

MARSHALL CLAGETT

Oral History Project

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INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY, PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

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Marshall Clagett

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Patricia H. Labalme
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SIGNATURES OF INTERVIEWERS

Date: June 8, 1998

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Transcripts of interviews of March 4, 1996 and March 14, 1996

PREFACE

The following manuscript contains the edited transcript of two interviews with Marshall Clagett, held at the Institute for Advanced Study on March 4 and March 14, 1996. They were conducted by Patricia H. Labalme and Elliott Shore.

Marshall Clagett was appointed a professor in the School of Historical Studies in 1964. He had previously twice been a visiting member (1958-59, 1963), and he would remain an active Faculty member until his retirement in 1986 when he became a professor emeritus. Born in Washington, D.C., he was educated at the California Institute of Technology and George Washington University where he took his A.B. and M.A. He earned his Ph.D. at Columbia University in 1941.

After five years in the Navy, Clagett taught at Columbia University, moving to the University of Wisconsin in 1947 and serving there, from 1959-64, as the first Director of the Institute for Research in the Humanities which he had helped to establish.

His publications include Giovanni Marliani and Late Medieval Physics (1941), The Medieval Science of Weights (1952), Greek Science in Antiquity (1955), The Science of Mechanics in the Middle Ages (1959, 1979), Archimedes in the Middle Ages (5 volumes in 10, 1964-84), and Nicole Oresme and the Medieval Geometry of Qualities (1968). His current work in progress is Ancient Egyptian Science, the first volume of which was published in 1989 and won the John Frederick Lewis Prize of the American Philosophical Society. He has since published two more volumes of this ongoing study.

Among his several other awards are the Sarton Medal, the Charles Homer Haskins Medal, the Koyré Medal, the International Galileo Prize and the Dondi dall'Orologio European Prize in the History of Science, Technology, and Industry which he won in 1995, the first year it was awarded. Clagett has also served as a member of the American Philosophical Society and fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Science and the Medieval Academy of America.

The reader should be aware that the following are transcripts of the spoken word, that they attempt to preserve the spontaneity and informality of the original tapes, and that the views expressed therein are those of the narrator.

INTERVIEW WITH MARSHALL CLAGETT

Date: March 4, 1996
Place: Princeton, New Jersey
Interviewers: Patricia Labalme and Elliott Shore

CASSETTE ONE, SIDE ONE

Labalme: What I'd like to do is to test this out for just a minute and to say good morning, Marshall, here are Patricia Labalme and Elliott Shore interviewing Marshall Clagett on Monday, March 4, 1996, at the Institute for Advanced Study, and would you just greet us so that we know that your voice is coming over.

Clagett: Well, it's a pleasure to greet you. I couldn't think of two people I'd rather talk to.

Labalme: Excellent. I want to make sure that this is being recorded. OK. I thought we'd begin with your career, Marshall.

Clagett: That I may know something about. I'm not sure the rest of it I know as much about. I became interested in science in high school and also, in a sense, in the humanities. I did reasonably well in both and took three

and a half years of Latin, and all the rest of the sciences: physics and the math, and so on. And as a result of a scientific career, so to speak, I received a scholarship at CalTech in Pasadena. And that's where I started to work, and then strangely enough I continued the interest in science but I also became interested in languages. Though I'd had the Latin, I didn't have -- or maybe we did have them, but I didn't take any modern languages at Beverly Hills High School. But I did take the Latin and then I took a lot of German, or I took some German, at CalTech and was fascinated by it. I also became fascinated again by history. I say again, because my sixth-grade teacher, though I have a hard time remembering her name, was one of the most influential teachers I ever had. She provided me with books in history. She skipped me a grade and gave me all these books in history. I just became absolutely fascinated with history at that time. So I came by the history of science, putting the two together, naturally as a result of this earlier education. And then, I guess those were the days of the depression, we had a hard time and my mother wanted to leave California. She really hated it, she'd had difficulties in her family life and so on, and so after two very intensive years at CalTech where I took

lots of courses, we went back to her home which was in Washington, DC, where I had been born. Then I went to George Washington University and in one year finished the undergraduate courses. Took a masters degree there and then went on to Columbia in September of 1937.

Shore: Did you know early on that you wanted to have an academic career?

Clagett: No. That's a good question. Because of the depression, I didn't really know what I wanted. I knew I loved to study, and I did quite well in high school. But I also had a great uncle who was in the steel business, and my initial idea was that perhaps I'd take chemical engineering at CalTech. By the way, his last name was Marshall so I thought that the family relationship might be some help. But when I began studying at CalTech I liked mathematics and physics so much better than chemistry, they became the direction of my interest and I sort of abandoned the thought of a chemical career. And when I came to George Washington I began to get some of the history and languages that I'd missed at CalTech and I also took some more Latin at Catholic University so that I began to round out my knowledge of languages. I took a lot of French personally with the head of the French department. So now I was studying French and

German as well as Latin. At the same time I liked medieval history very much. So I thought that I would go into medieval history.

As a result of the increasing interest in humanities, I applied to various colleges for graduate school. I particularly favored Columbia because Lynn Thorndike taught there and I was rather interested in the kinds of subjects he was interested in. And I also applied to Princeton, by the way. I got a scholarship at Princeton but I didn't take it because finally Columbia came through with a matching grant so I went to Columbia. And even after I started Columbia, I still wasn't sure I was going to do history of science.

At Columbia we had one of the first teachers of the history of science in America, Frederick Berry, who was a chemist and an historian of chemistry. By the way he did what happens to so many of us, he began to teach the history of science from the beginning. Well, he never got out of the early period as a result of that. But I started to work with Thorndike. He asked me what I wanted to do for a dissertation. He said there's been a great new edition of a Greek scholar. At Catholic University and at George Washington, I took some Greek, so I felt reasonably confident in that. And so he

suggested that I work on a Byzantine scholar, George Scholarios, the first patriarch of Constantinople. So I started to read the new edition of his works and it was certainly the dullest stuff I had ever read. And I went back to Thorndyke, and I said, no, no, no. And he said, all right, I have some manuscripts of a physician and natural philosopher of the fifteenth century, Giovanni Marliani. And so the study of his work developed into my dissertation which Columbia University published in 1941. And that brought me back into the history of science. Marliani was very receptive of the natural philosophy and science that came from Oxford and Paris in the fourteenth century. This led me back more and more into the medieval material in which I was really interested anyway. And so that's how I began working on the whole problem of continuity in the history of science, first starting out in physics, natural philosophy, and then going later into mathematics so that the last part of my career was almost all devoted to the history of mathematics. This, then, is how I got interested in the history of science.

Labalme: Was there a field for the history of science?

Clagett: Ah. Now, that's a very good question. It was just beginning, mainly at four places. Wisconsin--I say that

only because that's where I went after I taught for a year at Columbia. Later I became chairman of the program of the history of science at Wisconsin. The other places were Cornell with Henry Guerlac, and Harvard University with George Sarton and Bernard Cohen. Finally, there was Brown which centered mostly on ancient mathematics and of course had Neugebauer. It's rather interesting because with two of those people, all three of them, I have very strong connections. With Gerlach because, during the war, when I was in the navy for five years, he started out at Wisconsin as their historian of science. And so when I went to Wisconsin later, I was succeeding him, in a sense, at least in time. And then he had gone back to Cornell for some special program and he became the historian of science there. Bernard Cohen really shaped up the program at Harvard so that there were three centers where you could do all aspects of the history of science. And then, as I said, Brown where Neugebauer taught the history of ancient mathematics along with Parker and later others. So in a way this was the very beginning of the whole departmental structure of the history of science in the U.S. In the course of the next few years, many other universities established departments devoted to one or more aspects of the history

of science.

Labalme: But it remained part of the history departments...

Clagett: For the most part, except for the places I have mentioned. Sometimes it was also connected with other departments or programs such as with Philosophy at Indiana. By the way, one of my students at Wisconsin, who was here at IAS several times, Ed Grant, helped build the program in the history of science at Indiana. It was sometimes joined with the history of medicine, as at Johns Hopkins. As you might suspect, the histories of science and medicine were in fact very closely tied together.

Shore: Columbia wasn't one of these centers, then?

Clagett: Columbia's efforts were sporadic after the early days of Berry, and Thorndyke. And one of the first graduate students at Columbia was Carl Boyer, who became a leading historian of mathematics. He was a very close friend, a little bit older than I, I might add, and an influential friend. And so there was always an incipient department at Columbia, but its fortunes were varied, and depended, you know, on how many people were associated with whoever was teaching the standard course in the history of science. But it didn't quite have a fully developed Ph.D. program in the manner of the three universities I

mentioned earlier.

Labalme: Has the field stayed that way, very dependent on the few stars?

Clagett: To some extent, yes, but I think it has gotten past the critical point of survival in American universities. It is true that in some of the early programs there was one man who was dominant, and when he retired or something happened to him, the program went to pieces. But that always happens in small departments.

Labalme: One of the reviews or somebody commenting on your work said that you helped to create the field of the history of science.

Clagett: Well, only in this respect, that I had a quite a number of students in the department out there. Part of the difficulty in the early days was that you had to sell the history of science because many of the scientists, but fortunately not all of the creative scientists, thought that science destroys its past and what's the point of talking about the phlogiston theory or some other theory that is no longer operative and is long since gone. But, of course, that's a very narrow way of looking at it, and fortunately the community of scientists at Wisconsin was quite sympathetic. And when we started with just the two of us in the history of science, Bob Stauffer and myself

(Stauffer was from Harvard), we began to find support from other departments, such as those of medicine, pharmacy, chemistry and several other areas. Thus in that sense one can say I helped create the field because our department continued expanding into these other subjects.

Shore: Was it a hard sell because you wouldn't have many undergraduates that would take it, did they not see it as something they...

Clagett: In a sense, yes, but the administration did something very interesting at Wisconsin. It began to give science credit for the history of science and so that made it attractive for students who didn't want to go in for hard science, and so we acquired a fairly large number of students, at least in the beginning. For example, when I went there in 1947 we had, I think, close to 200 students in the introductory course. And I must admit I was a little uncomfortable about this whole thing, I didn't really believe there were 200 people interested in the history of science.

Labalme: Was this a survey from the Greeks to ...

Clagett: Yes. If I can mention just one thing that amused me. At Columbia I just had small classes of very able young students. I mean they scared me they were so smart. But

there was a greater mix at Wisconsin. I had some marvelous students, especially in the graduate program, but I had also some that weren't quite as good. I'll never forget after the first lecture, in which I was talking about Egyptian science (this is rather amusing since my most recent work has been in Egyptian science) I was saying something about Egyptian Astronomical constellations, when a young man from the Navy, at school on the G.I. Bill, came up after the lecture and said: "Now that was a marvelous lecture, but I didn't understand everything: what's a constellation?" I guess he was thinking about an airplane so named. And I gulped because I thought, My God, have I pitched the lecture at the wrong level?

Labalme: That's funny.

Shore: Can we go back to the war for a minute because I know that you served gloriously.

Clagett: Well, I served, let's put it that way.

Shore: Could you make a connection maybe between two things, the languages you studied and also you were a professionally committed Ph.D. as you sort of signed up to...?

Clagett: I was professionally committed, as you say, but then was plunged into quite different activities by the war, because in 1941 I got my Ph.D. just before I went into

the navy. And I was almost five years in the navy, through April of '46 (I think my term ran out then), so I started to teach at Columbia in September. Then after that I went to Wisconsin in 1947. So I didn't serve gloriously but I served.

Labalme: Tell us a bit about it.

Claggett: Sure. The first thing, I was assigned to a gunnery school, actually it was the Gunners Mate School at the Navy Yard in Washington and I had to learn first all about the new guns that had come out and the hydraulic gear with which they were controlled. Then I began to try to give a little physics course along with the hydraulics to all the gunners mates, and that was tough. But sooner or later it worked out all right and I was there for almost three and a half years doing that. But then I wanted to get overseas and so I changed my rating from one that applied to guns to a deck rating. After that I was enrolled in a program in military government at Columbia University. From there they sent me to Okinawa just after our invasion. I was there from April in 1945 through the end of the war and an extra six months. Since I wasn't married then and didn't have enough points to be sent home I saw personnel just disappearing on all sides and I rising to the surface

like a cork so that by the time I finally got out of there I was put in charge of central Okinawa, the so called Jinuza district.

Shore: Tell us that wonderful story about the translation. I believe you were the interpreter for the ...

Clagett: Oh, yes. In the military government program they ran at Columbia, I'd taken some Japanese, mainly spoken Japanese, and they taught it in a fairly successful way, involving linguistic patterns. I had wanted to learn the Chinese characters and the written language in a program emphasizing speaking but this was out, of course. I learned a little on my own nevertheless. When we went to Okinawa, our first task was supposed to be to find some natives who would take over and help us establish a program in military government. (By the way, this was a combined operation of the army and the navy and an army man, a colonel, was in charge.) We were supposed to have an interpreter from Hawaii, a Japanese-American native. But something happened in the great scheme of things and he didn't show up and I was the only one in our unit who had any Japanese at all. So the colonel said to me, let's go in the jeep and get ourselves a mayor, and so ...

Labalme: Get ourselves a ...

Claggett: A mayor. Of the district.

Labalme: Oh, I see.

Claggett: In the first place we went to, it seems that the men had gone up into the hills, since, of course, the war was still going on. We were trying to find some native who would help us. The first place we went into was one of these sprawling frame buildings where there were some old people and some children. Then the colonel said to me, "Tell them what we want." And so I went through the whole thing. Absolute blank stares. And I began to gulp and perspire a bit. And it went on that way for some time, and the colonel looked at me and said to himself (or so I imagine), "What kind of a fake do we have here?" Then all of a sudden a child spoke up, and said that he had understood me and he told us that the men were not here. He explained the whole situation: these were old Okinawans who didn't know Japanese. So there I was, I felt a little bit relieved.

Labalme: So did you find a mayor?

Claggett: Well, we found people who were helpful.

Labalme: Was this experience in the navy useful to you?

Claggett: Tremendously, I think. I hate to say that since, like all of us academics, at that time I was anti-militaristic to some extent. But it surely taught me something about

courage and people under stress and so on, and I valued that tremendously after the war. It also told me something about myself: that when I needed to I could run something and administer organizations. I had never done that kind of thing, always having been as the kids would say now, a nerd. So the answer is certainly and absolutely yes. I had thought that the officers who came from Annapolis were a clique, but when I was running that Gunners Mate School, we would prepare gunnery officers to go onto new ships with new equipment, and I grew friendly with lots of them who had been to Annapolis and grew to admire them. One story I would like to tell is of a young man, a wonderful Irish-American boy. He and I did the usual things. He was my age and we went partying together and things of that sort. And I would have thought from my experience with him that this man was a lovely guy, but that he would not be the man to turn the fleet over to. But in one of the island campaigns, after he had left our school, the dive bombers and kamikazes badly damaged his destroyer, killing the captain and executive officer of the ship. Since he was, as gunnery officer, the next senior officer, he took over the ship. He was absolutely fantastic. He ran everything, saved the ship, and got the navy cross for it. And so I got

more and more respect for these people, that somehow or other they picked people who did respond to these critical situations.

Shore: Can I ask something about you going to Wisconsin, which is more of a state school, than staying in an ivy league?

Clagett: I thought I would never leave Columbia. Like all people who go to graduate school on the east coast, if it's Harvard, Columbia, or Yale, they want to return to the "home" and I thought I did too. But after a year, Dean Ingram, a mathematician at Wisconsin, came to New York and talked to me. He said they'd had Guerlac there and they wanted to continue the program and there was a lot of sympathy for it. Would I come and help establish the department? And I thought, no, I'm not going to leave Columbia. But I thought I'd go out and see what it was like. I arrived on one of those gorgeous days in Wisconsin when the sun was shining on the lake and Bascomb Hall looked so beautiful. They hadn't yet built all the buildings that now dot the landscape. In short, I was overwhelmed. They made me an offer, not a very good salary but much more than I was ever making at Columbia. So I said, why not try this?

Shore: You were already married at that point?

Clagett: When I went there, yes. I married before my first job at

Columbia. Married Sue when I returned from Okinawa.

Labalme: And then you were at Wisconsin for a long time.

Clagett: Seventeen years.

Labalme: Did you establish the Institute for Humanities?

Clagett: That's correct. The Institute for Research in the Humanities. That was my last major activity at Wisconsin and it's still flourishing, I'm happy to say. And it was very well treated financially by the Johnson Wax Company.

Labalme: What was the idea behind it?

Clagett: The idea behind it was to try and give some opportunities in the humanities for specialized research topics that were everywhere in sight in the scientific areas. And so we brought in some new people and also gave grants to people on the faculty so that they would come and work there too. And so you had this double arrangement of people coming from the outside and people coming from the faculty inside.

Shore: Did you do the fund raising as well?

Clagett: Yes, I did, some of it.

Shore: And it was an easy sell?

Clagett: I didn't think so at the time. But somehow or other, by getting that one big grant from Johnson we were on our way. We received, I think it was from the A.C.L.S., a five year fellowship to be assigned to different

scholars.

Labalme: It must have been a satisfaction for you to set up something for the humanities, using that humanistic side of your training.

Clagett: It was. It was indeed. And since I'd always been interested in the humanistic side as well as the scientific, it was. It was very hard to leave, I can tell you.

Labalme: One of the things that I enjoyed was Critical Problems in the History of Science. I just browsed through it. That's a remarkable testimony to the ...

Clagett: To the program. Yes. That, of course, was run by the Department of the History of Science. The Institute for Research in the Humanities was quite unattached to that.

Labalme: But it had some connection, did it not?

Clagett: No. The only connection was through me.

Shore: Were you chair of the department of the history of science and director of the Institute for the Humanities at the same time?

Clagett: No. The head of the department became director of the Institute. But the two positions never coalesced. I was still a member of the department, but I didn't chair that anymore, and Stauffer for a while was chair and then they acquired so many members by that time, that it was a very

healthy institution on its own.

Shore: One hears from a lot of people who come to the Institute that they love to get away, the annual members, from their departmental duties, but it seems like you were able to be prolific and to do the departmental work. Was that ...

Claggett: Physical energy, that's all.

Shore: Is it something for a younger person, is that what you mean?

Claggett: If you're going to do several things, you'd better be a little bit energetic. It's nice to be young, that's all I can say. But you know the first two or three books were written on the dining room table.

Shore: And you had three young children.

Claggett: I had three young children, that's right, in fairly quick order.

Labalme: About your coming to the Institute, in coming east, how did that happen?

Claggett: I'll tell you exactly how it happened. I don't know everything about it. I think it was about '58 or slightly earlier, I'm not sure of this, Harvard offered me a professorship. And this was the hardest decision that I've ever faced in my life because anybody would choose Widener Library as a place to study, particularly

if he wants to do scholarly research. And of course Harvard's reputation is well deserved. It's a tremendous university with an outstanding library, but I was also in the process of thinking about the new Institute at Wisconsin. Wisconsin treated me royally and gave me a chair that was a very nice one. Wisconsin met the Harvard offer with a tremendous raise of salary and all that sort of thing plus the fact that the Humanities Institute was incubating and I didn't want to abandon it. Hence I said no to Harvard. And I thought that decision meant that I was going to be at Wisconsin for the rest of my life. Among the people who came to Wisconsin at this time was Alexander Koyré who was a marvelous scholar and, I've always said, a second or third father, I don't know which he was, but a wonderful man, a brilliant Russian who had become French. And he occasionally came here to the IAS.

Shore: As an annual member?

Claggett: As an annual member. He was offered a permanent post. But he wanted to stay in Paris. He kept coming here regularly. And so he said to me: "you ought to apply to this place. You'll like it." He'd been very kind about the books I had written. And so I did apply and that's how I came here first as an annual member. But the

history of science had been coming increasingly to the attention of the Institute, especially as the result of Oppenheimer's interest in it. And Oppenheimer and Koyré were very close friends. At the same time Neugebauer was also coming to the Institute. And then Oppenheimer asked Guerlac at Cornell to come for a two-year membership and Guerlac said yes. This, then, was the background for my coming to the Institute.

Shore: Were they all here simultaneously or one would come and then another would come?

Clagett: Neugebauer came here regularly. That is, he came when he wanted and he was here, I would say, for brief periods from '50 on through '80. Koyré was here for a term each of four or five years. And it seemed to both of them an ideal place to do the history of science because so much important science had been going on here. I was particularly attracted because I had always loved research. I must say immediately that throughout the whole time I've been here (now 32 years), whatever irritation I have had with regulations and committees and all that sort of thing, it has been for me the most fruitful place I can possibly imagine in which to do research.

Shore: When you came for the first time, was it to get away from

teaching or did you enjoy teaching?

Clagett: No, I liked teaching but after 18 years of it, I was ready for research. When I came the first time, remember that I came as a member in 1958.

Labalme: '57-'58. Did you have two terms?

Clagett: '58-'59 I think. Does it say '57-'58 in the book?

Labalme: That's what my note says. That doesn't mean -- in any case.

Clagett: How are we doing?

Labalme: We may have to switch the tape at some point.

Clagett: Oh, there's plenty of time. But I want to make sure that Sue can have the car. Hence we have to watch the time. To continue what I was saying: this was a natural place to do research in the history of science. But as in all academic organizations, there is constant tension between getting public attention and sticking to the research objectives of the Institute. And so the result is that sometimes there is irritation. But I say, despite all of that, it's not really burdensome picking the members and all of that. I do have some observations on the process of picking faculty members. Part of the difficulty is that everybody is not a natural scholar or not as much of a researcher as others. But still they're brilliant and still can contribute usefully as professors. An example

was Felix Gilbert. Tremendous scholar. Read more than any man I've ever met, except maybe Julius Weinberg at Wisconsin. He produced extraordinarily little in the way of written scholarly work for the number of years he was here. But the influence he had, the people he brought added much to the IAS. He knew everybody, especially in Europe. I wouldn't have traded him for a different kind of scholar.

Shore: Can you go back to the earlier period for a moment when you talked about being an annual member. I just have a question about Oppenheimer. Did he take an active interest in the history of science?

Clagett: Very. Yes, he took an active part in running the schools except in mathematics.

Labalme: How do you mean?

Clagett: I mean that the School of Mathematics had its objectives and Oppenheimer his. I'm not going into that. It's all in the records, and it's interesting.

Labalme: Yes. The conflict between them.

Clagett: The conflict. But he took an active part -- see there were only three schools then -- and he sat in both the history school and the natural science school when we selected people. And it was only just in the year of his retirement, as a matter of fact, it was when I first

became executive officer, that we cut the umbilical cord, so to speak, and began to make it an entirely school decision without any input from him.

Shore: Was that because Oppenheimer was retiring?

Clagett: No. I think it was that everybody thought it was a good time to tighten school procedures. There wasn't any brouhaha.

Labalme: Was he an active participant?

Clagett: He was an active participant. Oppenheimer was always active. You know that goes without saying. And his contributions were always pretty good. He was, after all, a brilliant man. He was often accused of being arrogant and I suppose he was. But the more I got to know him, the more I appreciated him. He was just so much smarter than most of us that the arrogance, if it was arrogance, was well taken, well founded. And it was a period also of difficulties he had with the Trustees and the Mathematics school. Needless to say, he was always respected. And by the way, it was the best period for Trustees that we have ever had since I came, despite the difficulties.

Labalme: We won't let them know, the current ones!

Shore: Are there any Trustees that stand out in your mind as to people you had relationships with?

Clagett: Well, Leidesdorf was a very good one, as was Hochschild.

Labalme: Talk about Harold Hochschild a little.

Clagett: It seemed to me that he believed in trying to help carry out the objectives of the Institute without trying to force the faculty to untenable positions.

Shore: His own agenda?

Clagett: It's hard to remember his agenda in any particular direction. But he had that wonderful attitude of supporting the objectives of the IAS that several of them had.

END OF CASSETTE NO. 1, SIDE NO. 1

CASSETTE NO. 1, SIDE NO. 2:

Labalme: OK. Well, you were talking about Harold Hochschild. Of course, I'm always interested in that.

Clagett: Yes. Well, as I think back on it, I was enormously impressed by his service to the IAS. In fact I got to know him through Harold Cherniss, who was a very good friend of his, and so we had conversations on many occasions that were, I believe, mutually satisfying. I also heard him lecture on two or three occasions at the Nassau Club.

Labalme: Oh, did you really?

Clagett: He gave wonderful talks on the mining development in Africa which, of course, he knew so much about. As I say, there was never a feeling of hostile dispute in those days until the terrible time of the dispute over Bellah's appointment in the new School of Social Science. But there was never a time where there wasn't some kind of agreement with many trustees on the objectives of the place and, I thought, a mutual respect. I don't know the situation now. I have been retired for 10 years. Perhaps relationships between faculty and trustees are very friendly. I simply don't know. In my early days here, Eddie Greenbaum was an example of a good friend among the trustees. He and I and two or three other people here used to play poker together, and it was just a delightful time we all had. He listened to us, and we listened to what he said, and that was a very nice way of doing it. But I was going to talk about Leidesdorf, whom I admired greatly. He wrote me a wonderful supporting letter when I was appointed. He was the only Trustee who did, probably because he was Chairman of the Board at that time. But Oppenheimer did, and of course, my friend Harold Cherniss did. Leidesdorf, in his letter, said all the right things about what the Trustees thought and how they would want to help us in the kind of things we

wanted to do. And so I look back on that as a very good time for faculty and trustee relationships, despite any difficulties Oppenheimer might have had. In fact, I was not privy to all of that. As far as I was concerned, those were good days.

Labalme: Do you still have that letter of Leidesdorf?

Clagett: No, I doubt it.

Labalme: Because that would be lovely for our archives.

Clagett: Well, I'll look in my files in here.

Shore: Do you think they saw you as a bridge between the various schools because you do cross the line?

Clagett: Some of them did, but that's artificial in a way. I have had good friends in the other schools, more formerly than now. But that is no doubt explained by retirement and the passage of time.

Shore: The other question I wanted to ask you, and I think we talked about this many times over the years, when you talk about the Trustees as a group in the 1950s and the 1960s, I think we've talked about how they seemed to be closer to a sort of love of learning, or was there a different kind of mood then?

Clagett: They did, it just seemed to me, and, if I may be frank, I thought that this was a part of Jewish culture and the respect and love of learning. I thought this was a

tremendous thing. There was no trace of the attitude that we should be promoting free economy and all that sort of thing. In short, there was a strong appreciation for the cultural objective.

Shore: Respect for learning.

Clagett: Respect for learning motivated most of them, as far as I could tell. Lehman for example, and above all, Harold Hochschild. I think he was terrific, and the fact that I disagreed partly with him on the Bellah appointment made no difference whatsoever.

Shore: On what appointment?

Labalme: Over Bellah?

Clagett: Over Bellah, yes. There was a certain taking of sides in this affair, you know. I'm not saying anything that's not well known.

Shore: I just want to stick with this for a little bit longer. Was there a sort of a German-Jewish community feeling here among the Trustees, and was there any ...

Clagett: I never felt that there was any, no. No I never felt that a cultural clique was pushing its own ideas.

Shore: Let me rephrase that. I meant more in distinction to Princeton University as a different kind of an institution within Princeton, or was there really no division of that sort?

Clagett: I didn't see that kind of a division. I only mentioned the fact because I respected that aspect of it so much that I have often longed for those days.

Labalme: Was there an informality then of contact?

Clagett: There certainly was. I mean the very fact that even though I say this

Labalme: You said you had a story about, well Leidesdorf was the letter, but Henry Allen Moe, tell us a little about him.

Clagett: Though I knew him at the American Philosophical Society, I don't remember him as a Trustee. When was his term?

Labalme: 1942-1946.

Clagett: He was an interesting person because of the way he ran the Guggenheim Foundation.

Shore: And you told us about some kind of special fellowship.

Clagett: Yes. There were two Guggenheim Fellowships for returning veterans. He thought one of the contributions that an organization that supported scholarship could make would be to help people who had been headed in that direction and were out of it for all these years (almost 5 years in my case). And I'd say that was a godsend because when I came back from Okinawa, I was on terminal leave until April, but we got married in February and I began looking for a job.

Shore: In 1947?

Clagett: 1946.

Shore: Did you feel that you had lost touch with the field over the period?

Clagett: Of course. And you would have to. And that's why I was so interested in getting help. (I had some very good students out at Wisconsin, this is an aside, but very good students who had been more recently in scientific things and I depended on them a great deal. One of my students later became a professor at Harvard, now retired.)

Labalme: Who was that?

Clagett: Erwin Hiebert. I don't know if you remember him.

Labalme: Oh, yes. I remember him from the book.

Clagett: He's in the book, yes. And he was very helpful as one of our graduate assistants. So that fellowship from Guggenheim that you asked me about was important. It carried me over until my salary began at Columbia on July 1st, 1946.

Labalme: Coming back to the interest in learning that you felt from this group of Trustees, do you feel that in those days the emphasis really was on the professors' research rather than on the mentoring of the visiting members? Or was equal attention given to that?

Clagett: That's hard to say. I know a lot of my colleagues did

not want too many public occasions that they had to respond to because they felt that that was not the purpose of the Institute. The purpose was essentially research. A good example of such a colleague was Harold Cherniss. I mention him so many times for he was certainly one of the most influential men in my life and on my attitudes I've ever met. He was an exceedingly brilliant scholar and a thoroughly principled man. In fact most of my colleagues were in those days. As I have just said, Cherniss was rather rigid in his principles but they were good principles. He had marvelous relations with individuals and he helped members more than almost anybody else I have met. You could bring a research problem to him and he'd solve it for you. And that's what he did again and again. That kind of distraction was good for him but not the kind where he had to go to a series of lectures and things of that sort. And so he scarcely ever went to the lectures that we had here. And there was something of that attitude among the faculty. Now that's not all to the good. I know that. And I believe that if someone wants to give a series of lectures, let him do it. I'm not, and I was not, particularly interested in doing that myself.

Shore: You mentioned Felix Gilbert. You said that his mentoring

and his wide reading was very helpful. He also did not produce as much scholarship. Was this also true of Harold, because Harold is this kind of ...

Clagett: Well, it certainly is here. Of course he produced some tremendous books before he came here. He did publish here some parts of the Moralia of Plutarch. This is an extraordinary, beautiful job of translating that was clarified by his deep learning. He really was, I think, one of the two or three best Greek scholars that have ever lived. He was engaged in his tremendous work on Aristotle the last year before he died. He had more and more outlines, more and more cards, and more and more notes of detailed research. Hence death overtook him before he got the rest of that extensive work out.

Shore: Do you think there is something about the institution that ...

Clagett: No, I think that was Harold, the ultimate perfectionist. But remember that Panofsky was also at IAS. There could not have been a more productive man in terms of writing, and in speaking, and in everything. He was one of these few scholars in the humanities that are labeled as geniuses. In short, he was an extraordinary man. But he was no better a scholar, maybe not even as good a scholar as Harold. So there were both kinds of people at IAS.

That is all I am saying. Or maybe there are at least three different kinds. One that's both vibrant speaker and a good scholar like Panofsky. Then there was of course Harold who was a good speaker, but he rarely spoke. I recall that he went to Hopkins to give a memorial speech for his friend George Boas, a beautiful speech couched in elegant prose, crisp and accurate and moving. And there are scholars like Felix Gilbert, who shared his vast knowledge in discussions and conversations.

Shore: I remember Harold telling me that if the war had not broken out he might not have published those two books he sent off just before he went off. I can't remember exactly the terms he was using, but I meant in terms of the institution that one has the time to make something perfect, or almost perfect, and that ...

Claggett: Let me explain further. One of the things that I learned when I came here as a member twice before joining the faculty was that this was the only place I had experienced where you could start something and work on it the whole day. That's not possible in a state university. I mean it's not possible in any university, not just a state university. And so what can I say, except that a research institute should foster research

primarily.

Labalme: Well one thing one can say is that you've produced a great deal because you did your Archimedes volume after volume.

Clagett: Yes, that's right. Five volumes in ten.

Labalme: That's right. That's amazing. So the Institute really served your purposes.

Clagett: It surely served my purposes and I hope, those of the several fields as well. I've asked a lot of very good scholars in many different fields in the history of science here as members and they have produced important works while being here.

Labalme: Let's talk about some of them.

Clagett: Well, I spoke about Ed Grant. Grant is a tremendous producer. He came here maybe two or three times, I don't remember exactly the number. He's produced solid books, and he's also produced semi-popular ones. Dave Linberg, one of my "academic grandchildren," one of the most productive scholars now writing in the history of medieval science. He was here twice, I think.

Labalme: He was a student of ...

Clagett: Of Grant's.

Labalme: Of Ed's.

Clagett: Yes, yes. He was a student of Ed's. And then I had

several other historians of science, but scholars from outside of the early scientific fields.

Labalme: Noel Swerdlow.

Clagett: Noel Swerdlow was never a student of mine. He of course has been here a couple of times.

Labalme: Yes. Or Tom Kuhn?

Clagett: Yes. Tom Kuhn was here. His is a whole other area of the history of science, a very important one. One that attempts to determine and evaluate methodological development within science. Certainly Kuhn has been the most single influential man in the field. He was here several years, associated with the Social Science School mostly.

Labalme: When he was here did you and he connect about this?

Clagett: Yes, indeed.

Shore: Without those formal occasions to connect, formal seminars and formal lectures, and with the notion that the School of Historical Studies is a place where you sit and do your project, how did these interactions take place?

Clagett: If the member was someone like Lindberg or Grant or a Hiebert, he might say, "This is what I'm working on and I'm trying to take this approach. What do you think?" It was a daily relationship. And that's the way a

research institute ought to work, it seems to me. As I say, I have nothing against the brilliant lecturer who can bring material together and influence all kinds of people, maybe in and out of the Institute, but I'm just saying the other way is the way I prefer, i.e. where there is a lot of personal contact. And that brings up the problem of the selection of annual members. And that's an important function of the faculty. And there is no real solution for a perfect system. But you have a group of scholars here who are the permanent faculty and they are all good, or relatively good, one way or the other, and yet you sometimes want to go beyond them. Still a difficulty arises if the selection process gets hardened and in a way that has happened. I do not know anything about the selection process now, but let me explain what I mean about the selection process in the past. If a professor says to himself and indeed communicates the idea to his colleagues that he should be able to choose three people, that idea tends to harden and he establishes a kind of fiefdom, expecting to control three appointments each year, even if the applicants are not as proficient as in the previous year. It is attractive because it quickens the selection process and reduces the squabbling over who is the better

of two candidates in differing fields, which was prevalent in the original free-for-all selection procedure.

Shore: How did that work?

Clagett: We would start at 9:00 o'clock in the morning and the selection process would last all day long. I must have had twenty cups of coffee during the day. I always had a headache when I came out of the meeting. It was just extraordinary. Many a time I lost good candidates, but I still think it was the better system. As I have said, the system began to harden; indeed it was abandoned.

Shore: When was that?

Clagett: Oh, I don't know, about the time that we also began to get government money, which I was against from the start. I know it was difficult to find the needed money, but nevertheless I was against it because of the danger of losing control of the process. I guess that you must go outside, but you should not go outside solely on the basis of geography which the government personnel kept pushing.

Shore: What do you mean by going outside?

Clagett: For membership, i.e., finding money from outside agencies for the selection of the membership.

Labalme: You mean that an advisory committee attempts to take

control?

Clagett: Yes, an advisory committee. But I suppose that there are always ways of getting around it. I have not operated under that system at all, so I cannot speak of it. But off hand I would say that it could prove a very difficult and cumbersome system.

Labalme: What you say I find very interesting. My understanding was that when I first came here, which was in '82, this idea of preemptive rights--is that what it was called?--was just beginning to let go, it was just on its way out.

Clagett: Well, I don't want to dispute your understanding of this but I don't remember it in that way. It seemed to me that it hardened more, i.e. became more restrictive, and perhaps it is that way now, I don't know, I literally don't know.

Shore: I don't know if you ever thought about it in these terms, but could it be perhaps a consequence of being in a place where your colleagues really don't change very much. You stay together and you get one or two new people over the years and then...

Clagett: Well, it hasn't been helped by the law that says you can stay on forever and I'll be glad to say as many things against that as possible. For a small institution it can be a death knell, it seems to me. I do not think it has

been yet, but I think it could sound the death knell.

Shore: I guess what I'm suggesting is if you work together with the same people year in and year out you may devise a way whereby this process works so that you don't come into conflict with the rest of your colleagues.

Clagett: Well I insist that you have to come into conflict to a certain extent or you don't get the best members. And to say that it is like comparing apples and oranges is a cop-out because sometimes you have some applicant who has written three tremendous volumes and you've got someone who is just out of graduate school and has written nothing, and you try to compare the two as to what the Institute can do for them and what they can do for the Institute, and sometimes it's not very equal. But, on the whole, I think you can compare relative works.

Labalme: It sounds to me also like what you're arguing for is a sense that the school, school of historical studies, should be cohesive, that you ought to interest yourselves in a variety of fields.

Clagett: Well, you should. But at the same time what I'm saying is that you should be able to say that this person is in an area in which I am not entirely competent, but he's obviously so good we should have him as a member and it'll probably help us in the long run if he is selected.

And that I do think that system worked in the '60s and '70s. Now maybe I'm describing it or remembering through rose colored glasses.

Labalme: I know that they meet for a long time each year. The day begins early and ends fairly late, so there are discussions, but I know less about it, Marshall, than you do. Do you want to talk a bit about the school of social science? It would be helpful to hear your views.

Clagett: Well, yes. Let me describe my initial opposition, not to the school, but to the appointment of Bellah. It just came from reading his works. I thought how can a person really do sensitive work on social practices and social institutions without knowing the language or with knowing very little of the language in the area that he's working. And I felt that, and I may have been unjust, but I felt that that was the case of the Bellah appointment. Hence I am simply explaining my vote against it. On the other hand, when it was resolved, not gradually but rather abruptly, I thought this decision ought to belong to the social scientists and they ought to have their chance to make their mistakes while achieving their objectives. By the time that I would have been able to make a really helpful judgment I had already retired. This was in the case of the social

science school's proposal to appoint a professor in the sociology of science, that is, in the appointment of the Frenchman.

Shore: Latour?

Clagett: Yes. I was not asked my opinion and I did not give it. I read his books in case I would be asked. I thought he was probably worth supporting even though he obviously didn't know the sciences as well as some of his critics demanded.

Labalme: Had you had conversations about the sociology of science with some of the faculty in the school?

Clagett: Oh, sure, but not often. I do not go to luncheons at the Institute now. It is because I have a kind of maniacal idea that I must finish the third volume of my Egyptian science before I keel over. I do not for the same reason go to lectures often. I never went a lot, but I go even less now. And it has to be a good reason of the heart for me to go to a lecture these days. But I certainly supported the current appointment in the history of science if it had gone through, i.e., if the appointee had accepted. I must say that I have a stronger intellectual relationship with the members of the School than I had at the beginning.

Shore: The members of the School of Social Science?

Clagett: Yes. Of Social Science. You were asking about Social Science. And I am now a hundred percent for the School.

Shore: There's some indication in the archives and also from some talks I've had with people, that the School of Social Science was set up because it was a part of humanities scholarship that was not being covered in the School of Historical Studies.

Clagett: Yes. We had shifted away from it when we turned it into a strictly historical school. In the early days economics and politics were represented in the school. When we shifted to history, or better, to history and philology.

Shore: But the School of Social Science was set up with a particularly historical view of the social sciences.

Clagett: Well, I don't know. Do you think that -- it's hard for me to tell that.

Labalme: I don't agree with my colleague here.

Clagett: It doesn't seem to me that Kaysen was much interested in history.

Labalme: I think it was set up to take some cognizance of the changes in society and of the world.

Clagett: Well, I think maybe that's right. I just, I sat through all of these things, and I ...

Shore: You were on one of the advisory committees?

Clagett: We were all on a committee when every appointment was made. You could not escape this. Aside from the tremendous sniping that went on on the outside, you were there as an official part of the creation of the new school. We read the books and examined the credentials of the suggested appointees. It seems to me that the appointments that were made were very good, the ones that were actually made.

Labalme: There's been some talk, and you may have heard it during this period when we're doing this Decadal Review, the ten-year review, of bringing those two Schools, Historical Studies and Social Science, closer together, and some had even talked about the possibility of an eventual merger. How do you feel about those two schools? They have different methods, certainly.

Clagett: What's the matter with leaving them as two schools? I don't see anything wrong with that. I mean they have their objectives and very capable personnel, and you know if they merged now the preponderance would be in history and you would probably get less social science as the result. That seems obvious to me.

Labalme: I think the talk derives from the idea that there's been so much fertile cross pollination, I mean every other historian uses Cliff Geertz's language in the writing and

have the two disciplines, if you could speak of that, moved so close that they ought to be seen as ...

Clagett: Well, obviously Joan is a historian. Let's face it: there's no reason why the historical study of social institutions should not be a significant part of social science, as the professors in the School strongly support. Everything considered, I see no great reason for a merger. But again I just pretend I don't know what's going on.

Labalme: You've just said something very profound. What about relationships with the university?

Clagett: Now, I really am ignorant about them.

Labalme: You taught there, or not?

Clagett: I taught a seminar and have had some kind of slight academic relations with it. But I have also had pretty good relations with the history of science staff there.

Charlie Gillispie is one of my close friends, and the younger people too, Mike Mahoney and the lot. And of course I know the historians socially. I used to know the historians, let's put it that way.

Shore: Did you miss teaching at all?

Clagett: I loved graduate teaching. I'll tell you what happened. Maybe this happens to a lot of people. I was an enthusiastic lecturer when I started and I liked those

courses, I liked to hear myself talk and all that sort of thing. Then as the years went on, I began to think, you know, I was doing lots of research and I was thinking, how little I know about even the areas that I do my own research in and how difficult it is to make a sound judgment. And here every day I'm making, in that introductory course, judgments by the bushel that I know only superficially. And I became a little uncomfortable. And it makes me enormously uncomfortable for somebody to say you don't need to be a great research scholar, that doing research is of little help to your teaching in the general courses. I think that is preposterous. But it is said again and again. The fact is that every day I learn something that I didn't know before and if I were teaching a general course I ought to include it in a general lecture.

Shore: Does it work the other way around, do you learn from your teaching?

Claggett: I suppose it does. Because you suddenly come to some conclusion or fact and you say, hey, I cannot explain that. Let's see what the answer is. And that's kind of interesting.

Shore: Nothing is off the topic.

Claggett: All right. Well I was saying I was asked about my

research on Archimedes when I went to Italy for this prize thing.

Labalme: The Dondi.

Clagett: The Dondi prize. Yes. I told a story of how I got started on the five volumes or ten tomes on Archimedes. I had just gone through a manuscript in which I saw a version of one of the Archimedean works. I discussed this with Pearl Kibre, a distinguished medievalist, a student and associate of Thorndike, who was also my master. For this reason we were all very close. She visited us in Paris. (We were in Paris for the year, and we had her out to dinner.) I said, "Look at this treatise I found and you know there seems to me there's quite a bit of Archimedean material around and nothing is known about it." And so Pearl said to me, "Why don't you write a book on Archimedes in the middle ages." And I said well maybe. But I began thinking it over and five volumes later there it was. So you never really know what gets you into research projects. At least, I don't always know what gets me into the projects I undertake.

Shore: Do you remember we've talked over the years about the kind of scholarship you do, and the kind of love of documents and the love of research, and that we've also talked about, I asked you on one occasion about more

interpretive work. You told me a wonderful story that you started a couple of volumes, that you wanted to do a more interpretive kind of treatment and you got sort of seduced by the documents again.

Clagett: Well, I am a document man. Let's face it. And I know that. But of course for most of history, that's the heart of history and you better have the documents right, you better know what's in them. I never will forget a preposterous statement said by a man who was in the philosophy department, one of Julius Weinberg's colleagues out in Wisconsin who was teaching Renaissance philosophy but didn't know Latin. And I said this is unbelievable. Then he said you don't really need to know the languages because the essential ideas emerge through translation and you just clutch onto them. And I said, "My God, this man is a professor in one of the great universities of the United States." So if I did say what you said I said, it's not incompatible with what I sometimes think. I think that perhaps I did not realize that the Egyptian science would expand and get out of hand so readily because of the complexities of the documents. But I know that the discerning students have to have the documents. But they need an interpretation too and that has expanded the scope of the work. The

first two volumes filled that bill, I believe. I hope that I can finish the third without requiring a fourth. But there is something of a truth to what you have said and I may well have said it. Still I don't remember having said it.

Shore: But of course the person who is the document person would maybe be the best person to do the interpretation.

Clagett: Yes, that's what I feel. And what I did, you know. For if you look at the Science of Mechanics which was the first really crucial interpretive work that I wrote, it's based solidly on the documents. Everything in there has a document to back it up. And it's presented that way because I don't believe I've said the last word on things. Maybe somebody else will read these documents and come to a different interpretation rather than hiding the source in a few footnotes here and there, why not present the whole document so that one can see what the context is. In the history of science, scholars often write "out of context." They take one snippet and they say this man's another Galileo, this one is a Newtonian, etc. For a wider interpretation you must have the documents. Without documents, no history.

Labalme: But there's some interesting. You wrote an article on Oresme, and you also wrote a large book on him.

Clagett: Oh, that was my favorite book.

Labalme: Well I also found the article from the Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society in Felix's file when I was looking for some of the offprints that you had sent him.

Clagett: Yes. Yes.

Labalme: And I was just looking at that and it seemed to me in that you did have a kind of philosophical speculation on why we're always so eager to find the antecedents.

Clagett: Yes, and I still stand by what I said in that article.

Shore: What is that, for the record?

Clagett: That is a lecture I gave at the American Philosophical Society, in fact the first. It was a so-called inaugural lecture after I was elected. It took me two or three years to get around to it but I did finally.

Labalme: "Nicholas Oresme and medieval scientific thought?"

Clagett: In fact, one of the most interpretive things I've ever done is that volume on Oresme.

Labalme: Yes. And why was that...

Clagett: Because the book is an extraordinarily interesting work. It describes a geometric system that is a kind of protoanalytic geometry. But a major question is "how close is it to the later concepts of analytic geometry?" It clearly describes geometric representation of functional statements. That's essentially what analytic

geometry is. But at the same time, the functional statements are not expressed algebraically. This is one of the main reasons that the commentary is very long. There are all kinds of Renaissance texts that reflect the system used by Oresme. The problems treated in these texts go into the mechanics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. And it seemed to me that Oresme's system provided one of the best opportunities to delineate continuity from novelty existing in the history of mechanics, and to base the delineation on the texts.

Shore: So is this a topic that lends itself immediately to interpretation because it's already in the documents to some extent?

Clagett: Yes, I think so.

Shore: Maybe we could pull a few things together that you've been talking about because the history of science seems to be a field where there are different groups.

Clagett: Absolutely. There is no one history of science.

Shore: And sometimes represented here by different factions.

Clagett: That is correct.

Shore: Maybe you could speak a little about those.

Clagett: There are scholars who think that exact science consists almost entirely of the mathematical analysis of

astronomical texts from antiquity onward. (This is the Neugebauer school.) Surely their work is an extremely important part of the history of science. On the other hand, some scholars don't really like this kind of exclusive scholarship. They may be trying to find out the relationship of alchemy to chemistry or some other aspects of natural philosophy that do not lend themselves to mathematical analysis. But those of the mathematical school pooh pooh that; they say that kind of scholarship is wasting time, because the real heart of the history of science is in mathematical analysis. Hence they emphasize the question of whether the older material looks like modern science and how can we represent it in modern scientific terms.

Shore: As someone said, a teleological kind of a thing.

Clagett: Yes, it is a teleological approach to history and that's very dangerous.

Shore: And --- ahistorical at some level I would imagine.

Clagett: That's obviously my view and the way I have gently criticized this approach.

Shore: When you would choose members would you try to make sure that you had some of column A and some of column B, would you try to bring people that ...

Clagett: Not necessarily, I mean you're always (maybe social

science school isn't) but we were always pretty well confined by the people who applied. It isn't so easy to get leave. Very few Americans can get leave for two years. (Henry Guerlac was an exception.) Only Europeans seemed to be able to get off for two years.

Shore: And then the other side of the history of science, is there another sort of second faction or a second group?

Clagett: Well, there are methodological studies and they abound. And their relations with philosophy are very close. There is a whole group that does nothing but that kind of study, starting with logic and investigating, for example, how Plutonic thought affects the investigation of nature.

Shore: So you had a foot in both schools, it seems to me.

Clagett: I suppose that in a way I did, yes.

Labalme: Have we time to ask you a bit about your Egyptian work. Shall we save that for another time?

Clagett: Maybe we'd better. I want to make sure that Sue has the car.

Labalme: Why don't we stop here.

END OF CASSETTE NO. 1, SIDE NO. 2

INTERVIEW WITH MARSHALL CLAGETT

Date: March 14, 1996
Place: Princeton, New Jersey
Interviewers: Patricia Labalme and Elliott Shore

CASSETTE TWO, SIDE ONE

Labalme: Good morning, Marshall. It's Patricia Labalme and Elliott Shore with Marshall Clagett, March 14, for our second go at your memories of the Institute. And I thought maybe we could start with some of your colleagues who were either in your school or in any of the other schools. For example, I have some names. Ben Merritt.

Clagett: I guess it is a privilege of age, namely to think that colleagues who were there when you first came were certainly the best there have ever been.

Labalme: Right.

Clagett: And that certainly is true of me because I had enormous respect and, well, even love for a lot of these of my colleagues at that time. And as you know, I said last time

I was very close to Harold Cherniss but also to Ben Merritt. Ben and I served on committees here and down at the American Philosophical Society until he became a little too deaf to participate easily. So both of these were exemplary scholars. I think the thing that struck me most was the complete integrity of their scholarship. Nothing was fudged or faked or used just for sensation, and I've already spoken of Felix last time and my respect for him.

Labalme: Yes.

Clagett: Felix Gilbert, what a significant contributor he was to our School. And then, of course, I didn't actually serve as a permanent professor here with Panofsky, but I was here with him twice as a visiting member. And as they say, he was something. He had the most extraordinarily fertile imagination. And an absolute infinite collection of facts. One day we were all at dinner at his house and I said, isn't it silly that we're using forks? Thereupon he then gave us a lecture on the first fork, the second fork, down through history, complete and I'm sure one that would satisfy even our archaeological friends.

Shore: You once told me that he had almost complete recall in terms of footnotes as well as down to page numbers and things like that.

Clagett: Yes, I may have told you about him, and he probably did. But I was really thinking of Wolfson at Harvard. When he came out to Wisconsin for just a couple of lectures, his lectures exhibited exactly that quality. When he'd lecture he'd give you a complete footnote, you know, without looking at the page or his speech. It was astonishing.

Labalme: A kind of visual recollection.

Clagett: A visual recollection. And that's what they also say about von Neumann.

Shore: Von Neumann was still alive the first time you were here or he was already --

Clagett: No. He had already died. I came here first in '58-59.

Shore: He died in '57, I think.

Clagett: Yes. He died in '57.

Labalme: Did Panofsky attract junior members? Because that doesn't show in the records.

Clagett: Well, I'm not sure. He is one who, you know, used to say that this is a research institute in which we teach surreptitiously.

Shore: So he didn't believe in lectures and that sort of thing?

Clagett: I don't know, because when he retired from here he lectured in New York at the School of Fine Arts, but I don't

know how often. I suppose that you have those facts in your files. Still he was a marvelous lecturer because of his capacity to relate one movement to another. It just was extraordinary. You could see his mind just working through all of this material. I have a story about the fascination of his lectures. I hope I didn't tell this last time. You can cross it out if I did. When he came out to Wisconsin to give a speech?

Shore: No, I don't think you mentioned that.

Clagett: I was still on the faculty there, but I had been here once as a member and thought, well, I'll never go back probably, but wasn't it a nice place! And he talked literally for an hour and a half, and yes it was the quietest audience, the most absorbed audience. And there again he was relating one thing to another, antiquity, middle ages, renaissance, and so on. And later when we became semi-colleagues here, i.e., when I came here permanently, I said: "You know that lecture of yours was absolutely fascinating and captivating even though it lasted about an hour and a half." I don't know whether I was exaggerating or not, but he said, I have never talked an hour and a half. And I said, yes, you did. And then I told him of the audience's reaction, and he was mollified

somewhat by that.

Shore: How about his successor, I guess Millard Meiss. Were you friendly with him?

Clagett: Yes, very friendly. And he had a different kind of background. He was thoroughly American. He loved the Cincinnati Reds, for example. He was always telling me the latest score, at least when they won.

Labalme: He was born in Cincinnati.

Clagett: Well, yes, he was born in Cincinnati, and you know the famous story about how his name was spelled Meiss?

Labalme: No.

Shore: No.

Clagett: Don't you know that? Or how it was pronounced as if it is Miess though spelled M-E-I-S-S. It seems that when his father came to Ohio, it was M-I-E-S-S, He was a doctor, and one of his first moves was to have someone make a sign for him so that people would know who he was. However the sign painter misspelled it, putting the E before I. Anyway, I don't know whether this is a true story.

Shore: It's a good story.

Clagett: It used to be told all the time. But Meiss was an interesting man. He had an outstanding aesthetic quality or aesthetic judgment that very few people have. Of course you

know how beautiful his house was and how he never could have a fire in the fireplace there because he had too many nice paintings and other art objects, and nobody buys insurance any more on art objects.

Labalme: Right.

Clagett: Of my colleagues at that time, he was the most persuasive pleader for his candidates. He'd go through their scholarly attributes and then say: "I have these two people, they're simply phenomenal. I cannot judge which of them is the better." And then of course we would always say, let's take them both. So he was an artist in more ways than one.

Shore: Where did he stand on that, in that divide of picking members together or picking members individually?

Clagett: Well, we never thought of presumptive rights in the first days, and I'm not sure when the term was first used. Again you might know that from your records. He didn't live very long after he retired. What was it, about a year, something like that?

Labalme: Yes.

Clagett: And it was a miserable last year, I know that.

Shore: So his eloquence was useful then in the general discussion.

Clagett: Yes, very much so. Supposing we were talking about a candidate we were going to bring here for more than one year or even as a permanent professor, if he really didn't want him, he would say, well now he is so well liked where he is and he's serving such a useful purpose there, it would be a disservice to take him away. So he was a very good politician, in the best sense of that word. And let's see, who else was there.

Labalme: Did you know E. A. Lowe at all?

Clagett: Oh yes. Well he was a medievalist.

Labalme: What was he like?

Clagett: And I pretended to be a medievalist then as you know.

He was a peppery man. He used to come up and say to me,
"Jimmy Hoffa's getting a bum deal."

Labalme: What was that about?

Clagett: Well, we all knew that Hoffa was tied up with the mob and there wasn't much doubt of that. Still Lowe defended him as a protector of labor.

Labalme: His sympathies were...?

Clagett: He was a revolutionary at heart but he was also a rather elite anglophile because of his long Oxford career. He was also an old-fashioned scholar and the two were united in this small frame. It was extraordinary.

Shore: Marvelous handwriting.

Clagett: Yes. Yes. Well, why not, with a man who studies handwriting. And of course one thing that you must remember with him, he had probably the best assistant that's ever been in our group, Jim John, who is now at Cornell. John was an absolute genius at hands and he was so precise that, as we say these days, his input to Lowe's work on manuscript descriptions is simply extraordinary. And he really ought to have been specified as a co-author.

Shore: Didn't he work with you as well? Wasn't he your assistant later?

Clagett: We didn't work together, but my first three or four assistants were students of Jim John, for he attracted students with the same precision. And you certainly like that quality in an assistant. I might add, if I may have an aside here, one of my assistants, his name was Charlie Zuckerman, claimed that Jim John was so good because he knew where to find everything to compare another hand with, and he would sense that a manuscript had to be from such a date and such and such locale. Moreover he passed that ability on to Zuckerman, who had the best visual sense of any paleographer I have known (other than Jim John). And fortunately I had just finished the transcription of William

Moerbeke's translation of most of the works of Archimedes and I asked Zuckerman to go through the text. And he was simply marvelous. He said, oh, these are not the same hands and you've got an interloper here, and things of that sort. And he was so, so helpful. A part of that was the training from Jim and part of it was just a wonderful pair of eyes and a good sense. And what did we do? We lost him.

Scholarship lost him.

Shore: What happened?

Clagett: He wanted to get married and he was such a wonderfully frank man. He'd go for a job interview and by the time he was through, nobody wanted to hire him because he'd say, oh, no, you can't do it the way you suggest and so on. Employers don't like to be told what they should be doing. Now Zuckerman wanted to get married and so he decided, while he was still my assistant, to take accounting. Hence he went to Rutgers and took an accounting degree and became an accountant. Brilliant as he was he got a fantastic job making twice as much as all his contemporaries. So far as I know he's still in accounting and doing very, very well. But it's a shame because the man had a wonderful scholarly sense.

Labalme: You had a series of assistants, do you want to speak

about any others?

Clagett: Well, yes. One of my assistants was a man I had known in Madison very well: Father Joe Brown, who was a secular priest and extraordinarily warm and wonderful man. He gave up the priesthood. I hope nobody blamed it on me, but he was born to be a priest and it didn't make any difference who laid hands on him or didn't lay hands on him. He was a marvelous man. Did you know him at all?

Labalme: I don't think so.

Clagett: I think he had gone by the time you came here. Well, he left the priesthood. I guess you can't really leave the priesthood but at least he cut the formal tie. Then he got married and now teaches at Rensselaer. Even though he was an assistant professor without tenure, he was the only man who could make people with divergent views come together, and so for several years he was chairman of the department, for apparently nobody could agree with anybody else without Joe in the middle. And he was a good scholar, wrote a beautiful thesis on medieval statics, which is one of the few areas of what we would call physics today that was mathematical in the Middle Ages. So he took off from a book that Ernest Moody and I wrote on the medieval science of weights and studied a whole lot of other texts that impinged

on those and it's never been published but it's circulated with the Michigan University microfilm.

Shore: Not all of your assistants, though, were historians of science.

Clagett: No. But he was, because he took his doctorate with me at Wisconsin. And Charlie wasn't, i.e., Charlie Zuckerman wasn't. But he was so good at his craft and at anything medieval he was a delight to have as an assistant.

Labalme: The system then worked for the assistant as well as for you, of having an assistantship.

Clagett: I hope so. There is no doubt that if the professor is really interested in publication, he gains greatly from an assistant who locates and evaluates materials and from talking over things with him. I hope the assistants gained something from working with me.

Shore: That's no longer the case here.

Clagett: I don't know about how it is at present.

Shore: Only one assistant.

Clagett: I told you I was going to say I was out of town if you brought up -- ???

Labalme: But now it's like an extra member, isn't it?

Shore: But I mean you would use the assistant as a working partner.

Clagett: Absolutely. And that was the case with every single one of them.

Shore: And did that improve your efficiency?

Clagett: Of course it did. Of course it did. It improved the accuracy of what I was publishing, if that's what you mean by efficiency. An assistant like Charlie could run down anything for me. He could get anything from the library at Princeton. Of course the library was here even before you were here and was also very helpful with interlibrary loans. It's always been a strong point here. By the way, later on I have a few remarks on the library.

Shore: Why don't we talk now about the library?

Clagett: I'd like to do that because, you know, there are some real problems where it doesn't make any difference who the personnel are. (Well, that would make some difference.) But the problems would remain, the problems from having to serve specialized fields. When the professor leaves or dies then the field drops out of sight. Since there is a limited amount of money for books, whether they are being purchased for the professor or for the library, if the professor is not replaced the field is not maintained and neither is the library.

Shore: Maybe more importantly there's no one to select those

books.

Clagett: There's no one to select them, to keep them up. That's exactly right. And so what often emerges in these areas where we had somebody really very good is that it's a wonderful collection for a period of fifteen years or so and then falls off completely after he leaves or dies.

Shore: Do you have any remedy for this, any suggestion how they could handle this?

Clagett: I don't know. I think part of the trouble, the reason why it's so hard, is the way the library started, it started out of private collections really. I mean Meritt's collection and various others. There wasn't any library as such, it consisted of personal collections which were very good. I mean a man like Panofsky and his colleagues (especially Lowe) had tremendously good private libraries. You know the story about Lowe's library, and his skillful use of the library to live on for the last thirty years or however long he lived.

Shore: Could you explain that? I don't know that story.

Clagett: Well, it's simply that he sold his library to Morgan very early, I think maybe when he was about sixty, he had a heart attack, as you may remember, and he had a little machine in which he rode up to the second floor where his

office was.

Clagett: But he sold his collection to the Morgan library. And of course this was going to be a great plum for the Morgan Library because he had a marvelous collection. But he negotiated the proviso that he be able to keep possession for the rest of his life. Well, he lived another thirty years. And what happened was that Morgan kept duplicating his books because they needed them. So finally when Lowe's library was to be transported to Morgan, they had to sell the duplicates. And the IAS library bought them. Well, you undoubtedly know this story.

Labalme: No!

Clagett: And that's it. And we got a lot of good books out of it but also we had to pay for it plus the fact -- now I don't blame a person for doing that because you know, for example, Harold [Cherniss] wanted to provide a nice extra nest egg for Ruth and his collection was extremely valuable, \$75,000 I believe.

Shore: \$100,000.

Clagett: \$100,000? To Krauss.

Shore: To the University, Graduate Center of City University.

Clagett: Oh, no, and he didn't sell it.

Shore: It was sold by --

Clagett: Krauss. Not Krauss --

Shore: George Allen.

Clagett: George Allen.

Shore: With our help. And Frank Gilliam's library was also sold.

Clagett: Yes. So, see there's no tradition, there are occasional transfers, such as the library of Millard Meiss. You didn't have to pay for his library, did you?

Shore: That came before my time. I assume not.

Clagett: I don't think you did.

Shore: And we also got Panofsky's library.

Clagett: Yes, but I think you paid for that.

Shore: I don't know.

Clagett: I don't know that either, but it would be nice if we were all wealthy enough to leave our libraries to the Institute.

Shore: So the problem then is that the library builds a collection based on a private collection and then after a while it goes fallow.

Clagett: That's exactly right.

Shore: Except in the classics, I would assume.

Clagett: Well, that's because we have pretty much of a continuity in the classics. Not really but most of our

classicists will buy the basic materials anyway, the texts. That collection has stayed fresh. And the medieval collection has done very well.

Shore: And the other problem that you speak to, archaeology, is a classic example of us having a marvelous collection that has not been maintained.

Clagett: Absolutely. Well, I think a word ought to be said about Homer. In the first place, he's not only one of the great archaeologists, but he is one of the best expositors of archaeology, of what he's done and what an archaeologist does, and he has this great classical training, but in what he's done in Athens you all know, it's just simply unbelievable. So he can convince people that it's important. He convinced the Rockefellers that it's important and that was a hell of a thing. And here he is, he's still doing wonderful things.

Shore: Now you were on the faculty when he retired, isn't that right?

Clagett: No. Homer goes way back.

Shore: He had already retired before you came?

Clagett: No, I see what you mean.

Shore: You were on the permanent faculty when he retired.

Clagett: Oh, yes.

Shore: After his retirement no more archaeologists were appointed.

Clagett: Oh, that's right. No permanent archaeologist.

Shore: Was that a discussion that was held?

Clagett: His replacement was discussed. But nothing was done.

I think that you could tell better than I about how well he tries to keep up the library. I think that even today he still does make suggestions to you, doesn't he?

Shore: About books, but I was thinking more about the faculty or about members.

Clagett: I'll tell you what happens about members. And nobody should be bitter about this because it's just the way life is. For the first two or three years your colleagues say, "Well Marshall needs a candidate or two," and then the pressures of their own studies increase, so that practice drops off, with an occasional exception, like Roshdi Rashed.

Labalme: Do you remember though the discussion as Homer retired about whether archaeology should be continued?

Clagett: Sure. Every time there was a retirement, we'd say "What will we do?" And again that shows you the skill of a man like Millard. He made darn sure he had a successor before he left.

Labalme: Yes. He was maybe the only one who did. But they

[Millard and Irving Lavin] were both here at the same time.

Clagett: Yes. That's right. Well, he was also here at the same time with Panofsky.

Labalme: Yes, that's what I meant. Both Meiss and Panofsky.

Clagett: Oh, I see, it's true, it worked both ways, two generations.

Shore: There was always a medievalist as well, isn't that correct?

Clagett: Yes. Let me see. Always. Yes. Eka, what was the date of the controversy that brought him here.

Shore: In the late '40s.

Clagett: Late '40s.

Labalme: No, the McCarthy.

Clagett: Yes, but what was the date? What was the date roughly?

Shore: '50 I think is probably --

Clagett: Actually it's '51. And so you're right, there's always been a medievalist and the strange thing in a way was that when Eka died I wasn't a successor except in the fact that I was a medievalist and he was a medievalist, because I had different interests than Eka's.

Labalme: Did you know him when you were here as a member?

Clagett: Oh, yes.

Labalme: Tell us a bit about him.

Clagett: He was a very capable scholar. He had this remarkable sing-song voice. Did you know him at all?

Labalme: No.

Clagett: He sang as he talked in every language, whether it was English or German or some other European language. You could tell in a crowded room where he was from this wonderful voice. And another little personal thing that I just love, when I was first here as a member he was extraordinarily nice to me. I had my gall bladder removed, and so he used to visit me at the hospital. And of course just after it was removed Eka, being the great fancier of wine, brought a bottle of wine for me. I wanted a bottle of wine like a hole in the head at that time. But he inspired enthusiasm and I guess he must have done that in Germany in one way or the other.

Shore: Did he ever speak about those terrible times --

Clagett: Never. Never to me.

Shore: Either in Germany or in --

Clagett: Maybe he did to his older colleagues, but he certainly didn't to me. But what I'm trying to say is, I started out saying that really I was so impressed by my colleagues and he was certainly one of them, though I wasn't a true colleague until after his death. But he may have been

partly instrumental in my coming here because I think we went up together to a meeting of the Medieval Academy and it was one of those times when I gave a good talk, a so-so talk, and he liked it very much and expressed that opinion to my future colleagues.

Shore: Is this about the time when you were giving those talks around the country?

Clagett: Yes.

Shore: Could you tell us a little bit about that?

Clagett: Yes. That was Phi Beta Kappa lectures. And the purpose of those was that they sent you to ten different universities or colleges that were out of the way or small. They ended up, however, with some fairly large ones. I mean, for example, the University of Pennsylvania. Ohio State was another one that wasn't exactly a small college. But they also included Hamilton and Lawrence and the one at Williamsburg, you know, in Virginia.

Shore: William and Mary.

Clagett: William and Mary. That's right. And that was where I gave the first talk, it was at William and Mary and I remember it was such a wonderful occasion. See this was the Alpha chapter, Phi Beta Kappa, at William and Mary. And I said, and it spontaneously came to me when I started my talk

there, speaking where the Alpha chapter of Phi Beta Kappa began reminds me of a movie with Louise Rainer, the Great Waltz. As we get along in the script for a while she's down on the Danube and there's great music from the heavens with the great Danube waltz being played, and she looks up to her beau, whoever he is, and she says, isn't it marvelous to hear the Blue Danube at its source? So it's obvious how I feel about being at the Alpha chapter. So that worked out very nicely.

Shore: When you were here there were two medievalists, right?

One came right after you came.

Clagett: Well, you mean Ken Setton.

Shore: Yes. I mean we know that you were great friends for --

Clagett: Oh, yes. It was almost sixty years by the time he died. We met at Columbia, undergraduate students together, and we both were studying with Lynn Thorndike, who was a very interesting and strange man, but one very, very good to his students. And influential because he had a kind of precision that a graduate student really needs, I think. It's wonderful to have ideas, but they don't come so much from your teachers as they do from somewhere else, I don't know what it is. But to have a man like Thorndike was a great privilege. Personally, I know he was so good to both

of us. Particularly to me because I was his assistant for the last couple of years of my graduate training, and he was paying me out of his pocket. I wasn't being paid by Columbia, I was being paid by him.

Shore: It was also the depression as well.

Clagett: Yes. But back to Setton. Ken was a marvel as a student and as a professor, too, because he had a remarkable memory. It may be hard for you to believe this as you think of both of us getting old and not being able to remember our names, but he had the most complete and versatile memory of any scholar that I had contact with, and his command of Latin as you may know was unbelievable. His father started teaching him at seven years old; one drink and Ken was off with the Latin. Everything was in Latin. I don't know how he found the words to express these things in Latin, but he was extraordinary and then his publication record is really quite impressive, The Papacy and the Levant being very, very important. It was, I think, one of the four or five great works of the twentieth century in medieval studies.

Labalme: It's such a useful resource.

Clagett: Yes. And then he has that, what shall I say, peppery style. So, you don't expect when you're taking up a book about The Papacy and the Levant, that you're going to get

this dashing style as I said in a memorial that I was one of the authors on. And that style may have come from the fact that when he was a boy he loved Sabatini, the novels of Rafael Sabatini. He just thought they were great, and he always harbored the wish that when he gave up The Papacy and the Levant and this scholarship, that he would write a historical novel.

Labalme: He talked about it. It should be in Venice. Yet he never did it. He thought about it.

Clagett: Yes. I added that to the memorial too, I thought that was worth adding to the last one, the one that appeared in Speculum.

Shore: Just another question or two about Ken because it must have been great to have a real graduate student colleague on the faculty together. Did you work together in choosing members or did you, was there any kind of --

Clagett: Well, I'm sure we did without making it a regular practice because his interests were different from mine. But you can't ever discount friendship, you know, and the opinions of somebody that you respect and know are going to be fairly sound.

Shore: Do you think there were more medieval members then in that period than there were before or after?

Clagett: Well, I assume there were because there were two of us selecting, but in a way the areas of interest were so different that you didn't get a sense that the School was being overwhelmed by medievalists, or historians of science. I also had members that were modern as well as medieval, though perhaps not as many for obvious reasons. I knew the medieval group better. But we had a good sprinkling of modern historians of science here.

Labalme: In general, Ken's stay at the Institute was a happy one for him, I had that impression.

Clagett: Yes. Very much so. Because, despite his really great speaking ability, his heart really was in those books, and he was constantly being, in a sense, held back at Penn, perhaps not at Wisconsin, but certainly at Penn, because he was the University orator and he wrote, indeed he loved to write, these blurbs about the various people that Penn was giving honorary degrees to and the best one, the one he liked the most, was Grace Kelly. She came back for an honorary degree and he thought she was really nifty, if I were to use the '20s expression.

Labalme: We'll have to retrieve that citation.

Clagett: Yes. I don't know where. I guess you could get it.

Shore: Grace Kelly and Latin.

Clagett: Yes.

Labalme: How about some of the people outside your School, like Gödel. Did you have any --

Clagett: Yes. I had exactly three conversations with Gödel. He had an office right next to me. That's what makes this even funnier in a way, and I've never been able to explain one of the conversations. The only one that didn't consist of platitudes was when we were thinking about appointing Setton and the faculty was being prepared as it usually is and papers were sent around, and there was a knock on my door in this very building or rather over in the other --

Shore: The annex.

Clagett: The annex. And in walks Gödel and he said, is Setton a Catholic? And I said, no. Well, he writes about the Pope. I said, yes. Oh. then he walked out. I don't know the meaning of that. Whether he wanted him to be a Catholic, or didn't want him to. Of course, didn't Gödel get buried as a Catholic?

Labalme: I don't know.

Shore: He had a very intense interest in religion at the end of his life. Do you remember the other two conversations?

Clagett: No. Nothing memorable was said. I took him home one time and he said that his wife was a ballet dancer and the

way he pronounced it, I thought he said belly dancer, and I knew that wasn't likely. And the third one was at another party. He never took her, by the way, he always came alone to everything. Perhaps she was ill. And he lived down right near the cemetery where I guess he's buried, isn't he? Yes. The main cemetery there.

Labalme: Should we --

Shore: We could go on. Actually may I ask a question?

Labalme: Yes.

Shore: Just because you mention that he came to the party alone without his wife, you were here in a period when there were no women on the faculty.

Clagett: No women on the active faculty, but there had been one.

Labalme: Hetty.

Clagett: Hetty Goldman. Yes.

Shore: Before you came, right?

Clagett: Yes, but I got to know her.

Labalme: Tell us about Hetty.

Clagett: Well, as you know, she was really an extraordinarily good scholar, and she had access to everything, being of a family as important as her family was, and of course that wasn't why she was hired, or at least what I know of why she was hired, but at least she was a first class scholar. And

so I think we must be one of the few small institutions that did have from almost the word go, a woman professor. But I must admit our overall average hasn't been high.

Shore: Was there any discussion about it in the period when you were on the faculty from the mid '60s?

Clagett: Always. Always candidates came up. Sure.

Shore: You mean in the early period?

Clagett: Sure. That came up. But somehow or another it never materialized except when Joan was appointed. I was still on the faculty when Joan was appointed.

Shore: Was that an issue when she was appointed, that she was a woman?

Clagett: No. I don't think so. Well, I don't know what their School --

Shore: I mean in the general discussion.

Clagett: No.

Labalme: By then I would think there was some pressure on the Institute to --

Clagett: Maybe there was. Maybe there was.

Labalme: If they couldn't find a woman candidate.

Clagett: That's right.

Labalme: I know when I came people said, but there isn't a woman on the faculty.

Clagett: Yes. Yes.

Labalme: How about Alfoldi?

Clagett: Alfoldi. Alfoldi. Again a superb scholar but a strange man as far as I could see, and he loved horses. Every time he gave a lecture, horses and the cavalry were sure to appear. I remember one lecture he gave when he made the terrible mistake of having slides. It was back in the annex, not long after the annex was finished, and he turned the lights out and that was the mistake because he just had one slide after another, a picture of a horse and a chariot and a horse and chariot and a horse and a chariot and so on. So he was --

Labalme: He lost his audience, are you saying? They went to sleep?

Clagett: Yes.

END OF CASSETTE NO. 2, SIDE NO. 1

CASSETTE NO. 2, SIDE NO. 2:

Labalme: Tell us about Alfoldi's work.

Clagett: He was an excellent scholar and his published work was very influential. I didn't know him personally very well. He was a good deal older than I and he was very Hungarian in a sense that he liked to keep up with his Hungarian colleagues and those who come to America. And his assistant Stephen Foltini was a Hungarian. I must say he had some troubles, I mean Foltini did, because Alfoldi had an old world view of what an assistant should do and so poor Foltini did everything.

Labalme: He did everything.

Clagett: Yes. Yes.

Labalme: But he was part of the distinguished group. Alfoldi was part of it.

Clagett: Sure. No doubt about it. I can't really think of anybody in my period at least in those first two years that I didn't enormously respect as a scholar, which doesn't mean I was close to them all, because that's not the way life is.

Shore: Isn't there a famous story about Alfoldi, a remark about the School of Historical Studies and the School of Mathematics?

Clagett: I don't know the remark.

Shore: I'll think of it.

Labalme: Marshall, with such a distinguished group and everyone doing his thing, why was the Institute difficult in the terms of governance? What are the problems?

Clagett: If you hire a person who at least partially dominates a field (and he usually comes from a fairly influential position in his university), he expects to continue in a position of influence at the Institute in terms of the governance as well as scholarly responsibilities. That's the way the American system is in universities, at least until recently. Now everybody is using accountants as executives, but in the old days a scholar would be a Dean or a President or the like.

Labalme: That's right.

Clagett: So I think that one of the difficulties was that -- you get prima donnas. And you know I've always loved that article in Time, I think it was, it's Time or Newsweek, "Trouble in Paradise," when we had our trouble in the Bellah affair.

Labalme: Right.

Clagett: On the other hand, I think that principles of any kind of democratic governance were at stake in that particular fight. However when you've got a group of twenty odd

people, and they're involved in the governance of the place, it's not going to be easy, and it's not going to be easy if you're committed to trying something as a Director. And also these four Schools are not going to come together always, and I can see that the Director's life is not an easy life in this place and I was simply horrified just after I came here and Oppenheimer retired, that Harold Cherniss wanted to go to the Board and make me a candidate for the directorship because I had run the Institute out in Madison, and I literally was horrified. Enough is enough. That is not why I came to the Institute.

Labalme: But Carl Kaysen was really a very qualified, a very able person.

Clagett: No doubt about it. No doubt about it. I think, though, that when there is a clear majority against an action in the whole faculty, that that is not a wise thing to do, to go to the Trustees and go over the head of the faculty.

Shore: Was his tenure hurt at the beginning because there were no faculty on the search committee? Was that an issue?

Clagett: Yes, I think so, because we were absolutely astounded, almost everybody on the faculty, utterly astounded. Most of us knew that he was down helping in Washington, that fellow

who was Dean at Harvard, McGeorge Bundy. Kaysen had been helping Mac in Washington. On the basis of his record he was certainly qualified but, as I say, we were astonished because we'd never heard any mention of him. As you know, word gets around that they're considering A, B, C, D, or E, from Harvard, from Washington, from somewhere. But at least I had not heard that he was being considered. And he conceived a fourth School as a mission and unless he could get candidates, he was in trouble.

Labalme: He had been appointed with the understanding that he would do this, wasn't he?

Clagett: Whose understanding, that's the point, whose understanding! That's what makes it a matter of governance.

Labalme: Yes.

Clagett: It wasn't the faculty's understanding.

Labalme: Right.

Shore: Can I ask then if the understanding is that they were looking for someone, it's one of those counterfactual questions, but why didn't the faculty insist on being on the search committee?

Clagett: My memory is not really good enough. I'm not weaseling. I just simply don't know why, I didn't know what the tradition was of selecting directors.

Shore: You were new.

Clagett: Yes, I was fairly new. I'd been here two years, I guess, when Oppenheimer resigned. I don't mean resigned, you know what I mean, retired.

Labalme: Retired, yes.

Shore: Oppenheimer's term was not a pleasant one.

Clagett: I gather from all I've heard which was the general knowledge in the faculty. I spoke last time about how I grew to have tremendous admiration for him, and I did so because he was just so darned intelligent.

Labalme: He sat with the different Schools, you pointed out.

Clagett: Yes.

Labalme: He seems to have contributed something.

Clagett: Oh, yes. He did.

Shore: Why did it get so nasty, I mean, one can understand the governance questions and the democratic issues, but the level of --

Clagett: Well, you'd have to sit in the meetings to answer that question.

Labalme: What were they like?

Clagett: They were not harmonious, to say the least. And there was a certain stubbornness on the part of the whole thing and interestingly enough the man, maybe the man you'd least

suspect on the Trustees was the most amenable.

Labalme: Who ran the Board for a while. Howard Peterson.

Clagett: Howard Peterson. He was really quite a good --

Shore: Mediator?

Clagett: Mediator, actually at the time, and Segal wasn't bad either as a mediator, you know, he recognized it's possible to have more than one opinion and that the Directors are not always right and vice versa. No, I had respect for Peterson in those days and maintained it. He just died recently. He was on the Board down in the Pennsylvania Museum, and he used to make sure I was included in things down there. I became quite attached to him.

Labalme: In the archives, I came across a letter to you from Carl Kaysen, you were E.O., Executive Officer, in 1966. He says, "As you will see from the current edition of the Institute flyer, I have taken the liberty of listing myself as a member of the School of Historical Studies, and that the printing deadline made some decision in this matter necessary." So he asked you to inform your colleagues.

Clagett: Inform.

Labalme: Yes. Inform you colleagues of this case.

Clagett: That's the problem, right there. That's the problem!

Labalme: Yes. And it may interest you to know that just

recently I was reviewing his sort of farewell statement to the Board of Trustees recounting the history of his actions in forming this new school, but he says, "I was a member of the School of Historical Studies by their invitation."

Clagett: Oh! I don't know whether -- there's no record in our School of a vote or anything of that sort?

Labalme: I didn't find one.

Clagett: Again, I wish I remembered, but we were not happy.

Labalme: Right. Did he attend meetings then?

Clagett: Not often. Not often. He did, oh yes. But then there was the famous meeting where he said something like this, no I don't know, I can't quote him accurately, maybe I shouldn't try to quote him, but the idea -- I'll paraphrase it -- the idea was that you know tenure's not everything. That was the message. And you know, I was thinking I am 50 something now! I don't know what the other people were thinking.

Shore: Right.

Labalme: Well, it was a difficult time, I'm sure.

Clagett: Yes.

Labalme: For everybody. What about your present work, your Egyptian work. Tell us about it.

Clagett: Well, it's something of a different character. It has

the same overall purpose that all of my work does. In the first place, I believe that unless you have the sources immediately at hand it's very difficult to evaluate the judgment of any historical analysis and summary and so I've always, perhaps not always, but I have for a long time thought that there has to be some combination of analysis and sources. In my medieval work where so much of the material had not been published, I felt it necessary to devote a great deal of my life to publishing texts, with analysis and commentary, but trying always in the various parts of the work to say, here is the way I look at them, but presenting them there because you know we're very fallible and rationalization is sometimes the bane of history. I think I mentioned something like that in our first talk together. The character of the Egyptian work is slightly different from the others, but it has underlying the consideration that I'm interested fundamentally in continuity and how do you distinguish continuity from novelty, and what are the sources on which those distinctions are based. And that's really what I'm doing with the Egyptian work too, I have all the sources there. I'm not, as they say, turning up absolutely new sources all the time the way I was in the medieval works. There are not

that many new sources around, but I'm also not a professional Egyptologist, though I think I've got a pretty good command of the language. And I can read. But I'm not so much involved in the editorial process the way I was in medieval works. Still, there is a very great lack when you go to Egyptian topics of finding any continuous treatment and so I thought that I might fill that lack. It first started out as just a plain old source book like several others in the history of science that we had and then I realized that if the reader does not know anything about Egyptian culture, it's hopeless just to throw the so-called scientific data at him. So that's when I decided the volumes all should be a combination of text and synthesis. It is called a source book and is fundamentally based on documents, but in every case I try to put them all together. And that's essentially what I'm doing.

Shore: Did you tell us last time why you turned to Egypt? I don't believe you did.

Clagett: Well, one gets tired of doing somewhat the same things, especially with the Archimedes, where I'd done essentially ten volumes and you know I suppose I was getting tired of doing that, and I was fascinated with Egypt from the time I was in graduate school. Earlier I had to put it aside; you

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can only do thoroughly one thing at a time and I had started in other directions. When I reached retirement I began again to work through Gardner's great grammar, which is one of the best works for learning hieroglyphics. And somewhere along the line I took my first trip to Egypt, in 1976. Before I took that trip, I said to myself, you can't go to a place and not know anything about it. I've done so at other times. But I knew that I shouldn't. And so I began to fiddle with the hieroglyphics then and try to revive what knowledge I had of that work. After I got back I saw that little had been done on science that tries to bring all the documents together, the most important ones, and so I began in the morning to read hieroglyphics. And every morning I read them for a couple of hours.

Shore: This is at the age of sixty?

Clagett: This is at the age of yes, about sixty-two or sixty-three. I began to read hieroglyphic texts every morning. Not connected with the history of science necessarily, just texts, so I would get some facility with the grammar and the language in every way. And I literally did that for almost ten years.

Labalme: You read it with a translation at the same time or you made your own translation?

Clagett: Well, I would get a text out that had been edited and I would go through and ordinarily the technique that I'd always used is that I would xerox the text and then, if I didn't recognize the words, I would write them on my xerox copies and so on and so you finally arrive at a crucial point in reading a language, namely when you know it would be hard to lose it. I don't know when that point is, it's different for different languages, but I finally got to that and then is when I began to go in on it. Meanwhile I finished the Archimedes. I've forgotten when the last volume was, '83 or '84 or something like that.

Shore: How did your colleagues feel about the change?

Clagett: They all admired it, or at least they told me they did. Because everybody gets to a point, especially if you're doing research, where you feel stuck in an area, a time when you might want to go beyond that, or if not beyond it, outside of it.

Labalme: Some people never do.

Clagett: I know.

Labalme: But having done this now you're shaping this enormous body of material and I love the way you pick for volume one, Knowledge and Order.

Clagett: I don't know how I did that. It just came to me. How

do you know, I don't know how you get these ideas. But it seemed to me that these were the crucial concepts and it wasn't artificial. They're there, you see, and so they became pretty good organizing concepts.

Shore: You were teaching yourself computer things at the same time, if I recall.

Clagett: Yes. Well I was learning about the computer but only in the last stages of the first volume. But I figured that I had to have some way to print hieroglyphics because I knew publications were very costly in this area and I wasn't sure how this whole work would be received anyway and so I decided to design hieroglyphs on the computer and that's when I devised a system to do that.

Labalme: Are other people using that system?

Clagett: Not much because it's been supplanted by one devised in Holland. I used my own system for the first two volumes but now in the third volume I've turned to the Dutch system that was invented for Microsoft Word and it is far better than mine.

Labalme: I know you're working very hard on volume three, so my next question is --

Clagett: When?

Labalme: No, I am not asking you for a date, but are you tempted

afterwards then to write a commentary, a broader -- because there is commentary throughout, right?

Clagett: Right. Well, what do we mean by that, a popularization or -- that's not a bad word, it's a good word if properly done. Is that what you mean? Visit the highlights, but all the chapters that precede the documents together in some convincing way, is that what you mean?

Labalme: What I mean is that usually as you begin to see somewhere even remotely the end in sight, usually there's something in the scholar's mind.

Clagett: Let's hope something does come up. I keep wondering if I do finish it, if I'm lucky enough to finish it, I'd say it's probably, it's less than half done now, but all the mathematical documents are done and now I'm struggling with the thing to put the whole thing together in the chapter and I don't know when that struggle will end. But then I promised to do medicine and I'm not sure -- I'm collecting the materials on medicine, and I know them a little bit anyway.

Labalme: This is the third volume you're talking about, medicine and biology.

Clagett: Yes, medicine, biology, well the mathematics had to be pushed into this volume because the second volume got too

big.

Labalme: Astronomy.

Clagett: Astronomy, yes. It just got too big and so there is the temptation maybe, it depends on how I feel, I mean physically feel, whether I can somehow figure out some graceful way to bring the mathematical part to an end in its own volume and then complete the last subject, the medicine and the overall view or something like it as a final part of the last volume. But that would make four volumes instead of three. I've only promised three and good lord I can't believe that I'd be anything more than an idiot by the time I get to this.

Labalme: We have great faith. But it's been fun, the Egyptian work.

Clagett: Oh, it has indeed. I was scared to death doing it. I mean I walked into a field in which all I had was a desire and interest, but the Egyptologists could not have been more gracious. I mean it's been incredibly satisfying.

Shore: But you also said that the tools that you developed over the years as a medievalist, you used again, organization --

Clagett: Oh, sure. And what I think is important out of documents, how you use documents, that has not changed.

That's a constant. And then this basic interest in what history is about, continuity and novelty, comes up everywhere. There's nothing quite so devastatingly wrong as to do history entirely by the Whig approach--because something becomes important in the future, its role in the past is exaggerated, even though it's one billionth of the whole picture at that time.

Labalme: Well, I know that you --

Clagett: Is that about it?

Labalme: We just wanted to --

Clagett: Go ahead, I'm game.

Labalme: I just wanted to say I loved one of the reviews about how you were bringing disparate cosmogonies which share some unifying characteristics together.

Clagett: Who said that?

Labalme: A Spanish reviewer.

Clagett: Oh, yes. That was it. That was a nice review. I don't know the author at all.

Labalme: Diabolically polysemous hieroglyphs, lovely words!

Clagett: That's wonderful. Yes, I remember that thing. Dennis-

-

Shore: Your son?

Clagett: Yes, who loved Spain, yes, and who also has his

Spanish--

Shore: Companion.

Clagett: Companion. He translated it and I don't know whether I have it.

Labalme: I found it in the archives.

Clagett: The translation? Yes, that's Dennis's.

Shore: I guess we want to ask you a last question about what you think about the Institute and its future.

Clagett: Let me put it this way, if I were that good of a prognosticator, I would be in the market. But I can't believe that it won't survive for another generation anyway and most of the difficulties are difficulties in the way that society is facing scholarship right now. That's why we have all the hype about raising money and doing all this sort of thing. It is because we feel pressured, pressured on all sides. You know, our part of the Institute, Historical Studies, is not much a part of the web and woof of life, so theoretically the Social Science School ought to be more zooming than the Historical School. But I think that we still have enough people around both in the faculty and maybe in the administration who will keep it going for a while. I mean, I am worried but not pessimistic, if there is some distinction.

Labalme: One has to have some faith in the humanities, and if you do have faith in the humanities, Historical Studies will survive.

Clagett: Yes. That's right.

Shore: Well, you bring up an interesting point. I think that in a way this School being slightly removed from society and the institution being itself also wanting to be removed from society, but yet again has to deal with whatever issues are going on in society, so if fund raising is more important at one point, or publicity at another point --

Clagett: I expect that's true. It's uncomfortable to face that and so one feels a kind of gnawing anxiety that it might be that the only thing you can raise money for is something other than humanistic activities, and therefore they might die on the vine, at least at the Institute. That's the thing that worries one most I think. In a way science can always take care of itself and the mathematicians get in on that, and of course they have worked it out so they're the aristocrats anyway of the whole enterprise so if natural science flourishes, mathematics a fortiori is also going to flourish. So I think there's just no question that that part of the Institute is going on. I hope the other two Schools are as lucky. I think they will be, because you

still have some people of good sense--not some, you have more than some. You have people of good sense around. And why should we become like every big place that can do it better than we can? Perhaps the trouble is that the universities have not only caught up with us but in some sense passed us on even the specialized research activities. I'm not sure.

Labalme: There is more research at universities, but there's no place like this with a faculty, visiting members --

Clagett: I think that's true.

Labalme: -- dedicated to this process.

Clagett: Yes. And that's why it's a little troublesome to see pressure to cede the activity that makes this place unique to some semi-governmental regulations or anything of that sort.

Shore: You're talking about funds for members.

Clagett: Sure. Things of that sort. Which after all we live by and we have to have the choice of scholars who are practicing these subjects that we hope will flourish. It seems to me their own aims are best served by having the best possible scholars doing the choosing without diluting the process of selection to the point where we are not only like all other universities but worse. Such might happen

since universities can piddle away money easier than we can.

Labalme: That's a thought.

Clagett: Yes.

Labalme: Well, we are about to conclude. Is there anything that we haven't talked about that you would feel --

Clagett: I can't really think of anything. I can only say that personally I can't conceive of a better thirty-two years than I've had at this place and that counts for an awful lot. And such activity that I am at all good at has certainly been encouraged, and the best of what's in me, I think, has come out.

Labalme: I would say the world would say that's pretty good.

Clagett: Yes. Well, I hope so.

Labalme: Thank you very much, Marshall.

Shore: Thanks.

Labalme: It's been such a pleasure.

Clagett: Thank you all for your very sympathetic interrogatories.

Labalme: We've had fun.

END OF CASSETTE NO. 2, SIDE NO.