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Remembering Erving Goffman

Robert Habenstein: He Was a Heck of a Nice Guy, Kind of Shy, and the Kids Liked Him

This interview with Robert Habenstein, Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the University of Missouri, was recorded over the phone on December 23 and December 29, 2008. Dmitri Shalin transcribed the interview, after which Dr. Habenstein and Dr. Patricia Morrow Habenstein approved posting the present version on the web. Breaks in the conversation flow are indicated by ellipses. Supplementary information and additional materials inserted during the editing process appear in square brackets. Undecipherable words and unclear passages are identified in the text as “[?]”. The interviewer’s questions are shortened in several places.

[Posted 01-22-09]

Part I.

Shalin: Greetings, Patricia [Morrow Habenstein]. This is Dmitri Shalin from the University of Nevada. We spoke a few days back, and I understand that Bob was planning to talk to me about Erving Goffman. Is Bob available today?

Patricia: Nobody is out today, believe me.

Shalin: Is it bad weather?

Patricia: Oh, believe me, it is terrible. Just a minute, I’ll get Bob. He will talk to you. . . . Bob – this is Shalin about Erving Goffman.

[Pause]

Habenstein: Hi.

Shalin: Is this Bob?

Habenstein: Yes.

Shalin: Good to hear you. Is it a good time to talk?

Habenstein: Sure.

Shalin: Wonderful. Would you mind if I record our conversation and then send you the transcript for you to edit and revise?

Habenstein: OK.

Shalin: Could you tell me please how you came to know Goffman, how the two of you met?

Habenstein: There was at the University of Chicago a small class of graduate students. We just happened to be walking back from the class, I guess to buy some food, and we talked. That started [my] family relationship with him [Goffman]. . . . At that time he was all by himself, more or less. Walking nearby, he slowed down, looked into our place, and my kids ran out and shouted, "Hey, come in!" He was a heck of a nice guy, kind of shy, and the kids liked him.

Shalin: You say he was alone at the time. He wasn't married yet, right?

Habenstein: I don't know. Now I am [unsure] about so many things.

Shalin: Memory plays tricks on us. Did you come to know Erving's wife once he married?

Habenstein: Yes, but she was not particularly interested in the sociology gang. I remember being at the party and talking to her.

Shalin: How would you describe Goffman's appearance? There are differences in the way people remember Erving's height, for instance.

Habenstein: I would guess 5.2 or 5.3.

Shalin: How did he dress?

Habenstein: He dressed neither poorly nor expensively. But he was always clean and had nice shirts, I guess.

Shalin: How did Erving behave when he was in a company? Goffman wrote about the presentation of self, and I am curious how he present himself in public.

Habenstein: I don't think he plunged into it at all. But once he got in with the group, you could hear him arguing in another room or explaining something. He was talkative and at the same time non-talkative when it came to meeting people or being among people.

Shalin: So he liked to argue with friends.

Habenstein: Yes.

Shalin: Did he like to win in a debate?

Habenstein: As I recall, he would end without [proclaiming] that he won or lost. I remember we had an argument, he was outside my car, and then he kicked the tire **[Laughing]**.

Shalin: He did?

Habenstein: I remember that. In fact, he kicked it so hard that he left a mark on the side for the rest of time I had the car.

Shalin: Was he angry?

Habenstein: No. I never really saw him blow up totally, but he was certainly willing to raise his voice [in a debate] or say a bunch of words he would not ordinarily say.

Shalin: So Erving wasn't blowing his top but he could be intense.

Habenstein: His top was well screwed on the way other people's was not **[Laughing]**. The big guys who wanted to play it rough – he just avoided them. He wouldn't answer a come-on or anything like that. When the argument arose – yes, he was ready.

Shalin: When you say "big guys" – do you mean physically big?

Habenstein: Yes. When they would be moving chairs or something like that . . . he wasn't weak, he had good muscles, but he wasn't known to be a muscle man at all.

Shalin: Would you say Erving was self-conscious about his appearance?

Habenstein: I guess so, because he had to look up and he didn't like that. I don't think he liked being around a large number of people and get into an argument in such places. Not things of that sorts. Five or seven people, you know, would be a good [size crowd for him]. Two or three people would be for friends.

Shalin: Any other Erving stories that stand out in your memory?

Habenstein: We lived on a second level, and he had to ring a bell to get in. Instead, he chose to throw pebbles into our window **[Chuckling]**. Not bricks or anything like that.

Shalin: Why would he do it – did he want to surprise you?

Habenstein: Well, I think he was always being himself and nobody else. You always knew him, and you couldn't mistake him for anyone else. It was hard to pick a fight [with him]. He certainly could pick an argument, but this would be two or three sentences and that's that.

Shalin: This is interesting. Those little details make the man come alive.

Habenstein: I might think of some. We had an apartment where you could go all the way around. He would be the only one who wanted to pal around with the kids. Most of us wanted to dive into our books.

Shalin: Was it Erving who was running with the kids?

Habenstein: Yes. He would make up things, chase the kids a little bit – kids liked him.

Shalin: Erving was good with the kids – that's important.

Habenstein: He would make funny faces, we would play Scrabble, or he would make a hat and put it on their head, something like that. Next time it would be something different.

Shalin: So he would notice kids, pay attention to them.

Habenstein: Yes.

Shalin: He liked to be with kids.

Habenstein: That's too much to say, but he certainly could poke fun [with kids] and things like that.

Shalin: Would he tease them, try to scare them?

Habenstein: Not girls, no. With boys he might do funny things, something that unfolds.

Shalin: Some do-dads.

Habenstein: That's right.

Shalin: How did people in your group respond to Erving? Was he accepted by others, was there any resentment?

Habenstein: I recall we'd have baseball games in a park. He was not very good at baseball. I remember pitching underhand. I'd throw by him two balls as fast as I could, and then I pretend to throw a fast one but it really would be

a slow ball. Fooled him about three times **[Laughing]**. He was not a good ball player. You would not put him on first base where you had to reach out. Maybe on third base.

Shalin: I read that Erving did some gymnastics when he was young. He must have had athletic skills.

Habenstein: Oh, yes. We would be playing in the park, and he could do almost anything [besides] being a fair ball player. I am trying to think back, and I know he was athletic for a small guy. . . . We might be walking through the park and look around and Erving would be on top of some stature looking down on us.

Shalin: He would climb on top of a stature?

Habenstein: He wouldn't climb very high. He climbed just to be different.

Shalin: Sort of to be his own man.

Habenstein: Yes. He might [suddenly] jump. Say, in a cemetery there would be a three feet [pit], and he would jump across rather than walk around. Active – yes, that he was. A mixture of intelligence and [?] Perhaps one of the five smartest graduate students [in our group]. We had a whole bunch back then, a lot of them coming back from the war. A lot of them picked Chicago, and Chicago couldn't say "No." So far as war – he didn't want to talk about it.

Shalin: Why not?

Habenstein: I think he didn't want to lay heavy on anybody unless they were really bad people. He didn't meddle into discussions about Irish versus Midwesterners or anything like that.

Shalin: How did Erving act at the parties with drinking and dancing – was he shy around such gatherings?

Habenstein: He would be in a small group. He wouldn't be dancing or singing or anything of that sort. He might be horsing around a bit, maybe talking. He liked to talk. But he didn't like to take over in the group.

Shalin: Did he or didn't he like to take over?

Habenstein: No, he didn't like it.

Shalin: I see. Did you see him dancing or dating?

Habenstein: Well, he was too short for that. Women were all tall. More likely, he would be talking to two or three guys at a party.

Shalin: Would he drink?

Habenstein: Yes, but I never saw him heavily drinking.

Shalin: It was a kind of social drinking.

Habenstein: Yes.

Shalin: What would he drink – beer?

Habenstein: Tonic with lemon.

Shalin: But you wouldn't see him dancing or flirting. That wasn't his style.

Habenstein: Oh, no. That's right.

Shalin: Do you know how Erving met his wife?

Habenstein: I don't know. It was a surprise.

Shalin: His marriage was a surprise for everyone?

Habenstein: I don't think it was a surprise for everyone. He certainly wasn't married in a church or anything like that. I think it was in a group where he was pronounced . . . I don't know.

Shalin: Were you present?

Habenstein: No. I just didn't want to go, but I enjoyed horsing around afterwards.

Shalin: After the ceremony, right?

Habenstein: Yes.

Shalin: You remember there being some reception.

Habenstein: I remember kidding him, running around. You know. There was no big formal follow-up to the ceremony. He might have been [standing] aside, figuring out the psycho-sociological thing that was going on. I think he was pretty good at that.

Shalin: Interesting. Was it around 1951?

Habenstein: Yes, because I got there in the '60.

Shalin: When?

Habenstein: It was 1960, I think. Whenever it was after the war.

Shalin: It was probably closer to 1950.

Habenstein: Yes, it was.

Shalin: Erving's son was born around 1953.

Habenstein: I remember his kid wearing short pants. It was a long time ago.

Shalin: So you met Erving's son, Tom?

Habenstein: I think when I went to California I met him out there. I thought he was a heck of a nice little kid.

Shalin: Aha!

Habenstein: Highly active.

Shalin: Sort of like father?

Habenstein: Not so much intelligence thrown around, you know, wisecracking. He just liked to run around and have fun.

Shalin: So Erving got along well with his son.

Habenstein: As far as we could see. I never saw Erving spank him. He would yell at him. We all did.

Shalin: Right, but no spanking.

Habenstein: I think he may have made him go sit some place. You know – "Calm down. Sit down." He was a decent young man.

Shalin: And Tom would do as his father told him.

Habenstein: Yes.

Shalin: Now, I understand that Sky was an anthropology student . . .

Habenstein: Yes.

Shalin: . . . that she was an A.B.D., although she never defended her thesis. Do you know anything about that?

Habenstein: I am thinking about it. Erving lived far away; we didn't go visit them, or if we did, it was seldom. He wouldn't sit quietly at the parties; he was always on the go. He just couldn't sit around and be a nice husband while his wife spoke. We used to say that we don't know what he took but it did make him, it made him, you know . . .

Shalin: Jittery?

Habenstein: Yes. I think we compared him with a big flag that crackles in the wind. We used to say, "He crackles in the wind like a flag."

Shalin: Was Sky a shy person, was she active?

Habenstein: She wasn't inactive. And she was quite intelligent. I am trying to think if I'd read anything that she wrote.

Shalin: I don't think she published much of anything.

Habenstein: It might not have been published. Something about children running [?]. She was involved with the young. We'd call her in, she would come by, and our kids were always glad to see her.

Shalin: Was she good with kids.

Habenstein: Yes. Not that she was organized, but she could grab a pencil and draw something for them.

Shalin: You said something about Erving not always acting nice around Sky – how did you mean that?

Habenstein: I think he preferred to be with his wife and others. He would rather be active with the others. He didn't strike me as someone who would sit in the corner while his wife showed off. Not at all. I don't think he could stand [her ?] showing off without being a part of it.

Shalin: You didn't see them arguing.

Habenstein: No, but I [vaguely recall] them going to Europe separately or something of that sort. I really cannot remember.

Shalin: They went to Paris together, I believe.

Habenstein: It wasn't Paris. But I do remember him coming to our house when his wife had gone some place, and he would play with our kids. I don't know if his wife was working or what, but there was time when he'd just show up. . . . We had a big house, and we told him that he could come and work and write in a corner if he wanted to. He said he might do that.

Shalin: And he would write at your place?

Habenstein: Yes, for a while. He was always carrying stuff around to write on.

Shalin: Do you remember anything about his dissertation, his working habits?

Habenstein: No doubt it – he worked. He carried stuff with him. There might be a group get-together, everybody may be talking, and I'd look around and he would be writing.

Shalin: Would he carry a briefcase around?

Habenstein: I don't remember. He possibly was. We all tried to **[Laughing]**. . . .

Shalin: Look professional.

Habenstein: Exactly.

Shalin: Do you remember how he chose his dissertation topic, how did he do his fieldwork?

Habenstein: We were surprised because everybody tried to do theirs locally. Other graduate students looked up to him.

Shalin: He was a highly regarded student.

Habenstein: Oh, yes. As I recall, he was not interested in teachers who were just starting up. He wanted to get to the top.

Shalin: You mean he wanted to work with the best professors?

Habenstein: Yes.

Shalin: Would you say he was ambitious?

Habenstein: I don't think he liked to be in a crowd. That was the time when there was an awful lot of graduate students who poured into Chicago. There

would be 25-30 students in a graduate class. What happened was that professors had one or two helpers who would end up grading papers. Erving didn't like that at all. He was always willing to talk to the top professors. . .

Shalin: Was he active in classes, ask questions?

Habenstein: No. But he usually was called upon in class, as I recall, and he never had any trouble responding. . . . He would [stomp?] his feet and beat on a desk **[Laughing]**. He was tightly woven.

Shalin: Like a spring ready to uncoil?

Habenstein: Yes, yes.

Shalin: And he was very serious about scholarship.

Habenstein: He was very serious about writing, and he was taken very seriously. He was in one of the best places in sociology, you know, in California.

Shalin: Erving published his first major article while he was still in graduate school.

Habenstein: As I recall, he wasn't working with just one professor. There was a mixture – an anthropologist, a sociologist, and . . .

Shalin: Didn't he work with [Lloyd] Warner?

Habenstein: Yes. We were surprised – we didn't figure Warner knew much about sociology.

Shalin: There was also Everett Hughes.

Habenstein: Yes. Hughes was quite different, highly intelligent. He wasn't a good teacher.

Shalin: Hughes was not a good teacher?

Habenstein: No. He preferred [to work] with smaller groups. As I recall he didn't have a good howling voice **[Laughing]**. I remember taking a course with him. Four or five students – that's what he liked. He became part of my dissertation committee.

Shalin: What memories do you have of Everett Hughes?

Habenstein: I recall that he was not part of the “big three” in sociology. His interests were in philosophy, sociology, and one other [field]. I did my dissertation with him. He looked me over and decided I could do it. I was a little disappointed because I would come with a dissertation chapter, and it seemed like he just flipped through it. He had so much to do.

Shalin: You didn’t feel you got enough mentoring.

Habenstein: No. But I was older. He knew I had wife, kids. He looked me over, tried me out, and decided that I should get into smaller classes. I was able to write and speak up. He took me under his wing a little bit, but then, as I got older and not put with the other ones [?].

Shalin: Did Hughes help you find your first job?

Habenstein: I am trying to think. He did help. I was helped by another graduate student who was a couple of years ahead of me. We took over a little cabin that would be our home, and he became in a way – well, not a member of the family, but he could come in without knocking on the door. He [Hughes ?] had a handful of people that he knew could do a good job, and he did it for me.

Shalin: Where was your first job?

Habenstein: **[Laughing]**. Right here [in Missouri]. Then I went away for quite a while, and then I came back.

Shalin: Was Goffman part of the small group of graduate students around Hughes?

Habenstein: No. He might show up or he might not show up. He was not a groupie at all. And he might show up in a group, show intelligence and [disappear].

Shalin: I understand that Hughes helped smooth rough edges when Goffman came up to defend his thesis.

Habenstein: Somebody is knocking on my door, a cleaning woman.

Shalin: Should I wait?

Habenstein: I think you might want to call another time.

Shalin: Can I call you in a day or two?

Habenstein: Yes.

Shalin: Thank you so much.

[End of the recording]

Part II

Habenstein: [This is] Habenstein.

Shalin: Greetings. This is Dmitri Shalin from the University of Nevada. Is this Robert?

Habenstein: Yes, who is this?

Shalin: This is Dmitri Shalin from the UNLV. Robert, if you remember, we spoke about Erving Goffman recently. I am beginning to work on the transcripts of your interview. It is very interesting. There are a few issues I would like to follow up on, if you don't mind, especially on the time after Erving left Chicago? If this is not a good time, maybe I could call later.

Habenstein: The best thing would probably be for you to write me and I'll write back. [This way] I will have a chance to sit and think.

Shalin: Sure. I will send you the transcripts so you can work on them – edit, revise, augment every which way you want.

Habenstein: OK.

Shalin: Our phone conversation is just a priming device to get the process started, to shake loose your memories. I am wondering if you kept up with Erving after he left Chicago.

Habenstein: I am trying to think. I have a pile of stuff at the back of the house. Whenever possible, I would try to find him. Later on we just didn't get together anymore. Maybe the first 15 years or so we knew about each other, then it slowly went away like [the contacts with] a lot of other graduate students from Chicago.

Shalin: Would you see Erving at conventions, sociology meetings? Would you hear him speak?

Habenstein: Yes, if he were to speak or criticize something, but mostly what I liked was to get together with him and maybe have a coke or something like that and kid each other. We did it a lot.

Shalin: Did you visit Erving at Berkeley.

Habenstein: Yes, but it was so long ago. I have to look around, look inside myself. Certainly I did get in touch with him when I got out there. When he had that beautiful home, he got me a place to live within a mile or so. He would drop by once in a while, and we would drop once in a while. It was nothing organized.

Shalin: Did you actually live in California?

Habenstein: Yes.

Shalin: I didn't know that. Looking back, would you say that Erving has changed over time? Did he grow mellow or was he always the same Erving as you remembered him

Habenstein: Well, he certainly walked a lot slower **[Laughing]**. He never kicked my car any more. I don't know why. I don't know, I saw him become a rounded person in California.

Shalin: Really?

Habenstein: Yes. In Chicago we just threw things at each other. [Now] we could talk about various things. I guess you could say, we both got "familized" out there in California.

Shalin: Erving's first wife committed suicide in 1964. Were you in California at that time?

Habenstein: Yes, it was terrible. I think she threw herself off [the bridge]. Why? I don't know. Who knows. It was a terrible blow. My wife and I loved her. But she was, you know, always on the edge, I guess.

Shalin: In which ways?

Habenstein: Well, she couldn't just sit around and yak, you know. She always, as I recall, had to put down things she thought of doing [?]. She was the one who did those things. And he would go off with his thoughts, whatever he was working on. So she was really a good person for a home, or tried to be. At the same time, I guess, I cannot remember so far back

whether or not she was touchy, you know. Do you know if she was a touchy person?

Shalin: I hear different stories. Some say that she saw a psychiatrist, that she might have been bipolar.

Habenstein: What?

Shalin: It's a kind of mood disorder.

Habenstein: Yes.

Shalin: Do you remember Erving's response to this tragedy?

Habenstein: I know he never jumped on her, as I recall it. He might instead walk around, or something like that. I never was around him when he would have a brawl with her.

Shalin: Interesting.

Habenstein: Yes. Now, he may have – because he was capable of discouraging almost anybody **[Laughing]**. I don't want to say something that might be silly, because he would come around to our house but we never went to his hose. Well, almost never. He kicked the center [?], but I would never see a car with him **[Laughing]**.

Shalin: Did you meet by any chance Erving's sister?

Habenstein: I cannot recall. I probably did. I'm just trying to think, because I was wound up with all kinds of things, including family and my moving around and writing and God knows what.

Shalin: Do you recall meeting Erving's son at Berkeley?

Habenstein: Yes, I thought he was a good looking little kid, intelligent, nice. He would never give you an equivalent of kick in the ass.

Shalin: He was kindhearted?

Habenstein: I know he did something but don't remember what it was. On his own he would put together something. I think he did have a [shop] of his own, and he could pull himself up to it.

Shalin: Some hobby.

Habenstein: Yes. When I came to visit, I'd say, "Where is your son?," he always was with his so and so.

Shalin: Very interesting.

Habenstein: I think he could pull himself off. There were so many things that were going on there.

Shalin: At Berkeley?

Habenstein: Yes, around his father. People were coming, cars were coming and going. As I recall, he [Tom] pulled himself off into them, at the corner of the house [?].

Shalin: I have heard that one of the reasons Erving left California and went to Pennsylvania was that he was not happy with the hippie movement and its impact on his son.

Habenstein: That could be, because when you are out West, you are going to do something with the hippies, you know, going with them down the street.

Shalin: Did you have any contact with Erving when he had cancer?

Habenstein: No, no. We were quite separated in many ways. . . . I only heard about him. At that time I was not visiting him, as far as I remember, or anybody much. I was trying to get some writing done.

Shalin: You said something about "the three big sociologists" at the University of Chicago – who did you have in mind? People like Herbert Blumer?

Habenstein: Herbert Blumer.

Shalin: Who else?

Habenstein: If you bring up the names . . .

Shalin: [Lloyd] Warner?

Habenstein: Right.

Shalin: He was in anthropology, I think.

Habenstein: Right. More than that, as I recall. He liked to run studies of towns.

Shalin: Who else – Louis Wirth?

Habenstein: Probably faculty at a lower level. With the top people – you seldom saw them, and when you went to see them, they might spend 10 minutes [with you].

Shalin: Did you take any classes with Herbert Blumer.

Habenstein: Oh, I did.

Shalin: What impression did he make on you?

Habenstein: You know, what I need to do is to sit and think for about half an hour. He was important in my life. He was the one who came to play baseball with us. I remember pitching him one time, threw two fast balls, then I threw a real slow one, although I pretended it was fast. I think he swung around [and] threw the bat about 50 feet.

Shalin: Was he upset?

Habenstein: Yes, yes. I think he liked me. I cannot say I adored him, but I certainly appreciated having him anywhere around. If we had a group get-together, it was nice to have him there.

Shalin: Did Herb like to be with students?

Habenstein: We had a half-a-dozen or so [students] that were always trying to get around him. We would have an hour a week or something when we would just go into a room and a faculty member would come in. There would be nothing in particular that he brought or that you brought with you. You just talked around. If not real generous, he was always generous with his thinking and talking.

Shalin: He was approachable.

Habenstein: Yes. And there were these people who hang on him, you know. We didn't like it too much.

Shalin: Sort of like groupies?

Habenstein: Yes. Well, personal groupies, you might say [**Laughing**]. Women liked him.

Shalin: Did they?

Habenstein: Oh, yes.

Shalin: Did he like them?

Habenstein: Well, certainly it wasn't anything more than, you know, just good relationships.

Shalin: What was he like as a teacher?

Habenstein: First place, as I said, the university was filled with people coming in after the war. And everybody wanted to get to the top, be able to sit up front and talk to him when they could, talk after class. He always had a conversation to his classes. He didn't pop around and ask this kind of questions or that kind of question. You probably know that.

Shalin: Was he a good lecturer?

Habenstein: He was rather . . . I am trying to think . . . He didn't raise his voice, he didn't lower his voice, he didn't wave his arms – he was there.

Shalin: He was calm.

Habenstein: Right. He was a big guy, he was there, and if he says something, you better take notes. In large classes, we didn't want anybody breaking in on him, you know. He had things to say.

Shalin: He was interesting to listen to, right?

Habenstein: Yes, off and on. Sometimes he was kind of reading from a book in his mind. But he was certainly able to quiz a little bit and talk, get off from whatever he was doing for a minute and talk. As I said, he liked to take women's problems, their school problems. I don't know how deep that was.

Shalin: He was ready to help them with their personal problems.

Habenstein: That's right.

Shalin: Was he a tough grader.

Habenstein: He wasn't particularly tough, but if you were going to speak, he was then very tough. [You had to] make sure that you weren't just gobbling along. If you are going to say something, your better mean something. He might stop you chatting along.

Shalin: He was serious and earnest.

Habenstein: Yes.

Shalin: Was he on your dissertation committee?

Habenstein: Yes.

Shalin: Having him as a mentor worked well.

Habenstein: Oh, yes. He was expectant. He didn't pat you on the back and he didn't reduce [?] your big sentences or anything like that. But he would call your attention, saying, "This was not very well done, or that was well done." He was probably the best [teacher] that I had there.

Shalin: That's very interesting. So he was fair-minded, he could tell it as it is, and he was generous with his praise when he felt you deserved it.

Habenstein: That's right.

Shalin: You mentioned that you have some stuff in your archives related to Goffman.

Shalin: I didn't have a chance to look. We have people from out of town. I'll write it down and see what I can dig out if it is not too deep.

Shalin: That would be great, Robert. In the Goffman archives we have a section for documents and papers. Letters, comments, student papers, newspaper articles – anything related to Goffman and his era is of interest. I would love to see anything you can find in your archives related to Goffman.

Habenstein: Had I sent you anything at all?

Shalin: No, you did not.

Habenstein: All right.

Shalin: I would be most grateful. The last question, if I may – and I am most grateful for your time. Would you say that your view of Goffman scholarship has changed over time? Did you find his theories more useful, less useful? You see what I mean?

Habenstein: Yes. When I first knew him, it seemed like he was tearing things inward and trying to get at them. When he would read what I wrote, he would try to help me. That is, if I gave him something to read, which didn't happen very often. As I said before, he would come to my family and ask my wife how I was coming along, whether I stumbled or something, but what he

really wanted was company. So I got to the point, when he came, that we would throw jokes at each other, have coffee and things of that sort. I didn't try to work on him or learn something.

Shalin: So it was more of a friendship than an intellectual, scholarly exchange. Do you know if Erving smoked?

Habenstein: I think he did. I am trying to recall. When I studied upstairs . . . I think that he smoked but he was careful about it. He didn't come and blow it in your face.

Shalin: Did he drink?

Habenstein: Yes. I never saw him really drunk. I might see him speaking louder or laughing or swatting you or swatting himself. Drinking was a kind of activity.

Shalin: It was social drinking, in other words.

Habenstein: Yes.

Shalin: Would he drink beer or something?

Habenstein: I think it was some kind of liquor. Not booze but . . .

Shalin: Like cognac . . .

Habenstein: Yes, something of that sort.

Shalin: . . . Brandy.

Habenstein: It would be strong.

Shalin: It would be scotch?

Habenstein: It would be strong enough.

Shalin: I see. Do you know if he liked music?

Habenstein: I am pretty sure he liked music.

Shalin: Did he play any instrument?

Habenstein: I am just trying to think. Because I believe there were some instruments around the house. But I don't recall him doing anything with it, just kidding around, pick up something and honk in our house **[Laughing]**.

Shalin: I know he had a piano at his home in Philadelphia.

Habenstein: I don't recall him playing the piano.

Shalin: But he liked music, right?

Habenstein: It wasn't up-to-date jazz.

Shalin: Was it classical music.

Habenstein: He liked classical [music], more or less sweet music.

Shalin: Sweet?

Habenstein: Sweet. Not real sweet but, you know. If it had good phrases, or even moderate [tempo ?], he might even be walking down the street. . . .

Shalin: Would he sing or whistle?

Habenstein: I don't remember him whistling.

Shalin: Did he play chess?

Habenstein: I know I did, but I don't recall paying chess with him. I think it took too much time for him. He would rather play cards where you can throw a hand, you know. But I am sure he knew what the hell chess was all about.

Shalin: I understand there was a group of students who played poker?

Habenstein: I wasn't because I didn't have that kind of money, and I had kids.

Shalin: I see.

Habenstein: But I cannot tell you [for sure].

Shalin: Robert, I wonder if I can tell you my address in case you find something you can share for the Goffman archives.

Habenstein: I've got a pen right here.

Shalin: Can you write down?

Habenstein: Yes.

Shalin: Great. Here it is: < . . . >. I would be most grateful if you could find anything that you feel might be of interest to Goffman scholars, that bears a mark of Erving's life. And thank you so much, Robert.

Habenstein: All right.

[End of the recording]