



2-15-2016

Michael Young

Michael Young

Meg Miner

Illinois Wesleyan University, mminer@iwu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/oral_hist



Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Young, Michael and Miner, Meg, "Michael Young" (2016). *All oral histories*. 136.
https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/oral_hist/136

This Article is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Commons @ IWU with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this material in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/ or on the work itself. This material has been accepted for inclusion by University Archivist & Special Collections Librarian at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@iwu.edu.

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

Oral History Interview with Mike Young, 2016

Meg Miner: Good afternoon, this is Meg Miner. I am the Archivist at Illinois Wesleyan University and I'm conducting a sabbatical project on Miner Myers Jr. former president of the University and the influences that he had on people both through his collecting interests and how those kinds of interests manifested and the way he conducted business here. With me today, in his office, is our distinguished professor of history, Mike Young. Please introduce yourself sir, and state how you are affiliated with Wesleyan and Minor.

Mike Young: Okay, well yes I have been a history professor here for 47 years, and I've lived under four presidents and two acting presidents.

Miner: Uh huh

Young: I first became acquainted with Minor because I was on the search committee for the presidency that year. I've been on the search committee for the...that hired Minor Myers but also the one that hired Dick Wilson, but also most recently the one that hired Eric Jensen, so I was the only person elected to or serving on all three of those recent presidential search committees. I was very honored to be chosen to do that but getting back to Minor then, so I was on the search committee and you know, this is, you sign some, you know, you'll give away your first born child if you reveal anything that happens in these presidential search committees (Miner laughs), don't get me started on that—

Miner: Okay, I won't.

Young: They're just obsessed with secrecy—

Miner: —although you told a great story—

Young: —just obsessed with secrecy.

Miner: —at Miner's commemoration

Young: Why don't I just go ahead and tell it. When he interviewed...uh, he was late that morning, and we were milling about in the hallway thinking is this candidate going to show up or not and then he did and there was some confusion at the time. I think he had gone jogging or I don't picture him jogging but I think he had that morning. Anyhow, we sat down and oh my god he was so impressive from the very beginning and he just took command of that interview and he laid out our catalog and some papers he had collected, some information on us, and he launched into this speech about 'you've got such a gem here, you know a diamond in the ruff, you people have, there's so much potential here,' you know, he just made us feel good about the place and ourselves and seemed to have so much enthusiasm to make, to put us on the map. And I think I wrote in my notes, I think, I know and I thought this, I think I wrote down: I love this guy, he's great. But the trustees will never go for him. (Miner laughs) And uh...when he left the room we sat around and started talking and I was just amazed that everybody was so impressed by him, and so relieved. I had this apprehension that the faculty might like him but the trustees might not. But we all were just blown away by him. So that was my first experience with Minor, and I would

just say overall, he is one of the, if not the single most, one of the most impressive, awesome people I have ever known.

Miner: In what way? Can you put your finger on that? I mean enthusiasm, excitement...

Young: Well the enthusiasm, the breath of the knowledge, the breath of the knowledge, the things he could refer to, I always felt so inferior around him. I saw Minor, now were leaping from the very first time—

Miner: —that's okay

Young: —to the last time

Miner: —do it.

Young: I heard word that he was in the hospital when he was dying. He was just sitting over in a hospital room over at Saint Josephs and people could visit him. And I thought this might be my last chance, so I'm going to do this. I'm not an impulsive person but I wanted to see him. And uh, he was sitting there reading a book as always, about some nineteenth century British Polymath because that of course it was his interest.

Miner: Of course

Young: And uh...I always had trouble making conversation with him, but I tried to explain to him that I was, maybe wasn't as friendly as I wished I had been, hadn't spent as much time with him or conversed as much with him while I was here because I always felt just so inadequate around him. He could refer to literature, art, certainly music, uh...practically any field other than early seventeenth century England, and even there he would know things that I didn't uh, and I just felt that he was in another league.

Miner: Yeah, so, I'm just trying to think of, I mean that shocks me, right. I mean I understand for outside of your discipline maybe, but even within your own. So you were out of your league in just the things that he read or the things he could recall or everything?

Young: He was just so broadly learned. I mean, when I was at Harvard, I met one person who I thought holy Christ this guy's smart. And Minor made me feel that same way like, oh my god, that's what it means to be brilliant.

Miner: Okay

Young: Have you met people like this in your life?

Miner: I don't think so

Young: Well I can, I've met two and Minor is one of them (Miner laughs)

Miner: That's great. And of course the ability to recall those kinds of things is completely envious. I have a horrible memory, so when I come across people who can, you know, pull things out like that it's uh it's pretty amazing to me.

Young: He wasn't uh...he didn't uh...he didn't show off his learning uh be, to impress other people, it just came so naturally to him. He just knew it so he talked about it. He wasn't name dropping, he dropped a lot of names, but he was never name dropping (Miner laughs)

Miner: So why would he do that? Why would that range of topics be part of a conversation?

Young: Oh I think that's just, again, that's the intelligence. That's the intellectual vitality. I mean you always had the impression that Minor was operating at warp speed.

Miner: (laughs) Where did he get the energy? Um, are you a collector?

Young: I was not—

Miner: Yeah, oh?

Young: —but I became one.

Miner: Why?

Young: When Minor died, some of his things were bought by...Jim and Andy at Gridley's Antique Store downtown Bloomington. And Marsha and I went down there, Marsha my wife, and I went down there and we were looking for things of Minor's to buy. Jim handed me, I've got one of Minor's ties, every once in a while I'll see a photograph of Miner and say 'I've got that tie' and Jim handed me Minor's globe, just gave it to me so I'd have something of Minor's. So I've got his globe in my basement. But we spotted two oil paintings and we went ahead and bought one. And I kept going back to Gridley's from time to time and eventually I bought another one of Minor's oil paintings so we've got two of Minor's oil paintings and that got me interested in oil paintings.

Miner: Okay

Young: And so the reason I wanted you to interview in my office is you see these oil paintings around here, I've got four, five, six, seven, eight, nine.

Miner: Oh my gosh.

Young: I've got ten oil paintings on my wall and that's just the tip of the iceberg. I now have about, I have bought, I would say at least, fifty oil paintings.

Miner: Oh my word.

Young: And it all started with those two of Minor's.

Miner: Did you ever talk to him about oil paintings when he was alive?

Young: No, no! what...and I feel so stupid about this because we were in his home a few times. You know there were formal occasions where he'd have a dinner and he'd invite a historian or there would be a group of people in which I would be one and there'd be a chance to talk to him about the things he had on his walls or the things sitting around but I was oblivious! I just looked right past them. I don't think I would've paid much attention between the difference between an oil painting and a print in those days. I wouldn't...I just didn't know enough. It was just like opening the hood of a car when I was a kid and looking inside and having no clue what was in there. Now I open a hood and I have some idea. But it's the same with oil paintings, I look at oil now and I know a difference between an oil painting, and an acrylic and a watercolor and I know something more about the styles of course I studied a little art history so I know something from that but I look at them now and I can place some. There are some artists now, I mean we are talking minor artists I don't collect Renoirs but one reason why I bought so darn many was because when I started I was kind of indiscriminant. I would buy what I could afford or what was handy.

Miner: Uh huh

Young: And in the later years when I became more discriminating, I found that I had this basement full of other stuff I had collected earlier. I unloaded about a dozen of those at an auction house down in Springfield...yeah Springfield and I have another carload I would like to take up to Chicago someday if they would be willing to sell them because I don't know if they're even valuable, we're talking several hundred dollars, not over a thousand. Most of what I bought was like 3-500 dollars some of it you know 20-30 dollars. But I got interested in it and I started, some of the earlier things that I bought needed some repairs and I discovered it makes an awful lot of difference what frame you put on a painting so sometimes I could spot a good painting and buy it and take it home and put a new frame on it and it looked 100% better. But I did a little cleaning of oil paintings, you've got to be very careful. I discovered this by ruining a few. You've got to be very careful cleaning oil painting. I've toyed with varnishing a few of them, I had mixed results there. But what you can see is that I'm a collector of oil paintings—

Miner: Yeahh, yeah,

Young: —and I was not before. And I have always thought, well I can't be too smart, because smart people have hobbies, right? That was one question I never knew how to answer on questionnaires when they said 'What hobbies do you have', well I have no hobbies, you know (Miner laughs). Uh I like to play golf, I guess that was kind of a hobby for a while, (Miner laughs) but I didn't play much. But it dawned on me one day, I think it was down in the basement you know, putting some new, a new frame on a painting or uh, I've got a box down there now full of clips and wires and hangers that you put on the backs of oil paintings. And I was working on something down there and I thought, 'I'll be damned, I've got a hobby'. (Miner laughs) So, finally in my sixties I got myself a hobby. It was all, it all started with those two oil paintings of Minors.

Miner: Which two were those? Do you still have them?

Young: Oh, I have them at home

Miner: Okay

Young: Yeah, this is...I didn't bring the good stuff to my office (both laugh)

Miner: What about those two that caught your eye? Was it something you could describe?

Young: I just thought they were good paintings.

Miner: Okay, these are mostly cityscapes and pastoral, right so—

Young: Well, that's another good question Meg. See Marsha and I, we grew up in the forties and fifties, went away to college in the sixties, and uh so things we had on our walls when we were in college and we were setting up house were abstract expressionism. In fact, you make me realize, when Marsha started working, one of the first things...we finally had a little money because it was paycheck to paycheck while I was the only supporter of the family, she worked on her PhD dissertation, uh she eventually got her PhD from Harvard, she well, uh the early eighties. And then with that, and our daughter, she stayed home and raised our daughter and worked on her dissertation and somewhere around the mid-eighties she started working and for the first time ever, we had a little disposable income (Miner laughs). And uh, there were sometimes when our checking account was empty, our savings account was down to the last hundred dollars (Miner laughs), we really did live hand to mouth in those days. I started here at \$10, 250 as my salary.

Miner: Wow.

Young: So, when she had a little money, when we had a little money because of her job, I'm reminded now, one of the first things we did was to buy some real paintings for the wall. I had forgotten that this was the way it happened. But we went searching around, where are you going to get abstract expressionism around here and this was long before all these local artists had their own studios downtown. And we ended up buying some things from an artist who was uh a University of Illinois professor and his wife, they both painted. And uh, so we did have these gigantic, colorful abstract expressionist works of art and we did have them with us in three different houses including the one we've got now. And then we bought these two landscapes of Minor's. Impressionistic, but still landscapes.

Miner: Uh huh

Young: And as I acquired more paintings, the abstracts started going to the basement and the landscapes started going up on the walls to replace them. And we now have just two of those abstract expressionists, one from a former member of our faculty. She was fantastic and she moved off to Allentown and I tried to see on the internet if she still has a career in art but she belongs to the art association there in Allentown. I don't know if she paints anymore and I can't find any auction records, but she was great.

Miner: What was her name?

Young: Ah, you know I'm struggling here to come up with it and can't, I didn't think I was going to stumble into that subject.

Miner: That's ok

Young: I can tell you that later, Marsha can remind me.

Miner: Just curious

Young: I can't remember. But anyhow, so we had been always interested in getting some paintings, but we always thought it would be abstract expressionism. Uh, but once I had started collecting in a serious major way, starting with Minor's work, I found that what I liked to sit and look at is landscapes. I can't get much, I like abstract expressionist piece of art just to look at as a piece of art, but like when I'm sitting here in my office, I wanted a lovely scene with a lot of depths and water, horizon, something pleasant to look at.

Miner: and you're looking right now at a beautiful oak tree that I think is quite stunning.

Young: Yeahh,

Miner: Yeahh, isn't that the one you're looking at?

Young: Yeahh, that's the one.

Miner: That's great.

Young: Yeah, one thing you discover too is that there are a lot of underestimated artists. You think, 'well why is that artist worth ten thousand and this one only worth one hundred?' you know?

Miner: Yeahh

Young: Uh and that's an underestimated artist. Uh and so is this one. I mean, this guy paints junk, he really is a bad painter. But, every once in a while, this is another thing I discovered, every once in a while a mediocre painter just hits it right, just is in his groove that day or whatever, is in her groove (Miner laughs). And that's true of that painter, he was a guy who spent his life painting in New Hampshire, he has a little studio and he'd paint things like covered bridges and uh they are truly mediocre paintings. But I saw that on the internet and I bought it and I reframed it and I think that day he just hit it right that's maybe not his masterpiece but that's as good as he could do.

Miner: What's the city?

Young: That's New York City, and he's written on the back, that's another great thing about this guy is he will tell you often times on the back what the scene is.

Miner: Ah, nice.

Young: And he explains that he painted that from the balcony of some friends in New Jersey and he's looking across the river at the skyline of New York City and my suspicion is that they kept bringing out martinis or something as he was painting (Miner laughs) and he just loosened up and he just got it right that day I think so this is another thing I've learned in the course of collecting is that a mediocre artist sometimes paints a really good painting. (Miner laughs)

Miner: That's a nice mix of some green space and then the city skyline too.

Young: Yeah, usually I only like landscapes, but that's a cityscape .

Miner: it's a nice mix of that too though, Yeahh. Well, you said you were a sort of indiscriminant collector at first—

Young: yep

Miner: —so you've resolved to landscapes and cityscapes. What were you sort of indiscriminant about?

Young: well, I was indiscriminant in the quality.

Miner: okay, so you developed, now you've developed—

Young: —now I have a little more well I guess taste...

Miner: —knowledge, and an eye of what you like...

Young: Yeahh I guess, yeah. and I don't, there's no point in going and buying another fifty-dollar painting or even a hundred-dollar painting. If I'm going to buy another painting it ought to be a good one. You know what I'm thinking of, at my age, I'm seventy two now, and I'm thinking, if I don't unload a lot of this, the worst of these (Miner laughs) at some point, Marsha will get stuck with them or my daughter or grandchildren will get stuck with them. And were also providing a lot of financial support to my daughter and her family. And I don't have any business buying a painting these days that I don't think they couldn't get at least good part of the money out of it. You know I shouldn't be squandering my daughter's inheritance (Miner laughs), her legacy on things that would be worthless.

Miner: So, you're thinking in terms of investments now?

Young: Yeah, every once in a while I'll buy something, like we know a local artist named Dale Evans. And Dale painted that cityscape, that's downtown Bloomington. He painted that cityscape up there and uh, I just liked it. And it was something like \$200, he's very reasonable. He's a local artist who prices his paintings reasonable. He's talented but he prices his paintings reasonable. So if I see something like that for \$200, I don't know where to put it, of course that's why it's in my office (Miner laughs). And that was one of those where he was painting around downtown Bloomington, and they had to do it in like an hour or so, it was a wet painting (Miner laughs) I think they called them. And uh, it was, he had put a really crappy Styrofoam frame around it and when I bought it I said later, I said, 'you know, could you maybe put a decent frame on that' and he goes 'I'm so glad you asked, I was I felt so guilty'. So he makes his own frames and he put his own frame on that.

Miner: Oh, wow that's even better.

Young: Yeah so that brought it out, that made it even better. So that I went ahead and I think that painting was uh \$200 for a painting that basically its worthless I don't think anybody would ever uh, maybe at a garage sale you'd get 5 or 10 bucks for it, I doubt it, unless Dale becomes famous which I don't expect. But it's a...he's a good painter and it's a nice painting and I wanted...I liked the idea of a cityscape because I have so few of them and then the one on the lower left there I found at an antique store downtown here in Bloomington, not Gridley's but another one and it hadn't sold because it had some uh spots on it where the paint had been scratched off had been scraped off and on the back of it says it was painted in something like 1915 and it gives the name of the stream and Marsha researched that stream on the internet and it turns out that a lot of very famous impressionist painters in the Philadelphia area painted that stream, it was very scenic.

Miner: Oh my.

Young: So the early 1900s impressionists are looking for things like Monet's lily pads and garden and instead they found this stream outside Philadelphia. So I bought that and I had to...I had to fill in the holes where it had been scraped or scratched.

Miner: Uh huh

Young: And so, I had some oil paintings as I tried some oil paints that I used earlier on other paintings, and I thought they were just not good enough match. So I went out and bought myself you know a little beginner set of oil paints, and I rediscovered the famous color wheel—

Miner: uh huh

Young: —which I had been, which I had forgotten entirely since grade school.

Miner: Sure, yeah

Young: —and by studying the color wheel

Miner: Wow

Young: —and mixing the paints I was able to fill in the holes there. And uh, I don't, a quick look at that you can't see where I've touched it up. But you see I made, I think I made a very pretty painting out of it.

Miner: You certainly did.

Young: I touched up the damaged areas and then I had to varnish it because it's, you see it's been varnished you can see the varnish when you tilt it like that.

Miner: Yeah.

Young: Oh there you can see I put those two spots, I filled in those two spots—

Miner: but only at a certain angle

Young: Yeah

Miner: I only noticed it when you tilted it down.

Young: and that's because of the varnish. If I had—

Miner: —the depth of it, maybe.

Young: —varnished it a little bit more you may not have noticed. Uh but that makes a very lovely painting. I've researched WRH, have no idea who he is.

Miner: Sure

Young: I wish WRH were like Monet but he's not (Miner laughs). Uh there it is Wissahickon Creek.

Miner: Whoa, that's a mouthful.

Young: Yeah. Wissahickon Creek in Pennsylvania and I now collect when I research these paintings I now print out information about the artist or the location if I can't find information and attach it—

Miner: Bless your heart

Young: —because I want whoever gets is...look 1956 October, it still says October 1956 Wissahickon Creek. That was painted over one hundred years ago outside Philadelphia, it's a lovely little impressionist landscape. It really is lovely.

Miner: It is.

Young: I'm glad I took it down off the wall (Miner laughs). And I think I put the right frame on it, I touched up the areas that were damaged and I think I put the right frame on it. the frame I paid more for, I paid thirty dollars for the painting (Miner laughs) and fifty for the frame.

Miner: Ah,

Young: So I've got eighty dollars invested in that.

Miner: And a little bit of time.

Young: And a little bit of time. But that's a hobby see,

Miner: Right

Young: It's something to do in your spare time, if you have any.

Miner: And you are very adventurous too to...to get out a color wheel and find some paints and do it yourself .

Young: Well I just knew it had to be rescued and I just thought I can do this damn it if I just put my mind to it yeah.

Miner: Good for you, that's great. Oh my. Do you know if Minor did any art? Or just collected art on his own?

Young: To my knowledge, he just collected it.

Miner: Yeah.

Young: Well you know this better than anybody else, he collected everything.

Miner: Yeah, and that's the curious thing about this right because his published interviews all he ever said was 18th century anything he could get his hands on and cheap was the way he put it.

Young: Well I understand that.

Miner: He would buy if it had to do with the 18th century. But his book collection spanned from the 1500s to the 20th century.

Young: Uh huh

Miner: And that was one of the things I got curious about so.

Young: One of the things I...I went to the auction. Now we're switching from paintings to books.

Miner: Sure.

Young: Well, I think it was the former chaplain who was...I think a prior friend of mine as he maneuvered into that position as chaplain. Uh I think it was the chaplain who told a story as one day Minor was leaving his house, he reached into a bowl of coins that this guy had collected and took them out and could identify every damn coin there.

Miner: Denny...this is Denny Gorrough?

Young: I think so...did you head that story?

Miner: —and these coins were Denny's? nu-uh

Young: I think they were Denny's I could be confusing who but someone told me when Minor was visiting their house he looked through...he pulled out this handful of coins and he knew every one of them. He had a coin collection.

Miner: Hmm

Young: Yeah, someone told me that after he died, Ellen put them all in a...he had them in a giant wooden filing cabinets in trays...

Miner: Coins?

Young: Uh coins yeah. and when he died Ellen took them all out and put them in a box like that and was shipping them off to a buyer in New York. I don't know what they all paid for it but it all went somewhere to some collector. And you think how the effort he put in to each one of those and then you think...this is, this is where I do not like the idea of libraries. They say, 'well we don't need a copy of it because there's one at Eastern or there's one at...'

Miner: Sure

Young: —or there's one at Bradley or whatever, we don't need it. But you see, a library ceases to have collections.

Miner: Yeah

Young: Right now because I have been a tutor, student, historian collecting books for myself for my courses for almost fifty years. We have a good collection, especially in early Steward Parliamentary History and to see libraries change their philosophy so that you don't keep a collection in tact or Paul Bushnell's collection on the Civil Rights Movement and Slavery. We don't keep a collection and that just seems to me short-sided.

Miner: So talk about that. This is your chance, tell me all about it.

Young: Oh, don't get me started on this.

Miner: Okay but so you know can you make a connection with Minor? Did you have discussions with him about these kinds of focuses for...

Young: For him it was just this voracious collecting—

Miner: —For him personally. But did it ever extend into you know his vision for libraries on this campus? Can you speak to that?

Young: —No, I just thought the more the better.

Miner: Okay.

Young And he wasn't, well we already mentioned before this interview that he bought that Corn Belt library system collection when they went out of business and boy did the librarians hate him for that, he didn't...

Miner: And I suspected that but I didn't know so tell me about it.

Young: Well I think they were...well I don't know that much about it. I think they were, were they like a regional library uh?

Miner: I think it was a library consortium.

Young: Yeah, it was a regional library that if a library didn't have a particular book the consortium might. It would be like the center for research libraries only it was hokier. It was more, it wasn't as selective. Uh and yeah and I guess they packed their bags and went out of business and I guess Minor bought the whole collection because he never thought there was never a book you shouldn't have and if your collection didn't have it you would go ahead and add it you know.

Miner: For...just because you didn't have it, you needed to have it.

Young: Yeah, yeah. and I remember...

Miner: and it didn't matter what it was for?

Young: And I remember he did talk to me, you reminded me. He did talk to me one day uh he was looking at a box there of uh they were...uh I can't remember precisely what they were but they were the kinds of stories they were but they were the kinds of stories you'd see in old bookstores and old antique malls these days. Uh romances and adventurous stories. Frivolous things that people would have read in their leisure time, uh escapist literature from the 19th century. You know not Charles Dickens, nobody famous. But he thought that somebody someday may want to know about that. Someday somebody may research that subject and we should have these available we should let them escape. So yeah, I know we ended up with a lot of junk (Young laughs), and you know I, when I went through our shelf list I probably identified about as many things that should have been gotten rid of as should have been retained.

Miner: Yeah.

Young: But uh, Minor would not have thrown anything out. Minor would be turning over in his grave if he knew what they were doing these days. I think part of that was, I think that was just the way he was, he just relished everything. But I think also we had to sometimes pretend that we had something like a million volumes in order to get the Phi Beta Kappa Chapter

Miner: Right

Young: So he was building up the collection for that.

Miner: Is that something that you discussed with him or you just think that that happened?

Young: No, I just...I just remember hearing that he was very intent of getting a Phi Beta Kappa Chapter which he did.

Miner: Sure

Young: And that uh I thought, although I have this feeling that I have been corrected on this recently so maybe I'm not right about this that he wanted a certain...oh I remember we talked about this...

Miner: We did talk about this.

Young: we talked about whether we would be able to retain our Phi Kappa...I was looking for some argument about Phi Beta Kappa. To keep our collection intact, and I was hoping that we would lose our membership (Miner laughs) in Phi Beta Kappa chapter if we went under a million volumes or whatever. But clearly that's not a worry, so damn.

Miner: So, so let me digress a little bit for and give the subtext to the future who is listening to this recording, presumably. The reason we are talking this way is that Mike and I have had discussions because I am the liaison to the History department um, about our recent need to weed in the library and there's, there is a difference of opinion between the need to weed and to keep collections because they might be used someday. So it's a real...completely understandable, it's really difficult argument to have with people who care deeply about their subjects um, but the notion that the library changes in response to the community that it serves is hard in a place that is not a research...one institution in charge with collecting and keeping knowledge, in the form of a physical book and I'm thoroughly and completely sympathetic to the book is an artifact argument but I'm also sympathetic to we've got to serve the needs of our community and that's all we've tried to do is make sure we serve your needs and the needs of your students. It's hard, it's very hard but we did, I did look into it and Phi Beta Kappa does not have any requirements—

Young: I need another argument. Oh we probably shouldn't distract too much—

Miner: It's fine, it's fine. But it does go to it. I've heard these stories about Minor taking away the withdrawal stamp from the library or only saying the library can spend money only on books and not on journals. I've heard these stories from other people. So I'm trying to get this all out in the open. Trying to tease through some of this for what we can save. You know is the influence which I think existed of a person who has a personal philosophy, who is in a position of power. To make—

Young: He was in a position of power. My impression was the librarians really hated him, maybe they liked him because he built a library—

Miner: Yeah.

Young: —and he authorized the hiring of more librarians, but they didn't like his micromanaging the library—

Miner: Yeah.

Young: —I'm sure but he just, he was a bibliophile. He really loved books.

Miner: Yeah

Young: He asked me one time...I think I asked him one time because I knew he bought a lot of books.

Miner: Uh huh

Young: I think I asked him, I said, "Minor if you ever see this thing, let me know, I'd love to have it" and what it was, was a ten volume set of the S.R. Gardiner's History of England from 1600 to 1603 to 1642, I

guess. It was the reign of James I and Charles I which is what I study. It's a ten volume set and when I was a graduate student, it was the authority. It had been written back in the 1880's but it was still like an encyclopedia, everything you needed to know. It fell into disrepute in the last few decades. People were basically going back to his point of view but their not owning up to it and they don't cite him anymore. It's a shame this is something happening in the historical profession. People don't give credit to the earlier authors but for 100 years he had a good run.

Miner: Yeah

Young: And when I started out he was still the thing you had to use, you had to cite. You needed it before the internet, it was the closest thing to just grab it off the shelf and look it up in the index. Sometimes just looking up something in the index was all you needed because you got enough information there to answer your question, whatever it may have been. Uh so I coveted a set of S.R. Gardiner and it had been reprinted. In fact, Ames, I hope to hell they still have both the reprint and the original because I asked that both the original and the reprint be kept that's all the more important because one volume of one of those has gone missing so we should have ten and nine, we should have nineteen, nineteen volumes sitting on the shelf. I sure hope it's there.

Miner: Give me the title again and I'll make sure.

Young: S.R. Gardiner and its—I recently rearranged my office.

Miner: Looks like you got some out of Buck.

Young: Well that's the rest of the story. Uh let me get the right title.

Miner: They have call numbers that are Dewey call numbers.

Young: It's *The History of England from the Accession of James I to the Outbreak of the Civil War*

Miner: —oh with maps. (Laughs)

Young: Yeah

Miner: Alright

Young: I guess some people will cut out the maps and sell them these days.

Miner: Yeah, they're good enough.

Young: So, one day, a Saturday morning, I was at home and I got a phone call from Minor. He said "Mike, what's the name of that book you wanted?" I said S.R. Gardiner. "They got it, down here." It was—

Miner: Where was it?

Young: It was a sale they were having at what used to be Miller's Hardware store which is now the Fox and Hounds hair studio.

Miner: Okay

Young: That used to be the Miller Hardware store and they had a floor full of books there. They were selling one of these Friends of the Library things.

Miner: Sure

Young: Just selling things they are getting rid of. I went down there. I told you there was a reprint of this.

Miner: Yeah

Young: I could have bought the reprint but it was several hundred dollars and we didn't have several hundred dollars in those days.

Miner: Uh huh.

Young: I bought that, the ten volume set for a buck a piece—

Miner: Hey, hey, hey

Young: —and that's...you know a lot of these books I'm just going to have to throw away, they'll end up in a dumpster, I know. Uh what I can't give away, what we don't have room for them at home, god knows the grandchildren don't want them. They'll be...I'm thinking already since I'm close to retirement they're must be a little core of books, that at least I'll save and I'll die hoping (laughs) you know that they'll be preserved.

Miner: We'll tell you

Young: Please don't disband that collection that was your grandpa's early steward collection. That's what he used for his research. He read and reviewed and used.

Miner: And that's what you got to do is tell the future why they should care. You know.

Young: Yeah

Miner: El Paso Public library.

Young: It was discarded by the El Paso Public library. Thank god they thought they were worthless. That's one of my prized possessions—

Miner: —That's a wonderful story. You owe it to Minor because he gave you the call.

Young: —I've got my copy of S.R. Gardiner.

Miner: That's great.

Young: But there he was on a Saturday morning down at Miller's Hardware store, rooting through the books there for something and I'm sure he didn't go home empty handed.

Miner: How long was it after you had had that conversation with him. A long time or was it coincidentally right after?

Young: That's an interesting question. I think it was probably in the vicinity of a year afterwards but he had kept it in the back of his mind.

Miner: Amazing. That's just amazing. Did you get a sense that he bought from bookstores a lot or did he purchase it at auction, do you have any knowledge of that kind of thing?

Young: I couldn't say I know where he got his books. I do know uh, he was...well he worked for Sotheby's, I think not Christy's...I think it was Sotheby's. People told you that?

Miner: No, he worked for them.

Young: Oh I think he did.

Miner: Oh my gosh that's new information. Tell me more.

Young: I thought when he was...was it when he was at Princeton? Well so this is by way of speculation, I think I heard that when he was a student at Princeton, he may have worked at Sotheby's and I think he was, I think he may have been an appraiser, uh and that may have been why he developed such a good eye for some things too. He was discriminate in some ways but he had an eye for things than others too.

Miner: Thanks, that's a good lead to follow. I'm going to be talking to his family hopefully next month. Uh but—

Young: —with his son?

Miner: And hopefully Ellen too. Hopefully, so I'm looking for these kinds of questions right to ask them—

Young: —Yes, ask whether he worked for Sotheby's. Yes ask if he worked for Sotheby's.

Miner: —And it's not come up. And it's never come up in any of his interviews that I've seen on him so I'm collecting interviews on him too. You know that talk about this kind of thing so.

Young: He had...a musical instrument collection.

Miner: Yeah

Young: He had that...what kind of a piano was it...a French piano, English piano—

Miner: —a harpsichord

Young: —English piano or French piano it was called and Jim and Andy of Gridley's told me one of the last things he told Ellen was "Sell the French piano" or "Sell the English piano." (Miner laughs) It was down at Gridley's for awhile.

Miner: She actually wrote it out on a note—

Young: Yeah

Miner: —that he displayed. He brought me a copy of it when we talked. Yeah it was sweet.

Young: Have you interviewed Jim then?

Miner: Yeah

Young: Oh good, good.

Miner: Yeah. Wow um, so you think he might have worked at an auction house um, are there other things that you can remember about things you saw in his home? Did you see the basement?

Young: No, no—

Miner: —I'm asking everyone for a picture of the basement—

Young: No, I wasn't in the basement. I don't know where...I don't think I was ever in the basement but I have this distinct impression of these old wooden cabinets with drawers that pulled out that had coins in them so I don't know how that could be. I baffle myself.

Miner: What was your sense of the books you saw in the main level of his house?

Young: Um,

Miner: Did you talk about things that he—

Young: —Yes

Miner: —had in his collection when you visited

Young: Yes so now we're moving from paintings to books which I wanted to do. I gave a talk on campus. One of the Friday afternoon colloquiums talks—

Miner: Uh huh.

Young: —and it was, it was about Boughed the Rising, about cleaning up Shakespeare and other literature in the 19th century. I called it Venus with a firebrand up her blank (Miner laughs) because I had run across a letter in which, in which the person writing the letter said this comet has been out there in the sky recently, and some people think it's like an omen, or it's this or it's that and they said that, the King James I, he says it's "Venus with a firebrand up her blank" (laughs) and this was a printed transcript of that letter and I was sure of course and then there's a little footnote and the footnote says the word, the word that appears here "If suitable for a clergyman to have repeated in this letter and for a king to have spoken, is still nevertheless unsuitable for the chaste ears of the reader."

Miner: Oh my goodness.

Young: I'm paraphrasing but that's pretty damn close to what it said. So that is Boughed the Rising

Miner: Funny

Young: So that's why I used it as my title and I worked like the devil to get my hands on the actual letter—

Miner: Yeah

Young: —to see, well you could pretty much guess what it was but I finally got a friend at Yale University to loan me a reel of microfilm that had the real letter on the microfilm.

Miner: Oh my goodness

Young: —and when I got to the letter itself, it had said arse of course, she has a firebrand in her arse. (laughs) So I gave that talk and I may have been working on my book about King James and homosexuality, yes I must have been working on that. That's why I got in this area of prudery and it's question of why the people were so prudish about James. James had a series of young male lovers. We shouldn't be surprised by this and we should have a pretty good idea of what was going on there—

Miner: Right

Young: —but historians have, they still are, here we are sixteen years later where they're still horribly prudish about this and into denial, they just don't..."King James, how could he have been going to bed with boys," but we know he went to bed with boys.

Miner: Yeah

Young: "Well he just slept with them, that's all he did, he just slept with them." You got to be crazy.

Miner: Brotherly love

Young: Exactly, so this, so this is why I was writing the book, now I'm writing a new expanded pair of eyes edition and as we speak. So we got to Minor's office of Minor's home because there was always a little reception afterwards and Minor pulled this book down off the shelf.

Miner: This one you're holding in your hand?

Young: Yes, it was published in 1715. It's *A Case of Impotency*. It's about a famous divorce case in the reign of James I. The Earl of Sommerset wanted to marry Francis Howard. She was a beautiful, sexy woman. There was only one problem, she was already married to the Earl of Essex.

Miner: Oops

Young: And so they had to prove that the Earl of Essex was impotent and that he had never consummated the marriage.

Miner: Uh huh

Young: So they could get a divorce, so Somerset could marry Francis Howard and James was all in favor of this and James eventually had to pack the court of clergymen who were hearing the case, he had to pack it with enough of his own nominees or appointees to get the verdict he wanted which was give the divorce to Francis—

Miner: Uh huh

Young: —so she could marry my friend the Earl of Somerset so Minor pulled that off the shelf and showed it to me, he loaned...he would loan these books. That's a book written in 1715 and he loaned it to me. I may actually even have put it on the Xerox machine, or at least part of it. (laughs) So I had that book in my possession for a little while and then I gave it back to him. So when they had the auction for his books which I've told you many times over I think was one of the two dumbest, I've been here forty-seven years and I've seen the University do two really dumb things and that was one of them, to sell Minor's book collection on the grounds, as I understood it, that they couldn't preserve it properly. Well shit it wasn't going to be properly preserved by the people who bought it, a piece here and a piece there. Again, why wouldn't you keep a collection in tact. What a horrible...why don't you have that right now as a resource to be researched. It wasn't huge. It wouldn't have taken up a lot of room and it did not have to be in an environmentally controlled room. Minor didn't keep it in an environmentally controlled room and he handed this stuff out for people to take home, borrow, use and who knows if he ever got it all back. He thought it should be used. It should be read. It shouldn't be treated as relics to be kept out of the hands of ordinary people.

Miner: Uh huh

Young: So it could have been put in a room somewhere, a small room at that and people should have had access to it. It shouldn't have been sold all piecemeal as it was but I went to the auction. Oh I think about that auction often.

Miner: Do you?

Young: If I had had more money. They sold his stamp collection. That was among the books was his stamp collection. Why the devil didn't I bid on the stamp collection but these...so I wanted this book because I associated it with Minor and because it is in the field I work in. Actually I've been thinking about writing an article on impotency in the 17th century.

Miner: Oh wonderful.

Young: But it was part of a lot of, I don't know, twelve, fifteen books and so I wouldn't have minded having the others but because it was a lot of...more books, it went for more money than I was willing to spend. So I went over to the guy who had bought the lot and I gave him...I wrote him a little note that said, "Here's my email, if you're interested in selling these off one at a time, piecemeal get back to me. I'd like to buy this book" and several years went by and I got a phone call from a fellow, or an email from a fellow who said, "I just bought some books," another dealer and he said, "I found this note—

Miner: Oh my goodness.

Young: —in a book. I wonder if you still might would be interested in it?”

Miner: Oh my goodness.

Young: So it had gone from the original purchaser into the hands of maybe more, but at least one other bookseller and he found the note, he got in touch with me and then we dickered over the price. Again I don't have infinite resources. I think I finally told him, “I'm just a poor professor, I'll give you a hundred bucks for it, that's all.” (laughs) So I think I bought it for a hundred bucks.

Miner: Good for you.

Young: I did, I do have a proclamation from the reign of Charles I which I must have bought at that auction. Uh, so I have these two things from Minor's collection, a proclamation from the reign of Charles I and a book published in 1715 which is about a famous case in the reign of James I. I was talking to my wife Marsha about this last night. I told her I was going to be interviewed by you for this reason and she said don't forget the cookbooks. He had a tremendous cookbook collection, uh, historical cookbooks, old cookbooks and one of our students, my wife ran the David Davis mansion for about twenty-five years and she had a lot of interns and one of the interns she had was named Sara Vale, a local girl, woman. Her father is a doctor here in town or was, I don't know. She was, she got interested in putting together a cookbook that might have had the recipes that would have been used at the mansion when it was built in 1870's and 80's and she did eventually, they did eventually print that the foundation that supports the mansion printed that cookbook and it was for sale in the gift shop over there. I don't know whether it's still is. Minor gave Marsha and this student arms full of cookbooks to do her research. He was just generous that way with his stuff. He wanted it to get out there and be used.

Miner: We have...one of the areas that we retained was what we ended up calling Conduct of Life books so some of them were the sort of household hints that included table setting and preparing meats and you know all of these things that people would need to know and some of them were moral instruction to youth from secular and other aspects—

Young: —Did you say that the library retained some of his books?

Miner: Oh yeah we kept about ten percent of—

Young: Oh I didn't know that.

Miner: —of his collection.

Young: I'm learning something and that's good.

Miner: Yeah and the areas we kept were areas that Special Collections had identified as collecting focus for them and we kept two different ones, ones that I ended up calling Book Arts, so books that were unique for some printing history kinds of reasons, decorations and bindings and things like that and then this Conduct of Life which was also a new area for the Archives/Special Collections and then we kept his

reference books, books about books. So other than that we kept drama, cause drama was already a collecting area, we kept the Conduct of Life ones, yeah so other areas we could identify—

Young: —I remember

Miner: —in Special Collections.

Young: When you talk about reference books. He knew his...*The Wing* and the Short Title Catalog—

Miner: Yes

Young: —and the Library of Congress catalogs, we had those all lined up in a little hallway joining the cataloging area to the main entry area in the old library here.

Miner: I've seen pictures of it.

Young: Yeah we had them all and I bumped into him a few time because I was always looking for this obscure stuff before the internets.

Miner: Yeah

Young: He would be in there checking on something he was thinking of buying (Miner laughs) or know more about so yeah he had...he was somebody I could talk to about *The Wing* or the Pollard...Pollard and Redgrave *Short-Title Catalog*, things like that. He also...I noticed shortly after he was here...it must have been though...after...am I thinking...I picture this in the new library, was it the old library. Yeah I think it was...I'm not sure uh, but at some point along the way I noticed, again we used to have a Reference section, we don't have a Reference section anymore. Gee, I don't know how much change I can take but we used to have a Reference section (Miner laughs) I don't know how much I can take and it would include encyclopedias and Minor had bought...I spotted this one day, an old ratty, torn, the spines of some of the books were torn, part way torn off, the eleventh edition of the *Britannica*.

Miner: Yes

Young: Now who the hell else would in this town would know—

Miner: Yes

Young: —I guess there are a few dozen of us who would know that the eleventh edition of the *Britannica* is the best encyclopedia ever written. That's the sort of thing he would have thought—

Miner: See I didn't know he would use something like that though. So that's my question, right, I mean he had so many subjects, he had so...such a range. I'm told he bought books he couldn't read and took them to people to tell him what they were about, I mean in languages he couldn't read—

Young: Uh huh

Miner: —so what on earth

Young: Part of his collection of books was also a college catalog collection—

Miner: Yeah

Young: Did you get rid of those?

Miner: No that was actually the collection I was hired to process. That's how I got a job at Illinois Wesleyan.

Young: Really

Miner: Before he died, he donated that collection to the library and then he partially funded my job. The cobbled together funds from a lot of different places. I was hired to do that and on the polar opposite to oversee the digitization of the Argus.

Young: Wow

Miner: So I was dealing with college catalogs.

Young: The old technology and the new, you mentioned...you posed this question about what drove him. I just think it was that, that intellect, that consuming intellect. He just...again when I was in his presence, I just felt so lazy by comparison. He just relished everything and wanted to know about everything. It was that mind.

Miner: Yeah

Young: That dynamic, vital, engaged mind. He's always wanting to know more about things and you must have talked to many people would say I run across these notes that Miner wrote me. Yeah I have...there are at least two notes that I routinely run across from Miner but I bet there are more here if I went through all my books and my shelves here. You know he would run across a reference to a book published in the late 1600's that he thought I should know about and so I have a note there, up there on that shelf about a religious work published in the 1600's that he thought I would get a kick out of. Again he thought I would get more of a kick out of it than I would but he got such a kick out of it. You see.

Miner: Yeah, did you end up looking at that book?

Young: That one no, I didn't because I didn't get the kick out of it that he did.

Miner: Sure. It wasn't your thing.

Young: "Oh I know what that's about and I'm really not interested but thank you anyhow," (laughs) and I think he sent me a copy of the review of Oscar Wilde when Wilde appeared over in Peoria and I had a minor interest in Oscar Wilde so I already knew about that and I already had a copy of that interview which is very interesting, the review, which is very interesting. Oh he appeared here in Bloomington and he appeared in Peoria the night or two before and then he came here next—

Miner: Oh my

Young: —and the reviewer talked about the two performances and had some, I thought, insightful observations on Oscar Wilde that'd make a nonsense out of recent book on Oscar Wilde (laughs) but anyhow it's Oscar Wilde, one day it's Oscar Wilde and the next day it's a religious work from 1670's or 80's. He was just, just voracious.

Miner: So let's move then to the kind of influence, the kind of personality he had here on people, on the institution. I mean we talked about the library already a little bit. What can you say with your span of experiences here about that?

Young: Well...it's not that I'm at a loss for words or know where to start.

Miner: Sure

Young: So many things I'd like to say to answer that question. One is that if we had a president that good, we must be pretty good, right. He was better than we deserved but thank god we had him and I said in my eulogy for him that he was our Thomas Jefferson and uh, I think we were visiting Monticello the weekend he died.

Miner: Oh my goodness

Young: Uh, but he was our Thomas Jefferson and we were his University of Virginia. (Miner laughs) I think that's true. I think he took it upon himself to make us over into the best dang place we could be and without reflecting too much on the preceeding President let me just say that Minor's style was vastly different almost the polar opposite. He made us feel good about ourselves.

Miner: Uh huh

Young: And made us feel we could get in there and compete with the more prestigious places. He upset people because he kept comparing us to Williams College because Williams was right up there at the top of the rankings and so boy people, people like Jim Rudy and others I guess he would have been among those who resented that competed comparison but it was like IWU stood for Illinois Williams University, right.

Miner: I read that in your eulogy and I had not heard that before. That was funny.

Young: But he had vision.

Miner: Yeah

Young: He had vision and his vision of us was that we were pretty damn good and we could compete with the best of them.

Miner: Hmm

Young: And we could go national. There was no reason why we shouldn't be a Haverford or Williams. He came from that environment. He was...I'm hesitant to call him a snob...I don't think he put on airs but there was a little bit of a patrician element about him you might say and he came from that East coast

environment and he knew there was a difference between schools and their not all created equal and you want to run with the big boys. You want to be one of the best and he thought he could make us one of the best. So that's one of the things you got to say that he inspired us, he made us feel good about ourselves. Just by his being there, it made you feel like we must be pretty good because we've got such an incredible president. I think you know...a large part of the US News and World Report ranking is just what university, other university presidents say, think of your university.

Miner: Right

Young: Where would they know, how would they get an impression of us except in their dealings with our president.

Miner: Right

Young: And I think Minor helped us in our rankings, partly by going out there in the world and they were impressed by...they must have been impressed by him and that indirectly impressed them with us.

Miner: Yeah

Young: But he made you feel good about yourself. I heard from somebody else that he said, "As a university president, you had two obligations, one is to persuade the faculty that they're better than they think they are—

Miner: Hmm

Young: —and the other is to persuade them that they're not as good as they need to be (laughs) and the first is easy but the second one is a little harder."

Miner: Oh in both directions, that's great. So he didn't say that to you.

Young: No, that's secondhand.

Miner: Yeah well that's a great quote.

Young: —but it—

Miner: It explains a lot.

Young: It makes sense. I can see him because he had the enthusiasm. He rarely, the president, of course, presides over our faculty meetings and it seemed to me that more times than not when he did that, he'd told some encouraging, uplifting, or moral boosting story about what you the faculty are doing. What I'm hearing back from grads or what happened on campus last week. He was always reporting good things.

Miner: To some extent he was fortunate to be here at a time—

Young: There's no doubt about it.

Miner: —to do that.

Young: He profited from the times, no doubt about it that he came along at the right time. Just as Wilson, by no means demeaning Dick Wilson, they both were the right men at the right time.

Miner: Uh huh

Young: You know we had in my experience here, my first president was Bob Eckley and by the way you never called Bob Eckley, Bob. (Miner laughs) He was President Eckley no matter how old you were or how distinguished you were, you called him President Eckley. You never called him by his first name while he was president. Later in life, probably a few times, probably did refer to him as Bob but what the hell, he wasn't my boss anymore.

Miner: That's right.

Young: He never let you forget that he was your boss.

Miner: Is that right?

Young: But anyhow he had to put the place back in financial order after the rapid growth, after the second World War. Um, what was the name of the president?

Miner: Bertholf

Young: Bertholf had run up a lot of debt.

Miner: Yeah.

Young: Put up a lot of buildings.

Miner: Yeah.

Young: Eckley had to come in and pinch pennies. So he did it partly because the times required it.

Miner: Right.

Young: Other things he did, I don't think they were so required but the penny...back in those days I would have been afraid, I would have hesitated to order more than maybe a half dozen books for the library in a year. I didn't order things that I needed for my own work and should have ordered because we were so steady state it was called, steady state—

Miner: Oh god

Young: —was where the budget just stayed the same year after year so that the endowment could grow but anyhow it was his job and I'm sure the trustees given him that job to make sure...he was an economist and he had to put us back on a sound financial footing after the spending and running up of the debt.

Miner: Yeah

Young: And then Minor came in the roaring eighties when the stock market was doing great up until 2000.

Miner: Yeah

Young: And they could just build him these...everything was going to increase 5% a year or 6 % a year indefinitely into the future. Uh and we finally got decent raises.

Miner: Yeah

Young: That's the single thing. You know Janet McNew didn't want me to put that in his eulogy.

Miner: Hmm

Young: And I thought goddammit that's got to go in there.

Miner: Yeah

Young: He raised our salaries.

Miner: You gave numbers too.

Young: Yes, I had the numbers. She did not want it in there. I'm not sure what she was upset about. In any case I thought that had to be recognized. We finally got paid a decent wage. So he was able to do that I know and he might have racked up too much debt. I know that some people thought it was a mistake to build the library.

Miner: Yeah

Young: He brow beat and twisted arms and got the trustees to go along with it but we're still hurting from the debt we ran up at the time but we had library. Although I tell you, the more books you take out of it, the more you repurpose it, the more I wonder he must be turning over in his grave and I must be wondering what would we be if we built the damn building if we're just going to put other things in it.

Miner: Yeah

Young: I, I walked over to the library today behind a group of visitors because it's President's Day.

Miner: Yeah

Young: And I heard the student who was leading this group because he was facing back toward the group but I was in the back of them so it he was like he was talking to me too. When they got to the library...when he got to the library he said...he pointed to one wing of the library and said, "That's the Writing Center, that's the most popular part of the library."

Miner: Oh my gosh

Young: He also said, "You take your paper in there and they'll take a C paper a B or a B paper an A."

Miner: Oh god.

Young: And I thought, kid, I don't think so.

Miner: Oh my god. Yeah, well they're in the sales business.

Young: Yes so now we've stuck the library in there, we've stuck the IT people in there. God don't tell me we're going to put a coffee shop in there but who knows.

Miner: There is one, it's vending machines.

Young: Well vending machines yeah but at least...I can understand that. So he came at a good...the times were right for him. One does wonder, I certainly grieved his death, but it wouldn't have been easy for him to stay around when the bills came due. When the market dropped and we needed to start pinching pennies that would have been....I don't think frankly he would have been good at his job as he was at the job he had and Wilson, Dick Wilson, the poor fellow, he just...year after year it was just one financial calamity after another and he managed like an Eckley, to pinch the pennies to find some way to go on paying the bills.

Miner: Yeah.

Young: So we've had spendthrift, tightwad, spendthrift, tightwad.

Miner: Yeah

Young: I wish that Eric Jensen could be another spendthrift (laughs) but I'm not sure—

Miner: Well so here's another crazy thought that has come to me as I've been talking to people and it follows on what you're just saying is that...and I keep coming back to my only introduction to him is through his collection. I only met him once and we had like a five minute conversation.

Young: Oh, I didn't realize that.

Miner: That was it. He came to me in the basement when I was working with that collection that I was charged to organize, not the one that was later sold. The one that he donated, and this guy who had this incredible range of interest and I'm starting to think of it as it as an expansionist kind of, you know personal interest and personality—

Young: —and you read—

Miner: —of what he did on campus.

Young: —and you read about collecting and you know the thrill was in the purchase, in the acquiring and then its like you get a little rush from that—

Miner: Yeah

Young: —and then its over...and that's why—

Miner: But he didn't do what you did. You got rid of some paintings.

Young: Well I did...my wife from the museum field calls it deaccessioning.

Miner: Deaccessioning is what we call it in the library.

Young: I'm having a lot of trouble deaccessioning books.

Miner: Yeah

Young: That's what I'm trying to do now but I'm sorry

Miner: But that's exactly the point.

Young: The rush was in the acquiring.

Miner: It is and some collectors get a rush out of getting rid of a collection and reacquiring.

Young: Starting over

Miner: Right and sometimes they go in a different direction and sometimes...I met a guy two years ago who completely donated all of his collection to an institution and then got the bug again for the same author, the same artist and started collecting again.

Young: Oh my

Miner: Just for the joy of it, but Minor wasn't that way. That's what I'm hearing right. As far as I...no one has ever told me that he got rid of anything.

Young: I don't know.

Miner: He may have loaned but I've never heard of anybody said that he gave me these things.

Young: Right.

Miner: Um, and I don't think he ever sold anything so we get to then this type of personality on our campus and writ large, he did that. He acquired, he accumulated, he built to bursting the shelves if you will—

Young: Uh huh

Miner: —but I've heard descriptions of shelves in his home, this campus so he did the same thing.

Young: Yeah

Miner: And part of this doesn't seem like rocket science anymore. It seems all pretty obvious.

Young: Of course the internet came along there and he...you must of heard a lot of stories about how he would spend a lot of time in his office, uh, on Ebay.

Miner: I've heard that so he was not anti-technology.

Young: No, no, no, he was on Ebay buying stuff on Ebay. It just gave him access to the whole world. He had been brought up in that auctionhouse world.

Miner: Yeah

Young: And now on Ebay it's a 24 hour a day auction so yeah he gloried in that.

Miner: Do you think that it was um, uncontrollable, his, his desire to acquire?

Young: That's a very interesting question isn't it. I mean we're almost kind of turning his virtue into maybe a fault here.

Miner: You know, there's a lot been written about bibliomania. It's not like, it's not like it's a terrible vice. I mean—

Young: —I think it was

Miner: —it's been written about

Young: —I think he was obsessive about it. Yeah

Miner: Yeah

Young: But it would have been uncontrollable if he were like a gambling addict who was mortgaging a house to gamble more. I, I don't know how much he spent or how much money he had and I don't know how he spent it.

Miner: Sure

Young: Uh, I suspected Ellen would have been happy if he hadn't spent as much.

Miner: Sure

Young: And uh, the stories when she...when he died left me with the impression that he didn't leave much cash lying around anywhere that she could get her hands on quickly to pay for funeral expenses and just living expenses until they could settle his estate.

Miner: Oh really

Young: So he may have been, he may have been spending a lot of his desposable income on collecting but I don't get the impression that he was doing it to the point where it was affecting the financial well-being of his family, affecting his ability to educate his sons properly and so forth. It helped that the

university provided a home for him and a car I guess. Uh, that gave him more money to spend on his collecting but yeah, so control, that's an interesting question—

Miner: —well

Young: —I don't think it was out of control but I don't think he, I don't think he felt as inhibited or restrained as most normal people would.

Miner: I heard, and the reason I ask is 'cause we were talking about Ebay and someone brought up a story that they were in a meeting with him and a ding came in like a chime that a bid had come up apparently and then he got up from the meeting and went to look at you know that so yeah I...I also have heard him, heard of him saying well that's too much, you know...whatever so it's not like he was maxing out his credit card.

Young: No, no I think he knew his limits.

Miner: Yeah

Young: But he pushed them I guess you might say.

Miner: Sure

Young: He still knew them.

Miner: Sure, well what else do you think we should know to better understand Minor. You mentioned in your eulogy that he was a president for the faculty and I've heard different stories about good and bad about him running faculty meetings so people who appreciated his style and some people who didn't and you have, you have four presidents in your pocket that you can compare this to. I don't know, do you want to say anything about his other interactions or keep it with the kinds of topics that we've talked about.

Young: We can talk more generally, uh, that surprises me that people...You see I'm so old (laughs) and my baseline, my baseline is Bob Eckley.

Miner: Right

Young: I was here for nearly his entire presidency and I don't know how long that was, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen years.

Miner: Seventeen years. Yeah

Young: It was hard times.

Miner: Yeah

Young: It was hard labor. You did not feel appreciated.

Miner: Hmm

Young: He ruled through fear and he never let you forget that you were expendable.

Miner: Oh my goodness

Young: He didn't praise. He didn't want you to become too overconfident, I think. He had a huge problem I think with interpersonal relationships.

Miner: Hmm

Young: Uh, and he was very uncomfortable in faculty meetings and tried to run them, run them. He was an autocrat.

Miner: Well he was from a business background.

Young: Exactly, he came from Caterpillar.

Miner: He didn't have the experience.

Young: He had a PhD. I was amazed when I read his obituary, to learn that he defended his PhD against one of these interrogators, a guy names Schumpeter. Well Schumpeter, I read about him when I was a graduate student because he had this view of imperialism, European imperialism as atavistic, it was leftover from the previous age. It was primitive, this need to acquire territory.

Miner: Hmm

Young: Uh, he was huge. Poor Eckley had to defend his dissertation with Schumpeter grilling him. I guess I should have more respect for him but, that was a scary time. There was another faculty member at that time, Frank Starkey, an African-American—

Miner: Yeah

Young: —we should have prized and kept, a chemist. Frank and I were good friends and Don Koehn in philosophy and the three of us were very outspoken critics of the Eckley regime and our wives would ask us, only half-jokingly after each faculty meeting, "Did you lose your job today?"

Miner: Hmm

Young: Those were scary times and I say, my impression, in my opinion. Do you escape slander if you add that phrase? In my opinion he rules through fear, rather than affection. He was immensely uncomfortable in faculty meetings. I think he felt very much out of his element. He did not see us as friends and he was trying to manage us the way a Caterpillar tractor manager would manage his employees on the assembly line. I remember Bob Bray used to say the one thing that Eckley doesn't understand is that we are not employees. We don't have a boss.

Miner: Uh huh

Young: We're more like a law firm or medical practice but I think lawyers and medical practices are finding out they're not that independent themselves anymore.

Miner: Right

Young: But anyhow, so that's my baseline, that was my introduction to academia and I spent a long time under his rule.

Miner: Right

Young: So when Minor came along, oh my god, what a breath of fresh air. So I saw the way he ran the faculty meetings as much more accommodating, and friendly, much more open to debate and difference of opinion. He didn't rule with an iron fist.

Miner: That's great

Young: I thought I was being ruled with an iron fist and it was dangerous to speak your mind. I still spoke truth to power but I was afraid and I thought there might be repercussions.

Miner: And your very first faculty meeting you did that. It's why you got an AAUP, one of the many reasons you got an AAUP award not too long ago. Did you know Clayton Highum?

Young: Yes

Miner: What did you...do you recall anything about him.

Young: (pause)Uh....you know it reminds me of something about Minor. Uh, Don Koehn was the closest friend I had.

Miner: What department was he in?

Young: He was in philosophy.

Miner: Interesting

Young: and its K-O-E-H-N, K-O-E-H-N and that's no disparity to people like Paul Bushnell who hired me and who is, would be the other person that would be my very closest friend. Mike Weis was a great friend, as well, but Don and I were as closest to love as two guys can get. I loved the man.

Miner: Uh huh

Young: And when he died, I grieved a lot and Minor said, "What do you want to do? What can we do to honor Don." He through a party for Don when Don retired. He threw a retirement party for Don down at the, what is now the...what do they call themselves...it used to be Central Station, it's now the—

Miner: Epiphany, yeah

Young: Epiphany Farms has a restaurant in there. Station, something or other, and then upstairs they had the tapas bar.

Miner: Yeah

Young: The upstairs used to be banquets, wedding receptions, things like that and as I remember it, Minor paid for the retirement party for Don there.

Miner: Wow

Young: And they gave him a Wesleyan chair like you're sitting in and I think he called Don "Mister AAUP" because Don had been a big fan of AAUP. Such a...president of the local chapter and a great advocate of AAUP. So Minor said what do you want to do about Don, what should we do and I don't know whether he mentioned it or I suggested it but I think the parallel he suggested, he said at the beginning, he said at the beginning of every meeting of the Board of Trustees we have somebody say a little something about any member, present or former member of the trustees, who may have died since the last meeting, maybe we should do that at faculty meetings and so he tried that out and I gave a little eulogy for Don and Bob Bray gave a little eulogy for Clayton Highum.

Miner: Oh did he.

Young: So that, that practice didn't continue. We may have tried it once or twice after that first initial maiden voyage. It died out quickly. There just isn't time at faculty meetings for stuff like that.

Miner: Sure

Young: It is a shame how little attention we pay to our Emeritus faculty and even when our faculty die. We always get a condolence from the president—

Miner: Right

Young: —or whoever that is for email these days but it seems like we ought to do more. In any case, I'm reminded...I'm trying to think of something good to say about the dead, Clayton Highum.

Miner: I want to hear it all.

Young: Bob Bray found something good to say about Clayton, I must say. My impression of Clayton Highum was that he did...let's put it kindly, he did not overwork.

Miner: Ok (laughs) alright.

Young: He was...he just kept things, kept a lid on things and didn't...he was not exceedingly ambitious.

Miner: Ok, didn't make any waves.

Young: He was, he was not an empire builder, you can say that in his favor, whatever.

Miner: Yeah

Young: And I remember what Bob Bray said in his eulogy that because I think Bob had been on the library advisory board for many years, committee, whatever they call it, and so he must have had more dealings with Clayton than I would have and he said, "We've got to remember the times in which he operated, those were very straightened circumstances and he did what he could with what he had," and that may well be the case. I didn't interact with him that much. I certainly had now view of the inner workings of the library at the time but one certainly did get the impression or I didn't get the impression of dynamism from him.

Miner: Sure, ok. That's very helpful. That's very helpful. Thank you. How about anything else. Is there anything else. I think we've run the gamut—

Young: —One of the things you'll want to explore with Minor is whether he was too patrician.

Miner: Uh huh

Young: You see I didn't think so. I didn't think so. I thought he got along with anybody and I heard stories of how he could be, at a gathering at Wesleyan, some event, and he was talking to the guy who was setting up the stage or whatever, getting along just fine. I didn't think he put on airs. I think though that some people may have thought he did.

Miner: Yeah

Young: Um, because he was what he was. I mean he was an aristocrat. He was a man of enormous learning and he wasn't a blue jeans kind of guy. He couldn't do, play like some of our politicians sometimes do now, go around in Carhart coats and blue jeans—

Miner: Really

Young: —and drive a pick up truck and that they're just folks.

Miner: Ok

Young: He was what he was and I think some people may have resented him for that unnecessarily and didn't give him the benefit of the doubt. The one picture that I have of Minor, here in my office, is one that Sally Koehn, Don Koehn's widow, gave me. There he is marching in the annual Labor Day parade. I think it is—

Miner: Hmm

Young: —and he's got these two little African kids with him. I get the calls but I can't make out what the signs say.

Miner: Those are title signs so he is in a parade—

Young: —It says what he is

Miner: It's his name and behind him is Dr. Robert Nielsen, the superintendent of schools.

Young: Ok, so those are just the titles—

Miner: Yeah

Young: —of who, Dr. Robert Nielsen and—

Miner: It says Dr. Minor Myers, President of Illinois Wesleyan.

Young: Yeah, right. So here he is walking in the Labor Day parade. I think of him as being able to communicate to people at all levels but I have heard stories that he was not as appreciated by staff as he was by faculty.

Miner: Ok

Young: The story...you know he was very proud of his library.

Miner: Uh huh

Young: I remember he, he was over at lunch one day when I happened to be there. We, the faculty, use to eat lunch together over there. A lot more than they do now.

Miner: Uh huh

Young: And he grabbed me after the meeting, asked me if I had a class or if I was free, I had to come see the library (Miner laughs) and we went over there and it was still hard hat territory. I had to put on a hard hat to walk in the library (Miner laughs) but he just wanted to show it off. He was so proud of it. He was so proud of it. Uh, one of the things he acquired were those stained glass windows.

Miner: Yes. Uh huh

Young: From one of the colleges at Oxford.

Miner: Uh huh

Young: They were disposing of them and he thought, "My god, we could have those," so he put them up there—

Miner: Yeah

Young: —are they still up there on the top floor?

Miner: Uh huh

Young: On the top of the library, and I think the story I heard later was...he was very proud of them and theres a little brochure about—

Miner: Uh huh.

Young: —somewhere in my office describing them.

Miner: Yes

Young: Describing how we acquired them and what they were all about. Uh, but what I heard back, was some meeting of the staff maybe where he was present, it was made clear that they did not appreciate him spending our money on stained glass windows. We should be paying staff more.

Miner: Huh

Young: So I do not know how well he got along with ordinary working people.

Miner: Uh huh

Young: And I think it would have been a challenge for him to get along with them and for them, a challenge for them to see past the aristocratic—

Miner: Sure

Young: Uh, I wouldn't say demeanor, he didn't have...he had a very relaxed demeanor but maybe a bearing, somewhat of a bearing and just the knowledge. I mean I was intimidated by—

Miner: Yeah

Young: He made me feel inferior—

Miner: Yeah

Young: —so and I have a PhD from Harvard. I sure felt inferior...but I did. So I can see that he might have been...the more serious question from how did he view them?

Miner: Yeah

Young: —and was there a bit of a snob in him. I never detected it.

Miner: Sure

Young: But I think...I'm sure others suspected it of him but I just saw him as one of the most astonishing and impressive people I've ever met.

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

Young: Well I'm glad I had the chance to talk about him.

