as Chick's unofficial assistant, but I make no apology for claiming that the Festival consisted of the most remarkable array of first-rate talent in entertainment of any program put on by an American museum in our century.

The Festival began on a Sunday with what people who understand music tell me was a surprisingly good concert called "Music of the Connecticut Valley". The music was played by the Civic Symphony Orchestra of Hartford and among the composers involved were Josten, Sessions and Jacobi. Again I need to be told that these are estimable names, since the only musician's name which is immovably lodged in my brain is that of the late "Fats" Waller, who fell dead at my feet on the sidewalk as I was entering a 52nd Street nightclub to hear him play. On Sunday, February 9, 1936, I wasn't any more interested in music than I am now, and the program which fascinated me was a program of very early films selected by the late Iris Barry. Iris had only recently discovered negatives or prints of the films, and they were a superb lot. The earliest

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was the great fantasy, "A Trip to the Moon', made by George Melies in 1902, the latest a film of 1924 called "Entr'acte,' directed by Rene Clair and the painter Francis Picabia, with music by Erik Satie. In between as to date came the 1914 film of Irene and Vernon Castle, dancing the foxtrot, called "The Whirl of Life." Of the same vintage year was the one and only indisputable vampire, Theda Bara, in a film appropriately called "A Fool There Was." Everybody was Theda Bara's fool, including myself, who used to spend my small weekly allowance to see her films in the slightly shoddy Empire Theatre across from the old Bond Hotel in Hartford, admission 10¢, no minors allowed except myself, who had grown fast.

After this opening salvo, The Friends and Enemies of Modern Music took a breather until the next Friday, when on the small stage of the Avery Memorial wing were performed "Les Noces," an opera-oratorio by Igor Stravinsky, of which I've no memory whatever, performed by something called The Art of Musical Russia, and Erik Satie's "Socrate," described in the program as a symphonic drama for tenor, soprano and orchestra. As usual I don't remember that music even fragmentarily, but I do remember Sandy Calder's stage set which consisted mainly of a huge brass disk revolving slowly at the back of the stage. The closing performance of that evening was a "Ballet Divertissement," choreographed by the now-famous George Balanchine for Felia Doubrovski and her corps de ballet, the music conducted by Alexander Smallens.

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The entire program except for the films was repeated at a matinee on Saturday, February 15, at the rather odd hour of 4:00 P.M. I remember that all of us had to scramble home quickly, for that evening at 10:00 P.M. was scheduled the Festival's climactic event, The Paper Ball, a legend in its own time, if ever there was one.

I can't truthfully say how long the Paper Ball had been in preparation, though it seems to me in retrospect that it was made ready in astonishingly short order, under the chairmanship of one of the most beautiful and efficient women I've ever known in my life, Mrs. Richard M. Bissell The decoration of the entire court of the Avery Memorial had been entrusted to Pavel Tchelitchew, whom I've mentioned in a previous chapter. Pavlik, as we all called him, was a Russian aristocrat, a marvelous clown in the finest tradition of buffoonery and impersonation and an artist I think will emerge again as one of the greatest draftsmen of our time. "He died of rage," Lincoln Kirstein wrote me soon after Pavlik's death in Italy, and I think this was true. Pavlik wanted nothing less than absolute fame and authority. He had the grace, wit and talent for it, but it still evaded him somehow, and I'm more and more convinced that Lincoln's certificate as to cause of death was correct.

I saw Pavlik on many, many occasions during his life. I never saw him work with more headlong assurance than when he was decorating the Avery court with ordinary newspapers, many of them

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drawn on to represent figures, others left blank and dangling to create a new order of visual excitement from the barest and least expensive means. For more years than I can remember I've wanted to write an article entitled "The Cult of Poverty in Modern Art." I've never written it for the reason that I could never explain satisfactorily why so many first-rate contemporary artists have looked with special favor on the scraps and left-overs of our civilization. It's easy to say they have taken pride in making something out of nothing, but I don't think that's the whole answer. In any case, Pavlik turned newspapers into brocade and, in his constumes for the Paper Ball tissue paper was transformed into velvet. As a footnote I should add with admiration that the use of highly flammable materials in the court of an art museum seems not to have troubled the husband of the Paper Ball's chairman at all, though I've mentioned before that Mr. Bissell was the president of Hartford's leading fire insurance company.

The Ball itself consisted of a Grand March around the court of the Avery Memorial led by Paul Cooley and the assistant director of the Atheneum as heralds, followed by Mrs. Bissell and Chick Austin as Ringmasters. They in turn were followed by a group of twelve paper horses and four figures representing the seasons, all of the circus figures' costumes having been designed by Tchelitchew. There were other groups whose costumes had been designed by Eugene Berman (who also decorated the lobby of the Avery Memorial).

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Music had been especially composed for one group by Nicholas Nabokeff, with lyrics by the poet Charles Henri Ford, for another by Vernon Duke. It was indeed a gala occasion.

I had asked Sandy Calder to design the costumes for the group I was in. We were to meet him at my Farmington house and he was to convert us into paper animals of various kinds. Sandy and his wife, Louisa, surely one of the most beautiful women of our time, were very late in arriving. This didn't make me terribly nervous, since I had heard that Sandy had created an entire exhibition of his mobiles in the few hours before one of his shows was to open in Boston. But it did make several other members of the group jittery and one or two quite naturally calmed themselves with strong drink.

I began to wonder whether these members of the group could be fitted into their paper costumes and, if so, whether they could be relied on to stay in them. But Sandy and Louisa Calder arrived at last and Sandy worked at incredible speed, assisted by Winslow Ames, then Director of the Lyman Allyn museum in New London. Sandy had brought with him only huge sheets of brown wrapping paper, staplers, scissors, needles and strong thread. Yet it seemed to me that at one moment I looked around at old friends, at the next to see the house swarming with tigers,elephants and other jungle beasts. I remember that I had the most trouble with one of the elephants. The man inside this costume had a temporary problem with alcohol, and he kept bursting out of his costume at unlikely places to get

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another drink. I had taken this man up to see the Calders in Roxbury a few weeks before and I think his problem had been intensified by Louisa Calder's flat statement that everyone should always drink more rather than less. Like everyone else I ever knew, he had accepted Louisa's dictum with the utmost seriousness, and it had taken us ten days to sober him up. On this occasion, February 15, 1936, his sudden reincarnation as an elephant may well have made things worse. In any case, I remember that he had trouble keeping his trunk aloft and defiant as the night wore on.

At about 9:30 we all wedged ourselves and our costumes into various cars and arrived at the Avery in plenty of time for the Grand March at 10:00. Our group is listed in the program of the Ball as "A Nightmare Side Show." It must have appeared to those on the sidelines as precisely that, since none of us was exactly sober, and our paper shrouds were starting to give at the seams. We were followed by a more properly behaved group, oddly enough entitled "Mae West and The Boys," and by a group typifying modern art, its costumes designed the Hartford Art School. The names of the artists whose works were mimiced by the costumes of the latter group are interesting in retrospect. There were six Picassos, including my own Seated Woman which had been on loan to the Atheneum very often; no less than four De Chiricos; two Marie Laurencins; an Archipenko, a Klee; Brancusi's Blond Negress, and Leonid's Fisherwoman with Net. There were also two additional works which no imaginable gathering of art critics could have identified as to source. There followed a little later several groups of particular charm and inventiveness: "Les Ruines de

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Hartford 3095," led and designed by Eugene Berman; "Beggards," led by George Balanchine, costumed by Tchelitchew, music by Nabokoff and lebretto by Charles Henri Ford; "Poets," with the fine actress Ruth Ford as leader. Somehow, perhaps because it was the last entry, I remember with special clarity the entrance of Gohn Goodwin and the celebrated ballerina, Miss Tilly Losch, as Perseus and Andromeda. After that I must have gotten drunk, very drunk. At least that's what the late, blessed Marie Harriman told me the next day when I took her and her sister to lunch. "You were the drunkest Man I've ever seen in my entire life," Mrs. Harriman told me sweetly. It was a proud moment in my life. I can't telly why, but Mrs. Harriman said it so nicely that I took it as a compliment, though I wasn't feeling very well at the moment. I do like exaggeration and extravagance even when ill.

The Paper Ball ended at daybreak, and it ended quite literally with a splash. Sandy Calder in one of his chronic fits of playfulness pushed Chick Austin into one of the shallow pools in the Avery court, and the marble floor ran scarlet from the red paper costume Chick had been wearing. After this climactic achievement Sandy wanted to go home. I was sober by then, and I drove him to my Farmington house, he sound asleep and his big arms intertwined with the spokes of my steering wheel, so that progress was rather irregular and difficult.

It must have been on the Friday night after the Ball that I gave a party for the Festival's geusts at my not-yet completed

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Farmington house. It was a raucous party, and it soon divided itself into two factions: those who had been enchanted by what they'd seen at the Avery; and those, chiefly from Hartford, who thought the whole affair nonsense and said so loudly. But by no means were all the local people indifferent or angry about the Festival. The enthusiasts were encouraged in their pleasure by old friends of Chick's and mine: Jere Abbott, then Director of the Smith College Museum of Art; Agnes Rindge and John McAndrew from the Vassar faculty; Kirk and Constance Askew; Julien and Joella Levy; Winslow Ames, Director of the Lyman Allyn Museum in New London and his wife; Pierre and Teeny Matisse. These last-named people were all of them out-of-town regulars of the band which followed Chick's activities, just as Paul Cooley, Eleanor Howland, Russell Hitchcock and I were always on deck to help him in any way we could. It was a small but devoted following. It was never anywhere near as large as it should have been, considering Chick's talents as an impressario. Many people in Hartford seem to have forgotten this melancholy fact, as I rather crudely reminded them in a speech when they turned out in droves to pay homage to Chick Austin when the new Austin Art Center was opened a few years ago at Trinity College in Hartford, where Chick had been that college's first professor of art history.

The concluding event of the Festival was called a "Matinee Musicale," a concert of works by Vivaldi, Scarlatti, D'Hervelois, Thomson, Cliquet-Pleyel, Jere Abbott, Paul Bowles and others, conducted by Virgil Thomson himslef. The music from the Baroque era was played on instruments of that period, and naturally I remember

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them better than the music; some were extraordinarily handsome. It had been an exciting week, and all of us involved in it collapsed for several days except Chick, who was wide awake with ideas for a Second Hartford Festival which, alas, never took place.

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THE CALDERS

A few years after I began to work steadily in the Wadsworth Atheneum, Alexander and Louisa Calder had bought a small, old farmhouse in Roxbury, Connecticut. Within an astonishingly short time they had converted the interior of the house into a small palace of a special kind, unique in the world. Nearly every accessory in the house, from ash trays to wire hands which held toilet paper, were made by Sandy himself. Sandy also designed some of the chairs and tables, and everywhere there were cloth objects for every purpose, from pot holders to throw rugs. These were knitted or woven by Louisa or friends in entrancingly bright primary colors. I remember walking into the house for the first time in the early 1930s and literally holding my breath out of pleasure. I'd never seen such original and personal decorations and useful objects in any house in my life; I've never seen anything comparable since, except in other rooms in which the Calders have lived. There were never any plaster busts and exotic trivia such as artists used to have in their studios. There was only the clear strong and inimitable taste of a man and his wife whose names are known and respected around the world, especially for the mobiles whose generic name has become part of the international vocabulary.

It always irritates me when Calder's mobiles and also his stabiles are imitated. They are always badly done and lacking in the life Sandy gives his works whether they are stationary or whirling madly in a breeze. Sandy's works are also notable for a precision of balance which may seem almost accidental but is really the delayed result of Calder's youthful training

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as an engineer. As a man Sandy is big and strong, yet when he adjusts one of his sculptures he works like a diamond cutter who must make the quick, right move or shatter the rare substance before him. I once had an expert restorer in to adjust the swing of a small, beautiful mobile Sandy had given my wife and me. He worked for an hour or more and finally said, "It's impossible; no one can fix it." Then Sandy came over, fussed for a moment with his large hands and the mobile worked like the movements of a fine Swiss watch.

Calder's voice has always been an odd mixture of laughter and an inaudible growl, depending on his mood. I suppose I've seen his famous miniature circus some twenty times. I've never understood how it was made to work, whether trapeze artists were catching each other in mid-air or miniature animals were suddenly emerging from their cages. Once in Paris I bought a large Victorian birdcage. I had live birds in it at first and then gave up because the birds were always getting caught in the cage's turrets and could only break free by injuring a leg or wing. So then I had no birds for a while. Sandy came over to Farmington from Roxbury, said an empty birdcage was useless if not sinful and promptly made me a set of new birds from Medaglia D'Oro coffee tins and pipe cleaners. When he was finished in an incredibly short time, he said there should also be birds outside the cage to redress nature's balance and he made me a mobile of finches and doves to flutter around the home of their captive relatives.

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I experienced another example of Sandy's ingenuity when my first wife and I were divorced in 1936. The flat silver in our house had been given to her as a wedding present, and she naturally took it with her. Sandy and Louisa came over for dinner shortly afterward, and I had to explain that we'd be forced to eat with our fingers until I could buy stainless steel knives, forks and spoons. "That's silly," said Sandy, "I'll make you at least one of each." He came back ~~or I went there~~ a few days later, and ~~Sandy~~ presented me with a rusty, old knife he'd dug up on his grounds, a fork he must have found the same way and a spoon made out of twisted coils of copper which naturally wouldn't hold liquid of any kind. All three objects were so beautifully made and decorated that I've treasured them all these years except for the spoon which someone stole, probably out of indignation. I hope the thief tries drinking arsenic with the spoon; the poison will reach his vital organs in one second flat.

I've so many vivid memories of the Calders that it's hard to sort them out. I think the only terrifying one was once when I was driving down from Boston and nearing Hartford. Around Windsor, Connecticut, I became aware that a car was following me closely and that it had no headlights. I pulled over to the side of the road to let the car pass, but it came to an abrupt halt behind me. Out jumped Sandy Calder and said quickly, "Thank God, it's you. My headlights gave out a few miles back and I didn't know how I'd get home because it's so late

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that all the service stations are closed." He and I proceeded at a snail's pace to my house in Farmington, where he naturally spent the night. I shudder even now to think what might have happened to him. His car was a La Salle and very old. But Sandy was fond of it and had replaced most of its dashboard controls with buttons and other appliances he had made himself out of twisted pieces of copper. He was a good, if rather defiant, driver. Once he was arrested in Woodbury for speeding and the judge told him, sternly, that gasoline and wine didn't mix. Sandy was so horrified by the suggested combination that he threw up on the floor and the judge, in despair, dismissed the case.

I drove down as often as I could to the Calders' magic house in Roxbury, and they were often at my house. I see them less often these days, alas, because they live in France and seldom are at their place in Roxbury, which they still own and will never sell, I'm sure. Louisa once told me that they preferred France among other reasons because American bread was inedible. I agree with her, but the fact remains that the bread Louisa baked herself was marvelous. At her house we always ate vast quantities of it washed down with red wine, and the other food was slid down to our table outdoors on an ingenious contraption Sandy had made to save Louisa steps. These luncheons were not only hilarious fun but they taught me that elegance and the simple country life were by no means contradictory terms. Certainly it was at the Calders' Roxbury house that I learned more about French life at its best than during any number of visits to Paris or even to small villages in France and Italy. I'll al-

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ways be grateful to both Calders for the lessons they taught me as well as for a friendship I've treasured these many years.

One final note about Sandy Calder only. A large exhibition of his work was planned for the Museum of Modern Art, to be held from September, 1943, to January, 1944. I was asked to direct the show, since I'd admired Sandy as an artist for a very long time. I naturally accepted. But then one evening a few weeks later, Sandy and Louisa asked me for dinner at a shabby Italian restaurant in uptown New York where they'd discovered that the food was excellent. The main dining room was large, there was a small orchestra and the Calders and some of their more agile friends danced constantly. I noticed that Sandy seemed nervous and was sweating profusely, I thought from the effort of dancing, which to Sandy was a strenuous, contact sport. When he sat down again he would stare at me in a puzzled fashion and finally he asked me to dance. I explained quickly that even nimble-footed ladies found me a very bad dancer but Sandy said, "No, I want to talk, too, but not here at the table." We danced a few steps and suddenly Sandy said, "I don't know how to say this. I know you're supposed to direct my show at the Museum, but I wish Jim Sweeney could do it. I'm sorry because you and I are old friends." I answered promptly, "For God's sake, Sandy, is that what you're nervous about? I'm all for having Sweeney do the show. He's followed your work more closely than I have, and I'd be glad to have him take over. I'm sure Monroe Wheeler will agree, and we'll arrange things tomorrow, so it's

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settled." I've never seen a human being stop sweating faster in my life, and Sandy and I repaired to the table and drank more wine -a great deal more. And the show itself, with Jim Sweeney and Herbert Matter in charge, was very beautiful and a great success, as I knew it would be.

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Collecting: The Early Years

It was in January 1930 that I decided to buy some paintings by the School of Paris artists whose illustrated books I had admired for some time. I went to the Valentine Gallery in New York and asked its owner, Valentine Dudensing, what pictures by Matisse, Picasso and Derain he had in stock. He had a good number and I bought a smallish Matisse of c. 1923 entitled The Red Sofa and a Derain landscape of the late 1920's. The Matisse was not as big and impressive as a painting of a ballet dancer resting in a doorway which I'd seen the previous year at the Wadsworth Atheneum in one of Chick Austin's many brilliant shows, "Loan Exhibition of Selected Contemporary French Painting." The latter picture was one Chick Austin wanted very much to buy for the Atheneum, but the members of his acquisitions committee told him the price -- around $20,000 -- was utterly ridiculous. They were not impressed when Chick told them that a New York collector already had an option to buy the Matisse at the asking price, since some of them felt strongly that New Yorkers were hopelessly reckless with money and short on common sense. The collector turned out to be Stephen C. Clark, an astute businessman, a distinguished collector and later my boss at the Museum of Modern Art, of which he was Chairman of the Board for many years. I remember that Chick later told me he'd reminded his committee (its official title was the Art Committee) that Mr. Clark could hardly be thought a wastrel since he was one of the richest men in the world and had added to rather than dissipated his vast inheritance.

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I was delighted with my purchases when I got them home and up on the living room walls of my West Hartford house. I was also scared. I'd never spent more than $1,000 for a painting before, and the Matisse and the Derain cost respectively seven and five times that. I didn't then know Chick Austin, but I knew enough about him from his exhibitions to be sure that he, if anyone in Hartford, would give me the moral support I needed badly. I went to his office in the Atheneum and there ensued what for me will always be a golden moment. When I told him the names of the artists whose pictures I'd bought in New York, he quite literally grabbed me by the coat, flug me into his car and we drove off with his customary contempt for speed limits to my West Hartford house. He couldn't have been more excited if the purchases had been his own. From that day on we became close friends and worked together for almost ten years on various exhibitions and projects in the Wadsworth Atheneum. During those years I saw many examples of Chick's extraordinary generosity of spirit. I think I never saw it more clearly than on the first day of our friendship, when his enthusiasm for my Matisse and Derain scattered my fears of extravagance like dead ashes in a strong wind.

As the weeks went by I liked the Matisse more and more, the Derain less. I went on year after year buying more Matisses until I'd owned a total of seven. I didn't have the money to own them all at once; I got them by trading in and out, one for another, until they were all gone, including the best and first one, <u>The Red Sofa</u>, which Dr. Barnes of Merion finally bought and hailed in

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one of his muscle-bound and ponderous articles or books as a top Matisse of its period.

It took me a very long time to understand what my trouble with Matisse had been: I had bought the wrong pictures (except for The Red Sofa and an early still life) by the right master. Matisse's color is so seductive that the temptation is to want to change it at intervals, as the brazen change women. But that is true only of the relaxed paintings of the 1920's and early 1930's. The paintings up to roughly 1920 are so strong, revolutionary and vivid that one no longer wonders why all those years Matisse remained Picasso's sole formidable rival, as Picasso himself keeps repeating to friends. And it may well be that the paintings of Matisse's late life are equally exciting and show him sitting bolt upright again after a middle age siesta, a period of "calm, luxury, and voluptuousness," to use the words of Baudelaire which Matisse took as a title for an important painting years ago. Matisse was a very great master and whether he dozed at times or not seems to me a minor question.

My experience with Derain's paintings was quite different and so is my opinion of his talent today. He had all the skill and knowledge to become a master like Matisse; he lacked the required fire or banked it with calculation. I didn't make the same mistake of choice in acquiring his works that I did with Matisse. In March, 1930, I bought his very large Bagpipe Player. It was painted in 1911 when Derain was very much in the middle of our century's astonishing revolution in painting, he was regarded as

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a peer even by Matisse and Picasso and was their friend. I still consider The Bagpipe Player one of Derain's best works and so obviously had the great John Quinn, to whom the painting belonged until it was sold at an auction after Quinn's death. But after fifteen years of dwindling pride, I sold the picture, as I became convinced that its huge image was more dead than alive. I remember clearly the evening my decision was made. Stephen Clark had always admired the picture, and he and I were looking at it one evening in my New York apartment. "You know, Mr. Clark," I said, "I really don't want to look at that picture any more. I'm going to sell it." I thought he would be shocked, but he replied very promptly, "I think you're right. It's impressive but lifeless." I bought two additional Derains in 1930-31. One was called Monastery and had been much praised when it had been shown at the Museum of Modern Art in January-February, 1930, in Alfred Barr's first exhibition of contemporary French painting, chosen from American collections. After a few years it became for me a handsome but boring picture, much better than most Derains of the 1920's but still strangely bloodless. The second Derain I bought in 1931 was a still life of the same year as The Bagpipe Player but less ambitious and more intense. I think I should have held on to it but there was always something else I wanted to buy and couldn't.

Looking back over receipts for paintings I bought in 1931, it seems to me no wonder at all that I was short of cash. In October of that year I bought a tiny Daumier called The Lawyers and paid $19,000 for it in installments. I didn't tire of the Daumier

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(no one in his right mind could get sick of a good Daumier painting and this was a good one). But the very next month I saw, at Wildenstein's, a breathtaking Degas of 1874-75 called Woman Putting on Her Gloves. It was one of the most beautiful early Degas figure pieces I'd ever seen or have seen since and I traded in the little Daumier and paid an additional cash amount of $8,000. I think still this was a good transaction and the Degas is one picture I would feel remorse to see again today; it was marvelously drawn, of course, and its color was muted and irresistible. Still, I was at last beginning to realize that I had no business splashing around in the larger tides of the market for 19th century French art. And besides there were modern paintings appearing at the New York dealers during the Depression which I thought better suited to my pocketbook and my growing sense of affinity with works of art produced within our own memory and century. So I polished off the year 1931 by buying from Knoedler and Company, a very large Picasso drawing on canvas, called The Sigh and painted, rather than drawn, in 1923 in Picasso's neo-classic manner. Together with it I bought The Goatherd by Douanier Rousseau, done toward the end of the Douanier's miraculous life. When I lent this picture to the retrospective Rousseau exhibition organized by the Museum of Modern Art and the Art Institute of Chicago in 1942, both James Johnson Sweeney and Daniel Catton Rich told me excitedly that they'd discovered there was an otter lolling on the river bank in one corner of the picture. They asked me whether I'd ever noticed it and I said no. Now I see it all the time. Since

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~~life. When I lent this picture to the retrospective Rousseau exhibition organized by the Museum of Modern Art and the Art Institute of Chicago in 1942, both James Johnson Sweeney and Daniel Catton Rich told me excitedly that they'd discovered there was an otter lolling on the river bank in one corner of the picture. They asked me whether I'd ever noticed it and I said no. Now I see it all the time. Since~~ the picture was painted late in Rousseau's life, it's a 20th century work, of course. But Rousseau's career took place primarily in the late 19th century and for years I've threatened to sell the painting as not really belonging in my field of collecting. I don't know whether otters can growl or not. Yet every time I'm ready at last to sell the picture, I give it a farewell look. I then distinctly hear a voice saying, "Listen, stupid." It's not my voice. It must be the otter's and I thank him for the warning.

In retrospect 1932 seems to me to have been the most reckless and certainly the most frustrating year of my life as a collector. In April I bought Picasso's now-famous Seated Woman of 1927 from the Valentine Gallery. It cost $16,000,* it scared me to death and I loved it; it has been my Best Girl ever since. It was "one of the most awe-inspiring of all Picasso's figure paintings," as Alfred Barr wrote of it later, and I'm not sure I would have had the courage to buy it if it hadn't been for the enthusiastic moral support of Chick Austin and Jere Abbott. Other people admired the picture but assured me that it was too strong to live

* Was valued at one million on J.T.S.'s death 1979

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with. Even then but with more certainty now, I felt and feel that this is a specious argument. Any collector in the end determines his own span of attention in looking at works of art on his walls. He looks at them when he feels like looking; he looks away when he has had enough temporarily. No one, however hardy, would expect to play Stravinsky's fiercest compositions on the Victrola all his waking hours. (I've been reminded that the word "Victrola" is hopelessly old-fashioned but since I don't believe in progress, I plan to go on using it.) The collector's mind has a built-in time switch. There are weeks when I walk unseeing past the Seated Woman and then suddenly I will stare at it constantly, spellbound and proud.

A banker-friend of my father's, seeing a reproduction of the Picasso in the Hartford paper, ordered me to get rid of it, no matter how much I lost on its purchase price. I had an equally threatening experience when I lent it to the Smith College Museum of Art at Jere Abbott's request. William Allan Neilson was then the president of Smith and came to a party given at the Museum when the Seated Woman was shown. President Neilson was the irreplaceable hero of every woman I've ever known who went to Smith during his regime and was extremely polite in thanking me for lending a picture Jere Abbott liked so much, though he himself obviously loathed it. But the Northampton newspaper was not quite as tolerant. It printed a long poem in which the author, a retired military man, said a

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cavalry regiment should ride over me with swords drawn. I don't quite understand why Picasso wasn't the one the soldiers should have butchered but then, of course, he wasn't readily available.

double ¶

In 1932 I was back in Paris for several months and I bought at last my first and only painting by Pierre Bonnard whose illustrated books I'd admired so much in 1926. I bought it from Bernheim Jeune, a gallery I didn't usually go to ~~much~~ unless they were showing Bonnard, Vuillard or other members of the group who called themselves the "Nabis." I remember being surprised at how high the Bonnard prices were and finally realized that his market was both active and primarily French. In those days Bonnard's pictures rarely appeared in the New York galleries and the only place where they could be seen in quantity was at the Phillips Memorial Gallery in Washington. Mr. Duncan Phillips had bought a good number of very fine ones and I think it was he, in his quiet way, who had first persuaded me that Bonnard was one of the finest colorists of our time. I soon thought that Bonnard was also an absolute master of a curious hide-and-seek iconography which he developed along with his lifelong friend, Vuillard. The elements of this iconography are usually family or friends, everyday household furnishings and objects and dogs and cats. These figures and objects are veiled in shimmering color. They are melded into each other with such subtlety of tone and line that very often one discovers their presence only after close study. Bonnard's paintings are sometimes as hard to read on casual

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glance as the work of the great cubists, Picasso, Braque and Gris and they are, I think, equally beautiful in their quite separate way.

From Paris I went for the first time to Berlin and promptly visited Alfred Flechtheim's gallery. I told Mr. Flechtheim that I was especially interested in the works of Paul Klee. Within minutes the room in which I was sitting was lined with perhaps fifty Klees of the finest quality, Chick Austin having been in the gallery a short time before and, with his usual thoughtfulness, having told Flechtheim I was arriving and asked him to get out the best paintings and watercolors he had. It was a staggering array and for the second time in my life I wanted to buy everything in sight, as I had when visiting the exhibition of the Douanier Rousseau at Marie Harriman's New York gallery in 1931. At Mrs. Harriman's show I wanted most The Cart of Père Juniet but it was in the dealer Paul Guillaume's private collection and not for sale. At Flechtheim's all the pictures were for sale and I wanted them all. But I'd already spent a lot of money in Paris for the Bonnard and a Gris painting and two drawings at Kahnweiler's gallery, so I settled for one Klee painting, Gifts for I. It is painted in Klee's frequently composite technique and it records a party for a friend of the painter. In the picture I assume it is the friend's head which rests horizontally on the floor and above him are the festive table, champagne glass and salt and pepper shakers. Flechtheim begged me to buy Lehmbruck's Standing Youth of 1913 in cast stone which Alfred Barr later

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persuaded Mrs. John D. Rockefeller Jr. to buy and give to the Museum of Modern Art. It is a magnificently elegaic sculpture and the price Flechtheim asked me was modest, a fact which made no difference because I had no spending money left at all, and at home the Depression seemed to be getting worse rather than better. Yet no matter how much I scolded myself about money, I still couldn't get Lehmbruck out of my head, and I went back to Flechtheim and bought a pink, cast stone Woman's Head,* 16½ inches high, to my mind remarkable for its pensive mood and lyric quality without being sweet.

I think my interest in modern sculpture must have been growing steadily if unconsciously. As long before as 1930 I had bought two small Maillôl bronzes from Ambrose Vollard in Paris. I remember that it had been rather an unpleasant experience because Vollard had been in a disagreeable mood. The visit to his labyrinthine galleries had started badly when he asked me whether I liked Rouault's paintings. At that early point I didn't, though I later liked the early ones very much. I told him so. I remember that I sat for an hour while he glowered at me and mumbled about "Les idiots américains." All the time about six of Vollard's cats were walking around, nearer and nearer to a group of fine Renoirs and Cézannes stacked against the wall. Finally one of the cats walked right into one of the canvases, its tail swishing. My temper broke and I said, "Those goddamned cats of yours will ruin the pictures." For once Vollard almost managed a

* still in the JTS collection

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smile, though his expression was remote from helpless mirth. "Cats understand paintings," he said. And then he added crossly, "If you don't like Rouault, the cats certainly understand paintings better than you do." I left in a hurry with my two Maillôls in a paper bag. This parting remark had seemed to me the ultimate insult because I've always considered cat lovers highly neurotic. I suppose I must amend this statement, since I myself have owned a cat for eighteen years and have become grudgingly fond of her. She was a kitten when she was offered to me by neighbors. I didn't want to accept her, but Marga and Alfred Barr, usually reasonable people but drooling idiots on the subject of cats, bullied me into taking her. She sleeps on my neck whenever I try to take a nap and follows at my heels when I walk in the woods, a practice I consider unladylike. My cat's name is Toughy and she is well named, being a terror with dogs. I had a large Airedale once, and Toughy would wait until he was asleep and then pounce down on him from a sofa or table, making him a cringing nervous wreck. I once asked Alfred Barr how he could possibly like cats as well as birds, since the former were always ambushing the latter and chomping them into digestible pieces. Alfred's answer was prompt and, I suppose, satisfactory. He said: "I like them both but not one inside the other." Anyway, I wish I'd sent my ferocious cat to Ambrose Vollard, great man though he was; Toughy might have evened the score.

During the early and mid 1930s, I continued to buy works by

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Tchelitchew and the Berman brothers. But the neo-romantic painting I acquired and admired most was On the Beach by Christian Bérard, whose painting seldom reached that picture's degree of completion. The canvas shows the painter himself looking over his own shoulder, seated on a beach at Arcachon on a visit in 1933 to the Bordeaux coast Bérard and his American friend, Philip Lasell had made ~~in 1933~~. The picture is inscribed to Lasell and the story is that he and Bérard pushed the painting out of their window to avoid paying their bill. It's a strange, beautiful and disquieting picture, perhaps inspired by Degas' paintings of figures placed on white sand amid their belongings. The picture must convey its onanistic message with considerable force because all women loathe it. I finally got tired of fighting the battle of the sexes over an oil painting and gave it to the Museum of Modern Art in 1960. I regret the surrender but not the gift.

In 1933 Robert Storrs, my wife and I drove ~~back~~ to Germany from Paris. My brother, his wife and son had just arrived in Munich after a long stay in Egypt, and we all had rooms at the Regina Palast Hotel. It was an extremely comfortable hotel, and I bought a boxer dog from one of the desk clerks and had it shipped home. But the political climate had changed greatly in Germany since my previous visit in 1932 and there was a general atmosphere of malaise and expectancy in the Munich streets. Storrsy, my wife and I began after a few weeks to wish we hadn't gone back to Germany, where there were more men in uniform everywhere than there had

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been the year before. My own feeling of discomfort was greatly increased by the fact that I'd developed a severe case of dysentery on our motor trip. My brother had made friends with a German doctor in Egypt and had brought him along for a visit to his native country. The doctor promptly put me to bed and restricted my diet to toast and tea, but nothing seemed to stop the dysentery which lasted for four or five months and made me terribly weak.

I had to give up all ideas of visiting private galleries. But my nephew had caught the bug, whatever it was, and become sicker than I, so when the doctor was attending to him, I would sneak out and pay brief but repeated visits to the Alte Pinakothek, where all Munich's old masters were on view. I was usually in trouble after I'd gone through two or three galleries, I never could find the washrooms and I'd have to beat it back to the hotel and try again the next day. I remember that a Patinier landscape of superb quality became the testing point of my endurance. If I reached the gallery where it was hung, I thought I'd made satisfactory progress. If I couldn't get that far, I thought I'd failed. I don't recommend this as an ideal way of seeing art museums nor do I yet understand why the hygienic Germans were so stingy about toilets. The only conclusion I've been able to reach is that the imminent take-over by the Nazis had made all decent Germans constipated. I was very glad indeed when we got back to Paris and the doctors at the American Hospital in Neuilly got my intestines on the way to recovery at last.

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The most important purchase I made in 1933-34 was not really a purchase at all. At Marie Harriman's gallery one day in New York I saw a life-size Lehmbruck torso in gray, cast stone. I was determined to have it but I didn't have the cash, and I'd been told repeatedly in youth never to borrow anything for any purpose whatever (my father was especially opposed to mortgages and said he preferred to have a verandah on his house). In despair I finally told Mrs. Harriman that I would trade her even, her Lehmbruck for a rather large Matisse of a woman playing a violin at a window, the surrounding wallpaper being purple and white stripes. Mrs. Harriman chewed gum solemnly for a while and then said that I was stark raving mad, since the Matisse was worth four times as much as the Lehmbruck. I assured her that I knew this but I wanted the Lehmbruck; it arrived at my West Hartford house by truck the next day. I've never since had any illusions about my business acumen, and I've never regretted the trade.

Mrs. Harriman had bought the piece from Dr. G.F. Reber of Lausanne, Switzerland, whose secretary thought the piece had been sold at the Hotel DROUOT in Paris on February 22, 1921, after the contents of Lehmbruck's Paris studio had been seized by the French government. Dr. August Hoff, then Director of the Lehmbruck Museum in Duisberg, Germany, (Lehmbruck's birthplace) wrote Mrs. Harriman at the time I bought the piece (1933) that

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a bronze of the sculpture was in his museum and that another piece, with slightly longer arms, probably existed in cast stone. Since it's been my misfortune never to have measured any lady's arms in inches, let alone centimetres, and since photographs of sculptures tell outrageous lies, I really don't know whether my sculpture is a unique piece, though I gather it is. At least Dr. Hoff wrote Mrs. Harriman a wonderful sentence about the sculpture: "Else it is to me not met such [another] exemplar." But the finest letter of all was written to me by Margaret Gise, a very nice woman who ran Marie Harriman's gallery when the boss wasn't present. I don't think Mrs. Gise was an ardent anti-feminist, but she did write me on November 23, 1933: "It is indeed rare that one finds not only an original Lehmbruck which has not been in the possession of the [Lehmbruck's] wife but a unique Lehmbruck." In short Mrs. Lehmbruck had casts made of every sculpture by Lehmbruck she could get her hands on. The married life of the Lehmbrucks seems not to have been at all happy. But at least I think he took a more dignified if far more tragic exit from it in 1919 - suicide. I keep wondering whether my sculpture is not the one which appears in photographs of one of Mies van der Rohe's masterpieces, the Tugendhat house, completed in 1930 at Brno, Czechoslovakia. My good friend and neighbor, Philip Johnson, assures me that the Tugendhats were not collectors of painting or sculpture. Nevertheless, Mies may have persuaded them to buy the Lehmbruck or it may have been on loan when the photographs

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of their house were taken. I should add, however, that an artificial stone cast of my piece was listed and reproduced in the June, 1931, issue of International Art Market; it had just been bought by London's Tate Gallery for $42,164. It's described as "mostly red with gray-green patina." I'm prepared to concede that sculpture of Indian ladies may be more valuable than sculpture of ladies whose love of alcohol has given them bad livers and turned them gray. But I've never seen the Tate piece. I can only hope it's not like the cast of my Woman's Head which I saw a few years ago, which had seams as thick as your finger and must have been one of the casts Mrs. Lehmbruck had made in her rage against her dead husband. This hopelessly clumsy cast, be it noted, was for sale in one of New York's most respectable galleries.

When Chick Austin and I assembled the big retrospective Picasso show in the Wadsworth Atheneum (& mentioned chapt III) with important help from Russell Hitchcock and Paul Cooley, we kept staring at two diminutive paintings of the master's neo-classic period, the smaller one having been executed in 1921, the larger in 1922. Both pictures belonged to Picasso himself and he had promised to give them eventually to members of his family but changed his mind in tribute to our show. We wanted very much to buy them both, one for the Atheneum, the other for me. I can't remember how we decided which one of the two I would buy, though I think that Chick characteristically gave me the choice. The two little pictures

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were quite even in quality but I decided on the smaller one and I own it still. It is tempera on wood and it measures 5 /8 x 3 7/8 inches; it is therefore about the size of a postcard, though its monumentality and sureness are unbelievable. A few years after I bought the picture I agreed to lend it to a mid-western Museum (I can't remember which one). For some reason the museum's curator didn't ask me for the dimensions and I assumed they knew its size. A week or so later a huge moving van drew up at my West Hartford house and three burly drivers clumped up to the door and asked for the Picasso. I handed it to one of them in the palm of my hand and they walked back to the truck, giving me baleful glances over their shoulders, as though I'd played an unforgiveable trick. Their confusion and that of the museum curators who'd sent them was understandable, because some of Picasso's neo-classic paintings <u>are</u> very large and it's difficult to estimate their sizes from photographs.

I think it was very early in 1935 when I bought my first Miró. It was a small collage of 1934 of felt and cardboard stuck on a piece of sandpaper. It had been, I thought, the most perfectly resolved of the Miró collages which Pierre Matisse had shown in 1935 and years later Alfred Barr told me that he had thought so, too. It had also been a picture which had been a contributing factor to a divorce, as paintings have probably been many times in the past but never to people I've known. The collage had been bought from Matisse by Paul Cooley, a friend of mine since our

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childhood and a stalwart of the Wadsworth Atheneum in what I call the golden days. His wife had hated and disapproved of the picture from the beginning and I had heard them argue about it many times. I wouldn't tell the story and certainly not use names except that both partners to the marriage have been happily remarried for a long time. Naturally people about to become divorced don't quarrel about one matter only, but the Miró collage was a bone of contention between the Cooleys for a long time. I bought it from Pierre Matisse when Paul turned it back in. It remains one of my favorite Mirós, regardless of size. Everyone tells me it will fall apart one day. But then, indeed, so will I.

Late in 1934 I had begun writing my first book. It was called After Picasso and it was published by Dodd, Mead and Edwin Valentine Mitchell in 1935. Its title was a blatant paraphrase on Clive Bell's Since Cézanne, a book I liked very much at the time. I tried as clearly as I could in the preface to explain that the artists considered were not in any sense replacing Picasso but were younger than he and owed him so much that in a double sense their work was "after" the great Spanish master. The book was divided into two sections; the first dealt with the neo-romantics, Bérard, Tchelitchew and the Berman brothers; the second section tried to explore and explain surrealist art from its official inception in 1924 to the then-present. I'm told that it was the first long study in English of surrealist art, though Peter Neagoe had written a book about surrealist theory a year or so before and James

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Johnson Sweeney's Plastic Redirections in Twentieth Century Art (1924) had a short section on surrealist art. I wrote the book in the attic of my West Hartford house which I'd converted into a library of sorts, since I'd acquired every book and article about surrealism I could get my hands on. It was a comfortable, quiet place, to work, far better than the tiny library on the first floor, [which I had long since christened "Abe Lincoln's birthplace" because of its knotted pine paneling and fake-primitive furniture.] I worked long hours every day and I was helped most by Russell Hitchcock's frequent visits and editorial advice and by the works of art I had seen in Chick Austin's 1931 exhibition, "Newer Super-Realism." Chick had used the word "newer" primarily because Salvador Dali's advent on the Paris art scene had given surrealist art a new and important impetus. In those days all Americans interested in painting used the clumsy term "super-realism"; I think it was Russell who at last persuaded us to revert to surrealism, as the French had done long since.

The longer I worked on my book the more convinced I became that Giorgio de Chirico in his youth had provided the central starting point both for the reveries of the neo-romantics and for the affronts to logic of the surrealist painters. The one direction in which he had not affected the latter painters was that of the automatism practiced by Masson, Miró and others. Otherwise his influence was everywhere among the neo-romantics and the surrealists, especially when younger men like Tanguy and Dali

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began to make the incredible seem instantly credible through precisions of technique. The surrealists were photographed several times grouped in front of de Chirico's large canvas, The Enigma of a Day, and they even sent out a questionnaire in which their colleagues were asked to identify objects, phantomic or real, within this picture. The answers were enigmatic, to put it mildly, Oddly enough, de Chirico had become the surrealist movement's patron saint at almost precisely the moment when his own work had become hopelessly academic. The surrealists expressed their contempt for their turncoat prophet by publishing a plate of one of de Chirico's classic pictures of the early 1920s and then defacing it with black lines.

It so happened that in 1935, when I was completing my book, Pierre Matisse held in his New York gallery an exhibition of de Chirico's painting of the "metaphysical" period. This period lasted from 1911 to 1917, though in 1919 de Chirico, painting for the first time in artificial light, regained his youthful fervor in a few works like The Sacred Fish (Museum of Modern Art). I walked back and forth through Pierre's gallery like a man gone crazy with lust and I bought four paintings, including The Enigma of a Day, The Grand Metaphysical Still Life, The Duo and a small still life called The Faithful Servitor. I was furious that I couldn't buy more but the only way I could pay for ones I had bought was to sell the beautiful Degas, Woman Putting on Her Gloves. I sold the Degas back to Wildenstein, most reluctantly, and waited for Pierre to round up more early de Chiricos.

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HH

During the early and mid-1930s the two New York galleries that both Chick Austin and I frequented most were those of Julien Levy and of Durlacher Brothers, the latter gallery owned by R. Kirk Askew, Jr., whom Chick had known at Harvard. Both galleries were distinguished in very opposite ways. Kirk Askew handled the work of a number of leading, contemporary painters but his main field was the art of the three centuries preceding the 19th. I'm not sure how many people understand how important it was ~~was~~ to have had in New York a dealer who didn't share the prevailing and ridiculous opinion that all art of consequence began with the impressionists and Cézanne, as though all artists of earlier periods were of minor consequence and talent. It was always a relief and for me a rare experience to go to Kirk Askew's gallery and see works by Piranesi rather than Picasso, by Guercino rather than Gauguin. No matter how great one's admiration for recent and modern masters is, I think it is always necessary to keep in mind the familiar but easily forgotten adage that art is very long indeed. Kirk Askew was and is a scholar as well as a dealer and these two attributes in combination are rare in the commercial art world, especially in New York. Great as is my admiration for many painters and sculptors of the past one hundred years, I always felt a sense of relief in visiting Kirk's gallery and I always learned a great deal from listening to him talk. His conversational range was extraordinary; he would shift from gossip of the day to discus-

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sions of subtle maneuvers in art history, and I wouldn't always be quickly aware that he had shifted gears. Besides, I adored his beautiful wife, Constance, as everyone does, and both were regulars at the events in the Wadsworth Atheneum. If I must find a flaw in the characters of these two cherished friends, as one always must, I can report that both Askews are uneven croquet players, alternating between recklessness and caution, in either case slowing up the game outrageously and with no sense of public responsibility whatever.

Whereas the Askews belonged in taste and heart to many centuries, Julien Levy belonged to only one - our own. He was for a long time the only New York dealer who handled the work of the surrealists and the neo-romantics. Indeed he was as close to being an official surrealist himself as one could come without signing one of André Breton's guidelines to the surrealist faith. He spent much of his time in Paris; he was the friend as well as the dealer of many of the younger Parisian artists. Nor did he neglect some of the best younger American painters, sculptors and (a very rare inclusion in the early 1930s in New York) photographers. It was at his various galleries in the 57th Street area that I first saw the paintings of Ben Shahn, the photographs of Atget and Walker Evans and of many other artists whose names now seem secure in art's ever-changing constellation; it was there that I saw Peter Blume's masterwork, _The Eternal City_, and many other works by people of decided

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originality such as Joseph Cornell, not yet surpassed as the creator of magic objects in the surrealist vein. Whereas business affairs fascinated Kirk Askew, they bored Julien Levy, who would have given up any possibly remunerative transaction in order to play chess with Marcel Duchamp. ~~The game was ideally suited to Levy and Duchamp in that it called for a concentration of intelligence, made more appealing to both in that the proceeds of this intelligence could be obliterated at the end of the game by a sweep of the hand.~~

It is difficult to decide which of these two exceptional dealers made the greater contribution to the expanding appreciation of art in this country. Kirk Askew, however frequent his forays into the contemporary field, was primarily notable, I think, because he waved a ~~flag~~ sign of warning about how much we still needed to know about art history's past. Julien Levy was a standard bearer for the present and the future. I've no intention of attempting a comparison of the two men's accomplishments. I can only say that since their retirement we haven't seen their like again.

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COLLECTING: LATER YEARS

I seem not to have bought many works of art between 1935 and 1940, I think primarily because I was spending so much furnishing my Farmington house and improving the grounds. In 1940, however, two events took place which revived my interest in collecting. The first and more important of these events was that I was made a member of the Museum of Modern Art's Acquisitions Committee, an appointment which so far has lasted more than thirty years. I enjoyed the meetings very much and I couldn't help learning a great deal from Alfred Barr's presentation of works to be considered by the Committee, either as purchases or as gifts. I'd known, of course, that Alfred was the top authority in the international field of modern art and I'd studied carefully [plan] his superb catalogs. But listening to him talk informally was a different yet equally rewarding matter. The impact of his knowledge was enough to stun anyone, and it was increased by listening to his assistant, Dorothy Miller, a true expert in the American field. I began to realize that there were many facets to the precious and semi-precious jewels in contemporary art's crown and that a good number of these I either hadn't noticed or had passed over too lightly. I think another contributing factor in my education was that the Acquisitions Committee meetings took me more often to New York, unquestionably this country's art center. Today, as often happens, when younger museum people tell me it is better to live far

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away from New York so as to retain a better perspective, I can only reply that "better perspective" to me means simply that you live too far away from America's art capital to see what is going on.

The second event which started me buying again was that Pierre Matisse had another show of de Chirico's early works. One would have thought that I'd acquired enough de Chiricos in Pierre's 1935 exhibition to last a lifetime. But I was working in 1940 on the first of two books I did on de Chirico's "metaphysical" paintings, and I probably fell into a trance when trying to describe their importance in my book. In any case, I bought three more paintings out of Pierre's second de Chirico show. One of them was the Gare Montparnasse of 1914, identical in size with The Enigma of a Day and therefore the second of four large paintings de Chirico did in 1913-14, the other two being in the collections of Walter Arensberg (the Arensberg collection now belongs to the Philadelphia Museum) and Mrs. Wolfgang Schoenborn. The second picture I bought from Pierre's 1940 show was an extremely beautiful still life called The Amusements of a Young Girl. It had been painted in 1916 or 1917, when de Chirico was in the Italian Army's mental hospital at Ferrara, and it has that city's magic Castello Estense in its background. My third acquisition was an unusually poetic mannequin picture entitled The Double Dream of Spring, and it eventually got me into another row with de Chirico himself, as follows.

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COLLECTING: LATER YEARS

As soon as the mails to Italy were open again after World War II, I sent de Chirico a copy of my first book on him, entitled The Early Chirico. I asked his help with many questions I hadn't been able to answer, in part because of wartime restrictions on research. I heard nothing from the Master. But presently an Italian friend sent me a copy of a review de Chirico had done of the book in a Milanese newspaper. The review was scalding, as I had expected it would be, since my book dealt only with the painter's works of 1911-17. The book had been written, said the great man, "by an American pederast who knows nothing about my paintings." I acceptedthe adjective in his description of me proudly; the noun seemed to me utterly nonsensical, since I've never had any homosexual inclinations whatever. I think everyone's sex life is his own and no one else's business; I object only to being called something I'm not and never have been.

Anyway, the first public notice I had in this country of de Chirico's rage was when Time phoned me to ask whether they could publish a picture in my book which de Chirico had told them was a blatant forgery. This seemed strange to me in that nowhere in his venomous review of the book in an Italian newspaper had he questioned the authenticity of any pictures in my book, though that would have been the most damaging thing he could have written. His Time piece had started with a blast at an exhibition of his early works held at the Galerie Allard in Paris in 1946. De Chirico declared that 19 of the 25 early paintings of

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his were forgeries. Since through Paris friends I already had photographs and other documents on the Allard show, I must say I think de Chirico's estimate of the number of fakes was low if anything. It had obviously been an exhibition slapped together to attract the postwar tourist trade and I think de Chirico was right to be angry. But then the painter told the Time interviewer - I soon found out it was the late Charles Wertenbacker - that there were two forgeries reproduced in my book, one of them The Double Dream of Spring. Since I'd known what collections this picture had been in since 1919, that is, long before any forged de Chiricos had appeared, I felt on safe ground in writing a sassy letter of reply which Time published, as they'd agreed to do when I gave them permission to reproduce the Double Dream. It follows:

"Sirs: In your Aug. 26 issue, you report the latest gunfire from a man who seems determined to assassinate one of the most brilliant youths in the history of recent art. The man is Giorgio de Chirico, living Italian painter; his intended victim is himself as a young man.

"You report that De Chirico has recently received a copy of my book, The Early Chirico, dealing with his paintings of 1910-17... Double Dream of Spring. However odd it may seem for a critic to insist that a man painted a picture he says he did not paint, I disagree flatly with de Chirico. I think he painted The Double Dream of Spring, and I plan to publish the lengthy evidence for this assertion in a new edition of my book.

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"May I add that a consuming belief in the young de Chirico, as one of the greatest creative personages of our time, prompts this letter? I hope to go on defending him against all comers, including his aging, naked, grandiose, disgraceful, his rather wonderful self."

Well, anyway, that's the strange story. Its ending was no less curious. About a year later I sent de Chirico a photograph of The Double Dream of Spring through a mutual friend in Rome. I asked the painter to sign the photograph if he'd changed his mind about its authenticity. The photograph came back promptly with de Chirico's signature written all over its face. I thought then and I think now that the Double Dream is one of the most romantic in mood of all the de Chirico mannequin pictures. Some years later I gave it to the Museum of Modern Art which had no paintings in the mannequin series, whereas I had three.

I think a brief postscript is in order regarding the second painting de Chirico is said to have denounced as a fake to Time's Charles Wertenbacker, though this picture was not reproduced in Time nor mentioned by title. The picture is a work of 1916 or 1917, was also executed by de Chirico during his stay at the Army's mental hospital in Ferrara. It is entitled The Language of a Child and has been in Pierre Matisse's private collection for a number of years. I couldn't believe that the picture was a forgery or a copy, having seen it innumerable times. During the spring of 1970 a retrospective exhibition of de Chirico's works

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was held in the Palazzo Reale in Milan. The contents of the exhibition were selected by de Chirico himself and his new dealer in Italy, Claudio Bruni of the Medusa Gallery. Since all paintings in that show were chosen and approved by either de Chirico or Bruni, it came as something of a surprise to see it published as a full-page plate in the catalogue of the 1970 show at Milan, a show, to repeat, chosen by the Master and his new dealer. Moreover, I have a copy of a cable sent by de Chirico to Pierre Matisse asking for the loan to his Milanese show of "this irreplacable painting" - The Language of a Child.

Oddly enough the greatest of all the de Chiricos I have was not in either of Pierre Matisse's shows but arrived a month or more after the second exhibition closed. This is the king of all the mannequin pictures, it is called The Seer and had belonged to the late Peter Watson, a Londoner. Watson was a collector of exceptional taste and I never understood what prompted him to sell The Seer. I know only that I bought it in 1940 the minute Pierre phoned me that it was available. Today I think it shares honors for top quality in de Chirico's early work with the painting called The Disquieting Muses. The latter picture belonged first to Giorgio Castelfranco, who had presumably bought the painting soon after its completion in 1917. In 1924 Paul Eluard, the most distinguished poet of the surrealist movement, tried to buy the picture, but de Chirico wrote that Castelfranco refused to sell it, except for a high price (3,500 Italian lire). The

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artist in the same letter (of which I have a copy) offered to paint an exact replica himself for 1,000 lire, though in de Chirico's words, "executed in a more beautiful medium and with a more knowledgeable technique." The replica is or was in the collection of Mrs. Jonathan Tichenor in New York and is the first of a number of copies de Chirico himself has made of this celebrated image. The Eluard-Tichenor replica is still a good picture, though not anywhere near as good as the Castelfranco original which for a long time belonged to the remarkable collector, Pietro Feroldi of Brescia, and was sold with the rest of Feroldi's collection in the late 1940s to Gianni Mattioli's Foundation in Milan, where it still is.

I bought one or two de Chirico drawings in Paris during the 1940s but I think my greed for the Italian's work was satiated at last. As Duncan Phillips once wrote of himself, I was always eager for new sensations in painting. By 1942 Max Ernst had married Peggy Guggenheim, and they were living in a marvelous apartment on the East River in New York. I went to parties there often, and once I took photographs of Max Ernst on the upper terrace, surrounded by his collection of ~~Eskimo~~ Kachina dolls. Max had long seemed to me one of the most endlessly inventive of all modern artists, and I looked constantly at the new pictures he had in New York. I finally bought one called Alice in 1941, painted in 1942. It is an imaginary portrait of Max's great friend, Leonora Carrington, a colleague in the surrealist movement. The picture is partly done in the decalcomania technique

X ask Dorothy

Arizonan

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of which Ernst was an absolute master. In front of the seated, half-undressed figure in an immense hat are two large birds melded into the rocky landscape. All his life Max has had a special affinity with birds, and I remember that when he first arrived in New York a huge gull flew in his hotel window to keep him company in an alien land. More than that, I have a photograph of Ernst seated in an armchair which had an insanely high back. The photograph was taken by Arnold Newman. Max is smoking and the smoke naturally assumed the form of a bird, what else? It also seems quite in character that Alice in 1941 was begun in a mountainous part of France where Max had been interned during World War II as an enemy alien. But when he and Peggy Guggenheim were staying in Arizona before coming to New York, the dry hills looked precisely like those he had seen in France during his internment and he finished Alice in 1941 there, presumably without pause.

I used to enjoy Peggy and Max's parties very much but there were always many people I didn't know and I would find myself, time after time, talking to the late Arshile Gorky, ~~whom I liked very much~~. One of Gorky's favorite painters was Ingres. I could never understand why in terms of Gorky's own work. My painter-friends in Southampton used to say this was stupid of me. I still didn't understand, and I asked Gorky the same questions about Ingres every time we met at Peggy's or elsewhere; naturally he never gave me the same answer, being a born mystic if there ever was one, at least in terms of his personal life and

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preferences.

Gorky was also a very fine painter, as almost everyone now knows. In the early 1940s, however, he seemed to me too close for comfort in his painting to the young Chilean artist, Matta Echaurren. At that time Matta was extremely poor, he had had twins (he himself had a twin brother), and his pictures were for a time executed on cheap paper with the kind of colored crayons children buy in sets. Despite their technical means they were not really drawings but paintings. I bought a number of them in 1942 and 1943. I lent the finest of them to the surrealist exhibition which André Breton organized in the old Ogden Reid mansion on Madison Avenue in 1942. The drawing's subject was Joan of Arc being burned at the stake. The exhibition had been held to raise funds to help ease the strained relationship between Britain and France after Dunkirk. I wonder whether Matta's drawing was ideally chosen for the exhibition, since England and France have not yet stopped rowing over whether it was the English or the Burgundians who roasted the Maid of Orleans alive.

Matta had an amazingly quick intelligence, and I was always fascinated by him. We did have two extremely minor misunderstandings. In 1947 I wrote a long article about Matta's paintings for the Magazine of Art. Matta read it and came up to me in the Museum of Modern Art 's garden, half sulky, half pleased. He said: "How can I go on painting when you follow me so closely? Can't you stand back a bit?" I guess it was a compliment but

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I'm not sure; you never ~~were~~ ~~sure~~ were with Matta. Our more serious misunderstanding, this time on his part, was when he thought he would be drafted and wanted my help as Director of Museum's Armed Services Program. I told him I didn't think that he, as a citizen of Chile, was likely to be drafted by the U.S. Government. This didn't satisfy him, and he went on to say gloomily, "If I am drafted I want to be assigned to camouflage, especially to camouflaging tanks which I'm rather fond of when I see them lumbering around in the movies." I tried to explain that camouflage was not as simple as it had been in the day of the cubists, largely because of aerial reconnaissance, which had reduced spotting the enemy to a more exact science. "Yes," he said, "but you don't understand. I don't care whether the Germans know where I am. I'm only interested in not knowing where I am. After all, I've got to sit in the thing and drive it around and it depresses me. I'd rather be somewhere else - or pretend to." I told him coldly that I'd see him after the war. And of course I saw him frequently.

I also bought two of his paintings which immodestly seem to me to be particularly fine in quality. Both pictures were painted in 1942 but they could hardly be more different in tonality. The slightly earlier one is called "Here, Sir Fire, Eat, was executed especially for the exhibition of surrealist art organized by André Breton and Marcel Duchamp in the autumn of 1942 and held at the Reid Mansion, 451 Madison Avenue, New York City, as already noted. Its color is predominantly a brilliant yellow.

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The second Matta painting is called The Disasters of Mysticism, a picture very dark in overall color but enlivened by bursts of volcanic flames, perhaps inspired by Matta's trip to Mexico in 1941. Today in my house the two pictures often hang side by side and I never fail to be astonished by the tonal contrast between them or by its taking place within one year.

I've already pointed out that it was from Alfred Barr and Dorothy Miller at the Museum of Modern Art that I learned how little I'd known about contemporary American art during my years at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford. I studied Dorothy Miller's annual shows of native painting closely and from one of them bought a painting by Loren MacIver called Tree. It is a picture of a small tree which grew behind an iron fence near Loren's apartment on Perry Street in Greenwich Village and I liked it so much that I later bought a second image of clothes hung out to dry outside her studio window. I continue to think that MacIver is one of our most personal and poetic artists and I treasure both paintings deeply and Loren's friendship, too.

[Handwritten marginal annotation: "& current" / "or 4 years"]

During my Hartford days I'd become fascinated by the objects Joseph Cornell was creating in the surrealist spirit, and I bought several of them. The finest, I think, was entitled Taglioni's Jewel Casket. It tells in symbolic terms the story of how the famous ballerina, traveling in winter by sleigh, was held up by bandits and in memory of this romantic episode ever afterwards kept her jewels in a case with pieces of ice. I'd bought the

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Cornell object in 1941 and ten years later gave it to the Museum of Modern Art in disgust at my more pragmatic friends who kept pocketing the simulated ice cubes. As works of art Cornell's objects are in a very high degree. To this day I think him the purest artist our country has produced in the surrealist vein. But Taglioni was by no means the only love of Cornell's febrile imagination. I remember talking to him once about Tamara Toumanova who had come to Hartford to be part of the ill-fated ballet company of Balenchine and Dimitriev in 1933. I was halfway through my summary of Toumanova's great beauty when Cornell put his fingers to his lips and said, "Please talk more softly," he said. "You'll wake her up." I asked where she was and Cornell answered quickly, "She's asleep in my bureau drawer." I don't know why I couldn't stop asking silly questions. But I couldn't and I said, "Is she alone?" "Of course not," Joseph Cornell answered instantly. "She's with Hedy Lamarr." I nodded as though this was the most logical reply in the world but Cornell sensed my skepticism and opened the bureau drawer to show me his somewhat tattered photographs of the two beautiful ladies.

Of American artists allied to the cubist movement, I found Charles Demuth the most sensitive and in the mid-1940s I bought his _Female Acrobats_, a watercolor of 1916. It seems to me even now that no American artist has rivaled Demuth in deftness of technique or added more to cubism's sardonic side. Aloof and secure in his inherited home in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Demuth added to the discoveries of Picasso and Braque a witty and ironic

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detachment. It's surely no accident that one of his close friends was Marcel Duchamp.

My admiration for Yves Tanguy's incredibly singleminded art had been growing steadily with the years and I bought a fairly large painting of his entitled The Furniture of Time in 1943. It had been painted in 1939 at a French town named Chemilleux where a number of surrealist artists had gathered temporarily and where, according to the late Tanguy, the English painter Gordon Onslow-Ford had set long, specific hours in which they all must paint whether they felt like it or not. It seems likely that Onslow-Ford's insistence on discipline was an inheritance from his years as an extremely brilliant officer in the Royal Navy, a career he gave up without a twinge of regret when he joined the surrealists. In any case, Tanguy probably worked more regularly then than ever before or after. The result was a new perfection in what I once called "one of his most poetic inventions - the melting of land into sky, one image metamorphosed into another, as in the moving-picture technique known as lap-dissolve. The fixed horizon was now often replaced by a continuous and flowing treatment of space, and in many paintings of the 1930s and 1940s...it is extremely difficult to determine at what point earth becomes sky or whether objects rest on the ground or float aloft. The ambiguity is intensified by changes in the density of the objects themselves, from opaque to translucent to transparent, creating a spatial double-entendre."

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I suppose an indication of my growing conviction about Tanguy's work is the fact that when I went to Paris for the first time after the war (1948) the only picture I couldn't resist buying was a small gouache which Yves had done the previous year. And when I went back to Paris again in 1955 I persuaded André Breton's ex-wife, Simone Collinet, to sell me a remarkable early canvas of Yves' called The Mood of Now, painted when he was only twenty-eight. Tanguy remains one of my favorite 20th century painters and during his years in America we became close personal friends.

Of all artists of the post-Picasso generation the one I have long revered most is Joán Miró. He is also the one whose paintings I've had the most trouble acquiring. I even know when the jinx set in. During the autumn of 1930 the Valentine Gallery had a large Miró exhibition. I went a number of times, trying to understand. I failed in every case except one. There was a picture in the show called Mistress Mills in 1750, done in 1929. I not only understood that particular picture, I loved it deeply. It was not for sale, Val Dudensing having given it to his enchanting wife, Bibi. For thirteen years on several visits each year and occasional dinners with the Dudensings and Henry McBride, I tried to persuade Bibi to sell me Mistress Mills. In 1943 she broke down because she and her husband were retiring and moving to France. She told me that if I could be at the Valentine Gallery soon with the right amount in Government Bonds I could have

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the picture. I was there in twenty minutes, bonds in her hand and the Miró in mine. It is a picture I adore in the literal sense of the verb. Once in a while I drowse late at night looking at it, not wishing to take my eyes away. The source of the image was a postcard Miró had of a portrait of one Mrs. Mills, an English singer whose portrait George Engleheart, a minor disciple of Reynolds, painted. The prototype of the Mistress Mills was discovered by Miss Helen Franc of the Museum of Modern Art's staff. I knew Miró saved postcards from his travels and tried to trace the Engleheart for years and Helen, being a top-notch scholar, found it. Her discovery made me feel both grateful and inferior.

My long wait to possess Miró's Portrait of Mistress Mills was not a unique experience for me in acquiring works I especially admired by this very great artist. As early as 1941 James Johnson Sweeney and I were directing simultaneous exhibitions in the Museum of Modern Art, he of Miró's work, I of Salvador Dali's. When the two shows were nearing completion I found myself spending more time in Jim Sweeney's exhibition than in my own. There was one Miró - the Still Life with Old Shoe of 1937 - at which I stared day after day. It was a painting in which Miró had reverted to his early, more realistic style in order to express his anguish about the Spanish Civil War. It was also a picture which Jim Sweeney and other leading champions of more abstract forms of art thought at best a courageous mistake. The surrealists, on the other hand admired the picture very much and so did

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I. It took me three years of relentless pursuit before Pierre Matisse could persuade its owner - a woman painter from Pennsylvania - to sell me the Old Shoe and she did so then only because she found herself being influenced by Miró's picture. I bought it at once.

I waited even longer before Pierre Matisse cabled me from Paris that he'd decided to sell Miró's Self Portrait of 1937-38. I remember phoning every Western Union office within fifty miles of Farmington until I found one ready and willing to cable Pierre confirming the deal. Luckily Pierre knew how much I wanted the picture since I had made a beeline for it every time I went to his apartment. The picture had been painted in a small Paris flat belonging to a friend of Miró. The room in which he worked on the self portrait for a very long time was extremely small. Miró would work at his easel at one end of the room and look over his shoulder at a round, convex mirror hung on the opposite wall, a fact which undoubtedly accounts for the magnification of his features in the self portrait. In addition to his own visage the portrait contains a virtual anthology of the cryptic and sometimes indefinable forms Miró has used so often in his art. But the picture has little of the bold color on which Miró's fame was first made. When the portrait was completed Miró therefore had a tracing of it made and began a second, colorful version of the subject. He decided that strong color weakened rather than intensified the image, and he destroyed the

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second version. One can easily understand his action, since the image's hypnotic intensity depends in good part on what might be called a muted fervor - unlike anything he has sought in any other work. In a sense, both the Still Life with Old Shoe and the Self Portrait are mavericks in Miró's life work. This may or may not be why I admire them so much.

My experience~~s~~ as a collector during the 1940s were enriched beyond measure by the fact that the dealer, Curt Valentin~~e~~, became a close personal friend. He was one of the most charming men I've ever known, a courageous champion of sculpture at a time when few New York dealers took much interest in this difficult and expensive medium, a man who defied the mystique of art dealing by showing friends every painting, sculpture or print as soon as it arrived in his gallery.

I find it impossible to explain why I bought from Curt only a watercolor by Henry Moore in 1943 and another by Graham Sutherland in 1946 and this despite the fact that I was in his 57th Street gallery several times a week, persuaded him to come to my house in Farmington quite frequently, wrote a book on Paul Klee's prints for him and in general considered him one of my close friends. I remember one of his visits to Farmington with particular clarity because Curt had brought along the late Dr. Wilhelm Valentiner, at that time Director of the ~~museum~~ Art Institute in Detroit. Dr. Valentiner was not feeling well and slept most of the afternoon, while Curt and I drank Bourbon on the porch of

? - he slept almost every day after lunch.

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my house. Our trip to the airport in Hartford must have been rather erratic because I remember that we almost hit another car and that Dr. Valentiner's only comment was, "This is a very interesting trip, Mr. Soby."

I suppose the reason why I didn't buy more works of art from Curt was that I could never take in the fact that he made his living as an art dealer. In my mind he was a crony, and we always talked about works of art in the abstract, whether or not they were for sale in his gallery. I was not alone in this inability to focus on Curt's profession as an art dealer. Some of my colleagues on the Museum of Modern Art's staff felt the same way, and he came to our offices to chat as often as we settled ourselves happily in the back room of his distinguished gallery. I wrote an obituary of Curt for the Saturday Review when he died in 1954 while visiting Marino Marini and his wife in Italy. "The article made me cry," said Jane Ritchie, whose husband used to be the director of the Yale University Art Gallery, now retired. I'm afraid but not ashamed that it almost did me, too, while writing it. The article was called "Death of a Valiant." And a valiant and rare man Curt Valentin was, and I don't see why this shouldn't be said, dry-eyed or not.

Probably it was Curt Valentin's interest in England's post-war painting and sculpture which helped me decide to go to London in 1956, after many years of visiting the Continent only. I remember that I was especially anxious to see Francis Bacon's

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new paintings. I had bought a very large painting by him from Kirk Askew's gallery in 1953. It was called Study of a Baboon and showed one of these large monkeys half in a cage, half out. It has always seemed to me likely that Bacon on his many trips to Africa had been intrigued by the fact that in the major cities wild animals were kept in zoos, while in the nearby jungles their cousins ran free. Moreover, the baboon in my picture sits on a forked tree trunk similar to those of the acacia trees in which baboons rest in a plate from one of Bacon's favorite books - "his Bible", as a friend of his puts it - Marius Maxwell's Stalking Big Game with a Camera in Equatorial Africa, published in 1925. Whatever the derivation of Bacon's image, it convinced me that Bacon was one of the few major artists of the postwar art scene in Europe. So when I arrived in London I hurried over to the Hanover Gallery to see Bacon's newest pictures. I bought the fourth and final painting in a series of just-completed works inspired by J.S. Deville's extraordinary life mask of William Blake in London's National Portrait Gallery. It is a much smaller but no less hypnotic picture.

Long before I left New York for London, I'd been puzzled by the fact that England should have produced so many first-rate sculptors, with Henry Moore's international fame to goad them on in spirit, though not in style. For a very long time England had produced statuary, not sculpture. Sometimes I'm asked to explain the difference between the two forms of expression: I can only reply that for me statuary is memory; sculpture is ex-

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perience. There are other differences between the two art forms, of course, but I think these the basic ones. In any case, the two newer English sculptors who interested me most in 1956 were Reg Butler and Lynn Chadwick, both born just before the outbreak of World War I.

I drove out to see Chadwick's first because I'd been fascinated by a sculpture of his on the theme of "The Seasons". I'd seen this piece at the 1956 Biennale di Venezia where Chadwick had won first prize for foreign sculpture, perhaps in part because the British Pavilion was enchantingly installed by Lilian Somerville. The piece at Venice was large in scale and had already been bought by Mr. May in St. Louis. Chadwick then lived on a farm in Upper Coberly, near Cheltemham, a long trip from London. I remember that my wife and I stayed in an exceedingly un-Broadway-like town called Broadway and drove over in the morning to Chadwick's farm, closing behind us an endless series of rail fence gates before we reached his studio. He and his very beautiful wife gave us whisky to drink, though it was only mid-morning, and we talked and talked and talked. Finally I brought up the subject of his sculpture, The Seasons, which I'd seen and longed for at Venice. He told me he was working on a smaller version of the same subject, executed in welded iron, with plaster and cement added as in the large St. Louis version. I said then and there that I wanted the smaller version, since I had no doubts whatever about Chadwick's integrity and talent. Chadwick

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long since has moved to far more sumptuous quarters in England. I always remember that when we were talking about Lynn's Venice award, his wife said, "Lynn has never been courted before; he loves it." It's very strange. For many years I've taken snapshots of artists I admired and liked. They hang now in a back hall of my house in New Canaan. The one that always stops me for a second look is the one of Lynn Chadwick, his wife and mine standing under umbrellas in the heavy rain at his door in Upper Coberly, nearest town, Cheltenham, England.

The trip from London to visit the second postwar British sculptor I admired most was a simpler matter. This sculptor was Reg Butler and he had first caught my attention when he won an international exhibition for a sculptural monument planned for but never erected (in London) [leave out?] in honor of "The Unknown Prisoner of War." [? Berlin?] Butler lived in Berkhamstead about an hour and a half's drive from London. He had been an expert metallurgist before turning to sculpture, and he is an extremely intelligent and coherent man - a description which can't fairly be applied to some contemporary artists. I bought from Butler a small bronze figure entitled Figure in Space. Butler himself explained the title to me as follows: "the figure is the meat, its wire enclosure the gravy." Like Chadwick, Butler had an extremely beautiful wife and mistress [wife and mistress] (English artists seem to be unique in arranging these matters without difficulty), and his conversation was enchanting.

I asked Butler to have made for me a cast of a mammoth woman

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exhibition was called L'Art Brut and included a few artists who had turned their backs on traditional French taste in order to reassert the validity of the crude force exemplified by the art of young children and insane adults. Some time later Dubuffet and his nice wife came for a long weekend at my house in New Canaan, and I realized more fully than ever how committed Dubuffet was to his ferocious esthetic or anti-esthetic, though he seemed in person a gentle man. Perhaps his sort of revulsion against the tastefulness of most Parisian painting after the war was possible only for a man like Dubuffet, who had begun to work professionally after he was forty years old and had therefore felt obliged to plunge swiftly, as Maillol had done when he turned from painting to sculpture at about the same age. Dubuffet's career poses many enigmas, not the least of them this sudden mastery of a medium which for its own sake he held in low regard. Recently Dubuffet, too, has turned to sculpture and when doubts arise in my mind as to his swift prolificness in sculpture, I remind myself how wrong I was about Dubuffet as a painter some years ago.

I've never been able to understand financial matters in anything but their simplest form, and I've no idea why in 1957 I (my wife) went on a spree and bought Alberto Giacometti's superb Tall Figure of 1949, Grace Hartigan's mammoth Shinnecock Canal and Jasper Johns' White Target. Of these three works of art, only the last-named has let me down and this for the reason I've mentioned in describing my youthful purchases of Matisse's pictures: I had in both

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cases bought the wrong picture by the right artist. I still think Jasper Johns is one of the very best American painters of his generation, and it's my fault, not his, if the much admired White Target quite abruptly lost my attention. There are purely chemical factors at work in any collector's choices and it would be arrogant to assume that they would never fizz the wrong way.

What urges collectors on, I suppose, is their incurable conviction that age doesn't dim their eyes. There is plenty of evidence to the contrary, as when one considers the case of even so eminent a collector as Gertrude Stein, who started with Matisse, Picasso and Gris and ended up with Picabia and Sir Francis Rose. But the collecting instinct dies hard and is subject to flare-ups of conviction even in older age.

I know that I had such a flare-up as recently as 1970 when I saw and couldn't put out of mind a painting by Esteban Vicente. I'd looked at and admired Vicente's paintings and collages for a number of years as they appeared in New York galleries. But suddenly his most recent works exploded for me in a delicious flame. I'd seen them in the late afternoon in Esteban's studio at Bridgehampton, Long Island and I thought about them all through dinner at the Vicentes house. There was one painting I liked particularly and after dinner Esteban brought it up to the house so that I could have another look. I bought the picture within a week, and I've never failed to be impressed by how

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thoroughly ~~professional~~ skilled it is and how sensitive in color from beginning to end. I suppose it pleases me, too, that Vicente should have improved steadily as an artist during his very long career. There are times when all of us of my generation get a little impatient with the tyranny of youth in the arts, and it's fine to come across a painter who is not a prodigy but an experienced ~~master~~ professional.