

The Cultural Landscape Foundation
Pioneers of American Landscape Design

LAWRENCE HALPRIN

ORAL HISTORY

REFLECTIONS

Michael Apostolos Gary Roth
Shlomo Aronson Andrew Sullivan
Gerson Bakar Ed Westbrook
Charles A. Birnbaum
Max Z. Conrad
Angela Danadjieva
Douglas E. Goldman
Rich Haag
Jahan Khalighi
Bruce Levin
Donlyn Lyndon
George McLaughlin
Robert Mueting
Cornelia Hahn Oberlander
John G. Parsons

Reflections on Lawrence Halprin by Michael Apostolos, RA, AIA

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Larry and Ms. Ikeda with the Host Chapter "Cow Limo", courtesy of the Cody Chamber of Commerce

Just got the e-architect's newspaper on the passing of Lawrence Halprin – what a great life he lived and the many contributions he provided through his work and efforts.

The article was well done and appreciated. As I read through the piece, it brought me to recall the fond memories from Mr. Halprin's visit as a program speaker to one of the AIA's Western Mountain Region Conferences, hosted by the Wyoming AIA Chapter in Jackson Hole, WY a number of years ago. Mr. Halprin attended the conference with Sue Yung Ikeda for several days and the attached photograph was at the airport when I picked up Mr. Halprin and Ms. Ikeda and of the sheer delight of Mr. Halprin having his picture taken with Ms. Ikeda and the Host Chapter "Cow Limo", courtesy of the Cody Chamber of Commerce. We used this vehicle to shuttle dignitaries during the conference and Mr. Halprin enjoyed his time being taken to the different events via the "Cow Limo". The program he and Ms. Ikeda presented on master planning, design and communities was absolutely one of the best I have ever attended and have used that information and some of his philosophies during my career. But the most pleasant memory is of Mr. Halprin riding in the "Cow Limo" slapping his hand on the side of the car in tune with the western music being played through the car's PA system when I was driving them around Jackson Hole after an evening at the western theater. Having had several occasions to visit with him, it was obvious he had a great love of life and was truly a pioneer in his field and will be remembered by all who knew him and those that enjoy his work as they walk through it. Thank you for a well written article on a man of great vision, talent and professionalism.

Reflections on Lawrence Halprin by Shlomo Aronson

February 2010

Reflections on a Friend

Now, when this event has happened which we all know must come, many people who knew Larry must feel like I do: a special loss, and a special relationship with other close friends to Larry.

I feel privileged to have been one of the torch carriers for Larry, perhaps in charge of the Jewish-Israeli sphere, and I felt how important and central that position is.

Even though Larry had a lot of criticism about Israel, he didn't embrace the easiest way by cutting himself off from what went on, but he tried to influence decisions by every positive means that occurred to him. One of his great achievements, more in planning than in landscape architecture, was his stand against the destructive Jerusalem Master Plan of 1969, which was ultimately not approved; an achievement which he was immensely proud of, and rightly so.

On one of his trips to Israel in the '50's, I invited him to come with me to the Negev. He was delighted to join. We hiked in the heat, perhaps 20 kilometers through mountains and wadis. He never complained; on the contrary, he seemed to enjoy every minute of it. He was very resilient, very strong. There are quite a few people in Israel who remember and appreciate Larry, and a very nice obituary has already appeared in Haaretz Newspaper.

I always remember the procedure and effort he made to bring his mother to be buried in the Mount of Olives. As in everything, he was very involved and he checked every detail; the stone, the dressing. I felt how deeply he was attached to her and what a great influence she had on him.

May his memory be blessed.

January 4, 2011

Early Life

Larry Halprin was born in one of the bloodiest periods of human history, at the end of the First World War. This was a period, between the World Wars, when many people in the West were uncompromisingly committed to the then-current ideological camps. Socialism, Communism, and Fascism were political ideologies competing with indigenous economic capitalism during Halprin's youth.

After graduating from high school in the summer of 1933, Larry went to live in what was then Palestine. He worked at several jobs in different parts of the country and was among the

founders of Kibbutz Ein Hashofet, where he lived for almost a year. He was much influenced by the people of the kibbutz who were full of enthusiasm about the new society that they were struggling to create. He relished the intensity and vigor of the “kibbutzniks,” and always felt that his time in Ein Hashofet was a formative, positive period in his life. At times, he criticized Israel, but he loved it. In almost all of his trips to Israel he would try to squeeze in a visit to the Kibbutz.

His mother, who was a central personality in American Jewry through her involvement in the Hadassah Women’s Organization (and the head of the organization for decades) even though she was a great Zionist, wouldn’t even hear about Larry remaining in a kibbutz.

Eventually her strong character prevailed and, in 1935, Larry left the kibbutz and returned to the United States to study. In spite of this, he did go through the experience of war. He later joined the United States Navy and was an officer on a ship which was hit by a Japanese Kamikaze during the Second World War. This was an experience which also left a strong mark on him. He often talked about these experiences.

Larry loved nature and that is one of the most important elements in both his personal and professional life. It is interesting to note how he chose to draw trees; very similar in all his sketches. There is something in the character of his trees, like that of a nice old uncle, very encouraging. You can see the love of nature in the smile of his sketches, in their personality, self-satisfaction with humor.

While searching for direction, Larry stumbled by chance on a small brochure by Christopher Tunnard that changed his life. He found in this short writing the answer to his search for a vocation: Landscape Architecture. He never regretted it.*

The Jerusalem Committee

Larry’s influence in Jerusalem, or even in Israel, relates to what I consider his most central contribution to Israel: his participation in The Jerusalem Committee. After the Six Days War when Jerusalem became a united city again, there was a need to create a workable entity of it. A new radical plan was called for to integrate the different sets of infrastructures such as transportation, water, electricity, housing, etc.

As it happened, Jerusalem had embarked in the late 1960s on the process of creating a new master plan and it was, at the time of the war, in the approval stage. The Master Plan was headed by the team of Avia and Zion Hashimshoni and Yosef Schweid. The plan had some very important positive points, mainly regarding the open space pattern. But it was weak and not very imaginative regarding transportation and would have endangered historical Jerusalem. Jerusalem’s Mayor, Teddy Kollek, wisely wanted to take advantage of the advice of the members of the Jerusalem Committee whom he had invited to give their input to development in Jerusalem, but he didn’t realize the depth of the criticism that would be forthcoming.

There was a constellation of world famous intellectuals, architects and designers on the committee along with Larry, including Lewis Mumford, Buckminster Fuller, Denys Lasdun, Nikolaus Pevsner, Philip Johnson, Louis Kahn, Isamu Noguchi, Bruno Zevi, Moshe Safdie, and some leading Israeli planners. Larry, along with many others, immediately saw very serious deficiencies in the 1968 plan. With his knowledge of projects with similar problems such as the "Pan Handle Freeway" in San Francisco which was eventually cancelled, he advocated redoing the whole plan from the beginning.

At that late time in the course of the planning process, there was every reason not to go back to start again. The loud and clear voices of the critics of the plan won the day. Larry, by adding his strong voice to the criticism, contributed to bringing this about. Larry was a gifted communicator with powerful convictions and he enjoyed the fight for what he believed in.

In response, Teddy Kollek, after serious deliberation, announced a halt of the almost-finished Jerusalem Master Plan and the beginning of a rethink of the whole thing. The major lesson from this episode is that suddenly it looked so possible to do it better. The plan could and should be changed because the essence of Jerusalem carried deep historical value. In such a case, as with physicians of the human body, planners should strive to do no harm. Because of this episode, the Jerusalem city planners became much more aware of the sanctity of this special city, and the fact that development and planning here (and anywhere) deserves the utmost care.

The Jerusalem Promenade and Park

During this time, Larry and I became involved in a project which was to have very important meaning for Jerusalem. As in many professions, a good project usually also includes a lot of luck. The Jerusalem Promenade and Park, on which I worked both with Larry and independently, is a good example. The area of the slopes descending from the crest of the United Nations Headquarters to Jerusalem has an outstanding and unique view looking to the Temple Mount and the Judean Desert, a world-class panorama full of meaning for millions. The land in this area was understood to be prime real estate, and there had been many suggestions over time to make use of its intrinsic value by building expensive properties, including locating the foreign embassies there. Fortunately, a number of influential people in the Land Authority of Israel, the Jerusalem Municipality, and the Jerusalem Foundation agreed to keep this land open for public enjoyment. This moment of grace enabled local bureaucratic approval to be quickly given, donors to realize the value and importance of a public project in this area, and the work to begin.

National Master Plan

One of the most important goals in landscape planning is to achieve an open-ended plan. By open-ended I mean a plan that can grow and redirect itself both in a geographical sense (expansion) and in time (future change). An open-ended landscape plan strives to incorporate a system of plant material that can also extend through space and time. Thus, the great investment in time and resources of a master plan will be justified, preserved, and enhanced.

In the early 1990s, the Israeli Ministry of Interior commissioned a master plan for the whole country. Shamaï Assif was the head of the National Master Plan team of which I was the Landscape Architect. Our role in developing this Master Plan was in two major things: the locations and characteristics of the open spaces and the visual aspect of the design. Landscape Architecture has evolved over the last 45 years to be an essential and integral part of a sophisticated planning structure in Israel. It is recognized as being a major contributor to a positive outcome for an increasingly complicated region.

Much of my work in very big projects, including the National Master Plan, was influenced by seeing Larry's approach and the depth of his understanding, and knowing, from his experience, that things can be changed for the better. This gave me the courage to take on such large and complicated projects and to think big.

Later Years

During the 1970s, there was a sort of revolution in Larry's office about the running of the office, the distribution of fees, administrative decisions, etc. It had the overtones of a fight of the young guard, the revolutionaries, against the establishment. Suddenly Larry found himself forced into the role of the entrenched establishment defending against energetic youth. He was outraged. He saw this development as a personal betrayal by his ex-partners. He ended up closing the office and withdrawing to a much smaller enterprise. Looking back at the subsequent period, one can say that he lost some of the happiness and strength which he had in the 1960s when he was leading and growing his practice by the force and undoubted charm of his personality. This internal revolution was felt as a personal betrayal.

His talent and character carried him past this time to accomplish many more outstanding works, such as the Haas Promenade in Jerusalem; the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial in Washington, D.C.; the FIAT plant in Florence, Italy; and Levi's Plaza and Embarcadero Fountain, both in San Francisco. I was lucky to have learned through working with him in the golden age of his career, the early '60s when he was doing projects like Sea Ranch, the Portland fountain, Ghirardelli Square, Nicolet Avenue and many more.

Larry, always like a cat falling on its feet, made brilliant presentations, whether planned or extemporaneous. He was a concise and entertaining speaker. I remember how he went to Eilat on the Red Sea for a project that was offered to him by the Shoyer family of New York. He made a presentation about Eilat on the spot, with no previous preparation, to a gathering of the Mayor and the City Council and other local dignitaries. You could see that he enjoyed speaking in such a situation, putting things together, making sense of the existing situation, and projecting his ideas toward a solution for the future. He was very convincing.

Larry was also a strong man physically. I took him once on a long hiking trip in the Judean Desert to the project of the Conveyor Belt (an 18 kilometer long system of bridges to haul the

potash from the Dead Sea to Arad in the Judean Desert). The track is very, very difficult. Larry, at that time in his 70's, walked superbly, didn't complain and enjoyed the duration of the hike.

Larry loved to stay in the American Colony Hotel in Jerusalem. He knew the original family who owned the hotel. He made friends with many of the remarkable guests who came and went. The courtyard cafe at the American Colony was (and still is) like a movie set where one might bump into celebrities such as Peter Ustinov, as well as first string foreign correspondents from all over the world. Larry loved Dry Martinis, a habit going back to his years at 1620 Montgomery Street. Larry had a quick, sharp sense of humor and he could see in any situation the funny part.

Larry's Influence on Me

I got to know Larry more closely in my senior year as a student when he was teaching the design class in Landscape Architecture at UC Berkeley. One of his assignments was to study the city and to express it graphically and in other ways. I suggested that instead of each student choosing his own media which would result in many small projects with nothing holding them together, rather we could photograph elements from the city and put them together to make a big "happening" using slides, black and white photographs, sound recordings, and drawings. Larry liked this idea, and he asked me to organize it. We all had a great time collecting our materials which were organized under my direction. Toward the end of the semester, he invited to the presentation—the happening—many of his professional friends and acquaintances, all the students, as well as other students in related fields. It was to be held in the basement of his office in San Francisco late one day. Everything was going well until an overload on the electrical system shorted out the power. We tried to get the electricity up again but, it already being quite late, most of the guests had left before we finally got the show going. In the end some twenty people remained and the presentation was, indeed, very exciting.

After graduating with a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture from Berkeley, I went to work for Larry in his San Francisco office where I stayed for a year and a half. Subsequently, with Larry's recommendation and encouragement, I went to Harvard University Graduate School of Design for my Master of Architecture.

I discovered quite early that a good, clever idea can lift you above a great deal of ordinary work, save a lot of time, and make a success out of the effort. At Harvard, I took all the History of Architecture courses, and finally came to a true understanding of what Architecture really is. This very broad understanding came only at the end of my education, only with the eye-opening courses of Eduard Seckler, James Ackerman, and Jerzy Soltan.

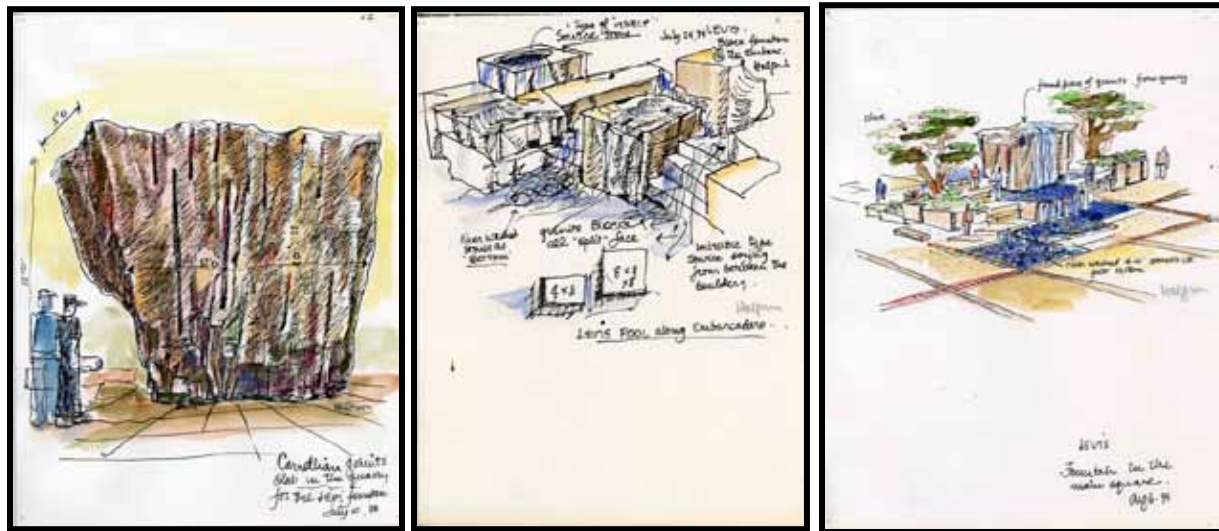
After the 1967 War, having lived abroad for seven years, I opened an office in Jerusalem. The awareness of the need for large-scale professional landscape work was just coming into focus with the responsible government agencies. I was overwhelmed with the importance and size of the jobs and the basic need for landscape design.

As one of the first landscape professionals in the country, I did every kind of job. The awareness of the outdoors is quite deep in Israel in modern times, but no traditional or systematic analytical approach was used in design, not in Israel but also not in America or Europe at that time. There was almost nothing in Israel to fertilize my ideas of place.

I was fortunate enough to be able to have a very rich practice in Israel, a practice which doesn't repeat itself or specialize in a narrow part of the field. I had more interest and more fun in a practice with a broad outlook toward my profession. Last year I retired from active involvement in the office, which is now run by my son and daughter-in-law. We continue to enjoy and have fun practicing this great profession. In the last years, I have written three books, the last of which, *ARIDSCAPES*, was published in 2008.

*A similar series of events happened to me. I studied architecture at UC Berkeley. In the fourth semester I took a required course which explained, by different practitioners, the professions that relate to architecture. This course took place at 8am and many times the students were quite tired. I remember the room with beautiful colored slides from two sources. The practitioner explaining Landscape Architecture was Lawrence Halprin. The projects which he showed us were his newest work on private residences and a shopping center, but for me it was like seeing the Promised Land. Until then I had never heard of this profession, but this was what I really wanted to do. When class was over I went and talked to the lecturer, Larry, and he encouraged my instant decision to change majors from Architecture to Landscape Architecture. He told me then about his experience on the Kibbutz and that he believed Israel needed people with this expertise. By the end of the week, I was studying Landscape Architecture.

Reflections on Lawrence Halprin by Gerson Bakar
February 2010



Larry Halprin, a National Treasure

In the 1950's, Larry brought an unbelievable amount of energy and creativity to a landscape plan for a small apartment building in San Francisco that I was developing. In the 1960's, Larry was the natural choice to be the landscape architect for Woodlake, a 1000 unit garden apartment in San Mateo. Countless thousands of residents have and continue to enjoy Larry's design.

In the 1970's, after Larry had "retired," I asked him whom he would recommend to do the landscape plan for Levi's Plaza. Larry looked at me, thought about my question for a few seconds, and said, "From this moment on, I am no longer retired. Use me." And another award winning design was created

Levi Strauss had given me a maximum landscape budget. Of course, Larry's plan came in a bit over budget. But Larry was politically skillful enough to convince Levi Strauss to fund the overage for his magnificent design.

To the best of my knowledge, Larry never did the hard line drawings needed for bidding. Larry's skill was in creating conceptual drawings, and these drawings in themselves were worthy of framing. Attached is a reproduction of a "Halprin original" done for Levi's Plaza's fountain. This hangs in my office.

And I'm not the only one who appreciates the art of Larry's drawings. Once we went to the new baseball park in San Francisco with one of the owners. Larry, being Larry, did a drawing of the park which I later saw displayed prominently in that owner's office.

Even more important to me than Larry's created landscapes are my memories of working with him. He cared, he pushed, and he argued with passion. Over more than 50 years I have had the good fortune to experience his warmth and friendship. Larry will be missed, but never forgotten.

Reflections on a Friend and Mentor by Charles A. Birnbaum, FASLA, FAAR

Founder + President, The Cultural Landscape Foundation

Lawrence Halprin Memorial Service, December 20, 2009



Larry and Charles Birnbaum at the Donnell Garden, 2007.

Larry Halprin was born in Brooklyn, New York, on July 1st 1916 – that day the Dodgers were ranked first in the American League with 38 wins and 24 losses. – Later that year the Dodgers went on to win the National League pennant -- a prize they had not captured for 16 years. Larry would go on to Poly Prep where he was awarded “High School Pitcher of the Year” in 1932 and 1933. Also in 1933, he went to Palestine for the first time. In our 2003 interview he noted, “it wasn't so much that I ran away from home . . . but I did.”

At 13 Larry was taken on a European grand tour by his parents. He later reflected, “I was just overwhelmed by the cities and loved them. And it was much more than stopping in at every cathedral, which is what the usual thing is. And I was more and more amazed by what made cities wonderful, which is not what you can say about American cities . . . and so I thought as I went through, I amassed all these photographs of places around the world where all of a sudden you would say well, gee, that's a wonderful place to be. I would love to live here.”

From 1933 to 1935 Larry found a place where he loved to live, a kibbutz near Haifa, where (in his words) he was “just knocked apart by the relationship between the people, by the social way of living, by the sense of egalitarianism, by the intensely debatable but very interesting way they brought up their children. And in fact, by everything about it, leaving aside the sense of adventure, because it was a pioneer stage. It was like going out West before the Gold Rush herein a sense, the same feeling then. I just loved it.”

Upon returning from Israel in 1935, Larry attended Cornell and (later) the University of Wisconsin. While attending the College of Horticulture in 1940, he read Christopher Tunnard's 1938 treatise, *Gardens in the Modern Landscape*, where Tunnard bemoaned “in a sick and suffering world . . . we have come to realize that the earthly paradise is unobtainable without

the planner of garden and landscape. Society cannot overlook his power to contribute to the life of the community. In his own medium he dispenses the two chief anodynes of life – art and play – without which we perish as surely as if we lack bread. That medium, the landscape, has taken on a new meaning which he alone, with his own special art and knowledge, can make especially clear to us. Let us give him the opportunity for creation.”

Tunnard’s book was an epiphany for Larry. He later stated, “My God, it’s about communities, the design of communities, the social implications of what you design, how you can make cities into remarkable places for people to live. And the sense of community that I had never seen since I was in the kibbutz in Israel. And so I thought to myself ‘Halprin, my God, landscape architecture, I’d better look into that.’”

With diverse life experiences that included his teenage Grand Tour when he learned how to draw; the Kibbutz experience which included understanding community, social networks, nurturing the land, and constructing landscapes; and now inspired and armed with Tunnard’s ideas initially as a muse, then later as a student at Harvard from 1942 to 1944, Larry would channel these life experiences and make them his own – -- filtered through a total design process that celebrated the “twisting and turnings, unknown explorations, [and] reactive to many different inputs and influences along the way.”

In an interview in 2003, Larry noted, “Sometimes people ask me about Sea Ranch, did that emerge from my experience on the kibbutz? Yes, it did. But again, it’s like all these questions about form. Are you copying art with your form? Are you copying the kibbutz in Sea Ranch? You know, that’s nonsense. What I’ve been influenced by is the basic quality of the experience and then I can transfer it to some new experience of mine. And that’s what the influence of the kibbutz was at the Sea Ranch. And if somebody asked me did the Sea Ranch emerge from the kibbutz, I would say no. But if they said were you influenced in the design at Sea Ranch?, You see the difference? It’s an important difference for me, not only on a social level, but also on an art level.”

Larry’s kibbutz experience is echoed in other creative fields. For example, In *The Kibbutz, An Exemplary Non Failure*, (1974) Amos Oz (born in Jerusalem in 1939) writes: “I do not believe that there is any such thing as “kibbutz literature.” There are poems and books that have kibbutz settings, and there are poets and writers who have lived in a kibbutz, but the kibbutz has not inspired any “mutation” of Hebrew literature.”

Oz goes on to note, “. . . I look around and I see a social system that, for all its disadvantages, is the least bad, the least unkind, that I have seen anywhere. . . The kibbutz is the only attempt to establish a collective society, without compulsion, without repression, and without bloodshed or brainwashing. It is also, a unique attempt for better or worse, to reconstruct or revive the extended family . . .

Oz suggests that in the 1930s (the time Larry was there), “the founders of the kibbutz

entrenched themselves in the land, digging their pale fingernails into the earth. Some were fair-haired . . . others were brazing and scowling. In the long burning hours of the day they used to curse the earth scorched by the fires of the sun, curse it in despair, in anger, in longing for rivers and forests. But in the darkness, when night fell, they composed sweet love songs to the earth, forgetful of time and place. At night, forgetfulness gave taste to life. . . "There," they used to sing, not "Here"

There in the land our fathers loved
There all the hopes shall be fulfilled
There we shall live and there a life
Of health and freedom shall we build

If the Kibbutz was a microcosm of the Jewish State, Larry's landscapes, I would suggest, are a microcosm of the larger natural setting where he has always enjoyed abstracting nature. As exemplified in his trailblazing work in Portland in the 1960s, where steps echo the rocky ledges of the High Sierras; his dramatic water canyon over a freeway in Seattle from the 1970s which "does not look natural but behaves in a natural way;" from the 1980s San Francisco's Levi Plaza with its focal point fountain – a massive slab of carnelian granite – a counterpoint to the park to its east and its meandering stream, "a symbol of the origins of Levi's and the California dream"; and the FDR Memorial, dedicated in 1997, and conceived as "a memorial whose environmental qualities are primarily experiential rather than purely visible." In these myriad projects it is equally Larry's interpretation of nature and how humans interact with nature which is his hallmark – what Sea Ranch colleague, architect Charles Moore described as "the power of the ideas [and] the unstoppable dynamics of his vision – a vision of humans experiencing with all of our senses, a richly dynamic natural world."¹

From the moment Larry opened his office, he began to realize these ideals, while exploring the idea of "choreographed for movement" -- an expression that first appears in his Portland sketches. This idea also plays out in 1955 when Larry created a trapezoidal-shaped Dance Deck, nestled into his and Anna's wooded hillside residence in Kentfield; and, serving as a bridge to future expressions of "solid, modern, non-organic forms".²

In the public projects from the 1960s onward, Larry moved away from biomorphic and Kidney shaped garden forms and in the decades that followed, his ideas of space being "choreographed for movement," and the recognition that "participation and activity are essential factors in a city, became critical tenets."³ Perhaps nowhere are they more inviting than in Portland's eight-block choreographed sequence with its chain of open spaces, with the Auditorium Forecourt Fountain, which The New York Times architecture critic, Ada Louise Huxtable dubbed in 1970, "one of the most important urban spaces since the Renaissance."

¹ Moore, Charles "Still Pools and Crashing Waves," *Changing Places* p.16

² *Process*, p. 99

³ *Cities*, "Choreography" p. 193

Larry passed away on October 25th at the age of 93. Just one month earlier his office celebrated 60 years of practice in the Bay Area. With his richly illustrated autobiography now complete and a number of his celebrated designs such as the Portland Chain of Open Spaces (which now has its own Conservancy) experiencing a newfound renaissance, Larry, with reservations, would retire to his home with frequent visits to Sea Ranch to once again be a Sunday painter, to enjoy nature and his grandchildren.

It was just four years ago, with Larry still going strong at the age of 89, that his office completed three capstone projects: the astonishing tri-fecta of Lucas Studios at the Presidio, Stern Grove, and Yosemite Falls. Ironically, it was because these projects were still to be built that scholars were late to evaluate Larry's work, and unlike Dan Kiley or Philip Johnson who both would live to see multiple National Historic Landmark designations listed during their lifetime, Larry was not as lucky and instead would witness the demolition and redesign of a number of his projects from the 1970s, including Nicolette Mall in Minneapolis, Skyline Park in Denver and the sculpture garden at the Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond. In addition, two of his revolutionary 1976 Bicentennial Commission projects – Seattle's Freeway Park (the first park over a freeway in the U.S.) and Fort Worth's Heritage Plaza (the progenitor of the outdoor rooms that would later be employed at the FDR Memorial) would also be targets for less than sensitive renovations that would threaten their design integrity.

It was this shared concern to guide these landscapes into the future and give them a voice that served as a personal bond between Larry and me. In one interview Larry reflected on his threatened work, noting "like anything I treasure them all just like you treasure children. Some of your children are more problems than others. But even so, you love them. I don't think from my point of view that there's much difference in my attitude about my children and my works of art."

Taking this one step further, we can suggest that Daria, who was born in 1948 would have the Donnell Garden with its calming biomorphic forms as her sister; Rana helped Larry jump over the garden wall in 1952 with Larry's first master plan where he got to site the buildings on the University of California, Davis campus. One can even forge connections with the next generation -- grandchild Ruthanna and Oregon's Willamette Valley plan for Choices for the Future are born the same year when Larry's plan asks, "What kind of environment do you want to live in?" – an appropriate question to raise when becoming a grandfather.

Optimistic, sensitive, thoughtful, cherubic, with a love of design, people, nature, and shaping cities and spaces, and the blurring of lines between his personal and professional life: all these characterized Larry. He will be remembered for his built legacy as much as for his multidisciplinary workshops which gave rise to his RSVP Cycles (Resources, Scores, Valuation and Performance) – a cyclical process that recognized that creativity, like nature is not necessarily linear while soliciting creative "input" from everyone from artists to residents.

In closing, I would like to share with you a passage I came upon recently at the University of

Pennsylvania archives, an article published in Impulse Dance Magazine in 1949.

Now picture this – Larry and Anna married in 1940, they moved to California together in 1945, he worked for Tommy Church designing “gardens for people” and opened his own firm in September 1949 – No large scale plans, Motation, RSVP Cycles for several decades . . .

Larry writes, “Our lives have changed over the years. So have our dances, and our gardens. We are no longer content to sit stiffly in the garden in our best Sunday clothes, protected from the sun by a frilled umbrella.

Our gardens have become more dynamic and should be designed with the moving person in mind. Our garden space has become a framework within which these activities of all sorts take place – games, barbeques, walks, swimming and even at time lounging. As a framework for movement activities the garden can influence our lives tremendously. If it flows easily in interesting patterns, textures and foliage all rhythmically united..then it can influence people’s movement patterns through its spaces taking on the fine sense of dance.

We are coming to realize that our everyday surroundings have tremendous importance in their influence on our emotional lives. The art process must be a total and continuing experience rather than compartmentalized into museums, theatres or symphony concerts. If the kinaesthetic sense is satisfied at a dance concert and left dormant during the week we are only half alive. But if it can be cultivated and encouraged in our daily lives in garden and house and all our environment by designing for constantly pleasant movement patterns, our lives can be given a continuous sense of dance.”

San Franciscans are blessed with extraordinary everyday surroundings spanning four decades of Larry’s ever-evolving approach to the city – Ghiradelli Square, Embarcadero Plaza, United Nations Plaza, Levi Plaza, and more recently, Lucas Studios at the Presidio, and Stern Grove. Today, let us celebrate these places not only by remembering Larry, but by also making a personal commitment to guide these irreplaceable places into the future.

In closing, I would like to share one last quote by Larry which is quintessential Larry -- “My art, which from my point of view is intuitive. It’s not particularly intellectual. It depends a lot on myths and symbols and basic primitive ideas of what human beings are like. And the rest of it is bullshit.”

Reflections on Lawrence Halprin by Max Z. Conrad, FASLA February 2010



Memories of my 1972 Sabbatical

Dr. Robert S. Reich, founder of the LSU School of Landscape Architecture advised me to take my first sabbatical leave in 1972 and spend time in the office of Lawrence Halprin. At that time, the office had become famous nationally as the designers of the Portland Fountain and other projects such as Ghirardelli Square. It did not take much convincing for me to try to obtain an invitation to spend time in the office. My request was quickly granted and for the spring semester I had the wonderful experience not only of living in San Francisco, but in observing the work in progress in the Halprin office on a daily basis.

Mr. Halprin was very hospitable and made it possible for me to roam the office, talk with the staff and observe the work in progress. It was fascinating to see how they approached the design process. I also had access to Mr. Halprin's complete library of "Notebooks" which was quite extensive. Randomly I chose various books to see what they contained. Most striking were the notes about his first site visits. It became apparent that Mr. Halprin had a great talent to quickly identify the important aspects that had to be addressed by the design and those qualities that were to become the basis of his design concepts.

He would then assign the project to one or more designers and give crits as they developed the designs. They were allowed to pursue the ideas until they satisfied what Mr. Halprin had in mind.

I also was surprised to observe that designs were developed in models prior to drawings. The Portland Fountain and Seattle Freeway Park are examples of this approach to design. The Portland Fountain model was carved in clay and measurements of the model were used to develop the construction drawings. When Andgela Danadjieva was developing the design for the Seattle Freeway Park, I helped her by building a part of that model in an attempt to learn how she went about the design process. She explained that she imagined movement through

the spaces and saw them somewhat as the camera view of a movie set. She had designed sets for the Bulgarian movie industry prior to working at the Halprin office.

For the many years after my experience in the office, I brought LSU students to visit. Mr. Halprin always welcomed the students into his studio, and had very interesting sessions with them. There was only one rule; the students had to ask questions in order to initiate the discussions.

Reflections on Lawrence Halprin by Angela Danadjieva

February 2010

As winner of the International Design Competition for the San Francisco civic center plaza I was presented by Henry Schubart, AIA, the competition's professional advisor, to Larry Halprin in 1966. He loved the winning competition concept and offered me the design position in his office. I asked Larry if he would give me freedom to express my design ideas and mentioned that as film set designer for the Bulgarian State film industry, I am used to work creatively. He agreed – never bridging this promise during my 9 years stay in his office.

With Larry we had similar drive – the passionate effort to improve the urban environment. I expressed my project's visions without interferences – Larry, nor his staff gave me design sketches or touched my clay sculpture models. I never had even a meeting with Larry to discuss design direction. It was a unique project understanding – not needing exchange of papers, tools or wordings.

At a few occasions he left on the board – Thank You Notes – about my work. In the same spirits one day an unforgettable event happened at lunch time. Walking though the office, Larry came to my desk looking at what I was modeling out of clay. Seeing my concept for Seattle's Freeway Park he turned around and disappeared – saying nothing. I went outside for lunch. We faced each other around the block and he told me: "Angela, I am so excited seeing your Freeway Park design concept – sorry even could not speak – needed to get some fresh air" and at that time I saw tears in his eyes. This is how I like to remember Larry Halprin – one of the greatest appreciators of my design work.

Reflections on Lawrence Halprin by Douglas E. Goldman
Stern Grove Festival's Chairman of the Board
February 2010



Doug Goldman and Larry.

Larry Halprin was a unique and supremely talented landscape architect. I had the distinct pleasure of interacting with Larry on two of his outstanding projects. One was the creation of the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Promenade in Jerusalem, Israel, and the other was the renovation of Sigmund Stern Grove.

The renovation of Stern Grove became one of his all-time favorites—he loved to take colleagues there for picnics. Indeed, his work transformed Stern Grove into one of the world's great jewels for performing arts.

Equally important, he was an incredibly caring person whose compassion and sensitivity were part of his persona. He prided himself on his interactions with those whose lives would be touched by his work. The end result was evidence of his inimitable approach.

Greater still for me was the friendship and appreciation that developed between us. I so enjoyed and was enriched by our time together. As a longtime admirer of his work, I greatly appreciate how he has left his stamp of beauty upon so many special spaces throughout our planet. He will be missed.

Reflections on Lawrence Halprin by Rich Haag
February 2010

In his long life's work Larry Halprin became our foremost landscape architect. The collective importance and originality of his built works is unsurpassed, as are the writings and drawings expressive of his theories of design.

In our staid profession he became a cult figure, always carefully groomed and costumed, he cast himself as the rugged miner prospecting the Sierras for nature's treasures. There was an edge of drama in every appearance that in turn informed his monumental tableaux of the interplay of energy, sound and light of columns of water. Spectators were irresistibly challenged to test their bravado, their skills and join in the fun.

Yes, Larry did exhibit a healthy and well deserved ego – he proved that ego can be a good thing.

Larry always anticipated the “times – they are a-changing” movements. His famous awareness/interactive séances set in a proscenium of natural landscapes were a prologue to gaining valuable public participation on relevant projects by staging sessions and workshops.

His synergy with Anne is another case. His wife was a performing star in the movement toward Modern Dance. Larry cadenced the dots, celebrated the experientialness of the episodic landscape, reinventing the archetypal processional.

As was his way, Larry has the last word, his autobiography will be required reading.

Ode to Abba

by Lawrence Halprin's grandson, Jahan Khalighi

Lawrence Halprin Memorial Service, December 20, 2009

*I stand on the fertile edge
Where the city meets the forest
Singing into a surviving creek bed
Rushing water carrying each note
Towards where tears go to give birth
This same creek bed where grandfather
Us to come to sit
And carefully craft his sketches in black notebooks
The tip of his pen articulating the graceful
Gesture of a leaning tree branch
The peeling skin of red madrone
I swear he could choreograph
The dance of a falling oak leaf
Or draw inspiration from deep within a stone
His love for nature
Gently folded into journals
Stacked high as mythology
Love letters to California Coastlines
Inscribed on paper plates
U could almost taste
The salt, the entangled kelp, the devotion
His bare hands wrapped around
Pencils and pens and paintbrushes
Think of an old wise calligrapher mimicking
The wings of a great blue heron in flight
Think of a child playing connect the dots with stars
On a dark winters night
Attempting to discover new constellations
I know his love for life was a constant exploration
As his dedication was to sowing heritage seeds
Into the cracks of city sidewalks
Grandfather who lived with creative ferocity
Whose love of democracy
Was cultivated in the orange fields of Jerusalem
Watered by the words of FDR*

*And sprouted fourth every time
He argued with you about politics
Grandfather who gracefully transplanted
High mountain waterfalls
Into the groaning bowels and gnashing teeth
Of modern cities
Delivering healing water songs
Into the neurotic bustle of urban sprawl
Grandfather who I will always remember as a redwood tree
Full of sap, full of the potential for fire, standing confident on deep roots
Grandfather, who always wore the earth's precious stones
Around his neck instead of ties
Who when I cried for the first and only time
In front of him at age 24
He responded by saying in a small raspy voice
Under his one black eye patch
Well, you must be doing something right
Grandfather whose visions were bigger than time
Whose dreams are folded into carefully stacked sketchbooks
We can now enjoy and ponder
I thank you for planting your passions
In the fertile soil
Of where our imaginations now wander.*

Reflections on Lawrence Halprin by Bruce Levin

February 2010



In Search of Hebron Limestone – September 2000

It was no secret that Larry, like many of us, carried around in his mind a few Jungian primeval landscapes which would influence his works time and again. One was probably the New York City of his `1930's adolescence. Another was of the same period in Mandatory Jerusalem where his grandparents had lived. Here he had spent time before the Second World War, and fell in love with the olive trees, the stones the Sabras (Palestinian born Jews), the Arabs and the goats. Later, after the war Larry would find the landscape love of his life in the great Sierra Nevada of California and the built and natural landscape of beautiful San Francisco Bay.

Just like Van Gogh, Larry loved landscaping with old gnarly, animated trees and he used the Mediterranean Olive with so much joy and never tired of drawing them. In addition, Larry's studies of the wild breakers at Sea Ranch and the rugged Northern Californian coast, and the rapid, powerful, and complex movements of never ending variation of Sierra Mountain streams, was a constant source and inspiration. He thrived on and constantly studied nature but not so much as naturalist but more as an artist and choreographer. Aside from the great trees and the endless movement of water, his other big love was of stone. Even when he worked in concrete as in the Portland Library Forecourt Plaza and Seattle Freeway Parks, he was creating crags and bluffs of stone in abstract and in metaphor. From Cold Springs Minnesota to the lime quarries of the Holy Land, stone was an essential part of his ritual. Larry formed long term relationships with the quarrymen and was back at his favorite quarries all along his working life. Larry was always moving stone whether for Levi's Plaza where he found old abandoned quarries once used to build San Francisco granite clad skyscrapers in the 1930's or for the Cold Springs Minnesota Quarry he loved so much where he rail freighted giant hewn red granite slabs to California and to Washington D.C. for the FDR Memorial.. Halprin saw the personal visit to the quarry and architect's stone selection as an essential and personal involvement essential in role as landscape creator.

Therefore I should have known in September 2000, that there was no way of convincing Larry that the political situation in Israel and the West Bank had become very tense and that he may want to reconsider making the quarry visit. Rumors flying on Palestinian radio had it that Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount was a precursor to the Jews taking over Al Aksa (the mosque built on the Temple Mount) to rebuild the ancient Temple. Arafat had just slammed the door on Ehud Barak and Bill Clinton's peace overtures and dark clouds hovered over the Jerusalem landscape.

It then came as no surprise to me that the various Israeli members of the project management team kindly turned down Larry's generous offer to join us for this trip to the quarry. Larry was up bright and early that Jerusalem morning. I picked him up at Mishkenot Sha'ananim, a creative retreat and guesthouse for artists and scholars and drove to the site at Armon HaNatziv (The Mount of Evil Council) where we were building the Goldman Promenade- a southerly extension of the Haas Promenade. Ismail and Mahmoud, the Hebronian stone contractors were waiting for us there. We moved into the rear of their jeep and set off along Hebron road to the south. We needed to cross the frontier into areas in de-facto "Fatah" control so Ismail's Hebroni Arabic and the Palestinian plates on the car were a definite bonus for this journey.

Ismail was a medium height, bearded man in his mid forties. Both his strong features, tough skin and strong hands were natural to a man who had literally chiseled his way from stone mason to becoming a major stone contractor this wild part of the Near East. His calm way and faith in Allah was also reassuring. Larry tried speaking to Ismail with a bit rusty Hebrew, but the two seemed to have an understanding which was beyond words. Stone was their common language and both of them had a common respect and reverence for this ancient and natural building material. Crossing the Israel border police check and then on thru the Palestinian Authority police check, we had no trouble getting thru and the car speeded south on Hebron road thru Bethlehem turning east at Beit Fajar on a small dirt road towards the quarry at Ayn Al-Arub. To the east we could see the mountains of Moab in Jordan and to the north peered Herodian, the fortress palace of the "jealous king" looking like an old exploded volcanic cone.

As we drove deeper into the pit of the Judean Hills, I grew tense as young men kept popping out between houses and atop the rooftops to take a fix on us. Larry was totally relaxed, either from experience or perhaps from being naïve or oblivious to the brewing conflict around us. He was busy reading the landscape, the ancient Olives, the terraced hills, and the ancient stone villages. He commented that here was an area that had not changed since the nineteen thirties. "By the way did I ever tell you that I founded a kibbutz?" I knew Larry was very proud of that but I don't think that it made a big impression on Ismail. As we wound down the narrow dirt road, more serious looking young men appeared on the rooftops and along the stone cliffs above. I

had a feeling that some were armed. Ismail was giving them some signal, sometimes with his hands, sometimes by beaming his lights, and they would then disappear as suddenly as they had appeared.

As the road climbed down, the car dispersed huge clouds of white limestone chalky dust which covered the area, even the trees. We finally arrived to the bottom of a huge and old (if not ancient) limestone quarry. Larry was elated. Ismail my man, you've done it. You've delivered us to exactly the stones I was looking for! Ismail blushed being happy that he had understood the older sage; the bearded American architect whose vision for a series of promenades in Jerusalem, both Ismail and myself had become part of. In Hebrew Ismail said to me, you see, I know him, I can read his mind".

We climbed over and between the huge 2 by 3 meter and larger stone blocks, discussing them and marking the ones to be hauled to Jerusalem. When we finished it was getting dark and I said to Larry, "how about we get going while the going's good- there is only so much you want to leave to the mercy of Allah". Larry, totally ignoring said, would you please get my notebook out of the canvas bag in the back seat of the jeep. I knew what that meant. Two hours later after Larry had calmly and lovingly sketched the quarry, made studies of the various stone blocks, and even sketched Ismail who was complemented and enjoyed posing; Larry felt that the days work was done. It was now past 5 pm and darkness was rapidly descending.

As we hopped into the jeep, Ismail drove us back up thru the dusty narrow dirt roads, along the fields of the fellahin, past the young men serving lookout on the rooftops, until we reached Hebron road and turned back north towards Jerusalem. On the way Ismail brought us to the restaurant of his Christian friend George on the outskirts of Bethlehem. It was the end of September and the small simple restaurant was adorned with 1950's vintage coca cola Santa Klaus placards, tassels and colored lights and other holiday décor. Unlike Ismail George spoke fluent English. Larry asked him "Isn't it a bit early for Christmas?" George replied "No you see we are from the Syrian Orthodox Church. We use the Julian and not the Gregorian calendar.

Our Christmas is in one month at the end of September." After this revelation on the messy breakup of the Byzantine Empire, Larry continued. "George we had a wonderful day in your area, very pastoral, but what is your view of the near future in this area?" George became very serious and somber. "I am very pessimistic. The leaders of the tow peoples, the politicians are corrupt, arrogant and selfish. The common people on both sides are headed for a lot of suffering and tragedy due to the stupidity of the leadership". Larry replied "I hope you are mistaken but I certainly agree that it is the simple folk who always pay the price for the stupidity of the politicians." We ate our lamb, humus, pita and raw onions and washed it down with Coca Cola in the old style glass bottles (went with the placards). We filled gas at the

"Betrol" (Arabic pronouncement of Petrol) station and went back across the border controls to our car where we bade Ismail good night and good fortune as well as a safe ride home.

Little did we know that in two days would be the start of the Second (Al Aksa) Intifada. The project continued throughout the intifada. Ismail and myself joked about turning Larry's Observation Platform- Café into a Mosque or a Synagogue and we remain friends to this day. I called him in Hebron and told him of Larry's passing. He was sad and said that he thought Larry was a great man.

Lawrence Halprin Memorial Service by Donlyn Lyndon, FAIA

December 20, 2009

To speak in this great Temple Emanuel of Larry Halprin and his life, one must first note how extraordinarily his works, and therefore his passions, thread through the civic fabric of this city: Ghirardelli Square at the edge of the Bay, Levi's Plaza at the foot of Telegraph Hill, The Embarcadero Plaza and Market Street, spine of the city, The UN Plaza, at the Civic Center, St Francis Square in the Western Addition, the great Stern Grove Amphitheater and, returning nearly full circle to the Presidio, the recent Letterman Digital Arts Center near the Palace of Fine Arts. These familiar names track an imaginative voyage through the city. I don't need to remind you that these are many of the places that characterize the city; places that have entered the lives of generations of citizens, and countless visitors; places that are embedded within the essential image of San Francisco.

Many of these places have their significance in the underlying geometry of the city, yet it's a measure of the man and his imagination and determination that these spaces were entrusted to him and his colleagues and that he touched them, shaped them and made them vivid to our senses. In many cases it his mark that made them landmarks. His vivid imagining of how a place might be; of how people could experience it with fresh awareness and how it could provide valuable moments of social encounter, made these into places that guide us to new understandings.

Levi's Plaza, for instance, is a place of many choices and associations. Water spills over a heroically sized block of granite into pools and bubbling channels in a succession of stepped concrete terraces. Paving blocks climb through these into intimate spots of respite, shaded by trees and enveloped by water sounds. The rectangular shapes of the terraces and steps, while geometrically akin to the buildings above them, are disposed with a sensibility that speaks immediately of natural places, fusing the grids of urbanity with the variability of nature. The flicker of shadow and reflected sunlight, the trickling and rushing of water, the movements of people finding their place within the diversity of this plaza, together create a place that stirs wonder and reflection. Across the street, the space transforms into a sylvan meadow with meandering stream, bringing intimations of far away places into the rough fabric of the city.

One hundred miles north of here, on ten miles of magnificent coast, lies The Sea Ranch where many of us have been privileged to live and work within a vision that he germinated, a far-seeing plan which yields continuing benefits. I say "germinated" because he did more than create a plan, he initiated a way of thinking, and helped to fashion processes that have enlisted many others in pursuit of that vision of living in gentle partnership with the land. The power of his convictions, the clarity of form with which he expressed them, and his compelling persuasiveness, motivated many others to join in creating a place of great distinction, a

community committed to excellence and to working within the fundamental ecology of the landscape.

At the Sea Ranch people live surrounded by stands of vegetation that were planted or scheduled for protection through his planning. We walk many trails that he traced along the bluffs and through the forests, enjoy views across open spaces that he showed how to preserve, and inhabit buildings that he helped inspire. Not all is as he intended, but he gave The Sea Ranch its fundamental groundings. Over four and a half decades, it has grown to its present stature; informed by his vision, nurtured by his guidance, strengthened by a series of community workshops that he conducted, and echoing his call to “live lightly on the land.”

His passionate involvement with the place and his articulation of its spirit in words and eloquent drawings, have been continuous. From the beginning, Larry and Anna Halprin lived the place. At the outset they camped on the land with their family, then built an evolving place of their own on a magnificent cove near the south end of The Sea Ranch, a place that he studied and loved intensely. Over the years he and Anna devised and led explorative workshops that would bring friends, colleagues and students into better touch with the many experiences that this rich landscape could make possible.....and learn, too, how to be better in touch with our own being.

Larry's presence was always imbued with his past, not as a place to return to, but as a place to grow from. The deep history of the Sea Ranch, its geological formation and tribal occupation, its transformation through logging, farming and grazing, the abundance of its conditions, all lived in his mind as he explored, formed, re-explored and lived the place...as did his own history in the kibbutz, his formative experience of working with others toward goals that could be held in common, his confidence that the landscape could become a guide and embodiment of social purpose. The Sea Ranch was not a place for luxury houses, it was a place for becoming engaged with, and for stewarding the forces of nature, the fundamentals of our being.

In his drawings and paintings you can read natural energy coursing through his veins in the stroke of his pencil or brush; the exquisite translations that muscles can make when guided by disciplined observation and informed by acute sensibilities...like the strokes that pour from the hand of a skilled performer of music into vibrations that penetrate our souls. In those drawings that he made, day after day and year after year in his studio and at The Sea Ranch and on hikes in the Sierras - water splashes through his hands into our minds, ground takes structure underneath our feet, organisms assume their shapes before our eyes. His drawings do not simply record, they are.

What remains most vivid is the indomitable will, the drive for life, the incessant engagement with the world around him. The energy reaching through all that he touched was nurtured by

an extraordinary life of parallel thoughts and creative exploration shared with Anna. What was seen and known, unshackled from what had been, was transformed into affirmations of what might be.

That indomitable will brought him through illness and misfortune, always returning to a strength that many never know; constantly reasserting his place in the world. It was more than will, it was indelible presence.

It's another measure, perhaps, of the integrity of his character that as I try to think back over forty- some years of knowing and working with Larry, the vitality of his presence –that bright attention, quick response and forthright confidence - overcomes reminiscence, the force of his person supplants recollection.

That is why his works matter so very much; they carry the traces of a mind at work and they transfer that intelligence into the world, where it mingles with the lives of others, takes form in the shapes, textures and bodily movements that suffuse the lives of people he never knew. The places he has made become part of the fabric of society. His imaginative energy channeled through his own hands and through the collaboration evoked in the minds and hands of others, created places that we can touch, step upon and listen to with all our senses.

Larry was real; real in a way that few become....and he made our lives more real by setting ideas and things before us in a way that rallies attention, calls us to be alive in our days, and to give them their full due.

He was a great friend and a mighty spirit.

Reflections on Lawrence Halprin by George McLaughlin

[A letter to Charles Birnbaum by email 2.5.10]

February 2010



George McLaughlin (center) and Richard Vignolo (left)

Hi Charles, a belated thanks for your wonderful tribute to Larry.

I was thinking of Larry as I dressed for the service. I first thought (for about 30 seconds) of wearing a suit. But I thought, naah, Larry wouldn't wear a suit to his own funeral so why I. Tennis shoes, Dockers and a jacket would be fine. But In honor of the occasion, I did wear a new shirt.

It is interesting that after hearing yours and the others professionals moving tributes to the Professional Larry and Annie and the kid's tribute to the Family Larry I have to say that the Larry that I most remember is the Family Larry. The office was actually a sort of large family of professionals. Larry was the head of the family with all that that entails. It was not an easy job for him, because like all families, the office could be quite dysfunctional at times.

I was lucky enough to be there when Larry and his extraordinary(if unsung) partners were putting the finishing touches on the "Halprin" design philosophy that would stand Larry in good stead for the 35 or so years after he left the office and went into private practice. I like to think that we younger staff members added a bit to the development of the philosophy.

Daria nailed Larry's leadership style when she described her trips with Larry into the Sierras. Larry did not lead her or tell her what to do. He simply followed behind her and was there to help when the going got tough. Larry was the same way in the office. He never told you to do it this way or that way (his way). You were to figure it out yourself, but he and his partners were always to help you along the way. This method of approach is almost unheard of in the design professions then and now. Usually the new people are stuck in a corner doing dreary work

detailing of someone else's work for a few years to learn the office philosophy before being given any real responsibility. Not at Larry's. You were thrown in at the deep end (given your own job on the first day) and it was sink or swim. Luckily I could always swim pretty well. For a young kid fresh out of school, this was wonderful indeed.

It was also nice to see that Annie is still Annie, marching to her own drummer.

The Annie that I remember though from several long chats was not the dancer Annie but the typical Jewish mother kvetching about her kids.

Most of us in the office did not pay much attention to the workshops and the dancing. We pretty much thought it was a lot of mumbo jumbo along the lines of Christopher Alexander's mumbo jumbo but, it was Larry's mumbo jumbo and it made him happy so we were happy. I did do a tiny bit of work on the RSVP material. The only time the folks in the office really embraced Annie work was when we all happily went to an advance showing of a documentary of one of their nude works that centered around the sex act. I guess we were always willing to support the arts.

One nice example of Larry's ability to let us younger staff members find our own way involved our work on the Salk Institute in La Jolla. Dr Salk had hired the Halprin office to redesign the landscaping for the courtyard which had been designed by the building architect Louis Kahn in a rather spare (barren) way that had not been well received by lot the Salk resident fellows or the donor. One of the fellows described the proposed design to me as being a bit prison like. A few Halprin staff members had already given the project a try without much success, when I was called upon to give it shot. I came up with a plan that was judged to be acceptable by Larry. It was than time for Larry and I to make the presentation to Salk and Kahn. About this time Larry began to get nervous about continuing the project. Knowing much more than I about giant sized egos, he came to me and said that we should resign the job because we would get nowhere with Kahn. He felt that redesigning something that Kahn had done would be like sleeping with his wife (one of them). I sort of agreed with him but really wanted to continue with the project. Larry very skeptically agreed that I could at least make the presentation. Larry, the clever devil, decided not to go at the last minute,(He did not show up at the airport). I was on my own, I went down to San Diego and met Kahn and his staff members and went out to breakfast with them. Kahn read to us from Vitruvius. Kahn was a god to me and I was very taken with him. We all went out to the Institute and gathered with Salk and some of his staff for my presentation. It went very well. Salk and his staff loved the plan for the courtyard and we turned to Kahn for his response. He had none because as soon as I rolled out my drawings he had gone into a corner and did not come out until I was finished. He did not see a thing. I rolled up my drawings, got back on the plane and went to Larry the next day and said "when you're right, you're right, we had no business there." We resigned the job but Larry, instead of

imposing his way on me had let me find out for myself how the world works. That was the family Larry that I remember.

One more memory and I will quit.

Larry and I never got along particularly well on a personal basis. He could be a bit of a tyrant at times and I was one of the few that would stand up to him. One of the nicest things he ever said to me was during one of my yearly performance reviews. After a lot of back and forth, he summed it up by saying, "George, I really like your work, I just don't like you".

Another time in a bit of foreshadowing after one of our dustups Larry came to me and said that if things did not improve between us, he would leave the office. I responded that "Larry, this is your office, if we can't get along I am the one to leave". He said "oh" and wandered off. A few years later (after I had left to for a VW camping trip around the world) he did leave the office. I think that he really just wanted to be a landscape architect without all the aggravation of running a large office. He did become a landscape architect in more or less private practice for almost 35 years. I think he did it with great distinction and probably great happiness. Larry was a wonderful person and a great influence on my life. Professional Larry or Family Larry, I will miss them both.

Thanks again for your tribute to Larry.

That is wonderful news about Springfield. You did a great job.

Reflections on Lawrence Halprin by Robert Mueting

February 2010



Larry Halprin – Personal Glimpse

Larry Halprin is so much a part of our professional lives at RJM Design Group that it is impossible to use the past tense when thinking about him, discussing him, or writing about him. So I won't use the past tense! Larry is first and foremost a wonderful man. I have enjoyed the warmth of his friendship, the tremendous benefits of his mentoring, and the sheer joy of his performance. He is a performer. In relaying a story about Larry at an interview for the Yosemite Falls Approach, one panel member described him thus: "A grisly old man walking in as though he was right off the mountain. He was all by himself and he told us what needed to be done." That is the Larry Halprin I have worked with, known, and loved for the past twenty years. Yes, I said loved – though not in the Biblical sense! Larry always reminds us, "to define our terms".

Larry's language is always precise. He once corrected a prospective client who said that he was providing a "gracious accommodation" by delaying a site visit so that he could attend. "Well," Larry responded, "it may be gracious of you, but it certainly is not a big accommodation." Larry had adjusted his travel schedule to attend the site meeting via his return flight from Israel.

Larry is passionate -- passionate about the environment, about people, and about the profession of landscape architecture. While sitting on a beautiful patio overlooking the Potomac River shortly after the dedication ceremony for the FDR Memorial, Larry shared his frustration with landscape architecture and landscape architects: "Landscape architecture is not providing leadership. No one is writing about important environmental issues. We need to lead the way. I am especially frustrated by young landscape architects, they need to publish, speak out, provide solutions." Being quite a bit younger than Larry, and pinioned by the stare of his piercing blue eyes, I took his comments personally. So far, I have not lived up to his challenge. As a German-Irish Catholic, I have enough guilt to go around, so I am sharing the

challenge with my son who is also a landscape architect -- based, no doubt, on the influence of Larry.

Larry is also passionate about family. He is very concerned about the world situation that faces his children and grandchildren. I know he wishes that he could leave them a world that was less complex, convoluted, bureaucratized, and politicized. He wishes that all of these problems could be resolved creatively as he would solve a design project. Larry knew that I shared this intense concern for family and In the glow of a campfire in Yosemite Valley Larry said to me, "You must be very proud to have a son who is carrying on your work."

I believe that the success of my design business, and it's survival in difficult times, is due in large part to Lawrence Halprin's "Take Part" Consensus Workshop process. Larry gives us all a great legacy -- a community workshop process, many wonderful projects, numerous books and articles, and the memory of a passionate and talented mentor for our profession.

God bless you Larry.

Reflections on Lawrence Halprin by Cornelia Hahn Oberlander, O.C., FASLA, FCSLA
February 2010



Cornelia Oberlander and Larry at the Donnell Garden, 2007.

As promised I am writing my memories of meeting Larry Halprin and Anna at the GSD in Cambridge.

It was the winter of 1944 when I entered the basement of Robinson Hall. There were students in Landscape Architecture and first year Architecture students in the same studio. Opposite my desk was Larry Halprin, a most distinguished figure, who was able to draw and explain to us newcomers what landscape was all about.

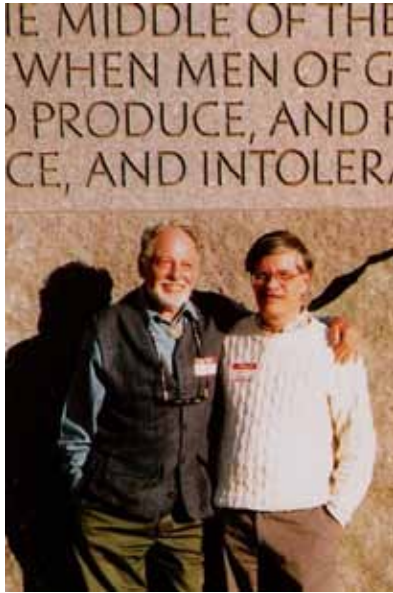
He spoke to us about discovery of the landscape, and he walked us through one of his projects and compared it to a dance. He mentioned that 'landscape architecture was syncopation in space.' This was unforgettable for me. A few weeks later, I saw Anna's wonderful dance performance on William Steig, and thus these two ideas became embedded in my mind.

In later years, Peter and I had unforgettable conversations with Larry about the meaningful Roosevelt memorial in Washington, D.C and the entrance to Yosemite Park. When in Jerusalem, Peter and I walked every step of the Haas Promenade on many Shabbats, thinking of the beauty captured on its way. Anna and Larry's visit to the Donnell Garden in 2007 was an unforgettable event, arranged by the Cultural Landscape Foundation. We saw this wonderful space for the enjoyment of body and mind and sat under giant oak trees in the sun, carrying on meaningful conversations with old and new friends.

Larry's work and books will always remind us of his inspiring mind and thus he will never be forgotten.

A Tribute to Lawrence Halprin, FASLA by John G. Parsons, FASLA

Lawrence Halprin Memorial Service, December 20, 2009



Larry and John Parsons at the FDR Memorial

We give thanks for the life of a man who was a creative genius of extraordinary talent and wisdom. He gave us many unique and special places which will be enjoyed by his true beneficiaries, the public and future generations. His life work spanned all scales of Landscape Architecture from city planning to garden design.

His wife, Anna, played a major role in his life. They met at the University of Wisconsin while he was studying horticulture and she modern dance. At her urging, they visited Taliesin, the home and studio of Frank Lloyd Wright where they observed an inscription on the lintel over the entrance which stated "What a man does, he is." This became Larry's credo and it was there that he decided to become a Landscape Architect.

Unlike most Landscape Architects in the 1950's and 60's, Larry cared what people thought about the spaces he was designing. He and Anna developed a process which they called Taking Part where they conducted very effective participatory workshops to seek public input into the design process. Public involvement has now become the norm, but when the Halprin's started it, it was revolutionary and few designers have perfected it as they did.

As a young Landscape Architect in the late 1960's, Larry had become my hero although I never expected to meet him. I joined the National Park Service and enjoyed a four decade career guiding the development of the many parks in the Nation's Capital. In the early 70's I was privileged to participate in the selection of Larry to design the Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Memorial on the National Mall. This began a long-term relationship between us that resulted in a close friendship.

Larry cared deeply about how people moved through the spaces he created. While contemplating the design of the FDR Memorial, he determined that only a slow-paced, personal experience could transmit the importance of this era to future generations. Thus, he designed the memorial as an experiential history lesson which contains quotations inscribed in granite walls, that he called the pages of the book, multiple sculptural vignettes to tell the story of the President and his times and fountains which reflect FDR's lifelong involvement with water.

Larry said that, "the FDR Memorial is the apotheosis of all that I have done" and I couldn't agree with him more. This unique memorial is a perfectly composed sequence of inspiring spaces. The emotional experience which he created has caused visitors to return time and again to discover more and enjoy his masterpiece. As a National Memorial, we can all be assured that it will live on in perpetuity.

Larry grew up during the Depression and World War II with "his President", as he called FDR. He became a life-long Democrat and was often critical of Republicans. Larry confided in me his concern that he might say something disrespectful to President George W. Bush when he presented him with the prestigious 2002 National Medal of the Arts at the White House. I assured him that he couldn't go wrong with a polite and respectful "Thank you, Mr. President, for this high honor." He planned to take my advice, but was dumbfounded when the President hung the medal around Larry's neck and said "Those are great shoes. I've got a pair just like them, but Laura won't let me wear them in the White House. He couldn't wait to get out of there before the First Lady saw his shoes.

Larry loved ice cream. During the planning phase of the FDR Memorial, we visited the little White House in Warm Springs, Georgia. While driving through a rural area on our way to the President's retreat, Larry decided that he had to have a strawberry ice cream cone. Unable to convince him otherwise, I finally detoured into a small town and found a tiny store that, thankfully, had strawberry ice cream. He responded "I knew you could find it kiddo" and after finishing the cone, he promptly fell asleep for the remainder of the trip.

Larry also had a good sense of humor. While moving through the process for the FDR Memorial, we were constantly plagued by the fact that FDR had told Justice Felix Frankfurter while meeting in the Oval Office that if anyone wanted to build a memorial to him, it should be a small block of granite about the size of his desk. It should be placed in a small triangular park on Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the United States Archives. Family members and friends erected such a memorial there in 1962. Thus, those who were critical of the proposed memorial kept citing his desire for that which was already built. I kept responding that, in America, it is

not the individual who determines how they will be memorialized; it is the generations which follow who have had time to evaluate the contribution the person has made to the country. Larry suggested that I change my response by saying that, "I also don't want a memorial but if they don't build one for me, I'll be furious."

As many of you know, Larry had a basic philosophy of combining life with work. My sense is that when his work ended, he felt the same as George Eastman who said just before his death, "My work is done, why wait."

God bless you my friend.

Reflections on Lawrence Halprin by Gary Roth

February 2010



Site Visit to Lower Yosemite Falls
Project – Nov., 2004

I worked with Larry Halprin on and off for 10 of the past 19 years. I began working for him in the fall of 1990 as a Design Assistant right out of college. We had some conversations where I may not have chosen my words carefully or I had casually represented an idea to him. His reproach in such instances could be blistering. He would be emphatic in pressing me to be more thoughtful in my approach and descriptions. His need to see and distill the essence of an idea and a thought in the most unambiguous manner sticks with me to this day.

I returned to work with Larry after graduate school and became a designer and project manager for him. I had the opportunity to work with him on the Lower Yosemite Falls Project as a designer/project manager. This was my introduction as a professional to the collision of the sacred and secular aspects of a place, as planning issues threatened basic design concepts that were important to the overall plan. Larry introduced me to the very notion of a “sacred” versus a “secular” space at the Falls and that concept was a clear guide for everyone throughout the process. The project had to balance the need for large numbers of people to have access to the Falls, while preserving it as an experience for future generations. Larry led the design and construction team to create a frame through which this experience of the Falls could be shared and he made sure that the hand of the designer should not intrude on this experience, only enable it. On our frequent site visits during construction, I remember the care he gave to the placement of each new element. I recall seeing his joy every time he saw a stunning view of the Falls, a gnarled old black oak or a young family taking a break on the boulders recently placed. Larry did not differentiate between these “joys” because he deeply believed that we humans

are a part of nature. I hope that others can learn from this joy and carry on his belief that we can be an agent in preserving our sacred natural environment by actively participating in it and enabling others to do so through the creative design of our outdoor environments.

Reflections on Lawrence Halprin by Andrew Sullivan

February 2010

One of my favorite memories of Larry was shortly after I'd joined the Office of Lawrence Halprin. I was asked to attend a high level meeting for the Letterman Campus project with Larry. The person who typically attended these meetings with Larry was unavailable and, as I was relatively new to the office, I was quietly warned by several people that I was to keep an eye on Larry and just make sure things ran smoothly – 'don't let him say anything crazy' I was warned by someone. Shortly into the meeting tensions rose as the Lucas representative (new to the project) began critiquing some of Larry's design ideas and direction, demanding things be changed. Not at all pleased with being challenged Larry pushed back. As Larry and the Lucas rep's voices became heated the tension in the room was visible. Many of the principals in the room were looking down and fidgeting as the Lucas rep began screaming that he was the person in charge, he was running the project, and that Larry was going to have to listen to direction from him. Very calm and still – Larry twirled his cane, turned to the owner's rep and said "Fuck you, this is my project. I'm running this project. I've designed it, and either I run it or I'll walk". At this point I think everyone in the room except Larry had stopped breathing. I asked if we might be able to take a five minute break - the room was cleared in about two seconds.

Needless to say, egos were eventually massaged and after a couple tense weeks Larry and the Lucas project manager became tight friends. They began to work out the issues together in a mutually respectable way. But what I saw in that conference room stuck with me. It was the first and only time I've seen a designer tell a client to 'fuck off'. But more importantly it illustrated one of Larry's strengths – a fierce dedication to his vision and a palpable confidence in his design vision so strong that he was willing to stand up for it no matter the consequences. I think this confidence was what allowed him to maintain control and realize so many of his projects.

Reflections on Lawrence Halprin by Ed Westbrook

February 2010



Lawrence Halprin with Ed Westbrook

I have worked with Lawrence Halprin, (Larry to me), for over 22 years. My experience with Larry was as a stonemason and builder, so when we worked together it was in the mode of accomplishing his vision for a project in the material that I feel he had a great affinity for, stone. I always felt that Larry had an innate sense of stone as a material that is common to the human experience as well as elemental and grounding in his work. He had a strong sense of what was good and what was bad stonework, and he had an amazing ability to inspire my crews to stretch our craft, to what he wanted to achieve as art. When you worked with Larry you entered into a conversation and an exploration, a fluid working environment (often referred to as the Larry factor) that meant plans could change and details did not always remain fixed.

In working on the Letterman Digital Arts Center, building a natural stream feature, we scheduled my crew to spend an afternoon hiking along a spring fed creek in the Mt. Tamalpais watershed, Larry sketched and talked with the guys about the sound and feel of the stream, and how they felt in the environment, how the stream changed as the sun passed over, and how nature made her stream beds. Later as we worked from detailed models and sketches', my crew would meet with Larry and we would all compare our work with what we experienced that day in an experiential loop that helped us place each stone and boulder with thought for how it would affect the final stream. Larry inspired working men to set aside any cynical "just another job" thinking and really engage with him in building something special, he would often arrive with an owner's entourage on site visits, and simply walk away from the group and make a beeline to the foreman on the job and jump right into what was really the issue of the moment, asking for his opinion and solutions, and testing those ideas pulling them into his

thinking then recycling by sketches a revision or improvement. We often left those visits with a handful of sketches that we immediately began to build from. This was a powerful way to work in collaboration; it built trust in our crews and foremen and inspired all of us to work at an artistic level. Everyone in my company takes great pride in the projects that we were lucky enough to build with Larry.

The sense of scale was something that we shared, Larry realized early in our working relationship that I innately understood scale, this was especially important when we were working with boulders and water features, as he could trust my judgment in selecting the stone and helping to compose the placements. This came to a peak when we began work on the Stern Grove Festival Amphitheater. Larry had a vision for a modern interpretation of a classical amphitheater and the stone would be the core element in the design; it needed to complement the natural setting, be extremely strong and have a real sculptural quality in the natural boulders. After a long worldwide search for the right stone we settled on a hard granite type stone from a remote area of China. It was not going to be possible for Larry to travel to the quarry with me on multiple trips to select the placement boulders and key elements, we needed to develop a way to communicate his vision not only to me and my crews, but also to the Chinese quarrymen. Larry used scale models of each boulder, with artistic sketches so we could train the Chinese men to look for boulders that where in scale and shapes close to what Larry envisioned. This lead to a really interesting exchange between the two cultures, my partners in China considered Larry an elder and a visionary, from their reading and interpretations of the sketches they developed a style of ideogram that related sentinel boulders to the sharp peaks of karsts mountains and the reclining boulders to sleeping hills, and so on. They added dimensions to these and working with me, they became very proficient at selection. The result was really exciting as we began to place the boulders with Larry as most of them arrived and fit almost exactly into the artistic sketched compositions.

Larry had a natural way of creating working environments of natural collaboration, where people felt engaged and empowered to do good work, he used this energy to fuel his designs and accomplish a built space that was infused with the artisan's spirit.

Larry and Anna, and the Halprin family are very close with my family, we have all shared happy times and some challenges in the 22 years we have been friends. Aside from just our working relationship, Larry taught me that it is important to strive to be a good human being; he understood that building something real in the world takes a certain amount of ego and drive, and that can easily become arrogance from pride. He was truly engaged with people, he wanted to hear their stories and share the common experiences of life, he loved dance and art, good food and drink with friends, he loved children and the energy and enthusiasm of young people. In this last year the final thing that Larry taught me was the courage to face our own

mortality; he sketched, designed, wrote and created almost to the end of his life, I will miss him.

My postscript is to mention the people in my company who have worked closely with Larry in all that we built together: Bob Paganini; Javier Ochoa, Hermino Ochoa, Sal Ochoa, Ramon Ibanez, Javier Andrade, Jason Joplin, Juan Santoyo, David Elkington, Wenbiao Chen, Wenjun Chen, Charlie Ragen, Moye Chen, Jeff Clark, Dillon Westbrook, Missy Westbrook, Cassie Westbrook, Luke Westbrook