

A: Interviewer
B: Person being interviewed

Robert Goryl
Stafford Springs, Conn.
Boston res. '51-52, '54-55
Artist

A: First of all, I'd like to know where we walked.
B: Just around one block. Around Boylston St. and then down the alley.
A: Where did we start?
B: In front of Bonwit Teller's.
A: Where did we go after we left Bonwit Teller's and what did you see?
B: You mean when we first started out from the walk? Well, we went down Boylston St. I think it was, and I noticed the {lush ?} rust-green planting all along the side. I guess it was a church there -- is there a church there? It was nice all along there; I noticed how nice it was, and that's why I noticed how trashy the alley was afterward we went down through there.
A: Did you notice anything else -- buildings, still on Boylston St. -- not particularly in progression, just anything you remember.
B: I remember noticing the signs on the trees. Oh, that was afterward, right where we saw Mr. Nelson in the park.
A: What about people or smells, or what you hear, or traffic.
B: I didn't notice anything.
A: Did you notice the store windows.
B: Well, I always notice them.
A: What did you see in them. did you like them or dislike them?
B: I didn't pay much attention because they were all mostly women's clothes except that I stopped at the new gift shop.
A: Did anything make a particular impression on you?
B: No, not there. Not until I got into the alley. There, I couldn't imagine how people live the way they do on Boylston St. with that green planting business, etc., and keep it so clean, and then and then right in back in the alley find months of trash lying there.
A: Is there anything you like that you saw or anything you disliked?
B: The alley.
A: How would you change any of this?
B: The alley? -- I'd sweep it up.

A: You don't remember any particular buildings?

B: In the alley I remember them all. You want me to describe what I saw?

First, when we came down we had to jump over tracks all the way down. Then I looked down on three cellar windows to the left, and I saw these benches with women working packing things into boxes, and I thought what a lousy way that was to earn a living. Then the next thing I noticed must have been a garden but there was an old bed thrown out there. Somebody threw it out from a 2nd story window, I guess. There was an old mattress, some barrels and boxes, loose bricks where part of the wall had caved in.. The next thing I noticed was a doorway. There was a business establishment but it was packed full of trash -- there must have been another door. Then we came out onto the street.

A: When we were walking on Newbury St. did you notice any of the buildings?

B: I noticed how interesting it was because some were recessed and some were set out further toward the sidewalk and this was interesting instead of having them all straight down. I think it was O Newbury which is recessed further and the next shop comes out, and there is one, I think it's a jewelry store, with small windows which comes out about twice as far as the others: Charles Sumner, I guess, is back further; then Brooks Bros. comes out again. It's interesting all the way up the street.

A: And then when we turned again back onto Berkeley St.?

B: I noticed how nice the whole Bonwit Teller building is because it sets by itself. It isn't in a row with a lot of other buildings. You know, it's a variation; like the Brooks Bros. it's an interesting type, like sort of surprises coming. That's why I thought that when some buildings recede and some advance toward the sidewalk and then you come around the corner and see Bonwit Teller's standing by itself, it's very interesting.

A: Going back to when we started down Boylston St., did you notice any shops?

B: I noticed one thing that I remember... that is there were these two stalls of books out in front of some bookstore, and I thought how continental it was. (laughter).

A: Anything else you remember?

B: Well, I could describe the whole street but there is nothing of any particular interest I remember except the books and the planting.

A: From what you saw today or what you remember in the past?

B: From what I saw today. How can I describe the people I saw walking . . ?

A: Describe what you can --

B: We came around the corner, and the first building I noticed -- I don't know whether it was the first or second -- but it was of yellowish-colored brick. This woman came out with a purple coat and got into - I've forgotten the name of it, I guess it was a Chrysler -- a chauffeur-driven car. I thought that must a very dull, uninteresting life, I mean it's just one minor point in a person's life, but to be chauffeured around all day isn't very interesting, very dull. Then there's a clock sticking right up in the middle of the sidewalk a little further down. About 6 feet past the clock is where the 2 stalls of books were, right in the middle of the sidewalk. They were all upheaved; it was near the end of the day, and I guess people had been going through them all day; the books were just in a pile on the shelves. They had awnings with that; I think they were green striped; in the same book store. Some of the display was at the top from where I was standing. Just as you get at the corner of - I don't know if it is a street or an alley -- no, no it's a street, Arlington St. because there was a maternity shop with a baby carriage sitting in the window. This has no connection with anything, each detail.

A: It doesn't matter. Is there anything else you noticed when we turned onto Arlington St.?

B: I noticed lots of people, individuals. I saw one woman with excess make-up, etc.

A: DO you remember any signs in particular? (Answer: No) Any smells? (Answer: No).
What about traffic?

B: Well, I noticed that. It was particularly heavy. It was a good thing I didn't bring the car.

A: Do you remember any signs?

B: Shop signs or road signs?

A: Either.

B: I noticed the Travel Agency sign. There's one on Boylston St. there with that scale model ocean liner in the window, advertising trips to Hawaii, at this time with special rates, starting around now. I noticed all the signs in there, such as "Go to Hawaii; it's nice in Hawaii".
(laughter)

A:

B: I noticed "Maternity Shop" written on the awning in script.

A: Did you notice any street signs?

B: No. ... When was it they put in a new sidewalk. I think it was up Newbury St. they much have taken the bricks out and put in a new concrete sidewalk; I noticed it was all cracked already.

A: Did you notice anything else about the sidewalks?

B: I noticed going up Newury St., right after {?} jewelry store, there was a parking lot, and the cars were parked at such angles that you had to walk around them. They were sticking out in the sidewalk, about 3 of them I think. I noticed a woman drove up in this Mercury convertible, a new '56 cream-colored. She hopped out of the car and said to the attendant, "Okay, it's all yours. and I felt like saying, "It is!" (laughter)

A: You don't remember anything else about the pavement; can you describe the street pavement, other than what you just said? The sidewalk or the street.

B: No.

A: How did this part of the city fit in with your conception of the city of Boston?

B: Around the block is my conception of Boston, but not down the alley. Since it is there they could make that Boston too, don't you think?

A: Then you say it fits in with your conception of Boston. The whole block, with Boylston St.

B: Yes, Boylston, Arlington, Newbury.

A: Have you been there very often?

B: I don't go there too often. Maybe once every two weeks.

A: Have you used the area at all?

B: You mean personally? No.

A: If you ever come here for a particular purpose, can you find your destination without any trouble?

B: Yes.

A: Do you feel at ease in this part of the city?

B: No, I don't, because it's too congested. Maybe it was just because it was 5 o'clock. Maybe it isn't like that all the time, but it certainly was crowded at that time.

A: Do you at other times feel at ease there?

B: A little in the evening, I suppose, or Sunday afternoon.

A: Can you tell me how many definite areas we passed?

B: Different types of area?

A: Yes. Maybe you don't feel that there were any definite areas.

B: Oh, no, there were different areas. Boylston St. was more of a conglomeration of all types of shops. Arlington St. was the park. Newbury St. was a section of women's and men's clothes, and across from Bonwit Teller's -- what's that street -- Berkeley, was like drug stores and, I think, a florist shop. Then the alley is totally different. It's not an alley actually, it's a street, a narrow street running right through the center of the block. Three -- the alley, the shopping district, and the park.

A: Was there anything that gave this area a character of its own?

B: The architecture in the church on Boylston St. at Arlington St., and the way some of the shops recede and some set out on Newbury St.

A: Was there anything that gave them order? continuity? Did you feel they fit together?

B: No. I don't think the alley fit with it at all. I don't know what you mean by order.

A: It's not a question of whether it's good. Did you feel that there was order or continuity there or didn't you?

B: There are so many things, in the atmosphere in the architecture, in the layout, or what do you mean?

A: In everything, taking the whole area as a whole, was there continuity?

B: You have to have something to compare it with.

A: Did the buildings fit in together, making a continuous whole, or did you feel that they didn't.

B: There was something that just didn't belong there -- oh, I see what you mean. Well, no. The parking lot has to be there and the alley has to be there in order to load buildings in the rear and pick up the swill.

A: Then you don't feel it had order or continuity.

B: Well, see, continuity and order aren't the same thing. It didn't have any order. The alley certainly didn't have any order. You walk past Arlington St. and you could look down the alley for a whole block and see all that trash piled up at a low angle, so you could see the whole works at once. You walk down Berkley St. and you could look down to Arlington St. through the alley and see all that trash. Continuity with what?

A: Continuity means that you have a continuous flow, that in this area everything flowed, one building into another so that they fit together, were a whole, that you didn't have one piece of architecture looking like it was really out of place, so there was continuity, so that it wasn't broken up.

B: That type of architecture, that type of church, my opinion doesn't belong in that type of setting, with a bunch of commercial buildings, it's so crowded together.

A: Can you describe the feelings you experienced as we walked?

B: No because I just thought it was a waste of time.

A: So you didn't have any particular feelings about the area?

B: Just about the dirt in the alley. That was the only think, if it was only cleaned up. Anything is nice if it's clean.