

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Butler Institute of American Art

Employee Experience

O. H. 824

ALICE GOLDCAMP

Interviewed

by

Paul Bick

on

November 19, 1975

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: ALICE GOLDCAMP

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SUBJECT: art exhibitions, social role of museum, education programs

DATE: November 19, 1975

B: This is an interview with Alice Goldcamp for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the Butler Institute of American Art, by Paul Bick, at the Butler Institute of American Art, on November 19, 1975, at approximately 1:45 p.m. I'm interviewing Alice Goldcamp who is the director of education for the Institute.

Can you describe your position, the things you do, and how you got to be there? Go as far as you would like to.

G: When I was invited to become a part of the museum's staff, Mr. Butler gave me full rein to take over any areas in the museum that I felt needed assistance. After being employed here for several months, it seemed to me that the educational area was the area that was weakest and needed assistance. In my mind, being an educator myself, having teacher training, it was an area that I particularly favored. I feel that in order for people to enjoy an art museum, they need to know something about the art works. They need art education in order to enjoy it to the fullest.

I also felt that an art museum should service a community to the fullest, and the best way to do this is, and was at that time in my mind, an approach towards educating schoolchildren club groups, art groups, any group of people who felt that they wanted to know more about art and appreciated the paintings that we have on view here in our collection. So that is the area that I had concentrated on, the education aspect of the museum.

I also handle other occupations here. I catalogue the library or art books that we have. I help arrange shows that are coming in. I handled the hanging of several of the shows, arranging of them.

We all sort of interchange our work here. We answer the phone when necessary. We cook food when necessary.

I have written articles for the newspaper and for magazines on specific artists in our collection.

B: Which magazine?

G: The Ohio Historical Society. I've written four articles for that, for their calendar that they put out. I have written art columns for the Youngstown Vindicator when Clyde Singer went on vacation. I was a substitute for him. I've written forwards, introductions, to some of our shows, catalogues of our shows, special shows going on, and television programs, television coverage on our special exhibitions going on here or some areas of the museum from the collection that we want exposed to the public.

B: What did you do before you came here and when did you come here to the Butler Institute?

G: I became employed here in September of 1964. Prior to that I had been teaching in the Niles School System and prior to that I was a house person.

B: Oh yes.

G: Raising three children. Prior to that I had a short career before marriage. I was in banking, in particular, and general office and secretarial work.

B: What did you teach when you were in Niles?

G: I taught sixth grade and on, a little bit of everything.

B: What is your art background? This is not a cross-examination, but what are your qualifications to do what you do here? Is it self-improvement or have you developed a regular course of education?

G: In college I majored in history. I took some fine arts, and math was another area that I was interested in. I come from a family of architects on my father's side. My father was a well-known architect in Youngstown and my grandfather before him. My daughter is now an architect. My other daughter is an artist. So it's sort of. . . I suppose my environment was slanted towards the arts in childhood.

- B: One of the things that the Butler Institute does is sponsor a couple of annual shows of various types, as I understand. What is your role? What type of problems does that present for you in terms of coordinating and getting things where they're supposed to be and getting the message out, the public relations problems and things of that sort? Let's sort of talk about these annual shows and things you remember about them.
- G: Well, we put on three particular shows here each year, three annual shows; the Area Artist's Annual, which is a local show and covers about a radius of forty miles from Youngstown. Then we have a ceramic and sculpture show during the months of January and February, which covers the whole state of Ohio, and this includes former residents of the state of Ohio or former local artists. Then in the summer months we have a national mid-year show, which covers all fifty states of the country. So we have the local area, the state, and the national, three shows each year.

We all have a hand in coordinating those shows, I would say, in the mechanics of it. There's a lot of paperwork that goes on in the museum behind the scenes. For our ceramic and sculpture show, entry forms are sent out to artists who had previously exhibited in those shows. The forms have to be printed up and they have to be sent out to all those people and to others who are interested in entering the show. For months ahead of time before the show even is staged or takes place, all this paperwork has to be handled. We have a secretary here at the museum who takes care of a great part of that, but others of us pitch in when the work load gets very heavy along any line.

It varies; it's flexible. Recently, I haven't had much to do with the Area Artist's show, but several years ago I helped catalogue the show and helped hang it. That was one time when we were shorthanded. Ordinarily I'm not called upon to do that unless we are shorthanded, need someone to fill in, the same way with the ceramic and sculpture show. The big national show takes, really, the entire staff to help in different areas: get the mailings out and so on and so forth. So I have to be really quite general on that. We have no specific show coordinator type of person who just simply handles all the shows. Everybody has a finger in the pot, so to speak, around here.

We have a show that's just coming in now, the Fifth International Miniature Print show, and I scheduled that last year. It appealed to me, so I asked permission to see if we could bring it here. It's here now and we're going to go over the works next week and one other museum member will help me put it together and get it on the wall, that sort of thing.

- B: You just mentioned you have the show which you sort of have brought here. Throughout the year, other than the three annual events, regular events which are every year, how many various other shows do you usually have, just roughly? Could you say what some of them are like?
- G: Yes.. Well, it varies. For instance, we have a show on our walls right now called "Deeds of Valor" and it consists of illustrations of Civil War battles and Spanish-American War battles. That came about because a friend of mine, who lives in Detroit, happened to know the owner of this particular collection and thought it would be an interesting bicentennial exhibition for our American museum. He called me, personally, and said, "Do you think your museum would like to have this work?" I consulted with Mr. Butler and several pieces of the work were sent down for us to see so we could decide whether it was museum quality or not. This is important too because in a museum, you can't just use anybody's collection or anybody's artwork. It has to have a certain quality to it.

So we felt the work was very confident and would be an interesting show. I went ahead then, and handled the mechanics of bringing the paintings to this museum. Then after they arrived one of our curators unpacked the big trunk that they came in and matted each piece. They were unmatted. In order to have the show look well on our walls, we contracted to mat each piece. It took him a month or so to put the paintings in shape for the walls. Then he hung all the works and I helped him put the works in chronological sequence according to the time the work was painted and then grouped them according to the number of pieces each artist had done. We put it together that way.

Then for artifacts, to enhance the whole show, artifacts were borrowed from the Arms Historical Society, a big drum, a Civil War drum, and some flags. Then some of the staff members had pieces that we felt would be interesting and add to the show. For instance, I loaned a wooden, carved eagle. Dorothy Dennison Butler loaned a little, colonial musket. So if we have anything of our own that adds to a museum, embellishes a collection, why. . . It's sort of a potpourri of putting it together, but this is the way we handle a great deal of our shows.

- B: I know the permanent collection here is restricted to American art. Do you restrict the shows and things of that sorts as well to American artists or not?
- G: No, we don't. As a matter of fact, Mr. Butler has said

several times that he would like to have work other than American come in here on view because it keeps us from becoming too narrow-minded about American art and too inbred, as I might say. So this international show that will open on November 30 is from all over the world, which I think is very helpful for this museum and this community to see the work coming from great distances.

- B: What are the financial aspects of a show? For example, say on your annual show, are exhibitors required a registration fee or anything of this sort or in terms of when a show comes in, a complete show. Is there any sort of fee that's required of the Institute?
- G: Yes. It varies with the show. For our Area Artist's Annual, our ceramic and sculpture show, and our national mid-year show, there is an entry fee charged. Each artist has to pay a certain amount of money to enter the show.
- B: Is it the same for everybody or does it vary on their. . .
- G: Well, for the Area Artist's Annual this year, if you entered one piece, it was \$1; if you entered two pieces it was \$2. Each piece was \$1 a piece. You could have two pieces in, I think, two different categories, two different media--that is, two watercolors, two oils, that would be \$4 or you could have one watercolor and one oil, that would be \$2. That's the way that was handled this year. There didn't use to be a charge, but museums have financial problems today so all of our shows, I think, from now on will have an entry fee to help cover the handling cost and so forth.
- Then it varies. The ceramic and sculpture show has a different price, entry fee, and the national show has a little bit higher fee. This, of course, just covers a very small part of the production cost of any show.
- B: When these various other shows and exhibits come in, what sort of financial requirements are there on the Butler Art other than just the overhead cost of putting it up and the labor involved in that? Does the Butler incur responsibility insurancewise or things of this sort for exhibits which come here?
- G: Oh yes. The shows all have to be covered by insurance. For instance, the show that just came in from Detroit and is now on the walls, we estimated it would cost us around \$1,000 to hang and we considered the cost of sending our handler and truck up to Detroit to pick up the collection, to bring it down here. We had to cover it with insurance immediately, upon acceptance of it. We matted the show, so the matting

materials cost us money--the labor for one of our staff members to do the matting cost us money--but in return the collector gave us two pieces of artwork for our permanent collection which he valued at a bit more than what it cost us to handle the show and bring it here and put it up. So we don't feel that we've lost anything on a show like that.

The Friends of American Art help fund some of the shows that we put on. For instance, our mid-year show last year, and I think the year before, they gave a great deal of help toward financing.

For prize money for our own shows--our Area Artist's, our ceramic and sculpture, and our national show--different people in the area have contributed. Organizations or industries or companies and so forth have contributed money toward prizes for the artists. So that helps greatly too.

B: Could you tell a little bit more about the Friends of American Art and how they function and who some of the people are, the more prominent people that might be involved with it?

G: Yes. They have a group of officers--presidents, I think two vice-presidents, secretary, treasurer and so forth. They are a nonprofit organization. I think they have a board of twenty-four people sitting on their board of directors. They have a small executive committee made up of board members, and they have a social committee, a program committee; it's all broken down into working areas.

They host preview openings here at the museum for the shows that we put on, the Area Artist's, the ceramic and sculpture, the mid-year show, any special show that we're putting on. They give money for prizes for the shows.

They, more recently, have helped improve the physical interior structure of the building. For instance, they put the carpeting down in this room. They've done some landscaping to the exterior in front of the museum. They bought some special cleaning equipment for the museum that we needed. They help in many different areas.

They have a membership between 500 and 600 people. I feel, and I think maybe others feel, that the membership should be much larger in Youngstown, but they've never put on a really hard-sell membership campaign. It's always been rather soft-sell here. I think there's a lot of untapped potential in this town. They have, I think, thirty to forty businesses'

in town who also are members. They have a membership category, a business category so that helps a little bit.

B: When you mention their membership, can you just briefly state how it's set up? Is there, like most other things of this sort, a membership fee? Obviously then this fee would certainly go to, I presume, the Butler Institute at some time or another.

G: Yes, it all comes back to the museum. It's a structured membership fee. It can be a student, single, family; then there are several larger amounts. I forget what they're called.

B: Contributing or life or something of that sort?

G: Yes.

B: Then does this membership confer any sort of benefits on the members, or is it just a gratifying thing to do a good deed for the Butler Institute?

G: No, they have special privileges which I feel are very necessary. I don't think you can sell anybody anything without giving them something in return. As a member they get to come to the preview openings which the public at large is not invited to. They get a discount on any sales item in our small sales shop. They get a quarterly news sheet that tells about their activities and activities at the museum. They can come to special lectures, special demonstrations here that are part of their program, the Friends of Art program. I think those are the most important things. They have a membership folder printed that tells what their aims are and what their privileges are.

B: You mentioned that there are some specific activities associated with them that go on here, or did I misinterpret?

G: Yes, you're right. Last year the Mountain Artisans show was totally sponsored by Friends of American Art. They organized it, coordinated it, set it all up physically, and had a big luncheon to introduce people to it. They had a dinner party. They brought a group of crippled children in to see the show, especially on a special day, and that type of thing. Then they put on a big dinner party for our national annual opening, which is a very lovely affair. It is usually limited to the membership.

Some of their programs they do open to the public, but they do have to have a few of them that are closed in order to warrant a membership, I suppose. Mr. Butler, who founded

the museum, stipulated that there would be no charge ever for anyone to come into this museum, and membership I guess. So this was an adjunct.

- B: Going back to the question of the annual shows, a couple of items: Can you recall, since you've been here eleven years now, people of significant talents from the area, say from the local show, who may have made a mark elsewhere or for that matter, national show, if you can bring to mind any specific people prominent in your memory?
- G: Yes. In our Area Artist's show, a young artist by the name of Margie Wontsky Moore, I believe her married name is now, has appeared very accomplished in our shows and she has gone on to do very fine work up in the Boston area. Her work is shown in galleries up there I understand.

As far as our national shows go, Paul Jenkins was a local. We have always considered him local because his mother was from the Struthers area. He has an international reputation today. Jack Sajack, who was educated in Youngstown, Woodrow Wilson Junior High School, now has an international reputation. Ralph Humphrey is another artist who started off here and who is very recognized in the New York area today. An artist by the name of Cucara, Pat Cucara is well advertised on the West Coast as his art is concerned. Dorothy Dennison Butler and Clyde Singer, both associated with this museum, are considered very competent artists.

Many of the artists who exhibit in the Area Artist's show are quite young in age and it takes a while for an artist to become seasoned and recognized. I would imagine there are artists right now, and have been for the past few years, who are doing excellent work and someday will be recognized. But it's a slow climb up the art ladder. The artists I speak of are older people who have worked for many years before they've attained recognition. But I think we have a great deal of talent in this area and some excellent work in our shows.

Of course, our ceramic and sculpture show, Ohio is the ceramic center of the country, so we always have excellent examples of pottery and sculpture work in that show. In fact, people from great distances, from far west states, have come here and have been very surprised and delighted at the quality of our work in that show. I can't say enough for it.

- B: A little bit more about the shows, when you have a show, like your annual shows, are the materials that are entered generally just on exhibit, or are they also for sale

or some of both?

G: All three of those shows are sale shows. It's a marvelous place to buy art right off the museum wall. We don't charge any commission. There's no middleman connected with it. Of course, a number of the pieces are not for sale, either the artist wants to keep the work in the artist's possession or perhaps it has already been sold. But a great deal of the work is for sale.

One of the reasons for this museum being is to expose the work of American artists to the public and get it sold for them.

B: Do they sell?

G: It depends somewhat on economic factors. Things have been a bit slower this past year because we've been in a recession and the price of art has gone up. So our last annual show had very slow sales. The prices were high and the people didn't have much money.

Our ceramic and sculpture show was very popular. I think this year we sold more out of that than we've ever sold. It broke a record. But, of course, there again we're dealing with much more modest prices for quality sculpture work, plus the fact that it's functional work and is probably maybe more appealing than fine arts that you hang on the wall. A lot of young people are very much interested in pottery today.

B: I think it's the crafts.

G: Like a craft ideas, yes: weaving, pottery, earthy things.

B: Does the museum itself purchase from these shows?

G: Yes, the museum does. It always adds to the museum collection through these shows.

B: In your capacity as director of education here, are there any regularly organized programs or classes or things of that sort, say art appreciation, or technical aspects of art either at the present or in the past or probably foreseeably in the future, that you could tell me about? If so, how are they sort of organized? What groups are they oriented towards?

G: Last year I taught an art appreciation course for the university under the adult continuing education program. There was a good response to that program. It was taught here at the museum so that I could use the museum's facilities. This

- year I taught an art appreciation course, museum sponsored, which was popular too. I felt the response was good. With that type of course I slanted toward trying to help people understand what a painting is all about, learning to look and see, really see something in a painting, not just looking superficially, but looking for composition, color, structure. To me this is quite important if you really want to enjoy art. That's the way I tried to slant the programs. I used slides showing examples of the work of masters and some films to go along with it, to supplement it with films.
- B: That, I would presume, is sort of oriented toward an older age group, by and large. Do you have younger age groups, children's groups, or things like that?
- G: We have many, many tour groups coming into the museum from schools. A couple years ago we took a count at the end of one year and I think the figures were close to 12,000 people coming in on tour. That included the city schools in the outlying districts. I counted forty-one outlying areas represented in groups that came in here, which I thought was pretty good; as far away as Streetsboro, which is close to Cleveland, Akron, Canton; to the east of us: New Castle, Sharon, Greenville, Greensburg; and south of us: the Columbiana County area in particular, even as far as Columbus. So I think that's a pretty good record.
- B: You mentioned that you yourself personally taught this adult continuing education art appreciation through Youngstown State University. Is there any official or unofficial relationship between the school and the art program at Youngstown State University and Butler? I'm pretty sure that there's no official connection, but is there any sort of reciprocal, or should we say tacit agreement that "We'll be nice to you if you'll be nice to us; we'll let you use our facilities if we can sometimes draw on yours," things of that sort?
- G: I think there's a very good relationship between the university and the museum because I think the university realizes that the museum can be an added teaching tool to the university. For a good many years in the past, some of their art courses were held here at our museum. This was when they were very cramped over there and they didn't have a little art building of their own. Of course, now they're going to have a lovely, big, fine arts building. But they held their classes here for quite a few years. I don't know how many. When I came here, they were holding them here. So they have used our facilities here.

I have borrowed art films from the university. They have

always been very gracious about loaning films. That's about all I've ever needed to borrow from them because we have our paintings here on the walls and we have a lecture room to work in. I don't think they have ever borrowed anything from us to take out of the museum. They have their annual May show here at the museum. Butler has always given them space to put that exhibition up for many years. I think he has given some of the art teachers special shows here of their own work from time to time.

- B: When I asked you about the educational offerings you mentioned that school groups would come from around, along the same line of groups coming, of people coming. How widely known is the Butler Institute of American Art? What is its recognition? How far away do people come to visit it or how far away have people come from, and then when they got here, visited, whether they came for that objective or not?
- G: Well, I don't come into contact with every visitor that comes into the museum. For awhile I was at the main desk and I was much more in touch with people coming in than I am now because my office is upstairs. But in the past I recall that a couple came in here who had just flown in from England and they really expected to terminate their trip in Pittsburgh, but they had heard of our American glass bell collection here and they were glass bell fanciers. They had heard about it over in England. Of course, our bells here in this country have been copied after English glass bells. In fact, it was the English glass blowers who came to this country and worked here. So they were very excited about seeing that collection and made a special effort to come on up to the Butler Museum to see that collection.

We have a number of people coming in from all over the country who know about "Snap the Whip" by Winslow Homer-- one of this museum's most treasured paintings--and they come here especially to see that and then they're very delighted to see the rest of the museum. People who are particularly interested in our Marine collection come in from all over the country. This museum is known in Europe too. It's known all over this country because it's one of the major American museums in this country.

Almost anybody who is knowledgeable about art knows of this museum. Last week a couple came in from Cleveland and they had never been here before. They were simply delighted with this museum. They said, "We didn't realize that you had this in Youngstown." So a lot of people happen on it or hear of it indirectly and then come on down to Youngstown or up to Youngstown to see it because we are a little bit out of the way.

Of course, when we have our summer national show, it's good travelling weather and our catalogues go out to all of the artists who have entered the show from all over the country. So that's good coverage. Then, of course, the artists who are accepted into the show, many of them want to come and see the show and see their own work hanging here. So we get a lot of summer travellers stopping off here. In fact, we have a registry book out in the great hall. It lists the names of people--you might want to look at that--coming in from distant areas.

- B: I'm going to change the emphasis a little bit. I would like you to sort of give us a brief description of what your average activity, your normal activities are when you come in here and as you go through the day. I realize it's probably not consistent. It's certainly not an assembly line job. But if you could just sort of say, "Well, I come in and I say hello to somebody" and go from there.
- G: Each day is different depending on what we're doing. Usually when I come in I discuss the daily schedule with my associate at the main desk. We look over the calendar. We usually know from the day before what is going to happen. Then, if and when the mail arrives, that's all sorted and everybody gets his chunk of mail. If there is anything that has to be answered immediately, it's taken care of. I get requests to send out slides of our permanent collection. I get requests from all over the country and I handle the slide library.

If we have tour groups coming in, they're usually scheduled--young people's tour groups--during the morning hours. We often have a tour coming in at 10:00 and one at 11:00 in the morning. I make sure that our docent has arrived who is going to conduct tours. If there's anything new up on the walls that she's not aware of, I try to clue her in on that.

If there's any reference material that has to be looked up my office is, fortunately and unfortunately, doubled as the library too. So there are always stacks of books all over the place. There are oodles of magazines, and we never get caught up with paper work, reading. So there is often that type of work that has to be handled.

Phone calls come in constantly for scheduling tours or for asking questions about art--something that somebody has collected and is it worth anything. We usually suggest that they bring it in and let us actually see it. They try to describe it over the phone. It's kind of hard to talk about it routinely.

Any extra time I have I research paintings that are on the walls from our permanent collection or a show that is already up on the walls. For instance, the Area Artist's Annual, sometimes two or three days will go by before I can even view that particular show. I get a quick view of it, a cursory view of it, and then have to go back to look at different pieces of artwork individually. Sometimes after looking at a show, like one of our area ones is up right now, it's amazing how many pieces you miss; as you go around you go back and you see something you haven't seen before. Then the other show that's up--I really haven't completely covered that yet--the "Deeds of Valor" show, because there's so much history connected with it. Before that the comic strip exhibition was up, and I never did get to read all the comics on the wall. We have a new shop of watercolors from the permanent collection. I know a great deal about certain ones that are up but not all of them. So that is some area to be constantly researched too.

Our new show that has just come in is down in the basement still in crates. I was informed about an hour ago that when I had some free time that I should get ahold of one of our curators and have the crates opened and count the pieces in. We are responsible for that work coming in. So first, we have to be sure that everything is in the crate that is supposed to be in the crate and if not, we have to notify the sender that we're short, this or that. So that all has to be taken out and inventoried. Then we have to find out where it's going to be hung, where we have space for it, and get it up. So a good part of next week, my work will be taken over with getting that show up on the wall because I happen to schedule the shows so that kind of falls on me to coordinate it.

In between times, though, there are tours coming in. For instance, yesterday afternoon I had a large group of women from a local club that asked me to address them. I told them about the museum, the background about the museum, and they were very interested in wanting advice on how to collect, how to go about collecting. So, I spent the rest of the time discussing that with them. After that, some of them wanted to tour through the museum and I spotlighted some of our most important paintings for them.

So it's hard to pinpoint our activities here. Nobody has a real production line job where they come in in the morning and all this is going to be done today and the desk is closed and that's the end of that.

B: When you talk about how you have some of the watercolors

from the permanent collection now on display, how large is the permanent collection and how frequently are the things.... I'm sure certain parts of it are permanently on public display and other parts and changed, rotated. How big is the permanent collection? How frequently are things rotated?

- G: I don't think that there has been an actual count taken recently, but I would wager that we have close to 4,000 pieces in the collection right now, pieces of artwork. That would include ceramic and sculpture and fine arts, watercolors, prints, drawings, oils. The first floor is more or less permanently hung for a year, a year and a half, even two years at a stretch. It stays pretty much the same. Individual paintings come down off the walls of the first floor to go out on loan. We loan a great deal of artwork--this is a great loaning museum--to other museums and special exhibitions. So when one particular piece that's hanging is needed for a show it comes and goes out. Our curator is constantly cleaning more works of art. So, maybe two or three pieces of this Marine collection will come down at a time, go off to the curator, and other pieces are put up in place, and the same way with the Indian Room, the little portraits are constantly taken down and others put up.

I think out of the collection of about 4,000, 400 to 500 of the entire collection gets up at a stretch. That is when we're using a great deal of the second floor for permanent collection too, when we're not in a special exhibition. It is said about a tenth of the museum collection shows on the surface. I understand Cleveland has about 80,000 pieces of work and only about 8,000 are up at a time. Then it's possible that sometimes works in the vaults never see the light of day. Some of them aren't probably that good.

When we have a special theme show here at the museum, permanent collection work, then a whole batch of paintings pertaining to one particular subject matter will come out, go up at the same place.

The first floor is given over to the Marine collection and about a third of the Indian collection and then some of our early colonial work and Eighteenth Century oils in the South Room, a few Nineteenth Century, but Seventeenth, Eighteenth, and Nineteenth Century works.

- B: Where are these things kept? Obviously, they're not behind the pictures which are on the walls. I presume in the subterranean depths there are storage facilities of some sort.

What do those consist of? What type of securities and things of that sort are involved?

- G: I think our building manager and our building superintendent can tell you more about that than I can. But we do have big vaults in the basement of the building. We have a big, oil painting vault, for instance, with the older art oils in it and we have a contemporary oil vault. We have a vault that has nothing but the prints in, I believe. Actually, there are paintings on the walls right in this room that do have works behind them out there in front. Young people often say, "What is that door over there?" On either side there is a painting hung up. Those are two vaults that hold a lot of our watercolor work in this wing and in the south wing too. They have been added recently, more recently. But yes, all the works are kept down in the vaults. We try to keep them as air-conditioned and as even temperature as possible, which is important.
- B: You have mentioned in passing several particular collections: the Marine collection, the Indian portrait collection, the glass bell collection. Can you make some comments about any or all of these specifically, like how they were put together, who may have donated them either as a group or significant parts?
- G: Yes, of course, as you can probably tell, I'm extremely proud of the collections that this museum has acquired. This Marine collection in this gallery that we're sitting in right now and the one forward, this collection is considered one of the finest inland Marine collections in the country. I think it's a little surprising that in landlocked Ohio that people come in here and find this excellent collection. But as I understand it, Mr. Joseph Greene Butler Jr.'s son, Henry Butler, was responsible for putting together a great deal of the Marine collection and then our present director, Joseph Butler III, has added to the Marine collection. But I believe it was Henry who was very interested in the Marine paintings and collected a great part of the old clipper ship collection. Then Mr. Joseph Greene Butler Jr.--the man who founded the museum--had collected the Indian works, which are of superior quality. I have heard, I don't know whether it's exactly true or not, that it's the second largest collection of. . .
- B: The Smithsonian has a bigger one.
- G: Yes, next to the Smithsonian. Now whether it is the second largest collection of work by E. A. Burbank--the majority of the pieces in that collection are by Burbank--or whether

it's the second largest collection of Indian portrait painting in the country, I'm not quite sure. We talked about that not long ago. I talked to Clyde Singer about it and we decided that we should check that out someday, write to other museums and find out just how many Indian works of art. Of course, by that we mean paintings of Indians, not by Indians. These are Euro-American artists that did all the work. So I'm interested in that and I want to check into it sometime and see if we can find out how accurate we're being or not.

Then we have a marvelous rare collection of miniature paintings of presidents of the United States on the stair landing going upstairs. That's considered very rare and very fine, and then the glass beels as we mentioned. In the scale models, the Marine clipper ship models are considered excellent pieces of artwork, beautifully handled. So we're proud of that collection, and then our early colonial paintings are sort of a group because they are of a particular period of development of America.

B: Which of those is the most aged? What would be the earliest painting that you have here?

G: Well, our painting of "Mr. Ray" by Joseph Badger is about 230 years old, by now anyway, but I don't know the exact date.

B: So that would be early 1700's.

G: Right. Then that's the oldest painting in this museum collection. That's getting pretty old. Badger was one of the real early colonial artists. So that's a marvelous piece to have in the collection. I don't know which of the clipper ships might be oldest. I should check that out. That's pretty much what we have that's outstanding.

The building itself, I might add, is a marvelous piece of artwork. It was designed by McKinney White who was the most famous architectural firm in this country at the turn of the century. So I always suggest to people that we not only have an excellent art collection but we have a beautiful building to house it all in, sort of the Italian Renaissance architecture. It was the first building erected in the entire country specifically to house art, American art in particular, which I think is rather interesting. The Whitney started off in an old home, but this building was built for an art collection. I think that's interesting.

B: The one other collection that you mentioned that you didn't say anything about just now was the glass bell collection.

It is certainly noticeable when you walk up the stairs.
It jumps out at you.

G: We have very little background information on that collection. It was all gathered, I understand--and this was told to me by a former curator here at the museum--by one woman, Fannie McBay Tribb, who had collected it throughout her lifetime. When it was given to the museum she had very few papers on where she had collected individual bells or how old they were. So this we don't know. I guess there isn't much information around the country on American glass bells. The president of the American Glass Bell Society came to this museum and was very delighted over our collection here and felt that it was one of the largest collections in the country. At the time she came to see the collection, I asked her if she had any information on our bells or knew of any and would she please pass it on to us. Well, as of yet we haven't gotten any information from her. I'm sure she would have sent it on. So it's really hard to say that one bell was blown in New Jersey by a certain company or whether it came from further north in New England. We don't know.

B: What makes glass bells significant? Is there anything--just the fact that they're glass bells--say, to distinguish them from cast iron bells or cow bells or something like this?

G: They're very artistic. Glass blowing is an art form in its own right. These bells were--from the information we can gather--blown by glass blowers at the end of the day. With odds and ends of glass left over, they were allowed to make anything creative that they cared to and they often made the bells. So, each one is different. Each one is a different design, a different creation. They're really part of our art heritage of this country, it seems to me. That's the way I view them. I think they're perfectly beautiful and, of course, very rare today. It's very difficult to find a glass bell. There weren't too many of them, apparently blown just within a short period of time. So they're sculpture pieces in their right, really.

Glass blowing is becoming more and more popular. It died out, I guess, for a long while. Now, the Toledo Museum has a great interest in glass and glass blowing. It has a new glass blowing shop, glass museum, actually. The Cleveland Institute of Art is instigating a glass blowing program up there I understand. So the artist has become very interested in it. It's becoming more and more popular. It's an art form that sort of lapsed, I guess, for awhile. Of course, Corning had their marvelous museum and their glass blowers. I think as we're turning more and more to crafts that it is one of the forms that has come around.

B: Unless you feel motivated to add something, I think we'll put it to a close. Okay, thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW