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## Minor Myers III

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Portrait of a Collector Interview with Minor Myers III

Transcribed by Kate Browne

BEGIN TRANSCRIPT

**Meg Miner:** Well, good morning. My name is Meg Miner, and it is March 12, 2016. I am in Groton, Connecticut or is it GrAHton—

**Minor Myers:** Groton.

**Miner:** Groton. Groton. See, I knew I would have a 50/50 chance. Groton, Connecticut Public Library. On a sabbatical project exploring the collecting interests, the influences of former president Minor Myers Junior and with me today is, please, sir, introduce yourself.

**Myers:** I'm Minor Myers the third. And Minor Myers Junior was my dad.

**Miner:** Great. And tell us—tell us something about yourself. Let's just start by talking about you and where you grew up and how much time you spent in central Illinois and all that.

**Myers:** So, I was born here. Not in Groton by across the river. One town west in New London. And stop me if I'm going on about stuff you don't want to know.

**Miner:** No, I think it's all interesting.

**Myers:** But my dad taught at Connecticut College. He got there in 1968. And my mom graduated from there in 1969. And not long after she basically met my dad around the time she was graduating and they kept in touch and it was a collecting interest, in fact, that sort of—at least my mom can tell you more about this.

**Miner:** Sure.

**Myers:** My mom lived outside Worcester in a town called Charlton, a town outside Worcester—Charlton, Massachusetts. And that isn't far from living history museums. So, it's about an hour from here to there and so they went to visit there together and, you know, it's just kind of—I went there as a kid but I don't remember it well. But I always imagined that my house always looked like that because of my mom's tastes and my dad's tastes in collecting stuff. You know, decorative arts. I don't know. That was there at least the genesis story for me.

**Miner:** Yeah, sure.

**Myers:** So, born here my brother was born here. And then in 1984 when I was 6—and I guess my dad would have been 44. 42. 42. We moved to Geneva, New York and he became provost at Hobart William Smith College and we lived there until 1984 to 1989. And in 1989 we moved to Bloomington where he became president of IWU. And we lived there until he died in 2003. And so I lived in Bloomington full time—that's the only place I knew.

**Miner:** I was going to say you were so young here.

**Myers:** Well, 11. So I don't have many memories from around here. Very episodic, weird ones. But I have memories of living in upstate New York. I was there playing baseball. And I don't know, first kid memory stuff. And I was 11 when we moved to Bloomington. And I moved away to boarding school when I was 14. So from 1989 to 1992 I was all Bloomington, all the time but from there I was always away at school. But I would come home for holidays and in the summer and just be kicking around. Bloomington was always home base. But I wasn't there sort of watching dad on the weekends and stuff like that. In a way, I missed that, but I was off doing other stuff.

**Miner:** Well, he was probably travelling a lot and stuff.

**Myers:** He was off traveling. Absolutely.

**Miner:** That's what our presidents do.

**Myers:** But he did a lot of stuff—going to the—what was it—the third Sunday. Every third Sunday that's where he was.

**Miner:** So would you do any of that with him?

**Myers:** I would tag along. I remember—guess I don't remember it more in Geneva. We—my brother and I—learned to play baseball in Geneva and I remember my dad didn't like sports. I mean, it's not that he disliked sports, it was never interesting to him. And I remember coming home to tell him when I was in first grade. Dad, you might be angry, but I like baseball. And he wasn't angry, and I said I want to collect—I like baseball cards. And I thought he was going to be, like, no, this is ridiculous, don't do that. But baseball cards became a huge art of our lives. A huge part of his life. Because we would drag him to all these baseball things.

**Miner:** You got him hooked on baseball?

**Myers:** Well, no, he never became hooked. He was still just hooked on us.

**Miner:** Oh, okay.

**Myers:** And by virtue of the hook was dragged to all these baseball card things. You know, waiting in line in at, you know, there would be baseball card shows. I don't even know if they do this anymore.

**Miner:** Yeah.

**Myers:** Baseball—I think baseball cards had their moment and that moment has passed. It was a little shop in Geneva where we lived and we would go there and buy, you know, two packs of cards, our favorite card or this old card or this is my favorite player and I want to whatever. And, you know, it became—we didn't realize what was happening, but it was a collection like all the

other collections he had. Here's how to keep track of what you got. And you should think about do you like collecting all the Yankees cards or do you like collecting all of these Hall of Famer cards? And thinking about structuring your interests. That was what we did. One thing that he never got into that he never—he never sold anything. You may know this—he bought—he acquired stuff—cookbook collections, model trains, stamps and coins and stuff. And a lot of people who do that acquire and then deaccession. And he never deaccessioned. He didn't sell. Just—for reasons that I think he wasn't in it as—he liked the idea of having, like, a British Museum style of collection. Like, I've got a little bit—you know, when it comes to coins of the Near East, I've got a compressive if not museum-quality collection. I can tell you a little bit about why the coin is shaped like that. Or I can show you one. And for him I think putting the collection together was having that encyclopedic style of collection and the idea of getting rid of one, then it's less encyclopedic.

**Miner:** Why would you do that?

**Myers:** So it wasn't—he wasn't, like, I'm going to buy ten of these thinking they've going to go up in value. I don't think he—even if he was interested in that he probably didn't even trust his own—I don't know what's going to go up in value I just know what's interesting. So, we did the baseball cards—now that I think about this and just in the context of collecting, I was very into—this even started when we lived her in London. I was very into Star Wars. Like most little boys were back then.

**Miner:** The rule back then.

**Myers:** And collecting the Star Wars action figures I thought was the best thing in the world. And Dad could get into—he liked Star Wars too. At least he liked doing Star Wars with me. And when we moved—I don't remember having sort of—when we moved to Bloomington I didn't like it. I liked it when we got there, but I didn't want to move. These aren't my friends and—I don't remember having that feeling when we moved to New York. I don't know, I'm six. Whatever. Going to a new school. Sounds fun. But I remember, you know, we had some system of I would get one of these acting figures every whatever—to put my—and he went—I didn't know this when it happened. He went and bought them all so that when we moved away from the toy store where we were doing this, he could keep doing that, that project going. And I've always interpreted that as, boy, he wanted me to be happy. But, you know, as an adult looking back, he kinda wanted to have a complete collection in the house himself.

**Miner:** So he played with your toys?

**Myers:** He didn't play with them so much as he liked the idea of yeah, we have a Boba Fett and we have the Luke Skywalker with the light saber and without the light saber. He's got a full collection, my son. I lost them all. I didn't take care of them. But I can sort of see the habits of the collector in the toy patterns. Other—I guess early—we're still talking about early stuff. One of the things he was always into his coins. And again, he as never interested in collecting museum quality stuff. He'd rather have ten things that were—ten coins that were in such bad

shape but you could still see what they were. So, I've got that, uh, Indian head nickel and I've got that buffalo nickel and I've got everything. I've got them all. Even if they're all, you know, almost unrecognizable. But so he would buy—he would often buy these lots from coin dealers where the coins were so—in such bad shape that you couldn't sell them individually. So, they'd just be kind of bulk coin lots. And he love 'em because you can just go through and really fill out the collection that way. But he also liked gardening. And I would sometimes—this is one of my few Geneva memories. I was into pirates and treasure and stuff like that. And the idea of where does treasure come from, where you do find it. I read *Treasure Island* and the idea of treasure sounds exciting. So, anyway, one day were working and he said dig over there. And I'm over there digging with a trowel and I hit something. This box. Dad, Dad, oh my God look at this box! And it's a wooden box full of coins. It was probably just a wooden cigar box. But I was slack jawed with excitement about it. But it was, again, I can see this as an adult, but he planted one of these packages of bulk coins—

**Miner:** So you could have the joy of discovery.

**Myers:** Yeah, yeah. So, I mean, that—the style of stuff he as interested in collecting. He wrote some stuff when he knew he didn't have a lot of them left he started writing some things just about his life.

**Miner:** I would love that.

**Myers:** But one of the things he described one of his interests is bottom feeding. Meaning the kind of thing I'm talking about with the coins, right? I would rather have ten—the coin dealer doesn't think he can sell them, but they're just what I want. I don't care about the condition of the coin. I care about having the complete set. And when you approach coin collecting that way—I mean, you know, putting some in the ground—that doesn't cost anything.

**Miner:** Wow.

**Myers:** So—

**Miner:** So he didn't to clean them up or try to do any major identification on them? It's just the thrill of discovery.

**Myers:** He definitely cared what they were. But I think you could sort of figure that out without a lot of cleaning. I don't recall what kinds of treatments or not one needs to do to old coins. I know with furniture and stuff he didn't—he liked the idea of polish. Polish is the wrong word, but, I don't know, the kind of grime.

**Miner:** Like the patina over time?

**Myers:** Exactly. So the idea of refinishing furniture or reconditioning furniture was not—

**Miner:** Great.

**Myers:** And I don't know, I guess I had some interest in the things that a kid would be interested in. so he was interested in coins and stamps, which, you know, I think in that era were more widely—bigger interest than they are now. There were columns in newspapers about stamp and coin collecting. I guess that's like baseball collecting I guess. I remember he taught me how to take a stamp off an envelope to collect it. So you wet the envelope with water and the stamp eventually—the glue will come off. And to dry it, you can put it backwards on a mirror. And so we had these mirrors in the basement that I would put stamps on. Not collectable stamps. Twenty-nine US Postal Service stamps.

**Miner:** But practice.

**Myers:** Yeah, practice that probably never got used as a coin collector—stamp collector. But, you know, I remember sort of sitting there doing this stuff with him. And I don't—and I still don't have the passion for collecting tangible things that he does. Maybe that's now because I live in New York City and I think the kind of collecting he liked requires costless storage space. Something one does not have in New York City is costless storage space.

**Miner:** Especially with three young children.

**Myers:** Of course.

**Miner:** And all of the things you have to store for them. Wow. Yeah.

**Myers:** So I guess all of that stuff is actually pre-Bloomington stuff. Things we were still interested in. Baseball and things when we came to Bloomington.

**Miner:** One more thing about baseball. You said he didn't like sports. So he didn't play baseball?

**Myers:** No. he'd play in the back with us. We'd say dad, I need to get better at baseball. You're going to stand there and throw it back at me. And he'd do it. He could stand there and catch the ball and throw it. Not—he didn't look like an All-Star when he did it. He was proud of that and he would—he would do any sport with us. He would do any sort of collecting thing, project with us, but it was out of love for us not out of any passion he had. He would go to the football games. He ended up—my brother and I got really into basketball after we left baseball. Basketball was obviously was and is a big thing at IWU. So is baseball. And going to those games was always fun for him as sort of a school activity. But sitting there and sort of studying what play are they going to run next held no interest for him.

**Miner:** Interesting.

**Myers:** Didn't play golf. Didn't understand golf. He played tennis in part I think because my mom played tennis. He'd rather not—if we all went on a trip for a weekend and he happened to be by himself, not that I ever think that happened, he would not watch any sports. He would not play any sports left to his own devices. So now that---on the theme of collecting as kids and I don't know—I doubt this is so much hereditary as just environmental. We saw how he collected

things. And we started a collection that we developed and had kind of going gangbusters was pets. So we had at one point, I don't know, eight different snakes and two lizards and four turtles. And the basement of the house we had in Bloomington was partially finished and had this wall of—they were designed as bookshelves, but we put aquariums there. It was just snake, lizard, turtle, snake, snake, snake, snake. And part of why were—part of I remember having these conversations. Dad, I don't want to move. I don't want to leave Geneva. He said, well, I got a phone book from Bloomington,. Let's—anything you want to look up. Let's see what the pet stores are like. So in the *Yellow Pages*, a page and a half of pet stores and some place in Champaign that had in there that specialized in snakes. I might—we'll do well here in central Illinois.

**Miner:** So I misunderstood—you said that in the basement in New York—

**Myers:** No, the basement in Bloomington.

**Miner:** Okay. But you already had an interest in pets or was that the lure?

**Myers:** We had an interest in pets—most of the pets we had—I remember catching animals in the backyard. I remember catching a snake in a bucket. I can't remember what else we had. We definitely had hamsters and gerbils. Definitely had turtles. It was—funny—another story. And again, the facts may be lost here and the details may be lost in the mists of time. But Hobart William Smith as many schools do owned land. People give it to the school. And one place not far from where we lived the college had a pond. And we had this—I don't know what you call it. Two sticks with a net that runs in between and two people can walk into the water and sort of catch everything.

**Miner:** Yeah.

**Myers:** And he said, you know, we're going to go and check out these nets. And this was just extraordinary. But again, to us, looking back on it was just collecting poor little animals that had the bad luck of being in that pond that day.

**Miner:** It was extraordinary to whom? It was extraordinary to him then?

**Myers:** Oh, sorry. To him, I don't think so. None of this was—all of this was a way of showing a kid the magic of collecting. But, I see you're interested in this, but let me show you how to do more. I think he could see for himself, you know, I like books. Here's how to do book. I like coins. Here's the coin shop, you go to the coin shop. Here's where you find pets if you like pets. And you know, he had these painter buckets we'd fill up with tadpoles and frogs and turtles and eels and all this—it was just mind-blowing. The kinds of things you see in books but that you don't expect to see in real life. So we had these kinds of things, but I don't really remember going to pet stores in Geneva. But I do remember having these aquariums filled with stuff we caught. But in Bloomington it became I'm saving up my money to get that corn snake or whatever. That painted turtle. That box turtle. So we really had that going for a while. But we never had—we

had a cat for a while. My mom has another cat that she's had shortly before my dad died. She sort of found it. It walked into the backyard. But for most of my life we didn't have a dog or a cat as a pet. All this stuff is, to me, is a window into how my dad viewed collecting things. But refracted through the interests of a kid.

**Miner:** Sure.

**Myers:** The stuff—there are things that we never really—based on when I became an adult and when he died. And not a lot of gap between. You know, I was 25 when he died. And I graduated from law school. You know, I was kind of done with my schooling in 2013. And he died in July. And the kinds of things that one would—even the things I would think about as an adult to ask him I just never got to ask him. I don't know the answers to the questions. And so for example, I as a child had no interest or even understanding one would have an interest in furniture. Decorative arts. Porcelain. This just seemed bothersome. You know, you can't sit on it. You can't play with it. You can't do anything with it. You have to, you know—I didn't get it. And now that I have—I mean, the commitment to that kind of thing seems all the more extraordinary to me now that I have these little kids. I'm just squeegeeing vomit off of everything I my house. And you can't sit on—they never had stuff that was covered in a sheet or plastic. It was all a part of life. But I couldn't sit on anything that could be—my mom has a lot of—when you go to her house, you'll see it's all the same stuff. A lot of the same stuff. But she's made some concessions to being her age. I want a chair I don't mind sitting in.

**Miner:** For a long time.

**Myers:** Yeah.

**Miner:** The difference between art and comfort.

**Myers:** I think that—my sense is that he may have been interested in other stuff, but books overtook all of his other interests. And he had the stamps and the coins and the furniture and had musical instruments. But book would be—you know, books was what he liked. And I could kinda get the interest in books as a kid. It's not—it's not one I had myself. I have books because it reminds me of my dad but book collecting is not something that I'm passionate about in any way except or, you know, it's revisiting an old ice cream parlor that you would have gone to with a parent. Books is something important to my dad.

**Miner:** Do you remember music at all playing?

**Myers:** I remember we had a—we had an upright piano in Geneva. This was before we had a harpsichord. I didn't play the harpsichord. He didn't always—when did he get that? 1998, 1999 I'm guessing. And it was a fifteen-year work in progress. He was always messing with it. Replacing this part of that part. So, that was never something that I touched. He'd say come play it but, you know, he loved having it. It's part of the keyboard collection. And—but so I took piano lessons. I remember doing that. And I took piano lessons in New York I guess from grade 1



to 5. I don't remember doing it that much. But I remember my piano lessons. I remember doing it all the time in Bloomington. So 6, 7, 8<sup>th</sup> grade. And then when I went away from school I was, like, do I have to keep doing the music lessons when I go? And I never—I remember my mom as being like, no, you don't have to do the music lessons. My dad liked music. But I don't have the recollection or maybe this is how a kid interprets what happens as coming from him. And then, so I got to boarding school. No music, no music, no music. And this will be a recurring theme in the story of my life. Last year, I said, you know, maybe I'd like to take some music lessons. And the boarding school I went to happened to have a harpsichord.

**Miner:** Oh my gosh.

**Myers:** And I took lessons with the person who did that. He was an organist. And I think I had this sense of this is the way I've been—I don't live at home anymore and this is a nice way of connecting with my dad and I'm starting to scratch because I had these piano lessons.

**Miner:** Right.

**Myers:** And I went to college and that probably happened that was probably for four months of high school. When I went to college no music at all. Went to law school. Again, last year of law school I said I want to take piano. And this was before my dad got sick. I want to take piano lessons. This started in 2002. So I took piano lessons with a kid at the music school. He was younger than me. I had a great time doing it. I remember talking to Dad. And at the time I was getting more into music—you know, we listened to music throughout our youth that he just found stomach-turning. You know, sort of 1980s rock music. Guns n' Roses.

**Miner:** Sure.

**Myers:** That kind of sort of loud music that he just—they're saying the same thing over and over. How can you like that? And I didn't really have any interested in—he liked sort of art music. You know, baroque, classical, romantic. He didn't like contemporary—not just rock music, he didn't like contemporary compositions or weird stuff. And when I was in law school, I don't know what happened, but in my last year of law school. Again, this was before he was sick. I said, you know, talking to a friend of mine and he said I like this opera. Okay, let's listen to it. I had taken some music appreciation class at some point. If you want to graduate from high school, you have to take this class. So I at least knew some tunes. I like that. So I started listening to some opera. I started listening to horn concertos, Mozart concertos, clarinet concertos, violin concertos. Dad, this isn't as bad as I always thought. And then, you know, he'd—I started playing the piano again. Taking these lessons. And he gave me this book for Christmas. This is the last Christmas we had for him. But he gave me this book. And I don't know if this is—one of many questions I would have asked him. I think it was one a book that he used—but it's calling *Playing the Piano for Pleasure* by a guy who worked for the New Yorker. Called, I believe, Charles Cook. I could be wrong about the details. It's, like, if you like playing the piano, here's how to weave it into your daily schedule. No one's too busy. You can make the time. And here's a way to approach improving a particular piece without—it's great to go get a piano teacher, but if you're

doing it yourself working day after day after day. Here's how to do it. And, again, it fit the book. I can even see now it fits in his—all right, if you want to play these eight pieces as part of your repertoire. If you want these eight stamps as part of your Soviet stamp collection this is how to put it together. So, in the last year of his life we started to have these—a connection on music. Like a shared, you know, we'd always gotten along very well. Like friends who had problems with their father. Never had that. But he always had these interests that I was, like, oh my God Dad, come on. Can we do something else? We liked going to museums and things together. But he's, like, I'm going to the book store. And I'd be, like, all right, all right, I'll wait outside. But music, you know, at that point it looked like a shared interest that we both really had. He'd tell me, go listen to this. You'll like this, you'll like that. And then going through all his old stuff I found when he was at Carleton College, he had a radio program about—it was called The World of Opera. I still have some recordings about it. I like to think that maybe he was getting to roughly the same point of life he was thinking geez, I can't believe it. So I remember—this is the serendipity of life, but he was very sick by the summer of 2003. And I was wrapping up law school. And I had—when he got sick in February, I just sort of ready to drop out. I'm not going to law school anymore. But then he was, like, just go and wrap it up. So I went back to law school where people just leave all the time. People would leave to just go and work on senate campaigns. It was just a normal thing to do. So being there and not was a normal thing to do so I went back and did my exams. And I had been getting into opera at the time for that year. And he knew that I was going to go work as a lawyer in New York the following year. And he knew he probably wasn't going to be around. And he said, well, for your graduation, I want to get you a subscription to the Metropolitan Opera for the following year. And that was great. And he helped me pick. Go see Boris Gudunov. Don't go see that.

**Miner:** Oh, how fun.

**Myers:** But Boris Gudunov wasn't playing that year. These are the right you're going to want to start with. And that summer I—the thing you do the summer after law school is you study for the bar exam. Normally, you go law school and you stay in the place you went to law school or you go to where you're going to work. But instead of doing that with all my classmates, I said I'm just going to study for it. So I was in Illinois for the summer. But the Metropolitan Opera does sometimes—I don't know if they still do it, they but staged opera in the park. And central park and the orchestra would be on the stage and just walk up and do their part and walk off. They did two in the course of the week. One one week and one the next and so, and my dad said, you know, you gotta go. You should go hear—this is wonderful. Fly out there. Take a week. And I did, and that's when I serendipitously met my wife.

**Miner:** Oh, my goodness.

**Myers:** And I flew back. And she—I was, like, you never know, but she seems pretty special this person I met. And she came and she got a chance to meet dad before.

**Miner:** Did she?

**Myers:** But it was just, you know, one chapter in my life was starting when the other was about to end.

**Miner:** Also because of a collecting interest.

**Myers:** Yeah, yeah in a way. So I don't know—music—it's funny now, music—I still—the same pattern of every three and a half years I decide I'm going to pick that up again. So, I did that and that's sort of the pattern of my life. I worked for a federal judge a few years later and I did it then. And when I first got married and I went to Rochester from New York and the school here is amazing and I should and I did. And then I just last fall started taking piano lessons again. But in conjunction with my daughter now. 5, she's about to be 6 and I guess 6 is the age when I started taking piano lessons. And I don't know, maybe I was a six year old that inspired more confidence in my parents. I can't believe that's true that my daughter does in me. But my parents just said go practice. And I just sort of did regular piano lesson. I don't know how much you know about music schools. It's the Suzuki method that's—I didn't do Suzuki anything, piano. But as I was looking into this my daughter loves music. And when she was 4, we started talking about music. I had a friend who had a very happy experience at a local Suzuki school with cello. And my daughter—I'm tall, my wife is tall. My daughter is tall. She has a body that is sort of perfect for holding a large instrument. She liked it. And we've been doing that and the practicing is just totally different than I remember. My mom and my dad were totally uninvolved. A different era of parenting. The Suzuki method—I had to go—they encourage this kind of mad parenting that's kind of the craze now. I had to go, when I started, I had to get my own instrument. I don't play the cello. And I had to take ten weeks of lessons myself. I had to go to a group lesson—her group lesson without her. I had to go to her private lesson without her for ten weeks. And I had three lessons a week on cello. And it was just for her to learn how to how to play the cello. Oh yeah, I see my day practice cello every day. Dr. Suzuki says only practice on the days you eat meaning make it part of your daily habit. So the cello—I said I'm going to do this with her. And I go to every one of these lessons. And when we drive up here, two things we have to jam in the back the car the dog and the cello.

**Miner:** Is the dog as big as the cello?

**Myers:** The dog takes up more space—she's a Lab. So she needs—she takes up more space than the cello does. But I do—I spend a lot of my week, you know, doing cello with my daughter. But she loves it. And one of my goals has been—I resented doing piano when I was doing it as a kid. and now, it's the kind of thing—it's a common problem now I know, why was I such a dunce? Why didn't I just do it and I'd be happy now playing the Beethoven sonata instead of plunking through it? So one of my goals is to make it—find—make it fun for her. It isn't always fun but like in sports where the coach is, you know, your friend I don't know I like to think it's the kind of thing my dad would be happy about.

**Miner:** That's she's involved in music.

**Myers:** Yeah, that she likes it the way I he liked it. My, my father-in-law, her grandfather—my daughter's grandfather. And we were walking the oldest daughter, the cello player. St Patrick's day or something parade goes by and he says those are bagpipes. And she says I want to learn how to play the bagpipes. Which is the sort of thing you imagine a young Minor Myers Junior saying. So I don't know, music is still, music is still a big part of my life and I think it's the inheritance of my dad.

**Miner:** And his presence in your life. And you said your mom plays too?

**Myers:** No. The music in her life is solely how I want to talk about books. You know, it's like, it's not my thing, but it really reminds me of a deep passion of Dad's. I don't think she listens to music but a little bit. But not really.

**Miner:** Did your dad share any of his books with you? I mean, try to get you involved in looking at things with him when he got something new or old-new?

**Myers:** Yeah, I mean, it wouldn't be—he definitely tied to spark out interest. Definitely not in the way that this is new. The theme I remember form when I was older was cookery books. He had this upstairs that was filled with, you know, look at this, this is ninety-two ways to make Yorkshire pudding. But he was fascinated by having a comprehensive book that cooking was not always something they learned by book. Look, here's how people first passed recipes and Industrial Revolution and everyone started cooking more in different ways. Ethnic cuisine. He was fascinated by that. Look, here's a book I got about Yorkshire pudding. There was no hope that was ever going to do anything. But what he would do is find things he knew we were already interested in. history, political science in college. Oh, we're adding John Locke's *Second Treatise* on government. It's really cool. Oh, look, I have this edition on Locke that came from XYZ. And, you know, there are various copies of Locke, or Thomas Jefferson had that his library and Alexander Hamilton had it in his library, and James Madison did. And so if you think about the founding influence that you can see—all right, that's cool dad. And he would try and say look how interesting book collecting can be. And we would sort of nod and say, all right, I'm going to watch the college basketball game. So, you know, the passion for the tangible thing was one he definitely tried to show us he show us this is why I find it interesting.

**Miner:** But he didn't make you—

**Myers:** I don't know what made—I think it was a kind of a fascination with the Metropolitan Museum and the British Museum and the idea of the encyclopedia. I think that's part of why he loved the library so much and the library at IWU is kind of something that he worked on and for so long and thought was such an important developing place. But in terms of the collecting gene, I mean it was there, right? The baseball cards and the Star Wars figures and the pets and stuff. But the fascination with books just didn't rub off.

**Miner:** Did you ever do anything with him with trains?

**Myers:** As a kid, yeah. That was, that was fun. I mean, I think in the, you know, he did not collect trains the way he collected other things. He like—trains for him in the 70s and 80s, he stopped doing trains—not entirely, but when he had boys dragging him to baseball card shows. Well, I guess this is my new hobby like it or not. But I think the trains were a way of—he had this whole downstairs that was trains. And it wasn't the same kinda thing if I want to have one of these and one of that. But it was something he thought was—he loved the act of looking at real trains as a kid. And I think there was some element of nostalgia. Of having the trains and running them. And as little kids, we thought it was great. But, you know, he would work on putting together—this was just a hobby. Not just a hobby but opposed to collecting. He would build these models of this was where my grandfather worked in Akron. This is the building. So he'd say this is the restaurant he would say from Akron Ohio. So there were things on the big—it was maybe two, three times the size of this table. But the little town and hills the trains would go through. They would go past—

**Miner:** These imaginary route.

**Myers:** Yeah, places from earlier phases from his life. It was mostly from his childhood. Here's Connecticut College.

**Miner:** Yeah. Do you have any pictures of that basement? I'm asking everybody. I would love to see all of this stuff together.

**Myers:** I don't know.

**Miner:** I'm definitely going to ask your mom.

**Myers:** No, I may be better at getting. I think I may have a lot of the pictures. I will look. It's funny. Certainly we don't have—if we do, it's the vein of there it is in the background of my brother in his baseball uniform.

**Miner:** I got a great one from the archivist at Connecticut College of your father in his office. It's a picture of him, but he books are already spilling off the shelves.

**Myers:** I would love to see that.

**Miner:** I'll send it to you. It's a wonderful picture.

**Myers:** I don't know what pictures. We have a lot of—a pile of family pictures, but I don't know. I don't know. The train set—the whole train systems went to some place in Bloomington after he died. Which may have had—may have had a photo of him with it, but—

**Miner:** I was told it was the Children's Discovery Museum.

**Myers:** Yeah, that sounds right.

**Miner:** Well—

**Myers:** I still have a—I have one N gauge. O gauge? N gauge. The little trains he liked. I still have one engine that he liked that's on my desk. But I don't know my favorite engine and my engine. He didn't like it when we screwed stuff up.

**Miner:** You mean took it out of its place?

**Myers:** He didn't mind that. It could go back to its place. I don't know. I told him I wanted to draw on it with a pencil. So it has all these pencil markings on it. But he really liked this because I said I wanted to draw on it so children would be scared by it. And we would go—I liked trains—the real thing as a kid. You know what? I say that, and I'm sort of filtering it through this memory of we'd go down to watch trains that I'd get excited about it, but he was definitely—and he'd say do you want to see the train and the train would come right from New London and we would sit there and it would go by and we'd go home. The train stuff. I don't know. He had a coin—like I said, he didn't like when we screwed stuff up. One time I remember him getting quite angry. Mel Fisher—Mel Fisher was a treasure hunter who would go down to Florida and find these sunken vessels with these big payloads of bouillon and gold bars and he would haul them up and he would auction them off. The wreck of the *Athocha*. It was one of these wrecks that was on the cover of *National Geographic* and the recovery was very exciting. And he bought a coin that was recovered from the *Athocha*. This is the sort of thing he liked being part of the collection. And it might have been because it was *National Geographic*. And so it was sort of a notable thing. And I took it to school. I said, Dad, can I take it to school? And then predictably, I don't quite remember whether I lost it or whether I passed it around the room too many times and it never made it back to me. In any event, I went back without it and sort of I remember telling him, you know, it's gone. And he was mad. And then I remember bing—it was the kind of thing that even as a kid, I really screwed up. So I went and got in bed and then he came back and said, don't worry about it. It's a coin. But I could see, you know, from the second I told him he was not happy about it. The collection got less encyclopedic.

**Miner:** Yeah. I hear you. Did you go to the big museums with him? You said you went to some museums with him.

**Myers:** So, I remember going-- we definitely went down to the British Museum with him. I don't know whether we went to the Metropolitan Museum together. I think we did, but I can't remember. The thing that sticks in my mind—they have a hall that has a lot of armor in it. I can't remember if we went to other museums with halls of armor and knights. Or whether we actually went there. I have a feeling we never went there together. I would go and he would go and we'd talk about it. We definitely went to the British Museum together. We saw the Rosetta Stone and I bet over and touched it. And he was, like what are you doing? Don't touch it.

**Miner:** How old were you then? Do you remember?

**Myers:** 14, 15. Old enough that I really should have known better not to do that. And old enough that I knew that I could, you know, get a laugh if it—and reprimand at the same time for doing it. But another museum we went to a lot was the standard suite of interest for a little boy

is dinosaurs. And I remember going to his office and the college book store at Connecticut College. I'd go to his office and every now and then. I just remember getting two books from the college bookstore. Which was on the first or second floor. It might have been in a different building Doesn't matter. But I'd get a book about dinosaurs which were both things I thought were amazing. And there's a museum of paleontology and archeology and natural history in New Haven called the Peabody Museum which has a lot of dinosaurs. And so we would drive down to New London to go to the Peabody museum and look at the dinosaurs and they were great. I have memories of that. And that's pre- age 6. And then when we lived in Geneva there really weren't museum there but in New London there was an exhibit of mummies. The sarcophagus and the actual mummified person. And I was older, but not that much older. I don't know. 8 or 9 maybe. And I just remember being, like, wow. I can't remember what other museums. We went to the Art Institute. The Chicago museums a lot.

**Miner:** Sure.

**Myers:** Museum of Science and Industry. The Art Institute. Those were the standards. We're in Chicago, let's do this.

**Miner:** Gotta do it.

**Myers:** Yeah.

**Miner:** Were those museums and experiences with him more about the, I don't know, I mean the way I've looked at museums has changed, right? So when I was younger it was like ooh, wow. And sadly, as a professional, I look at how they put things out on display was well why. I don't know. Did you have any conversations with him about, you know, the importance of this thing in time?

**Myers:** Nope.

**Miner:** Okay.

**Myers:** Certainly not that I remember. When we were 15 and 12 if he started talking like, come on, dad. Come on. Can we go to the Cubs game?

**Miner:** Let's go get some ice cream.

**Myers:** There was an era for every kid that my parents are not cool. And the nature of what's not cool about my dad for that, you know, teenage—the two of us, was, like, oh gosh, he's going to start talking about harpsichords again. And, you know, like anything now it's eight, ten years later I can't believe—whatever—so I definitely don't have any recollection of him kinda taking a curator's eye to the museums and saying this is why this is here instead of the other floor.

**Miner:** Did you have—sorry, go ahead.

**Myers:** It may have happened, but it's water off a duck's back.

**Miner:** You said when you moved to Bloomington, you were worried about losing friends. Did you find friends there fairly easily and did you invite them over with some uncool moments with your dad?

**Myers:** Yeah, I mean, absolutely. It was, you know, it was—there was nothing to be afraid of. They were—it was easy to make friends.

**Miner:** Well, sure.

**Myers:** Yeah. And it's just, you know, you're a kid. But, I don't know there was always—and I think we were into so many things that was a normal kid thing. It was easy to have the and basketball and baseball and pet orbit existing independently of what are all these—why are there eight violins in this room? So, I don't—I remember more conversations with my dad about, like, why are you doing what you're doing?

**Miner:** Who was doing what? You or him?

**Myers:** Us. I'd break something on purpose and dad would ask why are you doing this? What's fun about doing this? So I remember being on the receiving end of I don't understand why you're doing this, than instead of dad, why are you telling my friend about Genghis Khan?

**Miner:** The teacher in him.

**Myers:** Yeah, I suppose. But that was when he knew he had an audience so there was no point talking about it.

**Miner:** So, why did you become a teacher?

**Myers:** That's definitely all influenced by my dad. I loved the environment where we always lived. I loved the sports and the music and the lectures and I mean, I never took advantage of lectures when I was a kid but the environment of there's always something interesting. And it's, you know, it's own universe of community. And one that's focused on ideas and learning. And discovery. That was, I don't know, that seemed normal and nice and I also again, wasn't able to appreciate this so much as a kid until I had to think what do I want to do with my life? I'd thought about going to get a PhD like my dad and didn't. And he had sort of encouraged me to do it not in a sense of, like, don't do anything else but you'd like that. You'd enjoy it. And my sort of dearest friend in the world in college and still is did go get a PhD in history and is a historian so we have these parallel paths and I'd be him if I weren't me.

**Miner:** That'd be weird.

**Myers:** But, so I didn't do the PhD but I did go to law school. But I always had this thought in the back of my mind that being a law teacher was a great thing because you're in the same universe if the professional school is a little bit different from the arts and sciences but it's a more applied—one way of thinking about with law is that it's applied X. It can be applied psychology



or applied political theory or economics. And I liked the sort of public policy element of what law involves. And in addition to all that sort of—those intellectual reasons, I was able to—okay, for all those reasons I just said, that's a cool job. The guy behind the podium seems to have a really cool job. And when I went to go practice law, I remember it was wild how much I was working. All the time. Nights, weekends. Sleeping on couches. And that wasn't a big—it wasn't fun, but it wasn't like it was taking me away from my family. I was 25. But I'd look at it and see, all right, what are the partners like, what were the senior people like. And I go in his office and there's was a drawing that a child of his had done and it was a house and there were kids sitting around a table and there was a mom helping and off on the other side of the picture was a dad sitting at a desk and the title of the drawing was, "Daddy, Please Come Home."

**Miner:** Oh dear.

**Myers:** The guy put it up because he thought it was kind of funny.

**Miner:** Oh dear.

**Myers:** And, you know, the contrasting image for me was always, you know, my dad sitting there at all these baseball games in Bloomington. And in Geneva where he didn't like baseball. He didn't like professional baseball let alone Little League baseball. But he would drop us off at practices. He would go to all our games. He would sit there in the stands and read a book in the stands when the other kids were playing and look up at us when we were playing. And he would take us on trips in the summers and, you know, and it occurred to me that he could do that because he had the kind of job that it's not that it had fewer expectations or obligations, but there's an enormous amount of flexibility in how and when you meet them. And I thought, geez, I want to do that. And, you know, I lost my dad as an influence and a source of counsel but there are other people in my life—so I worked for a judge who I was very close to who had a line my dad would appreciate.

**Miner:** He had a what?

**Myers:** He had a line that I knew my dad would have appreciated. This is a guy who is a federal judge and before that had been a law professor at Yale. He'd been one of my teachers at Yale. And I was a law clerk for him. And he, you know, in some address to the remarks about at the retirement of a colleague of his. He said, you know, working at a university is the next best thing to being born rich. Tennis courts and there's a pool and there are these big lawns that always seem to be in perfect shape. There's a huge library and there's a nice place to eat and people are always smiling. I know my Dad would have liked that. Because I think it captures something important about, you know, priorities at an institute of higher education. I don't know. It just seemed sort of like that's what I want to do with my life.

**Miner:** That's a wonderful connection.

**Myers:** Although it's funny, my dad—I never got an inside except obliquely at faculty kind of politics. IWU politics. And I don't know the extent to which there was turmoil or not when dad was President. My only sense is that there wasn't much but, again, I was a teenager. But my dad had a friend—I can't remember his name, but he went to a library and museum on the west coast. And this guy reported back to my dad a line that my dad thought was hilarious. Which is, you know, when you drive home for the day, everybody who works there is smiling and waves goodbye to you with all five fingers, not just their middle finger. And so, you know, I think I had this—not naïve, but childlike vision of what it is to work at a university. And now that I go to faculty meetings myself, you know, I at least know that's not the best part of being associated with a university.

**Miner:** There are undercurrents.

**Myers:** Yeah.

**Miner:** So did you get interested in history—because your undergraduate degree is in history. Did you get interested in that because of—I mean, did you have a particular part of history that you focused on in undergrad?

**Myers:** Yeah, sort of and that's my dad's influence in weird ways. My dad always liked across music, across political thought, across, history, he always liked the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He thought the 18<sup>th</sup> century was just great. The French revolution, the American Revolution. Scottish Union stuff. He loved the 17<sup>th</sup> century. So I think I had the interesting parts of history for American history are, you know, Colonial era, Federal era. And when I got to college—I went to Connecticut College, and it felt I had I did not have any recollection of living there because I had been so young. But now that I see when the gap between when we moved and when I started was twelve years, and twelve years no longer seems like an eternity to me, for people who work there it was just Minor's kid who's back. But there were a lot of people who are my dad's friends who still worked there. And one of them—two of them I really became really close with. And one was a historian, one was a political scientist. But the historian's focus was the life of Abraham Lincoln and the civil war era. And this was a period that he could tell you all about but it was always well, it's intense.

**Miner:** Not as good as the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

**Myers:** So I sort of became a protégé of this Lincoln historian. I did my thesis on Lincoln and spent my summer—this was the summer of 1999. 8? 1999. Maybe 1998. In working in the state historical library in Springfield. Living at home and I would drive every summer. And it was great. I don't know. It was—I think it was when my dad started thinking you know, you love this, you should be a historian. Do it. You'll like it. And at the same time I think people who—my dad had a very optimistic, charitable view of the world and how the world works. I'm probably more cynical.

**Miner:** In what way did you get that impression?

**Myers:** He said, look, if you love history, you should do history. You should be a historian. And the historians said, look, it's just a brutal job market. If you get into a top program and are, you know, a star of the field you'll get a job. But it's just not, you know, the era of—if you look at my dad's publication history, he'll be the first to tell you this—he was a political science professor who wrote one or two articles about political science. Then he wrote all the other stuff about the history of a society. He wrote a book about American antiques and decorative arts. He'd be untenurable in a modern university. And I think his attitude was you love something you love. Don't go do something else. That's nuts. But I think he understood that I liked, I liked law. I think—his own father had been a lawyer and I don't know that my dad viewed him as having a very satisfying and happy career. But I don't know.

**Miner:** In practice?

**Myers:** He was an attorney in Akron, Ohio. Copley, Ohio. And I don't really know—when you're 22 you don't really ask did your dad have a satisfying career? That's not a question that occurs to a 22 year old. Not to this one, anyway. And so, I don't know, my interest in history I think was that's a normal, natural thing to be excited about and find fascinating. It's definitely influenced by growing up in the house I grew up in.

**Miner:** Is that Michael Burlingham?

**Myers:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Michael Burlingham

**Miner:** I knew they were colleagues. And he's huge in Illinois.

**Myers:** Yeah.

**Miner:** So, I don't know. What else can we talk about here?

**Myers:** I don't know. As I sort of walked through my mental list of, tried to walk down the rabbit holes as I passed them.

**Miner:** Yeah, that's great. So it's not like your terrarium collection he wasn't encouraging you to get you to label them and identify species and pulling out reference books. It was all about the fun and the collection.

**Myers:** Yeah.

**Miner:** And having a good time with something.

**Myers:** Yeah. And I think that's even the way he did it. You know, he would say—he would tell us, you know, I give—people have an impression that I'm smart. That I know a lot of stuff. And it's not quite true. I know where to find stuff. Like, I can go into the basement and look up stuff.

**Miner:** Yeah.

**Myers:** And that's a big difference. I don't know—it wasn't that he didn't know anything. I remember in high school I called him and I said, Dad, I'm having trouble in history. It's boring. I don't know what's going on. I remember having my history book open and, you know, we're in sort of the 1790s and looking at the heading and I don't even recognize where we are and he's, like, where are you? Are you at the quasi-war with France? And I'm looking down at the heading, like, what does that even mean, the quasi-war with France? And so he got—I think he had on topics that he didn't know—I don't know he knew what he didn't know and he knew how to fill in the gaps. I mean, he was—he would always tell me to go to the library.

**Miner:** He was a librarian.

**Myers:** He was a librarian, right? He was kind of—he—I'm not doing well in philosophy. I don't understand philosophy. Go to the reference librarian. You know, you need this book and this book—great introductions and it'll explain everything. I had something I was going to say.

**Miner:** About going and finding things on his own?

**Myers:** About things he didn't know. One thing I got into—again, why you'd like that I don't know but was fishing. Fly fishing. But, you know, in his map of knowledge, he knew that this was an area he didn't know a thing about. And he had a friend who in Bloomington—Dave Merwin. And Dave Merwin loved fly fishing too and was a member of some club in New Brunswick. On a river between New Brunswick and Quebec. And this historic, famous salmon fishery. So he said, you know, with Dave Merwin.

**Miner:** Wow.

**Myers:** And boy, that was great. And I think it was a way to Dad going, okay, heading fishing, famous rivers, Restigouche River, New Brunswick. Okay, just—and so he would be able to talk about the Restigouche salmon club. So I'd get these magazine—again, Dad taught me—I learned from him that if you like something, you go to the shop where it happens. Do you go to the fishing hop and you talk to people and you buy some books and you buy a couple of magazines.

**Miner:** And teach yourself about it.

**Myers:** Yeah. Just sort of learn the lay of the land. So, I remember telling him, you know, that I wasn't to go to—one of the things I want to do is go to Florida and fish for these three particular fish species. What is that? Permit fish That's not a fish. Yeah it is, yeah, okay. And so he was at some dinner—I don't know fundraising dinner or some sort of dinner that you get shipped off to and have to go to. And he's sitting next to somebody who turns out is a big fisherman. Boom fishing. Florida game fish species. And I was talking about this guy about permit all last night. So I thin, you know, he got a kick out of learning about something that he didn't care about but he knew that was at least was finish in something other people care about.

**Miner:** Yeah.

**Myers:** And it was knowledge if not to him worth knowing—

**Miner:** He could share it. Sounds like he had a phenomenal memory

**Myers:** Yeah, I think—yes, for headings. It was not—you know, I have a friend who's—will walk you through the tallest buildings in the world. Burj tower in Dubai, next is—he didn't have that so much as towers. The main, the big development in building was reinforced steel. You know, so it was more—I know what book. I know what call numbers to look at I think was more his attitude than I'm going to try and remember—

**Miner:** That exact thing.

**Myers:** —the information. And know how to sort it into history at the intersection what books I need to know that.

**Miner:** As you talked about headings, I just sort of mentally went back to card catalogs and tracings and how they point you to other things that you might be interested in.

**Myers:** Yeah. That was one thing he never did was catalog. I think he loved the idea of being able to catalog his books, but it was the sort of thing that the payoff was minimal compared to if you have a weekend, go to the antique markets and look for a couple more things.

**Miner:** Get some more.

**Myers:** I know he would have loved having that. The idea of—he was always skeptical of digital technologies, but I think he would have come around. I think he viewed them all as a substitute for being—he envisioned people using as a substitute for the stacks. Like, you don't need stacks anymore. You need stacks because you look here and you see what else is there. For example, I think Google Books would have appealed to him. Just being able to run a word search through books. It's not replacing the book. It's a new way to use the book and I think that would have blown his mind. YouTube would have blown his mind. He would have loved YouTube. Because I think—I can show my daughter all of these amazing—look, here's another little girl playing cello. Here's a XYZ famous cellist playing the same piece you're going to play—you know—

**Miner:** Get her excited.

**Myers:** And I think he would have thought I can hear Maria Callas sing this right there.

**Miner:** Do you think that would have changed his view of the in-person, the tangible, the actual experience?

**Myers:** No. I mean, I think he would have seen the importance of having that in addition to—you want the stacks. And you know to the extent that stacks are searchable, I don't know, he wouldn't want—he's not something who would have—books, books, books are important. He would have said, look, the stacks are in the basement from now on. They can be, you know, they can be the rollable shelves. You might not need to go as often. I don't know. He would have—I

know he would have been fascinated by that. But I often think as I'm looking at YouTube I'm can't believe I'm looking at this old video. He would've loved it.

**Miner:** Yeah. And I've seen—certainly seen printouts from eBay, so he was using technology to find things.

**Myers:** So, he was a mad auction scanner. And so, you know, we have coin galleries. Auction catalogs. Basement full of Christie's catalogs And () Sotheby's auction catalogs. Book dealer auction catalogs. Book dealer sales catalogs. Stamp dealer catalogs. Circle things. I still have some of the old coin things where he'd lot thirty and you mail in the check. It's crazy to me. What do you do, just hope no one will have bought it already? Mail your check back?

**Miner:** What if they get two in the same day?

**Myers:** But he was on eBay from the get go. He was not anti-technology, he was pro-book. So I think in the context of at least managing a library and I know it was something he thought in the context of the Ames Library, was books. This is about books. It's about a lot of other things, but it's not a Wi-Fi café. I don't know if Wi-Fi was around in 2003. I guess it was. But he'd find things, follow auctions. He loved that.

**Miner:** Did he talk to you much about how the library was—

**Myers:** No—

**Miner:** —built and what went in it and what he had as an idea for it?

**Myers:** I remember just hearing about we need a great library. We need a great library. And that's what we're going to get. We're building one. We're making one and I was old enough when it happened that I could go through and thing, boy, this is better than the library at Connecticut. This is amazing. This is great. This is an amazing library. And I remember, you know, one of my friends when we first moved to Bloomington lived on a street that doesn't even exist anymore. He lived on the street where the library is. It would bisect the library. So I—but in terms of the design decisions and priorities of the space I don't—

**Miner:** More on a philosophical level. Because one of the things we struggle with in the library—we—the librarians struggle with is the view that your dad had about not getting rid of things.

**Myers:** Yeah.

**Miner:** Right?

**Myers:** Yeah.

**Miner:** And acquiring things without regard to scope or audience.

**Myers:** Yeah. Sure. Sure. I mean, I struggle with that. Because I have two bookshelves in my apartment in New York. And I have trouble deaccessioned things that I've lugged around from

place to place to place. And I'm just, like, you know what? If my dad was sitting here and I said I can either put Dorothea's clothes here or I can put a book about harpsichords here, what do you think? And I know what the answer is. And the book goes to goodwill.

**Miner:** You think your dad would have had that answer?

**Myers:** Yeah. I mean, I think it's a question of trade offs. If the book—if you can never get the book back, it's not like you're lighting it on fire. At the same time I think part of why—he also was really into ABE Books. And I guess it isn't even called ABE Books anymore. The idea of being able to find books so easily when you want them is something that he was just coming to grips with. Because I think part of collecting was when are you ever going to see that one again? You can't part with it. You'll never be able to find it again. So—and space constraints, I have no idea about most places probably—when they're designed. Design a house or a library you probably think, well, this is all the space I'll never need. I'll never face a trade off between this or that. And you do. You know, you do.

**Miner:** It's not so much a space thing. What prompted this comment was your remarking on how he wanted us to have a great library. And we have a great library. What's the definition of a great library?

**Myers:** Of course. I mean, at the beginning when he would talk about it, it was just a sense of which I was using the word was the sort of being a central hub of the place. And the collection—those are—those can be independent questions, right? And I think as an architectural matter, saying, look, this is a centerpiece the old library was something of a centerpiece, but a weird one.

**Miner:** By virtue of being in the center.

**Myers:** Yeah. Right. And, but I don't know, I'm sure his conception of a great library as book-focused as he was but still change, you know, but that's me sort of trying to capture his spirit, refracting it through my own sense.

**Miner:** The residual effect of that—people who say he spoke of the great library and we were going to have it and compare—people today have interpreted that as the library of Alexandria. The great library. You know, with all the accumulated knowledge and everything right there for browsing. For all of that. And of course, the profession of librarianship values that, but also serves the community.

**Myers:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Miner:** Yeah, there was someplace else I was going with that. And it's still something people say today when we talk about the need to follow our curriculum and provide more space because students want study space.

**Myers:** Yep.

**Miner:** They're not using the books.

**Myers:** So, I have some administrative duties at my law school and law schools are different because they are—for law school libraries are a weird creature. But there's this tradeoff. We have a limited amount of space and students largely use it not to access monographs. Or even to access bound volumes of law reviews or periodicals but just as a place to study. So how do we make those trade offs? The trouble with law school libraries you have to have the accrediting bodies say you have to have a certain number of XYZ. And then there's a separate metric that goes into *US News* about libraries so we have the accrediting bodies that say what we have to have or not. And what's required sometimes go in different directions. But...

**Miner:** Yeah. Well, I think certainly it's an unanswerable question of how he would have changed with the change in the emphasis of electronics and electronic discovery of things. But certainly our faculty would say—I had someone say Minor would be turning over in his grave! Weeding the books out of the library. Yeah, but at the same time it was an incredibly—it is an incredibly versatile library and the student use it in that sense it's such a showcase for the campus too.

**Myers:** Yeah, I cannot imagine he would be—the place would serve his vision that it's not what it's supposed to do. But the place where it would serve his vision wouldn't be anyone else's. If it was a pile of books nobody every used and students felt that it wasn't—

**Miner:** That they didn't want to go there. There's nothing in it for me.

**Myers:** That's certainly not—I mean, I think I'm sure he cared about making room—making the place a receptacle of research sources. But I think the bigger idea was that the library is the hub of intellectual activity and school life. And if that's not happening, I have to say this for posterity. People are using, you know, you've got—you have to meet the needs of your consumers. If people use the library in the way that people use it in the 1970s then it's got to change. That's life.

**Miner:** Yeah. We all change. Well, do you know if he ever worked in archives?

**Myers:** I don't think so. I'm sorry—you mean as a researcher?

**Miner:** No, as a student. Somebody told me he worked in the Princeton archives.

**Myers:** You mean, he was—

**Miner:** He was a student worker. Had a work-study or something.

**Myers:** That could be possible. I don't know—I've never really known who he was—like, I don't know anybody that was a friend in that era. I mean, there are some people I've come into contact with at graduate school. But it's never been a case that—like my kids know my historian friend I told you about. James went to college with dad. I don't know anybody like that. Not



from college. And I think that's going to be a function of moving. It's going to be a function of career choice. I don't know. But I don't know whether he ever worked in an archive. I can imagine him working in the Princeton archive. That might have been just a cause and effect of working on the history of the graduate school. But I don't know.

**Miner:** I've always thought that the special collections and archives in the Ames Library, you know, would have been something that he would have emphasized in building a library with his interest in sources and his own persona collection. And it's certainly a wonderful space and we do have the collapsible shelves, but for the kind of collecting he was interested in I always thought would've he have been interested in making that a bigger or more prominent or some kind of location. And a lot of people when he died and when the University acquired his collection and then made the decision to auction it a lot of people thought, well, it should just go up in the archives. And some people didn't even know that we number one bought it, or number two auctioned part of it. But just in thinking of how, you know, how do we honor people and how to we convey the memory of, I don't know, and interest and a person's interest in life to the future. We certainly chose not to do that. Not to keep the entire collection. One of the things I'm doing is sort of documenting that path because there was such—it was such a terrible time for everybody in making those decisions. That nobody really knows what happened. So I'm sort of documenting that part of the journey too and thinking if he would have been okay with us auctioning his collection and not keeping the entire thing. You talked earlier about how some collectors enjoy the joy of selling and buying and the hunt. Do you think he would have objected to us—

**Myers:** No. No. Nope.

**Miner:** No question.

**Myers:** No question about it. No, no question.

**Miner:** Great. Well, I'm going to virtually bring it back together anyways by creating a catalog.

**Myers:** I mean, I think of him a lot of that, a lot of that collection was consumptive joy for him. Putting it together and doing it. And I think he was quite clear-eyed about the fact that handing it off to somebody else—be it my mom or the University would not convey—he had taken the joy from putting it together that he had and whatever happened to it, you know, let it go to somebody else who finds the joy in putting it together. So, you know, trapping it with my mom, trapping it with—not—trapping the wrong's word, but he liked the operation of the book market. And he liked—even if he was never a seller himself. I think there was part of him that liked—I don't know. We had a weird conversation one time. I said I wanted to own Monticello, Thomas Jefferson's home. He said, well, you can't. I said I'm going to do it. He said how? I said, well, I'm going to build an amusement park right next to it. So that—anyone who gets near it—no one decides to go Monticello and so they're not going to make any money and the federal government's not making any money on it and I'm going to buy it. And so I think, you know, he probably had an attitude of—you know, there are some things that belong in a museum. So

there are some things that belong in a permanent collection and whether that belongs in the world for everybody and where's the best place for it to be seen. But, you know, his collection was valuable to him because of it's encyclopedic nature. But was more valuable to him because it was fun to have something of an encyclopedic nature. And I think he would have been just fine with having things go to out in the sort of dealer, some broker would put it in the hands of someone who found as much joy in coming upon it as he probably did.

**Miner:** That's great.

**Myers:** And—

**Miner:** I love that phrase consumptive joy. That's a great way to put it.

**Myers:** Yeah, the act of collecting was what he loved. And I think that's part of why he was never a seller. Not because, you know, I don't want the money, I don't want to make any money. But because it was bringing it into the house and knowing it's there and so valuable. The way you'd pay me a coin that you can barely—it's been so worn that you can't even tell what it is anymore. You're not going to pay me anything for it but I love having it.

**Miner:** It's sort of like the joy you had in discovering the box of coins.

**Myers:** Yeah.

**Miner:** And he could take a joy that he could discover one thing in a lot. One good coin in five hundred. And you are a member of the Society of Cincinnati also?

**Myers:** I am. But that does not—again, he was—it was—something that he got involved in as an adult whose parents—no one else in his family had every been involved in it. He just dug it up. And he—it was important to him. He loved it. And I got married in the building that they operate in DC. Again, it's a place I associate with my dad. But I am. You know, it's not—I get an annual report once a year. It's not a big part of my life.

**Miner:** Do you know of anyone that was still there that might know your dad?

**Myers:** Frank Mauran is a name. He lives in Rhode Island. M-A-U-R-A-N. And then I can actually—let me Henry Beckwith is the other name.

**Miner:** And he was—he memorialized your father, I believe.

**Myers:** That might be.

**Miner:** And the commemoration I think he was one of the speakers.

**Myers:** No.

**Miner:** They must have collected some information—

**Myers:** No, he wasn't there. But Henry L.P. Beckwith I believe is some kind of connection.

**Miner:** Well, if you think it's, you know, something that would be helpful or interesting for me to have a conversation with any other people that he knew, I would appreciate referrals.

**Myers:** Sure, sure, sure.

**Miner:** Feel free to circulate my number and address. And tell them I'm fishing for Minor's story.

**Myers:** Yeah, these are people who—

**Miner:** That would be great, yeah. And I contacted Michael Burlingham too because he was recommended and then he said he didn't have anything to contribute to the project. So, you know, I'm respectful of that too, but I want to make sure I don't want to leave out anybody. And it's my time to do this project is finite but my job hopefully isn't. So anybody who comes along later.

**Myers:** Yeah.

**Miner:** I'll certainly talk to them at any point. Are there any other things we should know about him? Or are we reaching a good point here? I want to be respectful of your time with your family.

**Myers:** You know, I can't think—you know, we've sort of covered. I think we've covered everything.

**Miner:** I'm just delighted to meet you and I really appreciate you talking to me.

**Myers:** My pleasure. This is one of my favorite topics. My little girls and my father.

**Miner:** That's great. Thank you so much.

**Myers:** My pleasure.

END OF TRANSCRIPT