

Notes on my interview with Benjamin Dean Meritt

I interviewed Ben Meritt in three sessions, November 10-12, 1988, in Austin, Texas. Four cassettes were used altogether, one (sides A & B) on Nov. 10, two (sides A & B for first cassette and side A for second) on Nov. 11, and one cassette (sides A & B) on Nov. 12.

Ben Meritt, at the time of my visit, was nearly 90 years old, blind and quite deaf. Lucy Shoe Meritt, his wife, was present during the first interview, occasionally suggesting to me questions which I should ask him. There were many long pauses, and then I would speak up so that he would know I was there and listening even though he could not see me. I had to raise my voice considerably to make sure he understood me, and I was not certain, even then, that his mind had taken in my question.

As will be evident from the transcript and tapes, he did not always answer my questions, either because he had not heard them, or understood them, or because his own thoughts took him elsewhere. Often in response to my questions, his mind turned back to the studies of his youth and his work with the ancient cities of Northern Greece or he would revert to his tale of the "wood-cutting seminar" at the Institute, one of his favorite memories.

Occasionally I could not understand his words since his voice slurred them somewhat, and I consequently assumed he had said something he had not said, or I restated his words incorrectly.

In order to make better sense of the resulting interviews, I have, with Lucy Meritt's help, edited the transcript, sometimes extensively. Editorial remarks have been put in footnotes or in square brackets. Where the information or anecdote comes from Lucy Shoe Meritt, I have so indicated with her initials LSM. In some places, the text itself has been altered to make it clear. The original tapes are always available for consultation.

Professor Meritt sat in a chair in his bedroom, neatly dressed and apparently attentive. He had evidently looked forward to these meetings because, he told his wife, he wished "to set the record straight." This apparently had to do with his great admiration of Flexner and the role Flexner had played in the early days of the Institute.

Before the first interview, Lucy Meritt showed me an aerial map of Lake Ahmic in Ontario which hung on the staircase of their home. This was where it all began, she said, pointing out where the Flexner house was and the location of the neighboring house which had belonged to Chancellor Kirkland of the University of Tennessee, whose daughter, Elizabeth, was Ben Meritt's first wife and who knew Flexner through Flexner's work on medical education.

The summer of 1988 was the first summer that Ben Meritt had not gone to this summer home. He died on July 7, 1989, at the age of 90.

Patricia H. Labalme

Addendum to these notes, as of May 14, 1997

In preparing these materials for the archives, I am aware that Lucy Meritt, who in 1990 received these edited versions of the interviews with her husband with the understanding that she would correct them, was not able to go over these materials carefully at that time, and then her eyesight began to fail.

So they are submitted as is and should be read as an uncorrected draft of interviews that were, at times, almost incomprehensible, at other times, fairly lucid.

Patricia Labalme

INTERVIEW WITH BENJAMIN DEAN MERITT, Session # One

Date: November 10, 1988

Place: Austin, Texas, in the Meritts home at 712 West 16th Street

Interviewer: Patricia H. Labalme

CASSETTE ONE, SIDE ONE:

Labalme: All right. I consider that now we'll get started. Can I call you Ben, because I feel I know you very well?

Meritt: Absolutely.

Labalme: Tell me when you first came to the Institute.

Meritt: Oh, it was 1931 [1935].

Labalme: And in what capacity?

Meritt: The Flexner summer residence was just next door to the Kirkland residence and it turned out that Elizabeth Kirkland was to be my wife and we knew each other very well from the beginning of our acquaintance.¹ The

¹LSM: Meritt was already married to Elizabeth Kirkland and had met Flexner before Flexner bought the property adjoining Kirkland's at Lake Ahmic in Canada. Flexner knew Chancellor Kirkland and bought the property through the following events: after Flexner's report on medical schools in this country had appeared, Flexner was involved in the selection of certain medical schools to which money would be given to improve their education. When Flexner asked Dr. Howard Kelley (one of the four founders of The Johns Hopkins Medical School) and his assistant, Dr. Tom Cullen, both of Johns Hopkins, to suggest a school in the south to which money might be given, they urged him to talk to James Kirkland, Chancellor of Vanderbilt University. They knew Kirkland because both Kelley and Cullen had places on Lake Ahmic, as did Kirkland. Dr. Kirkland was then invited to come to Baltimore to meet with Flexner. They became friends and Flexner was invited by Kirkland to visit him at Lake Ahmic. That led eventually to Flexner's purchasing a cottage next to the Kirklands' at Lake Ahmic which had formerly belonged to a professor of

Flexner family was a very close-knit family, and I enjoyed every word I had with Dr. Flexner himself. I always called him Dr. Flexner. Privately I would sometimes refer to him as Abe among ourselves. He was a really great man. He was.

Labalme: In what way would you say he was a great man?

Meritt: Well, he knew what he was driving at, and every time he opened his mouth to say anything he wasted very few words. I enjoyed him because he was concise, spoke to the point, and had all his points marked down on the ends of his very several fingers. [I got] to know him every summer when we were at [Lake Ahmic], whether he came first or we came first, but I had an introduction to Dr. Flexner before I'd met him [at Lake Ahmic]. I was told the one thing you want to do first, if you can, is get to know Dr. Flexner. You'll have many things to do with him. So I tried to listen as keenly as I could to what went on in the Flexner household. And they lived right next door to us [in Lake Ahmic] so I had a good chance to do it.

Labalme: Was this Chancellor Kirkland who told you--?

Meritt: Chancellor Kirkland was the Chancellor of Vanderbilt University.

Labalme: And it was through his daughter that you went to this summer home. Is that correct?

Meritt: Yes. He and Dr. Flexner had summer homes that were side by side, and the first summer that I came up to this part of the world in Ontario I didn't know anybody much in these parts, but I did [get to] know some of

religion at Vanderbilt.

the local people up here in this part of the township--natives. And I came to appreciate their qualities, very promptly.

Labalme: And then you had an invitation to the Institute? Did Flexner come to interest himself in your work?

Meritt: He was interested in what I was doing right from the beginning. And it was a great pleasure to me to talk with him about it, because I was interested in his work too, because I'd been told about it by Dr. Kirkland. And he [Flexner] had his nets spread over a great terrain, a large territory. [In all his work] he knew everybody from the topmost janitor down to the lowest pedestrian--

Labalme: And he was curious about your work in the Agora, is that correct? Is that what drew you together?

Meritt: Well, I feel that he and I generally fused our interests.

Labalme: What was the fusion of your interests and his interests?

Meritt: The Agora excavation.

Labalme: Right. And Flexner himself had some connection with the Agora, did he not?

Meritt: Well, it so happens that I had the goodly part of a year at the School at Athens [1920-22], so I had had that initial experience rather early on.

Labalme: Yes, and you had worked out there. Who were the people involved?

Meritt: I worked later with Dr. Shear as one of the directing geniuses of the American School of Classical Studies at the Agora excavation, where we were giving most of our attention those days. And I was interested in

that from the beginning, of course, and my first associations with the material from the Agora formed the basis of some of my studies. We'll have a look at them before we're done with it.

Lucy Meritt: Tell her that story of his [Flexner's] visit with Mr. Hill.

Meritt: The Director of our School in Athens was one Bert Hodge Hill and he was interested in everything connected with the School. Bert Hodge Hill. We did work under his direction when we excavated, or when we wrote up our excavation report. These things were known to him and he supervised them, and we had done a number of excavations you might say before getting down to work really with the things that were to concern us later. I helped in the first big expedition from the American School to find out what went on in the old Odeum, the so-called Odeum [at Corinth]. Another student and I, Oscar Broneer, he and I took turns supervising the excavation of this Odeum. It had rock-cut seats and was on the side of a hill just below the Agora [of Corinth].

Lucy Meritt: Tell her about the visit of Dr. Flexner and Bert Hill, talking about the prospective excavation of the Agora and Dr. Flexner's reply and then his action on it.

Meritt: Yes. Well, we had the problem of a number of colleges participating one way or another in the excavation of the Agora.² My own

²LSM: Dr. Flexner's interest in Greek and the whole of ancient Greek civilization was his abiding interest. He had long, therefore, wanted to see the excavations and had finally succeeded. Burt Hodge Hill, Director of the American School, to whom of course he went, was happy to show him around Athens. As they stood on the Acropolis, Burt Hill waved to the north down into the area that we now know as the Agora and said, "This of course is where the heart of the ancient Athens that you know and love lies. We must investigate it somehow. They're beginning to tear down the old houses, build up something higher, that means digging deeper and destroying what's there.

first work was small, one little section of northern Epirus which I had taken for my bailiwick, because I wanted to study the geography of north Greece. And I made a special effort to, first of all, to get transportation. I went to the head of the state railways in Athens and told them what I wanted to do.

Labalme: This was in Northern Greece?

Meritt: Yes, this was in northern Greece.

Labalme: Where there were archaeological sites?

Meritt: Yes, I told the director of the railway system that if there was any [means] of helping me get to the places I wanted to study, I would write them up in a way that would be agreeable to them and to us as well.

Labalme: [Laughter] It sounds like a good bargain. Well, it's been an extraordinary achievement and I've had the pleasure of looking over the material that you've written and it's a very impressive collection of books and discoveries. And Flexner--I want to get back to Flexner and the

The Greek government can't afford it. They want one of the foreign schools to take it on. None of the foreign schools can afford it--we're going to have to work together with a group of the foreign schools and divide up the area." To which Dr. Flexner replied, "It won't work!" "Yes, I know," said Mr. Hill, "But there's no other way and we must do something before the evidence is gone. The American School ought to do it, but we can't possibly do it alone. We have to work together." "No, it won't work," said Dr. Flexner. "What are you going to do? You're going to divide it up and you will find that the dividing line is right in the middle of one building that you find. Who's going to publish which side of the building?" Dr. Flexner envisioned from the very start the completion of an excavation right down to the publication of it. Well, he came back home worrying about this. And that's when he went to Raymond Fosdick and he not only went to Raymond Fosdick and asked him to go to Mr. Rockefeller but Dr. Flexner himself invited Mr. Rockefeller to lunch. And he told Mr. Rockefeller that "If you sponsor the recovery of ancient Athens which is the core and background of our whole civilization, there's no better way for you to gain immortality."

Institute. I can see why, as a Greek scholar himself, he was interested. But then how did it work out with your actually coming to the Institute?

Meritt: Dr. Flexner's connection with the American School was his interest in what we were doing.

Labalme: And so, how did it work out that he actually invited you or asked you to come?

Meritt: Well, we began these excavations [in Corinth] on the Odeum. Now this was a great venture where we found stone-set seats of the music-hall. One of our chief colleagues was a man who was older than I was. He was a Swede, Oscar Broneer.

Labalme: Yes, I know his name.

Meritt: Well, he's still there. He must be 102 by now.

Labalme: Really?

Meritt: He's built himself a house.

Labalme: In Greece? Isn't that extraordinary?

Lucy Meritt: Tell her about how you started on the tribute lists, and then, Alan West, and Malcolm [McGregor], how you brought them--

Meritt: One of the cities that paid money to Athens was one of the cities of the Athenian empire and the one that I put my attention onto first was one of the northern cities of Epirus, northern central Greece. We hadn't narrowed it down very much then. My first experience was with northern Greece; I made it my job to visit the countryside as well as I could by myself, and I have some notebooks somewhere that tell of my first experiences which were rather interesting because one of the things that I did first was to go to Mount Athos. I thought not only will I see some

good antiquities but I would have authenticated the site of an ancient village. I made my acquaintance with them by knocking at the back door, so to speak, because I was up in northern Thessaly and wanted to get a look at what was going on in that part of the Greek world, and I hit upon the direction that I could do best if I studied individually one of the monastic convents. There were many monasteries, about 21 of them, I think and I went to [them] all.³

Labalme: Was there some difficulty about getting this permission?

Meritt: No, none whatever.

Labalme: And were you making squeezes at this time? You were already collecting the material that you would bring back to the Institute someday?

Meritt: Yes, I did. When I first began to work in the field in Greece, so to speak, to find some place to work on, I had to decide what to work on and I began to study the geography of Macedonia and the geography of Macedonia was very simple, because there were three peninsulas, long, narrow, sui generis. The important one was Mount Athos, which was the easternmost, [there was] the central one, then there was the western one. These were the places where monastic establishments had grown up on the land just as I knew them first. They were monastic farms and built by the hard work of their labor and they cared for their monastic establishment.

³ LSM: It was at one of the other monasteries, not Mount Athos, but a dependency of Mount Athos, that Meritt stayed and from which he was able to do the exploration of this whole area. No one else was living there at the time.

Labalme: Yes. But I'm interested in what attracted you to the Institute. What are some of your early impressions of the Institute?

Meritt: Well, the Institute, to me, was Flexner. I used to work with Flexner.

Labalme: Why was that?

Meritt: Well, it seemed to me to offer a fair chance of continuing my work on the Tribute Lists. [Earlier in my work] I had wanted to get people that lived longer down there and ploughed the earth, took the cities and were closest to sites that were already settled. I learned them first, not because they were connected with the monasteries but simply because they were places on the map and had to be studied by the Athenians if they were going to run that empire. They were going to have to [do business] with these cities like, places like Thessalonike, for example, on one of the peninsulas, a central connection with northern Greece. The thing, of course, was that I was dealing with people scattered around Greece and these places belonged to the cities that paid tribute to Athens, so much per talent and I thought it would be a good idea to make a list of them, and I decided to make it, and I did I suppose what now would be called a first preliminary study of the tribute-paying cities of central and northern Greece. I also took the students of the American School on their trips around Greece. So that we had a basis to work on already. I applied to the Patriarch of Constantinople as he then was, and he was the one in charge of the Greek settlement of monasteries and the middle one of these three peninsulas I spoke of--northern Greece, formerly they would be north of Thermopylae and on land and they had wheat

fields and they would grow their wheat and harvest it.

Labalme: Just as they did in the old times. There was a continuity.

Ben, I'm going to stop for a minute. Just wait till I change the tape.

All right?

END OF CASSETTE ONE, SIDE ONE.

CASSETTE ONE, SIDE TWO.

Labalme: Tell me about what you remember about the Institute, whether it was the early years or the later. What do you think of now as you look back on your Institute years?

Meritt: I didn't know the Institute, except through Flexner. I was interested in what he was doing. In my work it was sort of natural that I would just spread out my interests onto the landscape as they would fit in with the geography of Greece. I began to study the various parts of Greece that belonged to the Athenian empire and keep a record of them and it was not entirely hit or miss. Many a city would be part of some other city sprung from it, that would be in the neighborhood. I have now a list of cities that are not all well known even to the experts because many of them had no names, when I came along.

Labalme: Was one of the advantages of your being at the Institute that you were able to, once you were there, to make of it a center for the study of epigraphy?

Meritt: It was. My interest was in Northern Greece, because I wanted to get up to that part of the land which was less known. Peoples who lived around Piraeus were all pretty well known.

Labalme: And the islands were also, probably--

Meritt: They knew the islands pretty well, too.

Labalme: Yes.

Meritt: Well, I wanted to get to these places where there had been settlements separate from anybody else, but not too far away. There were the twenty-one observatories and they were all pretty substantially developed, they'd been developed since the year 900. I would guess at it now that they would be from the ninth century mostly.⁴

Labalme: These were the monasteries?

Meritt: These were the monasteries, and they were wealthy, the one that was most wealthy of all was the Russian monastery. They had sufficient knowledge of the folks back home in Russia [who] took an interest in this Russian monastery, called Mount Athos. It was one of the wealthiest ones there.

Labalme: Yes, I've heard much about it, but Ben, I really am here to talk about the Institute and some of your memories of the Institute. I want you to tell me about Panofsky, for example.

Meritt: Oh, he and I arrived at the same time.

Labalme: And what was he like?

Meritt: Well, he was a wonderful fellow. I liked him enormously. And Mrs. Panofsky, too.

Labalme: Was that Dora?

⁴LSM: Meritt was interested in all Greek periods. That was not always true of all classicists. Many tended to put on blinders after the late Roman period. There was no period of Greece that Meritt wasn't interested in.

Meritt: I liked both of them very much. [long pause].

Labalme: After you came to the Institute, did your work change in a way, once you were there. Did you work on different things, at the Institute from what you had done earlier?

Meritt: We had little places all around Greece. And they would be here and there and yonder as the case might be, and we would keep track of them, and make them members of our empire, as we called it.

Labalme: You were like a geographer of ancient Greece in your work. You were putting all these cities on a new map.

Meritt: We had to get them on the map.

Labalme: That's right. And you did that. And was that what attracted Flexner, is that what he wanted you to do when he brought you to the Institute?

Meritt: I don't think Flexner wanted us particularly to do that. When I first joined the Institute, I did it because I knew Flexner and was introduced to him by my future father-in-law.

Labalme: Yes, but he must have been interested in your work, to bring you there.

Meritt: Well, he was interested in it. He was interested because we were working in Greece, and we had a central core of interest about getting things in Greece organized so that we could make some sense of what was going on there.

Labalme: Which you accomplished over the years in a most extraordinary way.

Meritt: We had to get the geography settled down to fit on the first list

of tribute: the first time they paid any tribute in a regular way to Athens was 454.

Labalme: Right. And this led to your work on the Tribute Lists.

Meritt: Yes. The work on the Tribute Lists.

Labalme: Which was such a major achievement. Well, Ben, the Institute served you very well, in a sense, did it not? It gave you what you needed.

Meritt: The Institute helped me out in many things I wanted to get done, but it was done through the Institute which had the machinery to keep the records and know what we were doing and getting it not to run off the rails and doing something that meant nothing. And we had to have some kind of organization and we did that, first of all in my estimation, through the cities of Thrace. I wanted to build up the cities around Thrace. I discovered the city of Torrone which was one of the naval bases of the Athenian empire. It's a beautiful place, incidentally, and a magnificent harbor. Oh, I bet many a Greek city wished they had as good a harbor as they have now at Torrone, but I made my acquaintance at Torrone by going up to knock on the door of a land-owner who owned property and raised corn.

Labalme: And when you were at the Institute, you were able, as you say, to have the machinery to handle all these excavations and explorations. After Flexner left, when Aydelotte came, was he as supportive as Flexner was?

Meritt: Yes.

Labalme: What was he like?

Meritt: He was a very congenial soul and very good companion.

Labalme: Did he have as much knowledge of antiquity as Flexner did?

Meritt: I don't think he had as much knowledge as Flexner had or his breadth of experience and interest. But I didn't bother about that very much. I was happy to have my bailiwick mapped out for me, and there it was.

Labalme: And you continued to do your own work.

Meritt: We'd carry on from there.

Labalme: In your relations with others in the School of Historical Studies, in the School of Humanistic Studies, who do you remember in particular of your early colleagues? What are your recollections of the early colleagues you had? For example, Einstein, you surely knew. Did you have some conversations with him?

Meritt: You mean the community. To the best of my recollections, we had almost no Faculty meetings at the Institute.

Labalme: I know that there were Faculty meetings because I've seen the minutes and I've noticed your participating in some of them. But maybe they just weren't that important, and worth forgetting.

Meritt: Well--

Labalme: Did you have school meetings with your colleagues when you chose visiting members or other members of the Faculty? Do you remember some of those?

Meritt: Yes. I remember some of them.

Labalme: And is there anything that you particularly remember that you'd like to tell me about those earlier meetings?

Meritt: First of all, we all centered our interest on Dr. Flexner and his guidance and naturally we brought our ideas together and had a unanimity that I liked very much.

Labalme: I'm sure. Do you remember some of the younger people, the visiting members?

Meritt: Well, they weren't all young.

Labalme: Who were some of your associates whom you particularly remember at the Institute, whom you worked with?

Meritt: One that I remember particularly was an Englishman by the name of H. T. Wade-Gery. Wade-Gery. He was a fellow of All Souls. I had invited Wade-Gery to come over with me for many of things we wanted to discuss together because when we began to knuckle down to a study of the Athenian Empire then I had to get people like Wade-Gery in with me [with whom I had first worked at Oxford, the year before I came to the Institute].

Labalme: You introduced him to the project?

Meritt: That was something that we did together.

Labalme: Yes. And he came quite often to the Institute, did he?

Meritt: Oh yes. He was, as a matter of fact, he just lived in Athens. He'd been the British head of School there, he ran all the British school of archaeology so they had a base and they could work from there, which they did. But Wade-Gery was a very well documented man, historically, he knew his history and he knew the things that he wanted to know very, very well indeed. I had to give him credit for many things in the early years

of our work together.

Labalme: It sounds like a fortunate collaboration.

Meritt: It was fun. Oh, it was fun. That's what it was.

Labalme: That's a wonderful thing to be able to say about the work you've done, that you really enjoyed it and enjoyed it with good company.

Meritt: Yes. We were a goodly company.

Labalme: And do you think that continued for many years at the Institute?

Others came and went?

Meritt: I'm sure it did.

Labalme: Then did it change at any point for you?

Meritt: Not for us. I ran through a lot of the things on my list I wanted to get done.

Labalme: You didn't retire until 1969, and you were writing and publishing all the time, and even after you retired you continued to publish.

Meritt: That's right. I had to do it afterwards.

Labalme: I have the impression you never really finished. Is that correct?

Meritt: No, we didn't finish. Call it finish, but there's always something else that has to be left over. You never really finish it until you--I wouldn't like to quote anybody as saying this was a finished job.

Labalme: Yes, because in scholarship there's always a new interpretation, and new discoveries.

Meritt: We did that all the time.

Labalme: And what about some of the controversies about your work? Did you enjoy those, or did they just come and go and you figure that's part

of the life.

Meritt: How's that?

Labalme: How did you feel about some of the controversies about interpretation in your field?

Meritt: Oh, I think sometimes we 've gone off on a wrong alley. I don't agree with all the things that we've done. One of my particular protegés went off the track, I think, obviously doing things he ought not to have done, so we had to sort of cancel that out. I've tried to obliterate many of the things he did that were wrong.

Labalme: One of the early people you mention was Sterling Dow. I studied Greek with Sterling Dow at Harvard. Wonderful man.

Meritt: Yes. I have no quarrel with Sterling Dow.

Labalme: You were quite an unusual group of people working with the Greek inscriptions and with the Agora. Was Homer Thompson one of your students?

Meritt: Not primarily. He was his own. Homer Thompson.⁵

Lablame: Were you responsible for bringing him to the Institute.

Meritt: I was important in getting him to the Institute, yes. I was.

Labalme: And Hetty Goldman also?

Meritt: No. Hetty came just a year after I. She had excavated some of the first excavations we have near Thebes [Halai].

⁵LSM: Meritt felt that they were more colleagues than teacher and student. LSM also recounted the story of Oppenheimer's puzzlement that Homer's residence at the Institute was different from any other permanent member, since he went to Greece every spring term for the excavation period, but he was told that those were the terms of Homer's appointment. The minutes simply say that the Faculty voted to offer Homer Thompson a professorship according to the terms set forth by Professor Meritt, but these terms are not specified.

Labalme: Is that Colophon?

Meritt: No, she dug at Colophon later where I was a member of her staff.

Labalme: It's nearly time for us to stop this morning. Why don't we stop now and agree that tomorrow we will go on, if you feel like it. Is that all right with you? And I'd like to talk tomorrow about some of your memories about the Institute.

Meritt: Yes, I have them, of course.

END OF CASSETTE ONE, SIDE TWO. END OF SESSION ONE.

INTERVIEW WITH BENJAMIN DEAN MERITT, Session Two

Date: November 11, 1988

Place: Austin, Texas, in the Meritt's home at 712 West 16th Street

Interviewer: Patricia H. Labalme

CASSETTE I, SIDE ONE

Labalme: All right, Ben, we're all set to go on talking about the Institute. Can you hear me?

Meritt: Yes, I can. Have we anywhere in this part of the proceedings the principal names of our Faculty who joined with me in talking over things about the Institute?

Labalme: I have a list of some names I could give you.

Meritt: I think I'd like to have that--just to mention the names of the people who were--

Labalme: Well, of course there was Herzfeld in those early days. There was you and Panofsky and Lowe and Herzfeld.

Meritt: Yes.

Labalme: Do you want to talk about any of those people?

Meritt: Lowe and Panofsky and who?

Labalme: Herzfeld. Ernst Herzfeld? Well, tell me about Lowe or Panofsky--and later, of course, there was Ed Earle. Remember Edward M. Earle who was in the School of Humanistic Studies with you?

Meritt: That's right.

Labalme: And there was Ernst Kantorowicz. Do you remember Kantorowicz?

Meritt: Oh, very well.

Labalme: Those were among the historians, and Woodward, but there were many mathematicians too, like Oppenheimer and Veblen, Gödel, Selberg. I

would be interested in anything you have to say about any of those people.

Meritt: Yes. Well, ours was a closed compact. When we got together, we had what I called our seminar in woodcutting.

Labalme: Tell me about that.

Meritt: I liked to get the members of the faculty out into the woods and we'd size up a tree. I'd look at it and say, that's a little too big for us to handle at one clip like this. Why don't we take the next size down? Or the next size up. And we would just parcel out how much work had to be done. We had various kinds of saws, and I had my cross-cut saw and they were usually the ones we used always, because we had them around, always available. No, I enjoyed the informality of the people who were called upon to give free opinions and see what it looked like to them and so on. I think we did a mighty good-looking job with what I called my seminar on wood-cutting.

Labalme: How many faculty members would come?

Meritt: Oh four or five, anyway.

Labalme: And did everybody work or did some stand around and comment?

Meritt: Oh, once in a while there would be some who would not do it, but usually, if they started it, they liked to keep it up because it was fun. We had a good time. We cut the wood, and we split it and we had a wagon load. I think [Deane] Montgomery provided his truck so that we could load the finished product in his truck and drive it around to his back porch and unload it there. He'd take it down into the cellar.

Labalme: That sounds like a very good activity to bring the professors of the Institute together. Were there other activities like this? Did you

eat together at mealtime, with mathematicians or physicists?

Meritt: Well, we usually had meals with people who were accustomed to eating together. For example, Harold Cherniss always sat at a table for lunch, along with whoever happened to be along.

Labalme: Did he eat with historians or sometimes with people from the other Schools?

Meritt: Sometimes with other Schools-- a little bit mixed up once in a while. I enjoyed the conversations that I had with Harold Cherniss who was closest to me, I think, in the interests of what work was being done. I liked him very much, and I certainly miss Harold now that he's gone.

Labalme: I'm sure you do. He was a fine scholar.

Meritt: A wonderful man.

Labalme: Who else do you remember joining you in those meals?

Meritt: Oh, some of the time we had Panofsky, and once in a long while we'd get one of the--I called them--the ranking officials, people like Veblen¹--he would sometimes join in with the group of people doing some kind of work for the fun of it, wanting to see how they could do it, whether they had any better way of doing it.

Labalme: Did you feel that there was a real community such as Flexner intended?

Meritt: Oh I thought so, it really was.

Labalme: It really worked?

Meritt: There were four or five who were a solid core, four or five, I

¹LSM: Veblen had a kind of "vice-director" status. At least, he was so treated by Flexner.

counted them, and they would stick together pretty consistently.

Labalme: And who were those four or five, besides Cherniss?

Meritt: Oh, Montgomery, Panovsky. Panofsky was always uppermost in my thoughts because Panofsky and I entered the ranks of the Institute for Advanced Study at the same time. I liked Panofsky, and we had a common problem.

Labalme: What was that?

Meritt: It was the dog.

Labalme: The dog?

Meritt: Panofsky had a dog, and the dog, believe it or not, had discovered how to get the paper cap off of the bottle that carried the milk.

Labalme: Oh my goodness!

Meritt: Think of it for a moment as something rather unusual. Here would be a dog, and he would get the paper cap out of the way, and somehow or other get this bottle up so he could drink out of it and he got a pretty good drink before anybody discovered what was going on. I think that was [among our] major discoveries, the discovery that we had intelligent dogs who knew how to open a milk bottle and drink what they wanted.

Labalme: I think that's remarkable.

Meritt: I think we did a good job in taking care of our own wood, the wood for our fires. I know Montgomery was always glad to provide his truck to carry the wood up to the top of the hill and we'd distribute it, and he would decide how it would be distributed. Nobody would get too much wood out of the general effort, but everybody would have a go at it.

Labalme: I suppose it was good he was a mathematician in dividing the logs.

Meritt: Well, he could divide the logs so it would be absolutely accurate, but we didn't bother very much, I'm afraid, about the absolute accuracy of it.

Labalme: Do you feel that later on the Institute changed in this quality of community, or did it retain that as long as you knew it?

Meritt: Well, I think we held together pretty well as long as I knew them, and I enjoyed Harold Cherniss particularly because we had interests in common. Harold Cherniss was always present when there was any study to be done. I used to call on Harold frequently to give me the proper translation of my Greek text from the early mathematicians, and I would call on Harold to make sure that I was getting it right before I would commit myself to it. Four or five mathematicians were right with us all the time in my work.

Labalme: Of course, both Panofsky and Kantorowicz had good classical training, right? That made a difference in your being able to share common problems?

Meritt: I found that the common problems become pretty general common problems. We didn't go into dividing the fine lines that were very very visible. We'd get a pretty general idea of what was going on and then talk about them from then on.

Labalme: Such as what? What were some of the topics or problems that you remember?

Meritt: The mathematicians would divide the hypothetical problems of so

and so much [per acre] worked out for a special group, working on how many, on what kind of wood, and how much wood they were going to size up, you see what to cut from the next hill, and we would divide the work between us so that nobody had too big a burden of actual sawing with the cross-cut saw or splitting with the axe, but we were careful to divide the work so we got it done before the end of the day was over.

Labalme: It would take a whole day?

Meritt: Oh it wouldn't take a whole day, much less.

Labalme: I'm sure it was great exercise and lots of fun.

Meritt: That it was.

Labalme: Tell me, I want to talk about the relationship between the School of Humanistic Studies or Historical Studies and the School of Mathematics. In general, were you ever competing for funds?

Meritt: Not that I know of.

Labalme: Because there was in the records some concern when a new professor was appointed in mathematics, whether there would be funds for an appointment in Historical Studies.

Meritt: It made no difference at all, as far as I was concerned.

Labalme: Yes. You didn't worry that the Schools were of different--

Meritt: Far from it. If we were interested in the matter at all we would welcome him. We would welcome him with open arms. We had a group of four or five: Montgomery, Veblen--they were the leaders and they were pretty faithful and they were always good mathematicians and doing the job that had to be done.

Labalme: Tell me about the relations with Princeton University.

Meritt: We couldn't tell the difference.

Labalme: Really.

Meritt: No.

Labalme: How about Charles Morey who played quite a role in the early days.

Meritt: He was one of the first who was interested in what we were doing. It was Morey who first introduced me to the group. He knew what I wanted to do. Morey would carry on and he would sometimes help me out very much with an idea that was one of his and not one of mine. That was all to the good. I think we had a good all-round connection. I looked on Morey as fundamental to us. Morey was one of the chief foundation-stones of the group that I belonged to.

Labalme: Well, he was interested in building up the School of Historical Studies and evidently gave some advice to Flexner about appointments. Is this your recollection?

Meritt: I was never consulted about the appointments, but I was interested always when I heard about it, and I was interested whenever we had a new man that we were going to appoint. I would like to know about it and we were told about it as something that was going to be done. Frequently, I got Harold to comment on the mathematics of a composition of Euclid which would be mathematically sound and we would write it down and see how we came out and keep track of it, keep track of what work came out of it. I had a lot of that to be done because I had so many fractions with the people who were working on the mathematical groupings as I had to do with both the Tribute Lists and the Calendar. I never felt let down,

shall we say, by any of my mathematicians. I did enjoy the confidence of my colleagues. I liked particularly Veblen in mathematics. He was a good mathematician.

Labalme: And what was he like as a human being?

Meritt: Wonderful. A wonderful human being.

Labalme: Tell me about him. Was he interested in your work?

Meritt: He was. He would sometimes look over my shoulder, say "how did you get that?" I would tell him if I knew.

Labalme: Much of your work with the Tribute Lists was mathematical?

Meritt: Yes it was, all mathematical. The linguistic part of it was purely incidental. I sometimes had to spread the mathematical veneer a little thin sometimes, in order to get everything in. It was hard to get everybody satisfied at the same time. Well, I think we succeeded pretty largely.

Labalme: I think you did.

Meritt: We used to say that we could not be satisfied until we'd done it to our satisfaction as well as to that of the mathematicians.

Labalme: And of course this was true in your work on the Athenian Year and the Calendar. That's highly technical, is it not?

Meritt: It is. It had to be accurate, too. I corrected a good many mistakes that had been made by others in mathematics simply because they didn't understand. Malcolm McGregor was my right-hand man. He was really, I would say, fundamentally a very precise geographer. He sometimes knew how many places you'd have to allow for such-and-such an equation, whether it would be big or little, and littler didn't mean that

we didn't give it a lot of attention. If we had a small town in Northwest Greece we would give it as much prominence in our calculation or the geography of that region as we would to anything much more considerable.

Labalme: I didn't realize that geography was so important along with the financial contribution. Tell me a bit about how they worked together--the tribute and the geography.

Meritt: The size of it would be determined by the general contour of the land and how many crops could be reckoned in on such-and-such contours. They would be stayed, fixed figures that would turn up regularly for some of the principal cities that--shall we say had one talent or two talents or even five talents for a year-----accumulation. Tribute had to be paid to Athens.

Labalme: So the tribute was based on the economy and geography of every particular town.

Meritt: And the location. A small place, like Stagira, for example, which was the birthplace of Aristotle, as you know--

Labalme: The Stagirite.

Meritt: --doesn't count very much in the Tribute Lists but it has to be there just as surely as the one that is much bigger.

Labalme: So you were recovering not just a financial world but the whole geographic and economic world.

Meritt: The whole context. And the shipping--where the shipping came from and where it went to, and which ones of them went to the islands, like Pepyrinthus, and some of the far-away islands, now near Rhodes. We tried to figure it out so it would balance properly. Maybe we did too

much of that, but I don't think we tried anything that didn't work.

Labalme: I think it seems to have worked very well and resulted in a recovery of this aspect of Greek civilization. What a satisfaction that must have been to you.

Meritt: We had a good time doing that.

Labalme: It was like solving a mystery.

Meritt: But one of the people who helped solve the problems along with me was Malcolm McGregor who knew the problem from the local point of view. He had all kinds of leads that led [us] to believe that such-and-such a place should be put on a bigger map. They would carry more power if they were, say, put on a little bigger scale. We would try to do as we could with them. Some conditions were not so sure as many others. We tried to make them sure. And when we didn't see it, we didn't know whether we were doing the right thing. We would admit it. I think you'll find that we've done that pretty seriously.

Labalme: I think that that is the general conclusion that it was brilliantly accomplished and solid scholarship. Tell me--there's something else I'm curious about. I'm wondering--did you ever get to know any of the Trustees of the Institute? People on the Board of Trustees who might have been interested in your work?

Meritt: Not in my work. But people like Veblen--I knew Veblen very well.

Labalme: Here's another question that interests me. Flexner hoped that the Institute would influence universities and colleges to be more flexible, because he thought the Institute's freedom and elasticity would spread, would affect American higher education. Do you think that

happened?

Meritt: I think we went about as far as we could go there.

CASSETTE ONE, END OF SIDE ONE.

SESSION II

CASSETTE ONE, SIDE TWO

Labalme: I wonder if we could talk a bit about the war years at the Institute, because during the time of the second World War you actually did some work for the government.

Meritt: No, I didn't do much.²

Labalme: I know that while you were at Oxford, in 1935-36, you went and visited Germany before you came to the Institute. Do you remember any of the experiences with your colleagues at that time?

Meritt: Except that I enjoyed every bit of it.

Labalme: You had wonderful colleagues there.

Meritt: I certainly did. I was associated particularly with Wadham College. Wade=Gery worked for me on the Tribute Lists. That's one nice thing about the Tribute Lists. They do contain certain constants in making assessments that are consistently good, all down the line. I think they were remarkable. The Athenians thought so too, apparently. They kept it all. If you look into the Tribute Lists and find you have

²LSM: Although Meritt did work as a voluntary consultant for Eastern Mediterranean affairs for the Office of the Coordinator of Information, operating under Colonel Donovan, he did not count this as of much importance next to the work done by those in the armed forces.

something that was seven and a half talents for a year, that's what it will be. That's what it will be for the next year. I think we can depend upon what the Tribute Lists tell us for the ability of a city to pay up and pay something worthwhile. Anyway, I have assumed that to be true, and I take my assumption on the basis of a good many citations of similar content before or after.

Labalme: In looking at your many books, I've come across something called the "lapis primus" or the "stele primus". What was that--the first stone? Tell me about that. What is it? Why was it important?

Meritt: Well, it was the stone stele on which were inscribed the first tribute paid, following the assessments levelled upon the cities. That is the one where you have first of all the stated designation of something that is definitely regular right on through. If it's one drachma and five obols, it will be that until they change it to something else. With some of the smaller ones, they're harder to be sure of than the bigger ones. The bigger ones are pretty apt to be the way they were the last time. I don't think we've made very many changes out of the ordinary, because, oh we were in time of war, we can tell whether it's a fixed sum that belongs there or does not belong there. I think we've taken the lists pretty carefully over the coals and tried to find out what is best now for this city here and that city there and if we don't know we make a balanced assessment as will probably seem reasonable. We've tried to get them to fit into the picture.

Labalme: And this is what interested Flexner, I understand, in this lapis primus--that was what attracted him to your work?

Meritt: No, it was the whole problem of the Tribute Lists. The lapis primus was the first one in 454.... I have a lot of my favorite sons, I call them, cities like Torrone, lovely place, I must say, I think anything that's as lovely as the harbor town of Torrone deserves consideration. It's a perfectly beautiful harbor. And I like it because I found it first. I found it and it hadn't been discovered until I came along and found it in the Tribute Lists.

Labalme: What a pleasure, a whole discovery!

Meritt: Oh that was wonderful. I enjoyed that.

Labalme: I'm sure you did. What did you think lies ahead for archaeology. If you were advising a young person today, an archaeologist, what would you recommend that he concentrate on?

Meritt: Well, I think the modern trend is to go into agricultural archaeology, and the students we have now working in southern Italy are pretty well settling down to what can be learned of the agrarian population--how much they can get from a piece of land and how it would all be divided if they are going to divide it. I think the work that is being done by people from the University of Texas in southern Italy is well worth paying attention to. I like the work they are doing.

Labalme: And how about underwater archaeology?

Meritt: Oh that's exciting beyond measure. That's exciting beyond words. We happen to know the young man who's doing that and knew of his work from the beginning.

Labalme: Who is that?

Meritt: [George Bass].

Labalme: Do you think the field of archaeology is still strong?

Meritt: I do. I think it's strong. I think it's remarkable we have so many people working on it who are being very careful with what they do, and they are turning out very good reports, both the routine job that has to be done and the special jobs.

Labalme: Can you tell me some of the special projects that most interest you in the archaeology of today? What are the contemporary research projects which you are interested in?

Meritt: Well, I'm interested in the things that John Traill is doing, which is a careful scrutiny of the geographical places, and he has turned up a good many places that have not been known at all by name, found a lot of them, and the map of Attica, if you take it and put it up on the blackboard, you'll find much of it will be pretty familiar but there will be a great deal that will be not familiar in the old sense of the word. It will be something that can be studied because of the location of the demes of the city of Athens. I like to see people like John Traill go to work on a deme. He may find there something that is quite distinctive and different from anything that he has so far because this is a realm now where we are still in some uncertainty. I like the work that John Traill is doing. He can make a map of Attica that satisfies me, and he would have on it now three or four different things that I don't have at all because I don't have the evidence that he has. He has it well worked out. And I think he's doing a wonderful job of it. I hope he's been given lots of money by the Canada Council, and he's been given any amount of encouragement by the rest of his colleagues who are dealing with this

Lucy, from
here on I
worked on
my own,
so please
go over it
carefully.

problem, and I think we're getting along about the way we ought to. I don't look for any immediate change, but I would like to know if we do find one.

Labalme: It must be very satisfying to you to see what you've started moving on with John Traill's scholarship.

Meritt: Yes.

Labalme: Tell me about your visits to Thrace and Macedonia, where did you stay when you went there in the early days? Did you stay in the villages themselves? Were there hotels?

Meritt: No, I stayed on Mt. Athos with the monks of Mt. Athos.

Labalme: It was lucky you were a man [laughter], because they never let women in, isn't that right?

Meritt: They made me an honorary monk.

Labalme: They did? Congratulations.

Meritt: I'll be in paradise. I would like to go over the cities of Mt. Athos and see what has been provided by John Traill and his colleagues. He has a whole family of epigraphers right there at his disposal.

Labalme: But that's what you had too, at the Institute, wasn't it?

Meritt: I did.

Labalme: And it was like a family?

Meritt: Yes, that's the way we did it. I enjoyed that. One has to keep working at it, because changes come about that have to be taken into account.

Labalme: What were some of the changes that you remember?

Meritt: Well, the city of Chalcedon, for example, you'd want to know why

if they've changed their stipend, what the [reasons were] to change their stipend, and the chances are you'd find out.

Labalme: How did you recruit young epigraphers to this task, how did you gather what you call your family around you?

Meritt: First of all, I had some good material to work with. I had John Traill. I've known him for a long time.

Labalme: I'm thinking of the [other] people you worked with, like Stamires. Or Mitsos. Or Ed Capps.

Meritt: I like all of them. I think no one has wasted any time.

Labalme: What about some of the women you worked with? I have some names here. Wanda Holtzinger from Bryn Mawr. That was in 1965-66. Mabel Lang, whom I know.

Meritt: Well, she's just now [retiring]. I think she's giving up teaching. I look upon Mabel as rock-bound, sound, very hard-headed, sound, good sense. She's worked on this problem herself.

Labalme: The problem of the Tribute?

Meritt: The problem of the Tributors.

Labalme: And how about Emily Vermeule? Did you ever work with Emily?

Meritt: Yes. Only a little bit. I think we have a good group of scholars.

Labalme: I think you have an extraordinary group of scholars. I'd like to go back to the Directors of the Institute. Do you remember much about Robert Oppenheimer? Did he have interest in your work? Was he a good Director?

Meritt: So far as I know.

Labalme: What does that mean? He simply left the professors to do their work?

Meritt: A good Director? Well, the accounts were in order, and we had the reports regularly given to us by the Trustees.

Labalme: Oppenheimer interested himself in what some of the professors were doing. Did he ever come round to look at your work, your squeezes, your office, that you remember.

Meritt: Not very many [times]. The man, of course, who knew the most of all my work was Abraham Flexner, and I owe a great deal, practically everything to him, because he put me up, as it were, in the epigraphical business, and I am very much indebted to him for the whole prospect of getting something done. And if you look at my last three books, you will perhaps see what I mean by that.

Labalme: Did he ever talk to you about what he hoped the Institute would accomplish? Did he share with you his ideas on the Institute?

Meritt: No. As a matter of fact, I got to know Flexner intimately after our formative days were pretty well over. I knew Flexner intimately beginning along about 1970. I was devoted to him personally. I consulted with Flexner in everything that I did. I think I took his advice.

Labalme: And he was informed and very interested in what you were doing.

Meritt: He was. I knew Flexner from way back.

Labalme: You always called him Dr. Flexner, and he called you Ben.

Meritt: That's right.

Labalme: Did you ever, since you knew him so well, feel you could call him Abraham?

Meritt: Call him Abe? Oh I think when we were talking rather casually about him I would. I wouldn't hesitate to call him Abe. Though to him I wouldn't do that. I think I have too much reverence for him.

Labalme: You think he was really a visionary, a man of vision?

Meritt: He was the most remarkable man, Abraham Flexner. Consider the way he dealt with the numerous schools of thought that wanted his support because of his position. He gave them what support he thought they needed. But Flexner's last years were something else again. They were different from anything he'd ever done before. He was the grand old man. But I think he had a number of very sound deserving people working for him, and they have carried on very well.

Labalme: Who were the people you remember?

Meritt: Oh, the people I would think of would be the Thompsons, Homer Thompson and Dorothy Thompson, and the other people in all those prominent places--I would think of as being all capable scholars. And I don't distinguish when I write about them one way or another.

Labalme: Do you think Flexner had a talent for attracting good men to the Institute--good men and good women, when you think of Hetty Goldman?

Meritt: Yes. I think of her as one of the prime examples of a competent and capable scholar. I was affected by her early on, before all this Tribute List business came up. I studied for her and worked for Hetty Goldman as a student at the American School of Classical Studies.

END OF CASSETTE ONE, SIDE TWO.

INTERVIEW OF NOVEMBER 11, 1989, CONTINUES:

CASSETTE TWO, SIDE ONE.

Meritt: See, I came into the field of Greek epigraphy and Greek archaeology generally under the Hetty Goldman aegis.

Labalme: I didn't know that.

Meritt: Well, I came in because of my interest in her and my interest in her career. My first excavations were for Hetty Goldman.

Labalme: Where was that?

Meritt: Colophon.

Labalme: Which is in Turkey, now?

Meritt: In Turkey.

Labalme: What were you excavating there?

Meritt: I was excavating the city of Colophon and I made a complete excavation of the city and as many stories high of households. I worked along---on her [Hetty's] skirts. I went into epigraphy really with Hetty Goldman's blessing.

Labalme: Isn't that marvelous! Through the American School, was this?

Meritt: I regard myself as being very lucky, having known Hetty Goldman and having known her work.

Labalme: What made her a good archaeologist? Why do you think of her as such an exceptional scholar?

Meritt: She knew what she was doing.

Labalme: She was well prepared?

Meritt: Absolutely.

Labalme: But it takes more than that.

Meritt: She had the enthusiasm to do it.

Labalme: She was working with the American School at this time, and you were also with the American School?

Meritt: That's right.

Labalme: Tell me about the connection between the American School and the Institute. It's been very close. How did that come about?

Meritt: Almost accidentally.

Labalme: How was that?

Meritt: I'm out of my bailiwick now. I ought not to be saying much, but I'll tell you what I have in mind. I had worked for the American School in Colophon, in Turkey, in Asia Minor, and I had done a lot of work in that way in Smyrna [?] and in Asia Minor. I kept the record for the excavation of the Odeon and did other things that were similar, and I began my epigraphical work really with her.

Labalme: She helped to train you, in a sense? But how did the School and the Institute form this close connection?

Meritt: Well they were just naturally [close], I think.

Labalme: My impression was that you, in a sense, brought the American School into a relationship with the Institute when you came. Is that true?

Meritt: It is in a way, because I talked to Dr. Flexner about his work and about his connection with the Institute and his connection with our general field of Greek epigraphy. I knew the Flexners. I liked the Flexners very much. I make no exception to that rule.

Labalme: And he was connected with the American School, was he not? He was interested in the work and able to get funding for it from Mr.

Rockefeller, is that correct?

Meritt: Yes. Somebody asked Dr. Flexner, how was he going to manage this new coalition of Schools--the Italian School and the British School and the French School and the Greek Archaeological Society, all were anxious to do archaeological work and publish their results, and how are you going to get them to divide these things out in the way you think they ought to be divided out? Well, Flexner's very curt answer was, I think, you can't spread around a little bit for everybody. You've got to have them centrifuged and working accurately for some main purpose. If you want the American School to do well, you've got to put the American School under one director, Leslie Shear, and he will be the director of the American School. If you want to share having the piece of the archaeological work done by the Italians and part by the Greeks and part by the British, you have a difference all along the line, and there will be differences that will cause schism and you won't find it working well at all. What you ought to do in the American School is have one head of the American School principally, and that means one man or one institution. I remember at the time that this was Abe's--I call him Abe now--child and Abe was careful of his handling of it and he was careful and he has done a magnificent job melding up his organization with the Rockefeller people. He had Hetty Goldman interested and he had the American School interested, the School in Athens interested, all these people, and they all center, I think, around the personality of Abraham Flexner, and his machine.

Labalme: And was his machine the Institute?

Meritt: His machine was the Institute.

Labalme: Yes, and he ran it like a good engineer, then?

Meritt: I thought he was a good one, and I still think he was.

Labalme: Well, you know, we've talked nearly two hours, so I think we'll stop for this morning, and then we still have tomorrow. Are there other things you would like to tell me about your memories of the Institute that we should begin with tomorrow?

Meritt: Well, I can tell you a number of things that interest me about it. It's a great family, and it has a center in its work for Abraham Flexner. Now how about that? I was devoted to Abraham Flexner. I owed my position to him. He called me in and asked me to join him.

Labalme: But I think you served the Institute well, also. Don't you think you repaid his faith in you?

Meritt: I think I have.

Labalme: Yes, I think you did. Let's talk some more tomorrow, but we will stop now. I thank you again for these wonderful memories that you've share with me.

[The recorder was turned off for a minute, but Meritt continued to talk about Flexner so it was turned back on].

Meritt: He had a refrigerator seven paces high, I think, seven paces.

Labalme: A refrigerator?

Meritt: A refrigerator. At his house on Ahmic Lake. And he had that because he wanted it in the house and yet, not in the house. He wanted it to be on the back porch.

Labalme: This was a refrigerator with ice cut from the lake? In the winter? Or an electric refrigerator?

Meritt: This was a gas refrigerator. That's what he had, and that's the way he ran that refrigerator. I remember once being over at his house and looking out through the back door and I saw the refrigerator on the back porch and it was wide open. Everybody in it was having a good heyday, and the [one] who was doing the dirty work was a full-grown bear, and the bear was there with the door open, helping himself to the things that were available to him. Nobody interrupted him at that time. Of course they didn't interrupt him because there's a time for everything. But Flexner had this free-for-all for refrigeration. But that was just part of the whole thing with him.

Labalme: What happened to the bear, eventually?

Meritt: What happened is that the bear got chased away and the bear turned back into the forest.

Labalme: He never came back?

Meritt: No. But that was Flexner.

Labalme: What's that an example of, his generosity?

Meritt: I think it was his generosity. The main thing was his generosity and understanding what he had to do to make the whole thing go. He couldn't be too particular about a refrigerator that was open to the--

Labalme: Wildlife.

Meritt: The wildlife, or the country.

Labalme: And you think that's a kind of parable for the Institute, or the American School, or his character?

Meritt: Yes. I was much interested in all that. I thought he was right. We had many things to do together. I did many things for Flexner, but he

[inspired] a loyalty to himself which was phenomenal. Mrs. Bailey, the secretary [and] later on, Miss Eichelser--they were devoted to Dr. Flexner and I think that was a good way to have it. Now it was [like a] household run that way, and he said to me, "It seems to be running very well, doesn't it, why tinker with it? It's all right. These things are being accomplished. Don't bother with it. It's all right." I thought of that many times. He said, "I can't look after everything in detail. I'm letting Mrs. Bailey do the clerical work in the office." "Well," I said, "what about the staff?" He said, "the Faculty of course have to be chosen, they have to be looked after, but we do it by doing everything the best way we can." We had a good Director, we had a good Institute, and we had a good secretary. Well, that was it.

Labalme: That's a nice story about how he ran things and did it in the way that worked out best for everyone. All right now Ben, I am going to stop, because I think you must have told me enough for one day.

END OF CASSETTE TWO, SIDE ONE.

END OF SESSION TWO, NOVEMBER 11, 1989.

*probably condensed from original
ck?*

INTERVIEW WITH BENJAMIN DEAN MERITT, Session Three

Date: November 12, 1988

Place: Austin, Texas, in the Meritt's home at 712 West 16th Street

Interviewer: Patricia H. Labalme

CASSETTE ONE, SIDE ONE

Labalme: All right, Ben, we're all set. What are some of your memories you would like to share? Tell me some more of your recollections.

Meritt: Oh, that will be easy. I have many recollections of my days together with Flexner. One of the things that was a pleasure was to go off on a blueberry hunt when the blueberry season was ripe. We would get two quarts or three quarts of good ripe blueberries, and they were simply delicious. These were rare occasions when we would venture up into the hills, mostly behind the Flexner cottage over on the western side of the river.

Labalme: And did you talk as you gathered blueberries?

Meritt: We added blueberries, oh, whenever they were ripe. And we would make an occasion of it. Sometimes everybody would go and everybody would pitch in and do what he could to increase the burden so we'd get more berries than we would otherwise have had. But there wasn't much dilly-dallying. We attended to business and got our berries and packed them down in separate pails so they would keep until we got safely home with them to the cottage.

Labalme: Were you and Flexner together that way every summer? Did they go regularly to Lake Ahmic?

Meritt: I want to answer that, I think, with a qualified yes. We did not ourselves go every summer. For example, one of my first summers at the cottage was spent not at the cottage at all but at a discussion of plans for who would live at the cottage when anybody did live there, who they would be

of our family and when we would come and when we would leave. We planned, however, to make a steady summer of it whenever we settled down at the cottage and this would be perhaps early in the season. It was something we always looked forward to.

Labalme: And were you able to do your work there also?

Meritt: We had our books there.

Labalme: Did you work on a regular schedule?

Meritt: I did, yes. I had made arrangements with Dr. Flexner to share his admirable secretarial help when I was there by myself alone. This meant that I would have one of his secretaries working for me. I was not quite sure always who it would be, but it would be possibly Miss Eichelser or Mrs. Bailey.

Labalme: And he brought these secretaries to Canada with him?

Meritt: These were secretaries, and they were employed by Dr. Flexner to keep his records for him.

Labalme: And they came to Canada with him?

Meritt: Oh yes. They came there and were there when he was there. If they did not come with him, he would bring them later on, so that Mrs. Bailey, for example, was a native, I think, of Wilmington, Delaware, but she was regularly employed by Dr. Flexner in New York and she migrated with his goings and comings, back and forth from New York to wherever they were at the moment in Canada.

Labalme: I know that sometimes when he was away, she would run the office in Princeton. I noticed that from the correspondence.

Meritt: Mrs. Bailey would, yes.

Labalme: She was very competent.

Meritt: Very. One of the most competent people I can imagine. I grew to depend upon her very much, and I checked with her on matters of fact, to make sure that I got them right when the time came.

Labalme: Well you had then many summers together with Flexner at the Lake, so that must have made your relationship at the Institute a very close one, a very good one.

Meritt: And very fruitful, to me at least, however many other people were around. But Dr. Flexner was, of course, master always of his own plans, and he and Mrs. Bailey were the kingpins of our triumvirate who did secretarial work. I include myself as well of the triumvirate because I used my own secretary regularly as Dr. Flexner's secretary, if there was anything he needed to have done with me. My own secretary was, by statute, the member of our little staff at the cabin, at the Lake. She was the wife of Wesley Dauncey.

Labalme: Yes, Lucy's told me a bit about her.

Meritt: About that combination. Well, we had Wes as one of our right-hand men whenever there was anything that had to be done much about the place.

Labalme: And he worked also for Dr. Flexner.

Meritt: Oh yes. He would work for Dr. Flexner as the case might be.

Labalme: I'd like to stay with the Institute and some of your experiences there and, if you can remember some things about Einstein and your dealings with him--that would be very interesting.

Meritt: Well yes, some of them are purely accidental. It happened once that he and I arrived at the New York office of the lawyer at the same time, and we

were ushered in to see the lawyer, and I was interested, of course, in seeing who the lawyer was and what he wanted.

Labalme: Why were you going to New York to see the lawyer?

Meritt: This particular occasion, there was something Dr. Flexner had to clear up with the income tax people. That, of course, was personal business with him as well as with the Institute and what he had wanted to ask was something very simple. He wanted to make sure he had his figures right for the past year, and I was there when he asked.

Labalme: Is this Einstein who is asking, or Flexner?

Meritt: Einstein, to begin with. But Dr. Flexner was the one who had to know, because he was the one who had to make out [sign?] the income tax on his return. Well, I asked if we could be of help and we could be of help, and Mrs. Bailey was the one who had to be the helper. She had all the facts, and she answered questions very specifically, very much to the point and very accurately because she had the facts all down, as we would say, cold. She knew what they were, and when she would ask the question, "How would you fill out this blank here? Will you give us the facts so we can put them on your return?" And she had the facts always available and she would make them out and it would be a very simple business. That would be, for example, you put down here the income as received by you such-and-such-a-year, amounting to so much. Are we correct? And the answer would be, after having looked it up, "Yes, that is correct." Labalme: How did Einstein behave all during this? You say you were at the lawyer with Einstein. What happened there?

Meritt: He was there asking and he probably was the one who had the figures-- he'd worked out the figures--knew how to apportion them as I would not have

known how to do. And that was why we had a lawyer for it. And we would get hold of the lawyer and say, "Is this the way you make out the income?" And Dr. Flexner would say, "Yes, that is our income for the year and we're happy to put it down and have it closed and have the business sealed out." And the question would be put to Dr. Einstein if that was correct and he would say, "Yes--or no," as the case might be. "That is it". And we would close the deal when we found that we were in the right order or on the right road.

Labalme: And Einstein had to do this himself, you mean. That must have been rather amusing to see Einstein dealing with taxes.

Meritt: Yes. Well Einstein would say, "Yes, that is the sum total of my income tax for the year. And I'm glad you have it."

Labalme: And he had to go into New York to do this?

Meritt: He had it all with him there in Princeton. And we would say, "That is correct, is it, Dr. Einstein?" And he would say "That is correct and that's the whole story."

Labalme: I think it's wonderful to have an income tax validated by Einstein. That must have been amusing. Lucy mentioned some trip Flexner asked you to take with Einstein and Veblen into New York, and you were in an elevator with some business men? Tell me about that story.

Meritt: Oh yes, that's one of our stories that we like to tell. We would say, "Well now, Dr. Einstein, we will all the way down test the laws of gravitation."

Labalme: Who said that? Veblen?

Meritt: Veblen, possibly. Makes a good story if Veblen says it. I think probably he did.

Labalme: And were there others in the elevator?

Meritt: Oh there'd be two or three others.

Labalme: Did they recognize Einstein.

Meritt: Oh yes. Everybody knew him. At least I thought everybody did.

Labalme: Was he conversational?

Meritt: Oh yes. Oh yes, enough so to make a reasonable conversation. Of what he was doing and where he had been the day before, what he was going to do now and what he was going on to. Oh yes, he made conversation which ran on in the usual way.

Labalme: Tell me about other memories you may have of your days at the Institute, or people you knew there.

Meritt: Yes, the people that I knew most were the small group that we had ourselves--Einstein and Veblen and Montgomery--he was one of the favorites with us--we had a little club we called the cutting-wood club.

Labalme: Yes, you told me yesterday about your wood-cutting seminar. How about von Neumann?

Meritt: Not particularly interested in that, but he could have been if he wanted to.

Labalme: You asked me yesterday about some of the other faculty. How about Alföldi. Do you remember Alföldi, the Roman historian.

Meritt: Oh yes. Well, he lived over on the other side of town from us. I call it the other side of town--the other side of the Institute property.

Labalme: Yes, and did you see them socially or did you work together?

Meritt: I did, from time to time. [The subject in Meritt's mind shifted to Mrs. Bailey, the secretary]. She was a most remarkable and competent person.

Labalme: I bet she was.

Meritt: And, from my point of view she was very gracious and helpful to me because I was a new one in the group and had to learn my way by experience and I made it a point to find out all I could about my own part, what I had to play and what I had to report in the way of income and things of that sort.

Labalme: I was hoping you would tell me something about your colleagues, not just Mrs. Bailey, but, Andrew Alföldi, or Ernst Herzfeld, or Kantorowicz.

Meritt: Ernst Kantorowicz. Yes, he lived half-way round the circle where the road looped around.

Labalme: Did you interest yourself in his work and did he interest himself in yours?

Meritt: Not very much. We were interested, of course, in what the record was, but I didn't interest myself particularly in doing much about it.

Labalme: What do you mean by the record?

Meritt: What he was doing for himself.

Labalme: Were there any meetings where you discussed--, sort of public gatherings where you talked about your work as Faculty members to each other?

Meritt: That was done very little. If we knew what we wanted, we talked about it among ourselves, but as I recall it was usually a rather small group and not a discussion--

Labalme: And done in an informal rather than a formal way.

Meritt: I think so.

Labalme: And that worked very well.

Meritt: I'll try hard to think if I can remember any formal obligation as such of a Faculty meeting of the Institute Faculty. I can't remember that any

set meeting for Faculty.

Labalme: Although the records do show that there Faculty meetings and that you spoke at them. And I think they were held over lunch. I think once a month or once every few months.

Meritt: Very seldom. And not necessarily something that had to be done, if we didn't have it convenient to do, if we had something else that was going on that could be passed up for our meeting that would be taken care of otherwise. I would have tried to do that myself--

Labalme: You were not in favor of committee meetings, I gather.

Meritt: No, I didn't like them and I didn't approve of them much. I wanted to get to work, but I was not particularly interested in doling it out--a parcel here, a parcel there, a parcel somebody else. We had it pretty well handled by the Faculty members who were concerned.

Labalme: So that most of your attention was for your own research.

Meritt: Absolutely.

Labalme: And working with your younger colleagues whom you brought to the Institute.

Meritt: My younger colleagues were John Traill, Malcolm MacGregor--those were the two principal ones.

Labalme: And Wade-Gery?

Meritt: Wade-Gery to begin with. He was older. He was a New College man, from Oxford. ?

Labalme: And when you first came, there was Allen Brown West whom you hoped to work with.

Meritt: He was my close companion in my beginning studies in the Tribute

Lists and I had him all the time by my side and never did anything without consulting him. Allen Brown West. He had his bailiwick, a professorship in a little college up in Massachusetts, but he could always be reached by any one of us, any time we wanted to meet him. I think of Allen Brown West as being an extraordinarily able fellow. I have said that in my preface to my book, and my work with him is made known there. Allen Brown West.

Labalme: Did Dr. Flexner ever discuss with you his ideas about expanding the Institute?

Meritt: No, not as such. We were content with it as it was and our talk about it at all was usually with people who were either still active with us or just becoming active with us because of something they were doing which interested all of us. We could do that, and pretty soon we would have another member of our group. Now that was made up of me and Allen Brown West in the beginning and--did I say Allen Brown West?

Labalme: Yes.

Meritt: That's the man. He was an older man. He was teaching at Wheaton College in Massachusetts.

Labalme: Did Flexner always intend to keep the School of Humanistic Studies, of which you were a part, and the Mathematical School in some kind of balance? Did you have the sense that both aspects of the Institute were equally important to him?

Meritt: Well, he was interested of course in all that we did, but I think he left us pretty much to ourselves. He knew particularly about our work on the Tribute Lists. We did that pretty largely all on our own. And came up with what else we had, and we found out what the tribute was and how much it

amounted to and where and then we began to write the stories about it.

Labalme: Did you ever talk to Flexner about the other School which was the School of Economics and Politics--with Walter Stewart, and--

Meritt: Only individually, with individual members and chance meetings with people like Panofsky. He was always there and we enjoyed meeting with the Panofskys. And we had other members of the Faculty of our little group that would be interested in what we were doing, but it was always a matter of individual approach. They would perhaps come up with something that interested us and we would take that up and carry it on. And maybe begin something new about new members of the group that could be drawn in to make a closed circle. I gave a great deal of attention to the actual amounts of the Tributes as they were recorded by the Tribute Lists. They were my principal study to begin with. You have my books.

Labalme: I've looked at all your books. They're very impressive. And I've read in them. When you look back, have you favorites of the things you've done, are you particularly proud or pleased with one kind of work you've accomplished?

Meritt: I think the Tribute Lists and the letter [?] I had of the members who were Tribute-paying guests [?] of the Athenian Empire were the ones that I was most interested in and proudest of. I went back over the record and tried to get them sorted out as so-and-so were paying members regularly. Yes. I was interested in all of that, and I worked particularly at the difficult job of sorting out the individual cities of the Empire who belonged to the Thracian district or who belonged to the island district, who were members of other farther, remote, neighboring cities. I wanted to get them straightened out so

I could get them geographically oriented, and I put them in an orderly way, only adding them this way or that to show what they did, what they paid and how much they paid. All of these things went into one of my first books, The Athenian Tribute Lists probably.

Labalme: I'm not sure. I think you worked on The Athenian Year, the Athenian calendar, also, in those early days.

Meritt: That was one of the things that I did that interested me the most.

Labalme: I found that fascinating--the fact that there were two systems of reckoning the year.

Meritt: That's right.

Labalme: And that they didn't do it by observation but by politics.

Meritt: [Laughter]

Labalme: You know, I talked to Otto Neugebauer about this. He said, the Athenians were always political.

Meritt: Well, they were. They helped out a lot. And their politics helped us in so far as it was mathematical, because they kept it to a rigid system of mathematical analysis.

Labalme: Did you work with Neugebauer on some of these problems?

Meritt: No, I never did.

Labalme: But you were both working on--

Meritt: Yes. It all came out the same way.

Labalme: Although you don't agree about everything, much of it is supportive?

Meritt: I think it's all down as we've put it down now in our books. When we don't agree with what has been written, we say so.

Labalme: Well, that's fair.

END OF CASSETTE ONE, SIDE ONE

CASSETTE ONE, SIDE TWO

Meritt: Personally, my interest in the Institute centered around my connection with Flexner. I believe very strongly that he had something there that was well worth following up and I tried to follow it out. I tried to do it systematically by making a list of all the cities and how much money they paid and how they paid it and what it came to in the long run and the cities that I was interested in were those cities who were --group by group--around the islands, around the Thracian district, around the Carpathians, around the farther removed [areas?]; we could find all of them, and I made a list of the cities of the Empire and arranged them categorically and they are the things that made up my tribute lists. Now they're all systematically arranged in the volume that I have, all the tributary cities of Athens.

Labalme: How did you work out your time in Greece and Canada and Princeton?

Did you go to Greece also every summer?

Meritt: No, but I could have.

Labalme: But you had enough material--

Meritt: I was working on it all the time.

Labalme: You had enough material in Princeton that you could analyze without going back to Greece regularly?

Meritt: Oh yes, indeed I could. I kept it up and I had it for a long time.

Labalme: And then, when you did get through with it, is that why you left Princeton, because you'd felt you'd accomplished that phase in your--?

Meritt: That part of it was done.

Labalme: And you came to Austin because this was Lucy's home?

Meritt: Well, that's one reason. Of course she helped me a great deal in those years. We were very close with each other. I couldn't have done what I've done if Lucy had not been with me.

Labalme: I'm sure. And then you came to Austin and you taught in the University here?

Meritt: Well, that was quite incidental. My teaching in the University here was a side effort.

Labalme: I see. But you continued to work when you moved to Austin.

Meritt: Oh yes, that was continuous. My continuous record. You will find I've put my record down in the chronological order. You'll find it there in the book that relates the cities of the Athenian Empire were such-and-such. And you'll find them all there.

Labalme: I have a record of your publications up to 1982, and I'm sure there were some after that--but you were still writing on--

Meritt: Well, they would be minor [writings].

Labalme: "The saddle-cloths of Alcibiades"--that's the last title. What was that about?

Meritt: That was about a man who owned and prized a horse of his own possession, and his own use. Why did he claim particular advantage for one of his horses? He had the saddle-cloth. He was a man who wanted to have his own horse, his own type. And I wrote what I called "the saddle-cloth of Alcibiades" because I thought I knew who he was. I wrote that because I thought I could single out the man who had the horse.

Meritt: It must have been quite exciting to try to identify some of the

individuals who were referred to in these inscriptions that you worked with.

Meritt: You mean who they were?

Labalme: Who they were. And that extraordinary card-file that you kept, that's still in the Institute, that people call "the Athenian telephone book." Tell me about why you got that started and how that grew.

Meritt: It started with John Traill. He started it all with me to get the names of people who were concerned with tribute. They would be in the records someplace and they'd have to keep that way permanently. We'd have to carry them another year. I think if I were to go back to the Tribute Lists I would point to the work I did in the cities of the first four years--464-460 [454-50?]-I think these are about the first years we get systematic records where they're not all mixed up together.

Labalme: But that Tribute List really had to do with the cities and your card-file concerned individuals. Did that simply grow out of the Tribute List work?

Meritt: It did, because we wanted to know who they were and we'd look them up on the _____. For example, if a city had enough letters [?] so it could be classed as a city by the Athenians, I'd want it in my list where it belonged and [want to know] why it happened there or why it happened somewhere else and nowhere else except there. The cities of the Athenian Empire were classified by me according to place. We still go on doing it.

Labalme: You say, if they had enough letters? What do you mean, letters?

Meritt: If I had a city, for example, Etiocarpathians [?], etiocarpathioi, if I have all the letters of the Etiocarpathian name, I will put them in and that will be that. John Traill is working now on some names that don't appear in

my list at all. He has put them into the record of cities in the Tribute Lists according to the districts where they belong.

Labalme: Where did he find these names?

Meritt: He finds them in association with bigger cities.

Labalme: Going back to your trips to Greece, when did you go? If you did go to Greece, did you go in the spring in order to spend some time at the American School there and then come back to your Canada home for the summer months? How did that work?

Meritt: Yes, it worked fine. I used the summer months for work. I used them all for work. I regarded my summer months as work months, they weren't play months.

Labalme: And Greece is too hot for the summer, anyway, is that--?

Meritt: Well, I wouldn't think it was too hot. I like warm weather. I would class a lot of the cities first--rather first grade. Who were they? Where was the money? Where was it stored? Where was it coming from? I put a lot of that down in my book.

Labalme: Is it a story that is different for each city?

Meritt: Not all. No, the cities are--they'd be rather large cities would have a category of their own and they would fall under groups that would be related in the Tribute Lists according to the amount of money they paid in to Athens, and I'd keep those records separate so that they would go down into their own category. If you looked down through my list of cities you'll find that I will have most of them put in separate categories--where they are and how they are related to other big cities in their neighborhood.

Labalme: So the list was organized according to size as well as geography?

Meritt: Yes. But mostly geography which made the size.

Labalme: I would love to know more about life at the Institute--the society of the years you were there, whom you saw, what they were like.

Meritt: There were the groups of people who interested themselves around the things that interested me. I worked on the Tribute Lists because they first interested me. And I began getting them somewhat sorted out so that finally you get all the cities that belonged to the islands and get them sorted out.

Labalme: But I also wonder, did you ever think about the Institute in terms of other institutes that began to develop in the United States.

Meritt: No.

Labalme: Nobody ever consulted you about what one should do or shouldn't do to set up another kind of research institute?

Meritt: Never had another one.

Labalme: Well there was never another exactly alike, but there are quite a lot of institutes now. There are not many who have faculty. There's Dumbarton Oaks and our Institute. Have you any comment on the role of faculty at a research institute? Do you think it makes a difference to have faculty at a research institute?

Meritt: Oh I think it does.

Labalme: This is our last day of conversation so I'd like to talk about what you remember of the Institute, life at the Institute. For example, they served dinner at the Institute in the early days. Did you have dinner there, as well as lunch?

Meritt: Yes, we did. I used to eat there with Cherniss. He was a great buddy of mine.

Labalme: So with your families--you and Betty and Ruth and Harold would have dinner together?

Meritt: Well, there would be just Harold and I.

Labalme: Even in the evening?

Meritt: In the evening, maybe not so. In the main run of the day. Lunchtime we'd all be together, might be, not necessarily.

Labalme: Did you get to know many people who lived in Princeton besides the Institute. Did you feel connected with the township through your friends?

Meritt: We grew up with the Institute and I think that is what has molded our lives. The members of the Institute staff like the Panofskys and--they were among some of the first.

Labalme: And when you chose the visiting members to come, how did you do that? Did you all get together, you and Panofsky and Herzfeld.

Meritt: No, we did it individually.

Labalme: And you simply informed Flexner?

Meritt: I talked it over with him.

Labalme: That you would like so-and-so to come?

Meritt: Yes. Yes. For example, bringing Homer Thompson into the Institute fold was my own suggestion to begin with. He was somebody I wanted to have play a part.

Labalme: You didn't bring Homer in to work on the Tribute Lists, did you?

Meritt: Not primarily.

Labalme: Homer was always associated with the Agora excavations.

Meritt: Quite right, quite right. So was I in the beginning.

Labalme: And then Homer continued to--

Meritt: Oh yes.

Labalme: Was he the director of the Agora program?

Meritt: He was. We couldn't have got along well without Homer. He belonged with us from the very beginning.

Labalme: Did you feel, when you left the Institute, Homer stayed there of course--but that the School that you had established, that is the study of epigraphy, did you feel that that would continue to be as strong after you left?

Meritt: I thought that it would be. And I think that it will be.

Labalme: But there is no epigrapher in the Faculty now.

Meritt: The last one who was an epigrapher was Cherniss. He died this summer.

Labalme: And also, he had retired many years before. Do you feel that the Institute must go simply where the best people are rather than stay with a particular field? I think that was Flexner's idea--that the field was less important than the person doing it. Was that your impression?

Meritt: No, my intention has been to have the cities spread out their fangs [?] for the sake of argument. _There will be cities. And they will be grouped around a certain city that is more important than some others, and that will make a group that will be something that will pay tribute. Right now if you look over [John Traill's] latest work, [he] has numerous cities that are grouped by him in connection with other cities that are bigger. Sometimes it will be five or six cities nearby with or associated with somebody a little bit bigger, but they will not be themselves the big one. I count on John Traill to straighten that out.

cut or change?

Labalme: But he doesn't come to the Institute now. He works in Toronto.

Meritt: That's all right. It doesn't matter that he's in Toronto.

Labalme: No it doesn't.

Meritt: He has a very good school of his own there, but he's been my organizer, and he's doing the things that we like to have him do. I think he's doing grand work.

Labalme: I'm sure that he is. Well, is there anything else before we stop today that you think of that you would like to record to hold about your association with the Institute, your memories, something we haven't talked about?

Meritt: No. I'd like to have it go on as it is now. I like to consider that I am one of the people concerned with the Tribute Lists. That's been my life work.

Labalme: But others may work on other things.

Meritt: Anything they want.

Labalme: You say you'd like to have it go on. In what way? What were the qualities of the Institute that you value that you would like to see continue?

Meritt: Well, the life of the city and its relationship with its neighbors.

Labalme: But I don't mean a specific research project, like the cities and its [their] relations to its neighbors. What were the qualities of the Institute that you would like to see continue for other scholars?

Meritt: Well, I think it's pretty essential to carry on what we might call the big cities that belong in the Tribute Lists. We've got to keep those in mind always, or we lose them. I don't think of anything in particular that is necessary now. We've got them pretty well organized but not sufficiently down

through the small centers yet. One of the men who's working on that is John Traill.

Labalme: Yes, I'm sure he will continue to follow up the research which you made possible.

Meritt: I hope he will.

Labalme: I think you should feel very content knowing that he is carrying on your work.

Meritt: I think of him in that way, and I hope he continues to feel that way.

Labalme: I'm sure he will. Well, Ben, I think I'll stop now. Thank you very much.

Meritt: Thank you.

Labalme: We've had a good time, talking about the Institute, and if you have other things that you think of, stories, tell them to Lucy and she will--

Meritt: I'll pass them on.

Labalme; She'll pass them on to me.

Meritt: There are so many different ways of looking at these things. There'll be so many different ways they'll come up for our attention to them. And we'll have to pay attention before we get to know ourselves that we're doing something we hadn't planned to before, but we're going to find that we have to pay attention to it right now.

Labalme: Scholarship is full of the unexpected.

Meritt: I'm afraid it is.

Labalme: Aren't we glad that it is?

Meritt: Well, yes, in a way. We like it the way it is. But I think that we're really doing a lot for organizing the empire and I've made my own

categories and put them down in order where the groups of cities which I regard as being particularly important for the Institute.

Labalme: Well your scholarship was your contribution to the Institute. That is the best that any faculty member could do.

Meritt: Well it's been the same thing all along. I've gone back and I look at my organization. As I look back over the books that I've written there were three or four of them--the ones that I like most--are those where I've categorized the cities, even the little ones, and made them play a part in the following consensus, drawing together. I've got big cities and little cities and I've got some of both, and I like both of them.

Labalme: Do you agree that what the scholar does is to bring new material into some kind of pattern?

Meritt: What we have already. We don't have to make a new pattern. We've got a lot of it that can be organized still.

Labalme: But everything you add may affect the whole in a new way.

Meritt: I think so. When we organize it and give it a name. I don't think of the cities of the empire as being individual, particularly. There are so many of them. If I were to tell you now, look at the page, page x say, and see what I have in the way of cities of the Athenian empire. I may not have more than five or six of them playing a very important role, but I think they may get to be important as the time goes by and as the individual cities can sublimate themselves to an overall pattern. I like to think that I've got to get together some of the cities as I had at first of central Greece, of northern Greece, of the islands of Greece, and see how they fit into the pattern of the individual cities.

Labalme: There's always more to do, and it's wonderful that you are still thinking about this work that you undertook so many years ago and that you gave so much of your life to. Anyway, I am going to stop now, so thank you very much.

Meritt: Thank you for the trouble of thinking about it at all.

Labalme: It wasn't a trouble, it was a pleasure.

END OF CASSETTE ONE, SIDE TWO (B)

END OF INTERVIEW SERIES WITH BENJAMIN DEAN MERITT