Warren: This is Mame Warren. Today is the 24th of June, 1999. I’m in Baltimore, Maryland, with Richard Macksey.

I’m delighted to be here. You’re one of the people I think who can talk about the very early days of Johns Hopkins.

Macksey: My recollections of Gilman are a little limited. Gilman Hall I can talk about.

Warren: I want you to tell me about what that wonderful day was at the inauguration in 1876. Tell me about your experiences then.

Macksey: Yes. Oh, yes. Well, I was a little worried. I thought Gilman had stretched a little by inviting Huxley. [Laughter] But Huxley gave a very substantive talk, and the press was divided.

Now, what direction do you want me to go?

Warren: Well, you are one of the people who has paid attention to the early history of the university.

Macksey: Well, one of the familiar problems, I guess, in Hopkins’ history is in what sense is it the first American university. Other institutions were using the title, of course, before that. Gilman
came here from California, which was calling itself the University of California, but was essentially a collection of trade schools and some collegiate operations. [Tape recorder turned off.]

We're back to the history. One of the things that I suppose made it possible is the Hopkins bequest was free of the usual kinds of specific stipulations and directions that usually really can hogtie educational institutions when they get started. So it was essentially Gilman's creation, and he certainly did his homework. As I say, he came from an institution that called itself a university but wasn't, University of California. He had seen Yale both as a student and in early days, and really had a hand in establishing the Sterling [?], which was the engineering school at Yale. So he had some sense of what a multi-bodied university was.

But I think the idea of a graduate degree, a doctoral degree, really did evolve here. I think Harvard, Yale, in a couple of instances, had actually given doctoral degrees, but they were largely honoring those people who had done work in Europe.

So Gilman spent the early part of his tenure, the earliest part, traveling, consulting with the other presidents around the United States, Cornell and Chicago—well, Chicago hadn't really emerged yet. Hopkins had a hand in that. But he then traveled in Europe and it was recruiting travel, but it was also an education, so he managed to see a great many people.

He had a hunting list, or shopping list, and he didn't get everybody he wanted, but he got some remarkable people on the earliest faculty. It had a very international edge to it, in that certainly of the first professors to be appointed, they were either European or European-trained. Gildersleeve, the American, had Southern ties, and this probably was part of the politics of the draw, too, since Maryland was very much a border state. Gildersleeve had taught classics at Virginia, had ridden with Jeb Stuart when he was off duty, and had a gimpy leg from the campaigning.

But [J.J.] Sylvester was the most senior of the people he appointed, I think, and there was a certain brilliance about that, because Sylvester and [Arthur] Cayley at Cambridge were probably the two leading mathematicians of their generation. Sylvester was in a corner in the sense that he,
at that time, could not have had a post at senior universities, Oxford or Cambridge. The normal symmetry would have been that he would have been at Oxford, and Cayley would have been at Cambridge, but he was Jewish and disbarred from serving at senior universities at that time. So Sylvester was a remarkable and eccentric person. Most of the early appointments were eccentric, but he was one of the older people, established people. Cayley came over and was one of the significant visitors during the early days.

Warren: I don’t know that name.

Macksey: C-A-Y-L-E-Y. Both Sylvester and Cayley worked on pneumions [phonetic]. It was an interesting moment in mathematics generally, but Sylvester’s work before he came to Hopkins, and at Hopkins, is quite remarkable. He was teaching at W_____, the Royal Military Academy. That was the sort of post that was open to him. He had taught in the United States before. He taught briefly at Charlottesville. Not a very happy time. He encountered some students fairly late at night, and it was Charlottesville, and the students had been drinking, and there was sort of an encounter. Apparently Sylvester carried a sword cane, and thought the students were rushing him. Anyway, he got his sword cane out, made a stab at one of the students, hit him apparently in the sternum, and the student fell down, said, “I’m dead,” or something. And Sylvester got out of the country the same night and did not come back for a very long time.

So when he was negotiating with Gilman, he had a number of stipulations. One was that he wasn’t going to take the local paper money; he had to be paid in gold bullion. Turned out, of course, the student wasn’t seriously injured, and the reaction was probably in excess to the occasion.

But Sylvester and C.S. Peirce were among the early people who contributed to probably the most famous feud, but, again, you can’t have a university without a few feuds.

So, let’s see. Gildersleeve was the first appointment. Sylvester. Henry Newell Martin, a biologist, came from British institutions, and although died young, made remarkable contributions to biology and was very young. A number of the appointments were people in their early ’30s. Which was quite unusual.

In chemistry, Gilman appointed, although he interviewed a number of people in Germany, he appointed Ira Remsen, who had been trained in Germany, had studied under Libick [phonetic]}
and so on. And Remsen was associated with the discovery of saccharine, working with a graduate student in his lab here. In addition to that, eventually, of course, he became an administrator and second president of the university.

Then the appointment—let’s see. Biology, chemistry, classics, mathematics. The appointment of a collegiate professor—this is interesting, because Hopkins, certainly through the early years, really didn’t have much of a division between collegiate and undergraduate teaching in the graduate program, which was always the high profile part of the operation—was a man from Oxford, who was a devoted teacher and very popular and, who, again, died too young.

So those five appointments, I think, were the earliest he made, but he was using visitors, trying to get some of the gaps filled. The fairly obvious thing was the humanities. Well, actually, Herbert Baxter Adams came in, in history. And H.C. Adams in economics, political economy, shortly after that. I hadn’t been thinking about the sequence of these things. But the first five years were certainly genuinely exciting. They had a great many visitors from Europe. Lord [James Viscount] Bryce came over for a series of lectures, probably the most exciting thing in physics.

Oh, I’ve left out the physics appointment. I was thinking more recent history. Henry Rowland was the fifth of the senior appointments, with the physics department being the other one. Rowland was very young. Rowland had not been able to publish much because Europe was where the action was, and he was doing very exciting work in spectroscopy. Rowland—again, a profoundly eccentric person. He would show up in riding pinks in class, and who was, among other things, apparently a well-known kleptomaniac. If he admired something, if he saw it in your house, he’d take it with him. He, again, died a bit too young. He died in 1901, having nominated himself for the first Nobel Prize. Some of the received notions, of course, [W.C.] Rontgen received the first prize. The Swedish Academy was so shocked that he would nominate himself, that they said, “We’ll wait a year for Rowland,” apparently. The general assumption was that he was in line for a Nobel Prize. But he might have known something that the others didn’t, and he was gone by the time the second round went by. But he really started a certain kind of tradition in the physics department.
So they were the earliest appointments, but the graduate fellows were extraordinarily remarkable people, too. The appointment of Charles Peirce came two years later—I lose track—and Peirce was, again, a profoundly eccentric person who was here five years and I think you could make a pretty good case that Peirce was the most broad-gauged and creative mind that the American Academy had in the nineteenth century, but this was the only formal academic appointment he ever held. He had grown up at Harvard, and his father, Benjamin Peirce, was a great mathematician of the preceding generation. President Elliott couldn’t stand him, so he was not welcome around the precinct.

He had worked for the Geodetic Survey, did important work there, and presented himself as really almost a university in and of himself and, of course, long term we look to Peirce as the sort of—if not the father, the grandfather of semiotics, modern semiotics. Semiology, he called it. His work in mathematics was, I think, both profound and important, but because he published very little, much of this material doesn’t appear. The only monograph he published in his lifetime was a pendulum-swinging affair. But he was the candidate for professor of philosophy, which wasn’t an appointment that was made immediately. And there were a number of other candidates who did some teaching here. In fact, William James came down and did a year of teaching and developed the first version of his great psychology book out of the courses here.

Warren: What do you think it was like to be here in those early days?
Macksey: Well, some of the graduate students were, as I say, extraordinary folk who tend to quote Wordsworth, you know, about a spring in which it was so wonderful to be alive. It was, of course, a downtown campus, a campus without a library. They were using the Peabody as their library. They developed the so-called seminary system, the seminar system, for graduate instruction, and they would have small libraries attached to the individual seminaries. But the seminar method was new in the United States. It was not done entirely by lecturing.

Gilman did have some notions about meeting the community, so he established in the very beginning something called Hopkins Hall Lectures, which were open to the public as well as the faculty and students. They were in an old building downtown called Hopkins Hall. They’re quite remarkable. Very few concessions, I think, to popularization, but the excitement of it all was quite
real. I mean, it was a moment—well, to take literary studies, which emerged, as you can see, a little slowly compared to the sciences.

Philology was, of course, the slogan of the day, and they had remarkable people who came here, usually with German or French-trained philology. Paul Haupt was really the first person to work here on the oldest texts, and, in fact, worked on *Gilgamesh*, did an extraordinary maybe wrong-headed, but quite extraordinary polychrome Bible.

Much of this excitement, I think, is symbiotic, because the people were giving courses which were not canned courses; they were in the process of evolving. One of Gilman’s ideas was to have a circular or to have an ongoing report about this. I did bring down one of these things. But you’ll find a lot about the sort of spirit of the place in the early years from looking at these things.

**Warren:** The circulars. Yes, I’ve been looking at them in the library.

**Macksey:** Yes. At first you think—well, we still call the catalogs the circulars, but these were real journals, but journals were—I think, maybe the first one—yes, the 1 to 18 starting in ’79, so it took a couple of years to get under way. They are modeled, I think, on the Cambridge circulars, and they give accounts of who’s teaching what, but they also have material about the courses now.

Now, W.W. Gibbs, who was great, probably the leading American physicist, was at Yale, and they were trying to lure him away. He came down to do some courses in rational mechanics. You get some sense of what he was doing here.

Peirce’s father came in and lectured at Peabody, Benjamin Peirce. Gildersleeve was talking about Greek tragic poets. I’m just taking one—what is this? January 1880. And so you have a record. It’s sometimes dry, but then it gets exciting at times.

When Sylvester and Peirce had their great falling-out, it had to do with an article Sylvester published in the circulars and then disavowed in one of the footnotes, because the footnote had been written by Peirce on the galleys. He said he didn’t see this. Peirce, in the next issue, said, “I thought everybody read his own galleys.” Peirce, of course, suggested that he had the idea first. This went on for a bit, and then years later, Peirce said he discovered, in his work on {Gottfried
Wilhelm Leibnitz, that another person of some talent got to Leibnitz quite a few years before, had the same idea that both he and Sylvester were squabbling about.

Sylvester was interested in classical Greek as well and did—I’ve got somewhere a nice little memorial to Sylvester by Gildersleeve. Sylvester was called away. He was offered the Regent’s Chair at Oxford when they got around to admitting Jews, and he did go to Oxford. His last year, he died there. At the time he died, there were memorials here. I found a little copy of Sylvester’s book on verse prosody, metrics, which is quite a remarkable book because it’s full of Sylvester’s own versions of Latin and Greek material. It is an original, a truly original theory of prosody. But Sylvester said, you know, he found an audience here. He had relatively warm things to say about Hopkins, even after he’d gotten to Oxford. And Gildersleeve, in this memorial, I found a copy of the book it was folded in, in a bookstore. I gave it to the library. I don’t know whether they have it archived or it’s on the shelf. But it’s a hard book to find. I Xeroxed the book and did a little article on the memorial, which was quite moving.

So they were losing some of the early faculty through good attrition, that is to say someone like Sylvester going back to the Oxford chair. They lost [William] Osler later in the same route. As the university developed, it became sort of the incubator for Rockefeller’s University of Chicago. Now, of course, Chicago always had bundles of money, and it is interesting to watch the development of the first faculty of Chicago, which was seeded by Hopkins, really.

But they also lost people through premature death. They lost Peirce through a very mysterious—people are still arguing about why he was fired after five years. It was clearly a very complicated and somewhat secret affair. I’ve looked at a lot of the correspondence, and Max—the editor of the Peirce papers. Jack Cope did an article years ago on Peirce’s years at Hopkins. He was genuinely eccentric, and he presented himself to the professorship philosophy, which did not materialize, actually. The chair eventually went to someone who was primarily a psychologist, and they had another candidate who was a rather distinguished Hegelian philosopher. So things in philosophy could have gone in a number of directions, depending upon what was going to happen.

Now, missing the chance to have Charles Sanders Peirce continue on the faculty was one of the—I’d count it as one of those early great losses. He had wonderful students who really
changed the face of logic and mathematics in the country. He did a little collection of their works in logic, and this included Christine Ladd, who married Fabian Franklin, a mathematician who studied with Peirce. Fabian Franklin stayed on as an institution here in the math department, eventually left to become sort of a crusading editor of a newspaper in New York. But Christine Ladd was truly extraordinary.

**Warren:** Tell me about her.

**Macksey:** Well, there were women, see, in the classes, but their status was a little unclear. Carey Thomas and Christine Ladd would be two of the outstanding ones. Carey Thomas eventually did finish the degree in Europe. Christine Ladd did all the work for a degree; it wasn’t awarded. It should have been awarded, I think, on the basis of the paper she published in *Hopkins’ Study in Logic*. They finally got around to giving her a degree at the twenty-fifth [sic, fiftieth] anniversary in 1926, but she’s a fascinating figure because while she was here, she did teach some mathematics, terrified the graduate students. She was a much tougher mentor than her husband, Fabian Franklin. She was calling herself Christine Ladd-Franklin then, Franklin-Ladd. I get confused. So the students would go over to the house, and she would ask them questions that would stop people in their tracks.

Later she got interested in color vision and wrote a series of articles for a book. It wasn’t published until quite late, on color vision. It’s an original theory, probably the first one since Goethe that you could call truly original. So her contributions were not limited to formal logic. She worked in mathematics, logic, and later, of course, physiological theories.

Then, of course, there’s another great moment for women scholars when the medical school finally gets under way. This is all familiar history. The Women’s Board—

**Warren:** Before we go off to that, a couple of things I want to pursue. They did actually give a degree to Christine Ladd?

**Macksey:** In 1926.

**Warren:** At the fiftieth anniversary?

**Macksey:** At the fiftieth anniversary, yes. Did I say twenty-fifth? She was there and she took it.

**Warren:** That’s amazing.
Macksey: But she was, I think, after Peirce himself, probably the most important mind that went through, in terms of formal logic. There were several other people. Mark [unclear] went off to Princeton, and some other people. Actually, he worked on an early model of the calculating computer.

There were fascinating people in the graduate group, which included, of course, John Dewey and Josiah Royce. Royce had done a degree in Europe, but came back here, and Royce did do his degree here. Dewey did his degree here.

Warren: John Dewey?

Macksey: Yes. Unfortunately, the dissertation itself is missing, can't be found. But, no, he did his graduate work here. And then Thorstein Veblen was a graduate student. Thorstein Veblen wasn't very happy as a graduate student, left to go back. I guess he went directly back to the farm in Illinois, and he had a number of years which were strange, where he was a farmer, but eventually he became obviously an enormously important person in emerging sociology.

Dewey—I think Dewey, Royce, Veblen, are some of the names one thinks of among these early students in philosophy. Anyway, I think some of this stuff I sort of touch on at least in that little booklet.

Warren: Another thing that you alluded to that I'd like to talk about is the relationship between Johns Hopkins and Peabody in those early years.

Macksey: Yes. Well, I think the most important thing for Hopkins was that Peabody had a major lecture hall so that some of the big lectures were actually held at the Peabody and, probably more importantly, had a working scholarly library. Of course, Peabody’s bequest was not just a music conservatory; it was a library. This was on the Boston model. Peabody had spent some time in Boston. They were just a few blocks away. So it had both positive and negative effects, I suppose, on the evolution of the university, and it got things running fast. You couldn't have a university without books, but you weren't building a library, so we really did not have a separate library building until the Eisenhower Library in late 1950s, somewhere. Sorry, my dates are gone; lack of sleep last night.

But prior to that, the system of departmental libraries, Gilman Hall was, in fact, the center. The humanities and social sciences material was somewhat consolidated, although the general idea
of Gilman Hill, which went up in 1913 [sic], was to have—they had to do something by then, because that was also the move uptown. They moved away from the Peabody.

As far as music’s concerned, there was a lot of interaction. Sidney Lanier, who had been terribly damaged in the war, he developed tuberculosis at Old Point Comfort at prison, a Confederate prisoner, was teaching flute at the Peabody, and very, very much wanted to teach literature at Hopkins, and eventually did. He gave seriously a couple of remarkable courses, a course in the novel, a course in Shakespeare. Of course, he was evolving his own theory of prosody. So you’ve got these two rather eccentric and different people, a rather fierce Sylvester and a very gentle Sidney Lanier, both working in a very original way on metrics and prosody.

So the Peabody interaction was partly in that respect, but then I think the Peabody was an atheneum; that is to say, the lectures and concerts for the town. People tend to overlook, I think, particularly during the years at Hopkins, it seemed so isolated from the city, that in the very early years there really were ties to the city. Now, some of this was driven by self-interest, and the city was going to have to support the university.

But Gilman was willing to take some risks by inviting Huxley to speak at the first convocation. He obviously alienated a lot of people who saw Huxley as the main prophet of Darwinism. But Huxley worked hard, I think, on what he had to say, and he lays down, among other things, a good blueprint for a medical school. And since the original request was to start a university with a medical school, but also a hospital, and the money was to be divided, it came early. Then some of the people who eventually figured in the formation of the medical school are actually appointed to the university before there was a medical school.

The architect of the medical school, the whole design, Billings, Billings was another sort of Renaissance figure. He invented the Index Medicus and built a national medical library. The very idea of—I mean, this is a big thing in the history of libraries, a useable topically indexed set of file cards. But he came up here as an architect. His design of the hospital, he was very deliberate and slow about getting this thing under way. He wanted timber aged for two years and stuff like that, and he was using the pavilion plan, a sort of French design plan. But he was also lecturing on public health and medical topics—he had a medical degree—some years before the hospital was anything more than a glimmer.
Welch came down before the medical school had opened, a professor of pathology, even though they did not have a pathology department. And so in some ways it was a good thing, I think, for the medical school that it had those development years in the early '80s to start to gather the faculty. So there were interactions of various sorts, and when the interactions worked, I think that’s what happens in Hopkins’s best seasons. The faculty really did talk to each other, argue with each other, publish in the circular with each other, have feuds. And also on the very earliest medical faculty, Henry Newell Martin, before the medical school was there, Henry Newell Martin, a biologist, was also a member of the faculty. So there was a good deal of current cutting-edge research going on in fields which eventually became medical fields. I think it made the transition to a real research medical institution a lot easier.

Then, of course, it’s very exciting—I think in that letter, my wayward letter, talked a little about the two-volume book that came out on the centennial of the medical school, and it’s got a lot of illustrations in it, probably more illustrations than text. But it was an extremely interesting period. [William] Welch is, I think, the key figure in a way, the best known figure, a famous clinician, but Welch served as dean. Welch then retired from that job and founded the School of Hygiene and Public Health, which was the first of its sort, and then retired from that job. He lived longer than any of the others in the original medical faculty. Then he founded the Institute of the History of Medicine and Welch Medical Library. So all of this, in a sense, wouldn’t have been possible if the medical school had been really intellectually isolated, I think.

Of course, Welch was the person who moved the medical school into the full-time system, which meant that he had to use his skills, and he had real skills, to attract and intrigue sources of large money, in this case Rockefeller, what became the Rockefeller Foundation. It could not have made that move. And there Simon Flexner, another early student, was the go-between.

Accident had its role. One of the early medical students spent Thanksgiving vacation up in my home town in New Jersey, Montclair, and he was at the house of one of Rockefeller’s advisors. The guy was a preacher and turned philanthropist advisor. He was reading Osler’s great book, *Principles and Practice in Medicine*, and his host wanted to look at the book. He was appalled. Osler was a sort of therapeutic nihilist. He really felt that much that passed for medical therapy in pharmacopoeia was really doing more damage than good. So he said, “Is this really the
state of medicine?” And the student was able to repeat what he’d heard. That sort of established the tie with the Rockefellers, and became a very important tie in the development of the medical school.

But Welch was the person who knew how to handle this, and he was very close to Abraham Flexner. Flexner eventually, of course, did the Flexner Report early in this century, which looked at the proprietary medical schools, the state of medical education. It wasn’t a terribly happy conclusion he came to, but he said, “There is one sort of model for the medical school of the future, and that’s Hopkins.” Of course, that was another reason Rockefeller money continued, and other sources.

So I don’t pretend to be a historian, but the striking thing, I think, is the interactiveness of these early years. Individuals weren’t isolated.

Warren: You started to make reference to the Women’s Board. Since we’re talking about medicine, let’s talk about them.

Macksey: Women’s Board, of course, is famous for having saved the bacon. The initial gift from Hopkins, which, of course, is enormous, is the largest single gift for philanthropy up to that time, but it was divided between the two projects—the hospital and the university. A great deal of it was invested in the B&O Railroad. This is where the Garrett family plays a considerable role. Just about the time that the medical school was trying to open in the ’90s, of course, there was a general panic, and the B&O failed to pay its preferred stock dividends, which is the story of Hopkins, too, is when money stops.

Mary Garrett organized the Women’s Board, which was full of extraordinary people, including, I discovered fairly late—we were reading [unclear], Boston. I’d always thought she grew up in Maine. Her father was a country doctor. Country Doctor is the book. I’m sorry, I wasn’t thinking about names in the ancient past. But she was on Women’s Board. You look at Women’s Board, and it’s not limited to Baltimore. It reaches out. The idea was to organize enough money so the medical school could open. But Mary Garrett very clearly saw this gave her some leverage, and the leverage was to make certain stipulations which for years were listed in the catalog, the medical school catalog. She wanted a school which really required—it was a graduate school, I should say—which required a bachelor’s degree, which required German and
French. And for many years this was observed, and it’s funny, in not quite convincing ways, little
exams and things.

She wanted women admitted on equal terms to the medical school, which was a very
significant breakthrough, although there were individual proprietary schools which were women’s
medical schools at this time, but in isolation. She had other stipulations as well, and if these
stipulations weren’t met, part of the request was that the money would divert to Bryn Mawr
College. So there was always this shadow somewhere. Of course, the development of the medical
school, if they got too far away from Women’s Board stipulations, they could easily be subject to
a lawsuit and replevin from Bryn Mawr.

The early years brought in—I can’t do a litany now of all the figures, but I think most
especially of Florence Sabin, a great anatomist, worked with Franklin Paine Mall and in many
respects was his successor, a world-class anatomist, and Florence Sabin was a year or two ahead
of Gertrude Stein, was already assisting Mall.

Stein was here. Of course, she did her four years of medical school, but didn’t take a
degree because she had some courses she had not successfully completed. William James had sent
her down here from Harvard. She was at Radcliffe and worked with William James. She went to
Mall, saying that, well, she didn’t want to take a course over and so on, but if she could do an
anatomical presentation, do a specimen presentation, wasn’t that like that other woman, like
Florence Sabin had done. And Mall said, “Yes, try it.” So she had a pig embryo and she did a
neurological—brain, spinal cord. And made the preparations.

You’ll find in The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, in rather characteristic fashion,
Gertrude Stein rather high-handedly says, “They’re still using my preparation in instruction at the
medical school.” Of course, it was apparently a total botch. Mall couldn’t figure out what it was,
so he went to Sabin, who was a genius as far as three-dimensional imagination, and she said,
“What’s happened is the cord’s been wrapped around the embryo’s brain.” It’s the sort of thing
that’s a nightmare for anybody doing anatomy specimen. Of course, it immediately went into the
circular file. But it’s probably a very good thing that Stein moved on to Paris and her career and
where he gifts lay.
But those early years had remarkable people, and they weren’t just the early years, because the other medical schools were extremely slow, non-proprietary and male medical schools, were extremely slow to admit women on any terms, let alone equal terms. I remember an old friend, Helen Taussig, who, of course, was the medicine person, with Blalock, as a surgeon on the blue-baby operation, came here from Cambridge, from Harvard, had been a Radcliffe student. Her father taught public health, a very distinguished figure at Harvard. I said to her, “Well, I guess you came to Hopkins because you just wanted to find another environment to [unclear].” She said, “No, it’s much simpler than that. You forget, Harvard Medical School didn’t admit female students until after World War II,” which gives you some idea of how long it took the medical schools to catch up. So for a time, Hopkins really had a monopoly on gifted women students.

Warren: I need to turn the tape over.

Macksey: Okay.

[Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

Macksey: Then the other side of it is, Hopkins, on the medicine side, for many years had the essentially European system of one professor at the top of the pyramid in any given field. So they either had to invent new fields or make a move where there would be more than one professor if they were going to survive ultimately. But it meant that a great many very talented people started here and then went elsewhere.

Really the beginning of neurosurgery was the concurrence at Hopkins of Walter Dandy, who stayed on to be the first neurosurgeon, and Harvey Cushing. They were terribly competitive people, very different temperaments, and they spent a lot of time on the tennis court and fought madly there. Cushing, of course, went to Harvard and became, I suppose, the most famous neurosurgeon of his generation, although Dandy has a claim, too. Dandy invented more things in terms of techniques than Cushing. Both of them, in turn, became great neurosurgeons, I suppose, because of the tragedy of World War I, so many head wounds from the trenches.

We lost Osler to Oxford, but this opened the way for other people in medicine to continue here. So, as I say, the life of the place depends on attrition, too.

Warren: As an aside, I can’t leave Gertrude Stein behind. Do you know whether any of her papers survive, related to her days here at Hopkins?
Macksey: Oh, boy. The Stein Archives is big, big business. Most of the literary archives are at Yale. You’re talking to Nancy McCall at some point.

Warren: Yes.

Macksey: She’d be the best person to tell you what we’ve got. We’ve got the records of her courses. We’ve got a little bit of faculty correspondence. I like to think that the three stories about women, Three Lives, which she sort of modeled on Flaubert’s Trois Contes, parts of it evolved from her clinical cycle here at Hopkins. I think most of those papers are probably at Yale. The difficulty, of course, with Gertrude Stein is that she was a wonderfully inventive fictioneer, so she made up things all the time, and they were always more interesting than reality, almost always. But I think Three Lives is still a fascinating, readable book. It’s just before she began to experiment more broadly. She was experimenting there in modes of narrative, but not yet stylistically. Tender Buttons was sort of the breakthrough there, I think. So there’s an awful lot of Stein material. I think most of it’s at Yale.

What was interesting was she had plugged in while she was here to a group of very strong-minded women in town. She knew Mary Garrett. Of course, her family had Baltimore connections. She was born in Oakland, said, “There’s no there there,” in Oakland. But she had relatives here. The world of Carey Thomas and Mary Garrett and other members of the Women’s Board was sort of open to her.

But when you say Hopkins was a pioneer in opening medical school to women, it was not an easy task, and there are some interesting accounts from people who were early women medicine students here about how some members of faculty really were discouraging from all this. One wonderful account, the narrator meets one of the very senior members of the faculty, doesn’t know who it is, on the trolley going over to the medical school, and he does everything possible to discourage her from sticking it out.

But it’s a very distinguished sequence of people, and certainly Helen Taussig belongs in that sequence, and—what’s her name—Dorothy Reed. It’s a separate little chapter in history of the medical school. The medical school was very slow to make any woman a department head, although Sabin, as I say, was a world-class figure and succeeded to Mall’s chair. They did not have her chairing a department. I guess that was viewed as unladylike or something. But it’s
interesting that Hopkins was a magnet in the first twenty-five years for some very, very distinguished women scholars in many, many fields, in philology, logic, mathematics, anatomy, physiology, so on.

Warren: I have photographs in the library at the downtown campus, and there are four or five women in the picture. There are a lot of people who appear to be students, and there are these young women there in the picture. Who were they? Why were they there?

Macksey: Well, as I say, some, like Christine Ladd, were there because they were geniuses, I think. Carey Thomas took courses. Her father, of course, was chairman of the Board of Trustees. But she left before finishing a degree, went to Switzerland, took a degree. The general notion was that there was a certain flexibility about the School of Arts and Sciences, that women could take graduate courses. It was much more difficult to finish a graduate degree. So if you look—I find that fiftieth anniversary directory very helpful, because it does give you more details than you usually get about people’s background.

As I say, Christine Ladd is a kind of special case, because she probably would have been barred not just because she was a woman, from teaching, but probably barred because of nepotism rules, because her husband was the chairman of the department. She would have taught in mathematics. But she did teach courses in mathematics; it’s just that she wasn’t a regular faculty member in those years.

So as you go through the different disciplines, you’ll find distinguished people. As I say, as soon as the medical school opened with this new dictum that women be admitted, it wasn’t that women hadn’t been taking medical degrees during the nineteenth century. We just had Blackburn’s what would be 150th anniversary this spring, we’re doing something over at the medical school. This was an upstate New York medical college. Even there, although she managed to get in and get a medical degree, her niece and various other people later were refused, probably because they were women.

So here it was a new deck of cards, and there were strange things that obtained, though. The early amphitheater demonstrations, you’ll see some pictures where there’s a screen, men on one side, women on the other. They were both watching the same thing, but divided by a screen. Funny pictures. That, I don’t know, probably didn’t persist very long, but there was an attempt in
some ways to open the education, but keep some of these proprietary—well, in this case, barriers and proprieties of the men and women sit together, looking at a naked body.

I think that the earliest stipulations probably made it difficult for women, but then frequently it’s probably just as important in keeping the percentage of women on the faculty down, were nepotism rules, and frequently the male had the appointment and this barred the female from corresponding appointment. It’s a gender situation, but it’s not specifically—presumably, if the woman had gotten the appointment first, it would have barred the man under the nepotism rule. So, it’s at least symmetrical, although in practice it didn’t work that way.

So I think that’s both a source of enormous strength and pioneer work in any number of fields early on, this influx of women, but also there was a very considerable lag as far as progressing through the academic system, the teaching side.

Another sort of moment, I guess, and, of course, the undergraduate program, the baccalaureate program, was entirely male until, I think, Lincoln Gordon’s administration, and the move there was probably made for economic reasons. That doesn’t mean there aren’t women who took bachelor’s degrees at Hopkins. During the first war they had a whole sort of special program for women, so you’ll find interesting people who took an undergraduate degree here, and then others took it through the extension program and actually sat in on classes and so on.

So it was a permeable barrier, but Hopkins was very late in going to coeducation at the undergraduate level. Princeton had done it some years [sic]. Well, a lot of schools had done it, or else had a resident women’s college, a Radcliffe-Harvard arrangement. But since Hopkins never was built on this sort of idea of collegiate separation from the university, that wasn’t going to work here, because you didn’t have an undergraduate college in many senses of the word. Oxford, of course, had women’s colleges only very late in the nineteenth century, and they still have the arrangement of specifically women’s colleges, Lady Margaret Hall and [unclear] College and things like that. That, I think, is because they’re residential colleges and presumably an early student at Lady Margaret would be able to take courses all through the university, but couldn’t really say she was in [unclear] College or in Christ Church. She was in a woman’s college because that was where she went.
Warren: Let’s make a big leap. Let’s get Dick Macksey to Baltimore.

Macksey: Oh, that’s a long time later, yes.

Warren: What attracted you here in the first place?

Macksey: Fort Holabird. This is during the Korean War, so I didn’t know Baltimore well. When I was in college—I was an undergraduate at Princeton—I had been down to visit Baltimore, and it was very, to me, exotic and Southern town, but they were doing interesting things in sciences, and originally I was interested in sciences. They had just started a Department of Biophysics, Detlev Bronk, and they had a medical school and interesting things going on in the pure sciences. So these are things that looked real good to me.

And I had thought of Hopkins all my life, because when I was very, very little, about six or seven, I sort of solved some problems by saying I wanted to be a doctor. “Where are you going to go?” Well, it was always Hopkins. So there was an unexamined kind of Hopkins connection.

But after I got here, I then sort of drifted over into literary things. This is no great loss to the sciences, to be sure, but it was partly possible because it was such a small place. The buildings were cheek by jowl. I took courses in Rowland Hall and Mergenthaler, and Gilman was right next door. It was a wonderful generation here. I think that’s one of the striking things, again, about a certain period in Hopkins’ history. During the ’30s, it was a very poor institution economically, had some rather eccentric leadership, but it was hospitable, paradoxically hospitable to the émigrés. There were great figures.

Can I take a break?

Warren: Absolutely. [Tape recorder turned off.]

Okay. We’re back.

Macksey: Let me give you some of these things which may be a more economical way to do it.

Well, the striking thing, it’s certainly more important than whatever the comings and goings of my years involved, the moment at Hopkins when I arrived, was still very much the faculty represented the émigré generation. This was one of the extraordinary things, and I think it wouldn’t have happened but for the tragedy of Hitler and the war years. But Hopkins probably, for its size, had more great émigré scholars than any other institution in the country. Harvard was
resistant for various reasons. The New School in New York was kind of established in a way that built off this.

But the people who were working in fields that suddenly were interesting me had come as émigrés—not immigrants. That’s a bit of American history that I think sometimes gets a little fudged. The great cities and the influx in the great cities is so frequently a matter of immigration, and the immigrant comes with a minimum of cultural baggage, obviously, family and other cultural inheritances, but the émigré comes over and can be a very prickly customer, because his or her education has been, in this case, for the most part European contexts, and the Americanization process is quite different. The immigrant generation built Hollywood, among other things, but the émigré generation, I think, really made the American universities world-class institutions. They came at a time when there was a good deal of ferment in many fields. Art history, for instance, really didn’t exist in many respects until the influx of people from the w_____ and people from iconographic traditions in Europe.

But there were a number of people who touched me—Leo Spitzer in Romance philology, Ludwig Edelstein in classical philology, history of medicine, history of philosophy. Adolf Katzenellenbogen was here in art history. The natural sciences were, again, loaded. Some of these people left by the time I arrived in natural sciences. We had James Franck, who was already a Nobel laureate in the ’20s, in physics, who had left, with Marie Goeppert-Meyer, who later won a Nobel Prize, one of the rare women winners after Madame Curie, who, of course, got two Nobel Prizes. But in economics, Simon Kuznets was here and Friz Machlup. I worked with Georges Poulet in literary criticism, French literature, primarily.

**Warren:** Is this a list you’re going to share with me?

**Macksey:** Sure. You’re welcome to it.

**Warren:** This will give me all the spellings.

**Macksey:** Yes. There must be about twenty-five or thirty people there. I don’t pretend to have worked with all of them, but they came through and really constituted this generation. [Franco] Dino Rasetti in physics, who really was a strong candidate, had worked with Fermi, and if he had probably gone with Fermi to Chicago, would have had the Nobel Prize. Rasetti was an eccentric person who got more interested in paleontology and other things.
I roomed with Jean Starobinski from Switzerland, but this was largely because Poulet was here and Starobinski wanted to spend some time. Aurel Wintner, a great figure in topology and math department. Anyway, you can have that.

Warren: Tell me what it was like to be in the classroom with these people.

Macksey: Well, they all had different temperaments. Most had accents. [Laughter] More German than anything else, but some French. Poulet, who was as widely read as anyone I’ve ever met in English literature, was not really fluent in English, and had a strong accent. Spitzer, who worked in dozens of languages, had clearly a very sort of German professorial accent. There was a good deal of excitement in part because you couldn’t find what many of these people were doing at any other institution at that time, and I think we clearly profited from the émigré generation.

These are some other notes. What are they? I’ll pass them to you. There’s no need for me to intone on them. These are just how émigré scholars in earlier years had had some impact, but then also how medicine and humanistic studies, through visiting faculty, which has been awfully important at Hopkins, how some of these people, some of them I’ve mentioned in the early faculty people like Sylvester and Martin, Charles Morris. Anyway, that’s another bunch.

Warren: Thank you. That’s a big help.

Macksey: Then this is a list which may not be quite complete, but I’m always struggling to keep it up, these are Hopkins faculty or students with Nobel Prizes, and then a very incomplete list of Pulitzer Prizes there.

Warren: Great.

Macksey: I think that may be of some use.

Warren: It certainly is.

Macksey: So it was exciting. Spitzer was truly a sort of central casting’s notion of a European professor, a long shock of white hair, tended to wear things like opera capes, and had a histrionic sensibility so he could strike poses, and annoyed many of his American colleagues, I think, because of his airs, but he had started out in philology when it was a moment of ferment, and I think he’d studied in Vienna initially, with [unclear], when philology was the answer to everything. It was a science, you see.
This was, in turn, closely related to journals. Hopkins has more journals. This was part of Gilman’s original project, not just to have Hopkins Hall lectures, but to have journals and, consequently, a press. So early on, he called the circulars, pictures of the horse in motion, research as it’s going on, but he felt one had to spread knowledge, and one of the ways to do it, aside from teaching, is to publish, publish, publish. So we had journals like *ELH* and *MLN*, and even a literary journal, the *Hopkins Review*, which had a number of rather exciting years when I first arrived there, and was publishing a lot of material by and about the Southern Renaissance writers, the generation of Alan Tate and John K____ and Eudora Welty and Flannery O’Connor. Well, you can go on and on and on. But they published enough material in the journal so that Lou Rubin and Bob Jacobs put out a book of essays on Southern Renaissance people.

So I think this interaction, a small institution where people had to see and interact with others in related, but not the same fields, a place where there was an outlet for original material, journals, and a press, then something that I think is just as important, probably, some institutions where people could really get together and talk with each other.

The History of Ideas Club. History of Ideas was still very much a regnant Hopkins activity when I came, and we had monthly meetings which brought together not just people in history and philosophy and literary studies, but in the sciences. Bentley Glass was a biologist. We did a volume called *The Forerunners of Darwin*, as we were getting close to the centennial of Darwin’s *Origin of Species*. There were a lot of papers, and this got edited a couple of different ways. I had to go back and do a little introduction to the second edition of it, came out in paperback. But the History of Ideas Club was always a place where you’d have a scientist sitting next to a humanist, next to a social scientist.

Then the Philological Association, which went back to the very origins of the university, was another place where people would meet and we would hear each other’s work. A great many institutions, and perhaps more so now at Hopkins than in the past, you really have to go somewhere else to find out what your colleagues are going, whereas in this period you really were part of it.

**Warren:** Tell me more what you mean by that.
Macksey: Well, I mean if the way in which a scholar functions and proceeds through the course [unclear], scholarship is solely through publication. You go where the publications are. You do not necessarily share this inside the community you’re teaching in. That’s to put the worst face on it. It’s obviously not always true. But cooperation within individual disciplines is the best model, I suppose. But the interesting model about Hopkins was this interdisciplinary mixing. After I’d left the natural sciences, it would have been truly unusual to find out what biologists were thinking, let’s say.

In the History of Ideas Club there were biologists who were doing new and exciting work, and who were part of the enterprise. Of course, Lovejoy and [Gilbert] Chinard and Boas and people who founded the History of Ideas as a discipline, really, in the ’20s, then established the club, and then the journal *History of Ideas*, and things ran together, were determined that you could not do their kind of history, their kind of intellectual history, without having input from people in the sciences as well as the humanities.

What I mean now is that high degrees of specialization tend to take you to conferences of people who are all wearing the same underwear, and you don’t get this cross-disciplinary stimulation that I think really was part of Hopkins. I’m skeptical about people who talk about golden ages. I mean, when I was first here, Hopkins was not as rich as it is now. It had many fewer faculty members in both arts and sciences and medicine. But it did have this very interesting and, I think, in many cases productive interaction.

Students invited Jean Piaget to visit, the only trip, I think, he made to the United States, certainly the first one. He said he thought Hopkins was very important in his development, for two reasons. One, there was someone here when he was first developing as a psychologist, who represented “the other,” somebody to oppose, and he felt it was important, if you were going to be creative in your field, to have worthy opponents, and his opponent, of course was John D. Watson, founder of behaviorism. He associated behaviorism with that period in Hopkins’ history back in the early ’20s. Then he said the other thing he felt that had been important in his career was that he had not simply stayed close to people in his developmental psychology field, but had looked into other adjacent fields, and had gotten many of his ideas because he was willing to move around.
We'd had people like Spitzer and René Girard, slightly later generation of émigrés. Jean Starobinski, who had a degree in medicine and continued to work in medical history, but whose major contributions are probably in literary studies. All these people moved with some ease between disciplines and got some of their ideas by rating their neighbors. So that was one of the things. We still have a Philological Association. We still have a History of Ideas Club. They don't meet as regularly, and we tend to invite visitors from outside, which is useful, too, but I sort of regret not hearing my colleagues more.

Warren: When you attended these meetings early on when you first got here, describe that to me. Who was there? What was the mix of people?

Macksey: Well, it was a mix of faculty from a number of disciplines, sometimes six, eight, nine, ten different departments, graduate students from the same departments, a few undergraduates. It was not barred to undergraduates. Because the line between undergraduate study and graduate study was so permeable, somebody with a strong interest, all encouragement. A faculty member would show up, as well as a well-informed undergraduate. But they tended to be open, knock-down arguments. Papers would get read, questions would get asked.

Many people used to complain—I hear this less often now—but when they would visit Hopkins to give a paper, that they were worked over with a kind of rigor that they normally didn't expect as visiting lecturers. They expected a little gentler reception. But I think that was part of the issue, and it was established partly by personalities.

Lovejoy was a fierce controversialist, and he would pitch in. I remember the first paper that Georges Poulet ever read here, was really the introduction, a powerful, long introduction to his book on human time, the first book on human time, and Lovejoy, who was then very old and probably less able to be as fierce as he had been in the past, pitched right in and started to attack. It was a good thing. I mean, Poulet was certainly up to the attack.

So you could watch the horses in motion at these things. I think the reading of papers can be a deadly thing. In some cases people say, "Why don't you just publish them?" Well, that's what usually happens now, but I think it was the discussions that were so valuable. They weren't always brilliant, but frequently they were.
We would meet, for instance, the History of Ideas Club regularly met in what was then the Garrett Room, which is 110 Gilman, just under the bow of the Hutzler Library. Big room. We use it for film projection now. Full of books and chairs, an enormous long table. You’d sit around the table, and there might be anywhere from thirty to sixty people engaged in this. Not everybody, obviously, talked. If it was the History of Ideas Club, Lovejoy always talked first. But George Boas, one of my teachers, was never as fierce as Lovejoy, but he could, in fact, be a fierce controversialist. When Boas came, Lovejoy was a brilliant piece of demolition, and I think Boas, coming from the European tradition, did not resent it. I think he was more accustomed to this European stuff. But Boas’ touch was generally very light, more Mozartian. I suppose Lovejoy was more Beethovenian.

But we used to take Lovejoy over to the meetings, Catherine and I, after—well, we were still graduate students, and then after I came back to teach. We had sort of an arrangement. He didn’t get out very much, lived in the Lawrence Fowler House, just a little apartment across from the Broadview, that’s a parking lot now, a lovely house, and lived surrounded by books. His bed was covered with books. I don’t think he ever got in it. We’d take him over to the meetings. If it was the History of Ideas Club, he’d speak first.

But I think the interactions can be at times artificial. After I came back here, we started another kind of meeting. What did we call it? First Draft Club. This was a little less formal. The idea was that people had papers that weren’t really quite finished. They’d read under informal circumstances to colleagues and students. We used to meet here. So it was First Draft because there was beer, there was wine and beer. This was always interesting, because sometimes you’d hear a truly finished paper, and it’s very hard to get a discussion going afterwards, whereas these were things that were open. I think that served its own purpose. The First Draft Club had no particular constitution or anything. Everybody belonged to it who wanted to come. It started out relatively small. We jammed this room with chairs, then we had to move into the living room, which is a good deal larger. Still, I remember Larry Holland would always stand, even if there was a chair. He’d stand out at the door.

The nature of the discussions was open, and I think that is something that one needs to encourage. As I say, many departments have this kind of forum within the department. It’s rare to
get interdepartmental stuff of that sort. The Humanities Center was one attempt to kind of encourage this thing. That was really Milton’s last bequest, certainly, the humanities, get that started.

Warren: The Humanities Center?

Macksey: Yes.

Warren: I certainly want to talk about that and hear how that came to be.

Macksey: Well, as I say, Milton was the efficient cause, in that he, I think, was a powerful and productive administrator because he didn’t see himself as a rival scholar. Milton, of course, had been a professor, a professor of journalism, though, and he admired, in some ways even uncritically, I suppose, some of his faculty, and wanted to encourage them. I think he had some conversations with them when this was building, some notions which I certainly agree with about the essential unity of the humanities. The idea was to put enough resources together so that one could have a program which really involved all the humanities departments.

When we started out, we had money initially for some visitors. Some came for a term. Some came for just a few weeks. There would be a general topic each year. Some of it was period. We did a sort of Renaissance, Enlightenment, Medieval, Modern. Then some was topical. We did one year on interpretation theory and practice.

But at the same time this developed—this was very characteristic of Hopkins’ way of development—the first people who were really students, I guess you’d say, in the Center were postdoctoral students. We had enough—this was an era, the mid ’60s, when there was really money for this sort of thing available. We had support from Pew and some other—Ford helped us a lot with some of our conferences. We would have these folks in residence. Individual departments were all involved in voting on who would come in a given year, and we usually had about five postdocs.

Then it went from postdocs to graduate study, and that was within the Center, but again couldn’t exist, couldn’t have existed without the support of the neighboring departments, because our notion of graduate study was, of course, comparative literature and intellectual history as the two sort of prongs, and you needed the adjacent departments. You needed the literary
departments, the history department, philosophy department, the relevant departments. So they were, by design, interdisciplinary degrees.

Then the third development really was a pyramidal thing, you might say, the percolator system again, to involve undergraduate teaching. We designed courses that were interdisciplinary, some in comparative literature, some in intellectual history. We could experiment with a few courses in one thing and another. We had ethnic studies. We had black literature. We had film. We had various things that didn’t fit in any departments. This was particularly useful, I think, at the undergraduate level. So it took a while to evolve. Women’s studies. We gave the first courses in women’s studies, women and gender.

Some of this was because we had, I thought, very interesting graduate students who were part of the instructional process. So I think it made a better graduate environment for them to teach courses in fields they began to see emerging, and at the same time, if they were good teachers, which some graduate students are—alas, not all—but they would have an opportunity to work with undergraduates not teaching simply the survey course as a TA, but really conceiving a seminar and working on curriculum and so on. So that was part of the Center.

Warren: I need to change the tape.

[Begin Tape 2, Side 1]

Warren: This is Mame Warren. This is tape two with Dick Macksey on June 24, 1999.

Let’s get back to talking about particular faculty members who made an impression on you. You mentioned George Boas. Was he important to you?

Macksey: Oh, yes. George had been here a long time, came, like Gilman, from California, although he was a New Englander, Providence, Harvard. George established—it wasn’t a department—well, it was a program, I suppose, something called the Aesthetics of Literature. He had very alert interests in the arts and, actually, for a brief period was director of the Baltimore Museum of Art when they didn’t have a director. He sort of established [unclear] would run the place, made a lovely little film about looking at a picture. [Unclear] History of Ideas, but also in aesthetics. So he started this thing called the Aesthetics of Literature, which was interpreted different ways by different students, but it allowed you to work in, say, comparative literature when there was no Department of Comparative Literature.
George was a subversive, I think. We would talk at times about the rigidity of departments. He’d say, “Oh, just feed them a little poison every year and they’ll eventually wither away.” [Warren laughs.] But he had been working with Lovejoy during much of his academic life. He came here, Lovejoy was already established here. History of Ideas flowered in the ’20s. George was a very different temperament from Lovejoy, as I say, maybe Mozart and Beethoven would do it as far as touch. Lovejoy was a fierce figure in many ways, and although he was an American, he had done his degree in Berlin, I believe, very Germanic in many respects.

George was very French. His wife was French—Simone. He had spent a lot of time in France in both wars, and in the Army in the first war, in the Navy intelligence in the second war. Had done remarkable things there. He actually was a Knight in the Order of Leopold or something in Belgium or whatever—I discovered these things after George died—because he had recovered the Adoration of the Lamb panels that had been stolen by the Nazis, got them back to Belgium. But George’s tastes were French. In fact, he really had, I felt, almost insuperable prejudices against some aspects of German philosophy, various German philosophies at the center of Lovejoy’s interest.

Lovejoy was, as I say, someone we got to know reasonable well because of the History of Ideas Club. At one point I even had the offer of a little job to get paid to read to Lovejoy when his eyes had failed. All you had to do was read different languages. But Catherine and I had just gotten married. It was not a lot of money, but it was mainly the experience of working with Lovejoy that sounded great. I finally didn’t do it because there was someone, seemed to me, better qualified in the philosophy department to do this, who needed money more. So I feel I knew Lovejoy, even though he had retired officially at the time I arrived. He was still active because of things like the History of Ideas.

Boas, of course, taught down to his retirement, and then he had a very active career afterwards and he taught at other institutions, but lived on a farm, Cherry Hill, out by Baltimore, and was a person of great elegance. I mean, small, compact, elegant man, with great sensibilities, as I say, in the visual arts as well as literature, a philosopher with a wide range. But during most of the years when Lovejoy and Boas were teaching, Lovejoy never wanted to teach an undergraduate course. As far as I know, he never did. So Boas had to do all these things. He did a
lot of undergraduate courses. So a lot of people who were undergraduates here had much more contact with George Boas than with Lovejoy.

George encouraged his colleagues, which I think was a good quality. He would try to get them together when they seemed not to be meshing. I remember he tried to get Spitzer and Poulet together, and Earl Wasserman, and some other people in the English department together with people in Romance languages, German. This was, seems to me, all to the good. So these good seasons, of interdisciplinary cooperation don't occur just by accident. You need some enablers. George was an enabler.

He was the chairman of the humanities group, which is a system we've lost now. Each group, social sciences, natural sciences, and humanities had a separate sort of self-governing body. While he was the chairman of that, he did extremely interesting things. We used to have to get together and talk about dissertation topics and things of this sort in different departments, and so it was a great way to discover that somebody over here in history that was working in a field you were interested in. You'd get in touch with a student, not just show up at the board oral at the end. That's another Hopkins custom, the board oral. But it's a little too late then to say, "Oh, my God, you didn't read Kant," or, "You didn't read Tocqueville."

So, as I say, George was a splendid spirit and an elegant one, and his wife was a sculptor and a great cook. A very civilized household. He did encourage the Writing Seminars, which was, again, an invention that came in just after the war, one of the first writing programs. Elliott Coleman was brought in. This is still during the Bowman era. I think Bowman felt he couldn't run the English department, so he started this as something else. So there was always a little bit of tension between English and the Writing Seminars. The Writing Seminars had—

Warren: Talk to me about that. Tell me about that.

Macksey: Well, I think much of it's overdone. The people of my generation sort of remember what seemed to be "them" and "us," which I think is probably unfair. The English department really did not, I think, in that era want to teach composition courses or writing courses. They were teaching not too many modern contemporary authors, unless the faculty member had some specific interest. Raymond Haven was interested in twentieth century authors. A few others. Haven, actually, was an ardent reader of Henry James, and his books are in the library now.
But any sort of notion that the twentieth century was the modernist age, was a special age, came probably from the Writing Seminars, because they were teaching courses, obviously workshop courses, in writing, speech, and drama, but also that was its original name—Department of Writing, Speech, and Drama—a fairly large department with some sort of technically trained people in each of those areas.

Elliott Coleman was a poet with an interest in Proust and contemporary poetry, and would bring in people. Karl Shapiro was before my time, one of the first poets here, and was working then on prosody, so he was discovering, rediscovering Lanier and Sylvester on prosody.

Doc Emmart, who—that was another great *Evening Sun*, a very learned figure, probably not designed to be a great—the technical title of the *Sun* still is running the editorial page instead of being called editor, but you could read a Doc Emmart editorial, and it would frequently be a literary essay. Well, he came in, lectured on T.S. Eliot and Robert Graves, then contemporary writers. Eliot, Graves, and other contemporary writers visited.

So it was the sort of thing that in some cases would have evolved in an English department, just happened to evolve outside, and, of course, the degree program was different. The degree program gave a master of arts in writing. But a number of the people then went on and did doctoral degrees here. Some of them were also teaching Writing Seminars. Lou Rubin did a degree with Charles Anderson on Thomas Wolfe, and then wrote a novel sort of in the vein of Thomas Wolfe, about his own growing up in South Carolina. Jack Thompson. A number of the people who taught in the Writing Seminars were both writing poetry or fiction and doing criticism. But there was always a little bit of the sense that I think the English department saw that—I wasn’t privy to budgets back then, but the Writing Seminars really, because they offered undergraduate writing courses, had quite a bit of money for a teaching cause. That’s always an area where a department can be jealous.

I think there was a sort of cutting back of the Writing Seminars. It became the Writing Seminars. It ceased to be writing, speech, and drama. It was writing, speech, and drama in a sort of self-supporting way, too. This was in the era after the second war, and running down into the period just after Korea, when there was a lot of G.I. money around. A lot of people wanted to go
back to school for a year or two, but didn’t want to go into a doctoral program. This was the way
to do it. They were interested in a career as writers or journalists.

It was an interesting and distinguished group in many respects, but the continuity came
from Elliott Coleman. Elliott was, I think many informants would say, not treated very well by the
university. I was very fond of Elliott and I worked for him, but I’m not sure that’s entirely true.
He was a born victim, so he always looked like a victim, whether he was or not.

The English department—I’m saying this as a department. I think Don Allen, who was
another teacher of mine, a good friend for many years, was the Renaissance professor in the
English department, and I think he had a hand in designing the Writing Seminars in place of
Writing, Speech and Drama. I don’t know whether this belongs in the history unless it’s looked at
very soberly, because, as I said, there’s an awful lot of mythology about it. You ask a graduate
student from this era who wasn’t in touch with the people in the Writing Seminars what it was all
about, they’d say, “They’re just a lot of bohemian people who drank and smoked pot and thought
they were in a café,” whereas you ask some of the Writing Seminar people, and they’d say, “They
were terribly tight-assed and dominated by the dissertation directors,” and so on and so forth.

Fortunately, there are a lot of people in both departments that interacted in various ways.
Jack Barth, of course, was here as a student, as an undergraduate, and then as a graduate student
in the writing, speech, and drama department, wrote a novel, [unclear], never published, and then
entered the Aesthetics of Literature program, Boas’ program, which is a place where people who
wanted to stay in the university could go from, say, a Writing Seminar M.A.. Jack never finished
it. He really didn’t have to. He started to write and taught. Many of the people in the graduate
programs, of course, have to take jobs, and do their dissertation at a distance. He went to Penn
State, published *The Floating Opera*, a wonderful first book, and published *The End of the Road*.
At this point it would have been irrelevant to write a dissertation, so although he was in this
doctoral program for a while, it wasn’t something he was apt to finish.

On the other hand, many of the people who did finish in that track turned into very
distinguished academics. So I don’t know. I don’t make as much of the hostilities between
departments there as I would. They exist all the time, and they usually have to do with the finite
amount of money being shared by people with very different goals.
I felt Poulet was, of course, trying to reconcile his friend Elliott Coleman with his friend Earl Wasserman, and trying to get Spitzer–Poulet and Boas both had this ecumenical instinct of trying to get people together. Boas, as the chairman of the humanities group, as I say, had a strong subversive influence and instinct, so he probably was one of the people who was a patron of the Writing Seminars. This wasn’t to say that he didn’t have good friends in the English department, it’s just that he was a little more subversive.

As I say, it was an interesting time, and I think it didn’t hurt people studying, say, American literature, to meet some people who were writing American novels. And I don’t think it hurt people who were trying to write American novels to take a course or two where they read an American author seriously in a graduate context. So people did move back and forth across departments. But there was this mythology of opposition.

The program continued. Writing Seminars was quite reduced for a while, with Elliott Coleman plus one assistant and some visitors, guests, and things of that sort, and that really was very straightened, and then gradually the Writing Seminars grew and now it’s back probably about the size or larger than the original writing, speech, and drama department, but very different program in many respects. They still have the writing M.A.. But you could find a range of temperaments among graduate students. It was a small enough place, they interacted. Then they, in turn, had their impact on undergraduates. So I think there was a good deal of—I’d call it interdisciplinary or interdepartmental exchange.

Warren: What’s the distinction you’re making there?
Macksey: Well, interdisciplinary studies, I just read another book on the subject. Some people would argue—I don’t want to get into the philosophy of interdisciplinary studies, because some people would argue there isn’t any such thing. I don’t agree with them. The creation of the Department of Biophysics, for instance, was an interdisciplinary experiment to bring people who had worked in physics and people who had worked in biology, really emerging molecular biology, together, because the work itself required both these disciplines. In fact, Jim Watson, the double helix wouldn’t have evolved without the critical intervention of a crystallographer. So that’s interdisciplinary, a crystallographer as a discipline and a biologist and a physicist have disciplines
which can be married. I like to think comparative literature and certain forms of intellectual
history are interdisciplinary, too.

Interdepartmental is simpler to define. It’s simply people whose training and academic
affiliation is in one department, working on topics and with people who are being encouraged in
another department. So departments are not the most rational units of the human mind, but I think
they’re easier to comprehend in a way than disciplines. The whole notion of disciplinarity is a
tough topic and one that I think deserves some close thought and a little care in talking about it.

Interdepartmental stuff, when I was teaching first in the—this would have been actually
before the Humanities Center was actually started, a number of people—I think Earl Wasserman
was one, and one of my dissertation teachers, [unclear]—were regretting they would get students
at the undergraduate level who had never heard of authors and texts that one tended to assume
was a given. I mean, if you’re studying 17th century French literature, you really need to have
some awareness of Virgil and Homer and Greek drama. So the idea was to have some courses
that would—we tended to do this on a genre basis, as a kind of survey of narratives, [unclear],
Homer, [unclear] twentieth century survey of drama, [unclear].

And in order to teach these things, that’s the tricky part. You’ve got to get some
cooperation. So I tended to have my colleagues come in from different departments. Sometimes
you got people who have a natural gift for this. Gregory Nagy, who was a young guy here in the
classics department, who came here from Harvard and eventually went back to Harvard, was a
great colleague to have because he didn’t feel demeaned by talking to people who didn’t know
every play that Sophocles had written, let’s say. Greg was particularly helpful in the history of
narrative, because he had really done exciting work on Homer, which came out of his own
training, which was in comparative linguistics, which would include Sanskrit and antecedents of
Greek as well. He was able to make this exciting. So that’s interdepartmental.

Many of these people used whatever the discipline and the mode of discourse was that
they associated with their department, but they came into a course that involved a number of
different disciplines. So it was also interdisciplinary, but not—each individual participant wasn’t
saying, "I’m now going to do something in this discipline." It was part of a larger fabric. So that’s sort of the difference. I don’t know if it’s at all clear.

**Warren:** We were talking about members of the faculty. One name that certainly comes to mind when I think of the ’50s is Owen Lattimore. Did you know him?

**Macksey:** Yes.

**Warren:** Were you part of that whole time?

**Macksey:** I was never a student of his. Some of the political issues had started to emerge before I was here, although they were very hot while I was here. Lattimore had an institute for study. They were working, among other things, on Mongolian grammar. He had a number of Mongolian visitors, including a couple of [unclear] Buddhists, one lovely old man who didn’t know much English, wandered around Levering Hall, would benignly pat women. I remember I was with a woman who was about ten months pregnant. He came over and patted her on the belly and he said, “That’s going to be another Buddha.”

Lattimore had both partisans and critics. I mean, this was all inside the university. It’s not a bit of history that interests me very much or lifts my spirits very much, but in the geography department, George Carter, who was a very, in some ways, eccentric and rather revolutionary figure, thinking about geographic matters, particularly transatlantic migration, was extraordinarily conservative politically. One thing I guess everyone would agree about was that Lattimore was not conservative politically. It was Carter who initiated some of the early claims that Lattimore might be playing some kind of spy role. This all stemmed from a picnic, I think, at Carter’s house, the department. So there’s a danger of having departmental parties.

George Boas was one of the people who organized the defense of Owen Lattimore. Much of the criticism of Lattimore on the outside, people would say, “He’s not a scholar.” That’s because he didn’t have a Ph.D. So George got together a whole group of people and they did a small book, a large booklet, called *Owen Lattimore, The Scholar*, which simply went through the areas to which he made very significant contributions. Of course, the focus was not Hopkins; the focus was Washington and the era which, I guess, was loosely called the McCarthy era, but, of course, the House UnAmerican Affairs Committee in some ways preceded this.
Lattimore’s relationship to the university was interesting. I don’t know that everyone would agree with me, but I think the university was probably honorable here. They relieved him from teaching, because he really needed time to defend himself, but continued his salary. In those days, salaries were pretty trivial. Things went on for many years. There were older members of the faculty I had studied with who really didn’t have much contact with each other, partly because I think they may have been polarized about the Lattimore business. I remember having a lunch after George Boas had retired and Albright had retired, the two of them, and a couple of other people at lunch to get advice about something, and they both said, Albright being a conservative figure and Boas being the liberal one, “I’m sorry I haven’t seen so and so,”—George, Bill—in so many years. Anyway, there was obviously some community of interest once one got over the political slogans.

George, I think, saw real dangers for the faculty in this episode. Lovejoy had founded the American Association of University Professors back in the teens, and it was founded not to give people tenure forever, for no reason whatsoever; it was to give some political insulation to an academic so that he couldn’t be fired by a trustee or a regent who felt he didn’t like his politics. I think George felt, quite rightly, during the McCarthy era that academics were under the gun.

Someone who became my teacher, but who had been at Hopkins, was Ludwig Edelstein, a revered teacher. He had come here in the Institute of History of Medicine, came over to work with [Henry] Sigerist and [Erwin] Ackemecht. He’s part of the émigré generation. He left here to go to Berkeley, and he was a historian of ancient philosophy, a philologist and historian of ancient medicine, with very wide-ranging interests, and had been a junior person at Heidelberg when [Martin] Heidegger was professor of philosophy. He was very close to Erich Frank, a very distinguished philosopher. Edelstein would be another one of these figures in the émigré generation.

Well, he went to Berkeley. I’ll come back to Owen Lattimore in a minute. The university is not always courageous, but take these two cases. There was a famous case at Berkeley where a number of the faculty were not going to be renewed. Edelstein was a very distinguished person, had tenure. I’m trying to think—I have the legal brief upstairs. Edelstein, first of all, was the last person in the world I would think of as a Stalinist pawn. I mean, he really viewed the Russian
experiment as a gross and inhumane thing, as he viewed the Nazi experiment. So he had seen politics ruin a university, but he refused to sign the oath—this was the California loyalty oath—on the general principle that in teaching ancient philosophy, he would refer, at least, to Marxist interpretations of historical events, and he was not going to have someone tell him he could not refer to a figure, even a figure as significant as Marx.

So anyway, this meant that he was fired. This became a big lawsuit, probably one of the most important of the American lawsuits. Anyway, Hopkins invited him back at this point, which I think showed some courage. It was, I think, in large part because of people like Boas. He had a professorship here, no longer over at the medical school, in the History of Medicine, but professor of humanistic studies, which I think may even be my title, in arts and sciences, with his sort of home department, philosophy, although it could have been classic. He was wonderful and entertaining and extremely learned and eccentric in his own ways. But the university showed some courage there, and this was during the era, the height of the McCarthy era.

Now, what did they do with Owen Lattimore? They defended his—simply by putting him on leave, some people would say they took him out of the classroom and that was censorship. I think not. I think it was the humane thing to do while he had to defend himself in court. They kept up his salary. Lattimore had mixed feelings about Hopkins, partly because he’d been attacked so directly by colleagues, and, of course, he chose to go to Leeds. I think he went to England to teach for a number of years, and eventually came back to the Baltimore-Washington area. I talked to him at length, too, and he had, I think, a more detached view of Hopkins things. But it was a divisive issue, just as some faculty decided one way and some faculty the other, and students tended to line up this way, too.

Lattimore was an ardent bicyclist. A good friend of mine, who was a graduate student here, spent a lot of time bicycling with him. But I knew him partly because a graduate student in Romance languages, who was his niece, lived with him. As I say, Lattimore was a prickly person, but was indeed a scholar and was indeed a person who was abused in the press, abused before Congress and in congressional committee meetings. It was very different from the Alger Hiss case, which was the other big case of the era. I think that the university maybe didn’t look as
heroic as it might have, but I think it came out pretty well on the Lattimore issue. I just happened to be looking the other day at the Edelstein case.

Are we hitting the end of the tape there?

Warren: No, we still have some time to go. Do you need a break?

Macksey: I’m wondering. I did promise another phone call. [Tape recorder turned off.]

Warren: Let’s shift gears once more. Let’s talk about the Johns Hopkins University Press.

Macksey: Well, there’s a little history. Did I give you that? That’s what I was going to—

Warren: I was looking at it over here.

Macksey: I was going to—this is where I couldn’t find the original because I seemed to have lost them, but I know the fax of that. This is at the hundredth anniversary, so this is 1978.

Warren: Thank you.

Macksey: And I did something a little more recently, and I don’t think it’s here, on just the humanities at Hopkins, at the Hopkins Press. Yes, here it is. It was stuck here. A copy of—probably the letter never I mailed to you.

Warren: Talk to me about it.

Macksey: Okay. The press was obviously, as I said earlier, part of Gilman’s original plans, along with research and teaching, publication. And very earliest publications were not entirely, but largely starting major journals, the first journals in most of the fields in this country, *American Journal of Mathematics*, the—well, you’ll find all the stuff there, and the acronyms. The journal I’ve been associated with is *MLN*. That didn’t get under way until the tenth year, I think, till ‘86. We’ve had our centennial. All of them now are into second century. That was the first modern language journal in North America, the surviving one. These tended to be started by individual faculty members with a great stake.

*MLN* was started by—boy, it’s getting to me now. A. Marshall Elliot, who really came here and taught some Sanskrit before he got under way in Romance language curriculum. But the *American Journal of Philology*, *AJP*, a few years earlier, and that was the classical journal, and that was Gildersleeve’s journal. Of course, Gildersleeve had a very, very long life at Hopkins, so he covers a considerable era and wrote these wonderful “Brief Mentions,” as he called them in
back. They fortunately had been collected. I tried to collect a few of them in an article once. They’re extremely funny, and some of them are rather bawdy. But they’re comments on teaching classics, occasionally on reviews of books that have appeared, but often on issues.

So the press played, as I said, a vital role in the development of classics here. In chemistry. Newell Martin had a biology series. The Big Four at the medical school had access to new medical publications, and, of course, much later when the History of Medicine was established, there was also a Journal of the History of Medicine, which is still going, but which was started by Sigerist and Owsei Temkin and Edelstein, a wonderful generation of historians in medicine.

Warren: Am I correct in—was it the first university press in the United States?

Macksey: Well, if you state it a certain way, it’s the oldest surviving university press in North America. Cornell [University] started a press which got absolutely nowhere and floundered after a couple of years, and then was started up about twenty-five or thirty years later. So the Cornell Press really dates from the twentieth century, but it did have a brief life back there. So an ardent Cornell nationalist could probably make some case for Cornell Press, but I think the way the press states it is the oldest continuing press, university press.

The things they published were quite remarkable early and late. I get very tired from repeating myself, but in that thing about—well, both those things about the press, it talks a little about some of the initiatives work. One of the visitors in the very early years was [William] Thompson, Lord Kelvin. I don’t know whether he’d been named Lord Kelvin yet. He gave a remarkable series of lectures on the theory of light.

He had a great audience. Michelson and Morley, of the Michelson and Morley experiment, were in the audience, and he was one of the last people really to try to sustain the theory of the ether. Having given these lectures, they were almost immediately published by the press, because they used the stenographic method. They had, turns out it’s a very scarce, arcane book, but they got it out within a matter of a couple of months faster than anybody, short of Monica Lewinsky’s publishers got anything out or could get anything out today. The second edition I have in the other room. I’m sorry I can’t move around to pick up books, because I’m tied to the umbilical cord.
The Cambridge University Press published a much, much larger volume, because he attempted to answer the objections to ether theory, which is, of course, effectively and completely demolished by the Michelson and Morley experiment, which, in turn, was the impetus to Einstein, special and, since, the general theory of relativity. That kind of publication was really just on-the-spot publication.

Then there were the big projects, and the big projects took years and years. I mentioned the Spencer up there, the [unclear] Spencer, the first great American [unclear] editions. Penn did Shakespeare—Feness [phonetic]. But I think the press had—as I say, in its very early years, it wasn’t called a press, in fact; it was called the Publication Office. One of their jobs was getting out the journals, and some of these journals actually started up independently after the press had taken over the Publication Office. A. Marshall Elliot had a shed out in the back yard and he did binding and the shipping and whatnot, the fulfillment, from back there. So I think the significance in so many of the early publications was precisely to get these journals into use.

And then serial publications. The oldest of the history series was started by Adams and is still publishing away. Many of the other serials have expired shelf life. But I think, shorthand, you can certainly say the oldest university press in North America. Toronto came in a little bit after Hopkins.

But the life of the press, again it was not a wealthy operation, and it’s never been terribly well endowed, so it’s had to run in the black. You can’t do this every year. One of the reasons I think they expanded the publications we now have, I don’t know, close to fifty journals, and the journals division took quite a while. I don’t know whether this is still true. Well, I do know a little about the books there. But it earned back enough money so they could afford to lose some money on their monographs.

In terms of more recent pioneering, they got into online publications, Project Muse, which had some external support initially but now is on its own, and they put their journals on this. They don’t have them all on, but I think MLN, our journal, was one of the very first ones. This will impact hardcopy publishing in ways that not everybody yet understands. Hopkins Project Muse is a pioneer operation. They publish, of course, in many of the areas that you associate Hopkins research with—History of Ideas over a long period of time. They did not publish Lovejoy’s most
famous book, *The Great Chain of Being*, because that was a series of Harvard lectures, and Harvard published that. They published Lovejoy and Boas and Chinard and a lot of the people in the History of Ideas.

They published at other eras when our structuralist folks were here and we were having a lot of significant visitors in the structuralist and post-structuralist era. They were the first people to publish many of these authors, and they had a symposium they published, but they also published work by all these folks who were coming through, including Racal [phonetic], first publication in English, Georges Maundered [phonetic], Marist [phonetic]. Poulet had been published earlier, an old teacher of mine, very personally someone I’m deeply indebted to. They translated and published his work.

Warren: I need to turn the tape over.

Macksey: Okay.

[Begin Tape 2, Side 2]

Warren: When we first started talking about the press, you alluded to the fact that Gilman said in his inaugural address that he wanted to have a press. Gilman, in that address, in my opinion, seems to have envisioned the whole thing, what now exists.

Macksey: A lot of it. A lot of it. I tend to canonize figures too easily. Gilman served, what, twenty-five years, and I think the first half of his administration was remarkably forward-looking and prophetic. I’m not sure that all the Gilman years were that. I think he was, in many senses, ready to retire when he did. Of course, he went on and worked with Carnegie, was it? I mean, he had other productive things to do. But, yes, first of all, he had the leisure to do this sort of preliminary traveling around and talking with people. If you start a university, it’s not a bad idea to invest a couple of years doing that.

He clearly saw the—I forget his phrase now, about “to advance knowledge” and whatever, for the press, but he also saw things like the circular as, as he said, pictures of the horse in motion. In other words, research as it’s just going on. He certainly saw the power of the seminar method, seminary method. He was willing to take some chances on very young but brilliant faculty. He did most of these things, though, in probably the first half of his administration.
I wouldn’t sit down and do a formal accounting of all this, but some of the things he wanted to see come to pass didn’t. He wanted a major American author here. In one sense he had one in Lanier, although he probably didn’t recognize it, but he tried to get James Russell Lowell to come down. He spoke to Robert Browning at one point, several other British *homme de lettres* types. Those things didn’t develop as easily as they might have, and getting the modern languages going took him longer, probably, than he originally envisaged.

So there were some adjustments and some disappointments, I guess, too, but it’s remarkably forward-looking, what he began with as a blueprint. As I say, part of this is also because Hopkins, in his bequest, left very few specific instructions, so there was an opportunity to develop, so if it had to do with Gilman’s background at Yale and in California, he wasn’t very happy in California as president. But, yes, I think it’s fair to say that he was remarkably prophetic in some details. Everybody’s going to look a little foolish in the light of history, but I think in general he knew where he was going.

And fortunately, in the very early days he had the wherewithal. Now, where you can see money influencing things, or the lack of it, the railroad bonds were not the safest thing, the most secure investment that they had seen in the ’90s, and we damn near didn’t have a medical school, as I say, except for the Women’s Board, save for the Women’s Board.

**Warren:** So, today, Richard Macksey, how would you describe the personality of Johns Hopkins University?

**Macksey:** How it looks today?

**Warren:** Yes.

**Macksey:** A big order. It depends on whether you want the frog’s-eye view or the eagle’s-eye view, as the Germans say. I think that it has grown enormously in size. This can be measured by budget or by number of bodies. I think the arts and sciences graduate program, and engineering perforce, have both been very small and remain very small in numbers. Obviously medicine has grown enormously, and public health has grown enormously. We have operations like SAIS [School of Advanced International Studies] and the APL, things that one couldn’t have foreseen in the nineteenth century.
But what's its personality? Well, you know, it has areas that are richly endowed and doing very well. It has some large marshes of poverty, where money would make a difference. I say that even in the face of a lot of very aggressive endowment work in the last few years. I think the part of the personality that I hope is still there, it's of significance to me, it's not necessarily the sole determining characteristic of the personality, is its interdisciplinarity, its openness to movements across department and disciplines, ties between the divisions.

When I was first trying to do films as objects of study, but also some production courses, the production side was just impossible. Nobody was going to come up with enough money to make films. Students were borrowing. We went to APL, of all places, because they had a very good production operation. We did some of our work down there, some of the documentaries. We borrowed equipment. That's a side of Hopkins I kind of like, because you can occasionally cross lines, and it's very easy to move from arts and sciences to medicine, to nursing, to hygiene, and find that it's all a university.

At times there are rivalries and misunderstandings. My colleagues in East Baltimore, at the medical school, always refer to Homewood as the undergraduate school, and in terms now of numbers, they're absolutely right. When I came here, there were more graduate students than undergraduates. But it drives some of my colleagues at Homewood crazy because they think of themselves as a graduate school or several. On the other hand, the people at Homewood are, I think, unaware of how diverse the research activities are at the medical school, some of which are pure research, of changes in the curriculum over there, of a great deal of attention to teaching, probably more attention to teaching, in a certain way, at least, in the medical school than at Homewood. I don't know, [unclear]. So it isn't a totally transparent world, but the personalities still has these possibilities, I think, of interaction. That would be one characteristic.

I suppose another characteristic is because the departments are so small here at Homewood, people have to be in various ways versatile. You really can't afford somebody who is the world's greatest authority on the last eight years of the 16th century in Spain unless that teacher can do other things as well. So, for better or worse, that does encourage some of these movings around. Faculty can't afford super specialization. I think, thereby, we get better teachers. I hope. Some of the time, anyway.
Warren: Another word that you mentioned numerous times, you used the word mythology.

Macksey: Well, every institution has it. I remember a friend of mine, Irving B____, he's out at Oregon now and in Paris most of the time, was here in Romance languages. He had come here—he'd done his graduate degree at Yale, but he was himself a child of émigrés. He'd grown up in England, and he went back to Germany and taught, was a very junior faculty member at Frankfurt when the so-called Frankfurt school was in its glory there, and this involved people like Adorno, who's a fascinating, multifaceted figure. Poor Irving had to listen to us talking about our endless stories about Spitzer and Albright and Boas and Poulet and Starobinski, and one thing and another, and finally it dawned on me I just had never heard very much from Irving about the people I was interested in at Frankfurt, notably Adorno. I said, “You’ve had to suffer through our mythologies. Why no stories about Adorno?” And a very wry answer, Irving said, “I think for there to be a mythology, there has to be some residual affection.” [Laughter] Adorno was not an easy bird. I got to know him very distantly.

Warren: I don’t know that name.

Macksey: Theodore Adorno, A-D-O-R-N-O. He’s one of the founders of the so-called Frankfurt school of criticism, but he wrote on a wide range of subjects—literature, the sociology of literature, music, the theory of criticism. He was an émigré, came to the United States, taught in New York, was at the New School for a little while, but very quickly went back to Germany. Certainly one of the major critics of that second half of the twentieth century.

Warren: So there are Hopkins myths?

Macksey: Oh, sure, and many of them—I just read a whole issue, an extended article in the Princeton Alumni Weekly about local myths there, many of which I’d heard as an undergraduate, iconography, the chapel, about gifts and bequests.

Warren: What are the myths here?

Macksey: Well, you know, there are simple myths. Usually they have some ground in fact. One that comes to mind is the Hopkins Club sherbet, which somebody did investigate in the anthropology department, and I think found some evidence. But the myth, at least, or least the narrative to explain this is, some woman felt that she could civilize the place by leaving enough
money—and some people said it was Mrs. Marburg—leave enough money so that there would always be an *entremet*, always be sherbet served with a meal. It’s a minor thing, but you’ll hear that story over and over again.

As I say, mythology is a certain way of conveying knowledge, keeping traditions intact. Sometimes it’s more accurate in its way than certain kinds of history. But a great deal of oral history, I think, you’d probably have to admit, ventures into mythology. This is where beliefs begin to inflect the narratives.

There are certain myths about Hopkins: all undergraduate students are pre-med; there is no connection between graduate and undergraduate education; an interest in teaching is a disastrous career move. I’m taking some of the more unpleasant little myths, all which need to be examined, all of which have some perhaps germ of truth in them, like most myths may or may not be useful or may be benign or may be malign.

The ideas that we had about the lives of our professors is another area for mythology. As I say, many of the émigrés were genuinely eccentric people. Henry Sigerist—there’s a whole body of myths around him. I go not very often to a lunch club downtown on Hamilton Street, which had quite a few people from—well, some people from medical school, some people from Homewood, a lot of people from the press, the law professions [unclear]. Henry Sigerist was gone by the time I came, but he was famous for his learning. You tend to get myths about this, one which I suspect is a myth, although several people have told it to me as gospel. One was—I forget, I think it was 100 best canonical books. It may have been going back to Annapolis. It may have been one version of the canon from St. John’s or something, a bunch of books which included classics of East and West classified [unclear].

These gents—at that time it was a stag club—anyway, many of them were very cultivated lawyers and judges and doctors and so on. Anyway, everybody took a stab at this, and a number of them were professors, too, and came up with how many of these books have you actually read. The people who had come in at twenty or twenty-five were doing pretty well, and some a bit more, but Henry Sigerist came up with ninety-eight. He said, “However, I have to say that six of these books I read in translation.” I mean, you know, this is including the *Tibetan Book of the*
Dead and Lady Murasaki’s great novel. So I think the mythology of Henry Sigerist’s learning was fairly benign, but it may not have been all-for, as the lawyers say, the facts.

Warren: That’s great.

Macksey: He may well have said this. Whether it’s true is another question.

Warren: That’s a wonderful story. So what’s the most important lesson you’ve learned at Johns Hopkins?

Macksey: Oh, boy. Well, there are a lot of lessons I haven’t learned that are important. Don’t talk uninterruptedly for two or three hours, which is one I haven’t learned yet, but I think it’s an important lesson. That’s a little hard to say. I mean, I think I find that there are certain things that are hard to accommodate in [unclear] university. There are other things which are very congenial and very simple and couldn’t have anywhere else.

One of the things that—I mean, I certainly do believe there’s not much of a gap between real research and real teaching, despite the stories about the differences, that you need some research if you’re going to have any kind of interest in what you’re doing as a teacher, and the research tends to be a little stillborn unless you have some interest in communicating it to somebody. Now, some of my colleagues are wonderful teachers on the page, anyway, and do it that way. But this is just going back to the sort of platitudinous part of Gilman’s program, that it’s going to be an institution that did original research, but also was going to be an institution that trained other people and taught.

I don’t know, I went on about learning being more important than teaching when doing this thing about this chair, but I’d say that might be a lesson, too. Pay some attention to learning, because it’s so hard to predict. I think teaching, particularly the people who think all you need is a magnificent tape, and then you don’t need any teachers at all, well, even the best tapes are not interactive in the way that learning and teaching are interactive. You go into a class well prepared, and it will be dead before you start. You go into another class not prepared, and it will turn into a wonderful class. It has to do with the chemistry of interaction. I don’t recommend to my graduate students that they not prepare, just that sometimes if you let it happen, it will work. I think when I was very young, I think over preparation was a danger in the classroom to me, and I have certainly gotten beyond that.
Then I think of Curt Richter, who, again, probably should have had a Nobel Prize, great experimentalist, who came to Hopkins to work with John Watson, who got fired almost immediately, so he worked with other people, most of his life at the medical school, although he started at Homewood, a great experimentalist. He developed experiments which established a biological clock.

Anyway, Curt was a wonderfully shrewd critic of academic institutions, and he said the first point, which I think I’d almost endorse, he said, “The best parts of my learning didn’t come in the lecture hall and didn’t come in the laboratory even first; they came in the corridors talking to people.” The second thing was, he said the only other thing he generalized about his career was that he never served on a committee. I said, “How in the world did you pull that?” He said, “Well, it was much easier earlier,” but on one occasion it looked as though he would have to sit on a committee, and his friend Hal Cherniss, who had been here in classics, which had been at the institute at Princeton for years, and he said, “Harold got me a year at the institute, so I wouldn’t have to serve on a committee, then I came back.”

Now, for other temperaments, committees can be very invigorating. Something like the Press Committee, if it’s a real working committee, you learn a hell of a lot. But a great deal of our lives are spent, to be sure, doing things which probably neither advance knowledge nor educate anybody, committee jobs. I wouldn’t badmouth them. They have to be done, I guess. But somebody who may have other skills which are excellent as a scholar, as a teacher, even as a human being, may not have skills for committee work. The bigger institutions, places like Berkeley, seem to fractionate, the people who teach and the people who research and the people who serve on committees, and there’s a whole sort of community in some of these large institutions, professional committee persons.

So I think I wouldn’t exactly endorse, for me, Curt’s formula about those things being the two most important, but you do learn a lot in the corridors. You can even learn a bit, occasionally, on a committee, but not every committee. I enjoy some of them but some are really deadly.

Warren: How about your students? What do you want them to go away with? What’s the big lesson you want them to go away with?
Macksey: Well, the nice thing is, I’ve got different constituencies, so it’s a pretty wild generalization to take in undergraduates, graduate students in various departments, and medical students, nursing students, hygiene students. I see different versions of all these folk, and I think they have different agendas. I think there are certain things I would hope the medical students would learn that’s not always apparent in some of the earlier curricula, at least, and I would hope they would be, in both senses of the word, humane.

The undergraduates, it seems to me, are learning skills—how to read, how to write, how to think, certain other skills, skills in numeracy and a little bit of history. One would hope that they’d learn these things which would then allow them to continue to learn. That seems to me one of the hardest things to accomplish, and a lot of things flow against it. We don’t have a full free elective system, but students have quite a bit of freedom as undergraduates to put their curricula together. I see when we do the Phi Beta Kappa panning of the schools, we go through all these transcripts, the cutoff point is very arbitrary and mechanical, somebody with a 3.72 average or something, a hundredth of a percent. I think that I do regret, looking at some of the transcripts of the people who have done the very best, they’ve selected their courses in order to do so well and they have rather narrow education. So my instincts are broader rather than narrow, but I’m not sure this can be achieved by having a lot of core courses or a lot that required this and required that. I think ideally education ought to be the stimulation of curiosity, and that ought to lead to people also taking risks.

Many of the undergraduates now, perhaps more than in the past, are extraordinarily cautious about pushing out a little. So we do have these areas of distribution and things, and try to encourage them to do that. None of these things work ideally, but we do have courses which are called writing-intensive, where they’ve actually got to write something and somebody’s supposed to read what they write and critique it. Some of our students can talk very well and literally begin to look like remedial writing cases as undergraduates.

Graduate students, it’s a somewhat different educational problem. They’ve usually begun to find, at least, the area in which they want to work, and they need, I think, to keep their eyes open to the adjacent departments that’s built into our system in the center. But I think I’ve worked with people and I’ve directed dissertations in about six departments, and maybe more,
I’m not sure—when I say directed, I’ve been a first or a second reader. And at times the people stay a little too close to their departments. You can find people who are doing literary topics, let’s say nineteenth century literature, that really need to have some experience with social history, with institutional history, with a lot of things which go just outside the department. They have a good dissertation director, you have a department where the director of graduate studies gives people occasionally a little nudge and you can keep these things open, but it’s similar to, but not identical with the need of the undergraduate to spread out a little.

I think probably too little attention is spent on quality of writing at both the undergraduate and graduate level, and this is true of editing—every so often I lament books that we publish at the press that look underedited to me. Doesn’t happen every day. It’s a pretty conscientious [this is the word he used] press. But just because somebody’s a tenured professor doesn’t mean she or he can write without getting into some horrible binds, can write with any clarity.

So those are things that I think are important to carry away, and the other thing probably for the graduate students is, they’ve got to have a little sense of vocation. I mean, some people, probably I was the case of somebody who drifted, but certainly if you’re going to make a career of medicine, either at the lab bench or at the bedside, you’ve got to have a vocation or you’re going to be in deep trouble.

I think if you’re doing a graduate degree today, which is against the grain economically and, one might say, even demographically, you still especially need a vocation. You have to be doing something you find some delight in. You have to have, I think, some sense that it’s important. I said you have to. I think in order to be someone that the world can live with, a family can live with, all that, I think you have to enjoy your work. You also have to recognize the sacrifices that get made. Families of academics are not always the happiest families, because other people—it’s like an extended family. Other people are making demands all the time. That’s certainly true in medicine. It’s certainly true in nursing. So those kinds of self-awareness issues, I think, are important for graduate students.

**Warren:** Explain to me what you’re doing in East Baltimore.

**Macksey:** What I’m doing in East Baltimore. Well, it’s a number of different things. One of the calls I didn’t return, I’ve got to do something about was my colleague Gert Brieger. We have a
course that reads literary texts. This is an elective course for students from medical school and some from nursing and hygiene who come in. But about six years ago—I lose track now—there was a general revision of the curriculum on a Robert Wood Johnson grant. About every twenty years, medical schools search for some new panacea, and at one point it was studying psychiatry. At one point it was going to be molecular biology. There have been various ways in which people have looked for panaceas.

But this most recent attempt was to have some humanistic studies built into the curriculum, and the largest single component there is something called Physician in Society, really a casserole of courses. All the students have to take the course. Under the original idea, it ran for four years. We’ve had to lighten up somewhat in the clinical years. But it would then be taught in units, so it was not a whole year on one single topic, but included the history of medicine, medical ethics, and medical anthropology, some medical economics, which Gerry Anderson did very well, things that relate to the psychology of physician and patient, all those things that are very elusive, and also some literary texts that raise questions about illness and disease and suffering.

As a result, there’s a lot of experiment, and when we started out, it was a true delight, because we had so many faculty. The faculty were volunteers from both the basic science and the clinical faculty, and we had two faculty members in every seminar, fifteen people. It was a delight partly because it was a place where the students, the incoming students—we started out with first-year students—could get to know each other. Gradually we had to spread this thinner and thinner as you get to four years and people couldn’t just go on teaching forever. They had other demands on them. They were down to one faculty member. We had to enlarge the seminar, double the size of the seminar. Then we put in some units which were elective, in other words, at a given point you could do medical narratives or you could do something on medical economics or you could do something else.

But I think it still honors the general idea of the grant, which they’re now using in other medical institutions, that the training of the physician was more than the enzyme of the week or even good hands-on clinical experience. It involved things that had to do with communication and an ability to recognize other people’s narratives and help them edit their narratives. So that’s what goes on over there.
Before all this, we did have a program which is still going, which takes a lot of time, called the Office of Cultural Affairs, which is totally noncurricular and involves music, literature, the humanities generally, in a medical context. We try to have visitors. We have topics. We’re doing something next term on Cultures in Collision. We’re running a film program this summer with speakers [unclear]. They’re trying to write up the brochure which should have been out last week.

So that program is noncurricular. We hope that the medical students will come in and residents will come in, not as many as probably the enthusiasts would like, but we also get patients and we get the general public, people in the community. So that’s very different and noncurricular. The we have symposia and things of that sort. I don’t know how to solve this problem. I’m not going to solve it.

So that’s not perhaps an explanation of what I do day to day, but one of the things I was supposed to call Gert Briege, I discovered [unclear], and I imagine that’s probably about planning for next fall and what’s happening to the film brochure and other things.

Warren: I know I have taken up much, much, much of your time.

Macksey: No, I just hope I don’t sound too weary. I don’t like to be weary in the classroom.

Warren: You don’t at all. So my last question to you, is there anything you would like to talk about that we haven’t talked about?

Macksey: Oh, boy. I’ll think of these things on the stairs, of course. Well, as I say, great personalities, I really find, if I think about Hopkins, I think about people, and it’s always impossible to talk about the place [unclear] people we haven’t talked about, and some of them were famous and some were less than famous.

Warren: Let’s not leave anybody important out. Is there somebody you’d like to—

Macksey: Well, I’ve been fortunate in having some remarkable teachers. One tends to re-edit and mythologize the past, the only true paradise is the ones we’ve lost, Proust says. People are always talking about the golden age at Hopkins when I was first here, and I have to say there never was a golden age. I guess I have to say that to myself at times what a wonderful era the émigré years were, they were wonderful and they had their constraints, too. But as I say, the people I was able to teach with, lots of the people who taught me, but also the people I’ve been able to teach with, working with folks who came into these sort of quasi-core courses. This was
an education for me. Fortunately, even though some of them have gone elsewhere, like Greg Nagy, we can keep in touch. Some of them are dead and we’re not in very close touch.

I think that Hopkins is not just a compilation of famous names. There are more than one can imagine for the size of the place. Albert Hammond was an absolutely wonderful teacher in the philosophy department, who was quite stubborn about not being a widely published scholar. He spent his time instead, some of it, working for the Sun, and spent some of the time going to the racetrack. He was an ardent—followed the ponies. Gave up a year or two to follow the ponies.

But Albert I got to know fairly well. After he retired, he continued to be fairly active. We had some dissertations come up. We were involved together in a course for the News-Letter people—the undergraduate publications were so awful we felt we had to do something, but there was no easy solution, but we ran sort of a quasi-journalism course, since Albert knew everybody in the press here in town. We’d usually have a lunch together. He was flying back and teaching at Chapel Hill [unclear]. I’d pick him up and we’d have lunch with whoever it was a city editor from the Sun or the News-American or whatever.

Albert was a genuine phenomenon. After he retired, he actually published a couple of books, an interesting one, one very informal book and one that he could have written a good deal earlier but just chose not to. I think it was part of the strength of Hopkins that they cherished Albert—never got paid very much, but I think he was honored by people he respected, his colleagues and his students. So a place needs some people who are not famous, too, and Albert is famous at racetrack circles and the people who knew him there. They made a special issue of Sports Illustrated when he retired from Hopkins. Versatility, that’s the story. He did a great deal of teaching. The seminar room for the philosophy department is known as the—they call it the Boas Room and it’s the Hammond Society, is the ongoing [unclear].

Warren: I’ve heard of that. I am at the end of my tape, and I’ll bet you’re at the end of your energy level. I thank you so much.

[End of interview]