

The Cultural Landscape Foundation
Pioneers of American Landscape Design

LAURIE OLIN

ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interviews Conducted

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The Laurie Olin Oral History Interview Transcript

A six-day interview with Laurie Olin was conducted by Charles Birnbaum in the offices of the Olin Studio, and at project sites in Philadelphia, Washington DC and New York City. Included in this transcript is an interview with OLIN partners, Dennis McGlade, Susan Weiler, Chris Hanley, Rich Newton, Bob Bedell and Lucinda Sanders. For video excerpts from this oral history visit <http://tclf.org/pioneer/oral-history/laurie-olin>.

PRELUDE

OLIN: Hi, I'm Laurie Olin. I'm a landscape architect. We're sitting in my office here in Philadelphia. I live a block away. I've been here since 1974. I've been teaching at Penn and practicing in various places. It's great city. I wouldn't have picked it out of a hat probably. It was an accident. I came here and it's turned out very well.

BIOGRAPHY

Childhood

Living in Many Places

Prosser, Washington

OLIN: Well, actually I had very little to do with Wisconsin except birth. My family was there when I was born and being born in 1938 was as you may recall the end of the Depression. Things were not very good, and my father had a hard time earning a living. So we left when I was about two and a half or three. It was not like Tom Joad with all the furniture on top of

the car but the whole family drove across the country in a Plymouth coup. We moved west to southeastern Washington State where my mother's mother had gone when she became a widow. She opened a dress shop in a tiny little town called Prosser, Washington. My dad managed to get a job working for the Corps of Engineers, which turned out to be interesting for him later. And then, of course, the war happened and things were not very good.

I started kindergarten there in a one-room school in an asparagus field near Pasco, Washington. And I was kind remember, the few things from when I was five and six. I had a dog. We used to go out in the desert. There were jack rabbits and that sort of stuff. It was kind of interesting because Washington because in that corner of the State where the Snake River meets the Columbia River there was some agriculture but it was also the last gasp of ranching. All the irrigation from those great hydroelectric projects and dams like the Grand Coulee [Dam] was just starting to have an effect.

My parents, before I was born, lived in what we today would call a commune or congregate living [situation] with a bunch of other young people in Lombard, Illinois outside Chicago in a big old house they called the HMS Pinafore. My dad was an amateur actor, and a bartender. He played hockey. And he sold textiles at the Merchandise Mart. He did all the things people did during the Depression just to patch together a life. It took him five years to get through high school because he was playing around and he was not paying attention and all that sort of stuff but he could still quote Shakespeare. He read a lot. He loved the theater.

My mother was working as a librarian when he met her. Her father came from Canada. They were Scots who were driven out by the highland clearings [in Scotland]. He got involved in accounting and business. He married Daisy Frances, from Canada. She came from a pretty well-off family. They had a house up on the North Shore in Evanston, Illinois, near Northwestern University, before everything went to hell. He lost everything in the crash, everything. They lost the house; he lost his job. Everything crashed. And so they moved out to Glen Ellen, Illinois which was full of cows and things. I think her mother thought it was a tragedy. And it was because they were used to big cars, big dogs, big lawns and living down by the lake [Michigan]. She had a form of asthma. In those days they thought they were weak lungs. So they would send her to Canada as a child by herself on the train across the country to Vancouver for the summer to live with her Aunt Nina. Her uncle was Grand Patterson who was married to Jean Welch of the Welch's Grape Juice Company. They were an old Chicago family, and we used to get a case of Welch grape juice for Christmas every year even in Alaska. It was really weird. I still love grape juice. I love anything grapes in all form, juice, wine, whatever.

But anyway, so my mother and my father read a lot and they were always involved in books. And we always had books. And even when we moved across the country in our little Plymouth coup with everything we owned, everything we owned [did not include] furniture but there were books. But on that drive, this would be 1942, the transcontinental roads in those days were not paved and outside Cheyenne, Wyoming, she got dust pneumonia. We

were laid up in Wyoming for a few days while the doctors tried to get her straightened out so we could go on. So my mother was an interesting person.

Vancouver, Canada

But my father was drafted in the Army. He was 35 years old with a child. That's how bad it was. Everybody who could walk was taken into the Army. My mom and I went to Canada to live with her aunt. She was born in Vancouver, her father was from Canada. He had worked in the Yukon during the gold rush and so we went to Canada. I was one of those kids that ran around in a blue surge shorts and a jacket. I went to the Prince of Wales school and sang God save the King on every Friday at assembly. It was kind of an interesting place.

Vancouver in those days, during World War II, was a kind of an odd far extension of the British Empire. There were a lot of refugees from New Zealand and Australia and from London, people whose husbands had been killed in North Africa and bombed out in the blitz. That's where I first ran into Winnie the Pooh because this little girl from England had a copy of this really interesting book with these great drawings by E.H. Shephard. Anyway, so we were in Canada until the war ended and my father got out of the Army.

My first real urban experience was Vancouver, Canada. My aunt and uncle lived up on a hill in a big old Victorian house. Uncle Scudd raised dogs. He was an interesting character. He was a motorcycle dispatch rider in World War I for the Canadian expeditionary force. He went to McGill and after he got out of college he went west with a buddy of his. I guess it was a roommate from college. They decided automobiles were here to stay and so they got

into car franchises and distributorships. His buddy took [the territory] east of Hudson Bay and he took everything west. At a certain point, the Canadian government came after him. They were trust busting and broke up his business. But Scudd did pretty well for himself. And he was married to my grandmother's sister.

My mother's family was kind of interesting. They had a big house. We did not actually live with them. We lived in a boarding house that was also a big old Victorian house.

We used to take the trolley downtown and go to the Hudson Bay store. We would go around English Bay and poke around downtown. And so Vancouver was a city that had big buildings with trolleys and traffic and everything. It was my first real city.

We went to Stanley Park. I love Stanley Park. It had a funny old zoo, [it was] not very nice in retrospect. And one of the things I remember the most about Stanley Park was going to summer light opera. When it was dark, the lights would come on and the theater would start. And so I remember sort of the first act of a whole series of musicals, but I don't remember anything else, because I always fell asleep. They performed the chocolate soldier, the Rosenkavalier, all these different Victor Herbert things. [They were] you know, really goofy, dopey musicals from probably 30's and 40's. It was nice. I liked it.

The things I remember, from that brief year and a half was the public market, the Pike Place Market. I remember the netsuke and little carvings from China, because kids love miniature stuff. There were all these tiny ivory carvings of villages and ships; and all this kind of weird

sailor's paraphernalia and stuff from around the world from Africa and India. The market was very lively. I remember it as being a kind of magical place. The rest of Seattle was interesting but in different ways.

Prowling around on our own we explored the edges of Boeing Field where there were still camouflage nets over all the factories. They had these little paintings of houses on top of them because they were trying to make it look like it was a neighborhood. These were the factories where they built the B-29s and the B-17s. So it was a very serious place.

Seattle, Washington

When we moved back to the States in the latter part of 1945, we moved down to Seattle. My father managed to get a job with the Corps of Engineers. They had been his employer before he was drafted. We were there until December of '46. We lived in government housing for veterans out near Boeing Field in a part of the city that doesn't even exist anymore.

Anyway, so I went to this public school. It was an interesting school. It was a pretty interesting place for a six or seven year old. I had a very influential second grade school teacher. She was very savvy. She realized I liked to draw. So she made a deal with me that if I finished my work, I could go to the back of the room where I had access to art materials, paints and papers and everything. So I became a whiz. I was really fast. That was fun. She was very, very nice.

Fairbanks, Alaska

In June of 1946, my father and about 50 other men got on a boat from the Alaska Steamship Company and they went to Alaska to open a district for the Corps of Engineers. The reason was because after World War II, Harry Truman and Dean Acheson came to the conclusion that we were probably going to have a war with Russia. Because after the war, not only did Russia roll through Eastern Europe and hang on to those countries but they were moving into Asia. They never gave back any of the planes, the tanks, the boats we gave them to help fight the war in Lend - Lease. This is the beginning of the Cold War. And Alaska, you have remember was a territory, it was really the equivalent of a colony. So here was the United States facing off Russia as the next-door neighbor. It needed to beef up the military in case of a Russian attack. But the government also the saw it as a place from which we could launch an attack on Russia because it was the one of the closest places to Russia. And so they went up there basically to build military bases. My mother and I stayed behind in Seattle and my dad and some other guys went to Fairbanks to open a small satellite place and to build up a place called Ladd Field which is next to Fairbanks. This was the place where we handed all the airplanes to Russia that we gave them for the Eastern front. We flew the planes from where they were manufactured in the United States up through Canada through White Horse and then stopped in Fairbanks at Ladd Field and refueled them. The first oil pipeline was built by some of my dad's friends. It was to take oil to Alaska from the States in order to be able to fuel the planes so that they could make it all the way into Russia. So that's kind of interesting, the idea of a six inch pipeline going north with oil through Canada. This is really why the Alaska Highway was built. There were

wrecked airplanes all around Fairbanks because the Russians were just pulling guys off tractors and telling them, you're going to fly a plane back and some of them got it and some of them didn't. Some people made a mistake and oops another plane went down.

But anyway, they opened the little district up there at Ladd Field in '46. And then that winter in December my mom and I flew up. So the first time I ever got in an airplane was in December of 1946 and we flew to Fairbanks from Seattle. And in those days you would fly to Anchorage overnight, wait until the fog was lifted, and then fly the next day to Fairbanks. Of course, in the winter it was dark so there was no daytime. So you just waited until it was daytime and then you flew.

So my first night in Alaska was sleeping on folding chairs in a hanger in Anchorage and then we got up the next day and flew to Fairbanks. It was pretty exciting because we landed in the dark, of course, and it was something like 20 below, which was warm for them.

It was Christmas Eve, December 24th. It was a real Christmas present for my parents who hadn't been together for six months and I'm sure they were really looking forward to it. But the great thing was that when we got off the plane, my dad met us and he was wearing this big parka and boots and these wolf skin mittens. I was so excited. We went outside and he had a jeep and we drove to town in the icy fog. I thought holy smokes. We drove into town, the main downtown of Fairbanks, which was a tiny town of 15,000 people and we went into some place called the Model Café. It was an old café that went through the block from

Front Street on the Juneau River, back to Second Street. A bunch of the old establishments did that. It was a place that kind of was a descendent of the Gold Rush.

There weren't many people there for breakfast on December 24th, just some Eskimos, a couple of old timers and a couple of guys who had been up all night drinking. And there was one guy at the bar, Moose John Wiggins, who had this white beard and white Stetson hat and bib overalls and a great chain of gold nuggets. And he was sitting at the bar drinking his coffee. I mean oh my god; I thought this is really cool.

And then we went to the hotel. The Nordale hotel was the grand hotel in town. It had paintings by an artist named Rusty Hurley who was one of the great illustrators and painters of the North in those days. And then it had paintings of people on the ice pack hunting Nanook, the polar bear. It had paintings of guys whaling. It had all these great things. There were stuffed bears. There were skins. And there were airplane pilots and all these people there. I thought I was in heaven. You know, for an eight year old kid, this was great. So moving to Alaska for me started as an adventure and it just went on being an adventure.

But living in government housing was the beginning of a kind of social attitude. There was a sense of the public realm, a semi-private social realm and then a totally private realm. And then a kind of other world, a place where the kids could play but they weren't on the street; there was quasi supervision because of all the units looked out. The stuff that sociologists talked about in the 60's and 70's was all built into the plan; because it was a diagram that came out of social thinking, largely in Europe, in architecture in the early 20th century. It was

worked out here in the United States by people like Clarence Stein and others. But again it was the same basic diagram. There were a kind of modern row houses, you know, eight units, two units per porch. You'd go in and go to the left or right. They were two stories up with a full basement. Playgrounds were in the middle between the houses. They weren't planned particularly, but could be park-like, and that's where the swing sets and the kids and dogs and stuff like that were. Now the outside was chaos or the wilderness or something else.

Now I realize that government housing was an interesting thing because it was based on the social housing from Europe; especially housing from Holland and Germany from the pre-war years. [They were like] buildings done by Ernst May Mies [van der Rohe], [JJP] Oud and [Walter] Gropius. And it [the housing] was probably done by people like, Saarinen and Ed Barnes. They were the guys who were working for the government doing housing and government construction during the war. But when I think about it, they were actually attached houses, eight units to a block. There was the private side and then there was the street side [of the building]. It was a classic diagram. It was like Stein and Wright, except that out in the back on the street side there were coal boxes or coal bins. We used to get on top of them and watch shooting stars and play on them and everything. There were still coal fired stoves in the kitchens back then. This tells you how radically different it was at that point. The idea of electric stoves came with post-TVA and post-hydro projects built all along the Columbia River and other rivers in the West. So that whole business of the electrification of America really happened just as the war began and continued throughout

the war. And so, you know in my own lifetime the changes in the country technologically have been very interesting.

That winter was a cold winter, one of the coldest winters they remember. My dad and my mom went into town one night and came back and discovered it had been 69 below the night before. I mean it was really cold. It's not like that anymore, by the way. It's melting and very seriously [melting]. We can talk about later.

Fairbanks at that point was an interesting town. It basically was a grid on a river, a typical American pioneer settlement. The big trading post was down on the river and it was called the Northern Commercial Company, which was an American-Anglo version of the Hudson Bay Company. Basically they were a general store, an all-purpose trading company that had stores basically in every community that I knew of in Alaska. But there was the anchor store downtown. What happened was after the Gold Rush of 1898 which sent everybody to the Klondike, people mostly departed from Seattle. They took the boats up the inside passage, landed in Skagway, down in an area that we now call the Panhandle of Alaska. It is a string of fiords in southern Alaska that blocks off parts of Canada from the ocean. But anyway, they would go up and over the Chilkoot Pass and then down the valley and they would get to Dawson Creek. That's where the gold strikes were. And so the Americans went there. But if they got on the Yukon River and went downstream, they'd end up in Alaska because it flows west. It's a very big river, one of the largest in the continent, and it flows west to the Bering Sea. The gold strike was somewhere around 1907 or maybe 1908. People went down

that river and they struck gold on the beach in Nome. And so there was a gold rush to Nome. And then guys start poking around in the rivers and valleys that branched off the Yukon. One struck gold near Fairbanks. And so there, by 1908, just 10 years after the Yukon gold rush, there was a rush with, you know, probably 20,000- 30,000 miners all in that valley living in tents and going for the gold. And there was a lot of gold and there still is. They're still hauling gold out of there, millions per year.

But anyway, one of the things that it produced was a town that was a classic. If you look at [John] Repp's book on American cities of the West, what you'll see this is how they get laid out the towns. First is Front Street which is parallel to the river and then a bunch of streets at 90 degrees to the river. Some have numbers and some have names. And so it's First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Front Street is First Street. And then all the stuff that's at 90 degrees gets names for, you know, presidents, pioneers, local historians, somebody's wife, literary figures, whatever, you know. It's the American way, right? The same thing happened in Philadelphia, with Apple, Spruce, Chestnut, and Pine streets etc.

So in Fairbanks, by the time we got there, people were still living in log cabins. There were still false front buildings and very few masonry buildings. During the Franklin Delano Roosevelt [FDR] administration, lo and behold, Fairbanks got a beautiful federal courthouse and post office in the art deco style. You know, I've done drawings of it since. But I didn't know it was unusual. And a public school that I went to was an art deco, concrete, reinforced concrete building. There was a man named [Austin] "Cap" Lathrop who was one

of those early pioneers who started the newspapers and built some movie theaters and he built in concrete fireproof buildings because there were always fires.

The thing about the frontier is you build in wood. But it's cold, stoves overheat drunks fall asleep, things happen and there's always a fire. And then it spreads because there are all these little wooden buildings. It's the winter and the wind comes up and there goes half the town. Just like the night we arrived in Fairbanks which was the 24th of December. We went to bed and I got up the next day and my parents were still asleep so I thought well I'll get out and explore. So I put on some clothes and went walking around. I discovered huge piles of ice and all this mess because part of the town burnt down the night before. It turns out the city switchboard, the main garage for the city, and a bunch of apartments all behind the post office had all burned down. But what I found the next morning were these incredible piles of ice with posts frozen into them. All these charred timbers under six inches of solid ice. It was very interesting but really weird and it smelled very bad.

So it was an odd mixture of fairly recent modernity with pioneering log cabins.

And the streets, there were only two or three streets that were paved with asphalt. There was no concrete pavement that was too expensive. But the rest were all just gravel streets. There were some sidewalks of concrete, but the rest were made of boards, wooden boardwalks. And then there were places where there was none; it was just gravel, you know. And but interestingly, there's a slide I used for many years in various lectures that my father took, he liked taking pictures. He started taking pictures in the 40's with a Leica and

then he got a Kodak. And so around 1944 he started taking 35 mm slides. I have his slides and they're kind of amazing. I've tried to take care of some of them and edit them. But there's a slide he took of a street I know in Fairbanks that is heartbreaking because it is this street of houses and lining the street and there are these beautiful street trees, birch trees. And it's like being in Norway or somewhere. So that DNA of how you make a town and make civic spaces was there in Fairbanks. It was very interesting. You know, there's a park with a ball field and that sort of thing. One bridge crossed the river. Part of the town was on one side of the river and part of the town was on the other side of the river. In the summer there was only way to get there and that was across this one bridge. In the winter, of course, when the river froze solid, the whole town was put together. It was connected by the streets that went down and across and back up to the other side. Later when I was in the end of high school, they built a second bridge. Now I think there's a third. Anyway, so Fairbanks was a pretty good place. We lived in town that first year while I was in third grade.

Well, when I was 12 years old, I was selling Christmas trees on a lot in downtown Fairbanks and my father walked up in the dark and said, let's go have a drink. You've got a baby sister. So my mother had finally had another child. They'd wanted to have children and she had a whole bunch of miscarriages. In those days people didn't know why they kept having so many miscarriages. And then, of course, there were two more boys after that. But the 12-year gap was hard on a 12-year-old boy. It was hard to suddenly have a baby in the house when they've had the run of the place. It was hard especially when the parents think they

have a built in babysitter. So I sort of suffered under the raising of my baby sister for a while. In fact, it made me reluctant to want to have children of my own for a while. But needless to say, Sue is a dear love. And one of the things that happened was it turned out she had a birth defect that had to do with a hip condition. It was fairly common I guess in those days and it probably had to do with nutrition or some other thing. But it meant she had to be in a cast for nine months or so when she was two. And I took care of her. And part of how I did that was draw for her. You know, it's not that I didn't love her but it was difficult. I got very good at doing laundry, diapers and all that stuff. This is not what 14-year-old boys really want to do. So when my parents announced at the end of my sophomore year that they were moving to Anchorage, I said, "I'm not". My parents were I think taken aback by it but they saw the logic of why I wanted to not go. In a way it made things easier for them because they could devote their attention to my sister. And then they had some more kids.

Formative Education

Elementary School Memories

But then, I was immediately put into school, public school in town, in 3rd grade. I had already been in like five schools and I was only eight. Third grade was interesting because one of the things that happened was that we were reading in the geography book about different places and it talked about Alaska. And it talked about how everybody in Alaska lived in an igloo. And it was all about snow. And I'm sitting in this steam heated, reinforced concrete, art deco building and students were all looking at each other saying, igloo? We

don't live in igloos. And so doubt about received wisdom and the common sense the world set in fairly early after that. So that sense that you better find out for yourself, trust your in own experience and be careful about information that people feed you stayed with me and the rest of us.

The other interesting thing was the first week or two after school, every day when class would end, at 3:45 or whenever it was, I would come out of the building and of course it was dark. And all the boys in the class would be standing around outside the steps waiting for you to come out. And you'd have to fight a different one. And you had to fight every one of the boys in the class until you sort of done it with everybody and then they knew where you fit in. Nobody really got hurt because you were wearing parkas, you've got on mittens and there is snow. You're rolling around, pummeling each other, and the worst is you get snow down your neck or under your shirt up your sleeves. And, you know, in some ways holding your face in the snow and ice and saying, do you give? Do you give? This was really kind of weird kind of macho stuff. But everybody knows everybody very intimately in that kind of environment. It was a small town. And those people you were going to be with for many years. The girls some of them would hang around and watch us out of morbid fascination or curiosity. Most of them would just think this is hopeless and leave, you know. In the winter there we didn't go out much because it was too cold. So recreation and recess usually was in a gym, and that's why the only sport anybody really played much was basketball Football forget it.

BIRNBAUM: *You mentioned drawing someone from memory today. I'm wondering if that's something that goes back to your childhood?*

OLIN: Well, let's see. I have drawn all my life and I don't know why. I started when I was like three or four. I just started drawing and I drew a lot. And so by the time I got to Fairbanks, my classmates all knew I drew a lot. And so we used to shall I say borrow some chalk at recess and go outside and I would draw requests for them on the sidewalk. They'd say do Donald Duck and I'd draw Donald Duck. They'd say draw Popeye. I draw Popeye. Dick Tracey. I could draw any comic strip you could name. So for some reason I was interested in things and I had favorite comic strips. Terry and the Pirates, the Prince Valiant you know, Dick Tracy, Little Abner. I knew them all. I knew all the Disney characters and I was really good at it. So I was interested in graphics and comics and in drawing and with that comes a certain ability to extract and boil things down. Because the thing about a good cartoon is it's like any good caricature. It means you've got to the essence somehow.

OLIN: In the summer of 1947 we left Fairbanks and we moved to a place called 26 Mile, which was named that because it was 26 miles down the Alaska Highway from Fairbanks out in the wilderness. Well, actually there was a big cleared area where they were hoping to build some buildings so they just stripped out a lot of woods. There was a big meadow full of meadow mice and moles and rabbits and stuff. And then beyond that was a swamp, a real marsh, and then some moose ponds and lakes and beyond that were the hard rock hills

and streams. In the other direction they where they're building a runway, there were more woods and the town and our river eventually.

My dad and two other guys were in charge of all the construction workers and everything. And I had the run of the place. It was daylight for almost 24 hours most of the summer. So I used to go out and poke around. They opened gravel pits, they opened rock quarries, they were blasting and they built a batch plant. And so I just grew up on a construction site. And they built all these roads. They built a railroad [line] to bring supplies in from Fairbanks.

So it was a nice summer; it was a great summer. I got to go fishing. I learned a lot about how to catch a fish if you're hungry, you use salmon eggs. Any fish will eat salmon eggs.

But anyway when winter comes and it's back to school. And so now what do you do? Well, you have to go 26 miles to the nearest school. And because [my dad] was with the Corps of Engineers, the idea was that I would go the school on the military base in Ladd. Well, it was a two-room school. So first, second, and third were in one room, and fourth, fifth, and sixth in the other. I had this teacher for fourth grade who was really, really dumb. She wanted you to color inside the lines. Coloring a drawing made by somebody else was offensive to me. I was upset all year with her. I mean she was a moron about art whereas when I had been in Fairbanks in third grade, there was a woman Rose Lawson who had miniature reproductions from the Metropolitan Museum of Art all around the ceiling all around the windows. There was [Sir Anthony] van Dyck and there was [Hans] Holbein and Titian,

[Tiziano Vecelli] and there was [Pater Paul] Rubens and Rembrandt [van Rijn]. She believed in art and passion and paint and everything.

I could hardly get to school because half the time, I had a 50% attendance rate that year.

And fifth grade was even worse. That was the next year and I was supposed to learn about fractions and the times tables and everything and so I'm still pretty bad at arithmetic. If it is algebra, math, abstract math, great; if it is arithmetic, forget it. I'm just terrible with numbers and I will always be because I was just crippled in fourth and fifth grade by A, not getting there, B, not doing the work, anyway.

But reading that was different because we were out in the bush with a houseful of books.

My parents and I would go to town every weekend in the summer to a place called Adler's Bookstore. David Adler was probably the only Jewish person north of the Alaska Range in those days. He was a World War I veteran. He had been gassed in the Argonne. But David Adler was this wonderful white-haired older guy who had a really first rate bookstore. So my folks would come home with poetry, literature, fiction. In the back was sort of art and history. And so I began buying books for myself. When you're out in the wilderness people read a lot and they talk a lot. They drink a lot of coffee. They drink a lot of alcohol. There are some other social issues.

So one of the things that happened was my mother decided that if I couldn't go to school much she'd better do something about it. One of the neighbors with the two girls was home

schooling her kids because she realized that the school was hopeless. So she had these subscriptions - exercise books. But I was going to school so I didn't have that. My mom subscribed to Time magazine, Life magazine, Saturday Evening Post, Woman's Home Companion, and Look magazine; and they all came into the house every week. And so we had all that. Then one of the neighbors got National Geographic and Sports and Field. So there was this constant supply of kind of middlebrow information flowing into the house. And then interestingly enough, my mother decided that she should probably get me a subscription to something called Nature, which was a little funny paper publication that came out once a month from the Museum of Natural History in New York City. It was for children and it was about science. It had all these illustrations about dinosaurs and the paintings of Frank L. Knight, who did the illustrations for them.

My father brought home a book called Alaska's Animals and Fishes by Tom Dufresne, which had beautiful paintings by him, drawings and paintings by him of all the animals, wildlife and fish in Alaska. Anyway, so and then she [my mother] decided that she should do something about culture as well. So she subscribed to something from the Metropolitan Museum of Art where they sent out a little booklet about a painter once a month. There was a sheet of perforated four color illustrated reproductions of paintings that you would kind of tear apart like stamps and they glue them into the book. The pictures were about three inches by six inches or something. So into the house comes [John Singer] Sargent, and [Winslow] Homer.

I am fourth and fifth grade getting books with information about paintings from the Metropolitan Museum of Art and artists. I'm also getting stuff about paleontology and archaeology and natural history and biology. I am just reading and I'm sitting in the woods and outside is all this stuff that they are writing about. It's about color and light and it's about form and it's about, ecology; and it is all there. It's just not with labels or anyone instructing you. So after that going to school was difficult. So that tells you a little bit about my mom, you know.

And then we had all these crazy guys that my dad knew who worked for the Corps for Engineers who would help build the Burma Road, you know, under Vinegar Joe Stilwell, you know. I mean the guys my father knew from the Corps of Engineers were pretty interesting guys who had seen a lot of the world. But they had great stories and they had seen a lot and they were very worldly. So after a couple of years of not quite making it into school but going to school in a funny way we moved back to town.

A Teacher, Ms. Morrow, Makes a Difference

And I guess it would be 1948 no '49. And we went back into town. But we didn't move into the city. We moved to Ladd Field because my father was a civilian working for the Corps of Engineers as a government civil service employee. Therefore he was entitled to government housing. I can't say we were poor but we never had any money. Everybody had more money than we did. Anyway, we moved to Ladd Field. I could walk into town [Fairbanks] because it was only a couple miles and, you know, by that point I was used to walking

everywhere. I still walk as you know. I walk everywhere all the time. And then I'd walk into town and poke around and see my friends and then lo and behold in sixth grade they built a new building, a little red schoolhouse. And the teacher who was put in charge and who became the principal became a dear friend to my parents. Elizabeth Morrow. I've had a lot of important and interesting mentors in my life. She was another one. Ms. Morrow. Anyway, but her sister was head of the English department at the University of Alaska. She was the principal educator and head of the schools for the military there. I mean she's the one that gave me Rilke's book on Rodin with sketches and all these nudes. It was very exciting to a young person. I mean you don't give sixth graders Rilke in Alaska. But she did that for me.

Learning from Boy Scouts and Camping

So one of the things is that I managed to do was to join the Boy Scouts. And I found myself back with kids I'd known in third grade. And this is great because I have a community again. I've just had a couple years virtually by myself, reading, writing, poking around, drawing, painting, going to school but with people who don't live where I live, etc. But now I'm back with kids and we start doing things together like camping out, winter camping, you know. We did weird stuff that people do in the North, snowball fights in your underwear, running around in the dark, as only 12 year old boys would do.

Our first summer camp was at Mount McKinley National Park. It's now called Denali. I mean what a great place to go for summer camp. Can you imagine, climbing mountains, forging

rivers, going on hikes, looking at the caribou and seeing the grizzlies. There were marmots and parka squirrels. What the Eskimos call Siksikbuk. The parka squirrels, are little, beautiful little squirrels that people make those gorgeous coats from.

One of my friends, his father was a U.S. Marshall. We were still a territory. And when there was a double axe murder his dad would have to go home and put his guns on and go out and find the guy. Usually he would be hiding under a bridge or some damn thing. Today when people murder people sometimes they feel bad and think that they should shoot themselves. But in those days they would run and you would have to go get them and drag them back.

Now I could buy a lot more of my own books, build up my own library. And I started buying books on how to draw and how to paint, silly stuff like that. But they don't tell you how to draw or how to paint.

Learning from High School Experiences

From Travel

So by the time I guess my sophomore year in high school, an interesting thing happened. We came out to the States as we would say in Alaska; we came out to the States, to visit my grandparents. And we had a couple of interesting adventures doing that, a couple of trips up and down the Alaska Highway, on boats back and forth. I remember coming to Seattle and seeing the floating bridge across Lake Washington. One day we went to visit my

grandparents in Marsh Field, Wisconsin. It was a kind of a heartbreakingly beautiful little town with great American elm trees and lawns. My grandfather had this garden with peonies and irises and gladiolas. And I helped him build a fireplace in the back, a barbecue. The first time I ever laid bricks by myself was with him. And, you know, it didn't seem daunting to me. So the idea of building things with your hands was the most natural thing to me. I've been around it. He wanted to build a barbecue; we'd build a barbecue. He'd sit in his car and smoke cigars because my grandmother wouldn't let him do it in the house, which was interesting. It was kind of weird. I'd sit in the car with him while he smoked cigars. But why am I telling you this?

Because that summer my dad decided he had a kind of nostalgia for Chicago and his youth I think. He wanted to show me what a city looked like. My father convinced my mother and grandparents that we should go to Chicago for a few days to show me Chicago, so the two of us went down to Chicago. It was a mind blowing. It was great. We went into Marshall Fields. I remember going up on an escalator. It was the first time I had been on an escalator. As you're rising up you see this sea of merchandise including a row of television sets.. I'd never seen a television set. It was the Muriel cigar ad on 20 television sets all at once. It was amazing seeing Ernie Kovacs and all this other stuff. It was fabulous. I just thought this was incredible.

We stayed in some hotel in the Loop. We went and looked at Wrigley Field and bopped around and saw lots of stuff. I remember all the theaters on State Street. In those days

there were double features and some of the movie houses had live acts in between the movies. This was in 1949. Interestingly enough, that's when I saw Sid Caesar and Imogene Coco, live on stage. It was between a Western and one of those Hollywood noir films. Those were kind of interesting; they were so funny I thought I was going to die. It was also the worst Western I'd ever seen in my life. It was really a cheap film. Even to me, a 12 year old, I knew it was all screwed up. But anyway, I was visually acute in some ways. I noticed things about the environment and details and how they related to the bigger narrative.

From Summer Jobs

But what's going on at the University of Alaska? There are all these people, there are geologists; there are archaeologists; there's paleontologists; there's mining engineers; there's civil engineers; there's physicists. And so various people start coming through town and my parents got to know some of the people from the University of Alaska. There was Helga Larson who is the archaeologist who was working on the old Bering Sea sites. One person came up with some of the shaft points that were identified as being similar to those from Folsom, Arizona. That [discovery] put the old Bering Sea culture back to at least 20,000 years. And so he's a house guest.

So as high school moved along, I was kind of at loose ends. Between my freshman and sophomore year of high school, my parents managed to get me an internship with a paleontologist named Otto Geist at the University of Alaska. Otto Geist is very famous or infamous because of some of his methods and behavior. He was an old bachelor, a German

immigrant paleontologist. He is a legend in paleontology. He had a graduate student in mining who was his assistant and me. Otto went into the gold fields that summer and the student and I basically lived in a tent for a couple months that summer. There were a series of big gold mines around Fairbanks, plaster mines. You probably don't know what plaster mining is. There's hard rock mining and plaster mining. Hard rock mining is either shafts or drifts. For plaster mining you use water to wash stuff away, you basically screen it and you use dredges. So in Fairbanks there's a lot of post-glacial alluvial clay, sand and gravel. A lot of the mountains in the Alaska Range are all granite and some are volcanic. This is why it looks like the highlands; it's the same basic geological formation, the same plants, the same animals, and hoofed livestock like the deer family. There are also foxes, rabbits and Rangifer tarandus, [reindeer]. It's the same animal as the caribou. So there was this circumpolar set of creatures that I knew pretty well. And I was a freshman in high school. Man, I knew a lot, right?

So I went to work with this guy. We have a jeep and we go from Esther to Goldhill to all the different mines. We'd go out and we'd be in a place for about a week. And what would happen is this. There were hills that were mostly clay and the miners would have to get rid of the clay to get to the gold. So basically ruin the valley. I mean it's really strip mining. And because it was frozen they'd drive thaw points into it. They'd drive pipes into it, pump water in to thaw it out and wash it away with high pressure nozzles. This meant they had to build water systems with huge pipelines and fields of pipes. And then after they got down to the area where there was a stream they would then come in with a dredge, build a pond,

and then they'd start chewing their way down the valley. So there were a lot of fossils in the frozen clay and muck just above the gold bearing sands. So we would go into the areas where they were doing the hydraulic work, in between the shifts and look around and see if there were any fossils. It was mostly, Pleistocene bison and camels and horses. But once in a blue moon, there were a lot of mammoths, wooly mammoths and once in a blue moon a mastodon. But the rarest stuff to find would be carnivores. Every now and then you'd find, a bone from a cat or a canine, or you know a fox. We didn't find many tigers although they were there.

One afternoon up at Gold Hill, a place north of Fairbanks, on a big plateau of frozen clay there was this lens. It was like a granite shield almost. I noticed there were all these funny little spots. [I thought] what the heck are these little spots? And so I poked at them and they were fibrous. And so I thought oh that's interesting. So I kind of messed around and I thought oh they're all fibrous. I wonder what these are. I thought hmm maybe they're buffalo chips. So I kept fiddling. And then I started finding bones, then rodents. And so I realized what I had was a prairie dog village or some ground nesting ground squirrels of some sort from 10,000 years ago. So it was learning about the world first-hand

The other thing that happened that summer was when we were at Esther and we went into an area with some big high clay cliffs, and up the wall, about four or five feet, there was a complete jaw of a wooly mammoth with the teeth intact. Quite often we'd find a tooth, or you would find one mandible or the other one but you wouldn't find the whole jaw intact

with all the teeth. So that was a big deal. So Otto was going at it with a pick. I went off to get something and the student was down the way. Suddenly we heard this noise and we turned around and the clay had collapsed and buried him alive. And so we ran back to him and dug him out by hand and saved his life. All the while we were thinking there's more going to come down and it will bury us all. But we got him out and carried him partway back through the pipe field to the jeep. The student drove him into town. I didn't drive because I was just a high school kid and I didn't know how to drive anyway. And so I picked up all our gear and hiked back to the camp. Otto was in the hospital for a week or two and when he came out he was pretty beat up. But he was OK. And then about two weeks later he went with some Athabascan Indians on an expedition up the old Crow River where he made a couple of huge findings of some Paleocene giant ground dwelling beavers and things like that. And so it was a pretty good summer. So that summer. The student was fed up; he felt was babysitting me. I mean we were cooking our own food and obviously I wasn't as good a cook as he was. So that was that summer.

But the next summer interestingly enough my parents didn't know what to do with me so I went over to a place called Manley Hot Springs. I stayed with the two Morrow sisters in a place that was a trading post. There was a little air strip, a post office, a roadhouse, a hot spring, four cabins and a road that went up to a mine which was about 30 miles away. There also was a boat landing and there were riverboats. It was the last year of the stern-wheelers. I remember they came out of the water when I was in high school and never went

back. By then they had diesel riverboats bringing traffic up the river and bringing us goods and stuff. So it really was the frontier. And that was an interesting place.

From Drawing

It was the summer between sophomore and junior year. That was the summer I decided I was going to draw my environment. So I went around and I drew every building in town and most of the people. I watched them. I had nothing else to do but lie around and read. I had a hammock out by a stream with mosquito netting over it. I'd lie there and try to go to sleep with all the mosquitoes. It was kind of bad.

I also did something else. We were clearing brush on the property line and I stepped on a ground nest of some yellow jackets and they flew up and one stung me under my glasses. While I was flailing around I knocked my glasses off and jumped on my glasses. So the net result was I was now in Manley Hot Springs blind. So I was really laid up. A bush pilot came on Tuesdays and Thursdays with the mail, so on Thursday we gave him my glasses to take into Fairbanks and then the following Tuesday he brought them back. But for those four days I just lay around and held this murder mystery very close to my face and read. There was nothing else I could do. I couldn't see a thing. The woods were good to me. I began to document what was around me in sketches. And I started doing watercolors and selling them to make spending money. I was also by that point a high school cartoonist.

From Being Independent

And the next year by the end of my sophomore year, my dad was transferred and we were going to move to Anchorage. When they told me I said, “No, I don’t think so”. They said, “We have to move, your dad’s job is in Anchorage”. And I said, “I can’t go to Anchorage. Anchorage High, are you kidding? They’re terrible. I hate Anchorage High”. I had spent all my life hating Anchorage because every year in the spring at the Alaska High School basketball championship, Fairbanks plays Anchorage. We usually lost because it’s was a big city and we were not. And the Anchorage kids were so full of themselves. They might as well be from Los Angeles. I hated them. I can’t go to Anchorage. Are you kidding? You know how high school kids are. I’ve been with these kids since third grade. I said, “These are my friends and I’m not leaving”. Well, they thought, oh Christ, he’s not leaving. Now what do we do?

So I was going back to Fairbanks High School but they had to find some place to board me for a whole school year. And the solution was Ellen and Bill Wicher who were friends of my parents. He was the President of the Electrician’s Union. He was a very interesting guy. She was a nurse who my mother met working in a hospital in Fairbanks. She was a Smith grad. She was a very well-educated woman from New England.

Bill Wicher was a kind of goofy Canadian who came over the border at eight-years-old in the back of a wagon. He bounced around, working here and there and went into the military in World War II. The way he learned to drive was this. He got a job as an ambulance driver in San Francisco. He didn’t have a driver’s license and he didn’t know how to drive but he

talked himself into the job. And in those days the ambulance companies were at the tops of the hills. And whenever there was an alarm, you just go out and roll down the hill in the direction of the call. And he'd just get in the car, turn on the siren, and go down the hill. Everybody would get out of the way. That's how he learned to drive. He was a very interesting guy.

One of the things about Bill was that as the President of the Electricians [union]. He had started a series of classes for the union, classes in literature and philosophy and all sorts of history and stuff. The idea was that if he was going to be president of the union, then they should do progressive things. He thought that the union should help them get high school equivalency degrees and maybe get into university extension courses. And in the course of doing that, he made friends with some people at the university. That was easy because it was a very small community.

And so after I moved into their house, they gave me the upstairs basically the whole upstairs with my room in the back of the house. I had my record player and my books and, a desk and a chair and all that. It was like a college dorm room. My only chore was to be present at dinner. And on weekends and I had to make sure that there was coal in the stoker for the furnace so that the heat didn't go off in the middle night. And I only failed once. I had come home from a high school dance having had a little too much to drink. And boy I did not forget that.

You do forget things, especially if the house is locked and you can't find your key and you have to get the ladder out of the garage and climb through the window to get in. Then you have to come back down to let yourself out and put the ladder back in the garage and then get back in the house and not wake them up.

But that year I was on my own, living with them. Actually that was my senior year. My junior year I'll come back to.

But the Wichers made friends with a couple from the University of Alaska. He was one of the youngest physicists to attend a congress of nuclear scientists with Einstein, Bohr and Oppenheimer and all those guys. He was a very bright guy. His wife was a musician and played the French horn. They were of course, from Brooklyn. They were New York Jews from Brooklyn. He's a physicist and she's a musician. And they would come in every Sunday and we would listen to the New York Philharmonic broadcast. That's when I first heard David Oistrakh and Isaac Stern playing with the New York Philharmonic. The men would sit in the living room and they would smoke their pipes. We would discuss things because Bill subscribed to Time magazine, to the Atomic Scientist Monthly and a few other magazines. Ellen subscribed to various literary magazines like Harpers, the Saturday Review and the Atlantic. So there was more up to date kind of semi-cultivated stuff in the house. But the three guys played chess while listening to classical music. Then there would be a big Sunday dinner. The women would make dinner and talk about whatever like the novel they'd just read. So it was a proper normal old-fashioned kind of life.

From a Love of Music

The radio was very big and so we were very much in touch with the world. We had records, too. I remember one day in high school my father came home with a record player. I was very excited. And he started buying records and, of course, he bought sort of light classical music for my mother. But they also both loved jazz. When they were young and he was tending bar at the Edgewater Tavern on the Rock River they were not too far from a roadhouse that used to get, Count Basie, Duke Ellington and Chick Webb to play. When he'd get done tending bar they'd go over to this other place where the music would go on all night. And I'd just sleep in the car. In those days you just left the kids in the car. The world was very different. He started bringing home jazz records. That was really interesting. He was bringing home all these classic re-releases of music from the 20's and 30's. So I started listening to that.

About the same time a military band leader was transferred to Fairbanks. He had two sons, Dale and Hugh Blackwell; they both were interested in jazz. One played the trumpet and the other played any reed instrument and they had all the charts and all the music for all the jazz standards. They had all these records and they knew everything. And they could play note for note all these things from various classic recordings of whoever you were interested in as long as it was late Dixieland through swing into early bop.

Also at that same time, one of my friends asked me if I wanted to go to the record store.

They were selling 35 LPs, 10 and 12 inch LPs but they also sold 45 singles. He wanted me to

hear a 45 single that he had just heard that he thought was interesting. So we went in a little booth and we listened to it and we both were kind of staring down at it saying hmm “what’s this? What the heck is this?” I said, “So what do you think? Play it again.” So he played it again. He said, “What do you think?” I said, “I don’t know, but there’s something there. It’s, I’m not sure I like it but it’s really interesting”. Well, it was Bill Haley’s “Rock Around the Clock”. It was the first rock and roll record we’d ever heard. Well, a year later, of course, it’s all over everywhere. Dick Clark was starting to broadcast out of west Philly. At exactly as I hit my junior year in high school, rock and roll was a hit. It was Buddy Holly and the Big Bopper. It was really great stuff. And we loved it. We had suede shoes. We had peg pants. The girls had big kind of weird odd calf length velvet or flannel skirts with appliqués.

In high school I designed all the sets for the musicals and dramas as well as acted in many of the plays because there were only a handful of us and we had to do everything. I ran the lights for the musicals. The chorus was so happy with the work I did lighting their spring musical that they gave me a pink Mr.B roll collar shirt. So that whole era was very exhilarating. And it was exhilarating for me because I was out on my own.

From High School Activities

Now my sophomore year, that first year when I moved away from my family I lived with a family friend, a man who owned a hardware store and whose son, Monte Cady, was one of my oldest closest friends. His father was one of the pillars of society there. Monte and I palled around. We certainly got a lot of scrapes. But as long as you pulled straight A’s in

every course, no one would say much to you. That was it. So played basketball outdoors in the dark in the snow; we double dated in pickup trucks; we're went to weird movies and we went to church groups because that was a way to be with girls. There were dances on Friday night, Alaska dances at the YMCA, with polkas and schottisches and square dances. I mean it was really old-fashioned America. I'm not saying this out of nostalgia; it's just facts. There were things about it that we're kind of terrible. The way people treated each other was bad, there was sexism, racism, alcoholism, and spousal abuse. Everybody had TB. It was a difficult place to grow up. There was a lot of damage to a lot of people. Various high school classmates were dead by the time I was in college. Parents of friends were dead in boating accidents and hunting accidents. Life in the wilderness and on the edge is it's not better or worse; it's different. And it can be harsh. If you don't pay attention, the world will bite you because the world is just full of energy. It keeps pushing and pushing.

Anyway, so I get through high school. I managed to get through high school. I did very well. And the last summer between my junior and senior year, I moved back with my parents to Anchorage. I didn't know a soul in Anchorage because I didn't go to school there. So that summer I did nothing but walk around and draw and paint everything in front of me. I drew buildings, I drew airplanes, I drew people and I drew mountains, birds and rivers. I drew everything and often I drew them together. I realized I was drawing what you would now call a cultural landscape. I prowled around the railroad yards. I walked down and around the docks. I went into town. I was on the one hand lonely and on the other hand having a great

time. And that's the summer, actually that's the summer I started keeping sketchbooks. I still have that sketchbook from that summer. It's not great. It is small.

College Remembrances

The University Of Alaska: Studying Civil Engineering

But as high school is ending, I think oh what am I going to do? Some of the people are talking about going to college and I have no plan. I had never made a plan on what am I going to do with my life. It never occurred to me that I had to think about it.

But a recruiter came through from the Navy and I thought oh there is an idea, I could join the Navy and learn to fly. So I tried to join the Navy to become a Navy pilot but the recruiter just laughed at me. He said, "You wear glasses. You'll never make it. The Navy doesn't take people with glasses to be pilots."

So then I thought well maybe I'd go to college. During the last month or two of school a man came through the office where my father worked and said, "We need young men who want to study engineering who'd work for us in the summers and if they do they're guaranteed a job after college". And so I thought, there's an idea. Go to college. I will become an engineer. Many of the intellectuals in the Alaska community were engineers. You think of who were the interesting people in terms of thought in Alaska, they were priests, doctors, military officers, some merchants, some teachers, and engineers. Those are

your choices. So I thought engineering, yeah. Everybody I had grown up with was an engineer who was doing interesting things.

So I decided that I should go to college and study engineering and get a job with the road commission. I gave him my name. And that summer when I graduated, I went to Anchorage and went to work for the Alaska Road Commission in the Anchorage District as a young engineering aid. I started as a GS II or whatever it was. Somebody who was at the very bottom of the heap maybe a GS I if there is such a thing. Anyway, what they needed were survey crews. So I was thrown into a group with other people from college who are all from Anchorage High. We worked on survey crews together. We were taught the rudiments of how to run an instrument, how to set benches, run levels. We learned what traverses are. And all of us were all going to enroll in engineering. So it was great. We did a lot of work around Anchorage and it was fun because I learned about surveying. I started just pounding stakes and cutting brush but was doing things a bit more sophisticated by the end of the year. I went to work for them the next several summers and each year advanced my standing. I ran the instrument and then became party chief and then became a project engineer. I learned a lot about cadastral surveying and suntan lotion.

So we, that fall it was time to go to college. This was fall of 1956. I had applied to the University of Alaska in civil engineering and back then you went to the university that you had chosen and you sat for entrance exams. The exams were given the first week and at the end of that week you're admitted or you're not. It's like the SAT. It's the early SATs. And at

the end of a couple of days, not only had I passed but apparently I did so well that the math department tried to get me to change my major from civil engineering to math. And I said I don't think so. I really want to be an engineer.

So I ended up in civil engineering at the University of Alaska as a freshman and then I proceeded to overdo it. I ended up freshman class president. I ended up on the varsity basketball team. I ended up the assistant editor of the college yearbook and I was taking a full load in civil engineering. During my first semester in engineering I did pretty well. The second semester my grades were not great but they were OK. But I realized I was having something of a breakdown because I was really depressed. It was dark all the time. I was getting no sleep. I hated the courses, most of them.

They really weren't very good. My chemistry class was at 8 am and the teacher was horrible. My math teacher was blind in one eye and he would lose things on the board and would throw erasers at people, it was really weird. The dorms are full of guns. There were a lot of guys there on the GI bill who had been in Korea and were kind of shell shocked. There was a lot of drinking, really heavy drinking. People were making home brew and there were stills set up in the dorms. I mean it was unbelievable. There were very few women. There was a dorm called Vets Dorm which is mostly veterans and that was the wildest dorm. And every now and then you'd hear these noises, bang! Somebody was shooting at the bell at the end of the hall. And they would shoot the bell, especially if they had been drinking. And,

of course, if you were in the hall, you were in trouble. So everybody was a little shaky in that dorm.

There was a guy named Spiegleman. He was in my chemistry class. One morning he shot his chemistry book and everybody got upset about that. He threw it up in the air and shot it and people didn't like that and then the week later he shot his alarm clock. And so he was expelled. And so then they finally took all the guns away from everybody and declared one room a gunroom. You had to check your gun out from the proctor if you needed it for any reason.

But anyway, one of the things that after my freshman year in engineering, I said, this is and I'm not sure about this place. It really depresses me. I started drawing and painting a lot that spring semester. I was going to class less and less, but I was getting through. That summer we were running line up near Nancy Lake working on the road to Mount McKinley Park, up above Wasilla and Palmer. We'd come into town on the weekends and go out to the bush for the week and live together in tents or cabins or wherever we could find up the line. It was probably late June, early July; it was hot as hell. We were cutting brush and I hit myself in the leg with a machete. It bled for a while and it stopped. I was not in a good mood. My pant leg was stuck to my leg and there were mosquitoes everywhere. We went through the day and at the end of the day, we all got in the rig and we drove into Anchorage. When we came into town, I thought I'm such a mess. I need a haircut. Before I go home to see my folks, I've got to go get a haircut. And so I went to this barbershop and

while I was getting my hair cut, I suddenly felt this warm feeling in my leg. All this blood is running down into my boots. [I thought] I've got to get out of here. I've got to get out of here. I'll die if I stay here. So I left the barbershop and went about two blocks to where the public library was and I went in and I said, "Do you have any college catalogs from the States"? And they said, "Yeah, there's some over there". And they pointed and there's a shelf. So I went over and I started going through college catalogs, trying to think about what to do. I thought maybe architecture; maybe I'll try something that's more artistic or something. Because by then I'd kind of began to put two and two together [to find something] less like engineering and more to do with art. But I but I didn't have any money, [just] what whatever I've saved working on construction. So hmm. What's the nearest cheapest place with architecture? And I found the University of Washington in Seattle. Because this was the year before we became a state Washington, Oregon and Idaho, still offered in-state tuition, resident tuition to people from Alaska because they knew we didn't have choice, etc. So I thought a-ha! For \$89.00 a quarter I can go to the University of Washington. Can you believe the tuition was \$89.00?

The University of Washington: Studying Architecture

Before I went back into the woods, I sent a telegram to the registrar at the University of Washington. And, of course, I didn't hear anything. Eventually I get this [letter] by slow boat. The regular mail came by boat in those days. So the registrar responds by putting a first class postage stamp on [the letter] and putting it in the mailbox and it comes by boat.

So three weeks pass before I get an answer. So I sent another telegram. Can I transfer into architecture? What do I have to do? What's the procedure? Where are the forms?

Three weeks later I get the next response. So summer's drawing to a close. School is about to start. So I buy an airplane ticket and I get on a plane with a suitcase and I fly to Seattle. I go into the registrar and I say, "I'm here. I want to register." And they're like, "oh, you're here". "Yeah, I'm here". So after a day of negotiation and being sent from office to office and filling out forms, I'm enrolled as a student in architecture at the University of Washington. That was great.

Experiencing Campus Life

I found a place in the dormitory at the university in a brand new high-rise dorm. And it turns into another circus because the people on the floor they're from Panama. So my room's always freezing cold with the windows open. His room's got all the windows closed and the heat turned up. We're next to each other and it was really a very interesting experience. So here I am a sophomore at a major state university outside in a big city. And here in moose hide moccasins with a blue sweatshirt with a hood that said University of Alaska. There were some interesting kids on my dorm floor. One that I liked was this Nisei, American Japanese kid, George Ota. For some reason everybody on the floor had taken a hostile attitude toward fraternities. We were all independents. We decided to see if we could get an independent class president at a university dominated by fraternities. So I decided I was going to get George Ota elected freshman class president. And I did. What I did was I

realized that you could go get logs and make a tripod and hang and his name, O-T-A, O-T-A. It was kind of like a fraternity name with big red letters that hung from these tripods that I put all over campus. They were like 15 or 20 feet tall with these big red letters OTA. They were everywhere. And he was swept into office. And so we suddenly the independents captured the school government. I thought that was interesting.

And the other thing I did that year was to get involved in the college humor magazine, which was called Columns. The guy who was the editor was so impressed with Jack Kerouac that he was typing the great American novel. So while in architecture I started hanging out with people who were not in architecture, which was normal for me. People who were somehow on the lunatic fringe side of literature. And then I was hanging out with this other dissident group.

In those days, it was the sanctity of the individual. It was don't fence me in, American free enterprise, wildness and individuality on the one hand; and on the other hand, forget about privacy, sensitivity and personal space. This was the generation where everybody showered together naked in grade school and through the Army. We were used to being together as a community. It was a very socially progressive that way, if you think that's progressive. Other people think having a room to yourself with a private bathroom is progressive. Anyway, we didn't. We had group showers, you know, in the men's dorms. It was just like being in the Army. It was very similar to the Army.

That summer I went back to work in Alaska and then the following year when I came back to school I moved into a boarding house. I just couldn't take the dorms anymore. I moved into a boarding house with a guy named Brian Scheffer. He was sociology major. His family was Quakers. They lived in a Modern house across the lake. His grandfather had been a friend of T.H. Huxley and his father was a biologist, in charge of the research station in the [Aleutian] Pribilof Islands. He was Victor B. Scheffer who has written, you know, *Seals, Sea Lions, and Walruses: A review of the Pinnipedia*. There are sea-going fleas named after his daughter and things like that. Brian was an interesting guy because he was a social science major. So he was taking courses in Freud and psychology and all kinds of other stuff. And that was interesting to me because my mother as a young girl had worked at Hull-House when Jane Addams had founded it on the Southside of Chicago. This notion of being involved with the urban underprivileged, with immigrants and the poor and the interest in science and social science was something that has always had been kind of around.

While I was in the dorm, there was a bunch of musicians who lived down the hall. So when I moved to the boarding house with Brian it was great. I had a friend who worked in a record store. And one of my dorm roommates who lived in a different boarding house played basketball and was All State in high school. So we used to play a lot of basketball. So there's this kind of weird combination of sports, work all night and go play basketball to unwind. We would listen jazz and go downtown and hang out in bars. There was a lot of heavy drinking in bars. And one of my favorite bars, there were two bars where we hung out. One was a blue-collar working class bar that is sort of under one of the freeway bridges now but

before the freeway it used to be down by the lake. And that's where one would hear people like Johnny Cash and Tammy Wynette on that jukebox.

The other bar I hung out with was the Blue Moon. The Blue Moon Tavern was off limits to military personnel because homosexuals and communists were known to be there. There had been a huge witch hunt at the University of Washington because of all their socially progressive people, some of whom were communists. There were three boarding houses. I think that they were called Spider, Anthill, and Cockroach I guess. They were full of Trotskyites, you know, and gay people. They were really weird places. But, you know, they were the people I hung out with in this other bar because they were all into art and literature. So I developed a social life outside of architecture. I had a social life with my architecture friends and the social life with students and friends and hangars on, kind of refugees from history, literature, and music and art, in these bars.

Studying Architecture - First Year Memories

Architecture school is a five year bachelor's program in those days. The first year is all requirements. Its things like English, swimming, physics and history. Well, I had taken first year of civil engineering. I still had to take physics. I mean I'd been through semi-micro qualitative analysis at the University of Alaska but I still had to take all these other dopey things because rules are rules, you know.

I ended up in basic design, which was the goal. In those days basic design was team taught by a group of teachers. Students from three different curriculums, architecture, interior design and industrial design were all put together in a joint first year basic design studio, The faculty was made up of different people, one was a painter, one was a sculptor, one was an industrial designer. There was an interior designer whose name I do not remember and there were three or, four architects. They team taught. We met four afternoons a week from 1:00 to 5:00. Later it was 2:00 to 6:00 when we moved upstairs. On Mondays, they would hand out a problem, or it was a studio design workday at your desk. On Tuesdays, you had mechanical drawing and drafting, learning to construct perspectives, and hand lettering. Wednesday was a day off but you had so much homework, you better be in the studio or you're going to fall like a stone. On Thursday there were studio crits, sometimes a talk but generally there were desk crits. Friday was drawing or painting or some other assignment. That was the schedule every week for nine months. There were about 80 students total. Well, at the end of that year, 24 of us went upstairs. Some of the group were industrial designers and some were interior designers. So if you take maybe 30 away from the 80 you still have 50 students. The group got winnowed to 24 in that first year. By the time I graduated several years later, there were only about 16 of us from that first year. And so we ended up graduating about 20 but there were only about 16 of us from the original group. So we were a bunch of survivors who were put through a very rigorous training and education. And I say training and education because it was both. It was more like a music conservatory in that it was exercise and drills.

That year we didn't sleep a lot. We had to build, we would be given assignment to make something and we would then have to make it. We would then have to draw it and then we would have tested it until destruction. We had to prove that it could hold up a brick or a bunch of bean bags or spanned a distance or did something. If it was a collage of different textures, we'd go find some materials and we'd make a collage. We would then try and explain it, draw it and disassemble it.

One assignment was to make a hand sculpture. What the hell is a hand sculpture? Well, it's a thing to hold in your hand. It's just a thing. So we'd go and get a tropical hardwood which was very difficult. And we'd have to carve it in some shape that felt kind of interesting. That had some je ne sais quoi. The minute we finished, we'd have to draw it. Draw three different views of it. Then paint it.

We had to make a wire sculpture. We had to take six feet of wire and make a sculpture that defines space in a dynamic way. So we'd do something. And then as soon as you finish it, they'd say draw it. And then they'd say, oh, that's a very good drawing but this wire doesn't look like it is going back into the distance and coming toward you here. They would say, "You've got to draw harder, this is not right." One day George Tsutakawa, the sculptor, who was wonderful came in and he set this sanxian down on the table and he said draw how it sounds. I mean it was a very thought producing experience.

The kid next to me was, well, none of us were kids by that point, was color-blind. He was a veteran but he was color- blind. So when we would have the charrettes, he would say to

me, “Laurie, is this green”? It was just like no, no, no. That’s red. Oh. I thought he was an interior designer. I thought what kind of a career is he going to have unless he sticks to black and white? He’s in going to be in real trouble. Anyway, he was a great guy. So that was a good year.

The other thing that happened that year was that we also had to take watercolor up in the art department. We had a teacher, Ray Hill, who just taught watercolor. I did watercolor in the spring. That course really messed up my watercolors for a couple years. I could not paint well for at least two years after that. I had to get way past all of the things that went wrong in that class with his screwing me up.

BIRNBAUM: *That first year, I’m curious what your assessment of it as you look reflect on it now?*

OLIN: I think it was very good because of the different voices, the different critics. We had all had a different point of view, and you would draw something, and one person would come up and ask you about it and use the Socratic Method. And you would try and figure out the answer to the questions. Then the next person would come up would tell you something and bully you. You didn’t like it but they were bigger and older and more in charge than you were. So you had to deal with rough criticism. You had to deal with different styles of perception of your work and that was very interesting. The second thing

was that the exercises pushed us through a kind of sensitivity of visual perception in textures and materiality.

The last exercise of the year was to design a small garden, a kind of town house garden which had to do with space and form. We didn't know anything about plants but we could draw them. And so the combination of painters and sculptors and architects all criticizing your work from their point of view was I think extremely useful. I mean we had what we called when I was teaching at Penn, the Bauhaus Spots and Dots class. [For this exercise] you're pushing shapes around, you're working with 12 colors and you're trying to blend them from one to the other. You're doing basically a Bauhaus exercise.

Summer work for the Alaska Road Commission

When I was working for the Road Commission on the Bering Sea I had this huge truck wreck. I started having wrecks. That was another problem. To work for the road commission you had to drive. And I had never really learned how to drive like everybody else but I didn't tell them I didn't know how. I just thought well I'll just drive. You know, it's Alaska, what the hell. So I started driving and that didn't work so well. People said, "Well you should practice". So I practiced. "You should go get a license". So I went to go get a license and I had an accident with the territorial policeman sitting next to me. That was not very good. In downtown Anchorage it was hard to get in an accident but I did. The next year I tried and failed again because I stalled it out on a hill. So I never did quite have a driver's license but I kept working with the road commission. I finally had this one colossal wreck after I'd put

some trucks in ditches. But anyway, we were all guys on the loose. Anyway, I had this huge wreck in the middle of the motor pool at quitting time one day. I drove one truck into the side of another and everybody came running out and asked what happened. And I said, "I just screwed up". And he said, "That is not an answer that is acceptable." So they didn't quite know what to do with me.

But by then I had switched to architecture school. That is the next tale. They said, "Well, we're building out in Bristol Bay, we could put you in charge of those buildings because we need a project engineer". So this they sent me to Dillingham, which is on Bristol Bay. In Dillingham, there are big canneries and there are about 20 some miles of road that goes into the Tikchik Lakes and into Aleknagik. They needed a maintenance depot and a new house for the resident engineer. So I went out to Bristol Bay that summer to build those buildings.

I was out there all by myself at this fishing village with a cannery and a bunch of Aleuts and some construction workers. There was a college kid Chuck Kennedy who I'd known at the University of Alaska who was working on rebuilding the runway in Dillingham. He had a BMW motorcycle, which was a lot of fun. We'd go roaring around on the beach and the runway with that but there wasn't much else to do. There were two taverns in town. There was one restaurant. And that was it. There was a movie theater on the weekends for the cannery workers. But it was still segregated. Whites sat in one place and all the natives sat somewhere else. Your hair would stand on end if you're watching a Western and the

Indians came over the hill. Everybody would cheer. It was pretty interesting, seeing Western movies with American natives in those days, because they were starting to be able to express how they felt. I had been with them all my life and was close to some. I knew kids in high school who had supported themselves by shoplifting because there was poverty, there was illness and there were absent parents. There were a lot of problems and illness, especially tuberculosis. So working on the Bering Sea got me out from under my parents again. I was on my own, looking at a community on the edge once more and at the social relations between men and women. It was very interesting, very educational. There were great fishing trips, wonderful fish, but not salmon. We used salmon for dog food. I mean salmon, there was so many salmon, the salmon runs were huge and there were too many of them.

Alaska is a long, complicated story. How we finally got statehood is interesting. I mean I was involved in the statehood campaign to get people to vote for statehood. I did political cartoons for the Anchorage daily papers to, to encourage people to vote. It was all about taxation without representation. We were subject to the draft, we had to pay income tax, we could do a lot of things but we couldn't vote. And that bothered us. We thought it would be beneficial. Shortly thereafter, many people wondered [it this was so.]. The man who was the governor, the first thing he did upon acceding to the chair of the governorship was ban fish traps in southeastern Alaska. They were wiping out the salmon runs. And I mean that's his first official act. You know, Queen Elizabeth's official act was banning the docking of horse's tails. I mean there's a difference. But the one thing about salmon is that they were

very plentiful in Bristol Bay. It's still the largest salmon run in the world. That is why everybody is still worried about oil. That's why they're worried about mining, etc. [Salmon] because it was so common, it was like dog food. It was like lobster in 19th century in Maine. You know, that's what the poor people ate. So the real good fishing was for grayling or trout. My last couple of years in Alaska, people were coming around at the end of weekends with pickup trucks full of salmon trying to give it away. We were so fed up with salmon. When I came out to the States to go to college, I probably didn't eat salmon for about eight years. It took me a while to get back to liking salmon. Now I love it. I think it's a good fish, tasty, not like farmed salmon, which is not very good. It's mushy and you have to feed it dye to make it look pink. But real salmon, wild salmon, is wonderful and nutritious.

Studying Architecture - Second Year Challenges

The next year we moved upstairs where the big guys were. There was one girl in the class, Elaine Day. There were very few women in architecture in those days. There was one in the class behind me; one in my class; none in the class ahead of me. So when I got upstairs there were already two other classes there. It's confusing because it was called grade 1, grade 2, grade 3 and grade 4. Grade 2 is your third year. Grade 3 is your fourth year. So grade 2 which was the third year was upstairs. The building was an old Beaux-Arts building built for the Alaska Yukon Exposition, one that was a partial build out of an Olmsted plan. I didn't know anything about Olmsted at the time or about the City Beautiful [movement]. But that year I learned a heck of a lot because it was design, all day, all night, all year. Studio met four days a week from 2:00 to 6:00 pm. Desk crits were on Mondays and Fridays. We

would work on our own but faculty might drift in or out on Tuesdays and Thursdays when you're working on your projects. But Wednesdays were sketch problems. Well, also in the mornings we had structural engineering. I had blundered through physics the year before while in grade 1, which was miserable. It was a class of 300 [people] in a typical introductory physics course with a professor from Europe on sabbatical who couldn't speak English. He broke his leg partway through the term so they brought in his TA who was from, Pakistan and couldn't speak English. The whole thing was hysterically horrible.

But it wasn't as bad as my freshman chemistry class when one afternoon in semi-micro we were doing a general unknown. My lab partner was a little punchy He was a veteran Marine who was overrun at Chosin Reservoir by that Chinese army. He turns to me and says, "I can't stand it. Let's get out of here"! And I said, "Yeah, OK. You know, what do you want to do"? He said, "Let's go flying". I said, "OK". So we walked out of the building and walked about five miles down the road to a little field and rented a piper cub and went flying for the afternoon. He had a pilot's license.

The classes were a little different in those days. It wasn't the way it is now. It wasn't better; it wasn't worse; it was different. And it was really different because I do compare the architecture school to a music conservatory in that way we're drilled on fundamentals over and over and over about things., The school at that point about a third of the faculty or more had a deep Beaux-Arts background. Some had actually, studied in Europe. Some had studied from Americans who were [schooled] in the Ecole de Beaux-Arts. They really knew their stuff. We had, a history teacher how knew every stone in Europe and gave amazing

history lectures. But he was basically kicked out of school because he was gay. There was an event and someone complained. In those days, gay people were victims in a terrible way. He was the most beautiful history teacher that the school had ever had. Everyone adored him. You know, regardless of sexual proclivities, he was great. Everybody loved him, Spike Priest. He was a good architect, a very talented designer. He did some beautiful gardens and houses and was a fabulous history teacher. Anyway, he taught, started the history and then when he was thrown out, other people had to step in. Finally they hired a man who was very lugubrious from Princeton named Bernard Davis. I was a teaching assistant for him. I shoved the glass slides of the pyramids through [the projector] and next came the stamp and I shoved the next slide in. History was good. We had history for four semesters. We had a lot of history. We also had a lot structural engineering. We had materials. We had studio. Each year you got more difficult and larger projects and the last projects for the last year were urban design projects with multiple buildings and ensembles. It was really quite interesting.

Learning to Draw at the Highest Level

Every Wednesday was a sketch project for the whole school. The professors would hand out an exercise at noon, a little one page mimeograph assignment with what the problem statement and the presentation requirements were. Everybody would take that and immediately go off to lunch and sit in groups in the coffee shops and try and figure out how to approach the project? We would discuss the problem over lunch and then everybody would go back and work like mad until 10:00 when you turn them in. The faculty collected

them all and they'd put them all in room and they lock the room. They were almost invariably on 20" by 30" illustration board, vertical, titled at the bottom with some scale, a given north arrow up, blah, blah, blah. You had to have a plan section and/or elevation and a perspective in any medium. Sometimes they'd tell you the medium and sometimes it would be any medium of your choice. So usually you would start in pencil and you might add wash or you'd do pen and ink or you'd do full watercolor with ink or not. They used the Beaux-Arts school method of grading; you'd get a mention, half mention or a big ding, a red X. And they would scrawl it on [your work, you know. It's your original work. And so what would happen is you'd hand them in Wednesday night and by Thursday morning the faculty would come in and at 9:00 or 10:00 into the jury room and go through them. There'd be a TA from grade 4 would be in the room with them who'd kind of hear what's going on and watch. They'd just mark in big red pencil a mention, F, or a mention ding. And then they would hang them up. They put all the dings over here and the mentions or the half-mentions there. At noon the faculty would walk out of the building and they'd go out to the faculty club or go to a bar. We'd come in to see how we did. Now the way it worked was you were required to earn, I can't remember if it was two or three points. You would get a full point for mention and a half point for a half mention and nothing for a ding. And the legend was and who knows if this is true, that you needed two or maybe it was three points by the end of the year or you were not allowed to go on to the next year, no matter how your grades were in other things. So it was another hoop. It was the acid test of get a plan, get a concept and get it down. [You had to] present it well and persuade. So, you know, sometimes you'd say, "I'm not going to do it this week. This is crazy. I've got too much going

on with my studio problem. Or I've got a structures test. I just, I'm going to bag this one." So you could do as many as you wanted. You could do them all. Nobody would dare do nothing. And so you did most of them. You did three out of four of them as they came along. I usually did OK but most people got dings all the time. By spring the people who drew the best would usually have a point and a half or so. They'd be getting close. But most people were in trouble by spring. So the faculty devised a safety net called the spring watercolor show. Over this one week you were allowed to go out and do watercolors of whatever and turn them all in. There was this big show and they hang them up and they just handed out points like candy. So it was kind of sweet. It was kind of funny. And that was the treat in spring. And by spring usually everybody could do pretty good watercolors.

Guess what we did every Friday morning? We went to the basement to this room, with sunlight streaming in, from 9:00 to 12:00 we drew from plaster casts. They were [copies] of the Parthenon freeze, maidens adjusting sandals from some bas relief. They were [casts of] horses, of ionic column volutes, or pieces of an acanthus leaf. You drew in charcoal from plaster casts from September until Christmas. You handed everything in, people marked it with a grade, A, B, C, D, E, F and put pluses and minuses on the drawing. They just wrote on your drawings. One day I remember I did a drawing that I thought boy this is really great, I've nailed it. I've done this beautiful drawing. I guess it was of a maenad Greek woman in a chiton. Anyway, it was a nice drawing in charcoal. I absolutely I thought it was a fabulous drawing. When I got it back and it was A- I was deflated. I thought A-. What does it take? So I went to the teacher, Spike Priest, who was a Beaux-Arts guy. I went to Spike and I said,

“Excuse me”. What is it about this that it’s, no, it was Whiskey Jack Sproule. It wasn’t Spike. It was Whiskey Jack. He had this very red neck and beautiful white hair. He was a very delicate man and always wore red shirts opened with a great knit tie with a square cut off at the bottom and a military belt. He stood up straight as a ramrod just like the last Roman. He was about 5 foot 3 or something. Anyway, I went up with Jack Sproule and I said, “Excuse me, professor, but, Professor Sproule; I’m not complaining, OK. This is not a complaint. I just, I’m seeking information. I did a drawing that I thought was really one of the best drawings I’ve done and I’ve noticed you’ve given me an A-. I was wondering what the difference between this and an A would be in your mind”. He said, “Oh, it’s a lovely drawing. It’s an absolutely beautiful drawing”. I said, “Oh, well thanks”. Now I was more puzzled. And he said, “But you made it look like marble. It’s plaster”. They were very, very concerned about getting your drawing skills to the highest possible level. Well, the next, winter term every Friday morning we drew from life. [There were] three months of life drawing. Mostly clothes but it didn’t matter at that point. It was just, go in and draw for three solid hours every Friday morning. And then in the spring, the weather was better and so it was outdoors. [We would draw outdoors, draw landscapes, draw the urban scene for three solid.

OK, In the second year of architecture one of the exercises in the winter quarter was something called an analytique. And an analytique was a fundamental technique at the École de Beaux-Arts It’s like a sketch problem. You were to design something simple, some architectural piece. And then you were to present it in plan, section, and elevation and have

an enlarged detail with rendered shadows etc. And you were to use graded washes and have beautiful lettering, etc. And it was explained to us how you make particular mixes and stews of pigments. If you take Prussian blue and burnt sienna and then a little bit of ultramarine and a little bit of burnt umber and then lay them as washes and at different thicknesses over each other, different pigments will settle out and depending on how much you do. So we did these huge drawings. And to do them you had to lay a stretch. Well, we had all been in watercolor classes so we all knew about laying stretches. You get the paper-soaking wet and then you put it on a board. You smooth it out and then you tack it to the board so that when it dries, it shrinks taut as a drum and that's what you do your watercolors on. [Winslow Homer and [John Singer] Sargent and all those guys worked on great stretches. And the invention of the watercolor block, which is a modern 1940's-ish thing, was a way to be able to work in the field without having to do stretches and carry big boards around. And we were all delighted because we were using mostly watercolor blocks but for the watercolor class, we had to do stretches and for this problem we had to do this big stretch. So there were some of these old-fashioned exercises. And it's a little bit, romantic, you know and a little phony to think how wonderful it was because it was, if not abusive, it was almost beside the point. But on the other hand, they were weeding us out. They were finding out who's a survivor. Who's got it? Who doesn't? In terms of a passion as well as a skill, you know. How much can they learn and who's not going to learn enough. So architecture school was for survivors.

Beaux-Arts versus Modernism

The other thing I now should say about the faculty is that if part of the faculty was this École de Beaux-Arts boot camp group, draw until you drop, present, present in any medium; the other half of the faculty were flaming Modernists. Most of them had been to Harvard or Cornell. They studied under people from the Bauhaus or a derivative Modernist. They had started under [Walter] Gropius or they worked for Mies [van der rohe] or someone like that. One of the teachers had been at the Taliesin Fellowship, and worked for Frank Lloyd Wright. So the other people were into Modernism. They wanted you to do steel, use plastic. They wanted you to try and understand leather and metal and stuff like concrete. So they were an interesting bunch, very different. Many of them had gone to school on the GI Bill and were World War II veterans. And so they were kind of a tough bunch also who kept their own council. They were hard drinking, and interesting guys.

Remembering Victor Steinbrueck

And one of them was Victor Steinbrueck, a Bauhaus trained guy who was interested in Modernism and later interested in preservation. He gave us a class and one of the things he had us do was go out into Seattle and pick a building that was in the path of the I-5 freeway and measure buildings that were going to be torn down, buildings that were historic and record them. So everybody in the class picked a building. I picked the Cal Mar Hotel, which was a wooden structure that had escaped the great Seattle fire. It started as a two-story hotel and then a third story was added with galleria walks all around like you see in western movies. And it was an SRO hotel with old-timers, bums and pensioners and vets living there. So that's the first time I was actually in a building with Skid Road guys. They had a good

place to live but not much else. They lived in a building that was about to be torn down and they were about to get kicked out. Politically that interested me, socially, architecturally and urbanistically it interested me. The devastation of that freeway [was awful]. People say that the historic preservation movement started with Pennsylvania Station. Well, that's partly true. That is the East coast press version of it. Some would say well actually it started with Williamsburg or it started with Jackson Hole. Historic preservation started in many different places from different motives with different groups. But to a lot of people I know in Chicago, in San Francisco, Seattle and Los Angeles, the preservation movement got started because of the Interstate Highway System. As long as it was racing through Iowa and Kansas and knocking down corn, no one paid attention. But when it started ripping through the core cities of America, all hell broke loose and it was a tragedy. You know, the highways when they hit the city with their standards they were a disaster. It mobilized and it politicized my class.

Also, that year the freeway (I-5) was being built. We also noticed something else going on which was called the Seattle's World Fair. It was an international exposition under construction downtown. That led to some interesting things because one of our faculty members, Victor Steinbreuck was working on a project which became the Space Needle. And Vick who is an old Bauhaus guy who is interested in modernism, designs this iconic modern structure in Seattle. It has this kind of Jetsons's top, a kind of a flying saucer top. It's really kind of interesting. And Vick was a "form first" kind of guy. He intrigued us. That project intrigued us. Minoru Yamasaki was one of the most distinguished alums from our

College of Architecture. He did a really quite interesting project at Wayne State University and the World Trade Center. [For the Seattle World's Fair] he did the Science Center. It was this kind of pre-cast concrete gothic revival. None of us knew what to think of it. So the World's Fair had a series of interesting projects. There was an international competition for a fountain that some Japanese designed. It looked like a floating mine, this big sphere with jets sticking out in all directions. Rich [Haag] did the landscape around it. And so, and then Larry Halprin was doing a fountain. So things were going on in town, starting to happen that were kind of interesting.

Remembering Richard Haag

Now in 1958, my second year of architecture school, the University of Washington changed the department name to the College of Architecture and Urban Planning. They hired Mike Wolf to set up a planning department. The Dean, Arthur P. Herman, an old Beaux-Arts guy who believed sort of in Modernism, thought that all the great schools, Harvard, Berkeley, Cornell, Michigan, the great schools of architecture, Penn, all architecture, urban design, urban planning, and they also had landscape architecture. So [if] the University of Washington was going to be one of the big boys, play at the league of Harvard, Berkeley, etc., it needed a landscape architecture. So they thought we have to hire somebody to start a department like we did [for planning with] Mike Wolf. We got him. He came here. He wrote a curriculum, hired a faculty, recruited some students, courses approved, and now we're rolling. We've got a department. Let's get somebody to do a landscape department.

At that point on the West coast, there was a very interesting thing happening in landscape architecture, which actually in some ways in my view may be the first innovative development in landscape architecture. One of the two innovative I should say, since the 18th century pastoral agricultural landscape of the English landscape garden. On the East Coast there was the ecological movement. It began in northern Europe, in Holland, Germany and in Scandinavia, before the war [World War II]. McHarg picks up on it after the war. On the west coast, in California there was something called Modernism; it had a twin sister in South America in Brazil and Argentina at the same time. There's a modernity that sets in in landscape architecture in California with the work of Thomas Church and Bob Royston and Garrett Eckbo and a whole series of other people. When I was in architecture school, they were people who were practicing in California and their work was starting to appear in *House & Garden*, *Sunset* magazine, and *Architecture Record*. It was starting to appear in various places and then a man named John Entenza brought out a new magazine in Los Angeles called *Arts and Architecture*. And *Arts and Architecture* was a very interesting and a wonderful magazine. It didn't have a long life but Entenza was very interested in Modernism, in industrial design, in fine art, sculpture and in painting and poetry. He was out looking for people [to write about] for his magazine. So he was publishing Jackson Pollack, [Mark] Rothko and [Willem] de Kooning and people like that. At the same time he was also publishing work by [Christopher] Tunnard and work by various architects. And the architects were the architects who he had commissioned to do things called Case Study Houses. They were people like Pierre Koenig, Charles Eames, and Raphael Soriano.

Well, what was going on in California was very interesting to the people in Seattle because it was Modern; it was West Coast and it was kind of like our thing as opposed to East Coast. It was West Coast Modernism as opposed to Mies van der Rohe in the Midwest and [Walter] Gropius on the East Coast. So one could turn to the work of Thornton Ladd or could turn to the work of people in California and see that there might be a way to express things in the West. So when it came time to build the Landscape Architecture department they said, "Call California".

They contacted Tommy Church in San Francisco because he was the most prominent, the most famous, the elder statesman in landscape architecture and very gracious and thoughtful person. They called him to ask him as a courtesy if he was interested in doing it. They didn't expect him to say yes. When he said no, he couldn't move to Seattle; it was not the right time in his life; they said "who do you recommend? And while he was thinking they said we hear there's this really very talented person named Lawrence Halprin. What do you think of him? Church is reported to have said, "Well he's really great. Yeah, he's very good but, you know, I think there's someone else who would be a better teacher". And they said, "Who's that"? And he said," there's this young guy named Richard Haag who worked for me and for Halprin for a while. I think Haag might be a better teacher".

So they called Rich, they hired Richard Haag to come during the summer. But that autumn when we rolled into grade 2 upstairs, there was this funny guy with these kind of thick glasses and buggy eyes and a kind of a funny, bristly mustache. He spoke oddly with this

Midwestern accent. He's supposed to invent a curriculum, supposed to figure out how to recruit some faculty, he has to get some courses approved and he has to get some students. Well, you can't do that day one.

Then he had to earn his salary somehow. So he offered to teach a landscape appreciation course of some sort and site planning to the architects. He could do crits. So they put Rich in our studio for the whole entire year. He offered this course that we all had to take and we found ourselves sitting in the auditorium looking at a screen that was about 40 feet wide. Rich was projecting full color slides he had taken with his Rolly [Roleflex] in Japan on his Fulbright. They were absolutely stunning pictures. And Rich also talked to us about ecology, about Stan White, who had been the Olmsted office. He made us read Thoreau, Loren Eiseley, and J.B. Jackson.

So Rich started telling us everything he knew and showing us slides. It was beautiful. It was this bath of pictures. You know, I can still remember some of the pictures, the images of Katsura. Part of why I remember them is there was a book that Betty Wagner our great librarian, ordered at Rich's suggestion a book by Norman Carver called *Form and Space in Japanese Architecture* I still have a copy of that book. Norm Carver had a Fulbright to Japan the same year that Rich Haag did. And they traveled together a number of times and they would stand in the same place and take the picture of the stairway with the shadow going up the steps. And so anything you could see in many of Rich's slides, you'd go in and find the black and white version in Carver's *Form and Space*. And so that book became sort of a

quasi-Bible to us and it was supposed to be about buildings but it was really about everything. It was about stones and it was about paths; it was about plants; it's about water, roofs; it was about walls; it was about all kinds of stuff. But, you know, the images in it were palpable to us. So Rich was an interesting person.

Remembering Theodore Roethke

For the last course I decided I really wanted to do something that had more to do with art but was about literature. I'd heard that there was a Pulitzer Prize winning poet back from a leave of absence. He had had a mental breakdown and had been carried away by guys in white suits. But he was back on campus and everyone said he was a wonderful and important modern poet. And I thought, I wonder if I can get in? I looked in the catalog and he taught two courses. One was a first writing class and the other one was forms of modern verse. I thought forms of modern verse sounded pretty good. I might learn something. So I managed to somehow talk my way into that class too. This is Theodore Roethke, a poet who had a huge influence on me. And Roethke walked into the room; he was carrying an armload of books. He looked around and it was standing room only. All the grad students in English all wanted to take a course from him because he was nationally famous and he was a modernist, and he was an artist. He was this kind of big guy with blubbery lips. He was a big, powerful guy who used to coach tennis when he taught at a couple of girl's schools. Anyway, Ted comes in, looks around, and almost has a nervous breakdown again with all the pressure of all these people. He was in the back in the room where he had his nervous

breakdown and was carried away. And he just dropped everything and his arms on the floor. And I thought, oh-oh, this is not going to work out so well.

But he asked us all to write about why we want to be in the course. So I wrote down something and a few days later I was in the course and most of the English majors were in awe because I think there were only 14 of us. It was an incredible experience reading modern verse from a person who was a superb poet. We had to read our Wallace Stevens and William Carlos Williams and [T.S.] Elliot and all that stuff. He really started with Yates, Hardy and Pound as the beginning of real modern verse. And we came right up through Laney Adams and Elizabeth Bishop and people who were all buddies of his, friends of his, Marianne Moore and everybody. So since he knew all these people, he just talked about them like friends and their work became very approachable and we had to read a lot. That was a great course.

My roommate, Jerry Diethelm, also managed to get in the course with me. So he had two architects. I think he was thought it was kind of fun to have people outside of English in his class. He felt he was maybe reaching someone else. And the next year after I got back from the Army, Grant Jones, who was in the class behind me, he and a couple of other guys wanted to go up in get in Roethke's course and they did.

At a certain point, Ted Roethke went over to Vick Steinbrueck's house, they lived near each other on Lake Washington, and he said, "What are you guys doing in the architecture

department? You've got some really interesting guys down there". So it was an interesting period. But also, it helped me feel that I could read anything. The point was if you want to know about something, go get it and look at it yourself. This goes back to distrusting the received wisdom that happened to me in the third grade.

Working for Rich Haag

That next year Rich Haag asked some of us to participate in projects in his office because he'd opened a practice but didn't have any employees. Every now and then he needed somebody to do some drawings. That is what you'd do if you are a young faculty member you get the students who draw best to come help for a few dollars or a few beers. Several students from my class, including Jerry Deithelm and Elaine Dale among others, we started helping Rich in his office. In the class behind me was Grant Jones and some of them started working for Rich because by then they were taking classes from Rich. And they were sitting through his slide bath.

Working for Fred Bassetti

Between my last two years of architecture school I decided I didn't want to go back to Alaska to work for the road commission. I decided I needed a job. So I called an architect who I admired and I said I'd like to come for an appointment. He said, well, actually we had a lot of people come in. So just because he was about to hang up on me I grabbed that moment. I went down the next day with a portfolio of drawings. They hired me to work on a competition project and then we won the competition and I got a job. Yeah, so the man I

had called was a man named Fred Bassetti. It was Bassetti and Morris. They were one of the two or three flagship firms in town. They were great Modernists. His father-in-law was one of the great architects of Seattle in the 30's. He studied at [the firm] Belgioioso, Peresutti and Rogers. He had been to Scandinavia. He was a student of [Walter] Gropius. He was a great architect. I love Freddy. He's still alive.

The other thing that happened that summer; it was the first FDR [Memorial] competition. Everybody I knew entered as did the entire faculty. I don't know how many hundreds of applicants there were but there were a lot. Fred Bassetti decided to do one. They did a kind of Stonehenge thing. Meanwhile Rich [Haag] decided to do one. And so he pulled a series of his students, myself, Frank James, Jerry Diethelm, Elaine Day and Herb Bloom into his office; and at nights and weekends we did Rich's FDR competition [project]. Needless to say, neither Fred nor Rich won it. However, one of Rich's buddies from Harvard was one of the five finalists. He asked Rich to help him. So the next fall and winter when we were back in architecture school, Rich was working on one of the five finalists for the FDR competition. I did all the grading for it. Frank James and I basically did the site design for it. It was an interesting scheme and similar to the one that actually won. But it got thrown out by Congress who hated it. They couldn't have a Modernist piece there on the Tidal Basin. So that was my first involvement with Washington, DC and the Tidal Basin and the idea of an abstract memorial. So even while I was in school, I was becoming aware of things which had to do with meaning and civic memory at the National level.

Post College Years

The Army

Six days after I graduated from architecture school, I was sitting at Fort Ord with my head shaved on the upper bunk taking a part an M-1 rifle and thinking what the hell am I doing here? I was in the army. I was in basic training as a GI and I was there because I had decided I didn't want to be drafted. My draft board was in Anchorage, Alaska and when my name came up and I went. I was called and I went for my physical and I was 1A. I was in good health and I went flying through all the little exams and there I was, ready to go. I thought I don't want to be drafted two years. Not me, not now. I knew too much about the military having grown up on a military base. I thought the military is not what I want to do. So I had learned that you could join the Army Reserve and only do six months active duty and then just go to some reserve meetings afterwards. What I didn't realize is that was going to be six years of meetings. That really got to be a huge drag. But anyway, that led to some other interesting adventures. So I went in the army and I was at Fort Ord and it got me to California. The only time I'd been there before was to go to the Rose Bowl or take a greyhound bus to Arizona. By then my folks had moved from Alaska to Tombstone, Arizona.

In California I was alone again, but in a crowd, again, with people from all over America. I was one of the only college kids in the unit. But on weekends I could go to San Francisco. It was fun to go to a big city. That's where I went and learned how to play bocce, you know, down by the Marina. It was hanging out in North Beach, going to City Lights bookstore, going to the Blackhawk, listening to jazz. San Francisco was a bigger city than Seattle, and it

had this strong Asian community which was a real important thing to me, because Asian art had emerged as an interest while I was in Seattle. And I spent weekends when I couldn't get into San Francisco, going into Monterey or Carmel and just poking around reading, drawing and writing. For six months that's what I did when I wasn't on active duty.

I was also ill and I was in the hospital for a month. When I got out, I ended up with a bunkmate who was one of Hoagy Carmichael's two sons. When we were discharged on the same day, we got in a convertible and we drove to LA and saw his dad; that exciting to me because his father was a legend in American music. It was great seeing him and hearing him play songs which he couldn't get recorded at that point because rock and roll and popular music had gone somewhere else. They're now jazz standards. Songs like Skylark. There was Bix Beiderbecke mouthpiece on the piano. He was the greatest jazz cornetist in history. So it was important to me that I kept meeting people who were interesting. But they kept reinforcing the importance of art in your life, of music and poetry and painting and things like that.

With my folks moving to Arizona, they moved to Tombstone for lord's sake. That says something about them, edge people. Well, my father got a different job working for the military in a different place. But it took me to the desert where I'd never been. I was perturbed by it at first. I didn't really like it but it was interesting. And it was different. And it was another environment that was very pure in some ways. And so you know what I did? I drew it. I drew many of the buildings in Tombstone. I drew some of the people. I drew

Bisee. I drew Naco. I poked around and I really looked at those mining towns and those old western towns, because they strangely enough reminded me of Alaska in a totally translated landscape. It was just interesting to me what was similar and what was different. By then, of course, I was a graduate of architecture and I was looking at the architecture with a certain interest. But I also had become interested in how things were arranged, the arrangements between the pieces.

Work in Planning

When I got out of the military, I went back to Seattle. Why did I go to Seattle? Well, I went to Seattle because I didn't know where else to go. I wasn't going to go to Tombstone. I didn't know anybody anywhere. I was unemployed but that's where the few possessions I had were. So I decided to get a job. So I went back to [Fred] Bassetti but I didn't get a job. There was a depression. One more time Seattle was out of work. Fred didn't have any work.

I did get a job as a planner designer for the Port of Seattle. Now that sounds funny. What is that, a planner designer? Well, they made up the position because when I came in for an application, they realized I didn't know anything about planning but I could draw and I probably could help them do something. They also thought I might be able to help them with reports and some other stuff. Well, as it turned out I helped them plan Shilshole Bay Marina, we did a bunch of work for the airport, and we did a plan for a cargo terminal on Harbor Island. I picked colors for all the facilities in the entire waterfront. And I picked a blue that had to be the right blue for the water tank. So oddly enough, they invented a job

not knowing what I could do and I ended up doing a lot for them. But that got me looking at the large-scale industrial layouts of things. I was somewhat familiar with the area so it was not so hard for me to do it as a beginner. That was the summer of the World's Fair. Why does that matter? Well, because the world came so I saw the folklorico, the Mexico ballet, the New York City Ballet and the Metropolitan Opera performing. I got to hear a lot of good jazz. And so I was having this funny life where I was writing at night and on the weekends, going to bars with friends and working as a planner. I started getting headaches. I'd never had headaches in my life and I realized it's because I hated my job. I really couldn't stand it. So I quit but I didn't have any money.

Exploring Different Avenues

I quit anyway and that fall I decided I would go back to school and study verse writing with Roethke and study painting with a painter that I liked at the art school. So I did. Well, by Christmas, when I showed up to take advanced verse writing, Ted was really happy. He put me in for [the job] of the [teaching assistant] TA for his class and was turned down because I wasn't a grad student and I wasn't in the English department. It was foolish on his part but we really liked each other. But one of the things about Ted that I remember was doing an exam where we were all supposed to write something and he would call you out one at a time to talk to you on the porch about your progress. So when I got out there, he said, "Olin, you've got a cigarette"? So I gave him a cigarette and we're smoking and after a minute he said, "What does poetry say to you"? And he grabbed me by the shoulders and picked me up and shook me. My feet were off the ground and I am thinking what's going?

He's a big fierce man. I was speechless, of course. He set me down and he said, "Change your life. That's what it says". I didn't know if he thinks I'm wasting my life; I'm a bad person; or it's just the message of art. Well, I finally decided it was all of the above. I needed to really get my act together, etc. But he wasn't telling me go away. He was telling me to get serious in some way. And so by the end of that term, I'd written a lot. In retrospect it probably was not that good. It wasn't that bad, but you know it was student writing. But on the other hand, I was so broke I was living on eggs and rice and not much else.

So I needed to go back to work. I rustled around and I found that Bassetti's office actually might be a possibility. There was a competition so I went and helped him with it. We won it and I stayed. And some other people came and joined the office, interesting people, one of whom was Fred Koetter. He ended up at Cornell teaching with Colin Rowe and authoring *Collage City* Later he was the Dean of the School of Architecture at Yale. Well, he came from Oregon and sat at the desk next to me. He hadn't finished his thesis at Oregon and was having trouble with it so I did all the perspectives for him. The project was a shelter for homeless on Skid Road in Portland, Oregon. How interesting, there's a theme here, people without means in cities, social equity on the one hand and the public realm. How do you explain things to people, what's the way to get your message across through graphic means?

Learning from Skid Road

Well, interestingly enough, Skid Road was going to come back in my life. A few years later after I'd moved away and come back to Seattle, I rented a room for a studio in an old hotel above a ceramics gallery on Skid Road. It was cheap. And I became interested in the community there and it was this just before or about the same time that we were starting to have the fight about the Pike Place Market. And Pioneer Square was vulnerable to redevelop. A couple of people had begun to build, buy buildings and to fix them up but the thing that interested me was that the public market was vulnerable to be torn down by the city. There were a lot of people there who were what we think of as homeless or as bums or destitute or winos and some were all of the above.

But one of the things I discovered was a bunch of them were military veterans. And I thought that's interesting, because we are going into another war. The Vietnam War is going to produce more. And it sure did, and so are the wars we are in now. We're going to produce more damaged people who will come back who won't fit in. Most are male and single. They drift around and have nowhere to go. And there are people there who didn't mind working some. Some of them couldn't work very well. Some of them could [work]. For all kinds of reasons they had broken family ties, broken community ties, but they had formed a community of their own. It was a kind of anti-community community. I found that interesting.

So I started spending time with them and I ended up finally documenting and writing about them. It became an anti-planning track. It wasn't Jane Jacobs. It was something else. It is

actually about how these are people who have a right to exist in a community where for the most part they are harmless. They have some serious medical problems; for some it's alcohol; for some it is substance abuse. Not all of them. A lot of them are just indigent for one reason or another. And some of them are wonderful people. Many of them are probably. So I spent a lot of time around Indians and Eskimos and all sorts of people.

I found myself interested in the disadvantaged and in their needs and their social needs. But I wasn't a social scientist and I wasn't a missionary. I was interested in the city and their right to exist. [I was interested] in the fact that the city needed to have everybody in it and that if you smashed Skid Road, it would be like homogenized milk. You can have all the cream in one place or you can smash it and you'll have a little bit in every neighborhood. And that's what happens in places that try to tear down Skid Road. They'd go all over the city. And if you have a Skid Road, then you have to figure out how to make this a humane place that has the social services that are needed. And you try and find ways to bring health and well-being to people without pushing them around like vegetables.

So I didn't really know what to do about it but I knew what not to do. And what not to do was not knock down all the Victorian buildings and try and wish the people would all go away. And the suburban people from Bellevue and south of Seattle and north of Seattle they're frightened of people who aren't like them, so they wanted to get rid of the [the public] market.

I argued along with Vick Steinbrueck and others that the market was a low cost, regional low cost shopping center for an awful lot of people, the bulk of who are not homeless but are not rich. There were no real grocery stores downtown or in the center of the city and the market I felt was a vital place that served not only the poor and the middle class and urban residents, but I also felt that it maintained agriculture close to the city.

So I saw saving the market and saving the farmland near the city as being equally related things. So my, strangely enough, as I became involved in urban issues, I began to see the relationship between the center of a community and its perimeter and the region it's in. I began to look at it in ecological terms.

One of the things that Rich [Haag] had done was to get us all to reading a lot of ecology. Although it was a little fashionable in the 60's, there is such a thing as human ecology but there was also ethnology and behavioral studies were coming. Konrad Lorenz and a bunch of people were publishing things about the relationship between people and other animals and we behave like other animals. So behavioral studies from the biological science were beginning to be applied and looked to from people in art and design and planning. And my whole generation was very interested in that. We were interested in the relationships between people as a hominid, you know, we're gregarious primates. And so Skid Row was really interesting to me, as was the public market, as being very fundamental in a society as a piece of a larger ecology. And that's how I was looking at it. I didn't have answers but I

could see a situation I felt more clearly than my colleagues or some of the citizens. And I wanted to get that word out.

Lessons from Rich Haag

OLIN: Well, I was in and out of Rich Haag's office but never a regular employee. I did get some money from him for various times. But I liked to work on stuff there because I had friends there and I liked Rich. Rich was an inspiring teacher in ways that are hard to pin down because Rich basically wanted us all to have an ecological point of view, to understand ecology and a sense that we are all part of nature. We're not separate from nature ever. We're always in nature. So that's lesson one. Lesson two was he introduced us to J.B. Jackson and the concept that a lot of the environment albeit not consciously designed as a composition, ends up de facto as an arrangement of parts. It has value or meaning through the arrival of things, the departure of things and the evolution of things. Certain combinations can end up being very rich and very sustaining and fulfilling. What we call them cultural landscapes. And so that was a take away from Rich. And we all wanted to design everything but there are a lot of things that were wonderful that weren't designed. We needed to appreciate when we were doing design that some things can be undone or underdone. You don't have to do everything. Don't use up all the moves. Don't preempt everything. If there's a problem, in my view, based on that point of view with say some of [Larry] Halprin's work was that he used all the moves. It is the problem with Nicollet {Mall}. There was nothing left for anybody else to do. The city couldn't come and add anything or

move anything. It was all built in, every wriggle and every tchotcke, every bench, every lamp, every pot, everything. He just, he used it all up. It's like all the oxygen.

Rich was not passive at all. He was very devious and very controlling in some ways but in other ways he was very open, sending things in motion and leaving things open ended. He knew that you can't control it all. Allowing others to make their mark or move things or come in and add to something was a strategy of Rich's. Rich also it's hard to say, you know. It's kind of like having a Zen master, part of the teaching is through non-teaching. It's a non-striving that is a very difficult thing to explain, since we're all a bunch of strivers and designers or real strivers. But Rich had a very subversive way of approaching things. He would almost never go at anything straight at it. He would come at it from a side or if he wanted to get you to think of something, he would do something else so that you would think of it. He wouldn't tell you what to think. Although he would tell you what was important or what mattered to him. He would talk about life and, you know, he was totally unafraid of talking about important things. He was unafraid to talk about sex, birth, death, you know, things like that, emotions. He was unafraid of the obvious. Now that seems a bit clumsy but sometimes the obvious is sitting in the sun when it's hot, sit in the shade when it's hot, sit in the, you know, sun when it's cold. You know, don't sit on something that feels terrible. I mean the obvious stuff like that.

And his use of plants was very interesting. I didn't know beans about plants and I still am probably one of the weaker people about horticulture that you'll meet who's had anything

like a career in landscape architecture. But I love them. I just don't know as much as I wish I did because my education had been so backwards. I did everything the wrong way. But Rich came from a strong [horticultural] background and he would use plants in several ways. He would use them partly to structure a space, to organize it spatially. He would use them to stimulate you somehow, visually, olfactory, some way. He would stimulate you with their color, a combination of their texture. But he would also keep it sort of simple but there would be a richness by the selection of the few things and he always was interested in what it might have as a relationship to his context as habitat and he loved the idea very early on, even when I was a student I think I heard him talk about the edible landscape, the notion that why can't we use plants that make food.

The notion that things are decorative bothered him. Well, that was something that bothered modern architects, that the idea if you had a great structure, the structure was its own decoration. The filigree of a truss makes a pattern and it can be quite beautiful just as trees have beautiful textures and patterns. Take a look at the vegetation of the fruit and the leaves. So fall in love with the world not your drawing, that's what he used to tell me. It's about what the drawing is about. He would write on the board, make love to the earth.

It was the hippies before hippies. Rich raised rabbits and he had a bunch of kids. He was a father figure to many of us in a kind of beautiful horrible way that some fathers are because on the one hand, he loved us; he wanted us to succeed. On the other hand, he'd, you know, the minute someone would go off and start their own office, he would take umbrage. It was

kind of like [Larry] Halprin in that way. He couldn't stand it when the heads got too high but, you know, he loved them and raised them himself.

From time to time in the past I have used a phrase, the Sons of Rich. And what I meant by that was, there were a bunch of guys, who were students in architecture in the University of Washington Architecture program who Rich had contact with. He had them working in and out of his office. And an interesting number of them, probably six or seven, all ended up going back to Harvard to get MLAs, and eventually some ended up, like my roommate, Jerry Diethelm, chairman of architecture at Arizona State, and then at Oregon for many years. There was Bob Hanna. There was Frank James. I was probably the only one that didn't go get an MLA out of that crowd. But that's another story.

It was because I felt, why would you go to grad school when work is what it's all about? The whole point of this study is to have us go to work. But interestingly enough, many of us, like Grant Jones, Frank James, Don Sakuma and I had this idea that somehow if we could all get back together in the Northwest, we could start this Northwest school of landscape architecture. [It would be kind of] like what the Californians had done around the Bay Area, that sort of thing. But it sort of never quite happened that way. Although it's very clear, if you go to the Northwest today, you'll see a lot of work by a lot of people, some of whom were Rich's students, and some of whom weren't, that came out of an aesthetic and an ethic that was being developed and incubated in Rich's office. And those of us who left, like Bob Hanna, Frank Lockhart and me, who ended up in London, and Frank James, who ended

up back in Boston in Sasaki's office, took things we got from Rich with us and applied them in other places in different ways.

Reflecting on Rich Haag and His Work at Gas Work Park

One of his most important projects was the Gas Works. It brings up a lot of Rich's methodology and ideas. I guess I probably did the first drawing of Gas Works Park. But it was nothing like what [the project] it turned out for Action Better City. It was an AIA project in Seattle in 1967. The AIA Chapter President took a bunch of young architects, most of my classmates and friends and said, "these professional organizations ought to do something creative instead of just worrying about their own union". They spent a large part of the year thinking of projects that should be built in Seattle. I was living in New York at the time. I had left architecture. I dropped out. I couldn't stand it anymore. They called and asked if I would come to Seattle and help them do some drawings for ABC, Action for a Better City. They ended up proposing a series of projects, West Lake Park, Waterfront Park, the park at the gas works, a rails to trails thing. They proposed a whole series of public improvements around the city with changes in downtown zoning for mixed use and residential.

They needed to put together the report and they asked me to come to Seattle to help them produce it. So I flew back to Seattle and I helped put together an animated film with a filmmaker called *What's so Great about Seattle?* Fred and the committee invited all the wealthy people and the business community to a big meal at the Olympic Hotel where they rolled this thing out. Basically they were proposing a series of public works for the city and

two years later a bond issue actually passed for almost all of them. All but one of them is now built, believe it or not. In that plan there was a proposal for a park at Pioneer Square.

There were many other things [that happened] including something with the old gas works [in Seattle]. Now we all loved the gas works because for the spring watercolor shows, we would go over and paint the gas works. We used to go climb on it in the afterhours. The architects proposed it be a park so I did a drawing of it with this lawn coming down to the water and people sitting on the lawn looking toward Seattle and the Space Needle or something like that.

It was identifiably the gas works at Lake Union but a kind of pastoral version. It was an image of a park. The bond issue passed and then they did an RFP for designers and Rich got the job. They were going to name it after a prominent City Council woman who had died. It was a big deal and everybody was sort of happy about it.

Rich began to work on it. And in his inimitable fashion, he never proposed tearing down the gas works but he never said anything about leaving them either. He just started having community meetings for the community to give him a program. He led them like Halprin into a “we want this; we want that, we want a place to play, we want a place to picnic”. He got the community on his side. And as he moved forward, he began to do some things with the project.

I had moved back to Seattle by this time. This is now 1969, and we were about to get in a big fight over the market. I'm living in a cabin that Ted Roethke lived in when he died. All this is going on. I'm up to my ears in Pacific Northwestisms and politics about the market.

While he [Rich Haag] was working on the park, the city made a move to demolish a gasometer. It was a beautiful structure on Lake Union right behind the gas works. They were going to tear it down and Rich came to me and said, "We've got to do something. They're going to tear down the gasometer". I said, oh god, what? So Rich asked me to do something. So one weekend on Bainbridge Island, I started doing drawings of how to reuse structures at the gasworks. I started drawing on a piece of white butcher paper and I drew through the weekend. The scroll was like 12 feet long full of ideas. Using the place as a kind of jungle gym, doing a camera obscura in it, having theater, like Shakespeare in the park, just making up stuff you, you know. What could you do with this frame and these things? And so I just did that.

And then his photographs of the gas works were used at the Henry Gallery. It was the first art in public spaces exhibition that I know of in this country, certainly on the west coast. And so we had this one gallery with this long drawing of mine and Rich's photographs. The gallery owner there was very hip about the environment and this stuff. And so I wasn't in his [Rich's] office, but he and I were trying to figure out how the hell we save this thing. I then did some other things.

And the net result of it is that as he moved forward with the park, he never ever talked about tearing it down but he began to worry about the toxicity of what's in it. Well, he knew so much about plants. In his office he always had all these reports from the Department of Agriculture and stuff like that. We'd kind of poke around in them. Rich was very well-versed in plant science. He thought maybe you could take some of the heavy metals and some of the stuff from the tars, the pollutants from the gas works and take them out with tomato [plants]. Don't eat the tomatoes but the plant would extract the pollutants. And so he began, he basically began doing experimental phytoremediation on the site while he was still supposedly planning it with the community.

When he went public with the drawings of the park, He finally had to go public with the drawings. He had me do some drawings of the design, pictures of the kids climbing on the machinery, people on the cracking tars. So I did sketches for him that he still has somewhere. So I was involved always sort of on the edge helping him but he was the brains behind everything. He did it. I didn't think of any of it really.

But the interesting thing was when he finally came out with it and the city realized they weren't going to tear down the gas works, they were dumbfounded and the family was offended. They wanted to sue. They wanted their mother's name taken off the park, etc, which they did do. Myrtle Edwards Park is out overlooking the bay somewhere near Madrona.

What did I learn from Rich? I learned that there are some things you have to be careful to not tell people, not because you're so deceitful, but because if they know, they'll wreck your plan before you have a chance to develop it. They'll say no before they understand it or before you flushed the idea out.

Working in New York in the 1960s

A Move to New York City

OLIN: In 1964, I was working at Fred Bassetti's; I had married a classmate from Ted Roethke's class, who was an English graduate student. We both decided we had to get out of Seattle. It was just driving us nuts. So we decided to move to New York, you know, young people move to the big city to the bright lights. So we got a car, put everything we owned in it and drove to New York. I didn't have a job and so I went around trying to find one. The first couple of offices I went to had just laid everybody off or were out of work.

Working for Edward Barnes

I was about to be dismissed from Ed Barnes' office after having had an interview with his business manager, when I met Ed [Barnes] at the elevator. He was "ooh what's this"? And Dick Moger said to him, "oh, Ed, this is a young man who wanted to show us his work. He does really nice drawings. He's from Alaska." And he said, "Ooh Alaska, can I see your work"? We went back in and he looked at the drawings and they decided to hire me for a competition they were doing. There's that theme, "a competition. Hire him to get the competition". We won the competition. It was for the New England Merchants National

Bank, which is right next to Boston City Hall on the Boston massacre site. So there I was now working for Ed.

My wife got a job at Random House in the college division. Well, first she was a graduate student at New York University [NYU] and then she went to work for Random House; and so we immediately fell into a crowd of people who were working at Time Life or for Newsweek magazine or at ad agencies.

And what happened was that Ed was running a clearinghouse of talent. It was a very good office. The only offices that really mattered in town at that moment were our office, Marcel Breuer's office, Philip Johnson's office and SOM [Skidmore Owings & Merrill]. We were it. Well, [there also was the offices of] Kelly and Gruzen and Willis Conklin a little bit. Those were the firms. People moved from office to office and we all knew each other and partied together. But after a few years I decided to quit. The world was going to hell. Vietnam was happening. Everything was crazy. But when I decided to drop out, it was right after [John] Lindsay was elected [Mayor]. A couple of my friends, Charles Gwathmey, Jack Robertson, and another guy all had worked on Lindsay's campaign and they all ended up working for Midtown Manhattan Planning, Lower Manhattan Planning. Alex Cooper was there. He ended up Chairman of the Planning Commission. And so the guys I was working with all went to teach at Columbia in Urban Design and in Architecture. They all went into the Lindsay administration and I dropped out. Charlie Gwathmey went off on his own and started an office with Bobby Siegel. But we'd all been close and we'd all worked together.

But at Ed's, I learned was how to work at another level of intensity than [we did in] Seattle. We were putting buildings together like pieces of cabinet work. They were just beautiful but they were so simple. They were kind of like Rich [Haag] in a way that they appeared so effortless and they took so much effort to produce. But when they were done, they were just beautiful. They were almost like Shaker houses; they were very, very gorgeous. We did a bunch of fresher, fun camps, Jack and I and Percy Keck I guess, we did the Wye Island camp down in Delmarva. We did a lot of work. We cranked out the stuff. But I was not just burnt out from working hard, I decided I really I could do architecture, and I loved architecture but in my case, I wasn't sure I should be doing architecture. It's kind of like a bear riding a bicycle. Bears can ride bicycles. The question is should bears ride bicycles, you know. I felt it was too much. They were objects and the objects, beautiful as they were, good as I was at it and good as my friends were, I was more interested in necklaces than the beads. I was more interested in how you put it all together. I was interested in the ensemble. And because of my background out West, in the northwest in Alaska, I really was interested in nature.

Participating in the Museum of Modern Art Exhibition - *The New City*

And so in again in 1967, the year I did that thing in Seattle about Action for Better City we young architects were thinking that we should be making up projects, we shouldn't wait for them to come in the door. We should say what should happen in the city. So Arthur Drexler at the Museum of Modern Art decided to have an exhibition called *The New City* and to

bring young faculty members and architecture students from various schools to have an exhibition. So he had Cornell, Princeton, Columbia, I don't know if there was another. But [there was] Michael Graves and Peter Eisenman from Princeton, my old friend Fred Koetter and Colin Rowe from Cornell and Jack Robertson and Alex Cooper. I knew all these people. And so in 1967, I had this wall full of drawings in the Museum of Modern Art of the new city and stuff that we were planning for Park Avenue, which was large scale urban design infrastructure. We were going cover the railroad with this big structure on which we're going to hang housing on and this park along the top, kind of like the Highline. And then [we were going] to have all these shops along the bottom. We were going to rebuild Harlem basically with this spine of new development above the New York Central railroad. [It was a] pretty interesting project. You know, Richard Meier, I can't remember what he did. It was about the time that Peter and others started the Institute.

A friend of mine was building a house in the Catskills and so we all went up in the weekend to help to put up sheetrock. It was Hugh Hardy. So I met, I knew all these young people at a certain point in my life before I moved back to Seattle. They had a key role in my life later.

Lessons from Central Park

And one of the things that happened when I moved to New York was I discovered what Rich [Haag] had been talking about [when he discussed] Olmsted. There it was-Central Park. Well, one of the last projects I worked on in Ed's office was a competition for a polo ring in Central Park. I don't know if you know about this but Steven Courier, who was married to

one of the Whitney girls wanted to give the city of New York money for a covered indoor polo ring in Central Park. It would be on the 89th street transverse, just south of the transverse where that pinetum is, at the top of the great oval where all those ball fields are. That was the site. [The site was] a police pistol range and also a stable. It is still a pistol range; I don't think the stables are there anymore. And so what happened was it was invited competition for Kelly and Gruzen and Philip Johnson, our office and [Marcel] Breuer's office. One of the things that fell upon me was to do the site plan, which meant drawing all of Central Park. I had been looking at Central Park and walking through it for about two years at that point. Rich [Haag] had come to town and I'd given him a walk through the whole park. And when my friends who'd gone to Harvard to study landscape architecture would come and stay with me and I would take them for a walk through all of Central Park from top to bottom. [We would] take half a day and walk and look at other parks. I would take the Staten Island ferry. And I liked it I'd read a little bit about Olmsted because Rich had made us learn a little bit about [Frederick Law] Olmsted. There was anniversary and students at Harvard had put out a little horizontal 8½" by 11" book on Olmsted, . And so there was emerging interest in him when I did that competition. I drew every path, every road, every lake, every hill, and every rock in ink on mylar. It was this huge drawing. And it was interesting to do. It was kind of like one of those old Bauhaus exercises we did when I was in school. We'd draw everything. You'd learn something about it.

We were so broke when I quit Ed [Barnes] office. We didn't have enough money to leave town. We wanted to move back to the West Coast but we couldn't afford it. We didn't

know what to do. My wife was still working at Random House. So we got a rent-controlled apartment at 102nd and Central Park West facing the park, right where that little pond is which is the beginning of the lock that goes north to Harlem Mere. So I used to go, so first I used to know the park from the south. I used to walk across the park. Then I moved to the north end of the park. That was the year Columbia blew up and they [the students] occupied the place and the police came and it was really crazy. There were drugs everywhere. There were riots. Newark was on fire. The world was going crazy.

Rich [Haag] came through. He was working on Gas Works Park and he was taking people to Europe to see things like Tivoli [Gardens]. He and I went for a long walk one day in Central Park and he was saying, "Oh look, there's an osage orange. Those guys really knew their plants." So he and I were going around looking at the park and he noticed it was so eroded. [He said,] they're wearing it out; they're robbing it to death. It's like a child's teddy bear. The stuffing's coming out. It's so sad." Well, that was about the time that Betsy Rogers, then Betsy Barlow, was publishing *Frederick Olmsted's New York* and starting the Central Park Conservancy.

The park was absolutely at its lowest ebb. We walked through it and we were talking about it. I said, looking at the approach ramps on all the overpasses, "don't you think [the erosion is] because the grading was too steep"? And he said, "Yeah, it's partly that. But he said, "The other thing is all the shrubs were not long-lasting plants. And because of this business of fear and crime, they have [the City] has taken all the understory [plants] out and

everything's washing away. He said, "There are two or three reasons why this park is falling apart". I thought that's very interesting. They love it to death. They're wearing it out. They've taken stuff out for fear of crime, increased the erosion, short life plants. I mean you go for a walk with Rich, you learn a lot in a hurry. And so I found Central Park to be kind of my primer on public landscape design at a certain scale of ambition.

Discovering the Museum of Modern Art

And so being in New York during that period, setting aside the poets, the craziness, the move out to Amagansett, painting, living in a cabin [my life was full], meeting another batch of interesting people, who led me to England later and everything. You know, one thing leads to another, in everybody's life. In this case, New York was a wonderful period for me. The second month I was in New York, I got a membership to the Museum of Modern Art because we were living at 53rd and 3rd and I could just walk down 53rd and use it for my club. You could go in and use the café, you could use the library and I could go to the movies for free on the weekends. I would wander around the galleries as much as I wanted, just for the price of an annual membership. It was fabulous. They had jazz concerts in the garden. The garden had just been redone. That was interesting because I found it to be the most beautiful outdoor room in America. I thought, "God, this thing is really good, you know".

And it was, the Bob Zion redo [of the garden] that was finished in about 1963-64, was a very good project. Philip Johnson had done the second addition to the museum, the black steel

piece with the upper raised terrace where the George Rickey sculpture was. I just loved that garden. I really looked at it and later I wrote an article about the rise and fall of a Modern landscape. About how it's been ruined and it ain't what it was. But it was Mies van der Rohe's best unbuilt project. You know, there's the things you think of that you don't get to do and somebody else does. [Philip] Johnson built a homage to Mies there that really goes back to all of his urban houses from the 20's and 30's and to a series of his writings and projects. And if you don't know the articles, it's a good article. I published in JDH's journal a few years back. So anyway, I kind of memorized that garden and I memorized Central Park.

Learning from Other Landscape Architects

The only landscape architects that I knew of at that time in New York were Bob Zion, you know, later published his book on trees in cities. There was a young guy, Peter Roland in Rye, New York who was doing some work with Ed on a house for one of the Rockefellers. He seemed very bright and charming, you know, and knew all this stuff and he had been to Harvard and he was kind of very suave; and he still is bright, charming, and suave, just not as youthful as he was. But he was a dear. And I'm very fond of Peter. So he did some work with us.

I think someone asked me at one point did I meet Dan Kiley. I didn't meet Dan then but I knew about him because the Miller House and some other work done at the GM Tech Center. I knew of Dan's work but I didn't know him. And he wasn't working with us at the

time. He worked with Ed but not on projects when I was in the office or with my projects.

The only other landscape architect I knew of was Paul Friedberg.

And Paul Friedberg had built a Jacob Reese playground. It stunned us all because it was supposedly done for children. There were these pyramids of timbers and rocks, sand and there was climbing frames. It was an architectonic landscape that the kids loved. It kind of reminded you of things vaguely of architecture and archeological but it was also just kind of pure forms put together in a very interesting way. Kids played on it in the daytime and at night, young architects from around town all went down and climbed on it at night. We just thought it was really cool. And so between Olmsted, Friedberg and Zion they were a pretty good influence on me. I was just drinking the Kool-aid. I was just taking it up, like mother's milk.

Working on the West Coast in the 1970s

Encountering Ian McHarg at the University of Washington

OLIN: Well, after I came back from England in 1970, Rich asked me to teach at the University of Washington and in the spring of 1971, I was teaching a studio with Grant Jones. We gave the studio [the problem of] Bainbridge Island; they were to do the whole island. I liked that, because I had lived there. Grant had a house out there. We both knew the island first hand. But also, it had a boundary. There was an actual territorial edge.

That year, a person I had never heard of, called Ian McHarg, was asked to do the John Dance lectures at the University of Washington. They are a series of memorial lectures, sort of like the Norton Lectures at Harvard. He came that spring to give these lectures, and he didn't know what to do with himself during the day. So he would come over the school and poke around, and he would come into our studio. Grant had studied with Ian, of course. And one of the things that happened was that Ian hung out in the studio and talked about everything. The lectures were basically the chapters from *Design with Nature*. He had just completed the manuscript and sent off to the Natural History Press. And we had him in the studio. I found him to be electrifying and exciting, and he managed to pull together things that I had been interested in. And although I never was and still am not a great planner, I have an enormous appreciation for it. But it's not what I do.

A Return to Seattle and Frank Bassetti's Office

OLIN: I had been in and out of architecture already, once or twice. I came out of architecture school and I went into the army. I came back. I couldn't get a job in architecture. I was in planning. Then I got a job in architecture and then I dropped out and I went to study painting and poetry. Then I was poor so I needed money so I went back to architecture. Because I can draw, I can always get a job. And if you draw well, you can get a pretty job. And so what happened was I would come and go and each time at a higher level of shall I say commitment and practice in terms of intensity. And each time I would find some reason why it seemed I shouldn't do it. And each time it seemed like a different reason. Once was headaches. Once I wished I was a painter. So I kept leaving [architecture]

for yet another reason. But I didn't know what I was leaving for. Each time it was an exploration.

In 1969, my wife, my first wife and I break up. She moves to Norway, to Oslo, to work for the University of Oslo Press. And I stay on in the cabin and I'm so broke, I need to do something. There was a project to do a zoo in Seattle and there were three teams competing for the prize. Two of them asked me to be on their team. One of them was the architect {Fred] Bassetti. The other is Sakuma James, Don Sakuma and Frank James with Vick Steinbreuck. We put together this huge omnibus team of experts of all sorts, including people from the Biology Department at the University. And then the third team was a single guy from Bellingham, Washington named George Bartlett. He had worked for Sven Markelius in Sweden. He had been around, as campus planner at Bellingham and was a very interesting odd, attractive, and wonderful guy. And so I was on two teams. Not the Bartlett one. George [Bartlett] gets the job. And the day after he gets the job, he calls me and asked if I would come and help him. So for some reason I was a go-to person at that moment in Seattle for odd projects that had to do with community, environment or whatever.

And we had just been coming through the Pike Place Market fight. I was vice president of Friends of the Market. Vick was president of Friends of the Market. We sued the city. We stopped them in court. We got people in Washington to help us file the papers for the National Register [of Historic Places] nomination. I did all the fieldwork over a weekend and Vick wrote the narrative and we sent it in. We got it [listed] on the National Register while

they were still having hearings. We came in during the hearings and announce that the Market was listed and the City Council was dumbfounded. They can't believe it. That forces a special election, and the net result of that is we save the Market and get half of the City Council and the Mayor thrown out of office. It was really an amazing triumph of the small people. We had both newspapers and a couple television stations opposing us, daily. But we won. And so I was kind of tired from all that.

I took on the zoo with George and I had to set up an office for him. I got some space and some desks and found some young people and hired them. But what happened was that we didn't know anything about zoos, and we came to the conclusion that the zoo didn't either. So we decided that what we needed to do was to put on an International Conference on the Future of Zoo Design as a way to educate our client and the community. So we did. So we got Gary Player from South Africa; we got a guy from Canada; we got the head of the San Diego Zoo; and we got people from the St. Louis Zoo. We brought in people from basically all over and we had this retreat on Hood Canal. We had these all day meetings about what zoos were, what they are today, where they're going and the science of it. It was stunning. And basically out of it we came up with biogeographically physiographic regions. Zoo's needed to put like species together into associated groups. They have to be careful about predator-prey. So we basically set up an environmental agenda to design the zoo. And that led to all kinds of problems.

But at a certain point I was so worn out by it and so worn out by the Market fight and by other things that I decided I needed a break. So I said, "I needed to take a rest". And George said, "You can't. I need you". And then I said, "I quit". He said, "You can't quit". I said, "I have to quit".

I had gotten a letter from a friend in England who said, we're over here. We've rented a place near Oxford. Come for the summer. It would be great fun. So what happened was I told George, "I quit. I'm going to England for the summer". He says, "Well, that's awful but if you're going to England, there are a couple of zoos I'd like you to go to". I said, "George, you don't understand. I quit. I'm not working for you anymore, right? I'm out of here". He said, "yeah, but couldn't you go to Chester? There's a really great walkthrough thing where you can get in with the hippo and the birds and stuff. I want you to see how that works. At Longleat, they have giraffes and the yaks out in the Capability Brown landscape. I want you to go see that". I thought, "Oh George, this is great. All right, if I'm there, I'll see them".

Experiences Abroad

A Trip to England Teaches Landscape Lessons

So I flew off to England and I went down to Buckland. The day I arrived I met the woman who became my next wife. At sundown we walked out into an 18th century English landscape that was so beautiful. The deer were in the park and the sun was setting over the hills in the distance, you know, the Cotswold. There were 200 year old oak trees and a meadow and skylarks were singing. And I just thought, "Oh my god, this is beautiful". And

this woman I was with said, “Yeah, it’s one of the Capability Brown landscapes, you know, when they designed all this stuff”. I said, “Yeah, you’re right. I think this is a design. Interesting it’s a design. This house is kind of beautiful, too. It seems to go with the place”. It was this beautiful Bath stone, golden house in the Palladian style. The combination knocked me out. I’ve written about it. I wrote a book later about it called *Across the Open Field* where I describe that day and subsequent days. But that was when I thought, I need to know more about this stuff. This landscape design is really pretty good stuff. I’d been doing the zoo where I was trying to design a habitat that made sense ecologically and physiographically, where the animals could exhibit their full behavior. That had gotten me into designing the barriers, the shelters, the trees, the plants, and everything. So I was already well down that rabbit hole. And I’d been doing site designs since I worked for the highway department doing site surveys, bridges etc. I knew how to do all that stuff. So it was the most natural thing in the world for me to end up thinking about landscape architecture.

That summer I spent the whole summer buying books about English gardens and landscape and buying books about the history of that stuff. I bought my first books of Geoffrey Jellicoe’s about landscape design and ideas. And when I came back at the end of summer, Grant Jones asked me if I would join him in teaching a studio at the University of Washington. Then Rich asked me if I’d teach drawing. So I ended up teaching landscape architects, a studio about site planning, and landscape architecture, and landscape

architects about drawing landscape that year. And so I kind of just wandered in sideways. That's how I got to landscape architecture. It wasn't the plan.

So one of the things that occurred to me when I went to England was to look at the 18th century landscapes which had been viewed as gardens and pleasure places was to see what their role might be in terms of community productivity, sociology and ecology. What was their other role in holding the fabric of the countryside together? How did they work? Because I sensed that they really were more than just ornament. Well, some of them were actually less productive than I wished they were.

One of the ideas we had in those days, in the 60's or early 70's, was that things that are ecologically more complex were stable. We had this idea about stability. It turns out there is no such thing. We now know that the Greeks were right. It's all in flux. And there is no stable state. And that some things tend to be more resilient and more stable than others. You know, that monocultures are highly unstable whether they're urban or rural.

Opportunities to Study Abroad

OLIN: I decided to apply to the American Academy in Rome. I was interested in cities and I thought there are some cities that have survived for thousands of years that are still deemed to be great beautiful, lovable. They're full of people who are not rich. They are full of people who are working class, ordinary, who are middle class, who live there and have a full life and yet all of these other people want to go visit them. So what is that about? What

have they got right in the layering through time that has made them good environments for human beings? It can't all be the buildings because a lot of the buildings are old and falling down and have lots of problems. And so it's not just that they have great monuments and fabulous churches; it must be something about the city. What is it? So I applied to the American Academy of Rome. I wanted to go look at Rome. The cities of Paris and London have proved through the centuries to enhance life and support life and it's not just for rich people that it works. It works for people with less means. So I wanted to go see that.

I also applied to the Guggenheim Foundation to go work on what I thought of as a primer on the English landscape. I thought I wanted to produce a short little book for layman which would be kind of nice little easy read with some beautiful drawings, similar to the *Skid Road* book.

And my approach to the [American] Academy was that if this city, [Rome], has been so livable for long and our cities are falling apart, what do we do? You know, what can I learn from that? I mentioned in the interview that I live in Seattle. Right now Seattle is at the same moment in its evolution that London was at in the 19th century and Paris was in the 17th century and Rome in the 16th century. Seattle now exists with an economy and a history and yet it's outgrown its ability to function well. It's entering an era of new technologies, transportation, communication, and economics. And every one of the cities I just mentioned had an overlay and another scale in different systems that allowed it to go

on for another couple centuries because they overlaid it. Each one of those cities had a whole form and yet has formed itself into the next version of itself.

American cities need to do that now. We can't go on just saying, "oh, this doesn't work" and just tear everything down and then build something *denovo*. We need to figure out how to do overlay and insertions and infill. We need to know how to edit them so that we can add and subtract to them. And that's what I said in the interview for the Rome prize. Mike Rapuano was on the jury. And they sent me. It was wonderful. It changed my life again and again for the better as I took on more information, more people, [more] ideas and things that have been helpful.

Well, I had the good fortune, having applied to all these things; I was dumbfounded when I won them all. I found out within a week. Which one should I do? I really wanted to go to Rome but I also knew I needed to finish [the project in] England. If I could start the Guggenheim in England and then go to Rome I could go back and finish up [in England] the next summer. So I called and talked to them and they said, "Yeah, sure, that sounds great".

So that May, I went off to England with my new wife whom I had met in England in 1970.

This is 1972. I went to England with my wife and young daughter Jessica, who was five months old. We landed in England and I spent the summer in the country reading, writing, drawing, walking, studying, and working on the English landscape book. So and at the end of summer, we got in the car and we drove down through France and we arrived in Rome.

Embracing the American Academy in Rome Experience

When I get to Rome and they give me a studio. The landscape studio was on the top floor in a corner. It was great and it had a view of the Alban hills. It was gorgeous. But there was a painter who wanted my studio because she thought those were the views she had come to Rome to paint. So the net result was I traded her and got a better studio looking toward the Vatican City. It has been the landscape studio ever since. It's studio six. It's a great room. It's a fabulous room.

So what's good about Rome? Well, "A", the city. I've always been interested in history to some degree. But the thing about the [American] Academy is there is the physical place, the world outside the door, and then there's the community within the Academy. It is a community of people who are highly divergent, widely divergent, there are composers, writers, sculptors, painters, film makers, architects, landscape architects, classicists, philologists, archaeologists, and post-classical and humanists. There are all kinds of people there and they're all there doing independent work. There are no classes. And the thing about the Academy is whatever you think you're going to do when you go there; you almost always do something else after you're there, because [when you applied] you didn't know quite what to ask for. In the case of people working on post-doctoral research, they usually do their projects. But for people in the Arts when you get there that's when you discover what you should have asked for [something] that you didn't know about. And so everybody changes what they do or shifts [their focus] to some degree. The Academy expects that. They know that happens. They know people who are going there are going there because they want to change their life in an important way.

In my case, I went there because I thought I needed to try and become the person that people thought I was. I felt like a complete illiterate. I felt that I had a very poor education in the humanities and in the fine arts; although I had been doing nothing but thinking about the fine arts for 20 years, but it was totally disorganized. I felt a complete fraud as a landscape architect. And at one point, I remember saying to another fellow “oh man, I don’t know how I even got here. I’m such a fraud”. And he said, “not you, too”. Because almost everybody there felt [the same], how did I get this, because everybody else here is so smart. There was a sense that the other people knew more about what they were doing. But there were two or three structured things about the Academy. One was meals. Meals were scheduled for regular times and the whole community ate together. And even though it is cliquish and clannish, and people tend to sort themselves out like sheep and goats and pick friends and all that sort of stuff, it still means you can actually make friends across fields and with other groups. The pairings and mixings were pretty damn interesting and lively. The food was terrible in those days. It’s great now but it was bad then and that gave us a common enemy. So we had common meals with people of diverse fields who are all very full of themselves and excited to talk about their work and who want to argue with each other about stuff. Then there was another part.

There were some senior people usually distinguished visiting scholars. One of the people when I was a Fellow was a man named Frank Brown. He had been a Director of the Academy and was in charge of the Classical School. And Frank was the last of the Romans.

He stood up like a ramrod, looked at you very carefully, taught at Yale and spoke a very clipped way. He understood everything. He spoke like a book. He had written the book on Roman architecture for Braziller. He knew everybody and everything and every stone. He would give a talk once a week with illustrations and then we would follow in a van that day or another day and go out to some site. So I walked the Roman Forum with Frank Brown several times. I've been out to all these sites. It is unbelievable to go to Hadrian's Villa with Frank Brown. When we get out there the head of the excavation comes out to meet us. So there are walks and talks with people who take you to sites and interpret them and they come alive in front of your eyes. And suddenly history begins to sound kind of understandable. And you begin to see how they were building and thinking and organizing themselves. It's history at its best. So that's one thing that happens. And that's just in one field. You do it with the art historians. They take you into buildings and you talk. And they talk about what they know. There are visiting Fellows. There are shop talks. But then you're in and out of each other's studios. So there is a stimulus but it's the education the way it was before it all became kind of post-graduate study and organized curricula in great research universities. It's learning first-hand on the spot from people who know more about it than anyone else. And that is absolutely amazing. And so what happened was by accident, I recreated the 18th century Grand Tour in my own life by going to Europe for two years and walking around and looking at things. The same way Goethe did and the way other people did historically. I was going into people's houses, going up and down the coast and learning about agriculture. For me I was very interested in the agriculture of antiquity and its relationship to urbanism. Now Bill MacDonald had just published his first volume on the

architecture of the Roman Empire and in it he basically takes on infrastructure of the urbanization of Rome. He wrote the classic book on the Pantheon, which we all have and love. Anyway, so there were people like Spiro Kostof coming through. He was interested in third Rome, Mussolini and the fascist architecture and all this. But he also knew about the whole history of architecture in the world and has written some great textbooks. He is a great professor from [University of California] Berkeley. But one of the things that happened was that these people, I learned so much about painting by going to Venice with Titian scholars. Going to churches and museums and standing in front of the paintings and looking at them with them and thinking about them. I learned about Borromini by going to churches by Borromini with the person who wrote the book and hearing about it.

And so Rome for me was like the ultimate busman's holiday. You had a Fellowship to live somewhere where you could learn about so much that was all interrelated. Although each one of these experts didn't necessarily chase the interrelations between them, that was your job. But it wasn't travel as it is today, which is kind of tourism. It was travel as it was at an earlier period when you move slower and you had to take into account the lives of the people in the place you were. It is the difference between travel in the past, on a camel through Saudi Arabia, and jetting into a place looking at it and jetting out today. That's not travel. Travel is a slow thing that has a different essence in terms of how you take up information from the people in a place. By dropping out and stepping away from some manic career path, I had the very good fortune of following thoughts to places and topics that seemed interesting to me and that seemed related to other things I cared about. So it

led me the gardens and landscape of the early empire, the 1st century, to Hadrian and all that stuff. It also led me to the history of western agriculture. It led me to poking around in a lot of different small towns, medium size towns, bigger ones and cities and starting to look at what was common and what was different. It was the ability to sort typologies and urban spaces and architecture.

So thinking about] the Academy [experience], it takes you a while to sort through it and some people never quite recover from that experience. I made about as much as a person can probably can. I now really have a strong passion feeling for classical antiquity, its literature, its architecture, its aspirations, its problems. But I'm not interested in classical revival and I'm not interested in making faux classic buildings.

And one of the things I got out of it was stone. I love building in stone. And there are a lot of reasons. I grew up in a landscape in Alaska where there is a lot of good stone. But [in Alaska] they didn't really build with it. But when I got to Europe, they were building with stone beautifully. And what [I think] is so nice about the Museum of Modern Art garden is it's a beautiful stone. It's from Vermont. The rectangles, have you looked at them? They're beautiful. And the way Johnson laid them out is the way Mies laid them out; which is based upon the golden section, sort of but it's not quite right. It's like ah-uh. You've got get it right. You know, just a couple of risers. One more would be better, but that's what he could afford and that's what he did.

Working in London

Well, near the end of my period at the American Academy at Rome, I was quite broke, because the Guggenheim money was spent, and the Academy stipends were very small at that time. I had a wife and a child. We had an apartment. She decided we should have a nanny to help look after the child so she could have a life with the Fellows, too. This was very smart, but I was burning through more [money] than we had, and I needed to do something. So through her mother, who was a magistrate in Britain, Lady Nugent, I was offered a job with Derek Lovejoy in London. I was still at the Academy. I worked out a deal where I would fly to London one week a month to work in Derek's office and then go back to the Academy and be a Fellow. I was supplementing my income, basically, by working part time, which was really unheard of and probably not proper, but we were desperate for money and there was not a more loyal Fellow than me. But anyway, I started working at Derek's probably six months before my fellowship was up. When it ended in June, we moved to England, I was able to work there, because I was married to a British national and I had a daughter who had a British passport. Derek Lovejoy was one of the larger firms in Britain at that time and won a lot of awards. He had an office in Manchester and London sort of a corporate office based on a model that Sasaki and others had. I had great projects. I was the youngest person in the office, and I was leading projects in Scotland, the Isle of Jersey, in London and all around. But something happened. My wife left and ran off with a friend and announced that we weren't going to be together anymore. I was a little depressed. It started to rain like mad. And there I was in London thinking, why am I in this

country? How did I immigrate to a country, where I don't even have a place to live, and what am I doing?

Teaching

University of Pennsylvania

How I Came to Teach at Penn

I got a phone call from Peter Shephard, who was the Dean of what was then the School of Fine Arts at the University of Pennsylvania [Penn] which had, which is where Lou Kahn was. It was a fabulous school. It was one of the great design schools in the world. I get a call from the dean of the school saying, can I come over and have a drink and talk to you about the possibility of teaching at Penn. I'm like, what? How can this be? So I went over, and we sat in his garden at [Chalk] Farm, I guess it was, and after a few martinis, he said, "you know, we should call Bob Hanna, because it was his idea". And I said, "Oh, I see how it is." Because I thought, how did you get my name? Why me out of a hat. And of course, Bob Hanna was an old acquaintance of mine from the University of Washington. He was two classes ahead of me and had worked for Rich [Haag], he worked for the BRA, the Boston Redevelopment Authority and was a buddy of [Don] Sakuma and [Frank] James. And Bob had suggested it because was teaching at the University of Pennsylvania. He had met Ian McHarg when Ian was on a sabbatical and decided to teach a studio at his old alma mater, Harvard. And so Bob Hanna and been a student of Ian McHarg before he finished his MLA at Harvard. This barely computes. And so Ian had some good planners and good natural and social scientists, but he wanted some real designers, and so he thought of Bob Hanna and

invited him down to teach. And Bob was a big success. He had a big teaching studio. He was a very good designer. He knew architecture, landscape architecture, urban design and had a pretty good pedigree. So Ian hired Bob and after a couple of years he came to the attention of Peter Shephard.

Peter Shephard had decided to do something about the undergraduate design major at Penn. He decided to shake it up and reorganize it and put Bob in charge of it. Bob realized he needed some new, fresh teachers for design. And casting around he thought who could I get that would fit in with my vision of design, the environment, architecture and landscape architecture and understand that they're really just an extension of the same thing; but at the same time they would also understand art and architecture and sociology? And he thought of me. And so when he found me I was absolutely dumbfounded. I could go back to the [United] States with a job. So that's how I got to Penn.

Remembrances of Early Years

Well, I arrived at Penn in October of 1974. Bob pitched in for me the first month of teaching. I found myself in a studio with Carol Franklin, who later became one of the founders of Andropogon [Landscape Architecture]. We ended up team teaching for eight years straight in the undergraduate program. I began teaching with her and also with an architect named Lyman Perry, who was a wonderful man. We were in the last year of the three year program of the DOE. The first year the students went around and drew with Frank Kawasaki, the second year they were in a basic design course, run by Sasha Nebinski,

which was very much like a Bauhaus course. We organized the course around two semesters. The fall semester was around design and nature, and the spring semester was design for man. We emphasized projects that had to do with ecology and the natural physical environment in the fall, and in the spring, we emphasized projects that had to do with dwelling, community and urbanization. Projects [ranged] from camps in the wilderness to day care centers, and urban sites. It was a wonderful course. Our students were very smart. They worked enormously hard. We had bright kids at Penn. And many of them, I'm happy to say, all went off to either architecture or landscape architecture and programs in prominent schools. We gave them a good grounding, and they just flew through their graduate studies.

The teaching was great. At that point, with [Ian] McHarg, we probably had the most exciting department of landscape architecture in the world. We had all these natural scientists, three social scientists and we people who were interested in all sorts of things and we had a lot of research money. We were doing very lively projects. The problem was there weren't very many designers on the faculty. I mean, there was Bob Hanna, myself, Carol Franklin and Narendra Juneja. But Narendra had wandered into really being this remarkable resource analyst who basically ran all the projects that are in *Design with Nature* and produced all the graphics for it. Carol worked on many of those projects, too. And so the projects you see in *Design with Nature*, although they were done at Wallace, McHarg, Roberts and Todd, all the methodology, all the overlay systems, and all the research and everything was really coming

out of the department at Penn. And people were going back and forth between the two offices.

So I was kind of an odd duck, because I wasn't a planner. I didn't know anything about overlay analysis, although you can pick it up in a matter of weeks, which we all did. So the first year here was interesting, because while I was teaching design studio, I was also sitting in on juries of all this other stuff and reading and talking to people. So I got quite an education in ecological analysis and planning in the first two years while teaching. I was basically also studying and learning without overtly saying so. So that coming on top of Rome, was really pretty rich.

The people were great, and the students, of course, were as usual, amazing. Now, when I think about Penn in those days, one of my roles was basically not an antidote, but a supplement to all this science. They were really shaky on art. But landscape architecture just was ascendant, and still is. It has gone through several waves since for various reasons.

But my role was as a physical designer who knew how to make things, but who had fallen in love with large scale landscapes and now knew a lot about ecology and knew a lot about Europe's, the history of European landscape as well as American landscape. I was sort of the person, who knew about the art history of landscape architecture and about the art of it. I knew about paintings and sculpture and literature, which was not what the rest of the faculty, was really very strong at. So I wound up teaching history and teaching drawing.

And to teach drawing, I would show them great drawings through time. I would make them look at great draftsmen and look at paintings, like the evolution of perspective and things like that. And so it's hard to say it so bluntly, but basically I was brought in as the kind of humanist art supplement to a department very heavy on science. In a way, that was very effective, and the students had access to a lot.

And my second year at Penn, something interesting happened. Narendra Juneja had a heart attack, so they needed somebody to teach a graduate landscape studio. So they asked me. Well, I wasn't so sure I could do that. The next thing that happened was, architecture department said that they were short a person. They asked if I could participate in an architecture studio. And I said, OK. So I ended up teaching with Steve Eisenhower and Allan Greenberg, and we had people like Jim Timberlake and his students. It was interesting. So I was teaching architecture, landscape architecture and the undergraduate landscape and the environment [courses], all at the same time. It was that year that I sort of stopped writing the English book; because I was just too busy teaching.

So I arrived to teach at Penn and I began giving urban park problems. Bob taught a course that had to do with a townhouse gardens, and very nuts and bolts things in the city. The third year options, they weren't options then, they were required studios, those projects were always bigger. We did all of Gettysburg, the battle field and the town. We'd start the semester at the grand scale, and then we'd come down and end up demanding to see

paving details and construction plots at a fine grain. So we were trying to turn out not full-fledged practitioners, but people who understood the whole range and push them through a sequence, a very calculated sequence of what we called the DRB projects. In the first year of the national resource planning and analysis, they did communities and different sites along the Delaware River basin. And then we moved them through a series of things, of ascending scale, and we took on regional and sub regional projects in the last year. And as time passed, I began to give more and more urban subjects.

For three years in a row I taught a studio on Camden, New Jersey. It was a big project on a flooded site on the edge of town next to the high school where the boxer Ezra Charles [went]. Basically [it was] a tough black neighborhood in Camden. But Setha Lowe an anthropologist went with the students, into the houses where they did stuff. So we were really working in the city.

That said, after a few years of that, I began to feel that there was a problem because we weren't doing collaborative studios with other departments. So we began making overtures to the architecture department. But just about the time that happened, I left and went to Harvard. I didn't get to do those joint studios until later after I came back from Harvard.

Embracing New Directions

OLIN: Well, at Penn, we think of ourselves as a place where we should explore where the field should go and how it should improve itself. We are very interested in helping forge

positive directions for the field of landscape architecture. So we're interested in not just teaching people to go practice landscape architecture but we are interested in the field itself. How we can advance the field. So we have gone through a series of different periods with different personnel at the helm; we have purposely said, let's go in this direction, or said, this is an area that we should look at next. So with Ian [McHarg], we really mined the scientific methods, overlay methods and natural sciences.] We found great interest in the social aspect of landscape architecture, and we had a brief period with Anne [Spirn] where we pushed in that direction. But she had difficulty following Ian. But with JDH,[John Dixon Hunt] who I helped bring from DO [Dumbarton Oaks], several of us who were on the search committee decided that we really needed to work on the humanist background of landscape architecture and focus again on its intellectual roots. So we did that, in spades. We really did push it that way. We weren't interested in producing dozens of PhDs. We were interested in thinking about how you would apply it in the field with projects, with research, with your teaching methods and with your practice. What does it have to do with history? And [we were not thinking of it] as strictly as preservationists, but as the next layer of something. Because one of the things that interested me about the overlay method was that while I was in Rome, you could see all the layers. The layering was interesting to me. And when I saw that Ian was using the overlay method to go down into things, I thought, why can't you use the overlay method to build new layers and use it as a design tool to grow up, layering on instead of digging deep. And so that intrigued me. So with John Dixon Hunt, we explored this other direction. After that, with Jim [Corner] who was one of our students, one of my students, our deep interest in cities. It was so obvious with his

background from Britain, like Niall Kirkwood, one of our students, who became the chair at Harvard. The thing about them was they came from great old British cities to study with McHarg true believers of the environment and got hooked. But they also saw that there was more to it. It's like everybody argues with Dad, and Ian was Dad. So it was clear that the missing hole in the picture was the city. So landscape urbanism was incubated in the Department under Jim. And of course they're tried to brand it at Harvard. But who should they go with? They went with a person from Penn. Charles Waldheim and half the faculty there are all from our Department. So the thing is, the question is, what's next? Well, we're actually talking about that right now.

Reflecting on Ian McHarg and Ecological Planning

BIRNBAUM: There was momentum. All eyes were on Penn and McHarg. And I'm just curious what that meant, being there at that time.

OLIN: Well, starting in 1974, for probably the next four or five years at least, there was no question we felt at Penn that we were the center of the landscape architecture universe. Whether that was true or not, there was a lot of attention by the press. We were getting enormous interest on the part of other faculties and schools who wanted our students. They wanted people who could teach our methods. We were out on the edge, exploring methods of how to do landscape architectural planning in a way that was replicable, defensible and fundable. As Ian used to say, "It shouldn't be like ladies' hats". It's not about I wish, I want and impulse. It should be rational. He believed in art. He believed in

intuition. But he also felt that in the hands of ignorant people, it was dangerous. He was basically interested in the safety net. He wanted the profession to have a minimum standard of responsibility and of care for the environment, above which one would find art and beauty and drama. He really was a romantic. And if you knew Ian and you had been out to his farm with his pigs and sheep watched him in his bare feet, watering his plants for hours. He loved to stand out there with a hose chain smoking with his hose watering plants. He was such a complicated and wonderful man. We had huge arguments with him in the faculty meetings, because we realized that these methods were still crude. And we realized they were still sort of simplistic. We were just on the brink of computers, and we were still doing everything by hand in an analog way, and it was difficult. We were working with air photos, and we were working with overlays. And there were two or three aspects to that that got us. We knew that we were getting pretty good at the natural science data, the ability to manipulate it, apply values to it and synthesize it; but we've, we knew that there was a problem with social issues. And when you hit the cities, it all fell apart. You couldn't apply it in the cities. He wanted the social scientists to help him come up with a cook book recipe and they were resisting. They were trying to give methods and help us with understanding and perception and subtlety. Bob and Narendra, and Carol and I, we fought with Ian about determinism in social issues. We felt that there was a slippery slope to death squads and whatever. As far as we were concerned, the rich people were still going to be on the hill, and the poor people were still going to be at the bottom in the muck, if we followed some of the systems that he wanted to try to apply to the social science and the social side of the methodology. And so we had these enormous rows. And they were

great. Dan Rose and Setha Lowe arrived the year I did. We had Yehudi Cohen from Rutgers. He was sort of godfather of our social science. So we had three cultural anthropologists on the faculty. It was a very exciting moment. But because you couldn't bottle it, we didn't believe in a formula. We did believe in research. We believed in methods of exploration and investigation. But like Halprin, with his taking part workshops, asking people what they want doesn't necessarily give them what is best for them by quite a few measures. There are some serious problems with that. But just letting a designer do what he wants without interacting with the actual user and having real information, of course, is equally dangerous. And [that results in] some of the terrible architecture that we've had in cities.

Returning to the University of Pennsylvania

I came back to Philadelphia [after Harvard] because that's where the practice was, and the practice needed me, really needed me. I took a year off from teaching. I thought, oh, I can't do this anymore, teaching full time, practicing full time, traveling everywhere. I just can't do it. I've got to settle down and spend some time with my family, because by then I had a son, a newborn. So I basically put my energy back into the firm. And that really helped the partnership really get stable again. And then Penn said, "Well, since you're in town, could you come give a class"? I said, "Well, maybe just a theory class". So I started with theory, and that's when I had Jim Corner as a student. And he was this cranky, argumentative student who was, you know, the brightest sparkle in that class. He was clearly on his way to somewhere, and it was very good. We pushed the students; I mean we pushed that class along. It was a good class. But after another year, they said, "well, actually, it would be

more valuable if you do a studio". So I said, "I'll do a studio, but only if it's a collaborative studio".

I started back at doing studios at Penn, and continued to teach theory. And what happened were two things. We had a search, and I was on the search committee, and we brought John Dixon Hunt. We gave the Philadelphia Navy Yard, as a joint studio with architecture and with Wharton people who were coming in. And again we used the city as a laboratory. We gave that a couple of years in a row. Then I team taught with Marion Weiss for a while, and we brought in other partners. But the notion of joint studios with architecture was cared for and pursued until architecture in its fumbling around decided they couldn't do them, because they could work it out with their schedule. But they actually didn't like doing them. They wanted to corral their students in. It was a sign of weakness on the part of architecture, that the retreated again. And you know, at my age I have to tell it like it is.

Harvard

Experiences as Chairman of Harvard Landscape Architecture Department

BIRNBAUM: *So let's go to Harvard.*

OLIN: Well, when I went on to Harvard in 1982, I followed Pete Walker, and a natural scientist who was an interim chair. Pete got there sort of the same way I did. Pete [Walker] originally started teaching at Harvard in urban design. And after he was in urban design for a while, Chuck Harris stepped down as chairman, and they asked Pete to be the chair. He was a very good chairman, very dynamic. He attracted a lot of students. It was a period

when he was going through a self-reinvention, and met Martha [Schwartz], and lots of things happened. But his practice took off in such a way that he felt that he couldn't do a good job at both, so he stepped down.

And so Fred Smith, who was a natural scientist at Harvard, was hired on a Rockefeller Grant. He was hired partly to try and combat what was going on at Penn. Penn was so profoundly moving things with natural science that Harvard felt out of it. And so they got the Rockefeller fellow in, and gave him some money to endow a chair in the natural sciences and ecology. And so they hired Fred Smith, who was one of the people who actually changed ecology. He brought math, high mathematics and statistics into ecology and changed it forever. He was a brilliant person, a little bit of an odd duck, but a sweet man, and [someone] who really loved landscape architects and landscape architecture. He gave field courses and took them out and walked them around and showed them natural secession and association and stuff like that. But he was there briefly, and then went back to Woods Hole. He belonged there in many ways, because he didn't really fit in the department. Nice. Everybody loved him, including me. He was the interim chair when I turned him down.

But then when I finally did say yes, I got there, and I realized that part of why I was there was because I was from Penn, and they really wanted me to give them some chops in terms of [it] being a more serious place that did more than form, and was beyond the Sasaki legacy. They wanted to get past this problem solving and form giving. And I agreed. I felt,

the problem with the landscape department was the lack of content. Well so, we immediately launched a search for a natural scientist. And I ended up getting one of the very best you could ever get. I got Richard Foreman. Who, God, I wish we had had him at Penn. Foreman is the person, of course, who wrote *Landscape Ecology*. We had a difficult search. I had to find an ecologist who could survive in a design school and not have the scientific world run away from him and have him lose all his PhD students. So it took a brave person to come into a design school as a natural scientist. And some people never got Richard. So I felt, OK, I've got that in place, but we need a little bit more content on soils geology and hydrology. We managed to solve that with a kind of temporary appointment.

But I felt that they still were lacking in theory, there was no theoretical basis in anything they were doing. And I had the good fortune to have in the architecture program some young colleagues, one of whom was Jorge Silvetti. Also there was a guy who was drifting around getting a PhD in architecture, who was a Lichtenstein nut and interested in urban design, named John Whiteman. So the three of us put together a course: it was me for landscape architecture, Jorge for architecture, and John Whiteman for theoretical urban design and planning. And we team taught a theory course that all the architects and all the landscape architects had to have their first semester, period, it was about big ideas, and it was about theory. It was also about the trajectory of literature and thought in those fields. That was great, except I felt unqualified to teach the course. I realized that, well, my years in Rome, I sort of knew where I should go and what I should read. But I realized I hadn't read

enough of Kant and Hegel and I was sort of a little shaky on post enlightenment Western thought, so I'd better get up to speed.

So I realized that I was brought to Harvard to do two things. I was brought to Harvard to try and give landscape architecture some depth like Penn [University of Pennsylvania] in terms of its theory, in both the natural and social sciences, but also in the humanities. Now, Harvard thinks of itself as being a bastion of the humanities in America. You know, it started as a divinity school. It was only under [James Bryant] Conant that they ended being a great research university and pushing sciences. But I mean, [Charles William] Elliot started it and Conant really turned it into the great research engine that it is [today].

But the Graduate School of Design was still a kind of Bauhaus derivative of an Ecole de Beaux Arts school. They moved out of Robinson Hall with its plaster casts, and into Gund Hall, which was blindingly modern. It is hated by most people at Harvard and by people in the region and by some of the students and faculty. But I liked Gund Hall a lot. The only problem with it was when you came out of your office and went into what you thought would be the elevator; you ended up in the bathroom and vice versa. But anyway, back to Harvard.

Why I went. Yeah, there's a little bit of ambition, but also curiosity. I thought it would be another growth spurt for me and it was. I met great people who became dear friends and colleagues. I had fabulous students who are still dear friends and colleagues now. [The

Harvard experience was] the people, my favorite bookstores and it was also a couple of bars that we went to.

The people from lit [literature] were pretty good. They had great poets hanging around. But it's a hot house, and some people call it a snake pit. But the truth of the matter is everyone thinks they're special. And it's a little hard to take at times. But that pressure forced everyone to work very hard.

And the students at Harvard, I would say they were either "A"s or "D"s. We had no "B"s. There were some people that came into [the program], and you would say to yourself, how did this person get admitted? But everybody else- they were smart.

But what they didn't know about the world was amazing. How little they knew about natural science or social science. They might know a lot about art history, but to actually, nobody knew much about landscape history, because there really wasn't much.

So I thought, oh, God, I've got to build up the history. They don't have any history here.

And so, I had a few people, who did I have first? I can't remember. But then I had Melanie Simo come in for a year, and I brought Betty MacDougall from DO [Dumbarton Oaks]. She commuted from Washington, DC to teach. The students hated her. But the faculty kind of dug her. She was a hard drinking scholar of the old school. And I loved Betty. So I tried to bring history, real history and I tried to get real theory into the program. I tried to get ideas and everything. And so out of that we had Anita Berrizbeitia, Julie Bargmann here, we just brought them all [to the program].

[We had] lots of great students who have gone off to do wonderful things, but [they went off] with ideas. So we tried to engage ideas. I learned so much. I learned so much from my colleagues, from some of the students and just from the preparation I had to do in order to deal with it. Because like [I did at] the American Academy in Rome, I felt like I was a fraud. Here I was teaching students who have more degrees than I do. I had never studied landscape architecture. I'm at the school that invented the teaching of it [landscape architecture]. I just felt totally inadequate. So most people who are inadequate, they either run for the exits, or they overcompensate. So I overcompensated. I just piled it on in terms of what I attempted.

I started joint studios with architecture, some of which died after I left, and now they're trying to do them again. I got to students working on landscape in cities. Among other things, Joe Passonneau and I gave a studio in Downtown Boston that was a, basically it was urban design and landscape architecture joint studio. We said, OK, the purpose of this is to look at transportation, potentials and other ideas in Downtown Boston and see what they leverage in terms of civic change and community development and improvement. Well, out of that came proposals for bridges and tunnels around the Boston Harbor, [proposals for] taking down the Callahan Expressway and covering it and doing parks. A whole series of things came out of that studio. And of course we invited Fred Salvucci and people from Transportation and the state to jury [the work]. So the notion was this, can we use these

studios to leverage things in the region and show how design is a generator of not just social change, but civic improvement and societal benefit?

[We gave the] Back Bay Fens as a studio. It was sort of like, what do you do with the Fens? It was ruined by the Corp of Engineers; it hasn't functioned properly since 1910 or something. And then there's were all these institutions that are supposed to come there, some are there, but nothing else happened, they all turned their back on it. And so what do you do with this? So that was a really interesting studio. It had to do with development and infill and transformation of the Back Bay Fens. What of Olmsted could you restore? What do you do with this area with the phragmites? [What do you do this area] that is the meeting ground for gays, but is under threat from crime and whiteies from South Boston? What do you do with all this stuff? And I would say that some results came from it, as a matter of fact. There were transportation changes and changes at the university.

So the notion at Harvard was, how do I take studios and show this school that they could be collaborative studios and show them how they could leverage things in the great cities and bring our disciplines to bear on them? It kind of wore me out. But it was great. And after a while I said, "I got to tell you, I can't go on. You've got to get somebody else". And so I left at the end of four years. I had a five year appointment, and I just said I can't do it. So they again had an interim chair, and then another chair after a search.

Practice

Developing the LAMP Plan for University of Pennsylvania

In the fall of 1976, Ian McHarg accosted the President, Martin Meyerson, and told him the landscape was terrible at Penn. That it was falling apart and it was an embarrassment for a great university and they should do something about it. [McHarg] said his faculty could straighten it out, if only given a chance. Meyerson was so taken aback. So he went to Peter Shephard, who was a gentle, thoughtful [man] but also a skillful politician, architect, planner, landscape architect, writer, philosopher and artist. And he [Meyerson] went to Peter and said, "I guess we should do something about the landscape. If I gave you a little bit of money, McHarg says that your faculty could actually do a plan. Is that true"? And Peter said, "oh, sure. They're very good. Of course we could. We'd love to do it". So Myerson said, "Fine". And what happened was, Shephard came to us with Ian, and he said, "You have to do a plan for the university, and I can lead it, blah, blah, blah. OK"? And so everybody said "yes". And McHarg said, "Well, I'll stay out of the way".

So what happened was, we organized a team of people including Bob Hanna, Narendra Juneja, who was somewhat back after his heart attack, Carol Franklin, her husband, Colin Franklin, who was working at McHarg, Wallace, Roberts and Todd, Leslie Sauer, who was a friend of theirs, and Rolf Sauer, who was an architect, and myself. We were the team. And we hired some students to do the leg work, color the maps and do stuff like that, and go out and do field work. And so that was really pretty interesting. Two weeks after the team got organized, we set up a studio. Bob Hanna went off to Rome on a Rome Prize and Peter Shephard went to England for the summer and put me in charge. Well, being in charge of

Carol, Colin, Leslie and Rolf- nobody can be in charge of that crowd. Everybody was a leader. But that's OK. We managed to produce a plan.

And one of the things, while I was working on it, Bob Hanna came back from Rome later in the year, and he and Setha Lowe and some students did a social survey of all the students. They went out and mapped where students were walking. They got their preferences and got all sorts of things about what was good, what was wrong [with the campus]. So we actually did a pretty decent plan, and that next spring, we published the first Landscape Architecture Master Plan what we called LAMP, L-A-M-P, for University of Pennsylvania. It was a 25-year plan, with a series of projects. And most of the drawings in the book are either mine or Colin Franklin's. We sort of split up the tasks, because we both could draw well with pen and everybody else was feeding us stuff.

Bob Hanna worked out the path widths. He did a series of beautiful plans. Bob could do incredible diagrams and he could make these pithy, beautiful, well, resolved, formally attractive but coherent and understandable diagrams. Rolf and Leslie wrote most of the text. Anyway, we produced this plan, and lo and behold, we built it out quicker than 25 years. We had time to do the second 25 year plan in a few years. And about the year 2000, we did the second one, here in the [Olin] office. And so that first landscape plan was done before any of us had an office; but out of [that experience] came [the offices of] Andropogon and Hanna/Olin.

Joe Passonneau and the Washington DC Project

When I first got here [to Philadelphia], I didn't have a house or a place [to live] so I was sleeping on Bob Hanna's couch in his apartment here in Center City. And the fourth day I was back in the country, I got a phone call from Joe Passonneau. He had been the Dean at Washington and St. Louis for quite a few years. And I said, "I have friends who studied under you and admire you greatly. Why are you calling me"? He said, "Well, I have an interesting problem here in Washington, DC that I'm working on. I want an architect who can draw well and likes cities, knows something about trees and natural process and Harry Cobb suggested that I call you." I had met Harry Cobb one afternoon at the American Academy in Rome. We had lunch. He was interested in what I was doing and came up to my studio and saw my drawings of the English landscape and Skid Road. He left that afternoon on a plane to come back to the States and two years later, he recommended me to Joe. There's a talent scout for you.

So anyway, I went down to see Joe about the project. It was a central Washington transportation and urban design project. I began working on it part time for him. And for the next two years, I was basically his partner and helped him work on projects he was doing for the National Endowment for the Arts [NEA] on urban transportation. We were trying to figure out how to recover large portions of the L'Enfant plan for civic purpose and pedestrian life and that sort of thing in the core of Washington, DC. These were grants from the National Endowment for the Arts [NEA] and from Urban Mass Transportation Authority [UMTA]. They were pretty interesting studies. I am very pleased that one of the ones is now

actually underway. That project is the streetcar on K Street. I can show you the drawings I did in 1975 for it. But that sort of planning was way ahead of time, and no one was ready for it. [The country] was still really stuck on petroleum and that sort of thing and Detroit still had a death grip on the Transportation Department. I began teaching at Penn, but commuting to Washington, DC, right off the boat, pretty much. The work evolved into urban landscape infrastructure projects. That said [the work] was off and on. In the summer of '75 and summer of '76, I actually lived in Washington, DC, and then I commuted back to Philadelphia to do various odds and ends.

Creating the Hanna/Olin Firm

OLIN: In the spring of 1976, I got a call from I.M. Pei's office that a partner named Harry Cobb would like me to help them work on a proposal for a transportation and urban design project in Denver, Colorado. Because I had been doing that sort of work with Joe [Passonneau] in Washington, I went up and spent the weekend and we knocked out a great proposal with great ideas. One of the ideas I had was to set up a couple of nurseries along the 27 miles of track so that when we pulled the trees out from the nurseries and put them along the alignment as it was getting built, and those nurseries would devolve into regional parks, and they'd be part of the kiss and ride town centers. Anyway, it was a great idea. That project was the result of the transportation plan that Wallace, McHarg, Roberts and Todd had done for the Denver for their regional transportation district. And a young man named Dennis McGlade had worked on that. But the Nixon Administration canceled the project. We were scheduled to go for an interview, and they canceled the project that

spring, because they said, Denver didn't need rail. They said, buy buses. Detroit was still driving transportation policy. So that was that.

Well, in the fall, Harry Cobb, the partner at Pei's office called and said he would like me to consult on a corporate project he had in New Jersey. So I went and looked at it, it was a soy bean field near Princeton. I came up with some ideas, it was Johnson and Johnson [J&J] baby products' headquarters. They already had a diaper plant on the lot; it was out in these farm fields north of Princeton. Well, we presented it to the president and his executive team at J&J, and it was a huge success. And in fact, at the lunch, they teased Harry about how they thought the landscaping was great, but maybe the building would look better if you painted it red like barns or something. He was, of course, showing them white buildings. He took the ribbing, but I thought he was kind of like . . . So after they all left, and we had a wrap up, he walked me to the elevator and said, "How exciting it was". And I said, "yeah, Harry. I'm really happy for you". And he said, "well, aren't you excited to do the project"? I said, "Harry, what are you talking about? I don't even have an office"? He said, "Well, get an office". I got on the elevator and went down to Penn Station and came back to Philadelphia, and thought, now what do I do? So the next day after studio, I went and found Bob [Hanna] in the studio I said, "Do you want to go have a drink"? And he said, "oh, yeah", because at the end of studios we often felt like going to have a drink. It was like 6:30 or 7:00 at night and so we went over to La Tourasse which was an unofficial faculty club at Penn in those days, at least it was for our department. We were sitting there having a drink, and I said, "you know, Bob how teachers are always saying, oh, I'd always like to

practice, but it's so hard to get a job, because if you don't have an office, they don't give you the work"? And he said, "Yeah, I know. It's really awful". And I said, "Well, guess what. I got a job". He said, "What"? And I said, "it's a 150 acres for a corporate headquarters with I.M. Pei's office. He said, "You're kidding". And I said, "Do you want to do it"? He said, "What do you mean"? I said, "Do you want to help me do this project? I can't do this by myself. I don't even have a license in anything. I'm just a guy. And you at least have a license in architecture and in [the state of] Pennsylvania. And so he said, "Yeah". So that night, Hanna Olin was formed. That's how it started.

So we start working on that project and we did it on his living room floor and at my kitchen table through the winter. By spring, we had hired some students to help us. They were working at nights and on weekends. We had sort of a schematic design, and we were trying to figure out how we were going to do this project. And we knew we needed an office. So we started looking for space and by late May we had found a space over a bar by Market Street and 19th across from the Greyhound Bus station.

It was kind of low rent and was pretty dingy. We hired one of my students who had been a carpenter, to put up the dry wall and we designed some benches and tables based on those we had had in our studios in Rome. And we were rolling, we had an office, and we hired some more students. And by mid-summer, we realized we really had a problem. The students were great, and we could do a bunch of things but we didn't know enough about plants. We were really pretty shaky for a landscape team. At the time I was seeing a young woman who had recently graduated and had been one of our students who later became

my wife. She was working at Wallace, McHarg, Roberts and Todd. We had offered her a job, and she wisely said no. , I had lunch with her and I was talking to her about, how I didn't know what we're going to do. We really needed somebody who knows something about plants. And she said, "Well, there's this really nice guy in our office who's working on boulevard parks in the Baltimore Inner Harbor. And she said, I think he's from Illinois. His name is Dennis McGlade". So a few weeks later, Dennis joined us, and Dennis has been with us ever since. He's the oldest partner here. He was from Chicago. He'd gone to University of Illinois, which is where, Rich Haag and [Hideo] Sasaki and Stuart Dawson went. An awful lot of people went to Illinois, because of Stan White who was teaching there. He had come out of the Olmsted office. It was a very solid school. So Dennis brought to us depth of understanding and knowledge about plants and horticulture. He also was a veteran of Wallace, McHarg, Roberts and Todd which was really helpful, too. That spring, two or three things happened. The Denver Transit Mall came back, and we won the project.

Hanna/Olin Grows

And then an architect from New York named Lou Davis, who was on the board of overseers for the Graduate School of Fine Arts at Penn, had seen the LAMP master plan that we'd done, and he had a competition he asked Bob and I if we would work on it. It was for a research center the Atlantic Richfield Chemical Company, outside of Philadelphia. And another firm he was working with was Llewellyn Davies. And a partner in Llewellyn Davies was Jack Robertson, who used to work at Ed Barnes' office with me in the '60s in New York. So we did that competition, and we won it. We beat Skidmore Owings and Merrill [SOM],

Philip Johnson and {Marcel] Breuer. So we had that project. So by the late summer of '77, we had the Denver Transit Mall, we had Johnson and Johnson Baby Products and we had Arco going on. And then lo and behold, Harry came back and said, "Well, we've got the international headquarters for Johnson and Johnson in New Brunswick, and I want you to do it". So we added that. So we had two corporate headquarters, a corporate research site with about 180 acres, and we had an urban transit pedestrian corridor in one of the great cities in the American West. So we were overwhelmed with work way too fast, but it was a heck of a learning curve.

And we hired good people. We hired Dennis's ex-roommate, Ken Talbot, who when he left our office, became the planning director for the City of San Jose. People, when they bailed out of our office, went on to do something pretty good. We had the pick of students from Penn, and a fair number of them already had degrees in architecture and landscape architecture and were coming for their MLA, so they already knew something. So that's how we picked up people like Alistair McIntosh from Scotland. And we picked up Ian and Niall Kirkwood. And of course Cindy Sanders and Sue Weiler came out of the Penn program. They were students of Bob's and mine. And all those early students learned everything from the ground up, because they were thrown in off the deep end. They had to do grading, planting plans and construction details right away. They had to do studies for this and that. And we were drawing everything by hand, because this is all pre-computer. So they really became very proficient at both the technology and the how to make things. But because of the

Penn's training, they were also interested in the ecology and the commercial process. That's the early days.

So we became way too busy way too early. Bob and I continued to teach and we didn't pay ourselves out of the office for the first three years. We were still teaching full time and working full time. We were both single at that point, so we just worked around the clock and got a lot done. And the work came in. In 1979, Alex Cooper called, and he had also been in Barnes' office, and he was working on a plan for Battery Park City, which was a big pile of sand. It has one of the only physical things that came out of the Wallace, McHarg, Robert and Todd Lower Manhattan plan, as a matter of fact. It would be illegal today to have a big pile of sand in the middle of the Hudson River. But anyway, right after that first wave the Battery Park City project came.

1980, we start working at the New York Public Library with Lou Davis, which led in 1982 to Bryant Park. So a lot of things happened very fast. But also, in 1981, Jerry McCue, the dean of the School of Design at Harvard came by and asked me if I would come to Harvard to chair the department. I said, "No" because I was just way too busy. The office was too crazy. We had too much going on. I felt it would destroy the office if I moved to Harvard. And we couldn't imagine it. Also, I didn't know how to broach the subject with Bob, who was Harvard alum. I didn't even have a graduate degree in anything, and he had an MLA from Harvard, so I thought that might be a touchy subject. So we kept working, and in '82, they came back, and they talked me into doing it. Harry Cobb twisted my arm. He had become

the chairman of architecture there. And basically told me it was national service, and I had to do it. It was my moral obligation, my duty. I sort of said OK on that basis. But what I will say is that that's when we started going to the West Coast. We got calls to work out there. And then while I was at Harvard, London happened. So by the time I left Penn in '82 to go to Harvard, all hell was breaking loose.

The office had grown. We had moved. We were over 20 people. We were working on the West Coast. We were working in New York. We were working on the Penn campus. We were working in London.

And basically, Bob had a stay in the charge. But he didn't like the fact that I was going to Harvard that bothered him. The amount of work and the growth bothered him. He was much happier putting along, working on one thing at a time. He liked just doing a project and kind of happily drawing. Administration drove him nuts, and the finances scared him. There was too much personal interaction with too many people. There was the psychodrama of the employees. Bob really didn't like any of that. And he was a shy, introverted person. He was a very thoughtful designer, very solid, and a wonderful guy. But he had a way of being in the world that was at a pace that wasn't what the office was becoming. We had to turn more and more over to the associates; and it wasn't easy for Bob to work through others. For some reason, I always found it OK. You know, one of the things I admired about Bernini and Olmsted was how they managed to extend themselves through the brains and energy and ambitions and thoughts of other people. That's what the great

workshops and the great offices of the past have been. It wasn't blind ambition. It was the notion of, ah; this is important stuff, if I can just get more people to help me do it.

My wife and I moved to Harvard and lived, there, and I tried to commute to Philadelphia, I had a small apartment here. It was kind of crazy. That didn't seem to work very well. So I thought, let's move back to Philadelphia, and I can commute to Harvard. So I got a loft a few blocks from here. It was a great loft. And the problem I had then was the commute to Harvard and staying in an apartment in Beacon Hill. I read a lot and learned a lot, but the office was really stressed. And I was having to travel to job sites in either Europe or the West Coast, or be in the office, or be at Harvard. I was always in motion, always on planes. And Bob felt kind of abandoned, I think. The associates had to pick up the slack. We had moved to 2020 Chestnut Street at that point. Bob would pretty much stay at his desk. He would go sit at his desk, and he wouldn't go into the office. People had to come to him pretty much. That was puzzling to them and to me. And that's when we got our first computers.

The Firm Becomes the Olin Partnership

BIRNBAUM: *So I guess we should just keep moving onto the Olin Partnership.*

OLIN: The Olin Partnership came as the next step after Bob and I split up. The split was a long time coming, and it had to do with my going to Harvard, and it had to do with some personal differences. It finally had to do with some artistic differences. We can get over a

lot of stuff, but frankly, all the work that I did with Peter Eisenman, and my interest in exploring alternative sources of form and theory . . . and so we had a parting of the ways.

Back in days of Hanna Olin Limited, we wrote a statement for our brochure, one which Bob inserted it over my silent protest that we didn't believe in art for art's sake. In other words, everything we did was in the service of man and of society and all that; which I still believe. I do believe that. That's part of what makes us different from painting or music. Although I do believe painting and music serve man and humanity brilliantly and wonderfully. I think they're very functional at levels that have to do with spirit and purpose and meaning and understanding and comprehension of self and man's human condition. But I will say that I had become much more interested in expression and in meaning and in theory, and it really didn't set [well] with Bob. So we, for various reasons, split up.

In the split, we had a financial problem, in that I wanted Bob to take half the firm, and the people, and the projects. And he said, "No, you have to buy me out. I'm out of here. You want it? It's all yours". So I suddenly had the whole thing on me, and I owned it all, and we had huge problems economically. And so I turned to Dennis McGlade, Sue Weiler and Lucinda Sanders, and Bob BeBEDELL, and I said, I'm going to make you partners, and we've got to climb out of this economic problem we're in. Because we were going into an economic recession at the same time; and we were very close to bankruptcy. We talked about it three or four times. We met with lawyers, trying to figure out how to pay the bills. It was a real uphill climb. And Cindy and Bob and Dennis and Sue would meet every couple

of days. It wasn't like once a week or every two weeks. It was every couple of days to figure out who to pay and who not to pay and what we could do about it. And that became the Olin Partnership.

It was a smart thing to do, because if there was to be a future, it had to get past being all about me and what I wanted to do. It had to be a collective effort. It had always been collaborative. No one gets all this work by themselves. That is demonstrated by the fact that Bob and I needed Dennis almost immediately, and we had students that already had training. Landscape architecture is a collaborative act, even if there is leadership and there is vision from a couple of individuals. Still, it takes a lot of people to do it. And we almost always ended up having to collaborate with engineers and architects, and then there's the client. People forget that the client has a lot to say about things, and you've got to collaborate with the client. It almost never happens that they do not want their hand on the switch, they want to steer. And I have some clients that actually want to get a hold of the pencil. They want to take the pencil.

So the Olin Partnership started out as an answer to a crisis, we had all these projects we had to keep going on. Also we liked being landscape architects, and we like the kind of landscape architecture we were doing, which was an urban landscape architecture. But the question was, how do we practice? So we decided, well, we have to share the pain, share the wealth, share the leadership, and see how we could have a different kind office to continue to do the kind of work we believed in. And I have to say, it was the smartest thing I

ever did. Because of all the things . . . I never meant to have an office. I didn't think I was going to be a landscape architect. I didn't know I was going to be in Philadelphia. And so here I was with all these projects. And unburdening myself of that . . . I still had a major role for many years. But getting other people to have their own projects, to direct staff, to say what we should put our resources into, to get us into the computer age, to bring us up to the level and the ability to work on the kind of projects we wanted to work on, as the world around us was changing drastically, that was good. And that lasted for a good long while, too. I don't know, about ten years or something, or almost that long.

And where the current version, which is called Olin, where that came from was that in order to have a successful transition, we had to find a way to have it be a little less about the founders and a little bit more about it's an organization. So IBM, who knows what those three letters are? They stand for International Business Machines, HP stands for Dave Hewlett and what's his name, Bob Packard. Those initials, we didn't want to become an initial firm, WXYZ. We didn't want to do that. And the idea of having everybody's name that's the current version was too much like an old Philadelphia law firm.

So there were a whole series of changes that were strategic changes of how you do business in a changing world. In order to do that, we had to change our administrative and organizational structure, and we had to change how we were perceived, how we advertised ourselves to the world; so that when my partners were out getting projects or meeting clients, they weren't at a handicap, that was me. It was like, how to bury dad, and we still

have him in the next room doing some work and for some help, too. So that is an awkward transition, again. But I think we've made it.

Cindy is a great CEO. I think she may get worn out doing it. But it's her turn in the barrel. Sue did it. Sue was the CEO when we decided to reorganize ourselves after a few years of the Olin Partnership. She ran it for a couple of years, and it almost wore her out. And she was happy to go back to doing projects, like the wonderful projects she's been doing. And Cindy has had to take a hit and not be able to do quite as much project work. She's got a couple of huge projects right now that are daunting for anyone who's not even trying to run the whole thing.

But I would say that, the changes were not about the art of what we do. They were about something that Olmsted understood, and something that Alford understood in Paris, that in order to work at a certain scale, and to accommodate your clients and their needs in a way that deal with their expectations and demands today, you need resources in house, and you need to be able to work with an awful lot of other people. Now [the firm] goes on with me sort of happily off to the side, I'm still here working, but I'm not running anything, except the design of some projects that I'm working on.

In order to do a project like the Delaware Riverfront, you really need a different kind of organization. You need the kind of organization Olin is. It's not a pillar organization. It's a studio. But it's a studio that has the ability to do more than we could have done under the

old [system of] one man holding the pencil talking to his students at the drawing board.

Those days are kind of done here. We still do talk to everybody at the drawing board. We still have pencils. We still have a lot of trace and do a lot of drawings. But that's not the only thing that happens, and that's not how the work finally gets produced.

Work with Peter Eisenman

I'd like to talk about the work with Peter [Eisenman]. Peter's an architect who is fairly famous for being involved in theory, and especially post- structural theory and deconstruction theory and other theories. He is admired and feared and loathed by people in architecture, because he is such a rhetorician and theoretical force. I ended up being introduced to him by, of all people, Jack Robertson, on a competition in Portland, Oregon. We didn't win that competition. It was for a public square. Larry Halprin didn't win it either. But one of the things about that was we had fun. I find him kind of interesting in his rigorousness. He was awarded a PhD from Cambridge University. His thesis was on Terragni, an architect from the 1930s who worked for the fascist regime in Italy, but who was a brilliant architect. And Peter is a true intellectual of the old school. After that project, we kind of got along and had fun teasing each other and he called me about doing some work. Subsequently I ended up doing 25 or more projects over the next 20 some years. And I think by now we've only got maybe two, two and a half [of them] built. There's a big one under construction in Spain right now in the Santiago de Compostela that everyone will go and say "oh, ah" and whatever. They'll think it's all about buildings, but actually it's something else. It's something that Peter and I were very interested in. We were

interested in other sources of form. And we were interested in why people didn't understand that there was a continuum between landscape and architecture. If you wanted to experiment it might actually produce work where you could not separate them, because the architecture was the building, and the building was the architecture, it was all a continuum. When I was teaching at Harvard, Peter came as a visitor, and we did a competition at Ohio State University, and we won it. That project was the Wexner Center [for the Arts] and it is truly where a building and the landscape are totally interrelated. We started it in my office, because he didn't have an office, and we'd sit there with our little bottle of Scotch and a couple of TAs and work on the project. But once it became something that had to be drafted up and models built, we moved to Peter's office in New York, and a couple of guys from my office went up and worked in his office on it. We won that competition, and it was a lot of fun. It had ideas about place, about how one might deal with memory in a physical form that was both abstract, but also was accessible, I believe. It had to do with the demolition of an armory. It had to do with the Jefferson grid across the Midwest. It had to do with the lost prairie that was gone. And for me, it also had to do with kind of memories of Etruscan tombs. And for him it was a kind of a rational structuralist grid in dealing with the ghost of Terragni. So we brought our personal agendas, but then we grounded it in an actual place with events from that site. And it absolutely shocked people. The chairman of the landscape architecture department at Ohio State tried to get my license revoked in landscape architecture; he was so offended by it. [He was offended] because we were doing these big tipped planes with prairie grasses and stuff and he was offended because the landscape wasn't supine, the lawn wasn't behaving itself like a nice

mat for the building to sit on. We had broken all the rules of decorum in the Midwest about how buildings and site relate to each other. And I was absolutely thrilled that you could do something that would upset people that way. I mean, I felt, well, this may not be the Rite of Spring and Stravinsky, but damn it, art really still does affect people. They don't know what to do about it, especially if it's taking them somewhere out of their comfort zone [to a place] they've never been that has ideas. So Peter and I then spent many years working on projects, almost all in competitions. We did a design for Les Wexner in Palm Beach, and after he looked at the drawings and Peter presented them to him, he said, "Where's the house"? So that didn't happen. Anyway, we had some great experiences.

But one of the things that happened was, I wrote a piece called "Form, Meaning and Expression in Landscape Architecture" in *Landscape Journal*, not that many years ago and I hate to say it but it's a seminal piece, that's led to a lot of theory and anti-theory and foolish writing. But one of the things that I said in that [article] was that there is a limited vocabulary of forms. A lot of them have come out of the Greco-Roman civilization, and have to do with Euclidian geometry. They have basically formed most of the design vocabulary of Western public space and town planning, and that in this era, in an age after twentieth century art and after the atomic revolution and the discovery of relativity and ecology and everything, surely that there must be other sources of form that one would use to organize projects. And I was curious what those might be and which ones might be fruitful, and which ones would just be silly, or lead to dysfunctional places, like the house Peter did where there's a column where the bed should be. No one could figure out how to

live in it and that sort of thing. I mean, some explorations of form are not fruitful but some are. At that point in urban design, there were kind of two camps of contextualism and a kind of new urbanism was emerging. And then there was also a whole group, a kind of Leo Krier group, who were heavily influenced by earlier Camillo Sitte and some of the picturesque town planning ideas of the turn of the century. [This] as opposed to, say, a more mechanistic and functionalist camp that one might attribute to the Bauhaus or to Team 10 or some of the groups that came out of a European tradition in town planning. So I was interested if there was something beside figure/ground relationships or picturesqueness? What other sort of fundamental starting points are there for urbanization in terms of large compositional organization? And I thought maybe biology would be a good place to start, or modern physics or chemistry. And so that was cool with Peter because he was very interested in a lot of the philosophical developments that had come out of France, particularly [Jacques] Derrida and some other people who he knew and with whom he was friendly.

So when the competition for Rebstockpark in Frankfurt came up, we entered that competition and ended up on the short list and then eventually won the competition. Part of what got us started was that James Gleick had just published his work on chaos theory in which he had mentioned Seymour Mandelbrot, who was the father of fractal geometry. And fractal geometry, the notion of things nesting in scale in an ascending or descending order was very interesting to us, because we could see that that was something that you could find in architecture and planning in many ways. So Peter and I began looking at how

we might use some of these concepts and how they might translate into what we could draw, what we could make and what forms they would generate. And he also, at about that time, was starting to get some computers and some bright guys who could use computers and various programs. There were a couple of programs where you can kind of distort things, you could morph things around. So we took a couple of ideas, the fold and the concept of the le plier, which is actually central to a certain aspect in chaos theory, where there's a tipping point and things change. So we looked at a couple of concepts like that to see what they [would] do. Our site was right next to a project by Ernst May, the great German housing planner from the pre-war era. And so there was an Ernst May housing project right next to our site, with these kind of bar buildings with community gardens and allotment gardens on the site. And the site had been heavily bombed during the war by the Eighth Air Force and the British Air Force. It had been an air base and then it was obliterated. And then after the war, they tried to clean it up and they used it for public parking for the Frankfurt Fair. They also mined it for gravel, and had people do drivers' tests on it. And it was a kind of a goofy site. So it was a kind of oddball site but big. We basically laid the grid out, extrapolated stuff from the Ernst May project, and then began to distort it and play with it, and overlay it with ideas from ecology about air flow. Bernard Lassus had done a plan for the Grungürtel, which had to do with a greenbelt around the city, and how air could come from the Taunus Mountains down into the city at night. I was interested in how to pull that through the site through certain formal structures and arrangements of trees and landform and the buildings. But I was also interested in how one might produce a landscape that was a productive landscape which could also double as

overflow parking and other times produce cash crops of flowers or something like that which would be helpful to the park system and the people there. And then finally, how could we get water back into the groundwater table and produce habitat and produce gardens and recreation and all the housing? And so basically, that project was the kind of project that Peter and I did for years. We kept doing projects where we would try to see how much we could stuff into the project, but in alternative devices through formal exploration. So it was kind of an R&D adventure for me for many years. We didn't get a lot built. The last episode that I should talk about is the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe, which is its own tale.

landscape architects had to have their first semester, period, it was about big ideas, and it was about theory. It was also about the trajectory of literature and thought in those fields. That was great, except I felt unqualified to teach the course. I realized that, well, my years in Rome, I sort of knew where I should go and what I should read. But I realized I hadn't read enough of Kant and Hegel and I was sort of a little shaky on post enlightenment Western thought, so I'd better get up to speed.

So I realized that I was brought to Harvard to do two things. I was brought to Harvard to try and give landscape architecture some depth like Penn [University of Pennsylvania] in terms of its theory, in both the natural and social sciences, but also in the humanities. Now, Harvard thinks of itself as being a bastion of the humanities in America. You know, it started as a divinity school. It was only under [James Bryant] Conant that they ended being a great

research university and pushing sciences. But I mean, [Charles William] Elliot started it and Conant really turned it into the great research engine that it is [today].

But the Graduate School of Design was still a kind of Bauhaus derivative of an Ecole de Beaux Arts school. They moved out of Robinson Hall with its plaster casts, and into Gund Hall, which was blindingly modern. It is hated by most people at Harvard and by people in the region and by some of the students and faculty. But I liked Gund Hall a lot. The only problem with it was when you came out of your office and went into what you thought would be the elevator; you ended up in the bathroom and vice versa. But anyway, back to Harvard.

Why I went. Yeah, there's a little bit of ambition, but also curiosity. I thought it would be another growth spurt for me and it was. I met great people who became dear friends and colleagues. I had fabulous students who are still dear friends and colleagues now. [The Harvard experience was] the people, my favorite bookstores and it was also a couple of bars that we went to.

The people from lit [literature] were pretty good. They had great poets hanging around. But it's a hot house, and some people call it a snake pit. But the truth of the matter is everyone thinks they're special. And it's a little hard to take at times. But that pressure forced everyone to work very hard.

And the students at Harvard, I would say they were either “A”s or “D”s. We had no “B”s.

There were some people that came into [the program], and you would say to yourself, how did this person get admitted? But everybody else- they were smart.

But what they didn’t know about the world was amazing. How little they knew about natural science or social science. They might know a lot about art history, but to actually, nobody knew much about landscape history, because there really wasn’t much.

So I thought, oh, God, I’ve got to build up the history. They don’t have any history here.

And so, I had a few people, who did I have first? I can’t remember. But then I had Melanie Simo come in for a year, and I brought Betty MacDougall from DO [Dumbarton Oaks]. She commuted from Washington, DC to teach. The students hated her. But the faculty kind of dug her. She was a hard drinking scholar of the old school. And I loved Betty. So I tried to bring history, real history and I tried to get real theory into the program. I tried to get ideas and everything. And so out of that we had Anita Berrizbeitia, Julie Bargmann here, we just brought them all [to the program].

[We had] lots of great students who have gone off to do wonderful things, but [they went off] with ideas. So we tried to engage ideas. I learned so much. I learned so much from my colleagues, from some of the students and just from the preparation I had to do in order to deal with it. Because like [I did at] the American Academy in Rome, I felt like I was a fraud. Here I was teaching students who have more degrees than I do. I had never studied landscape architecture. I’m at the school that invented the teaching of it [landscape

architecture]. I just felt totally inadequate. So most people who are inadequate, they either run for the exits, or they overcompensate. So I overcompensated. I just piled it on in terms of what I attempted.

Lessons from Laurie

The Olin Interview continues in the OLIN office with the OLIN Partners, Dennis McGlade, Sue Weiler, Chris Hanley, Richard Newton, Bob Bedell and Lucinda Sanders.

Dennis McGlade and Sue Weiler

[Dennis McGlade recalls his days working at Hanna/Olin]

MCGLADE: Well, back in the old days, there was a sign that was hung on the reception desk, Hannah Olin, open 24 hours. And pretty much when we started, it was a seven day a week enterprise. We would have to write notes to Laurie [Olin] and Bob [Hanna] and tell them, it's Christmas. It's New Years. People aren't going to come in on the last Thursday of November for Thanksgiving. So that's the kind of an office it was when it first got started. And it was great. They were always around, and everybody else was always around. It was quite an adventure. And it was refreshing for me, because I came from a much larger and more established office. And so it was very refreshing getting to a lean, mean design machine, without a lot of the bureaucracy built in.

WEILER: Yeah, it was a pretty cozy place. I mean, there were a lot of smokers, I remember that. But I do remember at about 2:00 or 3:00 in the afternoon, there was just always this incredible, intense work atmosphere. You would hear the parallel rules going squeak,

squeak, and everyone was working really, really hard. Everybody just had their heads down. But there was also a lot of conversation back and forth. In fact, that's how I learned a lot of stuff; just listening to other people talk about whatever is they were dealing with. So it was a good group.

I think it really speaks to kind of the way the firm has evolved and the types of projects it's involved in, in that at a certain point, the business of the business is as important as the work that you do. Sometimes it's hard to believe the scale of the projects that we've been able to accomplish with the people, and the number of the people that it actually kind of takes to do that level and complex work. And as big as we are, it still is a pretty small group when you think about other firms.

MCGLADE: I think when you get to be a certain size, you also can get some luxury in your practice that you don't have when you're small. We have fabulous information systems in the office to keep us up to date on the latest in technology, everything from furniture to sustainability issues. We have a librarian and information manager. And it is wonderful to have that. We did not have that luxury when we started, and everybody was going to books. But as you know, teaching and education of landscape architects runs very deep in the office. All the principles have taught at one time or the other or they're teaching now. And so that aspect of information and keeping au courant is very important to the office. And at a certain size, we have economies of scale, which permit us to have a very comprehensive library and someone who's just dedicated keeping us up to date and bringing people in to

talk to us. What I think is kind of marvelous about the evolution of the firm is that we're still searching for knowledge, and trying to expand it ourselves to the extent we can. But then also we have a few people in the office that are just dedicated to that, which I think is quite wonderful and quite unique, actually.

BIRNBAUM: You're also all cohabitating together. I don't know many other offices physically where you have the principals comingling, cohabitating. What is it like to all be there together?

MCGLADE: Well, see, I'm an only child, so I find it annoying. But Laurie's a great roommate, because he travels all the time. He's never there. And Weiler is traveling more, and so she's hardly ever there. So I mean, no, I mean, they're great roommates.

WEILER: I come from a very big family, as you know. So it doesn't bother me in the least. But they are, it is kind of, it's a real joy when the three of us are actually there and can catch a few minutes just to talk about whatever. And McGlade is always cracking some hysterical comment and kind of keeps us all balanced. It's cozy, but we like each other.

MCGLADE: Yeah, we do.

WEILER: I think one of the joys of sharing an office together is that you actually do get to see each other, and you have a better sense of what each is working on, or what's

happening, their travels or their projects. And there's a lot of information there, and there's a lot of brain information. There's a lot of physical information. And there's a lot going on.

BIRNBAUM: You guys have obviously spent a lot of time with Laurie. And I'm curious if there's been a particular big lesson or a moment where this light bulb went off, or something happened with Laurie, can you tell me about that?

MCGLADE: There's been a lot. It's hard to put your finger on one thing. As you know, in the course of producing a project, sometimes situations can get pretty tense. There are issues with perhaps an irascible client or a contractor, and sometimes you put your life and soul in a certain project, and you think somehow it's being jeopardized because of forces beyond your control. And what I always found about working with Laurie is that he was always optimistic. He would say, "Oh, well, this will blow over. It will be fine". And he's generally right. So it helps you maintain a little bit of objectivity, and to not get too emotionally overwrought by the complexities, the human drama, as Laurie calls it. The design is easy. It's the psychodrama of the projects that are the difficult parts of it. So I think that sort of positive attitude just really saved my sanity on many occasions when I thought I was going to jump out the window, or I just couldn't take it anymore. So I think it's [his] basic optimism and good humor. I should be more like that. For me, that is one of the important things, I think.

WEILER: I think there are probably two things that I will always owe to Laurie, and one is similar to what Dennis is saying. Laurie always had a way of not letting something just get in the way. [It was alright] you could let something go. And [he felt] that not every battle was the right battle to fight. And the right idea at the wrong time just isn't the right idea. I think the other more practical thing that he taught me was, finish one thing first, and then go on to the next. But do the hardest thing of the day first.

MCGLADE: Yes, Laurie has very good work habits. He actually is very well organized and is very focused. And when he has a lot of stuff to do, he prioritizes. He's an extraordinarily productive person, he writes, he lectures, he teaches, he practices, and he shares red wine, [he shares] lots of things, even plants.

WEILER: That's right. I think he's also taught us a way to really focus on our work. [He taught us] that the only way that you can develop your craft is to actually do it and to work hard at it and to think about it every moment you're doing it.

MCGLADE: Yeah, I think also Laurie really demonstrates, at least to me, that drawing is a mode of thinking and development. And it is amazing. And that is actually how he thinks. I try to do that to the extent I can, also. Like I say, there are a lot of things one could reminisce about when you talk about how he's affected your life or your practice.

BIRNBAUM: *Anything else you want to say?*

WEILER: We're still here. It's been a privilege, and we're still here.

Chris Hanley and Richard Newton

BIRNBAUM: *So first off, could you tell us your names, please?*

HANLEY: I'm Chris Hanley, partner and director of technology here, and I've been here about ten years.

BIRNBAUM: *And?*

NEWTON: Rich Newton, a partner, and I've been here about 15 years.

BIRNBAUM: *Well, maybe we can begin with this issue of digital technology. We just spent a lot of time listening to Laurie talk about drawing by hand and how digital and drawing come together. Is it ever a challenge? Or are you guys ever on the same page?*

HANLEY: That's a very interesting question. We're on the same page in that we like people to think deeply about how they're expressing their design. And Laurie speaks very eloquently about how drawing allows him to do that. And for those who can sketch they can often translate those observational and exploration skills to a digital format. I don't know that we see entirely eye to eye in when it comes to which ones better or worse. I think that's . . .

BIRNBAUM: *Now, Richard is one of the younger partners in the office, and we just had interviews with Dennis McGlade and Sue Weiler, and you know it's extraordinary to me when you look at the longevity of these relationships, and it feels like an extended family, with the three of them in their condo, one on top of the other, getting along together very happily. I'm curious, from a sort of, as someone who's been here now almost 20 years, what is it, is there a sense of family? Is Laurie the Papa Smurf? Or is there mentoring that's happening from all partners? What's it like in terms of the collaborative spirit of the office?*

NEWTON: Well, a lot of what we do is collaboration. It's about developing landscape from relationships that we develop within ourselves in the studio and within the community that we're working in. And part of the key to making good landscapes is to really get inside of the heads of the people that you're working for and working with, because that is how you can engage the culture of a particular place. It's not imposing something on the [people]. It's about giving form to their aspirations. And that really is a key, I think, to what we enjoy doing, what we get energy from.

BIRNBAUM: *Do you have anything you want to add to that?*

HANLEY: Well, I agree 100% with what Richard said. And I would maybe jump back a little bit to the mentorship and say that Laurie has always felt very strongly about teaching opportunities. It's what the studio was born out of. Bob came here originally to teach, and

he likes to say that the studio happened by accident. But I think that legacy has been handed to all of us. [We need] to build on and share the knowledge that we've learned with the new folks coming in and other collaborators. But [we also learn] from having those teaching moments from others, and by being open to those experiences. I think Laurie's always felt very strongly, and I'm grateful that he's fostered a culture that has built us to that point.

BIRNBAUM: Building on that, one of the things we were talking about with Sue Weiler and Dennis McGlade, was could they recount a moment or a story or something that happened with Laurie in their time with the practice and the significance of it as a life lesson.

HANLEY: Well, I guess I have one. It was when I was first starting my time here. Laurie and I sat down, and he opened with this statement, "I'm the self-proclaimed and admitted original Luddite". Meaning a Luddite is a somewhat anti-technology person. And at the time, I was not a partner. I was coming in as the Director of the Digital Design Department. And I was sort of taken by that. That was when I started to learn a little bit more about his passion and his philosophy on digital versus hand sketching. The light bulb for me was that despite everything that I had read at the time about his penchant and desire for folks sketching, he actually was more impressed with the thought that went behind the design. Why are you doing something? And that's really impacted how I work and how I actually now select some of our digital tools. Is it the right tools? Is it helping us do what we want to

do? I know that might sound somewhat simple, but it really is a very effective filter. It helps you get really to the core of what you're working on and what you're doing.

NEWTON: I think one of the aspects of the way Laurie works that I learned right from the beginning is the way he is incredibly generous about giving other people credit. And one of my earliest experiences working on master plans was a sense, almost an artless way of saying, [that] well, all the ideas are here. You know sort of what we're really doing is organizing it, making it work together, and really sort of getting a sense of how it can become a real place. So this sense of having clarity of vision, of being able to organize things, telling stories about why things should be the way they are, is part of his skill. And one of the things that Chris said earlier talking about drawing, the sense that drawing is a way of telling stories. It is a way of talking to one's self, but it's also a way of talking to a client, talking to a community about how an idea might evolve to what it may be in the future. So there's a storytelling through drawing. To me it's an important quality of his work.

BIRNBAUM: *One last question. You are sort of the newbies in relation to the other people we're speaking with. Very often there's a public perception, when they see OLIN, that well, they're now a letter corporation. So if you had to describe what the office is and why it is or isn't a corporate, how do you answer something like that?*

HANLEY: I think that's a really good question. And I think we all sort of cringe a little bit when we hear the word corporate. And I think there are sort of two applications. There's some business strategy that obviously needs to be applied to run the business responsibly. Well, we're all trained designers. There are some folks that are really good at business strategy. So we help them or engage them to help us figure those things out. So I think a sense of corporate may apply to the business side, which I think is responsible. But culturally, I do not see us as corporate at all. We're very collaborative, just like Richard was saying earlier about the explorations and the collaboration and the communication. I think that we're very fortunate that our current CEO is very progressive. She's very open to new ideas and exploring things, and figuring out what's best for us, best to make our people happy and our designs the best they can be. And some of these things sound very obvious. But when you figure out how to try to do that, it's challenging. There isn't a corporate checklist of, OK, what we need to be happy. Well, that just kind of happens if you involve the right folks. And we're very fortunate in our office. I think, often companies that are viewed as corporate are based on a lack of inclusion of the members of their organization. And a lot of our strategies are based on inclusion of our folks and ideas and solutions, a lot of times come from them.

NEWTON: And I think that one of the ways that we pride ourselves is our ability to respond to each client, each project in a way that is specific to that project. [The notion of] being corporate sounds prescriptive. It sounds as you treat everything in a similar way, or everything may look identifiable. I think one of the qualities [of OLIN] is that we respond to

places as we find them and develop those relationships. We tailor projects and our method of working to the particular client, which means we can be much more responsive and develop stronger relationships.

HANLEY: I've been here ten years, and I know it's corny but I love what this organization is, what the studio is. [I love] what the folks that have [done], even those that have come and moved on to other opportunities, I've learned so much from the folks here. And I'm very appreciative of that culture that Laurie really started, and that we've sort of grown through.

Bob Bedell and Lucinda Sanders

BIRNBAUM: *So we've spent the last day and a half talking about Laurie and the evolution of the firm. And what I'd like to do is start with you, Cindy. You have a lot of the responsibility as a CEO of a firm and your recent partners, just moment ago celebrated your willingness to innovate and risk take. I hate to say this, but you're a woman at the helm of this, what does it all mean?*

SANDERS: That's a really tough question to answer. The transition of the firm is truly a challenge. And well for any business, it's difficult to move forward. Having just come back from the Harvard Business School executive training, one of the things that I learned was professional service firms typically last one generation. And this coming from a bunch of people who have spent a bunch of time studying professional service firms and really looking at their duration. So I take this challenge really seriously. A professional service firm

is all about the people. And Laurie has been a very strong figure in the profession. That in itself tells us a lot, [it tells us] that the next group of people in line needs to be very strong. [Sue Weiler, Dennis McGlade, myself, Laurie and Bob, have been very strong leaders. But this next generation, who really are going to be carrying the firm, probably without Laurie and without Dennis, really need to have a strong voice and a lot to say.

BIRNBAUM: *How would you respond to that?*

BEDELL: This is a difficult thing for any firm. There are a lot of first generation firms out there. Getting to second and third generation is a really tough task. Many firms fail. [After] the first generation, when the founder dies, the firm just becomes a bunch of caretakers and disappears. I've run into a number of firms over the years, architecture firms especially [where that has happened]. So I think we do a very good job of trying to bring a new generation in.

SANDERS: The question of innovation is something that is also a challenge. It's one thing when the entrepreneur says, "this is what I want to do". They can do anything. It's their script. Right? Now we're in a business, if you will, where we have to balance a lot of things. What I am personally very clear about, and I think the partners are [also], is that you can't make decisions just solely for profitability or solely toward innovation. All of these things have to be brought into balance with one another. The issue of innovation is always a challenge, because we're talking about balance. You can't just innovate, and you can't just

drive a firm toward profit. When you do that, you drive a firm toward profit, you don't innovate. When you just innovate, profitability can suffer. And really what we need to do is to think about a balance.

BIRNBAUM: So maybe taking this one step further, addressing the challenge and the quest, a decade from now or 20 years from now, one thing that's come up in the previous conversations we've had, is the idea of corporate culture, whatever that means, for better or worse. So remaining true to the vision and mission of Olin and its evolution and their studios, what does that mean? What would one, could you project what an ideal world would look like in the future?

SANDERS: I would say that Laurie has always been very reflective about the profession. He has been very reflective about life. And he has been very clear about what landscape can do in the context of society. That, to me, is a legacy. And that, to me, is something that every young partner needs to tackle and take to heart. If we can keep doing that, I think we can continue to be successful. And that means surrounding ourselves with young people who embrace that, who truly embrace that.

BEDELL: But it's going to be a different form. It's not going to be just Laurie with one voice. It's going to be five voices, six voices, seven voices.

SANDERS: It already is.

BEDELL: It already is several voices. So you're trying to have a similar set of values, but everyone has their own voice. Cindy is very different than Richard Newton, who's very different than Sue Weiler. But it's amazing, and we all sit around, we all sort of have the same set of values. We all sort of think the same way. You know, Cindy and I were talking this morning about the other challenge, for the firm, and that, is that innovation depends on finding really good clients. Half of our revenues are projects with architects, where we're a sub consultant to an architect. And the reason we're so good at it is because we've learned to listen. That's one of Laurie's mentoring things. If you just sit around, and you listen to how he talks with clients, how he deal with clients, he really does respect their viewpoint. He doesn't come in with an agenda. He really listens. That's why he can work with Richard Meier, and he can work with Harry Cobb and he can work with Peter Eisenman. Those people skills, I think are the hardest thing to learn from him. And I think that's the thing we work at all the time. I mean great clients make great projects.

BIRNBAUM: *So one of the questions I've asked everybody else is if they would be willing to recount a light bulb moment. I'm curious if there was a particular situation with Laurie where there was something that you thought, "Aha", and you sort of carried that into practice.*

BEDELL: The "Aha" moment for me, I think, was the first flight I took with Laurie. [We were] coming back from Los Angeles. I was new to the firm, [I had been here] less than two

weeks. I had been working in Boston for ten years as a project manager. And Laurie said, “We’ll take the day flight, and we’ll sit and talk and we’ll work on the plane. I thought, we’ll go over the schedules, and we have all this work to do. . . . So we get on the flight and he reaches into his tote bag, and he pulls this big book out on Mayan architecture. And he goes, just look at the book. And he starts thumbing through it, because we were working on walls and wall textures. And he said, “Let’s take a look on how they used stone, because we have to do the same thing with concrete block”. And I’m sitting there thinking, well, this is different. Forget the schedules and let’s just look at this picture book. And then we started drawing and sketching, and had several glasses of wine at lunch. This is all at 30,000 feet. And I’m sitting there thinking, this is really different than most people I’ve [worked with].

Laurie looks at the world almost like a little kid, not childish, almost childlike. He has a sense of wonder about things, everything. He says, “Oh, look at that. Isn’t that interesting”? And he always says, “Isn’t that interesting? I’ve never seen that before”. He just has this approach to projects and people and places. It’s a sense of wonder that is still kind of intriguing 20 some odd years later working with him. The other day he goes, “oh, let’s walk down this street. I’ve never been down there”. He’s just like a little kid sometimes. But it’s also why he looks at things with a fresh eye all the time. Everything is a challenge. Everything’s new.

SANDERS: “Aha” moments, there have been many. And probably one of the most interesting things about Laurie is not just the practice but life. I remember sitting on an airplane with Laurie, getting ready for a presentation; this is back in the days of the slides. Laurie’s sitting there with his slides spread out and I thought he was just going to organize them and drop them into the carousel. And what Laurie did was to hold the slides up, do a little sketch, and it was dual carousel, hold the other slide up, do another sketch, and write his notes. And he did this for about 90 pairs of slides. And this seemingly effortless human being, who does everything so easily, was dedicating an enormous amount of time to a relatively short presentation. That’s when I realized that even the most brilliant people put inordinate amounts of time into preparation, into achieving excellence. That was an “Aha” moment; there are no shortcuts. And there are many more, there are many, many more. And I think that having glasses of wine with Laurie and hearing stories about life in general, they are, were enormously impactful.

BIRNBAUM: *I’m wondering for either of you if there is anything that I haven’t asked you that you would like to say for posterity, or whatever reason at all.*

SANDERS: For me, it’s just been an enormous honor to spend a lot of my life working around and with Laurie. And I’m really honored to be leading the firm, to be trusted to be leading the firm, it’s not easy, but I’m truly honored. Most of my life has been spent doing what I’m doing. And [this opportunity] is largely because of Laurie, who was my professor at

Penn, and hired me midway through my academic career. I've been around him a very, very long time, and it truly has been an honor.

BEDELL: It's kind of hard to look around the space now with 85 people and projects all over the world and think, well, I didn't think about that in 1987 when I came to work. It was a very different firm. There were no computers. You know, it was the Bob and Laurie Show with Dennis along. So things have changed quite a bit. Laurie's still amazing. He can be this very calm [personality] and make it look effortless. He also has an amazing amount of energy. He still sort of runs us ragged.

In general it's just been a lot of fun with him. Cindy and were talking about the mentoring thing, and it usually happens in three ways. It [happens] either in the studio, or when you're with Laurie and a client, and you watch how he deals with clients and how he listens. But the other [time] is travels with Laurie. We all have travel stories, it is wine spilled at 30,000 feet, its exploding Mont Blanc pens at 30,000 feet, or its water colors at 30,000. So travels with Laurie are one of those things which have been a lot of fun.

SANDERS: That's probably a key observation. And Laurie doesn't separate his professional life and his personal life. They are one and the same. And it's fun. And I think those folks who are partners absolutely are people who embrace that. I think that when we travel, we don't stop looking, we don't stop loving, we don't stop enjoying; and that is really a gift that he has given us.

BEDELL: So now when that younger associate travels with Laurie and I say, “Well, how was the trip”? He goes “wow that was really different. “So, are you having fun”? And he goes, “oh, yeah. Laurie said we had to go see this museum”. And it’s that kind of a let’s take a look at the world [moment]. It’s very different.

DESIGN

Principles of Design

Editing the Landscape

OLIN: Well, one of the things that I learned from Rich [Haag] is that there are really three basic activities in landscape architecture. One is when you come to a project, you have to decide what stays and what goes. This is basic fundamental editing. How much do I have to keep or want to keep and how much do I have to get rid of or want to get rid of and why. So what stays, what goes? The next activity is a different form of editing which I will call pushing something to be more of what it is, to intensify something. Now this is not just adding or subtracting. This is the intensification of something. At Central Park, for instance, when [Frederick Law] Olmsted would have his crews excavate and expose ledges to make the hills hillier and the hollows more hollow, he was editing by way of emphasis. He was giving something more intensity of what it already was. And the third one, which is what most designers think they’re doing and that is addition. Addition is the act of bringing something new to a place which changes it in some minor or significant way. Those are the only three activities we really engage in. Everything is a version of those, frankly. And from

Rich, I realized some of the most subtle and profound ones are from those first two. The adding a new form or bringing a new activity is the easiest part. The concept of what stays, what goes maybe isn't the hardest but it's really vital. And then this business of emphasis and pushing something to be more intense or taking your foot off the pedal and let it get softer, those are qualities of artistic judgment. They're not about instrumentality, they're not about problem-solving, they're about the art of what we do. And Rich at his greatest, he has shown an incredible sense of how to do just one or two things and have it shift the project one way or another. Bloedel [Reserve] is the classic example of this.

When I was living out on Bainbridge [Island], a few miles away, was the Bloedel [estate] at Agate Point. Prentice Bloedel had me come over. Tommy did the early garden there. He did a beautiful walk among other things. I looked at the reflecting basin that Thomas Church did, which is groundwater that's been day lighted. So that's Church doing it, he found the essence of that flooded alder grove and he dug this shallow basin about six inches deep and the water just day lighted. Then he just put a kind of concrete frame around it. The bottom is just sand, soft. That's the groundwater exposed. But it was set in the woods and it was all kind of gray and higgley piggley. It was this beautiful form and Prentice asked me what should be done? I knew it wasn't right and I made a few suggestions how about to intensify it. There's a book that has a drawing of mine in it that talks about the Bloedel Reserve. It's in their collection. But when Rich got together with Prentice and they were spending time out there, Rich had the genius to figure out that the pool needed to be isolated by something dark to hold the woods back. And that intensifies it the most. Church got it. He knew what

the essence of [the space] was, and Rich intensified it with one gesture. Interesting, you know. And then he contrasted what was going on there by digging another couple of holes to expose more water. That's where all the blackbirds are and the marsh. People think it looks natural and it is. Nature has come into the holes he dug but it has this completely different [feel]. The plant palette is very simple in both. They're both exposed groundwater. But the cunning in it is amazing. It's very Zen, very Zen.

Giving Form to Your Ideas

BIRNBAUM: *I'm wondering about why architects in this one part of the world, have an interest in poetry. And does it play a role in their life and how they think about design?*

OLIN: Let me put it this way. We live in a rather prosaic era. I have a great number for friends who are poets. Well, not a great number. I have some friends who are poets, John Berryman, for instance, and Ted Roethke and others like Annie Lauderbach, Michael Palmer and this whole bunch. But what is it? Well, poetry is about distillation of thought experience, emotion and understanding. Whereas novels expand upon it and do what I quite often do, just wander off in all directions, talking about many things, poetry brings it back, always to essences. The essence of feeling and understanding and perception and of being, those heightened moments of awareness that are remarkable. It's the economical use of words to produce things in brilliant forms that are so stunning and if that's not design, I don't know what is.

So I think all of us who are around the Northwest in those days, we were very passionate about life. We still are passionate about life and we have a very emotional intuitive people but we also have found ourselves in a world of pros and rationality and instrumentality and so we try to find ways in our work to bring things to essences the way great writers do. But [we do it by] another means, you know, a different media. We try to bring things to some heightened moment. It's like I've talked about the perfection of the ordinary. I think it's a phrase I picked up from Niall Kirkwood who worked for me. He was a student who became the chairman of Harvard; I think he brought the phrase from some architect he worked with in England.

People are interested in words and meaning. Poets are interested in words and meaning. They just use them differently. But they use them better. They use them with more skill and care and more cunning. And that's the way I would like to think Rich [Haag] tried to get us to approach our work. Now poems don't tell you what to do but then most art doesn't. But it helps you. It should help you in your life in some way, in terms of your understanding or feelings, your passion, your comprehension of other things ethical or emotional or whatever. So I don't know what to say except that jazz and poetry was a thing of the 50's. We all spent a lot of time reading an awful lot of Japanese poetry in translation and Chinese poetry in translation and reading weird stuff.

And this was told to me by Peter Shephard, who is another designer of economic means and a very bright person. He was the person who hired me to come to the University of

Pennsylvania. Peter told a story about Edgar Degas, the painter. He did all the wonderful pastels and paintings of young woman and the ballet in late 19th century France. Anyway, Degas when he was young like me, tried to write poetry. And he was having a very difficult time. And the poems weren't turning out, it wasn't very good. He was disturbed, kind of like me when I was writing poetry. We went to Valaray one time, Paul Valaray and he said, "Monsieur Valaray, and this is my translation of what I said. I tried so hard. I write so much. I have all these ideas, these great ideas, and my poems don't turn out". And Valery said the equivalent to Degas. "My dear Degas, poems are made with words, not ideas". Well, there you got it. If you don't get your medium . . . I mean my mother had ideas. Everybody has ideas, but they're not great designers. Design you have to get the medium and figure out how to give things form and give your ideas shape that are physical or it's just an idea.

Evoking Nature in the City

Well, the notion of nature in the city, *rus in urbs*, is an old idea. The Romans got to the point where they felt it [nature] was at arm's length, and they didn't want to go to out to the countryside [for it]. And they said why can't we have some of that in town? So the rich began to figure out how they might get it in town by building basically country villas in the city, on top of masonry platforms, and by adding soil and planting trees. So that idea of dragging the country into the city is an old idea. And [Frederick Law] Olmsted,[Sr.] basically argued for that, too. He said that nature is good and positive and health giving. [He said] that cities were unhealthy, which they were, because the air and the water were foul. There was tuberculosis. Everybody was sick and coughing. And we know that today, there

have been scientific studies done that show people are more creative after they've been outdoors for half an hour than if they just stay indoors all day.

One of the things that I feel strongly about is that it is foolish, and also impossible, to recreate full blown natural systems in a city. In other words, you shouldn't be imitating nature and trying to make it be the woods, because it can't be the woods. It doesn't have the extent, the continuum and it doesn't have the inter-relationship with it. It's just too fragmentary. But there are attributes of nature that have to do with vegetation, that have to do with color, with movement, with water and sunlight, and those attributes can be brought to the city. Why do we go to nature, and what do we get from nature? [We get from nature] the notion of variable spaces, of climate, the participation in the seasons and of being able to see the sky. It changes the focal length, from the short distance of the indoors where almost nothing is more than 20 feet apart. And today everything is at the distance of your computer screen. So I believe that many of the properties, the physical properties that are restorative in our visits to nature can be brought to cities, and we could have them in spades. We could have lots of trees. We can have water. We can have movement. We can have light. We can have air. We can have the variety. We can have topography. We can even have the frisson of danger and adventure, which Halprin has in some of his parks and Michael [Van Valkenburgh] did down in Battery Park City. The thing is that you're not building the Palisades. You're not building the redwood forest. But you could have trees, and you could have redwoods. Redwoods grow in canyons on the Pacific slope, they need moisture and shade, and they grow well in the shade. I'm putting in some

slots in a parking garage right now in California. The garage needed ventilation, and it needed to be broken up, so that it wasn't so big. So in these canyons in the parking garage we have filled them with redwood groves. But it's not Muir Woods. But there you are. You get out of your car, and there's the smell of the trees, and there are ferns and the light coming down through the trees, it's kind of damp. So you can bring those experiences to the city without imitating nature. That's not imitation. That's what I would call an evocation. It's a recall. You know what Mark Twain said about history he said, it doesn't repeat, but it rhymes. Well, that's how I feel about nature in the city. You can't replicate it, but you can emulate it, and you can evoke it. And you can ask for some of its blessings through its attributes.

Design Integrity

OLIN: Let's talk about the next topic, authenticity. There is a problem that haunts our field that one might think of here and elsewhere and that is the dilemma about authenticity. We're in an era where international commerce, globalization, the ubiquitous use of the English language, the flattening processes of machine tool process and industrial commerce. The American media and entertainment are having an enormous homogenizing effect around the world. How do you work in a place where you try to do something that belongs there, that has some depth and meaning for the people who live there, that speaks to the past and allows them to have a future? You don't want to be producing work that is keeping them barefoot and pregnant down on the farm, and they can't go see the big city. There are questions about what is particular to a place that gives it something that has

meaning and purpose. I find that an interesting problem and wherever I go I always spend time trying to think where I am? As Grady Clay and others have said, “what time is this place”? That was J.B. Jackson, “what time is this place? Where am I?” Ken Frampton wrote a series of articles about critical regionalism which I think are still germane. They are probably the most useful things I would recommend anybody read. He is an architect theoretician who finally ended up thinking landscape is the only thing that ultimately will save us from the problems of globalization, because landscape is particular because of the climate, the soils, etcetera.

When you work in a place you really have to try and figure out how it got to be the way it is and not do a cartoon of it. Don't start copying it. I'll give you an example, Frank Gehry and I were working on a project for the Olympics in Barcelona and we were both kind of knocked out. We went and looked at the work by [Antoni] Gaudí and all the other people. There were some twentieth century architects who were quite brilliant and we were very interested in their work. I said, “Well, I based a design of the Hotel des Arts there and the Villa Olympica on a couple of Miró paintings because I said he's already done the homework. Miró has already looked at the landscape, seen the colors, thought of the forms and has distilled them down to this. This is the palette of color and form”. I said, “out of this should come whatever it is we do because this is the distillation”. I thought of a transect from the high mountains to the ocean so that on the top of the hotel there's a montaña and then we come down and then there's the river with the trees and instead of a fence, so you wouldn't fall off the roof there's all these agaves. Agaves are a kind of weird horrible desert

plant that grows on the escarpment around the Mediterranean. It was a series of things that came out of the landscape but served up in a new way that you hadn't seen before in Barcelona.

Then I started on the pavement. Another landscape architect, who had been working there before and had done these stripes, had been fired and they brought me in to rescue the project. I just chopped up his stripes and started moving them around. I said, well on the outside we'll start with big simple pieces and as we come into the project they'll get a bit more complex and have more color.

Then down in the pool, that Frank and I did over the parking garage was a waterfall that falls into the garage. I really wanted to be this beautiful dark blue color and to do that we should go talk to Escofet. They are the people who make precast concrete, who had worked for Gaudí and did the Gaudí pavements, some of which are still in existence. We worked with Escofet. At a certain point I was doing something and Frank said to me, "Laurie just remember you can't do Gaudí in Gaudí land". The notion that yes, I couldn't do Gaudí but I could pay attention to him. I could do something else that acknowledged his existence and something I had learned about color from Miró. I was there doing a modern piece. We were a couple of Americans working in Barcelona. It's a project that could never have done anywhere else, not like that. They kind of like it, it's not what they would have done but on the other hand it's only for them. When you think about authenticity you try to figure out when you're in China you don't want to wiggle around and imitate China. They understand

red. They know that red is a complementary color of green that's why they have all the red stuff in their gardens. There's an understanding about a certain attitude to colors and pallets in different cultures that you have to be sensitive to. I don't know, authenticity it's a difficult problem.

Thoughts on Practice

On What is Landscape Architecture

BIRNBAUM: *What is landscape architecture?*

OLIN: What is landscape architecture? Well, that's the problem because it is fairly widely construed as many things. For me, landscape architecture has to do with environmental design. A phrase that's overworked today. But it had to do with the design of the environment for people with natural processes for some purpose with meaning. It's about the arrangement of the parts as much as it's about the parts themselves. Landscape is a structure. It's not really a thing. It's a noun, not a verb. You don't landscape something. A landscape is. You can add buildings to landscape; you can't add landscape to buildings. The landscape is the arrangement of things including buildings and roads. And for me a different a-ha moment was more about cities. Cities are landscapes. They're not primeval landscapes. They're not agricultural landscapes. They're not rural landscapes. They're not suburban landscapes. They're urban landscapes. When you do that continuum, the phrase makes sense. And the thing I discovered about a year ago when I was reading some long delayed readings in Claude Levi Strauss was that in 1938, he wrote that cities are not an architectural problem. He said they're a cultural landscape. That's a quote. When I went to

Seattle to study architecture I discovered cities. And so for me cities and buildings were always together. This is something that the French Marxist geographer, philosopher Febvre writes about. Lucien Febvre writes about the inextricable connection between the broad landscape, the agricultural landscape, and the city; that the city really has its tentacles all the way out. He had an ecological understanding of it without using the word ecology. But the relationship of the supply system even whether it's the goat cheese in the mountains of France to Paris, or whether it's oil in Saudi Arabia to the pumps in New Jersey; the notion of the relationship of that far flung infrastructure to the cities is because the cities are where the people are. The intensity of civilization and has in cities been since the Sumerian age. So the landscape is a continuum, it doesn't have a beginning and end. And in the cities we think they have an edge. We love the European cities where, you know, here the wall and it ends and there's the farms. And that's a clear formal edge of a particular period in history and agriculture and governance. It seems like an edge but that wasn't even an edge then because the economy of that pollus was really broader in the region.

And thinking back to Seattle after we saved the Pike Place Market, we decided we really needed to try and save the Green River valley and the Duwamish River Valley from factories and industrialization and suburban sprawl because otherwise there wouldn't be any good produce near the city. The closest produce would be up in the Skagit Valley or over the Cascade Range. And so how could we save the support system for the city while saving the city was interesting to us.

On What Makes a Good Landscape Architect

BIRNBAUM: *I would like for you to speak a little bit about why should landscape architects draw? Why should they write? And so I'm curious what your message is to people who are practicing today as they harness and refine their skills in university life, why are these things so important?*

OLIN: You know, landscape architecture is a fairly broad field of endeavor on one hand, regardless of scale or location, it really is about the changing or creating an environment for humans and society that in some ways is in tune with its region and with natural process. And in order to do that, one needs to acquire certain insight and skills and a sympathy and understanding, if not total control and knowledge. And in order to do that well, you have to know something about the world. And you have to know something about natural process, and you have to understand something about people. And you have to also understand what's going on in society. Where has it been? Where it is? Where might it go? So to be successful in the field, I think one has to think a lot. You have to be reflective. You just can't just be intuitively responsive. And I think being somewhat literate is very helpful.

On Understanding Change

BIRNBAUM: *And so the question is is it just part of the natural process that these landscapes ebb and flow? You'd been around long enough to see some of these places go away. I was wondering if this was a moment to talk about sort of personal philosophy about that stuff.*

OLIN: Well, the word philosophy always makes me nervous, because I'm a practitioner. And although I am a bit of an academic, I don't think of myself as an intellectual. Because unlike social scientists who study things and are trained to not interfere we are trained to interfere. You know our instincts and our training and our education is all about trying to change things. Designers are optimists. They think that through their efforts they can make something better. So we believe in positive change, and we believe that we can actually make the world richer, not poorer, through our energy and through our projects. So one of the things to say is that I am somewhat reflective, and always have been about what I am doing. There's practice and there's also the thinking about it.

In working on those early suburban projects, one of my thoughts was, how odd, I don't even drive. I always need an associate or a young assistant or a partner or the architect to take me to the site. [This situation] meant that at some level I really didn't believe in the project. And so I think there is a real ambivalence. I called it melancholia. Landscape architects have a love of the world and nature, a love of the way things are. And here people are changing it, and sometimes wrecking it or taking away something that made them want to be a landscape architect. I think that is one of the dilemmas with suburban development. Most of the work of the landscape architect between 1950 and 1970 was suburban work. It was developing the mess that is America. So there is a genuine melancholy, I think, on the part of the profession, for its role in suburbanization. I've found those projects thought provoking, but I also found them useful, because it grew an office. We used them as great

training grounds for people, so that when we turned our energy towards the city, they knew how to do things, and they'd honed their skills.

But we also did it for another reason. And this sounds like a rationalization, and it may be, but I felt, well, if somebody's going to do it, it should be me. [I felt] that there are hundreds of people in those buildings who spend their days and lives there, and one should try and give them a really beautiful environment, that is uplifting and fulfills their needs and a place where young guys can sort of look at the girls and get offstage from their bosses. Give them a place where they can eat lunch outdoors in some nice way. And it was a chance to actually save farmland.

With Johnson & Johnson Baby Products, what I proposed was to keep agriculture by putting an orchard in the parking lot, restoring hedgerows and by building habitat. And so the very first project that I had was in the suburbs; but I thought how can I turn this project to the value system that I have? I argued with Harry [Cobb] when he first asked me to work on the Johnson & Johnson Headquarters that it should be urban. It is a somewhat suburban project but situated in a town. I argued that we should pull it to the street and do some other things behind. And basically he fired me. And then a couple of months later asked me to come back. And when I then came back I said, "all right, if you're going to do this, let me show you how to do it". And we did it. I said, "Let's do it as in the mode of the Rutgers campus across the street, and have it be an extension of that landscape".

But then the next corporate headquarters was in town. It was Pitney Bowes. It was a way of helping the city of Stamford, Connecticut, which was losing jobs, and it would restore a public park and some other things. So we tried to figure out if we're going to do this corporate stuff, how can we leverage values? Can we make it be about where you are? And what do you do for the lives of all those hundreds of people who are in there day and night. When they look out the window, when they go have lunch, when they come and go to work, what does it do for them physically and emotionally?

Well, I've, you know, Heraclitus is right. All is flux. The thing is that cities are part of nature. And nature is turbulent, energy flows through nature and everything is always changing. Some things [change] at a glacial speed, like glaciers, and some things at a very rapid speed, like hurricanes and tornados. And in cities, some things seem glacial and change slowly, like a street pattern, or the early settlement pattern, and some things change rapidly, like buildings that are for entertainment and things like that. So there are different speeds of change. And so everyone has experienced the fact that if they go back to a city they haven't been to in ten years, it's different. But if you live in a city, you don't really notice all the changes that are happening every day, because it is constantly evolving. And some things are more stable, because we value them for some economic or social reason.

But one of the things that happens, and I wrote about this and talked about it at a conference for the Cultural Landscape Foundation, is that some wonderful pieces of design, whether they are landscapes by people like Paul Friedberg or Dan Kiley, or even ourselves, if

they are commissioned, they are quite often commissioned by people who are at the center of the polis, and [by people who] have great power and economic resources. And those projects for institutions and corporations and governments, at the hearts of our cities, those projects are put in place in areas that have most pressure brought to bear on them from all the energies from all the other egos, economic forces, political forces and social change. And so what happens is that some of our projects, like the one that's now in great danger and probably will be destroyed in Minneapolis by Paul Friedberg, are subject to enormous desire, and other people get their hands on them and turn them to their own purposes. I've had projects torn up. One of them after it was torn up, the owner learned that it had just won a design award. That's OK. They were on to doing the next thing with somebody else. You know, it upset me, but I thought, eh, you win some, you lose some.

We've done some projects that are really not successful that maybe should go under the plow. But everything's a full sized mockup. Everything's an experiment. And what they built, they have never built before this year with these people and this economic moment. And so all landscape projects are full-fledged experiments; and people don't get that. It's OK. If you tell them, they probably would be afraid to do them. But what happens is that to defend a project of some design that is valued by some people, sometimes you succeed, sometimes you don't. [The project] has to have been developed and people have to love it enough, there have to be enough people in a society to want to defend it, or it won't happen. And quite often powerful people and agencies, governments, and institutions, can roll right over communities and citizens, if they're rigged the levers right. And it happens.

I've worked on projects that I jokingly call projects people love to hate. And some of them, I'm happy to say, after they're done people have embraced, like the Denver Transit Mall, or the Getty in Los Angeles, or Bryant Park, or Canary Wharf. There were huge public controversies, enormous outbursts of nervous energy or anger, or just fear of change. And afterwards, because we were fortunate or had done good work, or a combination often of both, they were embraced by the citizenry, because they actually met the goals we'd set, and that the society had set. But the thing about landscape design and architecture in general is that every project, any one thing, always preempts all the alternatives that might have been or were there.

What I talked about when I went off to Rome, was the notion of trying to figure out how we might add the next layer without just knocking everything down. When do you insert something or lovingly save most of it? How much be saved and how much should go? Should something be edited? And [if so] will it still have its soul. Those are questions that we ask. The whole riddle and the difficulty and the concept of authenticity comes up. And that's another topic I should discuss just it, in itself. But the thing about preservation and destruction of public work and of landscapes in cities is a thorny one, because a lot of change is sometimes just driven purely by economics in the evolution of the city to another stage in its own development. And that can just demolish wonderful things.

Taking Charge While Working with Your Team

OLIN: Landscape architecture is a wonderful profession. It's one of many, another is architecture and then there's civil engineering. For many years after World War II architects controlled projects and landscape architects were sort of treated like house maids who came in to kind of clean up and take care of things and were told what to do. This was unlike the days when Olmsted was telling the architects to "put your buildings here" and "Oh, no that would be too big". I don't think either profession should dominate the other, I think they need to work together. For a long time architects basically told landscape architects to be the good wife, make me look good and that's what we did. Several of us in my generation, and there's a bunch of us, it's not that we were so uppity it's just that we thought we had more to offer. We actually liked architecture and thought we could help them if they would work with us. We developed friendships with architects so that they started calling us when they started the job. Or clients started calling us to help them pick sites and help them think about what architects they might work with. I don't think either of us should be the boss of the other. But I do think what's happened is in the period between say from 1956 to today is that we've gone from being this kind of retiring smiling group that helps other people look smart and defers and backs off to being sometimes a bit uppity and a bit bumptious and a bit forthright. We need to be unafraid to take charge when we should, to help out when we should, to be quiet when we should and to collaborate at all levels with people; because these projects are so complex, they're so difficult, no one person can think of them all, nobody can or should control them all. We have to work on them together. I think we're in a period in landscape architecture where people understand who we are now. We've sort of come out, it's not like coming out of the closet, we were

always around and in full sight. But as Ian McHarg said about fish, and I've quoted it before, that they'll be the last creature to discover water. I think Americans and people in the world in general have realized that the landscape is extremely important for the way their whole life turns out and for our success as a society. They realize that people have devoted their life to working in landscape architecture are an enormous help to them. We're in a different position then we were when I entered this field and it's much better.

OLIN: We started work in the front [of the New York Public Library] here in 1980. In 1982 we began working here [Bryant Park]. Ten years later in 1992 we completed Bryant Park. We had been through three mayors, three park commissioners, people in the city council had come and gone, but Bryant Park Restoration Corporation kept going and we kept going, the library kept going, the board kept going. It was wonderful group. We finally got it built and there was a huge party to dedicate the opening of the park. I'm used to a lot of things. When Sixteenth Street in Denver opened, there were a lot of politicians who took credit for it who had actually tried to stop the project because they felt it was going to close their shops. So I was used to people taking credit for things that had actually opposed it when it was a success.

In the case of Bryant Park I was kind of surprised. There was a stage at the other end of this [lawn] with a lot of people sitting on it, there were park commissioners, there were city councilmen, there was the mayor, there were various other people, people from the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation, Dan Biederman, everybody was up there, Lynden Miller was

there, Hugh Hardy was there but I wasn't invited. I was sitting in the audience with Holly Whyte and his wife. We were really pleased and proud of the project but we were also kind of surprised that the landscape architect wasn't mentioned even though we had pulled it all off. That was 1982.

That would not happen today. Today when students of mine like Jim Corner produced the High Line, they're heroes and they are a civic [heroes]. They've done everything but a ticker tape parade for him in New York. Today, landscape architects [work has] been in the Museum of Modern Art, they are on stage and people know who they are they know what we do. I am so happy and proud that our profession has finally, people get it, they understand what we do and it's a good moment. Now we have to live up to it, they called our bluff, we've got to deliver the goods, and we have to produce the good world.

On the Academic Life

BIRNBAUM: Do landscape architects make good chairmen? And why would you want someone to consider being the chair of a department? Is there some message there that there's an opportunity for here in terms of not just the personal growth, but in terms of the kind of impact you could have on an institution and on alums?

OLIN: Well, so the question about teaching and about leading a field or individuals, or being a chair in a department is a puzzle. And there's a great book that was written by Laurens van der Post, a South African person, about a trip he took after World War II, recovering

from being a Japanese prisoner of war, called *Venture to the Interior*. And in the opening pages, he says, the first thing you must always consider is what their motives are? What are the motives of people who say they want to teach or want to be a chair, versus the motives of people who don't want to do it? Or the motives of people who wander into it and then find, well, if I'm here, how should I do this? I think I'm sort of in the latter category, because I never meant to teach. People suggested it to me, and I thought that's crazy. I don't know anything. When I was young, I was sensitive to insecurity. I'll go to my grave feeling insecure.

There's this thing about the safety of academia, the warm feeling like a warm bath, you know, that they really don't want to leave. It's kind of cool. I think that no one should go straight from graduate school into teaching, or from just getting a degree to teaching. I think everybody should do something for a bit, because I really do think they don't know enough. And I think they're not humble enough. You know? I think it's important to spend some time seeing how others live, even if it's just to be in the drafting room for two years. And then you can say, I'd rather teach, this is crazy, I hate practice. Because a lot of people who teach are there because they hate practice, or they just couldn't take it. Frankly, [there are] too many people.

And there's an escalation in degrees that has to do with people continuing to study and talk about something, and some of the content's a little questionable. I'm reading a book by Tony Judt right now, which is a fabulous thing that he recorded before he died. He talks

about teaching, and he talks about the problems with Oxford, Cambridge, Berkeley, the schools he knows the best and taught at. And these great institutions are great, but you need to run away from them for a while, because if you stay in them, they will chew you up. And it's good to be in them, and go away, and then bring back the news and kind of try and grab the steering wheel, and take them places that they don't naturally want to go, which is to deal with difficult issues in a substantive way.

And so [talking] about chairmanships- that's a terrible job. It's probably as bad as being the CEO of something if you actually are doing a good job; because you're responsible for everything from the light bulbs to the psychodrama of the people in the first year studio who think that the person you hired is a lunatic. You're dealing with human interactions on the one hand, and you're dealing with tawdry fiscal junk on the other hand. It's a very low level. Meanwhile, you are trying to see if you could have a curriculum that has some substance and content. And [figure out] what the hell's going on in the studios that relates to the world, the world's problems and the world's issues. So that's what chairmen are supposed to do. And parts, some days it's very attractive. But a lot of the time, it's hard work and it's boring. Parts of it are boring. And I made it harder for myself by insisting on always teaching a fairly full load while being the chair. Because of my practice this meant I needed an assistant to mind the store when I was away.

I would say that some of the most successful chairs have been full time chairs who have not had active practices. But there have also been very successful chairs who have been real

crackerjack practitioners. Who am I thinking of? Garrett Eckbo, Ian McHarg, I would say they did pretty well. And you know, Beth Meyer at UVA [University of Virginia]. She was a landscape architect that went to work for EDAW, worked there for a few years, and she was attracted to us. We hired her and she worked with us, worked on Bryant Park and worked on some stuff with me and Peter Eisenman. And I made a terrible mistake, because after I'd left Harvard, Jerry McCue asked me one day over a meal who I thought were some of the bright young things in the field, and who were the smartest people in my office. And I stupidly gave him the names. I gave him Alistair McIntosh, Niall Kirkwood, Beth Meyer. He hired them all.

But about chairmen, the department flourished. Harvard is a great school. And then she [Beth Meyer] flipped back to her alma mater and became one of the great chairs at Virginia. Well, what to say. That wasn't because of me. That was because she had the smarts to go and not do it too soon, to not teach too soon. She knew a lot. She'd been around the block. It was the same with Julie [Bargmann] and others and for Gary [Hilderbrand] when he went back to Harvard to teach. He practiced a lot. And Niall had practiced a lot. All the things that got built in London, Niall and Alistair were at my side getting it built and seeing that the documents got done. And so those guys actually knew what the hell they were doing. And I would say that Jim Corner, when he became chair, had experience in the field before he came to Penn. He had an undergraduate degree and he came to Penn and got an MLA. But he worked professionally, did a big garden exposition in Manchester and did a bunch of other stuff. He worked for about a year and a half, two years, in an office of a guy who spun

out from my office and decided that, this was kind of rinky dink. And [John Dixon] Hunt hired him. Jim's turned out to be fabulous.

On Global Work

The odd aspect of our practice has been the fact that we've worked in so many diverse places. That is not common to every firm, but is becoming more common today to work globally, or certainly nationally and internationally. And there is a great fear that that will produce a kind of homogenization and a lack of quality and authenticity. [A fear that] it's the death knell of local practices and of, shall I say, regional ethics and their environmental base. But I don't believe that. If it's in the hands of someone who is thoughtful and is careful about ecology and about sociology and [someone who is] resistant to homogenization and co modification, landscape is one of the most powerful weapons and tools because it is site specific. Yeah, you can plant Norway maples in California, but why would you? But the concept of native plants is equally foolish as a [concept], only because that is a form of ethnic cleansing as well. One of the things that you learn if you study the environment is that it's only one world. And the ecological principles of the northern hemisphere apply in the southern hemisphere, and they apply in Asia, and they apply in Europe. So ecology operates according to principles of natural science, of physics, chemistry, thermodynamics, everywhere they are the same. But the results are different because of the latitude and the longitude, the geology, the climate, or the culture that came into that place 5,000 years ago, 10,000 years ago or 200 years ago, and by what they've done to it and how they altered it. And so if you go someplace on the globe, you should be

able to figure those things out. Where am I? Who's here? What have they been doing? What's the climate? What are the soils? What's the geology? What works? What doesn't work? And we've been moving plants around the world forever, just as the animals and people have moved around the world. The world's population needs to understand how we are related, and we need to treasure our differences. But we also should not cling to certain things that are foolish about the environment. And so, in our case, we've been very stimulated and had the incredible fortune to work in Romania, Italy, Spain, France, Germany, England, Japan and China. I've got a project in Canada right now. We're having fun. But we're also very concerned about what we're doing when we're there. You want to really understand and try to do what works for the people in the place.

Why Maintenance Matters

OLIN: There is one other observation about this sequence of projects at Battery Park City and that is how good they look today years after they were built and installed. We know a lot about what public neglect looks like from our other projects. All of the successful ones, and especially this one, have ongoing maintenance, people figuring out how to program them, how to take care of them, fund them and to train people to do it. That [process] helps discipline the people who come and use it. There's a kind of civilizing quality because they are so well maintained and they look so good that people treat them well. That takes energy and that takes money.

Battery Park City, very wisely, in the very early days decided to put a little millage on their real estate income and to set up something called the Parks Corporation. That corporation has its own staff and maintains all of Battery Park City. Although it's in the city of New York, this is space created by a Public Authority and maintained by that Public Authority. They hired Tessa Huxley, who was up at the Cloisters, transforming the Cloisters Garden and brought her here and put her in charge. She has trained a number of people. She has a longtime colleague named T. Fleischer who is a great help to all of us. Tessa and T. have trained a generation of gardeners and parks people and they have also pioneered the use of all sorts of organic methods. There are no chemical sprays. They know so much about horticulture, maintenance, behavior, plants and biology. It's wonderful. As designers, we are the beneficiaries of having had a fabulous client. All you can say is that when you come here and you see all these kids and you see these people and the boats going by that we're so lucky. I feel so proud and I'm really happy to be here.

Learning From Cities

On why Hanna/Olin Worked on Urban Projects

Well, in the period of plus or minus 20 years of what was Hanna/Olin, I guess the thing one sees the most is our devotion to working in the heart of major cities, whether it's one of the largest cities in the West, Denver, or Los Angeles, or whether it's New York City or London. One of the things is that we devoted our efforts and our time to produce projects that we felt would be transformative in some way, and that would privilege a vision of civic life and public life. [Projects where] citizens could come out to be together and where they were

able to look around and see their city and be with each other. Projects that did that were projects that interested me the most, whether they were mostly paved or whether they were mostly green didn't matter. They were the same project for me.

And I also felt that when the La Villette competition happened. There was so much buzz about it being this whole new idea in landscape. I looked at it and thought, no, it's not, really. It's a recycled 1930s socialist worker's park with some Decon[struction] bits. It was an interesting thing and it's was stimulating to architects. But in terms of landscape, it was very retarded.

I had come to the conclusion that a lot of landscape projects that would be important would be kind of normative in one way, in that they would utilize almost archaic and traditional pieces. But they had to be strategically put together in certain ways, so that they would be seen as fresh and serving particular economic, social purposes. Because of my long devotion to the environment and my interest in natural process, the ocean and mountains, birds and animals and trees I had this sense that somehow getting nature into the city [was important]. In a way that actually has to do with what Ken Frampton calls critical regionalism. That is the notion that each project had to somehow be ground in its place. That you couldn't do that project just anywhere, and you could only do that project there. That's that old idea of genius of the place, this genius loci that we find in Roman literature and, in 18th century English poetry. And we also find it with McHarg. The notion that each place has a genius is also true in cities. So in our work we began to try and look at, what

would you do over a railroad yard in London that's different from what you'd do on a landfill on the Hudson River? What do they have in common and then what would be specific to that place? For the longest time, people just felt that every project looked different. For instance, like Saarinen's work. No two things look alike. What's this about? As opposed to people who produced a brand of work. One can say, "That's clearly a Richard Meier project". Our work was not identifiably signature work that way at the time. In aggregate, when people look back, they do see a common handwriting, the use of stone, love of certain patterns and some bad habits.

So in the period of Hanna/Olin, I would say that our goal was to know where you are and to work within that culture in a way that's meaningful to the people there. To make a place they will utilize and it will leverage other things in terms of their local civic vision of themselves. In Denver that happened. It didn't quite happen in Seattle with Leslie Park at the time, although now they like it. But for 20 years they didn't get it. For Bryant Park, it clicked right away. With some of the projects in London, I've had young landscape architects and landscape architects not so young, say that the work that we did at Canary Wharf and at Bishop's Gate, helped liberate the profession there from doing gardens and 18th century stuff. It allowed them to get back into the big game of cities and to understand the logistics of landscape construction at another scale. We returned them to actually where they had been in the 18th century and early 19th century.

Reexamining Cities

I began thinking that I needed to look at cities as ecological phenomena even though I was trained and loved design and physical design. Physical form is just the shape of the things. And I decided that my friends might be working on the wine glass, i.e. the buildings but I want to work on the wine, the stuff that flowed through the middle. You know, I was very interested in that other, the other, which people couldn't see. They couldn't see the landscape of a city for its spatial ecological structure. They only saw buildings or bridges or something like that. Or maybe [they saw] parks as voids in a city. And I didn't. I saw them as networks and flows. And I decided that streets were important to design and had to be rescued from traffic engineers, because I came to the conclusion that they made up the bulk of the open space of all cities. And that since streets were the major open space of every city, they needed to be reclaimed for all the social uses they used to have. Because if you look at a street in the 19th century, that's where socialization takes place, that's where you meet, that's where people talk, that's where children played. But the automobile has driven every other activity out of the streets to the point they became unbearable. And that made the centers of the cities where those highways and all those cars were untenable. And then the big tall buildings would vacuum up all the stuff from the lower buildings around them, emptying them out for parking lots. The transportation policies were destroying cities. There were a lot of things destroying cities and making them unlivable. I came to the conclusion that the most important landscape architectural problem was the city. And that the only way we could save the agriculture and the forest and the beautiful parts of ex-urban America was to make cities places people wanted to live. We had to make them desirable. We had to make cities beautiful places to raise children, to be in love, to work, to

rest, to recreate, to goof off. We had to make cities a place of refuge as well as work so that people didn't have to flee them. This meant we had to find a way to bring many of the things that people want when they leave the city back into the city. Bring back those life affirming things. Generally they go under the rubric of nature. We needed water. We needed birds. We needed trees. We needed the sun. We needed the sky. We needed seasonal change. We needed space. We needed to be able to change the focal length. We needed a whole bunch of things. And we needed to make cities places that weren't just safe so that you could survive or places where you could work and not drop dead. But we needed to make them places you really wanted to go to instead of away from. And the way to do that was make them be great environments. And J.B. Jackson had written about that. He has written some of the most poetic things about that. And I realized that yeah, I should work on that.

On the Renewal of Cities

And so there are many parts of cities in Europe and America that we treasure, and there are some open spaces that we treasure that are saved because of accident and economic decline. Most of them wonderful buildings in Harlem that people are restoring now are being restored because they weren't torn down. [They weren't torn down] because nobody wanted to do anything there. It wasn't the center of the city, so it didn't get the pressure to bear on it. The French Quarter, which we all treasure, in New Orleans, was a slum. Society Hill in Philadelphia was a black slum. It was largely abandoned. Skid Row was here north of Independence Hall. Under Ed Bacon, they tried two things; to tear down Skid Row to build

an honorific park for the Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell, and to do some kind of renovation and restoration in Society Hill. They didn't have the word gentrification. But [they wanted to do] some new work to attract people and development and to show it's a new OK place to live. [They thought] we can build some towers and a little bit of park, but let's have some low rise around it to help build it back. Well, the I.M. Pei Partners project of Society Hill towers and low rise buildings was done as part of a two part plan of save and improve some parts, the majority of the district, and insert and add a few new pieces. And they got away with it. It worked. It caught on. And then others were able to do inserts and tear down a few buildings and build some new buildings. But basically a large fabric was saved. That's a pretty interesting piece.

As opposed to Denver, where they started knocking down all the 19th century buildings along what became Skyline Park. So they sort of abandoned the area down by the railroad station, what's now called Low Do, the great loft district. That was Skid Row. They said, "let's work up here closer to downtown. Let's level everything and see what we can do". And of course, it took 20 years, and they ended up with a very clumsy urban renewal, big box buildings, suburban buildings in the middle of downtown. It was not successful. But by that time, we had done the Mall and other things had happened, the economics had turned around, and people began to see value in the historic buildings. And there were some tax incentives for that, so that changed what happened in the future. They had knocked down so much, they thought, we'd better not do anymore. This is not working. You know, the energy that churns through cities is really a remarkable, and most people don't see it. They

see the stock market go up and down. They see a high rise building go up next to them that they're trying to stop. Or they see that there are too many buses. They see incremental examples of the change, of this next level of quantum and energy and money. But they don't see the whole picture.

Lessons from Philadelphia

OLIN: Well, coming to Philadelphia and to Penn was an interesting thing for me to do as a designer. In spite of all of my background in the wilderness and nature in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska, I did develop this love of cities, when I came out to the States. Coming to Philadelphia was kind of interesting, because it is a planned city. And the plan is basically the plan done for London, which wasn't executed, after the Great Fire. And it's based upon a plan; it's really a Hippodamian plan. So when I got here, I realized there is this plan which its has roots in Greek town planning history and is a flexible and an extraordinarily resilient plan with great scale. It is adaptable to different periods of architecture and different modes of transportation and different economic eras, and I found this to be very thought provoking. The scale is pretty darn good and living and walking around it, it affects you. I used to take my students and we would start at the Delaware [River] and walk across the city. It was like walking through time, because the buildings get a little bit bigger and fatter, and the windows get higher, and the styles change. You basically go from the late 17th, early 18th century through [to] now, as you just walk west across the city. It's a great textbook place to take students to teach them about architecture and urbanism. It has good public spaces but it has been compromised by development and

real estate. So looking at what went wrong with Penn's plan, [you ask] would you really like Penn's plan if it had got built the way he did it with less density? I'm not sure you would. It's a little too much like Toy Town, and this is a real town.

As Homo sapiens, we're always checking out stuff, and you're learning about it, and you're studying things. Well, in this case, one of the things that puzzled me, and still does, is the problem of quantum. Because most of the troubles of our cities of today, like] the rapid growth in China and the difficulties we're having with some of the systems in America, when I think about them, I think that it's so much easier when you have less to deal with. The redundancy in the large quantum makes design a lot harder, because you have to figure out how to deal with bigger units, bigger blocks, more stuff, and how to keep that from getting clumsy or dehumanizing. So Philadelphia was stimulating.

Creating Livable Places

Well, I guess in thinking back and thinking forward on the one hand when I think back about the roads not taken, I [don't mind the fact I didn't become an architect of buildings. [I don't mind that] I didn't end up becoming a painter or going into music. I wonder what that would have been like. So that's the past. Those are the things that might have been. You know? [And of them] music may be the most interesting of that lot. Going forward, one of the things that I care about that I have not done much of is housing- social housing, housing for people. How do you develop community residential enclaves that are healthy? Housing is the biggest failure of all American design and planning for the last 70 years. We are good

at building cheap [housing] but not good housing. We're good at building expensive or really boutique housing. And we are terrible at building enough adequate dwellings in a good or in a wonderfully rich setting for multiple generations of people of various incomes. We're terrible at that and we haven't done very much of it. And I see that the relationship between the building, open space and public space as being absolutely critical to that adventure. Frank Gehry and I managed to do some social housing in Germany that's really terrific. But only in Germany would they hire Frank Gehry and Laurie Olin to do public housing. And we did. And it's really great. It's really wonderful. And when the Turks, the Turkish people and the retirees and the students all moved in, who didn't move in was the middle class, the successful working Germans. But for all these other people, it was great.

And I have this sense that the acid test for any design is, does it work for kids, and does it work for older people; because if it works for them, it will work for the world. And I feel that our ability to build communities that work for kids and older people is almost zero. And if there is a chore for us as a field, we have to figure out what's our role in leveraging that, and making that happen, because we have to make cities rich, wonderful places. We can't have it be that the only way to experience nature and to be free outdoors and to socialize in a stimulating way is to have to get a plane ticket and go to a faraway place or a National Park. That's crazy. That's not right. J.B. Jackson in some article years ago, called, the "Imitation of Nature", Hum- maybe it is not that one- well one of the things he says is that every American deserves to have an environment that is environmentally sound, that is socially just and spiritually rewarding. Oh, my God. It's a Vitruvian Triad, firmness,

commodity and delight. But when you say ecologically healthy, socially just, spiritually rewarding, you've nailed it.

So then you say, well, how are we doing in our cities? [We are] not, doing well. Quite often they're not very just, in terms of equity, [in terms of] who suffers and who gains. How are we're doing on ecology? Well, we're starting to worry about storm water, and we're trying to build bigger parks. How about [our cities being] spiritually rewarding in terms of lifting you up and making you feel alive? Well, we have moments and flashes and pieces. But it should be a continuum. And it's not that the whole thing should be an orgasm. I mean, you can't live a climax all the time. There's a lot of stuff that has to be background. There has to be ordinary. And then if a lot of the world is ordinary, then the things that are extraordinary really have value and meaning. And so [we need to] find that balance, and learn how to build simple things and keep them simple so that the special things can be special. And we need to get it straight, instead of every building having to say "wow, look at me, I'm upside down". And a lot of landscape shouldn't say, look at me, I'm an interesting pattern which will make you think of X. Actually, [the design] should just help you get down the block to the next thing without driving off the road or having something odd happen to you.

So everything shouldn't be special, and everything shouldn't be overdesigned. Places need to be solid, healthy, good, environmentally sound, open, and transparent. And so that sets in motion those places and events and things that should have incredible power for the

community, and those moments, when you get those moments, you'd better live up to them.

So for the future, what have I not been able to do? I've been so fortunate. I've done highways, like the road in Glenwood Canyon. I've done master plans. I've done campuses. I've done beautiful private estates. I've done public parks. I've had the fun. I've had really good luck and really wonderful clients. But the one thing we've missed is this incredible chunk of city building that would make cities the place everybody really wants to be, where they are fulfilled and have a good life.

Developing Your Craft

How Drawing Can Be a Powerful Tool

And I think one of the most amazing ways to learn about the world is to wander around in it and to actually do drawings, to draw it, because drawing makes you look at it. You sit still, and while you're looking you're not just thinking about your next meal or what you're going to do tomorrow, you're also thinking about what's in front of you and what makes it tick. [You think about] the color of the season and what have you. You think. The mind runs around, I've described it as, when you stop the car and let the dog out, the mind runs around in circles. But it does a lot of things while you're drawing, one of which is think. And so drawing is interesting.

Now, the thing about pencil, or a pen, is that they're very portable, and they're very light. You can stick it in your pocket. You don't need power. The battery doesn't die. And you can draw on the plane. You can draw on the train. You can draw maybe in your bedroom. You can draw wherever. [Now today] because, laptops are smaller, and the phones are kind of cute and small, we're making it so you can do things on little pads with your fingertips. But it doesn't have the textural, physical, sensual response that actually making drawings has. To draw, one has to develop a spatial sensibility. And you end up having to be able to imagine what a thing looks like and what it looks like when you look at it from the other side. You should be able to draw it from the other side. And so there is this thing about drawing that is related to a spatial vision in the imagination. So at Penn, we have as many computers there as anywhere, and fewer drafting boards and all that stuff.

I teach a drawing course. And the students have had these courses in computers and visualization but by the end of their period at Penn, quite often many of them flock to my drawing course. And I have all these people wanting to have a drawing course before they leave. I don't think it's just because they know they're going to get an easy grade with me, which that may be a nice thing to do on the way out, is have this one class that's low stress. It's kind of fun, we get to see slides, and we get to draw, and when the weather is good, we go sit in the Botany Garden or somewhere for three hours on Monday morning. There's something in that.

But the reason they come, which I firmly believe, is that if you want to make decent visualizations with a computer, you'd better learn how to draw, because it's going to tell you by which measures you judge and evaluate visual imagery. It will help you understand why that computer rendering doesn't look right. There's something wrong with it. Well, it's because . . . And then there's this series of things that have to do, it's out of perspective, or there's a scale problem, or there's a texture problem, or there is too much detail in the distance. I can explain to them what's wrong with their computer drawings quite often. And if they could learn to draw, they would be able to self-criticize. So I argue that those who make the most beautiful computer drawings probably can make the best hand drawings, and those who do the best hand drawings probably do the best computer drawings. It tends to be the case. It has been so for quite a few years, and will continue.

The way we use drawing here in the office is that we use it to explore and study things and to figure out what something looks like, how it feels, what it means. For most of the students, the only time they actually do perspective is when they're trying to use them for persuasion. They're trying to sell something. Well, that's a terrible waste, because it's very time consuming and sometimes quite ineffective. Some of those drawings could scare the bejesus out of people.

So drawing, for me, is not just a personal pleasure, it's a way of working. If you go into the studio, you can look around and look at different kinds of drawing done at different stages for different purposes, gestalt drawings versus layout drawings versus sketches trying to

imagine something in 3D. There's many different ways [to represent something]. And so drawing is an all-purpose tool. And the devices that one does it with are so portable, so cheap, so effective, compared to the expense and time in constructing these visual images that people see. And of course, because it takes so much time a lot of it is done by firms in China and in India. And that's all they do. And so a lot of architects around the world just send off their stuff and get back these kind of generic perspectives of maples in the wrong season and all kinds of weird stuff. We see this stuff all the time, just horrible drawings that actually are precise. And so our clients, I think, are starting to realize that just because they're getting lots of computer renderings with all this detail, they're not necessarily correct, they're often fudged, and they are not necessarily nice.

Drawing in front of a client is one of the most captivating and engaging things you can ever do. And they love it. They just love it. And for many years, I've found that, if there's a big team meeting on something or other, like on Mission Bay in San Francisco, I will usually go in and plunk myself and sit at the middle of the table. And then as the meeting begins to roll, you ask for a piece of paper. And pretty soon, you have taken control of the meeting. And if you have a table full of lawyers and engineers and architects, other planners and clients, you can take control of the meeting if you start to draw. And if you draw all over the plan and say, "well, then, what you're saying is this". . . . It's the power of the pencil, and it's very powerful.

Communication is Vital

BIRNBAUM: *I want to go back to my question of, why should they be able to write. Why should they be able to speak in public? What are their personal thoughts of being a landscape architect?*

OLIN: I think being able to write, speak and draw well, despite our ubiquitous computer technology and all of its virtues and capabilities, that each of those things, writing, speaking, drawing, are actually outward expressions of thinking. Computers aren't thinking, they are like telephones or jack knives or something.

But to write, you have to be able to put thoughts together, and it's not just a test of your intellect. It's an ability to communicate with other human beings ideas. You can do that with speaking. You can look somebody in the eye and start talking to them. You can sort of perceive when they're getting [what you mean] and when they're not. Speaking well is a social skill that babies all learn.

There is a wonderful man, Paul Goodman, a kind of left-wing, a beautiful liberal thinker and social philosopher. At one point he wrote a desperate article in the *New York Review of Books* about the educational system in New York City. This was 30 years ago, and everybody was kind of at their wits end, as they still are today. One of the things he said was that, by the age of four or five, every human being around the world has learned a language, and they have perfect diction, accent, syllabi, etc. They've got all the stuff they need to belong to their social group. And they speak perfectly. And then they go off to school, where they

don't learn to read. And he said, if we learn to speak the way we teach everything else in our school system, an hour or two uninterrupted by bells and people shouting at you, we'd be a nation of stutterers. But he said, the good news is, everybody learns to speak before they get to school.

Well, everyone does learn to speak before they go to school, but some people have to work harder at how to talk to others. And that usually takes some effort. The people, who are good at it, probably have worked at it the way babies learn to speak. They probably took some time trying to get better at it. And drawing, I think, is the same.

What Does It Mean to Draw?

OLIN: Well, I love to draw. As I said earlier, I've been drawing since I was a small child. I learned through school that drawing was a way to not only record things but to a way to make me look at things. But one of the things about drawing is that to do a drawing you either have to sit or stand still. You look at the page and there's nothing on the page and you look up and you see something and you have to think about it. What you're going to do, because when you look back at the page, there's nothing there. And so then you have to put something down that in some ways begins to help you record what it is you're looking at. And as you begin to make marks, you begin to do two or three things. You begin to look more carefully and specifically for the next kind of information you're after. But you also begin to think about what are the particular notations and marks. Where in the drawing should I go? You put something here and then you move over here.

I remember Henry Rachel Hitchcock wrote an article about the reflexive gesture. He was talking about Michelangelo's fortification drawings. But one of the things he talked about was that as you begin to draw, one line leads to the next line and then the next line leads to another line. There is this sense of things responding in some kind of generative sequence. So for me there are several different kinds of drawing. There's note taking, which is like a laundry list, just diagrams. Simple things, you know, it's like note to the cleaning lady or the delivery man. The next kind of drawing is drawing where you're trying to record something for some purpose. Those are plans, sections, sketches that show the relationships between things. And those can be very diagrammatic and cartoony or they can be quite literal. Then there are the drawings that have to do with what does the thing look and feel like? That is a bit more synthetic and analytical but also they tend to be worked a bit more. There are gestural drawings. There are lots of different kinds of drawing. But for me drawing is a way of being in the world. It's a way of slowing down and being somewhere. While in the act of drawing, you hear things in the environment around you, people walking, children, footsteps, airplanes overhead, and birds. When you're in a place drawing, you tend to be quiet. I guess some people draw with a headset on. I don't. I play records sometimes when I'm drawing. Being there is an act of existential will. You are making this drawing that is about the world or some sensation or experience or something that you care about for some reason. But in a way it's like the act of being there. It's the making your mark as you pass on through. Some drawings are more poetic. Some drawings are very instrumental. We've got the folks in the studio who are making drawings, many of which are not very

pretty but they are very careful and they're content-laden. The thing that makes them like design is that they are built up. They are made things. But they are made around some concept of order and form usually. And the thing about drawings is it forces you to get beyond yourself in certain ways. [When you draw] you look at that woman over there on the bench and in the drawing you come to think and worry a bit [about her] and you understand something about that woman on the bench. When you draw the kids those kids over there does your drawing have their movement, their lilt, their sassiness, their sense of aliveness? So a drawing is like poetry and it's like music in that out of all the things in the world, it only does a few things and it's very self-limiting. And the thing about design, a lot of things about design is eliminating choices.

When you can do anything, what would you do? So then you say, well, I'm not going to do anything. I'm going to just do this. Then you say well, I could use all these colors. But it is too many colors. I think I'll just use these. So you keep eliminating, making choices to create form. To create a drawing, you have to eliminate a lot. There is too much information in the world. If you take pictures of everything then there's just way too much stuff. The reason we like great photographers is [we admire] their ability to see something and figure out how to see just that. In that way, they are like all great artists.

BIRNBAUM: Can you maybe give us an example? I know from just walking around with you in Rome, that you are constantly sketching and you're also sketching, there are details that I see you sketch. There are things you're doing for recordation reasons. I'm wondering if you

can give an example for a project where you were working on something and then you have this aha moment where you think you know and you go back to an old sketchbook from a particular detail and that inspired something in design. Does something like that happen?

OLIN: I don't know. I don't go back through them looking for source material. But occasionally I will be talking to a young person in the office about something and I realize I have a drawing that I should show them. Or I'll be on airplane thinking, and I'll come to a decision about something that I might want to do, a solution to a bench or a composition. And I'll bring it into the office and put it down and I'll explain this is where we should be going. This is what I think we should try, blah, blah, blah. So I use them that way a lot. I use them, you're right. I do note details. Every now and then I'll want to measure something.

Dimensions really matters a lot in the design of the public realm and the physical world. The last month I was on sabbatical in Rome in 2008, I went around and drew a lot of stuff just for the fun of it. But the first time I began looking carefully at classical sculpture there was an aha moment. And I ended up doing some drawings a stock archetypal pose of Venus; it's her as a crouching nude. There are versions of it all over the Mediterranean. There's dozens of them. You can go into a museum and see four of them. They're all kind of sort of the same. Just like there's an archetype of Apollo sitting down with one knee out and with a lyre in his lap.

So I was looking at some of this stuff and I'm thinking, you know, I've never really looked at these carefully. These are really pretty damn good. And then I realized the thing that was so amazing about them was that they were on the one hand generic and on the other hand specific. That the Apollo, when you look at him carefully, it's like all the other Apollos that have ever been. This is a knee. This is a leg. This is calf. This is an ankle. And they're kind of cranking them out in some studio. And yet and it's an archetype. He is a young man of this weight and age. On the other hand, you look at the ankle and see that vein or the kneecap and you suddenly realize how particular they are within the generality. The artist who made this was articulating this one moment.

And that struck me as being like a building I was looking at there, which was a Fascist building at the Piazza Augusto. In it is a famous restaurant called Alfredos. It's a beautiful brick building with limestone trim that is a 1930's design. It is exquisitely made and the façade is like a piece of music. The architect was very good. Then I looked at the hardware on the doors and I looked at the window frames. The rhythm of them, the proportion of them, I thought, god, this guy is so good. Who did this building? This is really good. But it's a generic building. It's an office building. It's a bureaucratic building. It's a typologically that is very common for a 20th century bureaucratic building. But as a physical expression, it is very particular and parts of it are quite lyrical. And other parts are very simple. And that interesting difference between the simplicity of great stretches and then the richness of some moments is what I was seeing in these classical sculptures.

Well, that's what happens in architecture. That's what happens in landscape architecture.

There are parts that should just be ordinary and there are parts that say stop notice this. At a certain point you realize that there are principles that work here and that work through a different medium. You know, Stravinsky's famous remark I quote it all the time and people probably get tired of hearing it. He said there are only two choices in composition contrast and harmony. Well, yeah, that's true except that after every note you have to figure out what the next one is. It's like constantly deciding. Is it on or off? You can do infinite calculations by counting to two. You know, which is what computers do. The notion of building a rich universe out of a few simple things, that's what Mozart did. That's what Rich Haag did. That's what I'm interested in.

Learning from Others

Why Frederick Law Olmsted is a Hero

BIRNBAUM: *Let's talk about who your heroes are?*

OLIN: Well, the question of who are one's heroes? I have heroes. Who doesn't have heroes? For me, there are a number of people. You start with Olmsted. Olmsted and contemporaries people who are older than me but now gone, people like Dan Kiley, and Larry Halprin. [They were] two huge influences. Before Olmsted, of course, there was Lancelot Capability Brown and his contemporary, Adolph Alford. And then there are people in Germany. There are a lot of people who you admire when you actually learn about their work. I mean, these guys are really good. I mean, how can you not love the world of [Beatrice Farrand]? I mean there are some people who are just super. But of the people

who influenced me directly, I have to say, you [have to] start with Olmsted. You set your teachers aside, like Rich {Haag}, Victor Steinbrueck and Ted Roethke and people like that, because they are too close to be heroes, they're your mentors. But Olmsted, why Olmsted? Well, because of his social vision and because of his understanding of the relationship of the people to the environment and health, and to his ability to get things done. He was like the General Eisenhower of landscape architecture. Ike was not a great infantryman or soldier, but he was a hell of a manager and a logistician. It was his ability to get more barrels of oil to Sicily and his ability to deal with all the crazy generals who were some incompetent. Eisenhower was a great general, because he could out think all the little generals that he had to deal with. And Olmsted was a great inventor of our field as it was emerging into the modern city industrial city of the late 19th century. Everyone was being drained from the countryside into the city, and it needed support systems to make it work. [He was and innovator] and it was his ability to figure out how to get that many cartloads of soil, how to take all the Irish immigrants that Tammany Hall was trying to shove down his throats for direct labor, his ability to figure out how to get some horticulturalists who knew what they were doing and hire people from Europe who knew certain skills [that made a difference]. I mean, look at the studio he put together with the architects, the horticulturalists, the engineers and the craftsmen and his ability to put together the teams that were needed. And anybody who's read the *Devil in the White City*, which is that odd narrative of the Chicago World's Fair, the Columbian Exposition, if you set aside the kind of slightly dopey murder mystery on one side, and just take the description of Olmsted getting that done [it is amazing]. He had these colossal dental problems that go on for months, he can't even

think straight but he has the ability to realize that he'd better bring some railroad spurs in and get the materials in. And where is he going to get the hundreds of thousands of cubic yards of soil and all the trees? And how do you get it done so when the door opens at the fair there's a landscape that is all intact, the pavements in, the railings are in, the water's working and the trees are planted? He was a genius. But he was a genius not just because he figured out how to get it done, and the machine tool process and the modern industrial era. He was a genius because he saw how cities were going to grow, when what their needs were environmentally. So we invent the Parkway. We have the linked park systems, the business of natural systems and how that might be a resource for the region. His vision was astonishing. So when we think of him as the father of our profession, it's true as a profession. It's not true in terms of, well, landscape architecture. People have been changing the earth for their purposes since the late Neolithic times. There are some great landscape constructions from the past. And it's not like there haven't been gardens and parks. But Olmsted saw that the city was the problem, and he saw how to deal with it, and he worked to scale of the problem. And then if you know Central Park, you end up falling in love with, not just him, but with Jacob Wrey Mould and with Calvert -Vaux and with Ignatz Pilat, and all the guys he had as his core team. You realize that was a great crew. They invented the furniture that became the streetlights and the lids and the grates; the way the Alford bureaucracy did in Paris. He did the same thing. They invented this whole panoply of furnishings that became the modern city that we still use and characterize New York as different from *Paris*. And so it's hard not to admire them and think of them as heroes.

Why Dan Kiley is a Hero

More recently, of course, it's Dan [Kiley] and it's Larry [Halprin]. I like and admire Bob Zion but he didn't do enough work to make me have him be as a hero. I think the Museum of Modern Art Garden that he redid from the early versions is absolutely genius. And I think he had an absolutely fabulous touch. He designed some private properties that I've been to that I think are exquisite and masterful. But Larry changed landscape architecture the way Ian McHarg did. They were friends. Ian, of course, is one of my heroes, too, but he was a personal friend, and you know, we hung out together. You don't hang out with your heroes. They're your buddies. He was older and more mature, but in some ways and more immature in some other ways. And Dan, I'll talk about Dan first, and then I'll talk about Larry.

Dan appeals to me, because he, he saw the architecture of landscape architecture. He saw what it was about organizing something in an architectonic way that still was horticulturally sound and was socially evocative. But he did it as a student of modern, well, should I say, 20th century art. And he was very interested in early 20th century art. And music, he loved music. He played it endlessly. People don't know that about him. And to watch him . . . he was, it was like Stravinsky and the Rite of Spring, where it goes dum dum dum, dum dum dum. Dan would jump up and down and make the sound that you should get, that pulsating, pumping rhythmic beginning of that fabulous piece.

I mean, here was a guy who worked in Warren Manning's office, Manning being, of course, the non-Olmsted, great regional planner and landscape architect who designed parks all across New England the East. Manning designed the whole park system of Harrisburg. Dan once drove Warren Manning all the way to Harrisburg and back, because Manning, like me, didn't drive. Anyway, but they'd be going along, and Manning would say, oh, see that. And they'd stop, and they'd identify a tree, and Manning would have Dan go out and bring him back some leaves or something. Dan was very well trained in Manning's office. It was like being in Olmsted's office. But when he was in the Army in World War II, he saw the great French landscapes of Le Notre and it absolutely stunned him, because he saw the power of the geometries of Le Notre, but he also saw how they belonged to the Ile de France. They really felt right with that topography, and the hydrology. Of course they were all, drainage schemes. They were trying to figure out what to do with poorly flooded bottom land. All those canals are ecologically very simple in what they are doing. Because all the great land was under agriculture, that's where the money was, the leftover bits are where the chateaus are, just like the country houses in England. They're always in the places where you don't want to farm. They are up in that weird awkward ridge that's windswept that looks down on the bottom land where the poor heavy soil is. That's where all the lakes and ponds are. So people don't see them that way, but that's what they are. Dan got it. He saw it, and he understood it. But he also loved the geometries, and he loved it because he could see how it was in another way very modern. He could see the relationship between [Chateau de]Sceaux or Chantilly, he could see the relationship between those and [Piet] Mondrian. Broadway Boogie Woogie was one of his favorite paintings. He would reference

it in his discussions; it has this pulsating geometry with these rhythmic bits that are moving according to certain lines and shapes and forms that are making a greater composition. And Dan got that.

So Dan's work, Dan's work is classic, because it has these bones of old ancient structures, in this case, both Le Notre and Hippodamian stuff from Roman times. Le Notre understood some Italian stuff, but he only knew it from prints. So Le Notre goes back to classical and antiquity, but he renews it and refreshes it. And Dan goes back to Le Notre and renews and refreshes it through the filter of modernity and he produces work that's so clear and so beautiful. And he uses trees the way few people have. And he wasn't great at a lot of things. He quite often worked with architects, and if he had architects who knew how to detail site stuff, the site stuff was pretty good, like when he worked with SOM. But when Dan detailed stuff, like site furnishing, they usually fell apart, they weren't very good. He used the wrong kind of wood or something. He didn't really know about it, and he was hiring people who were just out of school, and they didn't know how to do it. But his structural understanding, he was a structuralist, and he really got it. He got how to do that, and how to do it on a site. Every now and then, it was nutty.

He was hired to work at the Getty, because Richard Meier wanted him. He was Richard's favorite landscape architect. He proposed a grid of live oak trees across the entire site, which was a mountainside. It was like, draping a blanket over a mountain. It was this kind of a rumpled thing. But he wanted to put them 16 feet on center in all directions. Well,

that's too close, and it's crazy. And the Getty basically fired him; they just thought this is insane. As far as they were concerned, you don't do a Le Notre [design] on the Santa Monica Mountains. Well, actually, I helped him get most of those oaks planted. We moved them apart a little bit out to 18 feet or so. But the point was it was smart, because they [Live Oaks] were fire retardant. So Dan knew what he was doing, in a way he always knew what he was doing. He was using a native tree that was like a Mediterranean tree, but planting it on an absolute grid that would produce a matrix into which Richard's pieces would sail like a ship. It was a very pure vision.

You know, Dan was good. I only worked with him once, and that was a great hoot. And he was great to pal around with. One time he told me, he said, you know, it's all about proportion. It's all proportion. And in a way, I kind of believed that. It was all about proportions in your behavior, in the amount you drink, in the way you draw, in what you do. It's this compared to that. It's this in relationship to that. Everything is in relationship to something else. That's true for ecology as well. Everything is in relationship to something else. Well, Dan knew that, and it shows in his work. And so he's a hero. He's nutty, mad as a march hare, a crazy Irishman from South Boston and a little cocky boxer. He wanted to make martinis, chase the girls, go skiing, jump in the lake in the middle of winter. He was a nut. I loved him. Everybody loved him. The architects loved him. And he could take it, he could dish it out. He and [Eero] Saarinen, they loved each other, in a nice way. And now we can move on to Larry [Halprin].

On Larry Halprin's Talent

Well, Larry Halprin is an important guy who I admire. I liked him. We were never really close, but we knew who the other one was, and I think he actually respected me. He liked me to the degree that I paid court to him, because in Larry's world, it really was a lot about Larry. And maybe in my world it is about me, too. A lot of us are that way. You have to believe in yourself to get anything done. But Larry was a great landscape architect, one of the greatest. And he helped change landscape architecture. He was trained as a modernist at Harvard, along with I.M. Pei and Ian McHarg, and Dan [Kiley], Bob Zion, and a whole bunch of other very brilliant men including Philip Johnson. That whole crowd after World War II were pretty amazing, they all loved [Walter] Gropius, they all believed in Modernism, and they were all pioneers. Before the War Larry had been involved in the kibbutzim in Israel, he had been on the grand tour with his mother, and they came back like a week before the stock market crashed. And so he had a life before World War II. Then the War happened and he was in the Navy; and after the War he went on the GI Bill he went to Harvard. And he already had a degree in landscape architecture. He had worked in horticulture at the University of Wisconsin, and he really knew his horticulture. It was pretty solid.

But he got the message about modernism from the source. He went to San Francisco, and he went to work for Tommy Church. He was there for a while and he really liked Church but he really felt he had to go out on his own. It was inevitable. But what did he do? Well, he hired bright people, just as Church had. He always had a stream of very talented people

going through his office. But Larry was interested in civics. He was a Progressive. Today the press would call him a liberal, or maybe even a socialist or something. But Larry believed in the people, because most people who were young during the Depression, did. And they believed there were things that the community knew best. He thought that a lot of the environment should be designed for the community and that they should be involved.

He was married to Anna Halprin the dancer, who was a great avant-garde dancer and a Modernist. Merce Cunningham studied with her, and other people studied with her. She is a very good person, and wonderful. [And she is] still having workshops. I get invitations. She is interested in the body and its movement in space and its ability to express ideas, concepts and feelings, as an art form. And so that had a big influence on Larry, the notion of the human as a sensory being in space, and the relationship to other people, and in movement.

Something else happened along the way. In the course of his work, he became interested in how the work might recall or give rise to the suggestion of representation; and he retrieved something that had been lost from landscape architecture for about 200 years, which was meaning. Landscape architecture had become under Olmsted and others, superb at instrumentation and problem solving and doing socially noble tasks. And Olmsted did believe that the greater project had meaning, but it was more as emblematic, rather than representational – there was no iconography. There was [iconography], in some of the pieces that were put in, like the Bethesda Terrace, which I've written about, but basically,

like Lancelot Brown, the whole thing represented itself. The landscape represented landscape. Whereas with Larry, he introduced the concept of evoking a specific set of images that were laden with meaning and purpose, while making a place that had social function and purpose. He hit on it early. You can see him playing with it in a couple of the early residential projects. But it is in Portland that it all comes together.

When he did Lovejoy [Plaza], I mean, there were things that led up to it. His trip to Europe with his daughter, Daria, was absolutely seminal. He almost had a nervous breakdown at one point. His office was growing. He had all these bills, and he wasn't good at management. He was struggling. And he just fled to Europe. And he started going to the Sierras, especially in and around Yosemite.

After that he did many other important projects like Skyline Park in Denver. He did Heritage Park in Fort Worth. He did a series of other things that we like and admire. But his next most important big project was of course, the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial in Washington, DC. It is important in another way, and that is because Larry, who is an incredible romantic on the one hand, a true artist and all, was also a very practical politician, and a really good all-around professional. Larry had this idea because he was from a generation who had fought in World War II and idolized FDR for his leadership and his social vision and his big heart. There are the four freedoms. He helped lift America out of the Depression with the public works, which we all admire, and we all think why has no one had that vision since. Anyway, so Larry idolized FDR. And what Larry concluded was that he

wanted to do a memorial that basically dealt with his four terms as president. This was unparalleled, no one before and no one ever again will have four terms as President of the United States. And so, Larry, by this point, really wanted to do something that wasn't just a mere memorial to a person. He wanted to tell a story. And so almost single handedly, having first brought the abstract representation of landscapes back to landscape; he now brings back figurative sculpture and inscription in public work.

But in the FDR Memorial, he produces a thing that is basically a journey. You go on this trip. It's about movement. It's about experience. It's about meaning. It's about words and image, you are in a bath of experiences and he is processing you as you move through it and he is telling a tale. It's a heroic piece. And it's a kind of piece that he'd been leading toward for quite a while in his own intellectual and his own artistic development.

So Ian actually got him to come and be in one of our studios once in a while. A bunch of us used to go and have lunch with him. He liked Ian. They both liked each other. They understood how powerful and how great the vision the other person had, and that both were needed in the world. And that was nice. I liked the fact that they admired each other, rather than undercutting each other or being envious or jealous. I thought that was very healthy and proper. The idea is almost like the heroes in Greek literature who admired each other. Their egos could take the fact that other egos existed that they thought were worthy. And that was important.

But Larry went on working, and after the FDR project, he did a couple of other projects, one of which was dear to his heart, redoing the mess at the base of Yosemite Falls. People for 20 years had been trying to clear up the mess and do something about the forest floor with all the crap that was there. The National Park Service had made the mess, but they were embarrassed by it, and they didn't quite know how to get rid of it. And Larry somehow talked them into undoing the tangle and now its handicap accessible. Larry was making it even more accessible, because he felt it was so powerfully important in the American psyche. And it was powerful in its role in the environmental movement, and powerful for what it stood for. He loved it. He loved Yosemite Falls. He did a brilliant job.

He also did a park, something that he had been involved in through his wife, Anna Halprin, called the Stern Grove, in San Francisco. It's on the west side of the city near the ocean, not too far from San Francisco State University and south of Golden Gate Park. It's a little old relic ravine in a neighborhood that has redwoods in it. It had a community theater from the '20s or '30s in this park that was kind of rundown and shabby. Anna had danced there. It was part of the city park system. Isaac Stern had played there. Ballets had been performed there. But it was a kind of rundown, a crummy place that was falling apart. And so Larry redesigned that amphitheater in the woods. He got an architect to do some little board and batten buildings that looked like the old days up in the woods in California. And it's an absolute beauty. It's so gorgeous. The stone work is unbelievable. You've got to go. It's great.

PROJECTS

University of Pennsylvania Campus, Philadelphia, PA

OLIN: We're on the University of Pennsylvania campus and this is where I've been teaching for many years. Behind me is College Hall. This is College Hall Green and it's also called Blanche Levy Park. The building where I have taught is just off to my right. It is called Meyerson Hall. This is a great Ivy League campus; it's also the first American university. There are others that started as divinity schools but this one started as a school for practical things with medicine, law, history and various mechanical arts. It has a great tradition of graduate schools that have to do with the quality of life. [It had] one of the first great medical schools in America. The man who became dean felt that the architecture school should have landscape architecture. It should really embrace the human environment and all the design arts and disciplines. It still has painting sculpture and photography and printmaking and the other fine arts; so it's a great place to be. We are standing in is the heart of that place.

In 1976, '77 the faculty of the landscape architecture department basically working as a team over a summer did a design for this entire university. We did a twenty five year plan which we called the Lamp Plan. L-A-M-P is very bright, and it shown like a lamp. Anyway, the Lamp Plan was technically directed by our Dean Peter Shephard. He announced shortly after rounding us up to do the work that he was going to England for the summer. He put me in charge, and of course, I had these other wonder faculty members, Carol Franklin, Colin Franklin, Leslie Sauer, Rolph Sauer, Bob Hanna, and Narendra Juneja, some great

teachers who needless to say were all leaders too. We were sort of like a group of leaders leading each other to do a plan and it turned out to be a great collaboration.

When people come here today they think oh wasn't it always like this, but actually it wasn't. It was a dust bowl. It was eroded, there was no grass, there was a concrete street called Woodland Avenue that went diagonally through with abandoned trolley tracks on it. There was a big traffic circle around this statue of Ben Franklin to my left. There were some nice old elm trees which were sort of struggling to survive and a couple of oak trees and that was about it. It was a mess.

We worked through that summer with our students. We came up with a plan and by the end of that we realized that to get it built we needed to find someone in town who could be the architect of record and the clerk of the works. We thought we needed one of our people to kind of supervise it and see that the drawings got done right. Bob Hanna and I decided that we should approach a woman named Linda Jewell and bring her back from North Carolina. She was one of our students. Part of the way we coaxed her was [for her] to teach with me in the undergraduate program and make her the university landscape architect. We invented the office of the university landscape architect. We invented a redo of the campus that actually incorporated several hundred acres and we got started. And the university got some money from a woman named Blanche Levy who was the sister of Bill Paley, the head of CBS. We got enough money to get started here and frankly we built our way out and within twenty years we had built out that whole plan. It's really quite amazing.

The next thing that happened of course is a bunch of us who were on that team went off and started our own offices. Our office became Hanna Olin and another one became [the firm] Andropogon. It was really quite an interesting incubation period for us and for the university.

This is an interesting place to talk about one aspect of landscape architecture which is that the dilemma of working in a historic environment; and knowing as I sometimes say, what stays what goes, how do you edit it, how do you enhance qualities that are inherent in the place. And this particular environment is a sloping place, there was a sculpture, a group of buildings, there were some utilities and a handful of old trees. We tried to figure out how to take what was here and make the most of it and the best of it. We decided that we weren't going to move Ben. I have moved sculptures in other places, he was OK and we could anchor the scheme around him. Later we ended up at a place where all the paths crossed and the pavement was getting a little too big and one of the things we decided was we needed something else [there]. And so we managed to get a work of art, there's a Claes Oldenburg sculpture there of a broken button. That's totally nouveau, so we saved the old one and we added a new one.

Also we saved the old trees, but then we figured out some of them were going to die, so we were going to need replacement understory, understudy trees. So we brought in some understudy trees and got those started.

And then we had to figure out how to grade the whole place and put in paths that had a nice quality. The paths had to be wide enough for a class change with lots of people but we didn't want them to feel like highways. Peter Shepheard had this bright idea that what we should do a path which would be like a big carpet with these side panels and curbs to catch the water. We had to catch the water and not let it all just go everywhere because it was flooding out the buildings. So we needed to control the water, we needed to make the big paths actually feel narrower optically and then we needed to try and figure out how to maximize the green but still do paths. This is a very distorted British flag pattern. That myth about waiting for the snow to come and see where people walk, we didn't bother for that. We just drew the desire lines and connected the dots that went from door to door. We had to figure out where everybody wanted to go. And then Bob Hanna who had a genius for understanding hierarchy and things like that, Bob began trying to figure out how wide each one should be. And the way he did it was he just drew people side by side and if was two people side by side it was that wide, if it was four people it was that wide, and so we kind of worked it out absolutely empirically and it has worked very, very well.

There's this business of how to light it. We got a wonderful lighting designer and he worked out how to put lights on the buildings so that the facades of the buildings would light up. And then we only needed a few lights around the outside and a couple in the middle.

A lot of smart people worked on this plan. We took some things out, they absolutely had to go and then put things back. And when it was done it was like a lot of our projects, people

somehow think it was always like that. Well it's not a fake something. It has a feeling of appropriateness, it's settled into place. It functions very well but there is a surplus of what benefit. There is more ambiance than anyone demanded. It's generous in its properties.

There's another thing one might notice here and that is there is a jumble of buildings around. There is a fabulous building by Frank Furness to my right that is what you would think is a high Victorian Romanesque style. Behind me is College Hall which is a high Victorian building in green serpentine stone. When it had its original tower it was the inspiration for Charles Addam's Victorian house in all his cartoons. He was a student here. Then there's a rather unfortunate giant modern building behind us that is the main library. Then there are some little old row houses that have become fraternity houses and that sort of thing. There's Meyerson Hall, a fairly clumsy building that our design school happens to be in. [A building] which we all don't like. But the point is there all the buildings look different and act different. They are different sizes, shapes, colors, textures. And so this place would be a real mess if it weren't for the landscape. What all the diverse buildings from different times and periods have in common is the landscape. It is what everybody at the university has in common, it's the public realm, it's the thread, and it's the glue that binds everything together. It's what harmonizes all those disparate pieces and makes it a continuum and a wholesome environment. The landscape has a presence and a physical form and an essence that is actually a subject matter that most people don't recognize. So there are buildings and a lot of people think between the buildings is empty space but for me what's between the buildings is actually the place. It's the stuff that the buildings help

shape the space but the quality and the character of the space is the landscape and it has its own purpose, its own use. And part of its use here is to unify all this disparity of buildings, activity, life, people, colors, textures. The landscape is this beautiful binder that we all inhabit and that we use and that we love.

Ed Bacon in the *Design of Cities* talks about the second man principle. And he uses the Piazza Santissima Annunziata in Florence as the example. There Brunelleschi did a founding hospital with a particular architectural manner for an arcade. Then the next architect came along and rather than do his own thing said, "That's a good idea, I should do some more of that, that would unify this space." So this business of realizing that someone had a good idea and that maybe you could extend or build upon it is a principle that landscape architects are very familiar with, and we find this is an opportune thing to do quite often. Here at Penn, a couple of years before I arrived, a marvelous landscape architect name George Patton was given the chance to take this one block of Locust Street and to do something with it. He had been at the American Academy with [Robert] Venturi and [Louis] Kahn and he was a rather thoughtful man from the South. [On Locust Street] they took up the curbs, they kept the street trees, but he planted some new Zelkovas in between the London plane trees. He couldn't really move anything and make it wider but what he did was he repaved the middle of it with this simple pattern of brick and a classic Greek zigzag of cobbles. And this became Locust Walk. It became the heart of the campus. It was so lovely it felt like an Ivy League campus. It gave the administration the courage so that when

Peter Shepheard said, “you should do a new environment. [You should] fix this place. My faculty can do it.” They believed it was possible.

Battery Park City, New York, NY

OLIN: Here we are in Battery Park City at [Robert] Wagner Park, which is at the south end of the island of Manhattan in New York City. This is one of the last parks that was built as part of the Battery Park City Plan.

In 1979 Alex Cooper, an architect who’s an old friend of mine, opened an office here in Manhattan on his own and was teaching urban design at Columbia. He was hired by the Urban Design Corporation and New York’s Battery Park City Authority. They were to develop a very large landfill in the Hudson River, about ninety seven acres, right on the west side of lower Manhattan near the Battery. They had built a series of coffer dams and had filled it with sand and drenched it and they put in some pilings with relieving platforms all along the edge to kind of reinforce it. Then it died. That work was a result of the Lower Manhattan plan by Wallace, McHarg, Roberts and Todd. It was one of the only things that came out of that very ambitious plan, except for South Street Seaport and a little bit of housing near Chinatown. When Alex started working on it he was trying to figure out how would you build an extension to Manhattan right next to Wall Street that’s ninety seven acres of development? As he was getting started he asked our firm to join them to work on the open space plan and try to think of all the spaces that would come as a result of that [plan].

And as we began work we tried to think what should we do? What was the nature of open space in New York City in terms of streets, parks and riverside edges and esplanades if there were any? So we went out and we knew New York, I used to live here.

So we went [out and looked] at Riverside Park, we went to Roosevelt Island which had recently been done and we went to Carl Schurz Park up by Gracie Mansion on the East River. We looked at some relic stuff by some play fields, from the [Robert] Moses era down here on the Lower East Side. We realized that in Manhattan there were not many places where you could you get to the river and when you did it wasn't very nice. We kind of knew a bit about the waterfront in New York. We knew Central Park and Bryant Park a bit, but we also looked at little places, smaller green places and squares throughout the city. We kind of inventoried it and thought well what this should be is it should be an extension of the city of New York. We didn't want it to be a completely radical new thing. But it also had to be fresh, it had to give access, it had to be open and connected to the city and it needed to be feel like more of New York. I took it upon myself for better or worse to think of this as an extension of the work of Frederick Law Olmsted and of Robert Moses and Mike Rapuano and the people who had built what I considered the robust and wonderful parts of the city.

One of the things that Alex I think wisely realized was that New York is a grid but if we just did a grid parallel to the Hudson there would be north/south streets that would sort of be dopey and go from nowhere to nowhere. It is a grid, it's similar to what's on the other side of West Side Highway or Westway but it's turned ever so slightly so the north/south streets

all lead to the Hudson [River]. The east west streets [also] lead to the Hudson [River], so that at the end of every street you see the river and you see where you are at the edge of the city. Then Bob Hanna and I with Alex decided that we would do an esplanade, a pedestrian walk the entire length of the perimeter of Battery Park City and keep it open and connect it back through some parks, like Rector Park, and places like that. Then there would be places and each place would have some local character. Some places [would be] bounded by buildings, some [would be] open to the river like the one we're in, Wagner Park, which was the last pieces really to get done.

One of the things we also realized was that there was a vocabulary of furniture in the city of New York that had been evolved over the decades and generations and some of it was really quintessential to New York. It wasn't like the furniture in Pittsburgh or San Francisco or Paris or somewhere. A few years after we had built this park, at a conference Paul Friedberg gave me a real hard time about why I didn't do a whole new set of furniture and invent my own and make it brand new and shiny here. And I said, "Paul, we could have done that but it was not appropriate at the time, partly because there was a crisis of confidence in the city of New York". [At the time] New York was bankrupt. It had largely been taken over by the State. And the notion that a development here could succeed and that it would be a place that people would want to come and invest money was really very questionable. I took it upon myself as a designer to try and say, "no this is New York, it feels like New York, you want to be here." And so we used the B pole from Central Park from the Olmsted firm. I used a railing and modified it considerably, that we found up at Carl Schurz

Park on the Hudson [River]. [I used] a couple of other things; there's the World's Fair bench from 1939 from the [Robert] Moses era and there's an adaptation of the Olmsted bench from Central Park. I said, "Paul I did that so that it would feel like New York to New Yorkers, that's why I have [used] the hex [agonal] asphalt pavers." "Yeah", I said, "I could have done something different. But that should be the armature and on that armature other people should come now and do other things", and they have. A number of other wonderful designers have done pieces on the framework that we set out. We had the good fortune to do the first phase of the esplanade which set the tone for the rest of it in terms of materials, pallet, dimensions and things like that. It's a little narrower than I would have liked because [we used] the foundations from the failed early project, that set the limits.

The Hudson's a big tough river with big waves and everything. One of the things [we wanted] was to give people a sense of security so that when they came out and leaned on the railing it felt OK. But I [also] wanted some transparency. We decided to put this big beautiful black granite base and then set this metal rail on top of it. When we got to the street ends, we dropped the base away so that when you looked down the street, you look right through to the water. Then when we got here, at the very southern tip [of the island], opposite the Statue of Liberty, it was obvious that we needed to make this great theatre. [We needed to make] a place which steps down to the water and looks out to the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. We wanted to get everything out of the way. [We wanted] nothing vertical. [We wanted] everything horizontal, we wanted to get everything out of the way.

We wanted to drop the railing down like in a ha-ha, so that everybody up on the terrace and in the park would just look out and see open water.

Well Battery Park City was built out from 1979 to about two years ago. They're just finishing it up here. If you look at this morning's New York Times, this is June of 2012, you'll see an article about a covered passageway between two of the last buildings built in this place. It takes a long time to build a city and in this case [it was] from 1979 'til 2012. We've been working off and on, on bits and pieces. We did that first phase. We did the schematics for Rector Park. Then other people worked in North Cove. A wonderful artist architect, landscape architect combination worked on South Cove. Some friends of ours from Boston did the North End. Paul Friedberg did a garden. Lots of people worked here on this armature that we did. That's what planning is really about, landscape planning.

Bryant Park, New York, NY

OLIN: Here we are in Bryant Park. In 1980 an architect who we had begun working with [named] Lew Davis, of Davis Brody, had begun to do the restoration of the New York Public Library. At a certain point he asked me if I would come and help with the work on the Fifth Avenue terraces. They were a bit of a mess. There was a lot of drug dealing going on. Enid Haupt, who was the Chairman of the Board of the [New York Public] Library, had been mugged on the Fifth Avenue steps. They decided they had to do something. I said yeah I thought we could figure out what to do with the terraces on Fifth Avenue but the first thing we had to do was take them out of service. So we built fences around them, closed them off

while we tried to figure out the design. We didn't actually know what to do. But we just stopped everything that was happening there and drove everybody away from the terraces. We figured that we would move the social behavior somewhere else while we thought about it. I had an idea that if we added little coffee bars, tables, chairs and ripped all the trees by the building and replant it, it might work.

Bryant Park had become a very dangerous place. In fact it was called Needle Park. It was full of drug dealers who kind of hid out in here and it was really scary. In 1967 as a person living in New York I witnessed a shooting just inside the park on the corner right over here by Sixth Avenue and 42nd Street. In the daytime it had a certain amount of use usually at lunchtime, but later in the day the use really fell off because everyone was terrified of coming in here. There were a lot of drugs.

So the 1980s was a difficult period in Manhattan. Some business men in the area formed something called the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation. They were trying to figure out what to do about the park. They had asked a man named William H. Whyte, Holly Whyte as we know him. He was a sociologist who wrote *The Organization Man*, and he *The Last Landscape*. He was a very interesting guy. He had begun studying spaces in New York City. He was doing time lapse photography, looking at the Seagram Plaza, looking at intersections and seeing how people behaved. It ended up being a documentary that PBS did called the *Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*; you can still rent the video. Finally it was published as a book and it became a chapter in a book of his called *City: [Rediscovering the Center]*.

Holly Whyte was very interested in how people behaved in spaces and he studied their behavior. The Rockefeller Brothers Fund asked him to do a study of Bryant Park. They wanted to try and figure out what to do to turn it around. He kind of looked at it and he thought about it and he studied these other spaces and Holly said, “There are a couple of things you’ve got to do. You’ve got to get eyes on the park, which is a kind of Jane Jacobs’s idea. You’ve got to figure out how to pry it open so you can see in and out, because it’s scary now. And you probably need to put things that will bring the middle class in, like food and beverage or a café or something like that”. He wrote a program for what should happen here in Bryant Park with an organization he had just begun. And the outfit that got the Grant was called the Project for Public Spaces.

Holly basically said do this, so Bryant Park Restoration Corporation thought well we should do that. They went off and somehow managed to do a deal with the city of New York Parks Department that allowed them to basically take over the park for a dollar a year and try and manage it. They were below the radar, no one was paying attention, and this was an experiment to see if they could improve a public park that was in serious trouble. So that was the beginning of what has become a revolution called public/private cooperation or collaboration. This was the beginning of a wave that is changing how we manage parks in America and actually around the world. [It was the beginning of the] realization that the government can only do so much and the private realm can only do so much but when they

work together they can do what's needed for society. They really have to work together. Both have to pull their weight.

In this particular experiment we were happily working on the front terrace trying to figure out how to untangle it when they said do you want to take a look at the back. They had decided that they needed to do food and get some kind of commercial stuff in the park which would attract the middle class to come in and make it safe. They had asked a series of quite prominent restaurateurs and food organizations to respond to an RFP and a kind of mad man a wonderful crazy guy named Warner LeRoy [responded]. His father was a movie mogul, who had a great estate on Long Island with all kinds of weird trees and stuff. He was an enthusiast. This is the man who did Tavern on The Green. He knew how to style in flamboyance. Warner LeRoy won the commission to do a café in the park. Warner [LeRoy] and Bryant Park Restoration Corporation decided that they needed an architect so they got Hugh Hardy of Hardy, Holzman and Pfeiffer. Hugh also is a kind of life long New Yorker who I have known since the Sixties. He had worked in theatre all his life. When he graduated from Yale he went to work for Joe Milstein doing stage and theatre design. He had a sense of how to do stuff and he's done a lot of wonderful things with theatre and many other wonderful pieces of architecture. Hugh started working on this project. Warner wanted him to do a thousand seat café on the terrace behind the library. It was kind of nutty. At a certain point Warner started saying we should have lights and we should have fountains and we should do this and we should do that. And Hugh said, "actually don't you think we should get a landscape architect"? They said, "Yeah I guess we should". Someone said, "Well there

are some [landscape architects] working on the other side of the library maybe we should ask them". So that's how we got involved in Bryant Park. They didn't think of us but here we are. We were already on the scene.

I loved Bryant Park because I thought it had great bones. I had known it in the Sixties as this beautiful kind of decrepit Frenchified park right in the middle of New York, with this lawn and these overgrown hedges and beautiful plane trees and terraces. It was a sort of faint echo of the Jardin du Luxembourg but it was really a wreck.

The Bryant Park Restoration Corporation hired a bright young guy from Brooklyn name Dan Biederman and put him in charge of Bryant Park Restoration Corporation. Dan was the most cunning, smart, intelligent, hardworking guy you'll ever meet. He kept trying things and he took charge. He's an incredibly bright entrepreneurial inventive man. So I suddenly had this interesting client which was the New York Public Library board, the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation, Dan Biederman and then a bunch of sort of wealth, thoughtful, hardworking and care giving New Yorkers.

This is an interesting town. What happened is we started working on Bryant Park and I thought I better find out something about Bryant Park. How did it get to be the way it is and what led to this mess we're in? Where should we go? And what's stays and what goes? They were thinking it was a restoration and I was thinking it's a salvage operation. How much can we hang on to? I love the bones of it but I knew we had problems. That led to us

studying it. This place began as a potter's field up somewhere north of the [what was then] the city. As the [city] grid [of streets] came north this was the site of the Croton Aqueduct. It was the central receiving basin that brought all the water from the Catskills to the city of New York. It was distributed from here. There's a huge waterworks here which we discovered later while working on it. There are pipes everywhere.

When [Frederick Law] Olmsted was working on Central Park it was decided that they didn't really need this reservoir, they needed a bigger more central one, so they moved it to Central Park. There's a central receiving basin north of Eighty Ninth Street that replaced this. At that point this became redundant. The Croton Reservoir was a kind of early public overlook; it was the High Line's first draft so to speak. After the Civil War, America was full of itself and it wanted to celebrate its centennial. So in 1876 they built a huge crystal palace on this spot. Like all crystal palaces it burned down a few years later.

The Tilden, Astor and Lenox Foundations came together to form the New York Public Library. They had a competition. Carrère and Hastings won the competition for the building that we all know as the grand New York Public library. It's a wonderful building and it has some interesting aspects to it. It's a kind of Beaux Arts building, very French, a turn of the century classic revival but in a robust style. There are three facades that seem to be public and then there's a back facade that faces what became the park. That facade is a kind of crypto, industrial, modern façade where the steel frames and the floors of the stacks and the floors of the great reading room . . . and down below there's these simple things and

there's a back terrace. Now Carrère and Hastings did a drawing that shows a carriage drive coming across the back but it never happened. They also did a drawing that had the lions on Forty Second Street but they ended up on Fifth Avenue. So if you go to the architectural drawings, they're not quite the way things got built, which is like a lot of art work and a lot of other peoples work. There is what you draw, what you try and then during construction things happen.

One of the things that happened was after the demolition of the ruins of the crystal palace; it became a kind of English square. It was developed with curved linear paths, elliptical beds, elm trees, gravel and benches. A man named Samuel Parsons who was a protégé of [Frederick Law] Olmsted took over the Parks Department after Olmsted. He was here for quite a while, did a lot of great work. Parsons did a version of it which was in semi ruins by the 1920's.

In 1934 when Fiorello LaGuardia was elected Mayor and [Franklin Delano Roosevelt] FDR was elected President. LaGuardia appoints a man named Robert Moses to be Commissioner of Parks. New York is flat on its heels. It was the Depression and everybody was out of work, and everybody was depressed. They didn't know quite what to do. They're tearing down the elevated [train] along Sixth Avenue, to build a subway. There was a decision that they would take some of the subway excavation and put it here to build a new park. And they used direct labor from the Parks Department to make work for a lot of out of work people. So they have a competition for the redesign of Bryant Park and an out of work architectural

draftsman named Lusby Simpson wins the completion. His design is basically this part; it's a lawn with two side panels with trees in a kind of French style with a balustrade and a fountain and a sculpture.

The Parks Department needed to get it built but Simpson didn't have an office. They then turned to Gilmore Clarke, of Clarke and Rapuano. Clarke is Robert Moses' go to guy for highways and Jones Beach and all that stuff. They turn to Gilmore Clarke and his partner Mike Rapuano and they say, "Build this park for us". So they go ahead with the design and they get it built. So in 1934, basically all these trees that you see around me are planted and the park is done. Now it's created as a sanctuary to get away from the city, as a place to hide from the city. It's behind walls, it's removed, its separate and its very French. There are many pieces of the original design that [are French]. I could take you to the Luxembourg Gardens and I'd say, "See that railing, see that bed, see that basin, see that molding and those urns they are part of the DNA of this park". The reason it was built as a sanctuary was because New York was seen as bit chaotic and a little dangerous during the depression. A lot of people were out of work and there was a lot of crime. Also a block and half from here is the intersection of all the subways in New York and so everybody could get here. It's where all the theatres were, it's where all the sailors came when they were in town, its where all the drunks, the pick pockets and all the prostitutes were, everybody was two blocks from here. The notion of making it a kind of sanctuary from the hurly burly of the rough and tumble Great White Way was part of the idea. The town was a little too wild, a little too dangerous in 1934. When you go forward in time, there was an outdoor reading

room here where books and papers, journals from the library were put out here for people to read.

Well by the 1960s everything was a little old and a little tired. The city, the energy had gone elsewhere, this was the kind of back water. The government district which is just below us was still healthy and strong, but it was over there. Offices had moved uptown. The Forty Second Street was even seedier than it was in 1934. It was full of a lot of porno shops and all the theatres had three X's on their marquees. This was a not very nice part of town. The drugs had become a serious problem and this park was dangerous.

At that point when Holly Whyte and I began figuring out what to do it was very clear. He said, "Open it up". And I looked at it and I thought, yeah, I would like to do that. The ideal thing would be to push it down four feet and make it at street level so you can just walk right in but with all these trees I couldn't push it down four feet. So I thought what could I do instead? So I decided to rip it open in the mid-block on both sides, on Forty Second and Fortieth Street and I had to make it wider than any one person could control. I opened up other places. Then the stair on Sixth Avenue I thought was too steep, you couldn't see what was in there. So I thought if I pull it back at a different angle so that you can see up and in, it would be different. And I did the same thing with the stair at the other end; I pulled it out and stretched it so you could see up. Then we decided to cut through at the most remote part which was in the very back, between Forty Second and Fortieth Street. There is a stair

on one side because of the grade change; the other side is a ramp for accessibility. We ripped it open.

Hugh [Hardy] meanwhile was struggling with the café with Warner LeRoy. Warner wanted a thousand seat restaurant so it was designed with two stories that went from one end to other all the way across the back of the library. It was kind of amazing. LeRoy said he would like more of the stone grandiosity of the [Library] building. Hugh wisely said “no, I’ll make it out of metal and glass; it has to be different because I don’t want it to look like it’s a growth on the library. I don’t want it to be a carbuncle or some kind of cancerous growth. I think it has to be different and contrast”. But he knew it was too big and I knew it was too big; and we had a lot of criticism. As we were working on the scheme we were presenting it to City Parks, Landmarks [Commission], Fine Art Commission, Park Department, and neighborhood groups and everybody hated the café and thought it was too big.

Meanwhile I’m cobbling away, ripping open other parts, taking the railings between the side pieces with the avenues of trees and I’m cutting, slicing through those railings to open up the circulation. Because part of what was dangerous about the park was that you would be trapped in here, you couldn’t see [in or out]. I realized at a certain point that there were these hedges and planting bed that had gotten overgrown. I just ripped them all out. I said, “They’ve got to go. We’ve got to open this up all the way and do a lawn”. And I think we should take the stone and use it to repair the stone terraces. And we should put in gravel paths because they more like the French parks that this place is based on. There is this sort

of soft scrunchy quality to them that I think will really help give a character to this space that's different from the way its felt before.

I also thought that we should have some little pavilions, little kiosks like I had done with Hugh [Hardy] out on the [Library] front [terraces]. This really irritated the architect who got me the job, Lew Davis. Lew was working in the library and I was working on the terrace and at a certain point I wanted two little kiosks to sell coffee and pastries and things like that with some tables and chairs, like cafes in France. I knew Hugh was working in theatre so I asked Hugh to do it because he could get out of work actors who were used to building sets [to do them]. We made them as non-buildings so that we didn't need to get a building permit. They were these little cheesy things we threw together which looked OK and they lasted much longer than any of us thought. They finally replaced those about ten years ago. Those pieces gave me the idea that we just needed some little out posts.

The things that Bryant Park Restoration Corporation had done with their earlier studies proved to me that we could seed little bits of commerce around here and that that would help pull the middle class in. I believed that if we could get enough ordinary people in here, it would somehow discipline or drive out homeless people. My work with the homeless in Seattle led me to believe that they will cohabit and will live with other people; but other people are uncomfortable if they cannot see people other than homeless people. We needed to find a way to get people in and get them deep into the park not just at the end. Then we had this fire storm about the café, unbelievable. Everybody hated it. Hugh and I

knew immediately that we just needed to take it apart and make it smaller. It dawned on me that we should just have two little pavilions on each side of the statue of William Cullen Bryant. Now well Bryant is an interesting person because Bryant was a newspaper editor, he was a reformist who was part of Olmsted's circle and he helped invent Central Park and the whole park system in New York. He crusaded for many things. This is a tribute to him.

I was in a job meeting one day when a man from the Park Department came in and said that the library had finally decided it was probably going to have to leave. I said what! He said, "well yeah their stacks are full and we don't know what to do because this essentially a research library and they needed to have more books. I said, "well you can't leave, we're doing this to save you, come on how can you leave, you can't leave now". He said we used to think we could build additional stacks on the terrace behind but with the restaurant and the café we don't think we can do that. I said, "Well if you can't build on the terrace why don't we just put them under the park"? He said, "What"? I said, "Yeah just put them under the park, I'll show you how to do it". So underneath this park there are two floors of stacks. Davis Brody did them as an extension to the library. There are two floors of stacks under here with millions of books. So that's why they're still here. There's always a solution if you really try hard.

I had come to the conclusion that like Paris we should have loose chairs and I proposed loose chairs [in the park]. Someone said, "Oh I'm not sure that's going to work. New Yorkers

will steal them. And I said, “No, no it’s what makes all the parks in Paris so fabulous and I know it will work”. They said, “Yeah but in New York, we’re not sure”. I said, “No I know it will work. It worked up at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. They have loose chairs on the Fifth Avenue sidewalk up there”. By a happy coincidence a man named Arthur Rosenblatt, the architect, who was getting things done at the Metropolitan Museum of Art had just been brought down to the New York Public Library to take over the construction of the renovation of the library and of Bryant Park. He said, “Absolutely Laurie’s right. I’ve got an uncle in Queens. We can get them for wholesale”. I don’t know if that’s how it really happened but Arthur backed me up. The loose chairs worked in New York. It was no problem. That led to the idea of loose chairs in Bryant Park. I knew about it and so did Holly Whyte. If you turned to some of the key sections of the *Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, William H. Whyte's publication, you’ll see he talks about how the chair empowers you. The ability to pick it up and move it makes it your space. People will approach a chair, they’ll touch it, and they’ll move it a little bit and sit in it. They tend not to just leave them alone. It’s part of making a place yours. We went to these sort of silly simple metal frames with a little wood back which this is a kind of cheap knock off of the original chairs that one sees in Paris. The idea that the chairs give you freedom, they give you individuality; they give you a place of your own. That was a discovery and yet it was one of the oldest principles in the world.

A lot of what we did here was not original but it was radical at the time because we were empowering people. We were ripping a place apart and yet making it feel more the way it

[had been]. I'll quote our late president Eisenhower who once said "things are more the way they used to be then they have ever been before". It is a fabulous statement. Bryant Park is more the way it used to be then it has ever been before. It is the idea of taking something and figuring out its essence and intensifying that.

There's maybe two other things to say. At a certain point in my original design I had two long water basins reflecting the little balustrades on the upper terraces. Well, Henry Stern hated them. I tried to outlast him which I did, but then the next parks commissioner, she told me to forget it. "We're not having water here, kids will drown". So I thought now what do I do? If I can't have water I think we should have flowers. I proposed these three hundred foot herbaceous borders on each side. Everybody thought what a great idea and then Dan Biederman came to me and he said, "I want Lynden Miller to do them". Dennis McGlade, my partner and I we were pretty upset about that because we really wanted to do them. We thought of them and we did the fundraising drawings but I realized that Lynden, having restored the Conservatory Garden uptown, really knew her plants. She had the ear and the attention and the devotion of a lot of people in New York; and if she did them they would get donations for them and she would do them beautifully. Not only did she do a great job but she also then stayed on for years afterwards training gardeners, helping them figure out what to do and using this as a spring board to help other parks do similar things. Once again trying not to do everything, letting other people in, letting other people have a piece of the action turned out to be the smartest thing I did. Lynden and I, we crossed swords in the early days, and now we both believe the other person is really terrific. You

have to let other people show you that they know how to do stuff better than you do and let them do it.

Bryant Park is a huge success. We had the good luck to get it built pretty much the way we wanted to, but it was after a lot of public opposition. There was a lot of hostility and then the gradual realization that we had brought it back alive. Part of the success of Bryant Park is its programming and management. Design is one thing. I've done pieces that are good pieces of design elsewhere and lo and behold because they weren't managed or weren't programmed well those pieces have ended up not being successful. This park is very successful and largely because of its management. Many people think it's become too successful. It's kind of like that old Yogi Berra joke about Sardi's nobody goes there anymore because it's too crowded. Well that's kind of like Bryant Park. Some days it's too crowded. The management has been a little overactive and at times keeps thinking about what should we do next, what should we do next? They've added some things that I think are wonderful, like the little carousel behind me. They do things at times that are too much for me like the market in the winter when they have the skating rink here and two story café. It's just a bit too much. I never was too upset when they had the Broadway fashion shows here, I thought that was great. It brought in money and put it on the map, and then it went away.

You know the question is how much is too much? Some people feel that some days the public private partnership really needs to be balanced very carefully and one needs to

maintain a very strong public sense and not let the private part get too ascendant. In the desire to bring in a revenue stream, to be able to maintain it and do other adventures, there are some that think that Bryant Park has gone too far. I will say there are things here that I think are wonderful. The Monday night movies in the summer [are great] where everybody rushes in with their blankets their hampers, their wine and their food and they all spread out and watch things. One of my favorites was when they showed the movie, King Kong, and there was the Empire State Building right next to it. There have been some great movies in this park. There have been great jazz concerts. There have been a lot of wonderful things. There are days when it's too much. So every society needs to figure out when is it not enough, when is it too much.

Robert Wagner Park, New York, NY

Robert Wagner Park is named for Robert Wagner, Jr., the son of one of the great mayors of New York. He was a progressive guy, who, I have to say was the best version of a liberal. He was an old Democratic pal but whom like Fiorello LaGuardia, was a man of the people.

This park has a very interesting set of pieces. We were asked to work with an architect, because there was a hunch there needed to be some architecture, and we were asked about a firm from Boston named Machado Silvetti. Well I taught with Jorge Silvetti at Harvard. They're old friends of ours. And we jumped at the chance. What a great idea; we could collaborate with friends. We were asked also if we could work with horticulturalist and garden designer, Lynden Miller. After a moment's pause I said, "Yes of course," because

we had worked with Lynden earlier at Bryant Park. Lynden is an extremely talented designer, a sort of protégée of Penelope Hobhouse, the great English designer and author. She has in her own right done some wonderful things like the complete restoration and transformation of the Conservatory Garden up in Central Park that actually Gilmore Clarke's wife designed.

When we start the designs there were three people, and three firms, an architect, a landscape architect and a garden designer. And the question was how are we going to do this together? Well we [OLIN] were the prime consultant, they were our consultants and we met together in a trailer down here and worked. We would come down here and have these long day long sessions that were sometimes contentious but always fun. They always got us further along. We worked through models. We worked through drawings. We'd all go home and do some stuff then bring it back to the table a week later. At the end of schematics we had a plan that we all agreed on that had a central heart to it, two twin pavilions and the two gardens and then connections to the street and the rest of the city. The esplanade of course came along through the front. Two or three things occurred to me while I working on it. One was it was like those great harbors where you look out and it's the beginning of journeys, it's the end of journeys. It's the beginning of the open space at Battery Park City but it's the also the end. From the north it is the end of the esplanade. If you come from the south it is how you enter and go north. It's also where Wall Street comes over and looks out at the Hudson River; there is the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. We became interested in these visual connections especially to the Statue of Liberty. It

means so much, it means so much to so many people around the world. It's framed through the gardens, it's framed through the arches and the overlook and the pavilions, it's framed between the pavilions, we just keep framing it from different places; because that was the point of this place in a way and why a lot of people want to come here. That was a sort of simple idea that led to a bunch of things.

I had gone up to look at the Conservatory Garden that had been redone by Lynden [Miller] and I noticed a couple of other things. Clarke and Rapuano had done these two little brick pavilions that had restrooms in them. You could climb up on top of them where there was a pergola where you could look out and look down on this nice central lawn. Then to the side [of the buildings] were flower and herbaceous gardens and a quite pretty allée of crab apples, which are spectacular. Working with Lynden we decided we would do these two gardens and we basically recomposed, reframed and deconstructed the Conservatory Garden with this plan. We had a terrace and we had two twin pavilions. That [idea] had to do with an odd dreamy notion I had when we were starting [to think] about what should we do here? I thought when people get to this park some will want to eat, some will want to go to the bathroom but a lot of people are going to want to get higher to look around. [I thought] if we could take those pavilions and turn them into things that you climb up on and make a stage of it, that somehow that would be really cool .

The architects, like me, were very interested in history but also like me, they are modernists. We were all sort of a little fed up with postmodernism. We didn't really like a

lot of what was happening. Both of us had spent time in Rome. We thought well it's kind of interesting, its over we said but on the other hand what do you do about it?

Standing here on this site which was just a plateau of sand actually, it was just this abandoned wasteland. It was kind of windy and cold and nasty and empty. We looked back at Wall Street and at a series of buildings built between 1900 and 1930 which had neoclassical architecture elements. We said its [postmodernism] over, but we're looking out into the water at this woman in a toga basically [who] is a Greek Goddess with rays coming out of her head. There was this kind of yearning and nostalgia for the confidence of the classical era which we did not have anymore. One of the things the [the architects] did was to conceive of a great giant who had been in love with the Statue of Liberty but who has now lost forever and he was sinking down. So if you look at these two pavilions you'll see that they're like these two big eyes that are looking longingly out to sea as they sink, with the top of their head blown off, like a Roman ruin. There's the reference in the ghost in the last whiff of classism. It is like saying its over. That's for people who can read architecture praline, but in our case we didn't worry if anyone could understand it because we just wanted to make it open, friendly, feels good, nice texture, nice materials, good space.

Now the scheme originally had a beautiful stone terrace here out of either limestone or marble. Clients are very important and good clients really push you. This client said, "I don't think I like that, I don't want a stone terrace. It's going to be too hot in the summer, too blinding with the reflection off the water, people will hate it, they'll fry, I don't want that,

give me something else.”. He kept trying to push stuff at us to soften it up. I said fine. But I also realized that this wasn’t Oyster Bay, we’re not on Long Island, and this isn’t some kind of estate with a lawn rolling down to the water. This is a different place, this is a public park. We did transform that piazza here into a big green bowling green. There is a real historic bowling green, the oldest park in the city of New York near here. So this looks like a bowling green, it’s kind of like another echo; it’s a rhyme, and it’s an off rhyme. Then to contain it, it occurred to me that we should put benches all around it. This was the first time I had that idea not to have a back on the bench because you don’t interrupt the view out. Everything had to be horizontal. I thought if there’s no back it’s going to feel kind of cheesy. It needs to have more generosity. We ended up with the benches being about four feet wide. There are some people sitting with their feet inside, some people with their feet outside the square and it looks just like a billiard table with cushions all around. Instead of side pockets it’s got little places where you can go in and out. Then when I was working with the lighting designer I said I want to light it like a billiard table. If you look you’ll see that there are these lights up above that shine down and make it this kind of velvety green sort of rectangle at night. If you come here at sunset there are people are all over on the steps. I’m very fond of this place because it does all the things we had hoped.

One of the last things to talk about is the planting. The things about the planting here at Battery Park City is that it is extremely important to soften this edge of Manhattan and to bring the pleasure of flowers to people right down where they can see them and touch them. One of the things about Battery Park City is that it is like being at the seashore, it’s

tough. The wind howls down here. It comes all the way from North Dakota across New Jersey, I swear, it comes across the Hudson River bringing ice and salt spray. It is cutting and it's fierce down here. The first winter when we planted the first part of the esplanade, the contractor said sorry I have to give you slightly larger trees than you tagged because I have to get rid of these trees. So we had oversized trees, it was just great. We had these big beautiful trees but we forgot to upsize the cables we tied them with. The wind came up and blew them all over. They went down just like ninepins. This whole row of trees were all lying in their sides; we had to come and tip them all back up but we didn't lose any of them. We realized this is a tough place. When we're working on the first planting plan, my partner Dennis McGlade, who is a really very sophisticated in horticulture, tried to get plant material from the Siberian steppes or from the Maine coast or something. The plant palette here is a pretty tough palette from harsh environments. Battery Park City in general, and [Robert] Wagner Park in particular, and the extension that we did with all the beautiful weeping willows here by the Museum of Jewish Heritage, I think really turned out well. People have voted with their feet. New Yorkers didn't need a user's manual to use this space, they came in droves, and they came like lemmings. As soon as it was open it was full of people rollerblading, joggers and people with dogs.

And part of the genius of why it still looks and feels good is that the Authority that built it set up a Parks Corporation to manage it. They have a slight mileage, a tax on the real estate here to support the parks. There is an ongoing stream of funds for well-trained gardeners who use totally organic methods. There's no chemical sprays used here. Tessa Huxley and T.

Fleisher have been here for maybe fifteen or twenty years running what is one of the best public outdoor sets of spaces anywhere in America, or I would say the world.

National Gallery of Art Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.

OLIN: Here we are at the Sculpture Garden at the National Gallery of Art on the Mall in Washington, D.C. right on Constitution Avenue. This is an interesting project because like all landscape projects it comes in the wake of a long series of other things that happened on the site. There's always a there, there. There's always a history. There is no such thing as a blank slate site no matter what some of my friends in architecture think. Everywhere has a history and this one had a particularly rich history.

Back when the federal capital was being laid out Jefferson had an idea which he got [Pierre Charles] L'Enfant and others to draw up for him. Jefferson's idea was to have a promenade with a series of great civic and public institutions and gardens leading west from the Capitol. Well, what happened was that over the period of many years leading up to the Civil War some things got built, some things got torn down, and some things never happened. It was a bit of a jumble. After the Civil War there was a great plan proposed by Calvert Vaux and Andrew Jackson Downing that really conceived of this as a park, a national park with trees from all the regions of America. And they started it. If you look at it really closely it is actually a rough draft of Central Park. It has overpasses, and across circulation, and that sort of thing. It didn't really get totally built out. This was partly because [Alexander Jackson] Downing was killed in a tragedy on the Hudson River and [Calvert] Vaux wandered off and

got tied up with [Frederick Law] Olmsted, Sr. He went off on another career. So by the turn of the twentieth century there was a big red light district over here where the Federal Triangle is. There were railroad tracks across the Mall. There was a jumble of planting. So a group of citizens and senators and government people decided they should do something about it. They wanted something more honorific, more beautiful and more dignified.

And so the great architect Daniel Burnham from Chicago, Daniel Chester French, the sculptor, [Augustus] Saint-Gaudens, Frederick Olmsted, Jr., and a whole group of brilliant professionals came together to produce what is known as the McMillan Plan. It is sometimes called the Kite Plan. Well this particular site was designated to be a garden in that plan but it didn't happen until the late twentieth century.

After the Korean War, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill did a plan for the Mall that proposed several things. On the plan they put two circles. One of the circles was across the Mall on the south side. It became the Hirshhorn Museum. The other one was here. It was to be a garden. It had a little round pond; it was really a pool with a ring of trees around it. That is all that ever got built here except a very interesting pavilion, painted green, which was done in sort of a French design. But it was a failure too because it wasn't a good café. They tried ice skating but the pool cracked. It didn't work.

Now it's sitting on top of a great box culvert that holds what used to be Goose Creek. It was tidal slew from the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers that was channelized into Tiber Creek.

Tiber Creek became a kind of canal that led to a marketplace which was right here in front of the Archives.

Well time passes, and the first great director of the National Gallery of Art in the period after the SOM Plan, Carter Brown, decides he wants to do a sculpture garden here. He commissions a design but that ends up being so costly that it doesn't happen. It was by Dan Kiley who I admire greatly. But it was, shall I say, a lot of stone, a lot of water and a lot of trees. But it sure cost too much. The people on [Capitol] Hill just said, "No thanks. We're not doing it." And Carter Brown sort of stepped back.

His successor Rusty Powell, who came to the museum from Los Angeles, thought maybe he could get this going again. By good fortune when he started thinking about people and he thought of us and so here I am sitting in the results. But what happened was he began to work on a garden for modern sculpture. It was to be almost exclusively to be work by American artists. There are a couple of artists here that are from other countries, like Louise Bourgeois. Anyway, the idea was to have some great American robust sculpture in an outdoor setting right next to the Mall, on land that belongs to the National Gallery [of Art].

Well, it was a great idea and there were a wonderful bunch of curators that we worked with. They started thinking about what they should do. When I started the project I said, "Well what's the collection and what am I designing the garden for? And they said, "Well we actually don't have anything. They had one nice Noguchi and that was about it. We had

some other things that were nice but they were too small to put outdoors. They said, “We have to go find a collection”. So that meant I didn’t really have anything to design it around. I said, “Well that’s kind of difficult”. They said, “No don’t worry, just make a nice garden and we’ll figure out the art. So I thought make a nice garden . . . So we came up with a plan.

The question of how to design an outdoor gallery that would also be an effective garden was an interesting question to me because in the twentieth century this idea of a sculpture gardens was something that was happening in Europe and in parts of America. We had worked on a few in other places. I was interested in sculpture anyway. I always have been. I had done a garden for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art for [Rusty] Powell when he was the director there. It was the first time I had encountered a series of Rodin sculptures. One of the things that I realized in looking at those Rodins in the Cantor Sculpture Garden in Los Angeles was that although one thinks of Rodin as the beginning of modern sculpture, he is also the end of figurative representation in sculpture too. So he’s a real transitional figure. It makes sense that Brancusi was an apprentice of his. Brancusi is one of the first great abstract sculptors. Later we ended up doing a project with Brancusi’s greatest work in Romania. So I’m very interested in sculpture. I always have been.

For this space] I didn’t know what to do except to try and come up with a series of outdoor spaces of different sizes and shapes, like a gallery. A space where you could contrast and compare and where you could see one sculpture and then look to another, or a space where you could see a sculpture isolated and be able to move about it. That seemed to me

what I could do. They would then figure out which pieces they wanted to put in [the garden] and what relationships they wanted from one piece to the other.

But I had this odd thing handed to me. I had a circle in the middle. A big circle with a bunch of little leaf linden trees all around it. Little leaf lindens were a favorite tree of Dan Kiley. It's a European tree that people shear into aerial hedges; it's a wonderful tree. Circles as I have said many times are very bossy. And in working around a circle there are only so many things you can do because they have rules of their own geometrically and formally. Then there was a pavilion. I thought the pavilion was useful and that we should keep it. But we needed to transform it into a really proper casino or café in the park with outdoor dining terraces.

Then I thought what can we do with this circle? I realized that it was big. It was so big you were sort of pushed around the edge and since it was all broken and didn't work we had to tear it up anyway. So I made it actually smaller. People think I made it bigger but I really made it smaller so that there was a promenade all the way around the outside and you could sit on the outside or you could sit on this coping that I'm sitting on right now. I'll talk about that in a minute. But that was the biggest space that we were going to have no matter what we did and it was up to the Gallery to decide whether they were going to introduce sculpture there or not. That was not my call but I thought well it could be at the least it would be a grand fountain and then maybe you could ice skate in the winter.] But

then how do I do the spatial arrangement of the parts to make them go with this bossy circle in the middle?

It dawned on me that there were some spaces that you wanted to have long views and then there were some spaces where you wanted to intimate views. So we began looking at it and I realized that along Constitution Avenue I could get a big long space with a vista that wasn't impacted by the circle; and then from it as you went south toward the Mall, one could have smaller subspaces. Then on the south I could again have an intermediate sized space with some other spaces that were almost as long as the other one. So there would be large, medium and small sized spaces. And I realized that they needed to be shaped by large masses of plants so that when you came in you actually could isolate the sculptures. We needed to produce different spaces with a different character and feeling but unify the whole thing. Then finally, I concluded with the gallery very early on that we needed to put a serious fence around the whole thing. This was partly to protect the millions and millions of dollars' worth of investment in art but also because we wanted to do a garden that had plants that one doesn't always leave out in the rain. No you leave them in the rain, but you don't leave them in the public, because some of them disappear or get stolen. Some of the plants are also of such a big generous evergreen variety that people have been nervous about having them in public parks because of the fear of crime and the homelessness and people living behind the bushes.

Dennis McGlade and Bob Bedell, and I really worked on the plant palettes. We spent a lot of time especially in nurseries. We ended up screening the transverse behind the tapestry, with a big tall tapestry hedge. We opened a couple of key views to the domes of various things and then when we came to designing the fountain the question was what should it be like? The [new] trees came in pretty much full size. I thought it would be nice to have some conifers and some big beautiful ones because when you look at the last scraps of Calvert Vaux's and Downing's planting around the Ellipse and the White House there are bald cypress. They had a lot of ideas about American trees. I've put some big cedars out here. I thought it would be nice because people don't plant big tall evergreens with skirts on them in public parks these days for fear of crime. We put them against the fence and there is no problem. There was a palette that we could use; there was a kind of vocabulary that we picked up from the site.

It occurred to me that one of the problems with copings on fountains is that if you have a coping and the water's here, you get the reflection of it and it looks like the water is twice as deep as it is. I remembered that André Le Nôtre in a basin near the Louvre in Paris, just outside the Tuileries, had taken an old Roman profile that had a kind of curve up and arch that came down and dropped it down next to the water to get less reflection. So by doing that the water had a bigger presence and there was less frame and more picture. I thought "Aha"; I'm going to do that. So I realized I wanted to use that profile, but I also didn't want to put it down on the ground, I wanted to lift it up and change the scale and turn it into a big bench that people could sit on. People can sun bathe here, they can put their feet in the

water, and they can keep their feet on dry land. So if you come and spend time here in the summer when it's hot you'll see a lot of people sitting here with their feet in the water and then you'll also see people with nice shoes sitting this way because they have to go back to work.

There's one other sort of fun thing here and that is these benches. I decided that we wanted to work in the same vocabulary of materials as the other buildings that had preceded us, John Russell Pope's museum that he did for the Mellons and then the East Wing that I.M. Pei did under J. Carter Brown. When we went to find that material we discovered well there was a big vein of marble that goes from Tennessee into Georgia but those quarries were closed. Well I.M. Pei had to open them up for his building and we had to reopen them for this. The next thing we discovered was that most of the quarries and the shops and the stone yards in America could cut stone in one direction, but not two at the same time. We had to get a machine from Magistretti in Italy and bring it to America. We basically helped push the industry in America to do things it couldn't do before.

I decided that I wanted a wall around the back [of the benches] so you have your back to something. You can sit under the trees and look out. That relates to an idea that Jay Appleton had quite a few years ago. He wrote about prospect-refuge theory. Well that notion still operates today. We like to sit with our back to the wall so nobody comes up behind us and we like that comfort. We also like looking out in the sun and watching the passing parade, and we also kind of like the trees and the birds and the shade overhead.

The nice thing about the circle, and there are many nice things about it, despite my remarks about their difficulties, is that if one side is sunny you can bet the other side is going to be shady. So you can always move around it and usually find somewhere to get shelter or sun depending on the season. I decided the bench backs should be solid. And I decided that it would be nice if the seats tipped a little bit so they would be more comfortable; however I worried that the water would form a puddle, so I pulled the seat away so the water would go down behind. That helped me because the drains could be underneath. So there are a series of odd little functional things that are underlying the design.

Finally I kept thinking about all the curves and all the circles as sort of derivative Art Nouveau building behind us here from SOM and I thought it should have this beautiful curve but it should be resolved. And I ended up drawing something that one thinks of as associated with the Rococo although you can go back to classical antiquity and find it in the second century works of classical antiquity. You also find it in Late Baroque and in Rococo work and some things like that. It's a lovely shape. You also find it in American antique furniture of the seventeenth and eighteenth century because it was revived in Britain as a furniture style by people who had been on the Grand Tour to Italy. So one of the things that happened was I drew this [shape] and we presented it to Carter Brown. By that time he was the Chairman of the Fine Arts Commission. He is from Newport, Rhode Island, and he knew his eighteenth century furniture. He grew up with it. Carter was somewhat nervous and said he wasn't sure he liked [the design] because he felt it was a Georgian furniture detail and he didn't think it belonged outdoors. I said no actually Balthasar Neumann used it at

Vierzehnheiligen. I can show you at the Oratorio San Filippo Neri where Borromini used it. I would argue that it doesn't belong to any one mode or medium. It is just an absolutely beautiful form that people find desirable and attractive. Well, he kind of backed off and he was kind enough to let us go ahead and do it. The result is here and people seem to like it. There are a few other things to say about this garden. I think the pavilion behind us is really quite attractive now. My biggest insight [about it] was that it should be painted dark. We ended up painting it what our office calls Bryant Park Green. It has a lot of lamp black in it which takes the color down and makes it less reflective. Also oddly enough it achieves more of a Parisian quality. The other thing, you'll notice that we pulled out these kinds of volutes. They are like an Ionic column capital laid down. So it's a little joke that designers would appreciate. It feels nice. We also affectionately call them the mouse ears in the office.

You'll notice all the entries to this place are at the corners. There are four corners just like Central Park. There was a circle in the middle so it seemed that we should just draw two big arcs to grace the circle and then do wiggly stuff in between. So that's the composition of the circulation. It allows you to go everywhere easily. We then could design those two arcs with a heavy concrete underneath and thick stone, so we could drive small cranes, tractors, and move big sculptures without wrecking the place.

There had been an ice skating rink here but it had failed. So we decided we would do a proper one. Underneath this big beautiful pond there is a hundred and eighty foot long ice rink that is quite wonderful. We had to build a pump house back here for coolant and put

cooling tubes under this entire thing. When the contractors were trying to build it they were trying to get the gravel and the concrete in between all the wire frames for the structure and all the coolant tubes. They were almost hand padding this stuff in to get it in. When we poured it we worked right through the night, twenty four hours on this pour to make it one continuous pour.

Well let me talk about this basin for a minute. In my period in Rome I spent a lot of time looking at the work of [Gian Lorenzo] Bernini and of all his fountains. I did drawings of most of them. I studied them. And when I went to France one of the things I always did was look at every [Andre] Le Nôtre garden I could get my hands on. Many of them have jets, some of which are supine. Some have single jets, some have multiple jets, and some of them have cascades. I am very interested in water like other landscape architects I guess, because it's such a lively medium. We love water, we're attracted to water, it's so mercurial, and it is so alive. So when conceiving of this I conceived that it should have jets, but you'll notice they're big arching jets that loop up. As a matter of fact when there's no wind they go all the way to the middle and bang into each other and fall in a great cascade. Then as the wind comes up the jets damp down because we put an anemometer over here on a little pole so that it can detect what the wind's doing. If the wind comes up and it starts spraying it all around they damp down. It really seems kind of sensible if you have technology, you should use it. Bernini would have if he had had it. If he had bulldozers he would have used those too. It's just how you use them right? But interestingly enough when those jets are arcing

there's an echo between the jets, the benches and the domes of all the buildings around us. So there are all these rhymes, kind of like in poetry.

Well as we moved to a final design we built some very big presentation models with quite representational trees complete with the color, the materials and textures. It was a very big model, very beautifully made with a laser cut out of the fence. One of the things that came out of that was that the [National] Gallery wanted to use the model to test putting in scale models of sculptures. They put one piece in here that they later decided was a little too weak for where it was and they've replaced it. That was the George Rickey. I'm very fond of George Rickey but it didn't hold that corner quite the way they had intended. The Louise Bourgeois and the Mark di Suvero are two pieces that sort of do that; they're on opposite corners from each other. Then there are stone pieces by the Scott Burton the [Isamu] Noguchi pieces and the [Joan] Miro pieces that go along there. *[Olin pointing at them in the garden]* The [curators] began thinking about where things went and how they related to each other without it being heavy and didactic.

So the question in our field, and most other design fields, is the problem of originality versus precedent. This is a pretty good example of a place that is laden with precedent. We picked up on some of it and then tried to take it forward a little bit without being so radical that the people in Washington would roll their eyes and not get it or would not like it or be offended. We also used a vocabulary of some things that are familiar and some things

that weren't. For instance the lights that are around in here are lights that one finds over by the [Smithsonian] Castle and by the beautiful Freer [Gallery].

The Freer Gallery was designed by [Charles Platt] a successful high end architect from New York of the period. He designed the lights that you see in this circle and nowhere else in this garden. I found them over at the Freer and I thought how wonderful these are. When I was working in Bryant Park I found a torchiere that had been designed by Carrere and Hastings that I reproduced to extend a feeling of a place without literally doing a neoclassical piece. [Over] here I made these kind of funny little tub things, they look kind of like Turks hats. These are stone plinths that the gallery can set pots or sculptures on. They're sort of an empty vessel waiting for people to fill them.

The other thing was we need to do a fence. To do that it needed some big stanchions at the gates and it needed them placed every so often to keep the fence from wobbling. We did what I called the baskets. They are these tall hollow columns of metal. The question was what are they going to be like and is there a precedent? I looked over at the [National] Archive and I looked at the [National] Gallery and there was a Greek motif of fish scales. And I said let's just use that because it's Roman paving pattern. Everybody has done it, the Chinese; the Japanese [have done it.] It's in the repertoire of pattern. There is also [the idea of] its over there, it's over here, it is a translation and yet it's a new fresh use.

OLIN: There is one other thing to talk about and that is the phenomenon of closed versus open scores, and of landscape being not fixed and static. Landscapes inherently are dynamic. One of the things that many of the great places of the world whether it's a square like Piazza Navona in Rome, or a garden like this garden [National Gallery of Art], which is certainly not in that league, you want to give it good bones. [You want to give it] a structure which will be enduring. You want to design the space as an investment so their money is well spent and that there is something lasting and useful for generations to come. On the other hand you don't want to tie it all up so that no one can make changes or cannot express themselves or live out a different life in that space. Over time one has to accept that if you do a good place other people will be attracted to it and want to add on [to it]. [They will want to] come in and do things and move stuff around. Here [at the National Gallery Sculpture Garden] I think we've given it a frame. There is the outer wrapper, there is the inner pool with its ring of trees and there is a terrace and with some paths. And actually the rest [of the space] could be changed out; people could move it [around]. They have already started moving sculptures, taking them in and out. They were going to put a big Frank Stella over in this corner; but we decided it didn't quite fit so it ended up at the other end of the National Gallery. I would bet you that within fifty years somebody is going to do something different in the middle of this basin. The only reason I didn't put a sculpture in the middle [of it] is you can't skate around it. [Then] I said, "Well I don't know about that. You can do an island with a bench. People could sit down out there and tighten their skates. Why not"? That led me to design something with Frank Gehry. I did a big freeform skating

pool with a round simple island in the middle that you could stop on. It had a sky light to a basement down below. Well it didn't happen but it was a great idea.

The notion [of change is] that other people are going to want to come and make changes. They will want to add chairs or take them out. They're going to say these two rows of trees are just too much, we should really only have one row here because they're getting too heavy. What [happens] if the trees all die? [What happens if] some new bug comes and wipes out lindens, heaven help us, if that happens it is time for a change. [It is time to] do something else. What would you do? I think that's OK. I think it's OK. We lose some things, we feel sad about it but our best places are very resilient and everyone finds a way to live their life in that.

Independence National Historical Park, Philadelphia, PA

BIRNBAUM: So Laurie, tell us where we are today.

OLIN: Well, this is Independence Park, and this is the Mall in Independence Park. We got the job in 1997, and it was to undo and redo a failed park that had been here since the early '70s or late '60s. Back in the late '50s, there was a move to tear down Skid Row to build a park. It was an idea at the city and state level, pushed by a man named Judge Lewis. Ed Bacon got it done. They basically were tearing down Skid Row to make it go away and to do it they tore down about 500 buildings. Can you imagine doing that today in the historic center of the nation's first capital? Ridiculous. And among other things, they torn down

the house that Washington lived in which Robert Morris had loaned him for the executive mansion. It's the only building from the federal period that's not here.

But the park was not a very good park. It was not designed well. It had serious problems, although one block of it was extraordinary, it was designed by Dan Kiley. Dan's park was elegant. It was sort of his take on the Spanish piazza from Seville, done in brick with honey locusts and fountains. And as nice as it was, it was too far away from Independence Hall. It was next to a bunch of highways with no social life around it. And so it's like having the right thing in the wrong place. It's like having a good idea too soon. It's the same as having a wrong idea sometimes.

The National Park Service did a management plan to come up with a way to revise the park, because it had become a National Park. They came up with a series of things. One of them was to build a new home for the Liberty Bell. They wanted one that was bigger and could tell the full story of its history. There was also a desire to have a visitor center for the region. Another group wanted to have a center to interpret the US Constitution. Although a lot of people know that the Declaration of Independence was drafted in this building behind me on a very hot summer, our Constitution was written by a group of delegates at the Continental Congress. And today we're still living with that Constitution. We argue about it every day in the press and everything. They felt that Americans don't really understand the Constitution. It is the oldest written constitution there is of a democratic society.

They asked for RFPs, for proposals. And at first, I thought, oh, that [project] would be a can of worms and it would be so politically fraught. But when I thought about it later, I thought, well, it's half a block from my office, and the notion of watching some other landscape architect struggle with the project in my backyard irritated me. So I thought, well, we should at least try. So I put together a team of local people, Bohlin Cywinski Jackson, who are Gold Medal winners in the AIA. There were brilliant planners, local interpretation people and local engineers. We put together an all Philadelphia team. Everybody had an office. You could walk to the site. And we got the job. It was not an easy project. It was ten years, from 1997 to 2007 before it was actually complete. And now it's 2011, four years later, and it actually looks like the drawings. It was a long haul, [it was] nobody's fault. The National Park Service has had a hard time because Congress hasn't been kind to them in terms of budgets. But we got it built. We had a wonderful team. But we managed to get three internationally known American architects; Bohlin Cywinski Jackson did the Bell Pavilion. Kallmann McKinnell & Wood from Boston did the Visitor Center, and Pei Cobb Freed did the Constitution Center. They're all superb buildings and each is different. And Bernie and I really worked very closely on the Master Plan. I spent a lot of time trying to figure out where the [Liberty] Bell should be. And I proposed that we put it right here behind me off to the side for two reasons. One, was so that when you look at the bell, you could look up at the tower of the building, and it would be against the sky instead of in front of some insurance company building from the 1930s and '50s. [I supported the] notion of seeing it appear tall again, so you could look up at it, because when it was built, it was one of the tallest buildings and one of the most important in America. I wanted to put the energy back

in that building. The other thing was that I had to get it out of the way, so that that people from the other two blocks could see to the hall. And then it dawned on me that the middle building was going to get in the way of the back building. So I had to push [that building] to the side, and but give it a rake like a theater, so it stepped forward a little and you could see past the first building. You can see from the door of the Constitution Center all the way to the door of the Independence Hall and see the people and everything, despite the fact that there's topography. The other thing that other people found odd about the plan was that one side was all buildings, and the other side was all these big bushy trees with curvy paths and gardens and then a lawn down the middle. We had to have the lawn, because we needed all this open space for thousands of people when the Freedom Medal is given to Kofi Anan or something like that. And when the president of another country comes to town they always take him here to see the Bell. It's a big deal. And we get thousands of people here for presidential elections and that sort of thing.

I always like to look at the history of a place, and this project made me really look at colonial history and the history of Philadelphia and the federal period, the period of during and after the Revolution. And one of the things that was interesting was that when this building was built, it was the state house of the colony, and it was one of the largest, most important buildings in America. It was on the edge of the wilderness and when you look at a plan, there are empty blocks with horse pastures and forests beyond. The first two pavilions on the side were built like big long houses for Native American delegations that came and met with the white man. Philadelphia was the second largest English speaking city in the world

at the time of the Revolution and yet it was on the edge of wilderness. And so the idea of having this big mass of trees on one side looking across the lawn, and through the buildings, was a kind of memory of this confrontation for me. It also allowed me to balance the buildings with something that is going to get more mass through time. At first people thought, oh, it's not symmetrical. And they couldn't understand it. And I said I'm not interested in symmetry. I care about balance. They are two different things, balance and symmetry. And so in this particular case, each block has a building with lights and people, and then it's got a park.

And one of the problems we found with parks in the late 20th century was that quite often they needed certain uses to guarantee that there would be eyes on the park and people using it. And so every block has a building with a social use, and every block has open space and with shade, flowers and bushes, so the things people want are all here. It's just in a different arrangement than they're used to.

There are a series of ideas here. I wanted to put back some of the lost memory of the place, so I put all the missing streets back in as paths in the park and that's sort of thing. And you can see right through that building along the alignment of one of the missing streets.

BIRNBAUM: *What was that idea about the colonial architecture versus modern?*

OLIN: Yeah, when we were doing the master plan for the National Park Service, the design team decided to write in guidelines. It was part of our contract to do guidelines. And so Bernie and I decided that there would be no faux colonial. We were not going to do ersatz, historic fake buildings. The first block should use brick and could have stone, and it should have some detail and texture that was compatible and sympathetic to Georgian and colonial buildings. The second block could begin to use metal and could have a different scale and introduce things that one finds in the 19th century, and in the third block, they would be free to use whatever modern materials [they wanted.] We thought that stone might be appropriate, because by the 20th century, there are a lot of civic buildings in Philadelphia and elsewhere done with limestone and marble. And so there is a range of palates that have to do with the evolution and the history of the city, but done as modern structures.

BIRNBAUM: *Show us where your office is.*

OLIN: Well, the old office is over there in the middle of the next block. And after we did the design for this, and it was in construction, we actually moved to this building, - the Public Ledger building. It was an old newspaper building in Philadelphia. So this is a really livable city in a wonderful way. And this park, although it's a National Park, is also an important city park, because as you see, a lot of these people are not just tourists, some are neighbors and office workers who use this space as well.

Washington Monument Grounds, Washington, D.C.

OLIN: Well here we are back on the Mall in Washington, D.C. Actually this is not the Mall, this is the Washington Monument grounds, the Mall technically stops at 14th Street. This monument, as everybody in America probably knows, was conceived shortly after the death of [George] Washington. It was a major project in the nineteenth century [worked on] by a series of people. Robert Mills won the competition. His ideas for the design of this rather Egyptian obelisk never happened. He designed it originally with a stylobate around the base with a circle of columns that included sculpture and all sorts of stuff. It never happened. Like a lot of projects they started it and it got stalled. And it's actually good it didn't happen because it is the most beautiful, the most pure, the most abstract monument we have here in our nation or on the Mall

Now this monument was built here on the banks of the Potomac River. A lot of people think this was built on a hill But it was actually built in a tidal flat. The Corps of Engineers back in the nineteenth century dug down until they hit a hard pan. They built a big pyramidal stone base and they pushed dirt around to hide the base. It was sort of a lumpy job and it stayed lumpy for a long time.

In the beginning of the twentieth century when the McMillan Plan was done for the Mall the [Commission] envisioned putting the monument on a huge set of terraces with fountains, basins, plants, trees, overlooks, underpasses and stairways. You name it. It was a little bombastic. It is good it didn't happen. The Corps of Engineers stopped it from happening because it would have sunk like a stone into the old tide flats here. After the

McMillan Plan several things happened. One [thing that happened] was the great Reflecting Basin and the other was the creation of the two other great memorials, the Jefferson Memorial and then the Lincoln Memorial which was designed by Henry Bacon. John Russell Pope, the man who did the National Gallery and the [National] Archives, is the author of the Jefferson [Memorial].

After the McMillan Plan several other famous landscape architects including Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., Henry Hubbard and Elbert Peets all made proposals to improve the grounds. But the grounds went on being sort of dreary right up until about fifteen years ago. One of the things that did happen however was that a parking lot was built, there was a hot dog stand, and there were some softball fields but not very much else. It was kind of dreary and not very nice. During World War II of course the Navy had a series of buildings built all along the side so that kind of preempted anyone improving the grounds. Landscapes are like that, things keep happening.

The net result is that by the 1960's it really looked terrible. When Lyndon Johnson and Lady Bird [Johnson] came into [office] after [John] Kennedy's assassination, they get involved with the people who were working on the next version of the mall. Nat Owings of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill developed a plan for the revitalization of the Mall to kind of reinvigorate the Burnham Plan and put in some more missing teeth. One of the things that he proposed was the Hirshhorn Museum and the garden that is the sculpture garden for the National Gallery [of Art]. One thing that was also proposed by Dan Kiley, the wonderful landscape

architect, was a series of groves of trees around the Monument. [The idea was] that you would come through these groves of trees and come into this big clearing with a hill and the Washington Monument on it. He managed to get some of them planted. There are some cherry trees beside me here that are relics from that plan. He got about fifty percent of it done but a lot of it died.

By 2001, September 11th this site was a mess. There was a huge parking lot here. There were these cracked concrete roads that drove straight up at the monument. There were some huge lanterns with these big trap doors that opened at night and flood lights came on and flooded the Monument with light. And then clouds of insects hovered over this light, so if you stood and looked at the US Capitol and the White House, you saw them through this haze of insects floating in the sky. The place was really terrible.

This was an interesting project for our office because it came as a result of the 9/11 terrorist attack in New York, Washington D.C. and Pennsylvania. Shortly after that the National Park Service concluded they had to defend a series of National icons. These [icons] included the Statue of Liberty, Independence Hall and the Washington Monument. The National Park Service had a competition and invited a series of landscape architects who had worked in Washington or knew the problems of a project like this. We were fortunate to be invited and fortunate enough to win the competition.

We went to work and I immediately thought what else could you do to keep terrorists from driving trucks into the monument? Now this may sound stupid to most people. Who would do that? Well a farmer had already driven a tractor into the pond in Constitution Gardens and another person had driven a car up onto the Monument grounds. We don't need foreign terrorist; we produce enough lunatics of our own. As I was thinking about how to protect the site I also wanted to see if I could improve it. The whole site was such a terrible mess, we should make the place better while we're at it. Isn't there a way that you can leverage civic purpose? Can you turn this defensive thing into a positive somehow? How could I make it more welcoming and handsome and dignified? The obvious answer to how do you stop fast moving vehicles loaded with explosives driving at a high speed is with mass. You just keep them from hitting something. What I decided was that we needed a wall that could take the impact and would be a visible barrier as well as a physical one. That was a good idea and it was obvious. But then I thought maybe it is not so nice. I was thinking about it when I remembered up at the US Capitol [Frederick Law] Olmsted, Sr. and [Calvert] Vaux had produced a series of very low granite walls. They were only a few feet high and they curved around and led you to where they wanted you to go and then they just died down into the ground. I thought there's a precedent here and it's right at the other end of the Mall. They are made of granite and they were very Victorian with an architectural profile. They had this rough cut rock face that was pretty strong and I kind of liked that.

As a young person I had spent a lot of time in England. And I ended up doing a study of the English landscape and writing about it. One of the central devices used by Capability Brown

and others in the eighteenth century English landscape park is the ha-ha. It's an old idea that you can see in France at Versailles and other places. But what it is is that you take a plateau into which you build a ditch, you build a wall in it and then you grade it back up. So when you look from one place the lawn looks continuous, the cows are out here grazing and you're sitting here having your tea. A ha-ha, as it's called seems kind of silly, but it's really a sunken wall. It's a kind of dreamy pastoral notion but a very clever and very simple device. I was able to do that on about fifty percent of the site, but on the other side I decided I couldn't tip the land up enough to hide it because I wanted to keep the [existing] softball fields. That may sound funny but here on the Mall and at the Washington Monument grounds there are all these government workers, thousands of people, who in the summer come out and play sports after work and on the weekends. They have all these softball leagues, people from the Commerce Department, the Labor Department, Education Department, all these people run around in their gym shorts and their t-shirts out here playing softball. I love the idea. What is more quintessentially more American than a bunch of people playing ball on a lawn in the summer in the face of power? There's the White House, there's the Capitol, there's the Pentagon and here are a bunch of guys running around hitting a ball. I felt that on the one hand we had a defensive problem to solve and on the other hand could we improve the quality of the general environment and that could make sure we could reinforce the social life of the place. I felt that for the men and women who play ball here it was really important to keep that sense of community, that sense of recreation and play, in the seat of the greatest powerful, most powerful nation in the world.

There are only one or two other things to say. People have commented, they've noticed there are these spiraling paths on the mound. One of the things is that when I hit upon the idea of the wall, that was a great idea to keep trucks from going up [to the monument] but it is very hard for pedestrians to get up [there]. So now what do you do? I realized if you just pull the wall apart, and slip it so that it overlaps, you could walk up between the walls on a ramp that goes up the hill. Now that makes perfect sense, but then so do the guys with the truck bomb. Then we had to come back and put the bollards in. That was a pretty simple thing to do. Once we had done that the question was how do you get the paths up the hill?

I didn't think the paths should go straight up and bang into the Monument. I thought you would want to come up and approach it and spin around and as you're coming up you get a view of the Capitol and as you come down you get a different view. But why does it really spiral? That's a nice idea, but the real reason is that its seventeen feet of vertical change from where you start down here on Seventeenth Street before you get to the base of the Monument. The question is if you want it to be handicap accessible, therefore less than five percent slope, that's one foot in twenty feet, that's quite a distance. And the distance is much longer than a straight line from the bottom of the hill to the top. I was trying to think what do I do? So I thought the only way to figure what to do is to cut a piece of string the length of the distance it would take to get up there and then see how you get to the top. Once we did that it was so clear; you do this, and then you do this, and then you do this.

The last thing to say about this project is this. I came to the conclusion that the Monument was this enormously beautiful, simple, elegant, vertical column with these flag poles and with all the beautiful flags. These [flag poles] in a way make the stylobate that Mills wanted to have. Had we had bigger flags, like I wanted, it would be even more like what Mills wanted to do. What I decided was that we couldn't have any other vertical; everything else had to be horizontal. I couldn't bear the thought that someone would want to come and put up light poles to light the paths. We figured out how to put the lights in the walls and then just put some lights up at the Monument, so that it's very subtle, very open and you can see across the great distances.

Then we needed to do seating at the top for people who are waiting to go to up the Monument, or were just too tired because it's hot or they walked the length of the Mall. We needed benches. I decided that we really should do some big beautiful graceful benches, but they should not have backs on them. Now the conventional wisdom is benches should have backs, that they would be more comfortable, which is sort of true. But that's when you have a place where you know that you sit this way and look that way. But here you're on the top of the hill and people want to look in all directions, and they do look in all directions, and so I decided we couldn't have backs.

At Battery Park City, Cindy [Sanders] and I did this bench that is about four feet wide. It's this beautiful bench made out of wood. What we learned was people could sit on one side looking one way onto the lawn or on the other side looking onto the Hudson River. People

could lie down, but yet two people could sit back to back and not touch each other, they had their own space. There was this kind of big gracious, generous gesture. I'm from Alaska and God doesn't do ditsy. When God decides to do something, he does a lot of it; let's have geese, a few million geese, and let's have wild flowers, let's have a glacier. I'm from a place that nature is generous and I think we should always err on the side of generosity. I wanted these to be big beautiful sweeping benches with a certain width and length. We did that and everybody can go see them now. We made them out of marble. Why marble? Well because all the edifices around here are either limestone or marble. And because this was the one place people are going to touch with their hands and their rear ends and they're going to be close to it; and I wanted to feel very beautiful. I wanted it to be beautiful and I wanted it to be calm and I wanted to be generous. So that's the story of those benches. They're made of the same marble that the monuments are made from.

Well, I guess there's one last thing to say about this project. We decided that we were going to try and plant the groves that Dan [Kiley] had started. You will see a lot of new trees being planted. This is still part of our project from 2001. Landscapes take a while. It takes a while to get them built and sometimes you have to build it in stages. And in this particular case, Dan Kiley didn't get it all built and we're still trying to build out some of the groves that he was trying to get built. The [National] Park Service didn't have quite enough money to get it all done when we had the contract. So they're still coming back trying to finish the project. Like many projects a lot of landscapes are unfinished work. They are what we talked about; they're open ended in some ways. I think this one is on the one hand finished,

and on the other hand people will always fiddle around with it. We're still adding trees, and it needs a few more. You know, like all projects it's not quite perfect, but we got a lot done, it looks pretty good. I have to say we're very proud.

Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin, Germany

OLIN: The Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe was started by Richard Serra and Peter Eisenman on their own as a competition. They got into the short list, and they were sailing along, and then they started having problems figuring out how to build it, and Peter called me and said, can you come and help? And I said, of course. You should help your friends, other people have good ideas and you should help them with their ideas. It doesn't always have to be your idea. So I went to help Peter. It's a fabulous project that I care deeply about. I was part of the generation that as a child learned about Nazi Germany. And by the time I was in junior high and high school, we were seeing the movies from the death camps that absolutely stunned us. And I know that if I'd been in Germany at the time, even though I'm not Jewish, I would have been sent off, too, because I'm not their kind of guy. But anyway, and I feel very powerfully moved by the tragedy and the horror of it and I wanted to help them. So there were a couple of simple problems. They had an idea, a topographic idea, and a notion of the replication of things, basically a grid gone mad. [It was] the notion of rational things becoming irrational, and of this deadliness of it all. It was a brilliant scheme. It was the best of both Peter and Richard. And in the course of doing it, I ended up trying to help figure out how we would handle the ground plane and how we would make it so that it could percolate water, and "A" not get water coming up but get

water going down. And then we were working with Buro Happold, the engineers, to figure out how to build it. Because you know, Peter hadn't built a lot. We also had to figure out how to deal with the German Senate, who was losing their courage because everybody was sniping at them. I had to go spend some time with the German Senate and a couple of the committee members. They sent the engineer and me because they felt we would be more rational and could coax them along. Peter just scared them. And in the course of it, something else happened. There was pressure from various people to put a register of names and an historic archive there, and Peter said, "Sure, he could do it". And Serra got very upset and started swearing and screaming, claiming that Peter was being a fucking architect, and that he was, as usual, selling out, blah, blah, blah, and as an artist he couldn't put up with that. And Peter said, "No, we don't have to express it. It can be underground. We can deal with it". But Serra was so upset about it, he quit. So then it was just Peter and I getting it built. And so we did. We figured out how we'd bury and one of the slots, instead of it being the great stelae, would just be a stair down. And it's really scary. When you go down there, I mean, you go down there, and there's the archive and there are the names. But it is like getting buried alive when you go there. And when you come back, you look up, and you just see the sky, and it's really like coming back into the world. It's really very moving. But that project is a horrible project. I mean in the way that it is chilling and it's numbing and the mechanical quality of it, it's a landscape, but it's a landscape of death, and it's a landscape of madness. And it's a landscape of mechanical reproduction of a repeated act. It's horrible. And I like it. Why I think its good is because it is so abstract, and yet everybody who goes there gets it. They understand. They are moved. Some will

tentatively go partway in or not, some go all the way down, but it gets scarier and creepier the further you go into it. It's very moving. And you know, we went to a lot of trouble not to have inscriptions, not to have signs, not to have very much of anything. I mean I had to fight to get a bus stop. But we wanted to keep it just very pure. I did want to do one more thing, which was interesting. I wanted to do a big row, a double row of conifers along the street facing the Tiergarten. I wanted to have this wall of trees that you could sort of see through diagonally, and then you step through into this world. The German Senate forbid us from using the conifers, because they said they were like tannenbaum, Christmas trees, and they didn't want them associated with that. They thought it would be confusing. And I argued and I said, but wait, the death camps were all in the forest, and they were in the woods. Treblinka and Dachau, and Birkenau, you name them, Buchenwald, they're all in the forests. And I think going into the forest is proper. And they said, no, no, no. It's too . . . that's a Christian thing. So I said, OK. I learned later from a woman who told me that actually that the Christmas trees that the Germans have were introduced by the Jews, by Jewish people in the Middle Ages

Columbus Circle, New York, NY

OLIN: Columbus Circle, like many of our projects and certainly like those here in New York, came as result of other people's efforts over time. And by the time we arrived for the third time on this site it was a different era than the first time we looked at it. Our first time of working at Columbus Circle was in 1980 when Central Park Conservancy asked Bob [Hanna] and I to look at the corner of Central Park where the Maine Memorial is located. It is on the

southwest corner right where 59th Street, 8th Avenue and Broadway all intersect. It's a five way intersection with a big circle. It was a bit of a mess. But in the middle of Columbus Circle there is a monument to Christopher Columbus. It is a rather handsome statue on top of a tall column with beaks, which are the beaks of Roman ships. It is kind of like a monument you might see in Ancient Rome. At the bottom is a small little fountain which has this little dinky little fence around it. In the 1950's the Delacorte family had given it to the city of New York. There are some inscriptions and some pretty good stuff there but you couldn't get near it and it was in the middle of lost in the traffic.

The Maine Monument was a monument to the Spanish American War. That corner of Central Park had always been a bit confused. It's a complicated corner in terms of its history, its physical form and its identity, and its traffic. It was a mess. So Bob Hanna and I did a plan for that corner of Central Park for the Conservancy and cleaned up the mess. We redid the pavement and we did a beautiful wall with some seats and new gates and new paths and we figured out how to edit the trees behind it to get sunlight back. The park had been overtaken by second growth trees and lost its special cohesion. We tried to restore that in that project and as a result we were fired. This was not because Marianne Cramer or Betsy Barlow didn't like what we were doing but because Henry Stern, who was a park commissioner, was upset that we were proposing cutting trees. He wouldn't let anyone cut a tree in a park even if they were junk weed trees. So we were dismissed. So that was the first time we looked at Columbus Circle. While we were doing that plan, we couldn't help but look at the total environment. We did a proposal for the whole circle to restore it to a

circle, the trees that went all around it and then to restore the circle inside with trees. So there would be two rings of trees with traffic in between. That's our first pass.

Time passes and in the mid 90's the Municipal Arts Society decides it might be interesting to have an ideas competition and they invited eight or nine designers to submit ideas. We did a project with Jorge Silvetti and Rodolfo Machado that was a little loopy but it was kind of fun. We thought that we would overreach a little. I proposed paving the entire thing from one side to the other all the way to the buildings with this beautiful stone pavement and then have rings of trees, but in this case I had this Piranesian idea that we could do a fountain that was also a big skylight that looked down into the subway. Underneath Columbus Circle there is the Eighth Avenue [subway] line, the old "A" train, which now has the new number, and then the Broadway Seventh Avenue line; one is stacked on top of the other. The notion that could we maybe do the new Columbus Circle so that you could see down to the concourses and below and to get a sense of the city below you, and then from below look up and see a little semi stage for people to kind of look at each other in the fountain, that didn't happen. In fact the New York City Parks Department was rather irritated by this thing and the Mayor's office and the Planning [Department] were irritated that Municipal Art [Society] had taken this idea and was trying to provoke them into doing something at Columbus Circle. There were some other loopier ideas that Jorge and Rodolfo came up with. It was an ideas contest, it was just for the fun of it; but we were serious about really changing the whole thing and getting it back to being a circle.

Again time passes. And in the last waning months of the [Rudolph] Giuliani administration I got a call from an old friend in New York who asked if I would be interested in talking to the City Planning Department about the possibility of doing a redesign of Columbus Circle for real. I said absolutely. I came up and I met with the Joe Rose, the City Planning Commissioner at the time, and Bruce Warwick who was the number two guy at Related [Real Estate] who were building a very large development on the property of the old convention center and arena that had been on that site since the sixties. I met with them and they said, "Can you do a design for this thing [Columbus Circle] that makes sense and get it done so that we can have in time for the opening of Related's great Columbus Circle buildings that Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, with David Childs and others had designed"? I said, "Well I can do the design but you can't get it built in time". They said, "Well what do you mean"? I said, "Well the drawings are the easy part. But getting it approved and built . . . I don't think we can get it permitted and built in a year. But if city planning and the administration want to try, let's try." They said, "OK we're going to call your bluff". And they hired me and we set forth to do it. We did do a scheme that's now built, and everyone can go see it, but it wasn't built in time for the opening. We did get the sidewalk in front of the building done so that you could drop off and get in and out of the building, but the circle was still under construction for the next year. That's because it takes a while to get things permitted in this city and to get them built, it's a tough town. We had the MTA to deal with, we had [people from] streets and highways to deal with, we had the Fine Arts Commission, the Landmarks Commission, the Planning Commission, and we had a bunch of people plus the neighborhood group from that district to deal with. We had a lot of people who wanted

to have some say. In addition, Central Park Conservancy was going to inherit that project because it was really deemed to be adjunct to Central Park; that meant that we were then working with the Conservancy who had to approve of the way we were paving it and the way we were going to plant it and things like that because they're going to have to pick up the maintenance.

When we started work it occurred to me that that very first design we did with the circles of trees that were pretty fundamental. And that we had to get the circle going [in this design]. I felt there was something wrong with the fountain, it was like a little puddle and it seemed so feeble to be in this heroic space. I also realized that if we were going to make it work at all we had to find some way to filter or mask the remarkable amount of traffic around it to make it kind of a sanctum. A lot of the problems that many parks have had, especially the earlier Bryant Park, by being separated from the city too much, they became places where you couldn't see in or out, and it scared people. They became dangerous [places]. So we had this issue about wanting to be able to see in and out of the space, but when you're in the space [we wanted you] to be removed from the street. That was a very interesting and difficult design problem. Like many difficult problems there was a simple solution but it took us a few minutes to think of it. I realized if I could set a perimeter berm of earth around the outside of the circle and plant the trees and plants on it that that would help mask the vehicle noise, the actual rumble from the tires on the street. Because [by doing] that solid mass it would cut some of the noise so that when you went inside this space, if you actually sat down, the cars would largely disappear, but if you stood up you could see in and out.

One of the great things about the project also was there was a marvelous traffic engineer and transportation planner who devised the timing of lights for the circle. One of the dilemmas of a traffic circle is they were invented to keep traffic moving and here we were trying to stop it at an intersection. It was a hybrid in terms of the urban dynamic and circulation. It's really a kind of a weird idea to have a circle at an intersection like this if you want people to cross the street. But in this case he had come up with a way to do it and get the timing right with these three ways to the island.

I then took this berm that went around the circle and just wacked it. I just cut it just like you would a sausage or a cake and took the path right through it. We looked at making the ends round but they ended up looking like hotdogs or sausages; and I thought it's better to have them look like a slice of a classical profile or a molding so we just cut them, and put in stone walls. Once I had come up with the notion of planting rows of trees and trees on the sidewalks, I abandoned paving all the way across the streets with nice unit pavers and stone pavers like we have in other cities, because in New York forget it you're not going to get that done. They just wouldn't even think of it.

When I looked at the fountain that was around the thing I thought well I want to blow up the Delacorte fountain. But what are we going to do because it was a gift to the city? Central Park [Conservancy] thought about it and the Park Commissioner thought about it. And they said, "Well if we come back with a nice new fountain why would they care,

because it's still going to be called the Delacorte Fountain. So I said, "OK". They asked somebody who was in contact with the family and the family said, "yes that would be alright". So we proceeded with the design. I had this idea. Who was Columbus? Well, he was this Italian sailor, a mariner and you could say an explorer. And what did he discover? He discovered an island. He didn't really ever see the mainland of North or South America; he actually discovered a bunch of islands which we call the West Indies.

We worked with many fountain designers and fountaineries, this one is a group from California that came originally out of Disney, a group called Wet, W-E-T, and they do high end great fountains. They've done some rather wiz bang ones that you would know in places like Las Vegas and Disney World. We got them to do this fountain for us. I was nervous about saying "this is what I want". And they said "no, no, no that's great we like helping people". It's kind of like when I helped Peter Eisenman with his *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*. When you have friends in the business and they've got an idea and you think that's a good idea then you don't mind helping them. You don't have to be in control of everything and think of everything. They had that idea about the fountain. They helped me do these simple jets that I wanted in this arena that fell into these perimeter basins. You have to be self-confident enough about yourself and your own ego to not want to drive and control everything. You have to just let other people have their way about things. That is real collaboration, everyone actually contributes. In this case they contributed a lot, part of which was the huge waterworks that makes it work.

We were trying to find a place to put the pump room which is huge because there is tons of water involved in these multiple fountains. In this particular case we looked at pipes by the Maine Monument in Central Park but it was kind of far away and we didn't want to rip up pieces of the park. We looked to see if we could get it in the buildings but it was too late and that's where Whole Foods is now and they couldn't give up any space. We finally wedged a pump room in believe it or not it's under the kind of northwest corner of the street. It just misses the edge of a subway. It was a real difficult project I have to say. Getting it built was hard but once it was built it looked so simple. It's just a circle with some low wooden benches and it has the fountains.

When we were presenting it to the Fine Art Commission there was this cranky art historian who said why are we doing all of this? Why are we spending and wasting this money on the middle of the street, nobody will ever go out there, this is foolish. Why are we even talking about the trees? I was saying, "Well because it will make it nicer and people like trees and it will help mask the cars. I was trying to explain what some of the fundamental aspects are of a nice environment in a city to somebody I thought was supposed to be an art historian, but I guess he does paintings or something [else]. Anyway, what happened was we got it built thanks to Central Park who backed us. They were very enthusiastic.

I was really happy that when Central Park Conservancy asked me what tree I wanted to use. I suggested that we use American buckeyes. It's a horse chestnut native to North America, but unlike the European one it has these beautiful tall golden creamy flowers instead of

pink. It's not like the Asian one, it's the American chestnut. Not the sweet chestnut which are extinct. It's a great tree, a big beautiful tree with these big spikes of flowers. They were enthusiastic and you can go see them, they're there.

One of the other things to talk about is the lighting. We had some interesting issues about the lighting. I didn't want lots of poles everywhere. We worked with a wonderful lighting designer named Hervé Descottes and his organization L'Observatoire {International}. They did lighting at the Louvre and other places. Anyways, Hervé is like this elf who has ideas about lights. He gave us the idea of putting these little blue lights underneath the bench. [That idea has] now have been copied by everybody all over the place. When we did it there it was like, wow, this little light [made] the benches float at night, and they lit that area of the plaza. Then he had this other idea of using this theatrical lighting on the Columbus Monument [the intent was not to flatten it out. He figured it out and he did it and it's beautiful. Outside in the planting beds he came up with these lights that are in these little metal tubes. They go all the way around and just glaze the outside of the trees and just give this little glow. So Columbus Circle is not over lit like everywhere else. The human eye is a very delicate thing, it wants to see the surface and wants to see the environment, it doesn't want glare. That's something that Hervé is very good about.

Columbus Circle like all the projects that I've done and that I'm so proud of whether it's the Getty Center or Bryant Park or somewhere else are usually the collaboration of a series of very skilled people who work well together. Columbus Circle is a good example of that. If

you go there now or if you go there in the middle of the night you will see all these young people who say, "I'll meet you at Columbus Circle". It's just amazing. People love it. It's full of people day and night year round.

Director Park, Portland, OR

There is a project that might talk about some of those things I've been talking about, and that is Director Park in Portland, Oregon. And it's a great project that I had the good fortune to work with several fabulous people from Portland, Oregon. There is an architectural firm called Zimmer Gunsul Frasca, ZGF. Bob Frasca's an old friend, but it was basically several of the younger partners there who really got it done. They worked it through and they were incredible. We also had a landscape architect, who is a dear friend, Carol Mayer-Reed. She and her associate had everything to do with helping us get the job, helping us see it through and get it built with the fabulous plants we have there. The café is maybe the smallest café but with the most beautiful green roof with flowers on top of it. It's a nice project.

We were asked to work on a project in Portland, Oregon, which was one of a series of little parks, it was tiny, 100 feet by 200 feet. It had a street on all four sides. And I thought, in Portland, what do you do? Portland, that's the city where Larry did his great stuff. And Pete Walker was doing a project, a nice project down in the Pearl District. They have a nice Chinese garden, and they had a riverfront and they had a lot of other stuff. And I said, eh, what do you do? What's needed? And the park blocks had all these rows of beautiful elm

trees. And here I was a block away from that with this vacant lot over what was six floors of a parking garage. What the heck to do? It was also a block away from Pioneer Square, the Portland Pioneer Square. So I thought, well, I think what it should be a more intimate outdoor room for people to come to. And if Larry is Beethoven, this should be more like a little Mozart sonata. It should just be a little piece. But one that's a delight, not heavy and full orchestra, but just a few horns and a couple of strings and a flute or something. So I thought what's that in landscape? And I thought, well I can think of two things. One is that I want the park to be bigger. I don't want it to feel so squashed. So I decided we should pave the whole thing in stone, wall to wall from building face to building face across two streets. And we had to make it so that the cars which were driving through the space had to mind their manners and behave themselves. And we had to design the space so that the floor would be very rich and very beautiful. It [the floor] needs to be blonde because this is sort of a gray, gloomy environment, but it needs to look nice [when it is] wet. And so I started, looking at the baskets from the Columbian River area where there are a lot of blond on blond, very pale, beautiful baskets. And I thought, "Aha". Then I started looking at granite and figuring out how to do textures. I thought that it should be made with beautiful elongated herringbone stone pieces, with texture, so that when it rained, there would be this shimmery pattern. So it's the notion that the floor of the city would come alive when it's wet, because it's often wet there. So that was that. So now I've got a stage for something to happen. And then I've got these things coming out from the garage, fire escapes, smoke exhaust [vents], elevators and stuff. And so I thought, two, that's an awkward number. I don't know what to do. I knew that in cities that people are like

primates, we like to eat together and watch each other and groom each other. So I thought it needs a little café. And that could be the third thing. It's like one, two, three. But the site sloped about 12 feet or more. What am I going to do? I wanted water, and water runs downhill and then I thought, why did I want water? I wanted it because people are attracted to water. Water is what makes life possible. Water and the sun are the two things that make it all possible. But doing water, when Larry [Halprin] had done water in spades [in Portland] it had to be different. It [the water] had to be lighter; it had to be kind of flimsy and silly. So I thought, if it just comes out of the pavement and falls back down in the pavement, and runs downhill, then I could just gathered it up with a little dam in the shape of the moon or something and make this crescent shaped pond. And then you could actually sit on that little dam, and I could put in a nice little curved bench, and people could sit with their feet outside, or with their feet in the water, or they could lay down on the bench, or whatever. So now the surface is starting to come together. There are a couple of terraces along one side, with feathered steps that step down from the café towards the fountain. And then I thought; now we need trees, because I've got to have leaves, and I want shade. So [I thought] maybe I can do a grove and I could put tables and chairs under them. Maybe we could take some of the pavement and make a big chess board in this little grove of trees. And so now I've got the trees. I've got the water. I've got the floor. It's come alive. And I've got the café. Everything's going well. And you know, people, when they come to the park, they wanted to read the paper, because it's Portland, Oregon, it's started to drizzle. So I thought, I've always wondered why in the Pacific Northwest, they don't partially cover spaces like the great train stations of the nineteenth century? So that

led to the notion of this big high glass canopy over the terraces from the café. And then that led to the notion of, what do I do with the water that comes off of it"? So I took the water off of the big high glass roof, and dropped it down into a big long planter. So the water is filtered before it goes into the storm water system, and we can reuse it. So there are these big planters full of gushy plants, and there are these trees which are yellowwoods [in the park]. In the spring, every other year they have some great racemes of white blossoms that hang down from them and they smell great. So we produced a place that has water, texture, color, light, food, drink, entertainment, people watching each other, and a place where they can play chess with the big funny chess set with other people watching what's going on. There are places to sit, places to move, it's got long views, short views, all the stuff we're talking about. It doesn't look like nature. It isn't nature. But it has some of the stimulus and attributes. But it also has some of the stimulus and attributes that we associate with good historic public spaces. To my enormous relief, the city was wonderful in rising to the occasion and coming up with the money. There was a donor who gave us money for most of the park. The city was going to pay for the rest. And then it turned out it was going to cost even more. We went back to our donor and he gave us some more money. And then when we needed some more help, he said he'd give it to us, and we could name a fountain for something or someone. He decided to name the fountain for teachers. So it's called Teachers Fountain, because he felt school teachers were so important in his life. And so the city has taken it up. They love this space; it's full of people and families. And now in the middle of downtown suddenly there are all these moms and kids in strollers. Where are they coming from? It happened at Battery Park City. It happened in Bryant Park.

It happens in many of our projects. After a while you realize that [the people] who are using it are old people, young people, homeless people, working class people and shop girls.

They're all there.

Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia, PA

OLIN: This is the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. And as I have talked about it in the past, this is the result of a great Beaux Arts project. Jacques Greber was the lead designer. Paul Philippe Cret worked on various parts and what you see in the distance is the Philadelphia Museum of Art by [Horace] Trumbauer. It's a remarkable ensemble of Beaux Arts buildings that was never quite finished. One of the things our office has been doing for the last decade is trying to help restore what was here and to enhance it and bring things to it that it didn't quite get the first time. [We are working to add] missing teeth like the new Barnes Museum, and [working on] the restoration of the Logan Circle here with the great Swann Memorial Fountain. We're continuing to work on the Rodin Museum and it's restoration that Paul Cret did, and we're now working up at the art museum on some master plan and some renovation for them.

The Logan Circle restoration really was a labor of love. Circles are very bossy; they're very difficult things to work with. You only have so many choices; you've got to work with the geometry. My partner Sue Weiler did most of this work and did this fabulous planting. The plants are very Parisian, the gravel underneath is very French and they go with the French sculpture by Alexander Stirling Calder for the Swann Fountain. Also you'll notice that it has

a kind of air of generosity to it, this kind of spirit of largesse of public openness. And once you get the parts right and you screen out the traffic what happens is you produce this quite wonderful outdoor room in the middle of the city. You can sort of step out of the city into the space and look around and see where you are and orient yourself and take pride in it and you can know about the weather, the climate, the sun, the wind and hear the sound of the water. You'll notice when you come to a place like this, if its been done the way we've done this, that there are homeless people asleep on a bench over there, there are small children in the fountain, there's retired people, and there's some middle class folks. The city comes out and joins itself. People take pleasure in each other's company in a place like this. No one dominates, they all share.

OK on this parkway, there is another thing that's a Philadelphia treat. Something that you can see nowhere else in the world is three generations of the Calder family. The Calders were sculptors from Philadelphia. If you go to the art museum and stand at the top of the stairs where the great Daniel Chester French sculpture of Diana is and you look out you'll see this big beautiful Calder mobile. Beyond it down the Parkway is this Swann Fountain by his father Alexander Sterling Calder. And then on top of City Hall, which was the tallest masonry structure in America, is this huge bronze statue of William Penn. It was done by their grandfather.

Museum of Jewish Heritage, New York, NY

OLIN: Adjacent to Wagner Park is an important cultural institution called the Museum of Jewish Heritage. It came after the [Robert Wagner] Park. When we're working on the landscape design for the Museum of Jewish Heritage my partner, Cindy Sanders, who had taken over the completion of this project and getting this thing built here at Wagner Park, became the lead designer in this next piece. One of the problems here was that they were very concerned about the potential of terrorists. Again there was concern about a bomb in a vehicle, driving at a high speed, crashing into the building and blowing it up. And so the question was how could we put barriers right along the street so that they would not ruin the quality of the pedestrian environment and the sense of ambiance that we had gone to so much trouble to create? Cindy came up with two solutions to it. One was a bench, a series of long benches that have a wood seat and funny rippled cast glass underneath it. They are lights at night on the sidewalk but they also have inside them the metal guardrail. So they're hidden crash barriers. Then she alternated those with a series of very beautiful long low stone basins. They have water which flows over the edges and kids all put their hands in them. Then we added some trees. So instead of having a continuous fence or continuous row of ballads like all these other people do; we did seats that are lights, we did fountains that are playful and we did trees for shade. We used a series of different things, the combinations of which you can't drive through if you tried

The Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia, PA

OLIN: Well we are at the Barnes Foundation's new facility on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in Philadelphia.

The Ben Franklin Parkway is right on the edge of downtown center city Philadelphia. The Parkway was conceived just before World War I and executed largely during and after it. It's a Beaux Arts derived City Beautiful diagonal that slashes through the William Penn grid from

city hall out to Fairmount which is one of the early historic homes on the hills above the Schuylkill River leading out of town. It was conceived as a civic boulevard that would have grand institutions rather like those in Chicago along the lake front and the Burnham Plan. Also in other cities that produced a series of monumental buildings. One of the things about this project, it was designed by a man named Jacques Greber who's a French Beaux Arts architect. And it was partially developed to a degree by one of his protégés a man named Paul Philippe Cret, who was also a French Beaux Arts architect of the period. He came to Philadelphia and became the Dean of the School of Architecture here [at the University of Philadelphia] and helped train an awful lot of important people who came from China and around the world and everything. And so the early great days of the architecture school at Penn were tied in also with this kind of Beaux Arts movement that happened, not bizarre but Beaux Arts. Anyway so near here diagonally opposite us is a place called Logan Circle, it was one of the five Penn Squares, Logan Square. And on the square is the Benjamin Franklin Institute, the Museum of Natural Science, Moore College of Art, the free library, the family court and the Saint Peter and Paul Cathedral. It's really an important cultural node in the heart of the city of Philadelphia. And from it this diagonal leads out to Fairmount where during the Depression they built the Philadelphia Museum of Art. And [Horace] Trumbauer whose office was great rivals to McKim, Mead & White, they did all the buildings at Duke University in collaboration with Olmsted. [He was also] the architect for some of the great mansions in Newport and for Widener Library at Harvard. Trumbauer did the museum with this great Greek revival monument on a hill at the end which originally had been a water works in the eighteenth century and nineteenth century. The Parkway

never got all of the monuments that are shown on the documents, drawings and the plans because master plans quite often don't get totally built out. You get the first big wave and some pieces and then quite often they run out of gas. But in this particular case, it had a few buildings and the whole Parkway got built pretty much along the lines and dimensions of Champs-Élysées. [It had] only one [building] by Paul Philippe Cret and that's the Rodin Museum which is right behind us. Unfortunately in the late nineteen fifties, on this particular site, a youth study center was built which is code for a jail for juvenile offenders. It had a ten foot high stone wall with barbed wire, parking lots and in the shadow of it homeless people camped out and lived. So it was not that it was an eyesore so much as it was totally the wrong use. And it was a very unfortunate expression of what's really needed to help the youth who have fallen afoul of the courts and the law. It was all the wrong messages and it was the wrong thing there.

A few years ago, I think actually about 2002, at the end of a huge long controversy, an institution called the Barnes Foundation, in Merion, had run out of money, it was bankrupt and it was up for new management. It was proposed by some of the foundations in town that the Barnes move its collection to Philadelphia. Now the collection is one of the great collections of late nineteenth century, early twentieth century, almost all [the work is] French art. There are more Cézannes here than any other city in America, you'd have to go to Paris to find more. There are over a hundred Renoirs, there are Picassos, Matisse's, like forty Matisse's, it's an unbelievable collection worth billions, if you could ever sell it. Dr. Barnes was a very fierce man who was a doctor from the University of Pennsylvania. He had

invented a patent medicine that cured various diseases one of which apparently is gonorrhea. That was a very useful thing in that period and probably still is. Anyway Dr. Barnes made a fortune. He had a high school buddy named William Glackens; one is one of the painters from the Ash Can School in New York. Glackens advised him about art. And he developed another personal friend who was John Dewey, the man that wrote *Art and Experience*. He was interested in Gestalt psychology and the notion that art is not just about form and not just about color, it's not just about narrative but it's also about physical tangible experience. One of the things that Dr. Barnes bought was the idea that he would build a collection and he would present it to people in a way that got rid of all the paraphernalia of a normal art museum. He had Paul Philippe Cret design him a gallery out in Merion just for his collection and then he commissioned Matisse, Henri Matisse, to do this huge set of murals and these lunettes above the tall French windows in the main gallery space. It's one of Matisse's masterpieces and it was done for this particular place. This collection, in art circles is and should be world famous. And it was out in Merion.

Barnes got in such a fight with the local authorities, he despised the establishment. He was a guy who came up from the lower middle classes and he wanted this to be for the working man. He wanted the common man to get art and to be able to experience art. He wanted it in the schools. He went so far as to have art classes for these factory workers and he gave them healthcare plans. He was an old fashioned kind of patron of his workers, and in a way noblesse oblige, he looked after those who were less fortunate. He was a cranky guy. When he had a fight with the local folks here at the art museum, he put it in the hands of a black

college outside of town, called Lincoln University. They sort of struggled because they couldn't really manage it either. At a certain point, it was not that university's fault but the fault of some of the people on the board and the will that he set up, there was serious trouble. And I'm not even going to go into the hoorah that took place about moving the museum. There are documentaries and scandal raising films about the stealing of the great Barnes Collection. There are a lot of people who still think it was a mistake and many other people think it was the most brilliant thing that ever happened. Now actually people can go see it. Because it was very restricted on how many could see the collection, and by where it was, and how you made reservations when it was out in the suburbs. Now here it is the decision was made to move it. In 2007 the selection committee after interviewing a series of architects selected Tod Williams and Billie Tsien, a remarkable architect pair from New York. They have done some brilliant buildings and they're wonderful designers, extremely sensitive, and thoughtful. They don't have a huge practice because they try to limit the amounts of things they do each year to just a couple. Tod and Billie got the job in the fall of 2007, and they began to figure out how on earth you could move the collection here, because it had to be maintained in a certain particular way, the way it had been hung in Merion. They came up with some brilliant concept diagram ideas about how to have the Merion bar as we'll call it, the block of rooms that are en suite, that replicate the Cret building in Merion, but then they figured out how to do the new facilities as just kind of embrace of the other structure. And [they figured out] how to have an open space in between that would allow you to enter that collection from the north and have it face south. So they had a diagrammatic idea of what to do and how to take a couple of walls and

pull them apart and insert some new spaces that would allow more breathing room, some for classes and maybe one for garden. They had got that far when the architects and the committee decided they really should have a landscape architect involved pronto. And my good fortune was they selected our firm and I got to work on it. By chance I was in Rome on a sabbatical, the first one I had in thirty five years at the American Academy in Rome. Billie Tsien is on the board of the American Academy. We overlapped actually before I stepped off the Board. I knew them socially, I knew them professionally, but we had never worked together. We liked each other's work and liked the notion that we could work with them. In the spring of 2008, I was in Rome and Billie came through town with Tod on other business for the Academy and it allowed us a chance to go sit with some tracing paper and doodle and to begin to work on how were we going to organize this project. I have to say we had the brains to pick a wine bar just off the Campo de' Fiori and we were there for about four hours. It was just sipping a little, nibbling a little and drawing a lot. And out of that four hour session we basically hit on the parti that we have finally built. It went through additions, modifications, and adjustments but we came to the conclusion that the building needed to be in about the center of the site. And we needed to produce an environment around it that would take you from the big city outside and transition you to the door, and that the door should be on the north so that you came in, in the same sequence that you entered the original [museum in] Merion. [We designed it so] that the big tall windows of the Merion block with the art collection, would face south. We [also] would have some room to do some site landscapes that would actually screen it to a large degree from the traffic and the buses on the parkway; so that people standing there looking at these great Mantises,

Picassos, Cézannes would be in a room where they could focus on them. One of the things about this sequence that I proposed to them was that you would move from very civic sort park-like spaces [serving] as a foyer down on the Parkway and that you would come up a ramp through a calmer passage between other trees and then turn, and at each turn you would be in another space and you're calming down and it's becoming more serene and the city is further away.

We also realized that we needed to bring people from the neighborhood off to the north. We needed to deal with some parking that the client insisted they absolutely had to have because that had been one of their huge problems in Merion. And the neighborhood was worried about the Barnes coming and all the cars parked in their neighborhood. So there was a big issue about parking. We decided that we would produce a space that was a kind of last space before you went in to the building that was this really serene space, a calm promenade. Whether people walked in from the city or the parkway, however they arrived they would go through a sequence of decompression. When you're in the city there's so much noise and chaos with our central nervous system one of the things we do is we find ways to block and screen out sensory experience just to keep from going crazy or deaf or whatever. The question is how could we get people to calm down and become very sensate and get all their nerve endings out and receptive to the nuance, the delicacy, the subtlety, the richness, the forms, the beauty, the sheer raw beauty of what's inside this building. The landscape had this job to do to make the transition.

The other thing is that even when you're in the building Tod and Billie did the same thing with the building. There is still this progression where you go through a low dark space, then you come into a big high open space and then you go back into the gallery. So Tod and Billie and I really cooked on how we would have worked this sequence from outside to inside so that it's an absolute continuum of thought and detailing.

So there are a couple of simple ideas. One is the building which we set halfway up and halfway down so that we could get handicap accessibility. It also allowed us to have an elevated space outside the building, toward the parkway, that I could plant. It would act as a ha-ha and [provide] a screen toward the street to produce a calm interior and [which I could] fill with plants that are basically all from, derived from Merion.

The second idea was that I thought we should have this long stretch of water so I proposed this big table top, table height basin of water that looks still but gushes and falls off at the end. It is sort of like Chantilly by [Andre] Le Nôtre where there is this great, beautiful, calm, piece of water out of which becomes this torrent. The notion of out of quiet comes something else. It's similar to the pool at Yosemite, by the silver apron just above Vernal Falls which is absolutely still but it swept people away last year. So I developed this notion of this calm piece that has water coming out of it, and that has water lilies in it. And although there aren't any Monet [water lily paintings] in the building there are some quite wonderful Monet paintings. So if I put water lilies out there in this French feeling forecourt with horse chestnut trees, gravel and the benches, it seemed to me that it would have the

memory and evoke Paris on the one hand and also French painting of the nineteenth century. And that would sort of be a preamble.

The second piece of water is right here behind me. It is this very calm piece. The first water piece is raised, this one is on the ground and it has these beautiful stones on the bottom. It's very calm and it leads you along this allée of trees to the door and the entry. Then when you get inside and you're in the light court you find the last piece of water. It is a big long rectangular piece but this time it is a table top, quite like a bar for serving and floating flower petals and stuff. And they're all going in the same direction. If you look at the work of Dan Kiley and you think about Le Nôtre, it is the notion of having these geometries that take you along and you move you. This is organized this site in a de Stijl manner.

Now the planting palette is unusual for city parks but not for Main Line estates. It turns out Dr. Barnes' wife, Laura, was a devoted horticulturalist. And he loved gardens too and a lot of the paintings showed the gardens and landscapes. In the late nineteen twenties out in Merion they started a school of horticulture, botany, landscape design and garden design. And they had an arboretum. They had inherited a bunch of trees on the site and they turned it into an arboretum. She corresponded with [Charles Sprague] Sargent at the Arnold Arboretum and together they imported a lot of oriental, Asian, Japanese, Chinese plants, shrubs and small trees etc. So if you go to Merion, look at their fabulous collection. They have a remarkable collection especially of things like maples. They have a great maple collection. They have a great conifer collection and various other things.

When I was working on the planting here I thought well we can't recreate a suburban site and you shouldn't anyway. But there should be a memory; you should make references to their thought and their sensibility and the character [of the place]. That would give a unique character to this place. So hence [I put in] this allée of Japanese maples behind me. I don't know of another one in the world. Maybe [there is one] somewhere in Japan which I have not seen, maybe in Nikko or somewhere else. [I am not talking about] those little dwarf funny things that you see in suburban gardens but [an allée of] proper tall multi-stemmed forest trees, like you see in Asia and like they have at Merion. This walkway that leads you up the ramp to the door from the parkway, I framed it with a series of deodar cedars to refer to the conifer collection. That's why I have a cryptomeria up here; it will grow and help hide the offending building in the distance. When I was in architecture school we used to call those transitions between one space and another, we used to call them a mood tube. But it's the notion that you're really affecting how people stand and move and feel and then there's this "Aha" [moment] when you arrive.

This sculpture by Ellsworth Kelly is a recent phenomenon. One of the board members Joe Neubauer, who is the vice chair of the foundation and of the building committee, has a great twentieth century art collection. He actually owns some Kellys himself. Joe saw a small maquette in Ellsworth's studio and said "ooh what's this"? And they talked about it and Joe said "oh can we have that for the Barnes"? It's big. So here it is.

Joe financed the manufacture and fabrication of this in California. That is where most of Kelly's work is made. It was brought here and we installed it. So it came along. And it's hard to believe that it was an addition because it seems as if everything was designed around it. That's how this project went; things fell into place as people really got together in the nicest way.

There are many other plants here that recall Merion. Out on the front plinth, in front of those big windows there are the rhododendrons, and there's a tapestry of ground covers which recall the hellebores and the ferns from Merion. But there are also a series of chestnut trees. There's a horse chestnut tree from Japan, there are two European ones and then there's an American buckeye. So we have horse chestnuts from three continents. And all of them also still stand outside Cret's building on the south lawn in Merion. So I went and found some of those and put them in, just for the fun of it. There are some other wonderful Asian plants here. There are these Katsuras, [there is] one at each end of this allée. They're kind of off, in other words it is that business of balance not symmetry. [They are the] da da. They're there but they're not like Tweedledum and Tweedledee. They are much more dynamic.

We were very interested in how to frame things and how to turn people and move them and limit their views. This beautiful stone tapestry wall of Tod and Billie's is made from Jerusalem stone. It [the stone] is really from the Negev Desert. Billie describes it as being derived from her thinking about kente cloth, the weavings from West Africa. The notion

that it's a series of strips that goes together. Well on the opposite side I'm doing a tapestry of vines. There are six vines over there. I'll see if I can rattle them off. There is Dutchman's pipe, there's a couple of clematis, there's some wisteria, there's climbing hydrangea, there's some roses and there's some honeysuckle. So there's a series of alternating things planted back and forth to make this complete tapestry of different colors, textures and aromas. So when you come in here, as Tod would say, your shoulders drop as you come in but also your eyes open and your senses begin to awaken.

When you go in the building there are several things that happen. One is that if you turn, you come into the light court and you see in front of you some glass, like a glass box with trees. They are very tall forest fastigiate trees, ginkgos and sweet gums. I chose them partly because they're very tall vertical trees that will stay narrow but also because they'll reach for the light. They're used to forest conditions. The other reason is that in the autumn one will be this absolute clear golden color and the other will be this beautiful rich vermilion, crimson and [their leaves] will fall together into this bed of ferns. It's going to be a knockout.

When you get into the light court, if you look straight ahead toward the end where the big tall glass wall is, you look right out to the west terrace where I planted some Halesias. These Carolina silverbells are a little bouquet on an outdoor deck. Beyond are the grounds of the Rodin Museum and this huge mass of trees, so it's like you're in the park. You've sort of left the city, you're in a park. And then if you turn and come into the gallery in the Merion wing

where all the paintings are what happens is you look out and it's the estate with the rhododendrons and all the big trees, and you're somewhere else. When you go upstairs on the balcony to look at the Matisses you see something that Matisse talked about. He talked about how he had to think about the colors for the lunettes [to make sure] that they would go with the green in the windows. When you're there you see the trees and you see the green.

The End