

**The Cultural Landscape Foundation®**

**Pioneers of American Landscape Design®**

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**WILLIAM “BILL” JOHNSON**

**ORAL HISTORY**

**INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT**

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**Interviews Conducted**

**August 25-28, 2015**

**By Charles A. Birnbaum, FASLA, FAAR**

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**Pioneers of American Landscape Design® Oral History Series: Bill Johnson Interview Transcript**

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## PRELUDE

I'm Bill Johnson. Being a landscape architect for many, many years, centering in Ann Arbor for 30 years and then to the West Coast with others there and another 25 years, and finally back to Holland, Michigan, now with my wife, Charlotte, and working with our [three] children and their families. It's just a delight to be here in Holland, Michigan, and consider the past as well as looking at the future.

## BIOGRAPHY

### CHILDHOOD

#### Growing Up in Lansing, MI

##### *Family*

Childhood was an amazing time for me and I can tell you that being a Midwestern kid growing up in this amazing part of the world that it has been a prominent effect on my point of view. My family was very active. I had a brother and a sister. My mother was a story teller, a poet. My father was an engineer and very adept at figuring out problems. He could sketch a lot. So, those influences were very prominent in my growing up days. I quickly became holding a pencil [sic] and making drawings like my Dad did. It was very special, enjoyed it. I think maybe the most powerful memory I have of my earliest days was the voice of my mother telling stories. They were great stories. She was great at it. Some of it would be stories that she read out of the daily newspaper, but sometimes she would make up her own stories about people



and adventures. Some of the stories were Biblical. She would tell the direct story of the Bible interest, but then she had some very interesting parts that were probably better than the Bible, but they were sure good. It was that kind of a spirit of exchange of ideas and laughter. It was part of our family life.

My brother Carl was five years older than I was. I have a sister who was six years older. So, their friends were not my friends particularly. I was on my own as a kid growing up and in order to entertain myself somewhat in special ways that I invented, and I wasn't a loner so much as I was resourceful because I had to be and I taught my own friends. [I] had a dog, Skippy - three legs. It was always a challenge for my dog to keep up with me, but it was a great time to have three-legged puppy. I became famous in our neighborhood because of that, so, it was good stuff.

### ***Parents***

[A memory of my] Mother Ethel and my father Ruben was that they let me decide things as I felt them. They never really told me what to do. But one thing that was a pattern and I'll never forget it because I practice it to the best of my ability today is that they would ask me questions about who my friends were. Tell me about your friends. They wanted details. They were interested. Then they would say where do you spend time if you have time on your hands? What do you do? What do you think about? There was never a question about judging what I was telling them. They just wanted to know. I suppose they were looking for who I was and probably if I was in any danger they could begin to sense that, I don't know, but what a

great memory for me of Ruben and Ethel, my father, my mother. They were interested, but let me be quite free. I appreciate that. I would like to be that way.

### ***Family Life During the Depression***

It was a depression [sic] and we felt it in very direct terms. We didn't have much money as a family, but the food was good. It was home prepared. I remember my mother focusing on the canning because she could put away many portions of fruit and vegetables by canning. She worked hard at that, but through the winter, then, we would open up those cans. I remember tomatoes, canned tomatoes was part of our diet. She would make goulash. I don't know if you know about the goulash, but it's a wonderful dish that gets better by the day. So, they would last through the week and if not, a couple of weeks. Pretty simple diet, but it was healthy and pleasurable. We didn't know. We didn't have much. It was just part of the scene.

I think that in a way, there was an intimate sense about what it took to entertain you. We were entertained pretty easily. We were inventive about how we entertained ourselves. Slingshots and hunting. I was into hunting early in my life. We would hunt for squirrels and rabbits in the outskirts of the city. It was great fun. Lots of boyhood friends.

I remember one event that I had gone into a drugstore in our neighborhood and I was going to purchase a candy bar, and I didn't enough money for this particular candy bar, so I thought I'd pay later. And I had picked up this candy bar and put it in my pocket and lo and behold, I was stopped at the door. The police came and took me home in a police car. I thought suddenly am I now a thief? But, my mother came to the door when the police car pulled up and

I was just devastated. And I can tell you I never did that again. But, what a time that was for me as a ten-year-old.

### ***Outdoor Memories***

Outdoor memories when I was a young boy are very poignant for me because we lived near a river system in downtown Lansing, Michigan. It was an urban neighborhood, but the river went by our doorway in a way and I was always running along that river with my buddies. We'd find a quiet little portion of the river that became a swimming hole. We weren't supposed to be in that river, but we couldn't stay out. We were diving from a boulder into that river and it was very special time, a memory for me, because later on, there's a story about remembering that waterhole and that swimming hole and I'll tell you about it at some point.

The name of the river [in Lansing] is the Grand River. And the fame of that river was that it was that the center of our power plant system, or energy plant, coal-fired railroad trains running along it, and servicing the Oldsmobile production plant right straight across from our house. So, we watched the Oldsmobiles being built. I would often get across the river on a bridge or two and go to the Oldsmobile plant and try to get in. And I would always be stopped, but I wanted to see the production line, but I was not able to do that as a kid, but it was very dominant in my life, those four big smokestacks across the river.

### ***The Power of Art***

Things that occurred in my earlier childhood that relates to those years of being 15 and 16 and on into high school was my interest in art. It occurred early. I have to [tell] this quick little story because it's a major turn for me as I look back on it especially. I was in the library and I'm

in the fifth grade. I was reading and I felt somebody pull my ear up as I stood up on my tiptoes. And this lady, teacher, marched me up to my room upstairs, up another flight of stairs, into my classroom. Took me to my desk - wooden desk with the inkwells, that sort of desk. She pointed at a carving in the table. She said "did you do that?".

And it was my name, Bill Johnson, deeply carved in that wooden table. I had to admit that I did that. She was irate about that, so the punishment was for me to go into her office and sit by her desk the rest of the day with a pad of paper to tell, to figure out, tell her by writing it down, what I had done, why it was wrong, and what I was going to do about it. I couldn't think of a thing to write all day. The children, the minute my buddies would go by in the classroom and look in and see me there, that was the punishment.

So, I went home that night and picked up a piece of watercolor paper about 18 by 12 in size and I made a painting, watercolor painting, of our swimming hole in the river. I had the boulder there, the diving board. Three or four guys jumping in and big trees and it was a wonderful spot. I thought she'd enjoy that because I enjoyed that.

I took it into her the next morning and she looked at it at her desk and she turned around and hugged me, tight full hug, and she said that is so beautiful. And the other teachers came over. They were going to their classes and they patted me on the back and had told me I was a good kid. I was suddenly forgiven.

I went back to my class and I've discovered a power of art. All I did was make a drawing for this lady. And she turned into this wonderful person who thought I was wonderful. The

painting did that. For all those times on, I kept drawing and drawing. I said that's power, pretty good idea.

In my grade school, we had a principal who was very difficult and tough and demanding. Her name was Essie Lindquist. I'll never forget that name because it has become an important name in my career. So, twenty years later, after this incident, she retired and invited me and my brother Carl and my sister Mary Lou to join the group that was celebrating her retirement. It was rather a large group. It was in the old school. She brought to that gathering that painting. As she gave her remarks, she took that painting and she put it up on the wall behind her and commented that it was one of the more meaningful things in her life. I couldn't believe it. Here, you know, my brother and I are running a business, Johnson, Johnson, and Roy (JJR). We were busy and lo and behold, this point came up and even Carl gave me a hug, my brother. So, it was a unique event in my life.

### ***Streets of Lansing***

But, the other thing that I did as a young boy, entertainment-wise, I would walk the streets of the city. I was not in any danger. I didn't feel ill at ease, and I was looking for matchbook covers. In those days, the little matchbook was used so much by those who smoked. And they would throw their matchbook covers away and I collected them. I had two shoeboxes full of those matchbook covers.

I would walk the streets of Lansing. It's a big city in those terms, and I knew every street in that city because of that little entertaining diversion. But, in the process, I would bump into the various parks of the city, particularly the museum in the base of the capitol, the Lansing state

capitol. The ground floor was a museum. The upper floors were, of course, the governmental floors and Senate and House. I would walk into that museum and spend four hours. It was about the Civil War. I loved that time because at that period, 1940, the Civil War was pretty fresh, relatively speaking. All the exhibits were straight out of family exhibits. The uniforms, bullet holes and just wonderful pieces of the Civil War. That was, I'm ten and eleven and twelve, that was very memorable for me to know my city, my town, in that intimate way by walking throughout the city. Nothing ever happened that wasn't pleasurable.

### ***A Sense of Scale***

Regarding the emerging points of view coming out of those days, I think one of the things that as I look back on it that occurred in me was that bigness was not a surprise. I knew the city at twelve years old intimately. It was big to me, but it wasn't a difficulty. A lot of the stories my folks told were big stories. Some of the Biblical stories were without scale limits. I saw the world as a whole globe. I saw it as a universe. The initial Garden of Eden was the center of that kind of faith-based life. That garden was, to me, a global garden. So, scale later on in my career was not an issue. I didn't classify things by how big or small. Is it just normal? Therefore, a small garden was just as important as a whole city. And it was natural. I look back with great pleasure with that because it was built in to the way I raised as a kid.

### ***Teaching Scale to his Children***

The heritage that I enjoyed of moving freely and without limits of scale is something that I just really wish we could do more about introducing to our kids. I tried that with my immediate children. One of the things I value in raising my three kids was resourcefulness, being free. Not

so free that they would be in danger, but free to make some of their own decisions early on.

Resourceful, finding their way.

Early in that process we had the opportunity to go to Europe for three months when they were five and seven and nine. They were pretty much on their own and the only rule we had in those three months travelling with them in Europe, every possible place we could find, the only rule was that when I pointed at them and clicked my fingers, that was time to stop whatever they were doing and that's all we had as a rule. I used it a couple times with perfect precision. It was because they were able to find ways to be entertained and to find their way when they were feeling limited or alone and figure it out. I liked that idea.

### ***World War II***

[1941 to 1945] '41 to '45, I was nine years old at the beginning of that to fourteen or fifteen at the end of the war. Those were very impressionable years. And the war was very real. I read the paper daily and had my views about what ought to be done from the military and I drew photographs or pictures of airplanes and all the things that had to do with that sort of intrigue from a young boy.

### ***Father Designs and Builds an Airplane***

My father was an engineer and was very interested in flight and aeronautics. He would often design an airplane or two. He would draw them in front of me and I thought wow, what a plane that would be if the government would only build it. It was beautifully done. One of the things that my father did in 1942 or 3, he had a buddy that was a pilot. He owned, they were young at the time. They were in their 40s, late 30s.

They designed a small plane using as a model, some of the small single-engine airplanes, and they built an airplane in the basement. Full size and carefully done, thoughtfully done and reassembled it in the back yard in the spring of that winter. And it was a yellow airplane. It was a canvas-coated frame and it was painted with this dope that was very pungent and I remember the smell and the color and the very thick paint.

They assembled it in the back yard and it was the event of the year in that neighborhood. Through this airplane formed in the back yard, wings, attached the wings. The engine had been figured out, it was ready to fly. They then disassembled it and took it out to the local airport and my father wouldn't fly it. He said not me. His buddy took it off and they flew that airplane.

The last I saw it was twenty years later with pontoons on it at a small lake in Michigan. I said hurrah for Dad. He did it. But, you know, the idea of with your hands making something, putting it into form and getting it built and it works. What a process that was. That was a big lesson. So, the war years were pretty special for me.

## **EDUCATION**

### **Choosing Landscape Architecture**

Interest in drawing increased because number one, I discovered Michigan State University or Michigan State College at that time and my brother Carl was interested in the field of art in general. He, too, prior to my choosing, had already chosen landscape architecture. So, when you put that together it begins to show me a direction. But the thing that triggered my decision to pursue landscape architecture with a vengeance was an event that happened right at the end of World War II.



### *How Earth and Water All Go Together*

At that time the housing shortage in this country was severe. There were hundreds of thousands of returning servicemen looking for homes, places to live. We were renting a house at the time. The landlord of our home came and said that their, his son was returning. We would have to leave. So, we were suddenly in market as a family of three because my brother Carl was, had been in the Navy and my sister had left the home and was working. So, the three of us had to find a place to live. The only thing we could find was a widow lady on a farm twenty miles outside of Lansing. Her name was Kouffle, Mrs. Kouffle, she was widowed, alone, and she said come and live with me.

So, suddenly I was on a farm and there's a farmer next door, down the way, a Dutch farmer and his wife, Arnold Boersma and Clara, that I happened on to as I walked down the road. I got acquainted with them. In the process of getting acquainted, I was asked to be a farmhand for this Dutch couple. So, for two summers I was a hardworking farmhand. I learned how to drive two horses. I learned how to saddle, put them together, and put their reins on and get them ready for work. Babe and Dolly were the two horses.

At that time people knew farms by their horses, so that's the farm of Babe and Dolly. It's just a remarkable thing. He also had a big Oliver tractor. The tractor would do some jobs. The two horses would do the others. I learned how to do all that. And I went to a graduate school in how earth and water all go together in a productive way. It was a great experience.

That was for two years. At that point I graduated from high school and I was able therefore to put together art, had a great experience of why it's important, and the farm, which

was all about the earth. How else could you not choose landscape architecture? It was a natural. So, and there was the program right there in our backyard, so, it was good stuff.

### ***The Midwest and the Dutch Attitude***

[I would] say [I] was a product of the Midwest. A lot of attention to getting things done, very straightforward, to the point my life was like that with my family. Very direct. I think it's a product somewhat of the Depression and World War II. It was very practical. I didn't see practical as a negative. I saw it as a celebration to understand something and get it done. That's what a farm is all about - getting it done, moving through the process to an end. So, this sense of straightforwardness, I don't want to say humility, but a sense that others are as important as you are. And as a community, you can accomplish more than as an individual during the Depression. I therefore I think my emerging sensitivities were to the idea of a kind of practical straightforwardness that probably is called common sense. I believe a lot in common sense, obviously, because that's how I work.

But when you're with Swedes a lot, my ethnic relationships, and a lot with Dutch, my Dutch farmer friend, it's all about straightforward, practical, getting a lot of worth out of every motion. I one time asked my farmer friend, Arnold Boersma, I said why is that every barn has an inclined plane in front of it? What does that do? Why is that slope? He said, well, I'll show you. Next time we bring in hay with the horses I'll show you why. It was all about physics. He got the horses up into the barn, marching down that inclined plane, they'd pull up two tons of hay.

They had the advantage of that downhill motion. I didn't know that. But, how beautiful that is in my mind. Things work because you kind of figure them out and calculate it. Maybe

that can get too practical, obviously. It forms your mind in such a way of approaching problems that is a little different from the notion that you conceive of the form as a kind of inspiration or passionate something that comes from somewhere. That's [a] good enough answer. I would say no, I'm after it coming the other way with a solution, figuring it out, seeing what emerges.

### ***Exploring the Campus of Michigan State University***

Yes, regarding the campus at Michigan State University, it was Michigan State College then. It was a very prominent part of our city life because it was a great university, close by, and I wandered on that campus like it was a neighborhood park. In fact, I think that's one of the ways in which I discovered landscape architecture, because I was intrigued with this one World War II building that was still being used for classrooms. It was kind of a Quonset hut. It's where the landscape architecture/urban planning program would occur. I remember walking through. I'm about fifteen, fourteen, walking through that building and seeing these phenomenal drawings and plans and beautifully rendered sketches. I was so thrilled with that.

I had been already interested in art, but this kind of art was different for me. It was art to solve problems, and in that my father was an engineer and I was picking up some of those vibes of engineering. It was problem-solving supreme for me. That was really a cool idea of using art not for art's sake, but art to help discover and solve a problem. That was special.

## **Michigan State University**

### ***Mentors at Michigan State University***

Say it, the faculty, then a couple were very, very memorable. One, Carl [Gerlach] was a very sensitive designer in landscape architecture and he was an absolute [sic] gifted renderer, artist. His hero at that time and he became my hero at that time in drawing, was a person by the name of Ted Kautzky. I don't know if you've ever heard of Ted, but his pencil work was superb and I just admired, I'd look at his, Ted Kautzky's, pencil sketches and I would just, my heart would flutter. I said oh, wow, I wish I could do that. You need those heroes, I think. But, Carl Gerlach was a mentor, a friend, had total integrity. He became a kind of uncle figure, warm and friendly and able to give me a sense of worth. He was a good man.

### ***Thoughts on the Michigan State Landscape Architecture Program***

Landscape architecture. I was a little bit disappointed in art, as such, because it was as I attended a few art classes, it was more about pattern making. Just abstract patterns and forms that did not make as much sense to me as solving problems with art. I was much more inclined to the more process-oriented part of art and science, not so much the form and pattern of abstract art. That did not necessarily mean I wasn't attracted to abstract patterns, but the process was much more intriguing to me.

There were things that emerged from the Michigan State education in landscape architecture, particularly having to do with analytic approach to thinking. I was quite disturbed

with some of the teaching that said well you, in order to solve let's say a garden plan for a couple, and the case study statement has indicated that here's something to solve. The teaching in some aspects was that you simply take one of your abstract pieces of art and lay it over the property and put plants where the forms are. You follow that form. You start with the form and embellish it. I was very ill at ease with that because I didn't like the idea of a predetermined solution just strengthened by adding plants here and there and making it a pattern.

I wanted the pattern to come from the place that helped to solve the problem. So, the analytic approach was much more attractive to me, where you take apart a piece of physical situation and the people who live there or want something. Understand it and its pieces and then reassemble it where the pieces began to fit in a different way. And then an emergent solution begins to show up and then you work with form. There were some who have advocated that, but at Michigan State it was a mix and I was ill at ease about the design process in that sense.

### ***The Exchange Problem and Meeting Hideo Sasaki***

In Michigan, at Michigan State in the last two years, there was a program among the Big 10 universities that was called the Exchange Problem. I don't know if you've ever heard of those, but it was a wonderful way in which you could participate in a problem-solving assignment, a case study, that was being worked on by ten other or nine other universities. We'd see in a jury we'd see the work of ten universities in one spot and your work is among those.

I did well in those case studies, problem-solving kinds of things. It was through that outlet where I had received a number of awards for doing well that a particular person noticed that. It happened to be a person in Urbana, Illinois, at the University of Illinois. It was Hideo Sasaki.

I didn't know him at all and he had no idea who I was, but he saw the work at Illinois. As I graduated from Michigan State, I was working in the campus planning office at the time, draftsman, and there was a knock at the door of the studio. The director of our section went to the door and I heard a voice say does Bill Johnson work here? He said yes, he's right over there. The person came and stood at my desk and it was Hideo Sasaki. Here he had come up from Illinois, headed back to Cambridge, and decided to stop in at Michigan State see if he could find who I was.

He said I saw your work at Urbana. I think you should go to graduate school. He shook my hand and said have a good day, and he left. I was stunned, by number one, somebody had noticed me. And noted, too, it was a person who was from a graduate school in landscape architecture called Harvard. As he left I said there's no way that I could go to graduate school for two years because I was committed to go into the Army. He understood that and said good day.

Two years later, after the Army, I stopped on the way home after being disengaged [sic] from the military, I stopped in Cambridge [Massachusetts] and went to Robinson Hall [at Harvard University] and looked up Hideo Sasaki. His door was there. It was half open. I nudged the door and looked in and interrupted Hideo. I said I'm Bill Johnson and you had mentioned

graduate school, where I'm out of the Army now. He said yes, we were expecting you. If you go down the hall you'll see so and so. We're going to start in a couple of weeks, so come on in. It was just that simple. Amazing how those things interact like that.

Happenstance, you could call it. But, I'm not sure about that. But certainly a unique piece of luck how converging things happen. It's a mystery of our lives, isn't it? That these moments where things converge in a unique way. That was one.

### **The Beauty of My Assignment**

Regarding the military, I'm not a military person. It was true and clear in school. I did not want to go into the military for all of the reasons and I was drafted for Korea. Korea was hot at the time [19]53. Eisenhower was trying to solve that issue globally. It was hot and dangerous. You'd get drafted and you're in the trenches, so I ran down to the ROTC program at Michigan State quickly. I had the draft. I was given a date to report. I took that letter down to the ROTC program and asked if I could get in the ROTC. I had just visited them the week before and had told them I didn't want to be in the ROTC, so suddenly I was back and they were smiling at me because I was holding that draft letter. I finally found a point where I could enter their ROTC, so grudgingly became a military officer.

### ***Brand-new MG TF, Red***

But the beauty of my assignment then came not to Korea. I was given Europe. And the beauty of that was that I had longed to have a little sports car. I had \$1400 in cash in my life. That's all I had. I went to Europe in the military and I headed for the MG dealer in Frankfurt, Germany, and figured out a deal for a brand-new MG TF, red. Then every weekend after

purchasing that new car was open to exploring Europe and sometimes a week leave once in a while we'd go to Rome and England and Amsterdam and what an amazing time. I think I did OK with the military part of it. But, when they said your two years is up. Do you want to re-enlist, I said no, I'm out of here. Because I wasn't really built for a military career. I'm glad.

### ***European Gardens***

[I] continued to sketch and draw and paint. I picked up oil painting at that time, made some very large paintings of places that I had adored. I enjoyed that. We did visit, we tried to visit gardens throughout Europe and Switzerland. The German and French and English garden-makers were very busy at that time because it was the repair of the Post-World War period 10 years later, but it was all still beat up with blocks of rubble. So, garden-making, park-making, was prominent in the German culture as well as the French and English and we were there a lot. We visited a lot of garden fairs where they'd have an annual garden bau-umt [sic] in Germany and Switzerland and Munich. I was always trying to get to those. Good fun. Yeah, there was a major German fair, a kind of annual celebration of gardens in Munich. They called it the garden bau-umt [sic], 1955, I believe it was.

There, I could see that the language of the German garden designers was the same language I had heard about in different form, obviously. But I had a chance to talk to a few of the German garden designers and there was immediate rapport. They immediately [would] shake your hand and then you were good buddies in the spirit of kindred spirits. And here these were German nationalists who were the enemy ten years earlier and oh, that didn't even exist



then, because you had this common interest bringing about a beauty to our world that was not there before. What a great commonality.

***Responsibility I Didn't Bargain for***

Yes, what effect that had on me as a young man in Europe with a good deal of responsibility I didn't bargain for in the military assignments. A young kid having to do things that probably would have not ever happened in civilian life because they were risky things. It was [having] a lot of men and equipment under your command. It was a maturing process. Not that that's where you become grown up, necessarily, but it was about resourcefulness again.

So, when I returned to Harvard and checked in with Hideo, I was kind of a bit of a veteran now of the world. I'd been around, gone to the various countries, Italy and France and Germany and knew the gardens somewhat and came across a person like Norman Newton, who was in the military for the purpose in Italy of finding places that should not be bombed. He had these great stories. We were immediate buddies as opposed to professor and student. We were compatriots. That was very beautiful stuff of how that military experience boosted your sense of confidence in a quiet way. That you'd been there, done enough of it, you know generally what's going on. That's good stuff.

It was influential in the immediate practice of landscape architecture when JJR emerged. We had a confidence among the partners that was superb, but not in a way that says I know how to do this, you guys don't. It was about tell us your problem and we'll figure it out, no matter what the scale. That's how we felt at the time and I don't think it was pompous. I don't think it was aggrandizement of ourselves. It was about there is a way to solve problems and

we're anxious to help with this. That was dominant. Then the next few years the emergence of the practice.

## **The Harvard Graduate School of Design (GSD)**

### ***Moving to Cambridge***

Yeah, that was an interesting moment. I went back home after talking to Hideo and he said come on [to the GSD]. Home, being Lansing. I was married to Nancy at the time. She was pregnant with our first child. I went on to Harvard. I drove alone while she waited to have the child and she would come later. I found a place to live on Brattle [Street], 50 Brattle. It was a little apartment building.

I rented a room from a woman who was Mrs. Cook. She was a Cuban lady. We talked about Cuba a lot. Castro was big at the time and was kind of a hero. She was very excited about that. She was very supportive in my going to Harvard. She gave me a little party when I got there. It was just a landlady. It was so beautiful in terms of welcoming.

### ***Meeting Pete Walker***

So, when I got to Harvard, the first person I met was, of course, Hideo, and the encouragement that's inherent in that, but, Pete Walker. We walked in the studio the same afternoon with our tackle boxes full of gear and we were setting up our desks at the same time. Nobody else was in the room at the time. It was afternoon. And Pete and I got acquainted quickly even that day. In the beginnings of our work together, we saw together that we were kindred spirits about the analytic process. You may not realize this when you look at Pete's

work, which is so much focused on the beautiful outcomes of thought. You don't really realize how good Pete is at analytic predetermined patterns that need to be satisfied. He's very good, he's very quick at the analytic take apart and the synthesis. It's almost like it didn't happen and suddenly he's at the point where the form is emerging. It's in his head. Impressive stuff from a fellow student. And then we shared our mutual gifts that we each had in that way and it was very, very supportive.

I'll never forget meeting Pete in the classroom. One of the things he always said as a fellow student. He'd come over and look at my work and Pete would say well, this looked OK but what's your idea? I'd say well, I, I'd fumble around and not be able to articulate that. And he'd say you need an idea. Go get that. So, how lucky is that, to run across a guy like Pete so early in your career?

### ***A More Open Kind of Teaching***

And then met Pete and we got moving into our work. What became evident right away at Harvard was that the kind of teaching that was different from what I had experienced at Michigan State was a looseness sort of thing where the intent of the studios were obviously design, but there was not a rigor particularly being given.

It's a direction, outcome, intentions, things like that, but you're on your own to figure out how you're going to talk this thing through and work it out, and you are open to partnerships. You could work together or work alone. It was pretty freewheeling. I really got a kick out of that because it fit with where I had been in Europe. I was ready for a little more open kind of teaching.

So, Hideo taught, I think, true with Norman Newton as well, in terms of principles. He would indicate certain points of view that were important. Like Hideo would say, “there are no limits of scale, if you know how to solve this problem in this particular way”, and we would study that a little bit, there was a process. You can then tackle this one and this one and this one. So, don't be limited [by] point of view. That was for me a wonderful point. I loved that idea.

Then, so what happened out of that general somewhat loose way of working, student groups formed between architects, planners, and landscape architects. We'd form and kind of become our own faculty, which is very appropriate because there was a lot to learn from your buddies and your peers. Here's Brian Falk from Ceylon, having worked in Ceylon as a planner for a couple of years before he came to Harvard. So, Pete and I immediately got Brian to our work [sic]. Then, we had a partnership going and a small business in a way.

### ***GSD - Chalk Drawing Classes***

On Wednesday nights for a period of two or three months, I ran a chalk drawing course [at the GSD]. Hideo made me charge for it. He said you can't do this for free. I said well, I'm willing to do that. I'm glad to be here. No, no. You work for pay. And the pay has got to be something similar to what you're getting paid here in the office [Sasaki's Watertown office]. Each person pays a piece of that.

So, there were about eight or ten, twelve people who would come every Wednesday, including Pete, and they'd pay a certain amount, but it amounted to an evening's pay for me. I thought this is cool, I like the way Hideo thinks. He came with his wife, Kisa, to those sessions

and they'd all draw. Can you imagine a faculty member, a professor, your professor, working with you like that? I find that just remarkable.

In that spirit, there was then a course that was defined for the school [the GSD], for the landscape architecture program, and I was given a special instructor category. I think they made it up. The stipend was very small. But I was so, it was just so good, energizing, to do that [to teach] at the school. Of course I got a lot of static from the other students. Pete gave me a hard time about getting paid for something that we do all the time in the middle of the night. I said, I'm sorry. But it was fun. We gave each other hard times, a bit of the Midwest thing

### ***GSD – Faculty Critiques***

We solved a problem in a town north of Boston where the mill towns kind of a syndrome, where old industrial pieces were being reformed and recalculated. We worked in that sort of spirit. That's where the chalkboards sessions, I learned so much in those subgroups.

Hideo followed those. He would comment on them. If you've ever been in a critique with Hideo Sasaki, you were a student, and you had your work showing, you were free game. Let me tell you. You never knew quite what he would point out, but his critiques were quiet and devastating in terms of lessons learned. He could quietly tell you if this was, don't ever do this one again. Stuff like that. He was tough, but quiet.

But [Serge] Chermayeff, on the architecture end, he would in occasionally. His critiques were bombastic. You kind of...almost [felt]terror, the way he'd rip your stuff apart. He was good at it. I think some faculty kind of liked that process of putting students into their place, you know, the harsh way? But Hideo never did that, nor Newton.

Walt Chambers was a good critic. He often stopped in, he didn't need to, on some of our design classes, because he was in the construction end more. He would stop in the design classes, stop at your table, ask you what you're doing, and comment. Mostly on whether or not it would work. He said this won't work or this has a chance for working if you'd figure this piece of drainage out and so on. Great faculty at the time. We really learned a lot. We were only there one year before we headed out.

### ***GSD - Collaborating with Architects***

The climate at the GSD [Harvard Graduate School of Design] in 1960, what was it? [19]'57, [19]'58, when I was there, was characterized by working together. That was the architect's theme at the time. [The Dean of the GSD] Josep [Lluís] Sert talked about collaboration. That was the great word of the moment. It had double meaning to us as we talked about it. It said at first that it was a word called collaboration and we understood it and we practiced some of it among ourselves, but we didn't experience it from the architecture point of view.

The collaboration meant that we had a predetermined role to play, usually at the end of the stream, and we'd do what we could to express ourselves into patterns of some trees and shrubs here and there. It was shallow to us at the time. We had often talked about a new kind of collaboration where it was genuine from all points of view. How do you do that? The role of the landscape architect being the finisher of a piece of design was not very satisfying. We were looking in accordance with the urging of Hideo Sasaki and Norman Newton. We were looking at the larger picture, putting context to architecture.

They had already started their architecture. In fact, the great collaborative problem was that all disciplines start at the same moment. But, it wasn't real in the sense that the context was not even addressed by the architecture students by their assignment. They were assigned these tasks in their case studies to go after these building forms. Context that.

Maybe some immediate things that are obvious, but not assessment of the people and the culture and the history of a place prior to beginning to think about the form of a major building complex. That was disconcerting. We didn't think it was consistent to preach collaborative work in that spirit. So, it was an issue.

### ***Hideo Sasaki's Office - Watertown, MA***

In the meantime, Hideo had this growing office called Sasaki Associates in Watertown, [Massachusetts] on Galen Street. I think it was 122 Galen, if I'm accurate. It was a small group, growing. Hideo was there quite a bit. He asked Pete and I to be part of that. We were. When we graduated from the school, Hideo asked if I would be willing to stay on, become part of the office staff along with Pete.

Pete agreed. I told Hideo that I had a sense of commitment to my brother in the Midwest, that the Midwest was a place of opportunity and that we probably would practice there. I thanked him and said that I'm going to go to the Midwest. He thought that was OK, of course.

### ***The Harvard Experience and Returning to the Midwest***

Harvard, that almost every student will tell you is that it's about Boston and the East Coast and that Eastern Seaboard. Boston was chock full of places to go and think about the current

moment. Scollay Square. The red table cloths at the fish restaurants, the seafood restaurants. I'll never forget the, and the subway from Cambridge to Scollay Square. On that all the time.

So, Boston was a big deal. I tried to do a little bit of personal practice in between things. There were two or three communities on the edge of Boston that I was helping with in terms of their park systems and all. Just kind of consulting for a little bit of extra money. But that was fun. I could have stayed in Boston easily from the spirit of things there, but I think my commitment to the Midwest was largely through my brother Carl.

## **PRACTICE**

### **Detroit Planning Commission**

Let me mention briefly the Detroit City Planning Commission because it was very much a part of the Great White City on the Hill point of view that some of these prominent city planners had. Charlie Blessing was one, and then Ed Bacon, and [Edward] Logue in Boston. They were buddies. They met together like we meet together. They would fly to their sort of respective places and then have brown bag [lunch] together. We knew them as sort of separate entities.

So, mine was Charlie Blessing. I don't know quite how I met him, but he asked me to come to the city and see if I wanted to work in the long-range planning division under his scrutiny. I said great. So, that I was suddenly an employee of the Detroit City Planning Commission, working with Charlie Blessing. He carried with him all the time lectures, that he would give at a drop of a hat, with materials. He was always bundled up with materials, he was ready, about the great future of the great cities of the world.



Machu Picchu, he had took a special trip to. It was rather new at the time and various other capitals of the world. He was a world traveler about the future of cities and he wanted Detroit to be one of the great cities. I think it was genuine. He was passionate. So, I was working with him, for him. He loved my drawing and sketches. I had a way with pastel sketches that he thought was wonderful, so I was able to help him express some of his ideas to [the] city council about the future of the city.

### ***Detroit***

But at the time, Detroit was tearing itself apart. It began to clear 180 acres of city to make way for an interchange of two freeways. Huge. Out went whole neighborhoods. Corktown was an Irish community. It was pretty much devastated with these kinds of injury. And it was the urban renewal mindset of the time. Hard to figure out.

I didn't know whether it was good or bad, but it was going on and it was those who objected to it were quite vocal. But, I was learning my way through those kinds of political urban-centered issues at the time, learning a lot. But I think what I discovered in that time, looking back on it, is that the word planning has several layers to it. The portion that I'm interested in is at the lower end, I call it. The lower end of the planning spectrum, where the beginnings of form begin to get set up, where it joins with design. So, that the planning and design begin to merge at the lower end of the planning sphere.

The Charlie Blessings were midway. And then there were land use federal experts, who were up in the upper part working only with policy of all kinds. And the two don't join together very well. So, I don't think I ever was inclined to head fully into the policy making end of

planning. I was in the lower end where it begins to merge with design. That's where I was intrigued. Charlie Blessing was a guy that applauded that, encouraged me to do that. And I think Ed Bacon was probably similar to Charlie Blessing, form-conscious policy makers about city life.

What they didn't calculate was the damage that was being done by the clearance. Devastating. And the freeways weren't a particular friend either. They certainly allowed commerce to flourish, but in Detroit it made a way for escape. The executives began to flow north into the, out suburbs, outskirts of Detroit, and a new Detroit began to happen on the outside of Detroit. Many of the citizens of Detroit at the time would point out that Detroit is becoming a doughnut. You know? All the functions are on the outside edge. There's a big hole in the middle. And it was true. It was hard to stop. And it emptied the city.

### ***Conversations with Hideo Sasaki***

On that point, two or three times in the next couple of years Hideo actually came to Detroit and stopped by our little office [to see], [Ed] Eichstaedt, my brother Carl and myself. He stopped in and commented on our work and was just a good supporter. At that time we would find time for lunch and each time, a couple of times like that, he would ask if I was still able to come back to Cambridge. Each time I said I just couldn't. And he stopped asking, of course. But he did it as a dear friend. He was integrity beyond belief in that man. I appreciated that, long handwritten letters.

We sat in the Willow Run airport. Detroit's Willow Run Airport was the prominent one at the time. I remember, in fact, the big hangar was redesigned by [Minoru] Yamasaki to become

kind of an OK place. It was impressive. I remember sitting in that hangar, terminal, for two or three hours with Hideo. He gave me a six page handwritten note on why it would make sense in my career if you'd go to the East Coast first and then go to the Midwest when you really learn something. It was sincere, it was genuine and quiet, and good friend. It was just a probe that he was doing.

### **University of Michigan – Department of Landscape Architecture**

#### ***Walt Chambers***

So, through the years, the Harvard thing has been part of my makeup. Through Pete and Hideo, Norman Newton and then the key guy in the end, in terms of change, was Walt Chambers. Because it was Walt who called me in Detroit and said I've decided to come to Michigan to renew the program of landscape architecture. Would you be willing to come and join me? I associated that with the Midwest, with Detroit. I told my brother Carl and Clarence Roy at the time. I said I'll go to Ann Arbor, join Walt Chambers, and see what happens with the teaching and the practice.

So, I opened a personal practice along with the teaching with the prospect that Carl and Clarence would come at another moment, seeing if things formed. It was Walt's call, that telephone call, that changed everything about the next 50 years. That did not make Hideo particularly pleased because that left him with the chairmanship, which he was not seeking at the time, as far as I know. But, maybe that was a conflict of some kind with those two guys, but they worked it out. Amazing stuff, actually.

## The University of Michigan Campus Expansion Plan

It was an idea of a three-way partnership that was hovering over our heads as a prospect. The three of us [Carl Johnson, Clarence Roy, and William Johnson] were looking at that as probability. Didn't know when or how. When I had gone with Walt [Chambers] into [the University of] Michigan in 1958. I think in 1960, probably a year and a half after I got there, I had worked with the University a little bit on some projects, one of them being the Dearborn Branch Campus, an engineering school there, and the campus plan. I was helping a little bit with that. Nothing heavy.

### *“We Don’t Have a Plan, but We Need One”*

I got acquainted with the Vice President for Finance, under whom that kind of thing fell, and his assistant John McKenna. McKenna apparently mentioned to the vice president that there was some planning skill that I had and it might be worth a talk with me. He called and said could we have lunch? This is as clear as I recall that moment. We went to the faculty club and it was a little different. I was a faculty member, but I was not a real academic. I didn't go to the faculty club often. Once in a while. But this one had white table cloths and it was rather a severe kind of place to eat.

He wanted to go there so we met there, the two of us. The vice president for finance. Name was Bill [Wilbur “Bill” Pierpont]. Impressive person who would be kind of a role model type guy. We talked and he said that the university was going to grow beyond what they could even estimate and that it would be big. He didn't know when or how that was all going to happen, but change was on its way and something needed to be done about a plan.

He said we don't have a plan, but we need one and it has to be a plan that is like this. He said this plan needs to have a strong sense of direction for our policy making, but no predetermined form of buildings or size or place. Can you do that? I said sure. We do that all the time. We know how to do that.

He said OK, if you know how to do that, tell me how you'd go about it. This is at the lunch. I went through a very typical start to finish process that we all pretty much know in school. It's kind of an analytic approach and synthesis and the options and the evaluation criteria and so on then you come up with a direction so everybody can follow and be included. He says that sounds just like how I think, so give me a proposal. And, he said, start with the North Campus first. We'll see if that works out. Then, go to the Medical Center and see what happens there. Lastly, we'll tackle the Central Campus.

### ***North Campus***

I made a proposal. North Campus had started. One of the assurances that the university did, they went to Philadelphia, a friend of John McKenna, to get an architect. I'm slipping. The name? [Will von Mulkey] came in to be my watchdog, kind of watch over my shoulder as I did these plans. It made the university feel OK about me because I was still pretty much a fresh kid out of school. The plan we came up with for North Campus was a game board, a checker board of playing the game from framework to detail. And here's how you go about playing it and you can play this game and you can come up with decisions out of a policy framework like this. They loved that idea. It was published and some good feedback came back.

### ***Medical Center***

The Medical Center was a quick study quick meaning eight or nine months recommending to the Regents that the university turn the Medical Center around 180 degrees and face its future on the valley [facing the Huron River, oriented to the north] rather than the town. Town couldn't handle that big sense of growth probabilities. They were aghast at that suggestion, but saw its virtue, and twenty years later it was flipped, turned and today it's 180 degrees turned around. Took some time.

### ***Central Campus***

The Central Campus was the prime piece. That's the one that triggered everything else with this plan that summed up in a five-minute sketch for the next twenty years, this is where to go. It was a strategy of a central piece of the university being the prime programs. The surrounding set of professional programs. Each precinct surround would have a center of distinction through which an academic avenue would flow towards a parking supply.

That plan, which I just described in a few words, was put into a diagram. When I summed up the study for the Regents, I drew that plan on a sheet of paper by the chalkboard. It took about five minutes. It represented a year's study. The president [of the university] never, he always came, but he was always in the back row. After presenting that, he got up and came up to the front, sat down again, and he said do that again. I went through that diagram again, explained it in five minutes, and the only thing he said is I could draw that too. Even I could draw that.

They approved what we were doing and it went on fine. But, I heard that later that he would often talk about the plan of the University of Michigan for the next number of years, and here's what we're going to do. And he'd draw that diagram. What I picked up from that was that if you can get a client to draw the plan in five minutes and be glad about it, you've got a winner.

### ***The Diagram***

That's the plan that everybody wanted copies of. We printed it out of the office 1500 copies, I believe, in the end. Every architecture firm around the country had one of those. It was a way to think. It was policy based design. From that, ten years of assignments came in on the phone. We never interviewed after that. Grew to 50, 60 people, in the largest sense. That's how fresh that was at the time. Today, the same good things happen, but it would discourage a lot of people thinking about innovation.

That's what I was saying earlier that so many good things are put into words, but still today there's not a lot of people that know how to do that [draw a diagram], especially in the front end where the policy design oriented things lurk. Many of our professional peers do it well. They're gaining a lot from that thinking. They've added their own dimensions to it. I think the profession is much stronger today because of the context way of thinking they bring to problems. It's where their solutions [are].

**Johnson, Johnson & Roy (JJR)**

***Brother Carl's Concerns***

One of the things about that is that when I left Detroit and working with Eichstaedt and my brother Carl to go to Harvard, Carl was very concerned about that. That it may not be the right thing to do for me. I wouldn't say angry so much as frustrated that he thought I was coming to practice with them. Here, suddenly, I was running off to this big deal school called Harvard. That was a bit of tension. We worked that out.

But I think when I came back from Boston/Cambridge into the Detroit scene and Walter Chambers called me and I went to Ann Arbor to work with Walter in view of a future Clarence and Carl coming, I had changed in ways that were probably good and ways that were not probably very good.

I think my confidence coming back was well founded, but arrogant, maybe, a bit. Thinking that now that I know Boston and Harvard and Sasaki and all these things, I must have a cut on things that others don't and so on. I don't know if I was that way exactly, but I think I could have been a little hard to get along with. I was aggressive. I knew that I could do whatever somebody asked me to do and that might now have shown well with my brother at first. I think we worked through that, as well. There is a story of how JJR started at some point.

***Brothers***

Emerging here is another phenomenon having to do with a brother [Carl] and the common interests that we both had. Even though he was five years older than I was in age, his military



service in the Navy during World War II was a time where, in effect, we both got in about the same time to the field of practice of landscape architecture. So, we were peers and yet this is this notion of brother, an older brother, a younger brother sort of thing. That was always there as it would be. We figured out because we both wanted to work together, we figured out ways of getting around any kind of static that would happen because of the brother thing. I think we figured it out pretty good.

One of the people who helped make that happen so beautifully was Clarence Roy, who came up from Dallas to join us. He had already been through the University of Michigan school, which is very much a Prairie [Style] tradition. Clarence represented that.

Carl was anxious to join the Ann Arbor firm. The one that was more able to come right away Clarence. Clarence and Carl were together with Eichstaedt. So, Clarence came down. We named the firm Johnson Roy, Inc., and began the University of Michigan work, the North Campus, (the) Medical Center and the Central Campus. Clarence was central to helping that all happen.

By the time those three or four studies were completed and we were on to other projects as well, the firm looked like it was able to take on Carl as well. That's when Carl asked Ed [Eichstaedt] about the future and they worked out a departure for Carl to come to Ann Arbor now and join as Johnson, Johnson and Roy. That left Ed Eichstaedt a little bit in a kind of spot where he lost a couple of key people. He didn't know quite what his future ought to be. He did think shortly there, a little brief span of time, that maybe he should come to Ann Arbor as well.

This is about Carl and Clarence coming to Ann Arbor. Ed Eichstaedt was quite intrigued with it all, and we were good friends. He thought briefly for a time of coming as well. He suggested and we talked about it, and of course, we didn't do that. Ed, then, went to a growing practice with another partner, John [Grissom], and Eichstaedt Grissom became a really stalwart firm in Detroit doing great work. We were kindred spirits and it was good.

### ***Influence of Jens Jensen, Hubbard & Kimball***

Edward Eichstaedt, the landscape architect in Detroit with whom my brother Carl, had worked out a partnership, was a Jens Jensen advocate. He had worked with Jens directly and Eichstaedt was a Jens Jensen in all respects in how he worked. That way of thinking and looking for the beauty of natural landscape, the grasses, the trees, the glades, the glens, the openings, that was all part of that scene. When you mentioned Hubbard and Kimball, Hubbard and Kimball was center [sic] in our thinking about design and all the attributes of form and texture and rhythm. It was all there as part of our retinue.

### ***Three Members of JJR in Place***

Then, we had now the full workings of Johnson, Johnson and Roy. That's when our debates and discussions of just how to operate in three partners in a growing, rapidly growing, business. Projects by the day flowing in. How should we all work?

A landscape architecture office of any size that has, say, three partners like we had, each partner has to tackle probably eight to twelve projects per person to cover the expenses of payroll and everything rather than the typical architecture office that had one or two major projects. It was a little different.

We were running ragged, each of us having, well, eight to twelve would be rather small. And they're all active. And that's a communication issue. You can't do justice to communicating with so many pieces. So, we were wondering just how to operate. We often thought that maybe we should, the three of us, split up activity in terms of types of work, like planning and detail design and so on. I think each one of the three of us wanted all kinds of smatterings of the challenge, not become a set of divisions. So, we got through that.

It was a hard, bracing, intense running hard. I remember it so well. Projects, we were on the plane all the time. I was teaching full, building [the University of Michigan] program, recruiting students for a graduate school. I would go to seventeen or twenty different universities under the guise of giving a lecture on sketching. I would recruit and most schools would invite me because of the sketching trick. We took advantage of that in the sense of meeting undergraduates who wanted to go to graduate school at Michigan.

Then, a lot of those Michigan graduates would come in to JJR, so the combination of teaching and practice was classic, not really thought well of now, but in those days I even asked the vice president if it was any conflict of interest that would bother them. They basically said let's let it be what it is and you exercise every caution that comes to you about this. You do the right things in both of your worlds of work. Do the right thing. If it becomes an issue it will be clear. I thought that's big time. There was never an issue about people who were complaining or anything else. I don't think that would allowed today.

*Working with Carl and Clarence*

I've been lucky to have an older brother who led the way on a lot of things in my life with friendships and attitudes and enthusiasm. He was a great factor in shared experiences. I gained a lot from my older brother. But he was in the Navy through World War II as I grew into my late teens, mid-teens and then into my later teens. That slowed his professional progress down to the point. We became quite balanced out in terms of when and how we entered our fields of professional choice.

It was still an indicator of what I had looked at and used as not so much a role model but examples of good common sense stuff. I learned a lot from him. He was devoted to doing the right thing, being very special in terms of thinking of others. Those were all almost part of family inheritance, qualities. We shared that. When we began to team up in terms of the same kind of work, it came out of our art expression. He was an artist in the sense of a lot of drawing. I drew and we drew together. We connected through the art.

As we promised ourselves that we could probably work together, there was a chance to express that that came along when he graduated from Michigan State. I was still two years from graduating. He was hired by the Lambert Landscape Company in Dallas and he invited me to come down and join them during the summer of 1952. I did that and that's how I met Clarence Roy, and Carl, myself, and we frequently talked about working together. That was kind of a no brainer.

***Areas of Expertise within JJR***

As we began to work together then, it was clear that my brother Carl's passion was more on the line of design detail. He loved plants. He was very good at it. Plant materials and kind of an ecosystem expert. I learned a lot from him. I was not as devoted to the plant materials. That made him feel ill at ease at times and rather frustrated that I got Cs when he got As. My mind was just a little different in terms of what I was focused on. [I was] more about the planning and design and I did that quite well. I was rewarded with that with accolades and help from faculty. It was really good.

So, we were pleased with each other. Carl had a sense of being an older brother and knowing what ought to go on. He was watching. He was making sure that I was worthy of being his brother. So, he would give me good critiques and well-intended and good and very helpful.

But I think in the beginning of JJR as an aggressive active vibrant practice, we were two things at once. We were both, including Clarence, all three of us, we were very busy. We were beginning to be overwhelmed with the work that was coming on. It kind of revealed that I was thinking more about the broader scale problems of landscape architecture and inspired by that scale. He [Carl] was not as devoted to that so much as to the detail design. He was very good [at] it.

The Harvard experience was a major factor in our relationships because he thought that we were ready to go full bore into the practice and he thought that I didn't need to go off and get more training. I was already there. It kind of separated us a little bit, especially when Walter

Chambers called and I went to Ann Arbor and he stayed in Detroit. That was a little bit of a differentiating experience.

I think the common ground was strong and powerful, successful business. We had no problem with money. It was flowing and we were careful with it. We were both very conservative about money. Like squirrels, you put your food away for the winter and put it in a safe place and you come back and you use it. It was a very deliberate careful money management accord all around. In a way what happened with myself and Carl and Clarence is that Clarence and Carl became sort of business plan managers. Why should I join in that too much when that was already well done?

So, I drifted much more to the teaching and the point of view that this is a teaching office and that recruiting that we do is both practice and teaching. I did that to maybe an extreme. Again, it was a little bit of a separator. Even though those tensions were always there, we always had a good way to overcome them through commonalities and our drawing. The joy we'd share [in] each other's drawings. I would draw for his planning needs and sometimes he'd do a sketch for me. It's really very beautiful.

### ***Clarence Roy***

Clarence Roy was very good at business oriented thinking and he was a very good writer. He was articulate. I loved to read the first brochures that we produced in 1961, '62. They read just like we would write it today about why we were there and what about other people and what about our culture, our history, our natural systems, and the world we live in and how it

can be sustaining it if we do it right? That's the nature of our first brochures. I was quite impressed when I found them again and read them. We were doing the right things.

***JJR Leads the Way – Regional Focus***

My solving of that was simply one of a personal initiative. I don't know if this is the right moment to mention this, but we started, the JJR firm, as a teaching phenomenon. It was teaching that was central to JJR. The lessons learned were the practice and that together, there would be a richness of why are you here and let's work at these things. This is exciting. It was about teaching. Therefore, we were quick to make something significant out of a context search. Our work flourished because we worked at context.

An interesting thing is that the architects of the region [the Midwest] began to gather at our door looking for work, because out of our work came dozens of architectural assignments. They fed at our door. The reverse was in their minds at Harvard. Architecture will be the great phenomenon and you hang around and you might get in on this somewhere along the line, but stick close and we'll keep you in mind.

It reversed with JJR. We were the source for fifteen years of architects gaining significant assignments out of our work and we became kindred spirits. They were glad to hang and get this work. And our joint ventures were easy to form with everybody and the architecture end would love to work with JJR, which tended to work on projects that produced dozens of prospects rather than one or two. It was good stuff. That, to me, was the way to work. Didn't mean that I was better than them. It just, I played a different role in the full perspective of problem solving. We're just in a different spot.

### *Saudi Arabia*

It was hot so to speak in the '70s, the early '70s. Everybody was there. You go to Saudi Arabia and you're going to bump into your next-door buddy. He's in town. He's going after something else, you know? None of us are paid. They never paid you. They promised a lot, but the fees, fee collecting was terrible. The aspirations of the client were hard to discern. Mostly profit and very little on the basis of root implications, designing in the spirit of the place.

The desert had no meaning in terms of a starting point with how do you perceive the future in terms of this community? Is it part of the desert? Does it become a reflection of how you battle the desert? Oh no, no, no. It ought to be like Iowa if possible. All green and we want to grow plants and corn and we want to be like the US. It was discouraging. I don't know what the answers would have been if they wanted it more inherent to their own patterns and circumstances that might not have been possible, but they didn't want to try.

So, what about parking structures that are designed with modest dimensions knowing that small cars and medium cars would be OK? No, we want to make sure we accommodate limousines by the triple dozen. You know, it was attitudes like that. You just want to get your bags and pick up. Forget the fees, I'm going home. It was a pretty difficult time. We had the assignment through Caudill Rowlett and Scott were joint venturing to design the what you'd call the West Point for Saudi Arabia, near Riyadh.

We started that project. We worked it through with Bill Caudill and gang, and it was full of those kinds of dilemmas. You go to Saudi Arabia and you might not get there because of change of plans on your way. So, you have to divert and go to Rome. The meetings are now going to be



in Rome, not in Riyadh. The people you're going to meet will come in about two weeks. Sorry about that. So, cool your heels and wait. You stayed in Athens. Sit in Athens for a week waiting for somebody to come and here you are with all this hundreds of thousands of dollars of effort. That was not fun. So yes, there were some work in the Middle East, but I don't like to talk about much, actually.

### **University of Michigan - School of Natural Resources**

The School of Natural Resources was a school that had several interlocking programs. It was a resource management focus. Landscape architecture was there, was a program, but it was quite different and distinct from the resource management programs, resource management meaning forestry, wildlife, fisheries. They were all very distinctive programs as such and quite separate.

The environmental push of the 1960s produced an attitude in that school where some thought and advocated, in fact, developed programs in environmental advocacy, a kind of delicate type program in those days because the school was highly supported by very pragmatic forestry companies, Weyerhaeuser and others. They were not particularly happy with the idea of the school having environment[al] advocacy programs as such. Training people to come out and stop things when their mindset was to keep things rolling and growing and producing natural resources.

### ***The Search for a Dean for the SNR***

So, it was a school full of tension, good tension, great discussions on what was right and what was wrong in the world of environmental protection. In the process of searching for a

dean, I was on the committee. It was hard to find somebody willing to take that school because it was such a mix of things. I was asked being part of the committee if I would consider such a thing and I said no. I'm not geared up for an academic appointment like that. I'm a designer. I draw. I don't have an academic ambition like that, and I don't have the credentials. That's how I dealt with it.

It went on to an extensive search and it was not working. There was a Vice President [for Academic Affairs and Provost] at Michigan at the time, impressive Scotchman, by the name of Frank Rhodes. He was tall. At graduation ceremonies, he had this red cape from some other university in the world and he was so impressive to me. He was a very elegant guy. He came to me one day and he said why don't you reconsider taking this deanship? He told me the reasons why the faculty keep coming to him and say[ing] why doesn't Bill take this job?

He said well, it was credentials, and they didn't think that that was a reason not to, given other attributes. I said no again. Then, another visit and I said well, maybe I can do this. Because, what I saw as an opportunity was central to my sense of mission. The opportunity was to bring disparate parts together into a kind of seeking of common ground and finding that, and therefore celebrating the differences. That was central to my design philosophy. I thought that that could be applied to the school. I called it at the time integrative thinking. That it was a needed attribute.

The university administration thought well, that's a pretty good idea even though some of us remained skeptical of that as an academic assumption. Because depth in each program is more important than breadth. That's where all the rewards were, in the center of a body of

knowledge. This would work in somewhat counter to that. So, we went ahead. For five years, 1975 to 1980, things went very, very well in my mind. I felt at ease.

I felt good about it. I was getting great support from faculty. I would visit the Weyerhaeuser people in Tacoma and they would say it's OK, we wish you were a forester. But we can't imagine a landscape architect being in charge of our kind of world, but you're doing a good job, so, it was OK. I felt good about it because it was making sense and making headway in a lot of faculty there. During that period I developed an overview of how the school could work. It was a look into the future.

### ***Diagram for the School of Natural Resources***

As you show this diagram, I want to emphasize it because it's a convergence diagram where the natural systems, the economic systems, and political systems, the design planning know-how and the behavioral social science inputs on the environment could combine into a kind of common ground that we'd call the forum, the discussion center. And that it would center around a first-degree awareness program for those just coming in and probably a post-degree course in integrative thinking after they had dealt with each specific expertise area.

The school, the faculty and the students, there were about a thousand students, and 60 faculty, they loved that diagram. They had never seen their school in a diagram. For me that was second nature. For them it was a brand new way of seeing themselves and it was greatly supported. One of the things I did that was kind of fun, in my office I had a blackboard. It was being disassembled in another old building and I asked if they could bring these big pieces of slate over and put them vertically rather than horizontally on my office wall, or conference wall.

The blackboard was vertical from ceiling to floor. I would stand there during sessions and I would draw the conversations.

This was not a design issue. It was planning the future of an academic enterprise. It still worked. It still could be diagrammed and you could get clarity. It stirred up conversations. It got interest. They would watch me draw these things and look and then wait and see if I made a goof. It was a wonderful process. That's another interesting little connection to the idea of visual thinking. How it stirs involvement. It was a beautiful time.

***The Chopping Block (budget cuts at the University of Michigan)***

Then 1980 came along and Chrysler went bankrupt. GM [General Motors] was going bankrupt. Government stepped in, great turmoil, and bailed them out for a short time. Give them the money and then recouped. Lee Iacocca was part of that resurgence. The economy was way, way down. It was a great dip in our national economy at that time. 1980, '81. The school was heavily supported by the university, of course, like any school.

The president [of the university] at the time was a person named Harold Shapiro. He was an economist. The Regents decided with Harold's urging to put some pressure on the state regarding funding, indicating that the university was so struggling, so badly, that they were willing to put three important schools on the chopping block and eliminate them. He said that to the [state] legislature and it was a strategy of pressure. So, we were suddenly a school threatened with elimination.

In an ensuing year, I was given twelve months, to make a case for why a great university should have a School of Natural Resources and two other schools faced the same test, the

School of Education and the School of Art. Education, art, and environment were put on the chopping block immediately. I often said to myself that's a great university?

But anyway, that was the situation. So, for a period of about a year, there was a committee appointed by the Regents to oversee what we were doing and come up with a solution or an elimination. We went through a terrible year. During that year of test and trial and public hearings, and I was calling in people from all over the world to testify. The best faculty, the ones you'd give your eye teeth for, were leaving. It drained the talent. It drained the top students. They stopped arriving. It was an awful strategy. It was destructive.

But in the end because the school had a future of integrative thinking it was said that it needs to be kept as is after this trial. It was very difficult to go through. When it was all over and the damages were clear and the gains were clear, the Regents then said officially that they would never take that approach to cutting budget here and there. It was the wrong way to think. Thank you.

After another year or two I shifted out of the Deanship. I was burned out and went back into my personal practice and taught a little bit more, but shifted into the tail end of my 30 years of teaching. And began to head for the next 30 years. I was still young and thinking about the next 30 years. That's when Pete Walker showed up again and we made interesting new plans.

### ***Women Students in the Michigan Program in the 1960s***

The enrollment at Michigan in the graduate school, as I recall, was probably close to a 50-50 in terms of men and women. The JJR office, I think, was maybe a third women. I don't think

there was an intention to be champions of some kind of equalization, but I think we were looking at talent and abilities pretty openly.

I think women at that time of 1960s were quite intrigued with the profession of natural systems and gardens and plants and all the green imagery that is there as well as the urban context. So, there was a lot of interest that flowed in. I interviewed almost all our graduate students before they came about that. So, I think it was pretty healthy.

The one thing that maybe was more of a mission-oriented advocacy was how to work with citizens in a creative way, to include them in a way that didn't count on them being professionals, but counted on them being insightful about what the professionals should produce. That was an issue. We worked hard on that. There was one project that was a symbol of how we were trying to think. I'd like to mention that at the right moment.

### **1970s**

Parallel to the time of the [School of] Natural Resource Deanship, that was the five-year period that I can look at and count that as the time, 1970 to 1975. I was in pretty constant touch with the GSD (Graduate School of Design) at Harvard. Chuck Harris was the main part of my conversation connection as well as the Dean of the school. In fact, Chuck would come to Ann Arbor. We had these sessions with Chuck Harris and his great wisdom on the whole. He was a design center professional and teacher, but very, very much a broad-scale thinker. He was a wonderful influence, but one of the things that started to happen is that the Dean would come, Dean of the GSD, would come to my office at Michigan.

We'd talk about this business of the overlap between this broad-scale natural resource conservation mindset and the form conscious, necessary form conscious, attention to buildings and the attributes around a building and in an urban scene. It's very much referred to by most of us as design, that those two were compatible and that the breadth was quite exciting. He was interested in the parallels and how that might influence the GSD and, of course, my own attention to the design end of the Natural Resource School.

[Ian] McHarg's messages were constant.<sup>i</sup> The notion of harmony and the large scale, big scale of stuff. Analysis, maybe, for some beyond reason, but voluminous and how much was done about ancillary and impacts on the design emergence of a form. Many call it over-reach, but I don't think so because it was so full and complete and a way of thinking. It was a great sample. I think McHarg's work was miraculous in how he could stand firm and shout out these great commandments across the world. It was a big help. People paid attention to that.

In that process we were able to also give attention to more quiet pleas that we were making. So, it was a positive thing all around regarding this convergence of broad-scaled sense of global longing for health of the world in natural resource ways. And the way in which human beings could fit in harmony with that. That was fundamental. It caught everybody's attention no matter if they're in near the field or in some other disparate sort of piece of work and they could understand that. That's probably why it hit the press well at the time.

### **Peter Walker William Johnson & Partners (PWWJP)**

A lifetime of joint work and joint thoughts. I don't know if you could call it as a pair. Pete has other buddies as dear as he feels I am and vice versa. Anyway, there was something special

about Pete and myself. Maybe it was the differences that charged up our like for each other. You always learn something new from somebody who thinks differently. Not dramatically differently, but just different people.

We got together often as a matter of rule whenever we could. During this time that I was struggling with the university and not knowing exactly what the next step should be, during this time of shifting into a new period, another chapter. I knew it was happening.

### ***Leave from JJR over, Cutting Ties***

My leave of absence from JJR was now finished. It was a five-year leave of absence during which time I put all of my interests, an investment, into a legal document where I couldn't have access to it because I was doing duty with the Deanship and we had a lot of university contracts, so we had to be careful about that with that. But it was now over as well.

I decided not to go back to JJR because of five, now seven years have passed and I didn't know the new people that well. They didn't know me was the new guy when I'd walk in. Carl was doing so beautifully with Clarence. I felt in a way that it had all been accomplished. My next chapter is not necessarily more of that. It would be a new round.

### ***"The Partnership that We Never Dared to Do"***

Pete called on some other thing and we got together during this little casual get together. He said let's try the partnership that we never dared to do because we always shied away from it for all those funny little reasons. I said well, let's do that. So, we figured out a way to do it for a given period of time. We said let's do five years. I was 60 at the time. He was about 60, just a year short. That would take us to 65 and then see what more was emerging in this crazy world.



We formed a partnership. I always feel really good about what Pete wanted to do. He sent me the announcement draft and it said together again. That was good. So, I went out to California. We set up our new fresh arrangement and celebrated. Had a great deal of fun. I had shifted my personal office into the Pete Walker office and figured all that out. Some projects that were in the Midwest and continued.

### ***Prairie Crossing***

In fact, Prairie Crossing was central to my slate at the time and we shifted Prairie Crossing into Pete Walker William Johnson [&] Partners (PWWJP), shifted out of my close association in Chicago back out to San Francisco. It made it a little difficult for continuing the project, but we did.

One of the big issues at the time that Pete and I struggled with together as to how to do it was a landfill right next door face to face with Prairie Crossing as a new community was a landfill. This landfill had been stopped because it was badly managed. It was a nasty place and the permit had been withdrawn at the pressure of [conservationist] Gaylord Donnelley, who was the mind behind the Prairie Crossing. A deal was made with Countryside Landfill, which later became part of the big guy, that is the landfill system in this country that's so prominent? Anyway.

### ***Japan***

So, we worked at these things like that. One of the major pieces of that next period of time was working in Japan with Pete. Pete was already well known in Japan because they loved his art expressions. I think one of the first things that Pete and I did together was to go over and

I observed while he opened his exhibition in Tokyo of his work. It was just a wonderful event. The Japanese were just so kind and so generous with their praise of his thinking and his work. We did that together. I got a kick out of that. So, we had a great five years.

### *In Pete's Shoes*

Pete and I had many, many times of great laughs. It was one of the joys of knowing Pete. He's a funny guy and I'm sure he thinks I'm a funny guy at times. But we had fun. One of the stories, just briefly, is a typical kind of thing that we bumped up against as we worked together. We worked a lot in Japan and we'd often fly to Tokyo together, two seats together. We'd talk and carry on and sleep.

This one trip we were headed to Tokyo to put together a competition solution with a Japanese group. On the way we both slept and each of us took our shoes off and put them under the seat and we wore, happened to wear the same kind of shoes. They were the same brand of penny loafers. We got to Narita and debarked [sic] and put our shoes on. You know how your feet will swell in a flight and you put shoes back on and they're tight? I just could hardly get my shoes on. We were walking down the hallway towards customs and I said Pete, I can hardly walk in these shoes. We've got to stop. My feet have swollen so much. How are yours?

He said mine are fine. We looked on and we saw that we had exchanged shoes. I finally was in Pete's shoes. This is tough. We laughed and laughed. We could hardly move on to the customs desk. Lo and behold, we found out that I wore ten and a half shoes, shoe size. He wore

eight and a half shoe size, and I had my feet stuffed in his shoes. I told him, I said Pete, "I don't like being in your shoes."

Those are the kind of things that we laugh and laugh about when we come back to them. Everybody in the office when I tell that story, I come back to the office once in a while and they want to hear the shoe story. It's part of kindred spirits.

### ***Roles within PWWJP***

I think in the unique contributions that each of us make towards any kind of a problem-solving process, the manner in which we work together is sort of self-evident after you, there's no assigned distinction, it just emerges as to how you work together. The main thing is that I understood Pete in depth. I knew where he's coming from. I admired his quickness of assessment of things. He soaked up things so fast that his design inclinations were sudden and it looks like it comes out of left field all of a sudden, but it's not. It's part of his way of working the way I do.

My way, I suppose, is a little more deliberate. That I make something of the preliminary pieces of assessment in diagrammatic form and so on. I make it part of the process to extent that others who don't know process techniques can join with us and understand where we're coming from without it being a mystery. Pete understood me in that same spirit so that we never were in contention about how to work together. We just understood each person's move as part of their own.

When Pete would come through with the very special kind of drawing, it was typical of Pete. He carried legal pads with him a lot. The yellow page lined paper. He would often have on

there a pen and ink, or pencil, little line drawing of his idea. It was simple, fundamental. It would be the tiniest little sketch. And it would be everything about what he was going to do. It was always on this rather modest informal yellow legal pad paper. I loved them. He didn't think it was a big deal, but I read everything he was thinking through those little sketches. It was his kind of art, expression.

When Pete would begin to form conscious resolutions to something we were both working on, I understood it enough to add a comment, critique, and help keep it strong, encourage his convictions if they were a little bit unsure. I think it was just a beautiful way to work together. None of us were trying to, either of us not trying, were not trying to be the other person. That was sort of the beauty of it all. We were at peace with who each one was, yet we saw the single notion as an uninterrupted set of wholeness, from process to outcome. It was good. Good stuff. I don't know, I don't recall of any contention, ever, about these things. They were emergent solutions. It made all kinds of sense to me. Of course, to Peter. It's powerful.

**NBBJ**

I spent a lot of time in the last ten years in Seattle with a very large excellent architecture firm called NBBJ. I respect them unbelievably. [NBBJ] has been in many startup moments with projects around the country led by architects. I was an observer and a helper from an overview point of view as a designer.

I can tell you that the way they wanted to start as architects were exactly the way I believe ought to be started, but their attention to it early in the game was very brief and by

words more than performance, and deeply and quickly, no fault of theirs. It's the client pressing deeply into the building of that building and these [agencies] are not as important. They should be just as important, but that's the way they have to work.

I think they would like to work is along the lines that we're talking. So, there's that complexity of client role in what is produced and how fast you have to do it. That makes the role of public government more important not as a general blur of regulatory measures, but some more creative way in which the public systems are partnered with the private pieces. That partnership, I think, has got to be revamped, rethought, and made more real from a broad point of view, not just the solving of a tail end of a building project on a riverfront. That's OK, but it's got to be bigger than that.

### ***Moving to Seattle***

About that time as that wound down I was very much anxious to do some things in Seattle area, particularly about boating. I had had a 40-foot sailing ketch in the Great Lakes. Sailed all the Great Lakes with the kids, grew them up on the boat and I missed that. So, Charlotte and I went up to Seattle and found another boat and spent pretty much five years poking around the British Columbia coast and Vancouver and so on. It was a great time.

### ***Thirty-Two Foot Trawler***

I remember the day Charlotte and I bought our boat. It was a 32-foot trawler. It was an absolute answer to a dream. I thought that is the most beautiful little boat I've ever seen. We've got to have that. We picked it up in a little village north of Seattle near the Skagit Valley.

We picked it up on a Sunday morning and it was a frosty morning. It was December. Usually that would be grey day, a grey week, maybe even a grey month.

It was a beautiful clear day. We were there at nine o'clock. We got the boat and backed out of the slip and to the river edge there and headed back to Seattle. It'd take about two or three hours of motoring. I was at the helm and I have a photograph of me at the helm. I looked like I was the happiest person in the world. I was.

That day I could see every mountain that ever existed in the Seattle region. Far in the distance, close by, clear as crystal. Sun was shining. It was a December day. Frost was still on the boat. It was unbelievable. Here I was with a boat of my little dreams and headed back home with this phenomenal water scene, islands and the cities popping up everywhere. There were these towers that you could see the centers of population. What a scene. There's a painting I know. It was wonderful. It does affect how you operate.

### ***Living in Seattle***

I think there were impacts from living in the area on the work that was done there in Seattle. When you live in Seattle you look forward to the next sunny day. And they do come. When they come everybody takes off work and they get their jeans and their hiking shoes and their backpacks and off everybody goes into the mountains or the sea. It's phenomenal.

What happens is that there's an expectation in these projects when we kind of try to work it this way that everything that happens in a city is oriented to a mountain range or a blue hole or the weather constraints and you work with the outdoor circumstances. That's why I think it's

become a city of no ties. Nobody wears a tie. You wear your jeans when you can. Business meetings, it's OK.

It's low key and I think it's impact or the presence of the sun and the sea and the ferries and the islands and the distant ridges of purple, which are the mountain ranges both ways, east and west. It's really affecting the way you feel about projects. The urban situations are intended to be reflective of the natural system. The glorious dimensions of that natural system out beyond the street level.

### **Holland, MI**

Beautiful. Standing here on the terrace of our little flat in downtown Holland, Michigan. It's just a delight to describe this because even though it's a little place, we've learned to live small. This terrace is just a wonderful place to be. Right in the center of town. From this very dense little downtown is a great little city, lots going on. If you look to the left, one would see the beginnings of the delta of the river valley just two blocks away. It's miles of walking, biking, just right almost in downtown. If you look the other way to my right, lo and behold there is a beautiful campus of a small college, population about 35 hundred students and every fall and winter it's just pumping with students.

So, we're delighted to be on this terrace. The way it happened is one of my friends who I got acquainted with through my 25 years of helping downtown through a revitalization time brought me up here one day and he said why don't you come here and live, Bill? I said well, I don't know where I'd live. He said why don't you live here? It's a flat. We have a garage and an

elevator and this big terrace and you could have a ball here. I said you know? We might consider that.

So, I went back to Seattle and told Charlotte I think we're moving. Charlotte was frightened at first and then she said, oh, that sounds pretty good. After a couple of years of using it as a station we came here and settled in and came back to Michigan where our roots are. And we just love this urban center that's very discernible and able to put your hands around. It's a great little urban place. We enjoy it no end.

## **DESIGN**

### **Fundamental Principles**

#### **Triumvirate of Forces**

Early in the emergence of JJR as a practice, I would guess 1961, about there, there were several fundamental principles that were emerging by which all three of us as partners believed in wholeheartedly. It was part of our somewhat unspoken agreement, that these were the principles that we were after.

I'd like to go through half a dozen of these [principles] because they charted the rest of our careers and they happened so early in the game. Right after graduate school for me, and right after Carl [Johnson] joined us from Detroit. One of them came off of the sketches made in our night-time sessions at Harvard is “who are we as landscape architects?” The interesting thing, can I make a drawing? Is that all right? Let me illustrate this little point of view about who



are we? A question we'd ask ourselves every day and every case study assignment, "who are we?"

Let's say we are residing in this arena of place and time. As landscape architects, we are working our way between a kind of triumvirate of forces, one being the natural sciences. It's a big item. Another is the world of the art, the arts, in a broad sense. The arts of communicating, of shaping places in a way that would be artistic and special. And a third one being the social sciences having a lot to do with architecture and those programs that related to people and place. The natural sciences in terms of natural systems and all that means. If those three fundamental things are shaping who you are, there's a bias that usually happens among those three that draws you in through natural inclinations or passion or special interests.

We began to say well, you know, we're all at[sic] in different places in this circle because of our own particular choices and inclinations. Some of us will hang a lot on the natural science of things. Some of us will orient to the architectural world of social sciences in terms of human endeavors and how to relate to that. And of course, the arts. The center or this is let me call it simply the primary body of knowledge is design with the bias being towards any one of these things. So, we each would tend to say 'well, you know I'm, this is who I am. We're here, or here. or here.'

If we became too much biased to any one of these triumvirates, we had to be careful because we might suddenly want to be one of these natural scientists or a social [scientist] or an architect. Maybe we've made the wrong choice if we want to get out of this circle or design shaped by those three. It was an interesting chess game we played about who are we? It was

fun as could be because what it defined is design is the center as a discipline in [the] broadest sense, and that this profession [landscape architecture] is a profession of edges more than it is one center, such as any body of knowledge it tends to be focused on in-depth only research and so on.

A profession of edges [such as landscape architecture] is a tough one to work with. It's elusive and not always clear, but that's part of the territory. We thought at the time that it's really interesting how we have to learn to work with ambiguities and lack of clarity at times as to what it was we were trying to do and who were you? The implication is quickly that if you find yourself in one edge of this because of your inclinations, in order to work centrally you had to have partnerships with the others. It was automatically a partnership oriented endeavor, not standing there alone doing all the stuff yourself, able to sign your name to every move. You can't do that because it's part of many pieces that have to be assembled. Great lesson in who you are and who you're not.

As I consider this kind of territory, my own bias brings me strongly over to the social sciences and I include in that the architectural world, the engineering world. That's where I hover. My work is not primarily art, as such, it's design. It's the solving of a challenge and [that] process takes me over to the social sciences more. I'm not a natural scientist or even close to being a pseudo-scientist. I lean on those guys big time to help what I do be solid and dependable, as I lean on the art world to help me in whatever I'm doing to not only create something that's artful, but to help others help me be artful.

That's how, you know Pete, I think is. He hovers in the arts a great deal. Although Pete is sort of a surprise because he's quick to deal with the other basics in his own quiet way or find people that have supplied him with insights that he uses in the art end of things. It's an interesting construct, one that's fun to talk about. It says in a way that design is a big deal as a way of thinking with capital letters. It's not only form producing, but process sensitive. That definition of design really helps me a lot.

### ***Limits***

I think that this who we are and how we work and live and what makes us tick is part of our chalk talks that we are in all the time. The other one that's related to that but very important is that there are couple of fundamental forces at work in our world. This is over simplistic in a way, but it helps to state it this way, that we live on an Earth that has its huge limits. We know that there are limits. We don't know how to define all the limits, but we know that we have to be careful with everything we do to keep this crazy Earth from being unable to sustain us. It's our only hope to be careful. Here we are as people having needs and we have to build to accommodate what we see as human needs and interests and ways of doing that in the development world.

### **The Basic Equation**

As you know, as everybody knows, this is intention. There's tradeoffs emerging all the time with this. The beauty of how we work is that there are advocates on both ends of the scale who know how to clarify the issues from both ends. That what we need is what we need badly and we can't live without the certain things to sustain human life from a technical point of view.

We know on this end that there are things that are happening that could end our ability to sustain our globe. So, those advocates are terribly important.

*Design as Mediator*

I can't afford to be either one because in my little mind, I know that I need to be in the middle to be effective. I need to learn how to bring these unavoidable interests into the game and play it in such a way that there can be at least creative compromises, though they bring the sites that each has in mind in terms of idealness to some kind of a resolution and compromise. The things we're after, though, is that if we work in such a way that ideas are more powerful than compromise and legal systems, the ideas that we can possibly bring to the forefront and entertain might even lift the sites of both ends so that the idea is to lift and win on both sides of this proposition. That's what we're after.

It doesn't always happen. In fact, it's quite rare, but there are cases where the beginning of a project has surprise outcomes on both ends, so [that scale] of development and preservation. Where, in fact, the development dollars will even be ways of repairing and restoring broken natural systems. Wouldn't that be something? Their development ends are satisfied. We've improved the environment. Wouldn't that be what we were after? Many times the compromises are so powerful and so deep that neither side gains much. It can be a negative.

So, that proposition is one that tells me in my convictions that I need to learn to work in the middle of all these tensions and bring clarity and excitement and inspiration to solving this

probably in a way that both win. I can't believe of a better intention than the win-win kind of outcomes. Tough to achieve.

Now, that proposition, this equation is one that popped up at Harvard, at Michigan State, even, particularly at Harvard, and has never left my sense of consciousness. It's with me today in spades. We have to learn how to do these things. That's not easy. So, that's precept two.

### ***Working in the Middle, Understanding Circumstances***

We say searching for the middle ground, no, not quite. We're working in the middle towards a solution that is far above the middle ground. It tends to imply that anything less than they're demanding and needing is a compromise solution. We're after the primary solution, which is win-win. Working the middle is not a diminishing term. It a central place that needs to be dealt with. The first thing, I suppose, is being good at understanding circumstances.

Understanding not just writing down the circumstance, but understanding the roots of a problem. What makes it ache and what is the pain on either side? After all, we are people, human beings, in the middle of a natural system, Earth. We can't deny us. So, something has to happen here that allows the best of both to prevail. Understanding both sides of this is the beginning of the forum, the arena in which discussions occur.

### ***Leadership***

Secondly, I think it's important that a landscape architect or other kind of professional, it could be an architect, it could be an engineer in those professional groups, that becomes not just the participant but a leader. To be leading the discussions not from a sense of being up

front and shouting out the charge, but a leadership style that beckons, allows, invites, welcomes the debate.

And in the leadership sense, that debate is enhanced by a leadership of potentialness coming out of those debates. Are you able, as a professional, to help this arena see possible ideas? Possible outcomes that aren't immediately available to people who are just arguing, but that say wow, not only can I make my argument, but this could be an outcome. And the more quickly that's done on the spot, which takes skill, the better the debate and the more, the further you can reach towards an idea that is prevalent.

### ***Power of Listening***

What I'm stating as an equation is that the basic arena is one of dialogue. It's exchange of ideas, the exchange. That means that those on several sides of the equation feel welcome to say things together in one setting. The skill part of it is for the leader, whether it's one of us or one of another sister profession. The key is to decide to listen and to know how to listen. Listening is an initiative. It's not a passive thing. You listen to respond. It's the purpose of listening is to feed back. Therefore, there's a dialogue there in exchange.

That's a skill. I think it needs to be learned by those who lead. If you don't do that, it'll fall part because nobody's going to respond. That's what bring creativity to the process is when a skillful listener can sum it up quickly enough to say what you're saying out there is this. For instance, Pete Walker is a master at implications. He's quick to do that kind of thing. I try to be quick in my leading of these kinds of sessions. To not let just a listening occur, but to do

something about it on the spot. Trying to interpret what the dialogue is beginning to produce. Those are skills. It can be learned.

Hid [Hideo Sasaki] was a master at what I'm talking about. He could take in a situation quietly without much comment. Listen to the extreme, but quickly sum things up. He did that in our critiques. That's why he was such a great teacher. We'd know before we left the room whether we were on the verge of success or not, because of his quick assessment of these things. It's a skill. It doesn't come on automatically and it's rarely exercised very well in this middle ground. It's rarely exercised.

So, therefore, a lot of these situations are downward trending into legalese, regulations, courts, and a summary as comprised. Some lose big. Others win big or vice versa. It's lack of this kind of creative dialogue. That doesn't happen for all kinds of projects, for sure. It's obvious that some have to go to the courts. But, we're missing a bet when we don't reach for ideas.

### ***Feedback***

Something rather similar, but my own version of it. I know that once you begin to be good at sensing an inclination of warring parties and beginning to spot some of the things that could bring them together, once you see that, confidence shoots up and you can begin to propose notions and ideas that might be taken as very positive by both sides. If that fails to happen and you can begin to see something beginning to fall apart, you can quickly become quite cutting about the failure that is beginning to happen before our very eyes.

So, change your ways right now and start looking at ideas. It can be quite abrupt and hard-hitting because it needs to be. In my earlier times, I think more than now, I was quite

cutting in my remarks. I know I was. I get that feedback from students. It's always relative how cutting that is. But, it's somewhat easy to be hard on people because it has its own adrenalin need. You can cut somebody down pretty fast if you're good at it. The wisdom is how to do that without injuring a person or their ambition or their energy. You need them. You can't wipe them out. It's an art of its own of how to modify directions that you think are sound.

### ***Process and Dialogue***

Depend on that process to reveal and be ready to take a lead in how that's dealt with in the developing dialogue with those who are concerned about that issue being solved. To lead the dialogue in which, by which, you can find answers that weren't otherwise visible. They would be discovered because of that dialogue. Can you be a leader in making that dialogue seem relevant and inspiring? Welcoming, as a way of working?

### **Early, Early, Early (Leverage)**

It might be worth going through two or three of the other precepts that are fundamental. I've covered two in terms of who are we and what is the equation that we struggle with? The second of the precepts I've just noted is the basic equation that we all struggle with between the world we live in and the people who we are. The third one has to do with ways of working. For instance, this one is called early, early, early. It's like the location, location, location. And that's an art of how to include yourself early in the day. It takes some aggressiveness at times. Good marketing. The point is to get in early enough to have leverage.

Early signifies leverage. How to do that in terms of being early in the game that you're not left with the dregs of a solution that has already happened. That's what happened with JJR. I



think we were determined, I hope it was nicely enough, we were determined to get into a game early. We didn't force it. We couldn't force our way in, but we persuaded our ways into issues that were policy oriented early.

We were easily on the policy end because we knew how to tackle a broad view, particularly with the help of natural system orientation. We were persuaded that natural systems could be as powerful a community form-giver as technology systems, infrastructure. So, it was a powerful tool to use to get in early. Once we were in early, we could develop form giving policy and set up design opportunities for others. The early, early did it.

We got tired of getting a project that the only thing left to do was to pretty it up here and there to see if we could salvage some things that were mistakenly done. That's tiresome. Pete used to say, Pete Walker would say we are rich in projects that we've made a silk purse out of a sow's ear. But we want to start with a few projects that are a silk purse to begin with so that we could even lift higher and better.

I mean he's right. It's called opportunities. How do you strategize opportunities that start high with leverage rather than fight for leverage later on in the game? Coming in early was for me both intended and an accident. Probably more accident than intended, but I knew what I was after. Early was important to me right out of graduate school. That's why I think I was probably maybe a bit obnoxious in the way I did things. I was forceful. But I was anxious to get in early.

So, the accident part was suddenly having an opportunity by this vice president at Michigan to say do you know how to do that? I said of course. I said it so quickly that he

couldn't do anything but say well, then how would you do it? And he liked what I said. Suddenly we were in so early that for instance, with the [University of Michigan] Medical Center, what we recommended was a 180-degree turnaround that took twenty years to happen. But they were persuaded that day that it ought to happen and that the next twenty years was figuring out a way to get four or five hundred million together to start the turnaround, which they did.

See? That's in early. I can tell you that number of architectural assignments that came out of that one move were huge in terms of numbers of parking decks, underground infrastructure, buildings, hospitals, wings, removal of the old hospital, and the removal of an old hospital to become the open space for the community. Can you believe that? That's one decision to see that turning it around would go easy on a community infrastructure and face a valley that was geared to circulation. That's called fit.

### **The Big Canvas**

Now, the other idea that pops up is what I refer to often as the big canvas. The other idea that pops up right after this one about early, early is the big canvas. I think this is an important one. I think it's more and more a part of the attitudes of graduate landscape architects than earlier in my time where there were no limits to scale to speak of. I am sure there are some limits but global description of problems was rather natural to talk about. Even as we talked about somebody's garden court and how a little courtyard could be beautiful.

Didn't differ a great deal from talking about a region of natural systems that would be supportive of urban centers. It was same thoughts but different scale. The way in which we illustrated the big canvas was this simple thing that is a vertical arrow in my little vernacular

Again, the next one that has been very powerful in my career, it came early, was the realization that we work on a big canvas. Wide open at any scale. This was an advocacy of Hideo Sasaki. He often would say that if you can solve this one, we're talking about a garden maybe or a plaza, you can also solve this one and he'd point at a region. The same thing. It was so encouraging when I heard that because I was already inclined to the larger picture stuff coming out of my boyhood even, where the large picture was part of my growing up days.

I typify this with a vertical arrow. This is just my kind of game. Where that is connecting, two ends of a scale of form giving inspiration. The upper arrow is overlapping with the general theme of planning for our communities and the safeguarding of our natural systems. It moves from high policy to those form-giving pieces that begin to apply design. And then the arrow is one that says don't leave it at that, but come on down and see what the results are implied by such policymaking.

What are the results? Are the results worthy of this kind of effort in the policy plan? Are the two ends worthy? That says that in my little world I live in the middle and I live on that arrow is my world. Those two things probably do much to define my motivations for working with this amazing profession. Keep in the middle and keep on that arrow. If you find yourself focused on one end or the other, that's fair enough. But there ought to be enough attention by some and most to know what the two ends mean.

You say well, Pete and I were successful professionals working together. We did that well. It's because that arrow was always there. For Pete, too. He did not live there at the end of the arrow. Totally. He was up here, many times up here. That's where he got his ideas. He will say

that, I'm sure, that context. Understandings is where he went for a lot of the seemingly immediate pieces of form that he was so good at. That I refer to living on the arrow. The big canvas.

### ***Planning Scale and Design Scale***

The planning-design tension is OK. I think it's really talking about two different scales. That's OK. But, they're best when they're seen together as opposed to separate entities. Together, planning at the policy level regarding the natural systems I mentioned and the design implications and detail and form, when they work together it's the richness of feedback.

Yeah. Let me mention about the planning and design as two converging forces. It may be that the best way to say it is that design form begins to occur at an early level in the process where the scale and the context becomes very important to the details that come later. So, that design is really a way of shifting into planning that begins to make that part of planning the beginnings of form.

### ***Shifting Across Scale***

But, it's interesting to note that landscape architecture has had a great sense of the large picture over the years coming out of the Beaux Arts [tradition]. There was a lot of big scale stuff going on. Look at the Olmsted thinking. There was no distinction of little or big. It was what is appropriate at any scale. The narrowness that may be referred to in the pointing out of a conflict by Newton and others, emerged. It emerged and shortly after World War II, where that distinction became.

### ***Abstract Patterns***

Maybe it was because we were maybe so interested in the art of it all, the form, the beautiful things that [Garrett] Eckbo expressed. That was a lot of the teaching of the '50s. Get to the endpoint. Get to the form and the beauty of abstract patterns, how they join and so on. I think we lost something there from the past in the field [of landscape architecture]. I think it's maybe regained now in probably a much more appropriate way than even in the '20s and '30s when that large-scale thinking was going on.

### ***No Limits on Scale***

It's improved, but landscape architecture isn't small because it relates to plants and plant materials. It's not small. It's probably one of the largest points of views among the design fields that we have. I love that notion of no limits on scale. So, only because that's the nature of natural systems. It's global. Why not look at the whole Eastern Seaboard as a legitimate way to think about the future of pieces within the seaboard? That's the way to get at it.

### ***Natural Systems as Form-Giver***

What it coincides with is that if you talk about natural systems as a form-giver to cities, which it is. River systems and flood plains and so on, you've got to talk at the policy level because it's the policy appropriateness of being able to set aside flood plains and have the regulatory help to make it happen. You've got to talk about something pretty big. Natural systems are big. Therefore, planning has a really good start at the natural system end, which then coincides with other infrastructure systems at the policy level.

Now, you're beginning to get into the design setup. If you can get those things straightened out at that level of scale, a community, I call it getting the framework sat [sic]. Then you're beginning to prepare devoted, appropriate places for design articulation. I think unless you do that, design can come in places where it's irrelevant to the next piece of design. It has no fabric that joins it all together.

So framework comes from the planning mindset. I think, if you can talk about planning as a large-scale point of view, and framework then sets up the design opportunities much more strongly than not. I believe that very much. It's how Pete Walker and I worked together. I would tend to represent by inclinations, not by assignment, but inclinations to articulate very clearly some of the beautiful parts of early form-giving based on policy. Pete enjoyed it. He did it too, but he didn't articulate it as quickly as I would tend to or even want to. He was able to quickly put it into physical intrigue. Great combination.

### ***Michigan's Upper Peninsula Study***

There is an assignment that was given to JJR, I may be getting ahead of things just a hair, that was very intriguing without any question. The State of Michigan came to our little office and said we'd like to look at the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and see what the future is for tourism. Could you do an assessment of the virtues of the natural systems in the Upper Peninsula, which is a huge piece of this country?

There was no question. Yeah, of course. We'll do that tomorrow. No question about how to do it or whether it's beyond our services. We just went ahead and came up with a very beautiful assessment, a strategy, and a set of policies that could very likely increase tourism in

the state beyond measure. It was not a big deal, but it was a big deal. Because it was big. I love that.

No, we didn't get into the level of design, but there are pieces that have gotten into the design level later in years. But that's all right. That's another issue that we might talk about at some point is time and how durable are plans that we make over periods of time like 20, 30, 40, even 50 years? That's not long in the perspective of natural systems.

### **The Bones (Framework Thinking)**

The other one [precept] that pops up quickly and it's a result of what I'm talking about. It came immediately in our early practice in a big way is what I refer to as the bones. The bones of a place, which is the fundamental structure of how something works, whether it's natural systems oriented or the cultural values or the technology of infrastructure or a way a city works. The bones, what are the bones? What are the fundamentals? Being careful to avoid too much attention too early in the game to the flesh. That will get you in trouble fast if it's not timed well, timed right.

So, I refer to it a lot in these days as framework thinking. [It's] a point of view that says if we can determine the fundamental frame in physical terms, you're well equipped to add flesh in good places and help correct mistakes fast. If you wouldn't have that frame. You can make big mistakes with big projects. Wrong place, wrong time, for the wrong reasons without that. It might be a way of saying it's the beginning of that vision. The framework accompanies a vision. They have to be there in order to have some kind of discipline to what I'm talking about.

It needs to be physical and it's highly related to natural systems and cultural patterns. The cultural patterns are movement patterns, particularly pedestrian and bicycle modes. We helped ourselves a lot in the campus planning [at the University of Michigan] by calling the walkways academic avenues. It helped to sense the purpose of a walkway beyond just exercise. That it had purpose to it. It had function to it. It had substance to these trails. Not all trails, because you had to isolate the important pieces from the relatively unimportant pieces so it didn't get too, tend too much rectangle. But the academic avenues associated with the bones is pretty good stuff and that was the basis of the University of Michigan Campus Plan.

The tendency is to do either/or, to either invest in the planning end of things, which is broad policy level thinking, which is necessary and important, and let it be at that and not try to relate it to the early form-giving pieces of planning that sets up the design detail. Just smart business. I guess it's the common-sense thing that I'm always expressing.

### **The Search**

The last one in terms of process, that would be referred in my mind as a precept, also came early in the game and it had so much to do with the notion of the process, the very way in which you exercise process. I refer to it as a precept that's titled the search. This means that the way in which you proceed from step one to step ten in a final outcome from the very beginning to the end is basically a lineal form.

But that lineal form, it has its own danger in the sense that you can proceed so fast to point eight and not being able to afford to go back to point three when you need to because you spent too much time and effort on the lineal track and you got too deep. What a mistake so



many still make in how to proceed. It's an iterative process. It's a feedback oriented notion. A lineal process is if you think of it in a cyclical term, it's feedback oriented. The way in which this came to us so dramatically was the simple assignment we were asked to address in terms of an issue with [what was] then called just Michigan State Highway Department, now M-DOT.

They came to the office, three or four engineers, tough guys, big guys somehow. They're just roaring and very worried that their process of route locations, new routes, new invasive routes that were working with, and this include Michigan State as well as some interest on the part of Illinois Department of Transportation, same request. They were having trouble with public hearings. I asked them if they would send their process to us and we'd do what we could to help with that idea, because they knew that we were pretty good with public input kinds of sessions.

They sent a thick volume of how they proceed with a route location process. It was extremely lengthy. So much so that before we met the first time, I took that report and pulled it apart page by page and taped one end to the other end until I had about a couple of hundred feet of process. In our offices we had this atrium, two levels, and a balcony system. I took one end and taped it the skylight and let the rest of it fall down through the atrium, down to the second floor, through the secretarial/reception, down the stairs to the street, and out to the street door. Just inside the street door and laid it on the floor.

The next morning they came in. I didn't say anything. Then we went up to the conference room to start our session. Finally one of them said what's that hanging there? I said oh, incidentally, that's your process. It's too lineal. You're in trouble the minute you walk in this

door. They laughed. It was funny. But when we got into it, sure enough, their public hearings were scheduled. At the time there were two of them that were key public hearings.

By the time the first one happened, they were probably 70% into their investment in the planning. There was no way that they would consider really important comments that would back them up. They couldn't back up. It's simple. Talk about Midwest common sense. How can you do that? So, we introduced the idea of bringing forward the whole process, crunching it down into 20% of the time, instead of 80, a 100% of the time bringing it back, finding an answer.

But you spent maybe 10 to 20% of your investment, finding an answer pretend-wise. What it did revealed every issue that they would later have to consider. Too late in the game. Now they had it early in the game. They could respond. They could do some interesting things. We described that process and they adopted it. In their own way it's been routine now for 30 years. Everybody works that way in one way or another to be reiterative, responsive, all those things.

This was kind of a fresh new kind of introduction with something. It was a way of thinking that we employed every project we ever got is a process that brought the potential end point up early and then went through digress of that. In the piece, interestingly, is how to handle data. It was a data management system. Because in the first stage where you're just probing for the issues, you didn't need a lot of data. The main thing was to keep it even. That you have enough physical, enough cultural, enough social data that you had a well-rounded view of the beginnings of what would be revealed as issues.

You would spend too much time on getting all the data you could physically. They had a lot of physical data. No social data. So, even that was kind of a freeing process for them, is that they didn't have to have everything on hand their first round of solution making. Just good sense about managing data. Then as you then descend further into the system, you could increase the level of detail because now you know where the issues are. It's fun. Good time. Precept.

### **Strength in Final Form**

Sense of these precepts has much to do with seeing the whole process and understanding the entire sequence from the beginning of a stated issue and need to that which resolves the issue and need into some kind of output. That is the final piece for a solution, so-called solution. At least a resolution. The wholeness of that process is critical. That's the beginning, fundamental. The other is that that process is open and flexible to maneuvering around what you're going to find or accommodating what you're going to find that you don't know yet is going to be there.

### ***Form That Fits and is Inspirational***

Then, the skill of shaping the outcome in such a way that it has relevance, it fits the circumstances at hand, and it lifts the heart and soul of those who are going to be in that place. It's inspiring to know how to do that. When you see it in those larger terms, what is evident then to many is that if you're not in that kind of wholeness, you will see that something's missing in terms of context and relevance and knowing where you are in the bigger picture as you invest in detailed outcomes.

As I say, there can be great buildings placed in the wrong place at the wrong time if you don't have that overview. So, it's a combination of process, the wholeness, the bones, the framework, and knowing how to bring out of that outcomes that are inspiring. It's a point of view. There are many who don't see that point of view and start in the wrong place at the wrong time. I see it every day. I'm dismayed at the willingness of good people to bypass that kind of creative way of thinking. My referencing is community building.

There are many other kinds of problems, such as environmental issues of great magnitude that aren't quite of the same nature as community building, per se. So, my target as basically common to all landscape architects is some kind of physical outcome that is appropriate and fits and is inspirational. We're all in that sort of physical business, but there are other aspects that we're not touching on that are of similar import.

### ***A Vision of Context***

I think the context search gives you an understanding of the forces it helps shape of potential decision on the form of something. The challenge is that context often means offsite. If you notice that most projects of architectural intensity are drawn up on a piece of property that is part of the ownership of the client. Architects properly are often ill at ease about showing things outside of that property, so their sheets of paper are to the edge of that property. They're in and they're not tuned to going outward.

Most of the context forces are offsite. Understanding natural systems, understanding the water systems, understanding history. The past years and how the issue grew and why it's an issue. What the outcome can be beyond the stated program in terms of vision. Vision is part of

context understandings. Vision building is part of that process. That's ill attended in these days. It's there in words, but the way to do it is still a real challenge. Not many know how and our schools are trying to work with that I think in a good way.

## **Developing Your Craft**

### **Drawing is a Language**

One of the things talking about why draw at all, one of the things we have to distinguish right away is what kind of drawing are we talking about? In this day and age we're talking about, I'm talking about, hand-based drawing. The things you do with your hand and not so much the fact that it's a graphic of some kind which the computer can do in spades in every way you want. Why draw by hand at all in this day and age? The reasons are numerous and powerful. One, right away, that is fundamental is that it brightens the soul to be able to draw.

It's a language that if you have any desire at all to broaden your language skills, to be able to draw is a language that is worthy of a great deal of attention in order to bring ideas to the forefront. Not only to your view as an individual, which is important, but maybe primarily for others. Many people have ideas that never see the light of day. Can you imagine being able to draw in such a way that brings their ideas to the forefront before their very eyes? On the spot? As you're talking?

And they say, wow, I didn't know that that was in my head and you say it was, because that's what I heard. And you do it on the spot. On the spot is all about the hand. The computer graphics can do everything we're talking about but not as spontaneously. Not at the call of the moment where you don't have to go and set it up and begin to do the things that you do.

It's spontaneous and available at any moment you want it. It's not automatic. What I'm talking about is a skill that has to be learned and developed and utilized often to refine it and so on. It's a way of drawing that is important and you learn it. The key is that you know where it exists in the process. It's not useful way late in the game where the computer graphics have already taken over the world. So beautiful, so rich in detail, so immediate.

We're talking about early in the game. Early in the game the hand drawn graphics properly timed, properly done with skill. Much more powerful than computers because it engages people and it gets their attention. They see you up. This is maybe the point you're making about being in the middle of the table. You're about to make a fool of yourself maybe. So, the sparkle goes up. You're saying oh, what's he going to do? And lo and behold there's information flowing. So, there's you can get attention.

Maybe that's not good, but I like it. Especially when you get up and go to the wall and began to draw. I'm picking up on a simple tool and making a complex statement out of a simple tool. It seems so beautiful and it's worthy of ordinary. It becomes extraordinary because of what it produces. What an amazing transformation from a simple little dollar pencil to a million-dollar idea. Right there. Right now. That's power. That immediacy is something to learn. The skill of knowing when and when not to. Isn't there a song along that line?

It takes insight and a sense of purpose and a bit of knowhow, but done right, it's powerful. And the interesting thing is that there's such little investment in time needed. It's a relatively inexpensive piece of the process because it has to be done fast to be effective. So, to not do it is

because probably you can't do it. Or don't know how. The need to do it is massive in my mind to be able to do that kind of thing.

Not all projects call for that. And you have to use good judgment there, but when it's right, being able to pick up a pencil or a pen or a big broad marker or a piece of chalk, which we don't do anymore, is spellbinding. How to do that in terms of learning is fairly straightforward and so simple and easy to do that it amazes me that it's not done frequently by our students or the faculty that teaches them. It's almost a kind of comical thing to me to tell somebody who asks how do you do that? And when I'm finished in five minutes they say I didn't know that's all there was to it. That's true.

Most of it is judgment as to how to do it and when to do it. For instance, being able to see. This is a point that's often made by designers. Drawing helps a drawer see better. Any time that you are walking and you sketch a place, you'll never forget that place. That process embeds it into your person, your brain. It becomes indelible. That's a way of seeing more. [

In talking about the why we draw, and one of the reasons being to be able to see more clearly and more deeply than you would otherwise see. The process of drawing and looking for, it isn't just a simple discipline of digging deeper. It just makes, it's common sense sort of thing. It's one language that is available to people who want to draw, could draw, to use the drawing skill to enhance their own ability to see.

### ***Dialogue Inducer***

The more important part of that is to help others to see. I think that's such a key thing. For instance, the minute one's drawing begins to reveal something to somebody else that they

hadn't seen before, you've engaged. It's an automatic invitation to take part. So that drawing, in this spontaneous seductive way, is a dialogue inducer. Dialogue is hard to even get going. In typical planning sessions you get argument and complaints, but not constructive dialogue that is very creative. That's what you're after.

A pencil, the pen, or the markings that are quickly done with care and skill are disarming. They say I just saw that done. It's not a secret. This was not cooked up last night and they're trying to persuade me. It was on the spot and was answered and my [buddy's question]. I'm in and the dialogue begins. It's a dialogue inducer.

We don't give credit to drawing like that as a dialogue inducer. In fact, I don't know if a computer in its best sense is quite dialogue inducer that could happen with hand drawing, risk taking, kind of exposure. Then, of course, to enhance debate in that way produces some of the most beautiful art that you can imagine, because it's almost cartoon-like. And it's memorable. It's takeaway stuff.

It's like the [University] President who came up and said even I could draw that. I don't know if he was saying you are a very simple person. Do things with simple. But what he was saying when he said that is that I have access to a language I never use and it will get attention. A president of a great university implying that this little piece of drawing could give himself attention. He didn't say that, but it was somewhat behind his statement. I can in five minutes over an envelope and coffee and finishing up with the lunch I can tell people what's in store for the University of Michigan over the next 30 years. Wow. This little diagram.



### *Seeing in Layers*

So, sketching is simple and I'll mention that. I may even note that here. That one of the most simple ways to sketch immediately by somebody who does not do this normally is to learn how to look at the world around them. The world around us is full of one thing layered over another thing. It's all about layers. Some of those layers are in the distance. Some of them are in front of our very eyes, very close.

If you know how to see in layers, you'll recognize that you are not seeing as much as, where you used to see very little and now you can see more because you're looking for the layers. You look for it, and you're going to then record those layers in simple terms like this. That the ones far away will be expressed in rather soft terms, but complete and full.

Let's say there was a distant hillside and some vegetation. Maybe even a row of buildings. That layer is drawn immediately softly and done in completion. You don't go back. You finish it. You then add a second layer that you could call it middle ground, as we do, and increase the density of what is drawn. A little darker. Whatever the notion is about a place. That becomes a little heavier and clearly obscures what it draws over. That's why it has to be darker. Lastly, you really dig in and record the things that are in front of your very eyes and it becomes very dark and silhouette-like.

Suddenly, that flat piece of paper has depth to it. It's automatic. It's just part of saying one's going to be light. Two is going to be rather darker. And three, the foreground's going to be very dark. Now we've got a space. We have a volume to play with and we can now play with

that volume. It's that simple. It gets complex when you start working at those layers and thinking about other ways. It can reverse itself. The dark can be in the very background it's on.

But that fundamental approach will immediately give a first-time drawer a sense of conquering that flat piece of paper. You've now won the battle. It's now a volume. What an amazing transformation of the eyes seeing through that paper like that. A simple thing. You can develop that little system on your own by just looking at the world around you in those kinds of layers.

Inspiration for me has been the writing of Annie Dillard, particularly the *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, second chapter is about seeing. In it she encourages and passionately seeks to know more about what she's looking at by the phenomenon, the magic phenomenon of light and mid-light and dark light, where the manipulation of light is so powerful. One of her quotes for me is so good. She says "I cannot create light, but I can maneuver myself into the path of its beam."<sup>ii</sup> I just think that is so true. That we can move ourselves around into these views. You do it with a camera all the time and with the sketching.

If this becomes a skill, quickly done, so simply done, what you can now do is do 10 [sketches] where you would normally do one. It's the 10 that gets attention because now you're working with multiples of thoughts and ideas and you're not giving anything precious to one. The worst thing about drawing with people in front of them is to takes so long that it gets precious. Now you don't want to injure this piece of paper.

As I try to teach some of this, I'll often take these 10 in a row of little sketches and throw them on the floor because they're done. The moment it had a message to make and we make

the message, it has had its day. Throw it away. That's not a waste because where that one came from you can do 10 more fast. That's the idea.

If you go further than that in trying to get it into a rendering or detailed drawing, you've now reached the computer. Let it do its job. This kind of thing has to happen early in the game at a time when thoughts are just beginning to bud into ideas. It has a short duration of usefulness, but when it has its usefulness, it's pretty powerful. That's why getting Dr. Black to draw in this competition for an assignment of a major commission we knew that when Dr. Black drew it would be magic to his medical buddies. And it was. Because it's so extraordinary,

Isn't it amazing that people who you meet anywhere in the world, business-wise, in your academic circles, presidents, vice presidents, managers, they all once drew. They all did. But they all dropped it. Why would you drop one of the three major languages we have to converse? Of a visual language. Why would you drop it? Well, for all the reasons we know that it seems childish. It seems too simplistic and so on.

Maybe it calls for a skill that you think you need, but you don't really need but you don't really need. So, drawing is important. I emphasize the why to draw because it's motivating. I emphasize the simple drawing and the quickness of it because there's only a moment where it's powerful. That's why I take the, you need to give it attention, to schools. I wish we could. It tends to get too complex. Drawing.

Jim Richards is a great cartoonist. <sup>iii</sup>It's unbelievable how he quickly does those drawings. They tend to be moving towards content many times more than you need to do what I'm talking about. So, there's a little different approach there, but Jim knows very well what I'm

talking about and he practices it, too, although his skills are so quick on the detailed side that he advances at a point where it begins to convert to computer programs that can match that and even go much further faster.

It's understanding the circumstances, you know? That's what I'm after. I find it very motivating to draw in this way. The nice thing about this if you are able to understand what I'm getting at in terms of these layers and the simplicity of this kind of drawing, it says that as you develop the skill, some of the output of this kind of drawing is extremely, extremely beautiful.

There are examples of these quick pencil sketches that are unbelievably revealing of not only the talent in doing it, but the messages that come forth with such delight. These kinds of sketches. They can become very beautiful, but they're not meant to be precious. The whole idea is to use them for message-making and then go on. Fun stuff. We could do better in teaching this than we do now.

Because I think in a way because of the amazing richness of computer graphics, I'm an advocate of it. I'm into computers since '83 in the computer sketching. I know what that means. This is different. This is different. You can now do some of this directly on a computer screen. And that's OK. Maybe we can eventually eliminate the actual pencil. But, it's pretty magic if we're able to use it. So, let's keep drawing.

I draw and you worry about that. Give me four hours and you'll go away saying I know how to draw. I know that's an exaggeration but there's a lot of it that's real to that. Because one of the greatest single barriers to people not daring to draw is that they don't think they can. Period. That ends the battle. But that's not needed. You just give me some time and you'll

say soon that yeah, I can do this. Once that's crossed then learning can happen because you say I'm in the ballpark. I'm fighting them. Now I'm in there.

### **Chalk Drawings**

Well, regarding the expression of plans and solutions in graphic form, I was quick to make drawings. Two of the sources of what I was doing at Harvard when I first met Pete Walker, and I know that he was quite taken by what I was doing. The two sources were Charlie Blessing, the Detroit city planning experience, and my introduction then to quick chalk expressions of ideas including buildings and places and parks. And the other one was Lambert Landscapes in Dallas, Texas, because I had gone there to work for Lambert's with Carl and Clarence in 1952. That was the summer of 1952.

### **Lambert's Landscaping**

At that point at Lambert's, I was given assignments to help by way of these chalk drawings, so I became quite adept at this soft chalk way of working. It wasn't just the stroke of a piece of chalk. It was the spreading out of the powder and then with your hand moving that powder around in kind of a soft transparent covering to a zone it becomes, then you circle with a dark chalk. Easy and beautiful.

When I got paid, in our first two or three case studies, I just produced that stuff. It was quite impressive. It wasn't necessarily good design, but it was pretty good chalk work and pencil, it was part of that as well. As a result, Hideo asked if I would do a class on drawing of that sort for the rest of the class and do it out of the auspices of the office {Sasaki Associates} not the school.

## Teaching

I think that the thrill of the profession from earliest days that I can remember being motivated so it was in teaching. It was helping others to understand what you think you understand. How do you communicate that? I would like that person to know what I'm seeing. It was kind of a sense of urgency. Teaching was centered, I think, in my makeup. Not formally so much as a desire to share. I couldn't help it. I think it's a bit of the Midwest.

## Finding Fit

I think the term aptness is very nice. I hadn't heard that one particularly, but I like that. I call it finding fit. But, that's only a portion of the search. Finding fit is the beginning of form, not the end of form. Therefore, there's another chapter to finding fit beyond the practical notion of the analytic process that gets you to a fit. You then have to translate that into something that is more emotional, more clear in terms of a message, maybe more down to a nubbin of an idea that is not very complex, but simple and strong because of its clear and simple. That's a process that has to happen after you find the basic fit, important.

## Enjoying Work

Being part of profession of this kind, I think it's a very special assignment we have in the field of fitting people to place. I really think that's an amazing assignment to try to do that. You live the life. You become part of that. It isn't a piece of work over there. You become part of that. Therefore, in joining the world that we live in is part of the work that we're responsible to do, to know it. Because out of knowing it you just build up your reserves for idea formation. It's

built in. What an amazing bargain that is in tackling a lifetime of work to be able to live and enjoy the place in which you work.

It's not easy. It's all hard work at times. You work all night at some of these things, but the idea of, for instance, in my case and others have other ways of doing it. Mine was sailing and not being able to see land, only a horizon, and finding anchors. You didn't know you'd find that. Some danger and some beautiful moments of peace.

I think that is part of a career, to enjoy the world we live in. It may not relate to other kinds of careers. I don't know. A business career where you're counting product pieces and counting dollars, maybe that's different. You need respite from it. You need to escape it. It's almost the reverse for us. We dive into it to enjoy it more. I think that's remarkable. Living and working at the same time is pretty exciting. I think in our profession of land planning and landscape insights is pretty easy to live it because it's so pleasurable.

### **Having Fun is Not Incidental**

A lot of our professionals will say that. That they love their garden-making process and they love to do it and in fact they do their own gardens. How close can you get to living and working at the same time? One aspect of that that we all experience in our fields like this whether you're a student or a young professional or well along, you have fun doing it. I think the fun is not incidental. I think it's part of learning. When the juices make you laugh and you see humor. The same juices that produce ideas.

If there's anything that we can do, or anyone, I don't know if, you can't teach it, I suppose, but to encourage the pleasure of doing the work. Sometimes that's based, the degree of that

for a young person, is based a lot on how they're taught in the first place, that a professor having fun probably will reside [sic] in a student going into the profession and going into the work continuing the fun.

It's a legacy that some professors understand. It's not dismissing responsibility. It's just building up the energy that's down in there that makes you continue and go through the tough spots and endure and having a ball. It's great fun and enjoyment. Maybe enjoyment is a better word a bit than fun. It's enjoying the pleasure of solving a problem or making a thing.

My father, Ruben, loved the idea of product satisfaction. Finishing the job. My roots on that side of the family are all about tool making. My grandparents, great-grandparents, I think male and female, Grandma and Grandpa, the great-great-greats, were stonecutters in Sweden. They cut granite blocks for paving the streets of Europe. That's what they did for 10 generations. That only ended with my grandfather's coming from Sweden to Chicago. He was always enjoying the moment.

My grandfather would stand on his hands and walk across a room and I'd clap. I was ten or twelve. I said wow, what an acrobat. He'd get a kick out of it. He had a big walrus moustache and he'd laugh and laugh. I just think that that's a part of living and working and enjoying and sharing and welcoming others into the group. Things that are disarming.

A really important part of our field because what we're doing is building ideas with others. It's that constructing of ideas that ought to be that pleasurable. I know that public meetings can be difficult. They can be terrible moments where people get mad and call you names and have these attitudes that hurt. But there are other ways to handle that than to allow that to come



up. You can get at it early. There, my theme. Get at it early and disarm the prejudices, the biases, and open them up. What a role to play.

### **Classic Form is Beautiful**

One aspect of the design frame of mind is a very important one that I refer to as just visual understanding. The eyes that we have, the things that we see through that, kind of is almost miraculous. The things that our eyes can do and see and we learn how to see more and more and all that. But the visual thing is very important to all designers. What they see is what they're beginning to understand and judge. So, there is a thing that I refer to sometimes just called this is classic. This will never go out of my mind. I saw it. I'll never forget it. And I love it because of the way it looks. That's a visual energy going on.

In my little world there have been three or four objects that have been like that. One, I'm trying to start with the first one. I think it is the first major one. I had in mind when I went into the military and got Germany as an assignment, I had in mind to spend all the money I had, which wasn't a lot but it was enough to buy one career, and it was an MG TF, 1955 TF.

I loved the whole scale and the form. It just was right. Later, as just a point, an aside, the person I met in Pete Walker later, he also had one. So, we weren't alone in seeing that object as classic.

In fact, later on for me, about twelve, fourteen years later, we still had it of course, I took it apart. Every piece that could be undone from that MG I took apart. I did it in order to repaint it. I didn't want to repaint it as a whole object. I wanted to repaint its pieces and then reassemble. I learned how it worked. It was down to just the frame. All the pieces were hanging

in my garage on wire. Hanging. We went ahead and then sandblasted each piece and put a new undercoat and I painted each piece bright red and then reassembled it.

That was the way I petted that car. Probably much overdone. Excessive beyond belief. I would sit in the evening at the end of some three or four hours of work in the garage and I'd look at that fender. I'd say they really got it. It could have gone like this. It would have been wrong. It could have extended it a bit. I thought ah, and I enjoyed that all visually.

The next object of a sort. I'm a little ill at ease talking about object in terms of being precious, but it was a boat. It was a 40-foot wood-holed ketch that I couldn't take my eyes off. It had sheer to it from the twelve-foot bowsprit down to its rake up into the upper lift of the aft rail and the spindles on the aft rail all varnished, beautifully varnished. I didn't think about varnishing it again and again and again, which I did later. The mast, the foremast, and the after mast were varnished 50 feet high. The booms and the spars were varnished. The hull was black and it had this big wide white strip down.

When we'd come into a little port or little harbors, the kids would run along the shore and say look, Mommy, a pirate ship. We'd put the sails away and come in. They'd leap aboard and say can I see your ship? They called it ship. It's a boat. But that boat, I could sit and just look at its picture. And time would go by just looking at that. That's something about a classic form, they're so beautiful.

I just found another object that just a couple months ago and here I'm in my middle 80s and it's still, it's pleasurable. I found a bike that was like that. It was a Dutch bike and it wasn't for speed. In fact, it's too heavy. It's so heavy that most people wouldn't buy such a bike. I

wanted it. I said I'm going to buy it. I don't know what the price is, but send it to me. Then I bought it in Santa Monica and they shipped it to me. Charlotte and I both have those two bikes.

Again, there's a classic form. It's like the MG. It's like the ketch. It's like the boat. In Seattle it was a trawler. A little 32-foot trawler. A slow boat to China. These are things that never interrupted my productivity in the field. I kept working. It didn't interrupt a thing, but it just salted all the pleasure that I was having in the field, too. So, it's good stuff.

### **Painting and Keeping Active**

When you talk about drawing in pencil as I have been noting regarding the early stages of problem solving and how much a help it can be in inducing dialogue and so on, it inevitably brings up the question of what medium do you use? Watercolor is not quite as immediate and responsive. It can be made available quickly, but it's a little more technique oriented and might even be disruptive in a meeting of trying to get the watercolors out and playing. It becomes a little more of a demonstration than you want. It probably leaves pencil and pen the most useful quick sketching methodology.

I have gone a lot lately into oil painting because I simply enjoy the process. It's cathartic to me. I get excited. It's a medicine. I can't think of a more beautiful time than finding a place to paint and recording what I'm looking at in the best way I can. And the oils are pretty easy. It's forgiving. You can block out a piece of oil, wipe it out, and redo something if you need to. It responds to being done fast and quick. It does best when it's fast in my mind.

I wish I could do more in terms of quality working fast. I'm working on it now, but I think the oil painting is more a medicine for me that gives me help and a sense of well-being and

exuberance than something that is used in the professional practice way. I love it. It's actually a reason on for being if you want to get it down to just that. I'd be glad to be just a painter and let the professional stuff have its own way. So, I'll keep doing it in every way I can for as long as I can. Isn't that a beautiful thing about our field? That it's a thinking field. As long as you can run that muscle up here you're in the game. I love that. You never stop. Keep it rolling.

That's part of good health. We talk about well-being and all the things it has to do with exercise and moving out there and getting busy, keeping active, and all. Continuing a professional point of view doesn't mean you have to do big deal things and all that, but it's wrinkling that brain up and wondering about things that is so much a health-giving impetus. I think in many ways those who in general keep active professionally in some way or another is a healthy thing, but extending one's life. Listen to me and do this.

### **Chapters of Life**

I'm Bill Johnson and when we look at our careers in the way we're doing right now it's interesting how the career comes in chapters. A piece at a time. And they interconnect into an overall story that gets rather intriguing, especially when you get older and you look back on it. It's interesting how the pieces begin to make sense when maybe it didn't make sense at the time. We have this charge of my kind of habit of doing is seeing it in an overall way. So, on one page here's my life. There are pieces to it that are worth noting.

One of them is that early in the game I had this amazing experience with my principal in the fifth grade where art became a new dimension for me through a troublesome moment in school, where I was in trouble and I was rescued by my art. That's noted in this diagram.

Shortly after that, five or six years later or more, right at the end of World War II, I had this amazing opportunity out of a difficult moment in our family of living on a farm for two years. I became a farmhand and all of sudden, as you look back on this and see the chart, you see art beginning the mix with land. Through this experience of driving horses on a farm and picking up hay and learning how water worked on a farm and where the cows graze and where they shouldn't graze, it was just a machine of productivity.

It makes sense as I look back on it that hooking up the beauty of art with the production systems that natural systems represent of how it all works. It is a natural combination. Then, when landscape architecture became, I became aware of it, it was kind of a natural thing to say hallelujah. I've found my way. That's noted in this little chart.

Then, I'm circling early in the game that the professional education moment beginning to go to school at Harvard and the beginning of JJR as a private practice. I came upon along with others in our joint efforts principles that I could number maybe six or eight basic principles that made that firm so successful. And how that endured, those principles endured, over the next 50 years. Consistent and anchor-like in terms of referencing. That all shows on this little chart. So, it's kind of fun to look at it as a single whole. That's a habit of mine. I do it in every way with this little sample of it.

## **Thoughts on Professional Practice**

### **Common Language**

As we talk about the future, I can't help but observe in the past 50 years of my practice how at one time early in the game when we'd gather among ourselves and chat and talk,

talking about the principles we've been talking about already. I remember commenting, either hearing comments or commenting myself on, wouldn't it be great if? And a lot of that was aimed at wouldn't it be great if these kinds of principles will someday be more uniform, more universal, more understood by others, other sister professions.

Wouldn't it be great if there was more integrative thought when problem solving by our architecture friends and our engineering friends and those who do urban planning and design? Wouldn't it be great? I think it was legitimate to say it isn't happening now, but wouldn't it be great? Because it wasn't happening in any great degree. We were suffering as a country by separate pieces here and there all over the country. There was no notion about a universal plan of any kind as a nation, of course, nor a region or even a state.

The best you could do was looking at a community, city limits, plan. And even plans of that kind were suspect because nobody was there when the plan was made. Who says that this is the way to go? And the property rights and so on. So, we're a nation of pieces. We were dominantly then and still, but there are some changes. This is about the future and it's very heartening. The best of what we could think of in 1960 is routine words today. They're words that cover all that we were dreaming about. It's taught, it's talked about. I think the understandings are there, but the way to perform and the how to do it is still too much of a mystery.

### **Keeping the Big Picture**

Good, that's a good question. When you mention the different roles that we are invariably intended to play and you have to look at the overall spectrum of what it is you're trying to do

from the very beginning of broad scale thinking, I suppose that would be the best way to say it to the ultimate culminating form or piece that you call finished, whatever that is. That line of events and tasks and people involved is very complex, very multifaceted. There are many points along the way.

By recognizing that overall pattern you're in the ballgame, but you're not ready to do it all in any way possible. That's the inherent caution of anybody in this larger picture. You have to pick your place or places that you shine. The rest of it has to be dealt with strategically and making sure it's in sight or available or somebody else is attending to it that you know and love because you're working together. Then you can deal with the whole.

What that implies is that wherever you can be flexible and step in and represent that big picture. Whether it's at the end of the line or the beginning of the line, you're still always representing the big picture to be really helpful. I think that's what I carry as I move around in the process and find myself early, early and sometimes a little late. I'm still representing the whole thing.

It's amazing to me how helpful to others that have lost their way and still trying to pump out daily products and lost their way and know they lost their way and didn't know why they felt that way. I can help them. Here's what you didn't do. Here's what you need to do. And here's what's to the side and what's to the other side. Now you can make your moves in a fresh way.

Architects love that. It was part of the point about Dr. Black. I suggested the fact that he draw, I'm sort of the drawer. And they told me that Dr. Black was so difficult to work with that

they were afraid of him. It occurred to me immediately then, then get him to do a language he doesn't know much about. He's great with words and pompousness, but didn't know how to draw.

He's watching us draw and make advances without him there he's going to join you because he wants to lead. He's bound pick up that pencil. If he does, he's going to like us because we helped him do something that was a mystery to him. He didn't like that. It's logical. I think that's Midwest thinking, in a way, it's sort of straightforward.

It's not a very mysterious thing that I'm trying to do and be. I'm quick to recognize where I'm out of sorts and maybe because I'm willing to pop in here and there and play different roles. It is only when I think I can be helpful. And I can be helpful a lot when I carry the vision for them and I carry the process for them. That's a big help almost any point along the way. So, in a way it's pretty easy. No mystery, OK.

### **Landscape Architects as Leaders**

I believe that leadership is worth a lot of discussion as to what is leadership. I think that in a way its inherent role in a landscape architect because of its source. Its source being an understanding of natural systems and how people relate to natural systems. That is such great leverage that you almost have a responsibility to lead people through that. You have to be wise about it and you have to know it well enough to know how to do that, but the leadership comes in a quiet demonstration of this is how it works. It's teaching all the time.

In fact, it would be fair to say that any new graduate in landscape architecture is inherently responsible to take a quiet leadership role because few people understand what that



person is all about. It's significant and you're going to have to lead your way through it. Others will follow once they see it. That's not a spotlight thing. It's a thing about clarity and being able to see where you're going and showing people how that can be theirs. Their vision too. That's leadership.

I'm perfectly at peace with being a background person picking up pieces, because they're falling all the time. A lot of the pieces fall out of ego and you pick those pieces up too and don't disparage that. It's probably a good energy for those folks, but it doesn't solve much.

### **The Danger of Pseudoscience**

There was something we were touching on that I do worry about. I don't know if it's worth putting on the camera, but it's real. I think when I've been through schools recently I think the ambitions of landscape architect[ure] students are huge, properly so in the sense of the scope of what they're looking at, but I think it could be dangerous in thinking they can do that all, that they are suddenly some kind of inherited expertise that doesn't show well when you get with real experts in those areas.

It's a kind of naiveté that would be hurtful. I worry about that a little bit, the way the programs, some of the programs, work, because they are presenting the scopes in big huge bites. They don't know how to draw yet and so on. That's just a figurative point. I think there's a problem there, pseudoscience.

I think a lot about the scope of things that are presented to our young professionals in the schools, of properly pointing out the dimensions that are global, of the issues we face about the natural systems of this world, the way in which we use natural resources, and a need to protect

them and how that relates somewhat to the very great detail of planning and designing even a little garden for a client. That scale range is beautiful and pretty well presented to new students and young professionals and they hear it and talk about it in their offices and their places of work. It's very ambitious and very exuberant, very hopeful, which is beautiful.

Out of that can come, and I worry about this, a sense of knowhow, [of] I can do. When I was young I had [an] I can do thing[attitude] that was probably pretty naïve, which scares me a little bit. But it takes so much expertise to fuel that scope creatively, that there might be out of that coming is some pseudo-expertise, pseudoscience. That is unhealthy. The main thing is to be aware of that and to be really careful about knowing where you are and where you're not, even though you see the whole. What a special need that is to teach somehow and learn. Maybe it's only learning in the workplace, I don't know. I wouldn't leave it to that. I'd want to build it into a curriculum, that kind of learning.

As we've implied so many times, the landscape architecture field is broad in scope. The details of growing something. A very, very detailed kinds of things, the tiny gardens and so on, and the forms of places we live. That is a scale that's central to our field and excites most of us about doing that kind of work.

But its roots of putting it in the right place at the right time in the right coincidence with other things comes from a broad view. We've talked about that a lot. How far that goes into how broad you want to think is another judgment call, but it's well into the policy levels of thinking about natural systems and protection of our natural resources. It begins quite broadly.

The problem is that for an individual in landscape architecture going through a program, we introduce the scope and it's very exciting. And it tends to produce a knowhow that isn't real about how to connect all that. The key is if a landscape architect wants to be that broad scope and find their place, it has to be done with others. Pseudoscience is the worst kind of thing you can do to help us.

You get the real stuff in, but be a leader in making sure that that's done. So, if you're at the lower end of the scale and working in detail and have a need to work at the broader levels, don't assume that you know it because you know about it. Get people together. You know, one of the things that was so special about the last 50 years, and all the good firms experienced this and are good at it, is joint ventures.

It's amazing and Ian McHarg was that in spades. Go out and get the geographers and so on. The special science (spatial?) , the water sciences. Get them in. That takes a lot of work, but it's really worth it. And it's been a pattern. That's part of the future too. The combinations that get together towards a single end, that's really special.

### **Environmental Advocacy**

There are those who have written to that end. You think right away of the environmental advocacy books of the '60s. Almost revolutionary insights on insecticides and those kinds of issues. For some reason, I don't think I was drawn to the heavy advocacy, but I always respected those who stood the ground because it's out of the advocacies that you have a chance to work out the center somewhere. Otherwise without the advocacies you wouldn't

even be in the center. You'd be on one end or the other with no choice of working it out. That's pretty serious stuff.

One of the things about the Jackson Park [in Chicago] issue where they were driving a freeway standard roadway through Jackson Park, two-thirds finished, and the neighbors stopped it by force. Because of the advocacy there created a chance for something in the middle to happen where a resolution could be had. The enemy in a sense were the thoughtless engineering interests of getting it done. Very able to build a road to anywhere. Fast. It wasn't a lack of skill. It was a lack of choice.

Unbelievably after getting this assignment to figure out why this didn't work in a short time, I'd say within a week of a three-month assignment, we knew right away the issue we found and just simple common sense assessment of the park itself that it wasn't one park. Jackson Park was not singular. It was plural. There were eight or nine separate park interests at work. Many of the constituents of each never went to the other park. It had to do with waterfronts and street fronts and so on.

Lo and behold, the engineers had chosen one of the most important pieces of the park called Stony Island Corridor, which was the park for the disenfranchised. They came rattling right down the center of that with a freeway. Never thinking that it was a center of a park. They thought it was the edge, therefore not important. We found that out in a week. A few questions.

Because of that we then were able to put together additional observations and moves that suggested that the route should be at the most an arterial, not a freeway. And that if a

freeway was ever considered there was a place in the park where it could be built and covered and not interrupt the park. You put the road where it broke into two different major parks at the intersection. It's just so fundamental.

It wasn't a perfect result, but the editorials at the time then came out from the *Hyde Park Herald* that the reprieve was the fact, for the engineers, was now there was a way in which the park could be designed for cars and people and have a result that was accommodating to both. And altered in each to fit the situation. It's a creative possible outcome. It wasn't the actual outcome that was honored so much as there was a way, there was a different way. That was the issue that the Hyde Park paper said it's a chance to think better now. It was a good result.

### **The Legacy of JJR**

Let me talk a little bit about the JJR legacy. I think that in many ways it follows some of the things we've been talking about in terms of framework thinking and seeing the whole as well as the pieces and understanding how the whole works. That's very much a part of it. But I think that in an overview way the JJR pattern is deliberateness, careful completeness to thinking, making sure that no key thing has been left to chance. As you move through the deliberate effort, that opportunities will have been marked and spotted for design exuberance and design direction. It's deliberate and it's whole and complete.

You will never get into trouble assigning your issue to JJR Group because it will be thorough and complete and probably will have a very pleasant outcome. Whether or not it is the high design that some look for, it happens, but it isn't focused on the authorship of a

particular form or piece. It's about the whole. I think that's the legacy. They do it well, still do it well. We did it well to begin with and it endured as it's done well today. It's a good group.

### **Office Management**

Because of my schedule and I'm probably not inclined to be good at that. Even as a money person I don't think I'd leave it unattended, but if you've got good people around you then don't do something that you're not very adept at. I don't think I ever, even with Pete, got into the management of the office other than talent searches and things like that. That's why I think so much of the folks who can do that to help a project become real and get it into the working portion of the process and get it done. You've got to have those folks. The problem is if you leave them only alone all the time, they may not have good direction at times. But, that's up to the leaders to figure out.

### **Holding onto Your Roots – Historic Preservation**

Regarding the importance of history as you look at designing a place for folks for the future. Looking back has that beautiful insight that arises on how to honor that and yet let it mean something about a future trend as well. That's important to good firms. I can't think of one that wouldn't say what I've just said in whatever way they want to say it. But then there comes a little bit more of a thing called historic preservation as a kind of specific skill.

On the other hand there is the phenomenon of professional skill. I think of it as historic preservation as a field of endeavor. It's very, very specific. It takes people who are geared to knowing how to dig and find out what went on and how that is important. Why that's important and how, in fact, to make it endure. We caught that difference early at JJR. We called

in, I had a small group of what we called historic preservationists, and they were skilled preservation architects and so on. We went after jobs that had to do with, targeted on preserving a piece of history of this country.

A number of different projects came out of that. The rebuilding of the Fort Mackinac at the Straits [of Mackinac], we did that project of [archaeological] digs. We sponsored the digs and helped find funds for the digs and got into it. I never became so much a part of that that I could call myself a preservationist, but I honor it. I love that work. I could actually do it as a career, but it wasn't necessary in that sense, but to build it in.

I think philosophically you can't not hold on to your roots, that in so many different ways whether it's physical in terms of an object in time or a place in time or a direction, whether it would be national or local. Those roots are everywhere and are settled parts of our world and we need to hold on to them. How to do that is a real trick. But what a good piece of work. I honor that kind of thing a lot.

What's next as you come to these points in your career? I look at this overall diagram and I say what is that last set of years?, maybe ten, maybe thirty? Who knows? I'm aiming for it. What is true is that I have great satisfaction and great delight with my work. I can't imagine not doing this kind of thinking. It's unfinished. It's incomplete. There are more things that are needed. There are weaknesses in how I think. There are gaps, not that I need to complete all this before one goes away, but I want to keep it rolling and I want to be with people who worry about the future, who enjoy and celebrate the past.

I want to be those people because they're talking about the right things. And it doesn't have to be professionals. It could be whoever's that intrigued. So, that work will go on up here in my little head. I want to continue to paint, because painting is one of my ways of celebrating the world we live in. I find it amazing. That's why when I read Annie Dillard's book on the *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, I realize that we are holders of miracles. Our eyes and our head, our hands, and our senses, our heart. That's miraculous of how that all works.

I don't need to know how it works, but I know it works, and it's all built in, it's free of charge. And how can I take advantage of that as long as you can breathe? It's really an interesting future. I'll continue to paint and celebrate, work, think through problems, meet with people. The little group that we had in regarding Holland was a delight to me, to hear them talk. They're all futurists because they want to make it right and they don't need to complete it. I think they would have the same idea. I don't need to complete this but I want to be a part of whatever completeness means. They're good people. I like that. I'm excited about the next 30 years.

## **Building Community**

### **Bringing Others into the Process**

When you think about the fundamental pieces of how we think as professionals in the design work, the planning [world], you begin to realize that the fundamentals of that are applicable in many different ways. One of those ways of working that is inherent in this little profession of landscape architecture is knowing the place, living in the place, going out to a site and staying there overnight if needed or [for] a week if it's that scale of something.



We used to do that, too. Bill Caudill, [founder of the architecture firm] Caudill, Rowlett and Scott, often took his partners to be overnight for two or three weeks in a siting where there's going to be buildings. It was kind of a fun tradition among the aggressive designers of the 1950s and '60s. We did that. There are names given to those sessions that were funny names. We all had fun doing it.

But the point was you live the circumstances. In that way you're trying to understand those circumstances so that in that process invariably there comes an insight, and oh my, I never saw that before. Oh, look at this idea. It keep[s] popping up like that. What we're learning now that I think is so powerful is learning to bring others into that pleasure that usually aren't given those assignments. They're not responsible for your work, but they are going to be critiquing your work. They're going to be judging and approving or disapproving what you come up with.

Bring them in. Let them live it too in the same way. Not necessarily camping out, but bringing citizenry and stakeholders into the room where you're doing these wonderful probing of ideas and understandings. Share it. That's not automatic. We tend to work alone. Not as an individual necessarily, but our group, our wonderful little team. We think we can work alone and not as well as if we brought people in.

It's again, here comes again another principle. As you learn and become aware of a situation that you're going to be using for a new idea, you can also share that and teach it at the same time. You learn and teach. So, bringing others into the process is a kind of natural we should learn how to do. It isn't easy. It takes a skill. You have to learn how to do that.

I think it ought to be part of our programs to teach young professionals the insights and the sensitivities and the skills. How to bring people in who are not of the same mind as you. Bring them in. Make them feel welcome. Give them something to work with and take their

### **Stewardship**

Christopher Alexander's book, *A Pattern Language*, was very impressive to me. It was a kind of a calculation of predictable pattern systems highly related to mathematics. I knew at the time a related advocate, Wally Sanders, who was the Chairman of Architecture at Michigan. His great interest in arithmetic approaches to architecture was coincidental with Christopher Alexander. I wasn't out of that mindset so much as I was impressed with the variables of how to approach form. I was not a mathematics oriented numbers guy in any way, but boy, was that impressive to me.

Then, of course, the writing of John Gardner on excellence. His book on excellence was inspirational to me. That was about 1961, '62. I devoured that commentary on the responsibility to do excellent work. Not as a choice so much as a given, seeking excellence, whatever that could possibly mean to you.

So, because of that, there was this discussion network that was so frequent on what does excellence mean? Out of making sure that it wasn't meant to be accolade oriented, but genuine search of the right thing at the right time in the right place. What does that mean? How can you do that? It doesn't have much to do with awards and things like that so much as knowing that you're doing the right thing in spite of maybe popular movements.

That's why the little project I mentioned briefly about Garden Homes [Ann Arbor], was a project that one could easily say that it shouldn't have happened. I should have let it go. We have a million strip development commercial centers. Just another one, what does it matter? Well, it mattered everything to 90 families, even though it wasn't yours. Fascinating stuff. I think the sense of responsibility is automatic. It's not something that you say, well, I'm a particularly nice person if I'm responsible. It's a given. It's not a question of choice.

Stewardship is a fundamental, it's a given. We have a world that is unbelievably complex and beautiful. Holding on to its virtues and increasing them where they've been broken is a fundamental responsibility. It's no questions asked. How do you deliver that is really more the question? How do you express that? How do you behave accordingly? A lot of variables there, but I think that's been part of our heritage in our kind of field because we know the limits and what we're playing with. The consequences are so huge if we do it wrong. But it doesn't mean you can't do anything. Otherwise we're dead in the water. Tough propositions.

### **Understanding the History of a Particular Place**

As a place, it's community. What we have when we look at any particular kind of function like a campus or city center or thing, neighborhood, we have a particular set of circumstances that's unique and it has to be understood in its own form and place and time and journey, so, that's unique. On the other hand you have ways of going about finding that uniqueness and they're more universal in terms of principles.

You could tackle any function with this set of principles of what you're after and how to go about it. But then you come to the particular place and you have to understand how it is

uniquely or not uniquely able to take on those principles. That's always there, those two dimensions of ways of thinking. The campus itself is one that is so community-like it's parallel to a central city or any community. It has a history. Probably most importantly the starting point are its roots.

How did it happen? Why did it happen? What were the steps along the way that produced it? Can you get information that says it came from here? And the way it is now was because of this and because of that. You begin to understand how it became what it is. When you understand what it is and how it came there, you can use those insights to take a next step. Can you extend these patterns into the next year or ten or fifty, depending upon what it is you're looking at?

I always got a big kick out of trying to understand the history. Maybe a little bit of it is divisive because I realize now that if you touch on the history of a person, you're getting their attention, fast. Histories are personal whether it's a campus emergency or the building up of a family. You go to the history and you got their attention. So, a little bit of that is divisive, but on the other hand, it's real. Because when you find those pieces of history out you can extend them.

That can be done well with most campus situations. They had a history. It came about. They have problems. Now know where the aches came from and you can begin to adjust the aches and find the openings for something new and fresh. That's where the universal ways of working come in, but the uniqueness will always be different. That's what[']s fun about applying

the universal process, you're going to find different routes, different skeletons down in there that tell you to go left here rather than go right and so on. What a beautiful way of working.

### **Design Policy for Connectivity**

One of the things about a campus that I think came up early in our work. It's relevant to a general community situation as well, has to do with how it's connected or not connected. Disconnects are apparent. Connections are apparent. They do different things. Disconnected place is chaotic. You don't know why or how these things ever happened. Many campuses are the product of disconnections. Pieces of separate worlds that were determined at the time only in and of itself. They don't hook into any other notion about unity, assuming unity is good. There's a lot of work to do on most campuses in that sense, just connecting.

One of the ideas that came up early and I think it still is prevalent today, this is something 60 years in my working, is the walking and pedestrian connections that, if they're good, they happen to follow breaks in function. You get creases of function, sometimes through the function but sometimes more readily between them. That becomes a production, not a separation, that works. The flow of people on a campus is essential. Early in the game we gave it a little different term on a campus. We called them academic corridors or academic avenues.

We gave it a functional term and used open space in that sense, functional open space, to add to infrastructure as a connecting system and highway and roadway networks as a connecting system. You put those together and you have the power at your disposal to shape a future without yet talking about a building, other than very general functional arenas. The other thing that has to happen along those connecting networks is occasional places where you

center. A crossing, a place that is unique to a function that needs identity. These are the stepping stones along a way that gives identity to what would be maybe just a long thin walk.

The identities happen at unique places and they become plazas, they become greens or they become clusters that you take your attention. You know where you are. Way-finding is part of that process. What I'm talking about now happens generally with the notion of connectivity and knowing how to give identity to connecting networks. Following that come functional distributions that are appropriate and building forms will pop up immediately that are the first pieces of [the] program that needs to be built. They begin to take form and indicate other patterns that may be coming and we'll use that. It's incremental.

That's why it shapes beautifully into policy that we call design policy because you know what you're going to do, but you don't know exactly where the pieces are going to fall. What a beautiful way to help a university make decisions. People who don't need to know the design outcome in a professional design sense, they don't need to know as long as they know the strategy. They can be left alone at times. With that strategy in mind, they're safe. That has been the leading elements of the campus stuff that we've been doing over the years. It works.

### **The Power of a Gateway**

I think the power of this profession is in its so-called roots that are related to things that grow and become more than its seed. What an amazing symbolic way to think about the future in every dimension. That everything you do that's worthy and invested in is a seed that becomes more and better because it's nurtured and stewardship prevails and you keep it

moving. That's what I mean by the growing, the flower, the plant. I love plants. I'm not a botanist, but I know enough about plants to, especially in years past, that it's exciting.

A case in point. It just happened the other day. I'm giving a talk in Holland soon, this September, the kind of a keynote for the annual convention of America in Bloom. Their symposium is here in Holland and I'm giving it on vision making. How do you do that? I picked up their mission and read this mission carefully. It's about two or three sentences.

I picked out the key words. Probably about a dozen key words in that mission statement that describe my career in their simple little mission statement. Powerful. I don't know if they realize how powerful their mission statement is and how much it tells about every scale of imagination of what it means to build community.

Their starting point? A flower. A flower was their gateway into the business that all of us joined about building community in a more substantial and beautiful way. I was taken by that because it doesn't take a big gateway. As long as you go in the gate. They don't have to become planners and important people in the process necessarily. They can be viewers or observers, but know what to call for. If you're not in the game, learn what people are doing and call them short if they're not doing things that are solid. Here's what to look for. You know? Bang, bang, bang, bang.

It was a great mission statement and I got a lot out of it. There's one mayor, they said, had observed America in Bloom. They said well, first I thought, this is a quote from the mayor. At first I thought that America in Bloom was all about flowers, but then I realized that their

mention of bloom is about our communities at large. My only revision to his discovery of scale is that because of the flower, not in spite of the flower. Because you're in the game.

I think that about landscape architecture. The terminology is referencing the natural systems largely. It's not the building. It's about something other than the building as is implied by the title. But that gateway I think is more powerful at times than the building itself because it talks about the context of framework, the surround that makes that building well placed or at least predicts that that building can be in that spot as a place. What an amazing leverage on the future of our communities.

It's big. I'm not sure we see it that big. I think many do. But we need to live it better and demonstrate it better. Many times it is heroic, the way it's defended and seen as a major part of a community. Chicago thought of it as major in the 1893 Exposition. The stuff that followed, the park systems, the anger at defying it, and the uprising that was immediate if there was danger of losing leverage on those park systems. That's why I'm so amazed that this one is not working at the moment, the issue and the taking of the park for a library. We need to be angry more probably in a way that is creative and helpful and strong and principled. It's so important.

### **The Vision of Holland, MI**

This community that you're in right now is a case in point. Holland as a group of people bought into the notion of letting a simple statement about the future lead them all away without trying to complicate it. And allowing a process to be somewhat loose but always characterized by hanging the mission, the goal, the vision in front of them. Even when they didn't necessarily find it relevant to that meeting. It was always hanging. Don't ever forget this



is why we're gathering today, whatever the issue, whether it was street curbs or fire improvements and safety.

Building this or building that or the creation of a new energy center, it was for this purpose. Don't forget that [process]. That's not automatic. That has to be deliberate. It has to be understood by all persuasions in allowing it, even engineers who are so pragmatic at times they only see the result that has to happen and the money that's needed and so on. It can be a deadening, blinding thing if it's not dealt with properly with good perspective.

The vision [for the community of Holland] drove this little downtown into its vibrance. It was very simply stated in one sentence and the rest was accompanied by a very interesting diagram that never went away. It never got out of date because it was so basic. See? That's an art. To keep something so basic that the message is clear all the time without needing to add and embellish detail. The detail emerges because of that simple singular direction. It always keeps falling out in terms of details that define themselves.

That's where the [City of Holland's Downtown] Snowmelt [System] came from.<sup>iv</sup> Ed Prince, during a session, said why aren't we using excess heat that we're throwing away into the atmosphere? Well, it takes so much expense to think of it that way. We can't afford it. Nobody does that. And he said basically I'll give the first increment of money and let's get it done. From the private sector. Now, the public sector is very boastful about this and it's a great thing and they are famous around the country for the biggest snowmelt in the country. It takes both. Public, private partnerships are crucial. It has to do with a vision. Where are you going and why?

If I were to paraphrase the vision for downtown Holland 25 years ago it would read something like this. We are seeking a downtown that's a destination where all things that are part of a downtown are blended into one unified direction. In other words, living downtown, a college, a purpose of shopping. Meeting. Living. That all together is a dynamic that no one version of the pieces would be able to accomplish. It's together as a unified whole that will produce vibrance.

For instance, one little phrase in there was mistaking small, I think it said tiny greens that give respite and delight to a vibrant urban place. Small greens, not big greens made sense. And it ended by saying that's the spirit of the kind of new downtown we're seeking. Period. It was the spirit of it. You could add some dimensions along that line. You could add more, and then somebody did, add more to it. But it said that's the spirit of the place we're seeking, not the definable tangible pieces of it. That's to be found. It's the spirit. Good stuff.

The diagram was a very simple diagram emphasizing connectivity. Everything at that time in 1987 was pretty much disconnected. There were no real connections. This diagram is all about connectivity. Connecting this to that to that to that. Snowmelt was about connecting. Can you imagine a snowstorm in the middle of the Midwest? Dry pavements all over downtown? That's connectivity, you know. It's a key word in Holland today.

### **The Future of Holland**

Yes. When you work on a downtown like this or any part of a community for as long as twenty to thirty years, which is the case here, and you have the results that are happening here in terms of phenomenal success, you say well, what got us here? The principles that got us here

are such that leadership-wise and vision-wise and the way we work-wise, it needs to continue because it's only half finished.

There's more to come and it's all on the horizon with a new energy center, brand new, turbine fired energy plant and other programs throughout the downtown that are coming along. Lakefront development. It's about another 25 years will probably happen before this has a sense of completion. The interesting thing is that we think we want to finish a job in three or four years. Sometimes it takes 25, like it did here. Doesn't seem long to me, but there's another 25 coming right on its heels that are full of the same issues and it takes a lot of attention to the old principles at work to sustain them and help them to be an enduring kind of lead role in the future of the town.

It's been great fun, great fun to do and there are many talented people involved in this. I can't name them all, they're by the dozens. I'm simply one of the small pieces that helped make it happen. So, it's a good place to live. That's a big order to do in a couple of minutes, but I tell you, the two or three things that were essential in the past are going to be critical in the immediate future.

One is to know the vision. Not just one or two people, but the leadership needs to be part of mounting that vision. It's clear in this town what that is. It's a downtown of multipurpose functions. It's a destination that people of all ages and persuasions are welcome in this downtown. It's a place of great dynamics and that attracts people.

But as they come and we plan for the more immediate future now, they have to be involved. That's not easy. It's kind of nice to be able to have all decisions in one or two people's

hands, but this is not Holland. This is not the way it happened. It has to be broadly associated with the stakeholders and citizens to come on in. You're welcome. We know how to work in such a way that we can listen to you and we'll show you what it means when you do speak about ideas. We'll make new ideas with you and keep it rolling in that spirit. It's got to be successful then.

The difficulty and the hazard is to let the vision dim and disappear. Not know where you're going really and letting bits and pieces fall in separate entities in this community. It would be a great harm. I hope we can avoid that and keep the vision sparkling and on-scene and always relevant to what we're doing.

## **Learning from Others**

### **Experiencing the Work of Artists**

Whenever I see a painting that is unbelievably beautiful, my knees are weak. My heart pumps because talent is showing unbelievably strong. I want to do some of that so badly, not for accolades but the joy it must be to be that talented. I think of some of the great watercolor artists. There are countless numbers of them. I look at that stuff all the time. I think there's something about the artists who rise above in any of the arts, it's unbelievable gifts that it's hard to calculate because it may be magic. It may be something beyond because they're so insightful.

I think it is a gift orientation. It's something that somehow was there and not totally acquired through learning and practice so much. I find those things exciting. I don't want to get into naming them all because there are so many. I think some of the things graphically that are

expressed whether they're diagrammatic or paintings or drawings or sketches are beautiful to me when they are minimally prepared. Few strokes. A one stroke that finishes. Something like that kind of simplicity. That's when my heart pumps. Wow. There are some who can do that.

You know, in a certain way, I think Peter Walker has some of that. We don't know quite where it comes from. And suddenly there's a simple stroke or two or a form that says it all. I think his work with the Twin Towers [National 9/11] Memorial, remarkable. Clarity. Simplicity. I think that's what he was after along with his compatriot, whom I didn't know.

### **The Power of Seeing, Observation**

We lived in a little community called Barton Hills. Genevieve had a small beautiful little house down the road. I often passed her home and she'd be coming out and we'd wave. We were sort of kindred spirits and good friends. She often showed up [to] issue oriented debates in the city and she was brave and courageous. She spoke out quickly on things that mattered to her. Probably in a way that I wish I could. I think she was a real tiger at times about issues.

We often rode together to certain meetings that were of common interest. I remember one day driving with Genevieve through the lower parts of Michigan. I think we were headed up towards Midland for some reason. We were observing the countryside. I'm always trying to register my mind on what I'm looking at and I love the fields and the different colors in early winter of the grasses that are not yet covered by snow, and the different tones of grey and brown and silver, mauve and a bit of reddish here and there on the buds.

It's just a beautiful time of year. I was mentioning that to her and she was observing the same things. She was even naming everything, which I couldn't do. I think we had that two-hour

drive one time and we didn't want to stop because everything we were looking at was just a riot of beauty. All in a kind of somewhat of a monotone because it was all winter greys and tans and mauves. We kept saying that this is winter and look what we're seeing. Isn't that a beautiful thing about this profession? You can see the world or at least want to see the world in ways that are celebratory and awesome? Wow. Free of charge. Pretty good that. She was a great lady. And to see her go.

The Bourquin sisters were similar. There was a Professor at Michigan. I don't know if you knew Chuck Cares [Professor of Landscape Architecture]. Did you know Chuck? Chuck was a good friend of the Bourquin sisters. They were neighbors who lived close by each other. He knew them very well and respected them no end. They loved to have visitors in their home. They had a beautiful home on Geddes Avenue, off of Geddes.

It was pleasure to meet with those ladies because they were stalwarts in a man's world of highway engineering. They spoke up. They spoke up in unison as twins often do, where one starts the sentence, the other finishes it. They were heard.

They did a lot of wonderful advocacy for the right things about highways in the state of Michigan just by being there every day and knowing what's going on. They were very good and they were great supporters of the Michigan program. They would often come wherever needed. Show up at the faculty sessions, the student sessions. They were always there, the Bourquins, unique sisters, good people.

### **An Excellent Student, Sandy Hansen**

I think the chemistry that it is very impressive about a female approach to sensitive things and being expressive about it and mindful to many that what we see and understand about the beauty of the world we live in in a natural system way is worthy of extensive attention and careful work. I think the women have been particularly helpful about that. I think of Sandy Hansen, a JJR principal, an excellent student.

I remember when she came to Michigan, interviewing her as a young lady. She came with her mother to interview. I remember them coming into the office I had on the campus, which was a very special office. We had, by chance, inherited an old house on the campus, an old wonderful home with beautiful ground floor tiled rooms. My office had a fireplace with [UNINTELLIGIBLE] tile and double French doors out to a terrace. This was right on the campus. They came in. I remember the setting, the paneled doorway. They walked in. Her mother sat down and said Sandy is interested in this program, what do you think? would you talk to her?

Sandy was very shy. Then we talked. You could tell that she was passionate about wanting to do this [study landscape architecture]. So, it worked out and she entered the program and became very intense about all that I'm talking about and extremely capable. After she graduated after four years, JJR was there. She had done a few of the part-time things and she became an associate right away and then became a partner later on, a senior associate and then a partner.

Her demeanor was, beyond the shyness, a kind of quiet determined demeanor that she was quick to speak, but with great care. She was wise and thoughtful and impressive. She had a

lot to do with the Kalamazoo Zoo that we did. She did a phenomenal job of animal research, figuring the various pens and places that were state of the art thinking about animal care and how to counter the negatives of a zoo for animals.

She was very, very impressive. I think eventually she took up residence in Dexter, Michigan, had a beautiful historic home, 1880s, *Queen Anne* [style]. Great lady, great lady. But it was typical of the kind of sensitivities many women can bring to something that often is, in a kind of male exuberance, missed, and hard charging kind of stuff. At times it comes up with the way us guys think. We need them.

### **Role Models from Among Faculty Colleagues**

Many people have influenced [me]. It's hard to even begin. I have role models and I have a lot of them. Actually one of my role models emerged at the University of Michigan. I became well acquainted as a faculty member with a fellow faculty member who was also the Dean of the College of Engineering [Professor of Mechanical Engineering] Gordon Van Wylen. The epitome of wisdom, care, sensitivity, leadership, determination. Dutchman, stubborn at times, he admits. That started in I would guess about 1964 and is active this moment. He's still going strong. He's 96 and an amazing individual. Good role model for me.

There are a number of others. I think Chuck Cares, a person who I taught with for 30 years. He came from Cornell. He was a World War II veteran. He used to plant materials. Expert. And we worked together in such beautiful ways.



## Two Memorable Students

That emulated what I'm talking about and added their own dimensions beyond what I'm talking about. One is Jim van Sweden. Jim came over to the graduate program at Michigan from architecture. He was a bright energetic good guy as he came in and said [he'd] I'd like to try the landscape architecture field after architecture. He picked up on this fast. He loved the notion of a looser way of heading towards an answer. Looser not in the sense of less discipline in how we go about it, but more open to the middle part of the process being rather squiggly and spontaneous and fun.

You know you can be loose when you're sure about where you are. That's a beautiful thing about a confident way of working. You can get rid of the nervousness about where am I now and I don't know what's going to come out of this and I'm nervous about the outcome. You don't have to worry about that because it will come. You just have to have fun and let this process emerge as long as it's open and welcoming to many and so on. The other person, and I look what Jim has done with his work, he's taken this interest in grasses and the beauty of things that we've long disregarded and made it a special thing. That's a beautiful thing where one dimension is opened up into a major revelation to people around the country.

The other one is Jim Reeves. I don't know if you knew Jim at [the University of] Texas. He came to school at Michigan driving his Volvo, which he was very proud of. He lived nearby in my neighborhood as a student. Interestingly, Jim Reeves was so excitable that at a meeting he would get very excited and say this is the best thing I've ever come across. I'm so excited. He'd jump up and down.

It was catching, you know? When Jim was around anything it was full of vitality. But he was excited about the process just as Jim van Sweden was. He said you know I could solve about anything working this way. And I'm not nervous about the outcome because I don't need to know. It will come. Always it comes because it's coming out of the whole cloth. The whole cloth of the place. I often used that term with Jim and Jim.

Jim Reeves just died. His son, Bill, was in touch recently, the last few weeks. He wanted to know about his dad. More. It just so happened that I have some good records of Jim Reeves's work. His father. I sent it to him and it was full of this creative juice is pouring out. He took a four-hour sketch problem. I have the results of it. In comparison with the other dozen students it was ten times the content because he was so excited. It was beautifully done.

Ten pages of deliberate purposeful principles in response to the case study issued for four hours. I told Bill, his son, that he was one of the more close friends as a professor/student. It wasn't the student relationship. It was a peer relationship. It was a lot of fun. Beautiful stuff. It was about process. Maybe that word is not good because I think that process gets overworked over and worn out amongst us as a term. It sounds like paralysis. It need not be. I think of it often as these words, the way we work.

### **Encouraging Creativity**

There's a book out recently called *Quick and Nimble*<sup>v</sup>. It's a result of a question given to a couple hundred CEOs of businesses around the country. [The author asks] what they do to sustain and further creativity in their firms. Their basic answer, if you were to sum them all is, it's the culture, not the process as such. It's the way they did it. The way they worked. The

attitudes, value and what they thought of each other. That was the key to what now is much more of a prevailing sustainable search for creative outcomes. I thought that was powerful.

In it was an interesting quote. Oliver Wendell Holmes said I wouldn't give a fig for simplicity this side of complexity, but I'd give my life for the simplicity on the other side of complexity. He said he understood it. Once you understand and work enough to understand, the clarity comes. Simplicity. Now, that's what Pete is a master at. Pretty well summed up, I think.

Having fun is part of the game. I think it's cathartic. It's a medicine that is automatic in terms of increasing motivation and joy and pleasure and creativity. I think the looser you are the more you can play. I remember a sketch problem I liked to give and it reminds me of Jim van Sweden because [he] got such a kick out of it. You can do it in many different ways, but it's where you take found materials and place them on the table and ask the students in three hours to take these materials and expand them to the greatest volumetric expression that you can.

These would be odds and ends of sticks and pieces of cloth and so on. Just a pile of stuff. Found materials. It's more fun. You get these crazy things happening. Jim had this thing that went 50 feet somehow out of this little bottle of nothing. Maybe a square foot of stuff and he had this huge thing filled a room out of those materials. It was extremely creative and of course the room was full of big laughs and derision. In making fun and it was cathartic.

That's how they worked. I really believe the *Quick and Nimble* book in terms of this outcome. The *Quick and Nimble* title was important to me. It just struck a chord the minute I

saw that book. That's how you have to be with this middle. To not be so self conscious that you're the leader that things deaden, but that by being quick and so-called nimble, that is creative, responsive to indicators, things will advance.

It takes skill. Quick is not automatic. Skill is important and being quick and simple and seemingly less content. When you understand something, it's powerful. It takes a lot of work. It seems simple and looks simple, but it's very deliberate.

### **Hideo Sasaki and Process**

[I am] persuaded Hideo Sasaki would applaud most of what we're talking about. He would have his own versions of some of it. He probably would prop up a few loose pieces that weren't too clear or responsible, but he would represent much of what we're talking about, the big picture, the iterative approach, the tangle of the process that happens in the midst of midstream struggles. It gets to be a tangle that you're always clarified by the knowing the process in its bigger sense.

You're never lost, put it that way, even though people, what is the Rudyard Kipling poem about If? When everybody else is losing their heads around you and you keep yours, yeah. He went on to say if you know how to dream and don't make dreams you're idle. If you know how to think and don't make thoughts your aim. He's saying don't get caught up in the process, use it. That's Hideo. Don't see it as an end, use it.

Many people critique those of us who are process-oriented as process excess. It actually becomes such a tangle it gets in your own way. You stumble on it and fall because you can't beyond it. That's what Rudyard Kipling was saying. And Hideo would be saying it in his own way.

But get smart. Don't let it get in your way. Use it and get to end point. Get there. Pete picked up that big time. I picked it up too, did it a little different way, but the same thing. I know how to get there.

It's funny how some people need to sign what they do. To be the author. That doesn't occur to me much. I like accolades. I like somebody to like what I do. It's a lift and I don't mind that. But I know that if that is the end point we're nowhere. I do know how to glide past my ego. I have it but I know how to glide through it. Get beyond it. That's what Kipling was talking about.

### **John Muir**

Many times in my early career the name John Muir comes up. It has a lot to do with the larger dimensions of the world we're looking at. What a pioneer and what a role model in terms of point of view. Very courageous and a great perspective of what human endeavor needs to use as respite and a sense of perspective in the natural systems and the woodlands and streams of this Earth. Muir was a hero, no question.

One of the things that I recall in reading about John Muir was his associations with the forestry folks, particularly Gifford Pinchot, and Pinchot's work with Teddy Roosevelt on the National Parks and these great reserves that were passionate efforts to do that because they could see the danger that they'd be lost forever. That really attracted me, particularly in terms of scale, see? That fit with my sense that landscape architecture as I began to understand it was an aspect of looking at the entire globe. Our universe, in a way, down to our own globe and then the pieces of our Earth. I love that sense of endless perspective.

## Texture and Rhythm

The way the eye informs you and catches your attention and draws you in and gives you a big thump at times when we'll say wow. I didn't know this and so on. Remember the Hubbard and Kimball principles of texture and rhythm and [UNINTELLIGIBLE] and all those basic design results you can work with as tools? They're always recurring to me as we travel around and look at different places.

At one time Pete Walker were in Paris together and Pete had arranged some kind of a piece of work to do on a competition for the extent of the Champs-Élysée through Paris, the big, big deal, and it was big. It was a major competition. We did OK, but didn't win that one. In the process we kept going off on the side and looking at places. We would begin to remember Hubbard and Kimball in kind of funny ways. There's a vista, you know? There is a vista. The long three and six and ten block moves of architectural repetition. That was another principle.

And how they just rattled down your eyeballs and you couldn't not look at it. What they were doing is saying don't look at me, look at where I'm pointing. And down at the end of this vista is this phenomenal object of some kind. A building or tower or something. Paris and London are full of these. It is a great kind of thing to recognize. It may have come out of a distant past in terms of how cities ought to be formed, but they sure are visual.

Pete and I would often go to just a garden. Gardens that are well known and just walk through them. I think Pete feasted on those moments of going to different places. He remembered them. They would pop up again in his work in that I was not always as tactile with

the things I was after. It wasn't the same kind of memory, but I used it too in being able to think visually at a policy level.

It can be illustrated when we'd take a peek at the University of Michigan plan and the other campuses and communities. Inherent in those are framework patterns that have all those capabilities of being used because of the way the framework is laid out.

## PROJECTS

### Sea Pines - Hilton Head Island, SC

During the work at Sasaki's office along with Pete and several others, I don't recall their names, but they're just great people, Bo Carr was one of them. We always worked, the picture I have of the work in the office was always at night. We [were] always going through all night sessions.

But there was one day this fellow [Charles Fraser] walked up to the door on Galen Street. He walked in. He was a young man, a young guy. He said he was from the business school and he was there for a graduate degree. He said his father owned quite a piece of land on the East Coast off of South Carolina and that he wondered if we wanted to look at the problem.

He had a Sunoco roadmap of the US. He put it out on the table and there are several of us standing around the table, including Hideo, of course. He said my father thinks that between New York and Miami there could be a resort right about here. He circled this island. He said would you like to take a look at this and see if we could something about it? Said oh, yeah. It

was Hilton Head. The name of the project, it was named Sea Pines at the time. I think that name held through the period. We began our work.

One of the things that had not be determined at all is the basic road network in the system. I remember the all night session we had. There was a presentation coming up the next day. I remember Hideo was there. He wasn't often there all night, but he was there that night. We were getting the roadway networks that works in terms of options identified. One of them circled way out and around and made room for this centerpiece of Sea Pines. There were others that cut through the property area in a different way. We were arguing about this long circular route.

I remember I took a big sheet of paper and put it over that and I did the network of movement from major to medium to minor in terms of automobile movement and pedestrian circulation with chalk. A big wide, one inch wide chalk for the big arterial and then downward. It was messy and dirty. I remember that was one of the remarks that one of them said. Well, this, this chalk gets all over. That's why I remember it because it was a muddled kind of drawing, but it was really powerful and clear. And it was clearly the one that we ought to present the next day.

So, Charles Fraser came back the next day. He was a young guy at the time. He thought that that was a marvelous start and that we'd keep on rolling. And then went into a lot of detail. You know, one of the principals of Sea Pines at that earliest stage was that there would be a drawing back of all major project centers. And that the only protrusion from the sea, from



the Pines to the beach, would be an occasional long promontory of built rather than change of grade. A built piece of promontory as it kind of a pier?

There were these run of, a number of, piers. They started that way. It began to be that the pressure on the part of the private developers was to get buildings onto the beach. So, I think now, that's then. Now, that's been the pattern of getting too much on the beaches. We were trying to set off the beaches, but it didn't make sense to the business competition, I think. The competing resorts were piling up on the beaches and they relented, I think, later on.

But that was a major piece of work. The funny part of it is that I went back to see Charles before he died. He was laughing about how many people had designed Hilton Head. He said everybody claimed to have done it. I said well, that's the way we work. We all claim a lot of stuff at times. But it was a popular thing to claim. He laughed about it, a remarkable person.

### **A Master Plan for the University of Michigan**

We're here on the University of Michigan central campus. Just here to double-check how durable the 1963 plan was and does it still remain intact in terms of its good bones? It really does in spades. As we've described, the central campus, the original campus, was 40 acres bringing about a kind of walking system that was full of diagonals. That's one of the significant things about the campus is the Diag.

The idea was to take these diagonals and move about five unique ones out towards the community and along that diagonal walkway we would have a place of distinction at the center of five different precincts. At the end of that diagonal walking avenue of academic function would occur a parking structure, a parking supply for the campus. We thought that over [a]

period of 30, 40 years that might endure as a fundamental way of development. Lo and behold, we've visited today several of these centers. They're there and great clearly that help to organize the separate precincts of the campus and actually a delight to behold. So, I'm very pleased that it continues to endure.

The primary unity that was caused by this plan was the way in which the walkways became broad and strong as a way of hooking functions together. Because of their strength and width they were remarkable in terms of being distinctive and recognizable. Certainly when they're full of the students and the faculty moving along them, it's a delight to see that these avenues are the engines of the campus, full of life and vibrance. It really did work.

When I think about it coming back after these more than 50 years and knowing that in those earliest days I was involved with developing a long-range campus development strategy, which we've been describing, and then see the memorable places where I taught and talked to students and dropped my slides here and there and ran to lectures. It's just a delight to revisit and to see how strongly the campus has developed along the lines we thought was possible in those early years.

Remember, one of the things that the university was very worried about was that the expansion of a great university in the middle of a group of neighborhoods in a small city, that it wouldn't damage those neighborhoods. I look around and see those neighborhood edges just as I saw them 50 years ago, unaffected by big growth. That's a real accomplishment by the university. That kind of attention to the neighborhood edges that they're unaffected by

enormous growth of the university is a real accomplishment by the university to be sensitive and thoughtful about that kind of thing.

### **Garden Homes - Ann Arbor, MI**

At this moment [The beginnings of JJR] we were considering a lot of the dynamics that were going on in the '60s of working more inclusively, working with citizenry groups, protecting the environment from an advocacy point of view, not just accommodating development. And working it into the process that we thought was so good. There was a lot of interest in that. One night I was in the office late and there was a knock on the door. This was when we were in the large Civil War-restored building that we had.

I went down to the first floor where the entry was. I found a woman standing at the door in tears saying that I've lost it all. I said what are you talking about? She said well, I'm a social worker working with this neighborhood. And the developer has now come through with offers to all 90 families to buy their homes so that he could get a shopping center going as soon as possible.

The meeting we had tonight, she said, is a meeting that concluded that they all were willing to sell. And that's the end of my work. I tried hard to figure this out, but I failed. I said well, are they still meeting? This was about nine o'clock. She said they were still meeting. I said can we join them yet? And she said she wasn't sure, but it's about ten blocks away, and we could go.

So, I left the building, walked back to this house where they were still meeting and I asked them if they were sure that they wanted to sell. Well, I think that most people wanted to sell. I

said would it bother you folks if we got a group of survey research people to come in and talk about your, privately, to each one privately about their desires and intentions and their means, because the neighborhood had no sewer and water.

It would cost each household something to just improve to that extent, to have a decent road and sewer and water hooked up. They said they'd be willing to have that happen. So, we delayed the decision and set about to get a two-week period of time where that research was done. They were given, the people who were interviewing had the numbers in general that they would need to represent to be able to pay for their own improvements to get a plan developed and keep the neighborhood.

There was a result that took place. They all came as a mass meeting to our office in our atrium. The conclusion was that 98% wanted to stay and keep their homes. Whereas they had told the developer that 100% were will to sell, but it wasn't true. They were simply pressured. This was being a confidential survey. It was OK.

So then, that gave the green light to a study and we then took off and over a period of about a year, we figured out a way in which each family could pay for their own way given the, this is small federal money that could come for the restoration of the neighborhood. Some of it was based upon one family having a large lot. It was large suburban lots. One family could have maybe two or three homes built on their property and sell those parcels thereby pay for their way only in the event that they needed it. If they didn't need it, then the property would stay whole.

So, we worked out this scatter board of unique individual circumstances, 90 families, and about twenty new units then came out of that. That would be low, modest homes and a park center, a walkway system. The commercial rather than to be the new shopping center could be placed on the corner and be kind of a convenience center of two or three shops, a gas station. The developer decided that that would be good enough for him, as well. The plan was approved and constructed. Had a ribbon cutting. The brand-new community I showed you a little photograph the other day.

I think we asked for no fee and it was OK. That was not a popular decision in the office. Some of our employees thought that that was too much of a giveaway. We should earn our way. But, at the moment we couldn't find that kind of money. What it meant to me was that these things are really possible to do if you do them right. It takes a lot of listening and putting aside your own particular view of what they ought to do or not do and find out what they could do. When that was all assembled, this is somewhat of a kind of context [thing], you could begin then to see a solution emerging and it happened. It's a wonderful place to live now. That would have been a shopping center, strip.

Think of how many times that didn't work. I think it's astounding. It's a project that's named Garden Homes. It's a small sub-neighborhood in Ann Arbor, Michigan, that is distinct and unique and a good place to live still. Racially mixed as it was in the beginning, some wealthy and some just making it. Modest homes, great park, kids running around playing and the walkway systems.

It was made out of whole cloth. That's incidentally a word I use a lot. Whole cloth. It's a term that I think is a Midwestern term. It was mentioned as a term by my mother a lot in the stories. I grew up learning that whole cloth was about authentic and genuine. I often will refer to that in some of our work. This is a place that feels like it has whole cloth to it, where all things are working together for good, you know? Good stuff.

### **Jackson Park – Chicago, IL**

It was because of the Jackson Park that we were asked to do the update of the whole lakefront. It might be worth going over the Jackson Park thing in basic terms again. Jackson Park was dear to the hearts of those in Chicago because it was a historic site for the 1893 Exposition by [Frederick Law] Olmsted and [Calvert] Vaux and others who were involved with the earliest form of that. And it was very, very intensive.

The Jackson Park issue arose because of the damage it was beginning to show and trying to run transportation through it. It was a revered place by the Chicago folks because of the 1893 Exposition, a landscape that was done by Olmsted, Vaux. Their efforts put in the Chicago retinue of parks one of the most enjoyed and favored parks of the city because it was that phenomenal site of the World's Fair.

The World's Fair filled that site with many, many buildings. It was a very urbanized piece of natural shoreline. Many people thought that Jackson Park was untouched by human hands, but it was heavily touched by great planners in design. It was a great event. An event of the century.

As the roadway issue began to emerge, it was beginning to destroy what had been revered in the park as basically a natural system. The islands of the lake [were] being interrupted. Trees were being leveled to allow for a freeway standard extension of the Chicago Lakeshore Drive. It was heavy duty damage. It was frightening to see and as result, citizens of Hyde Park and the other neighborhoods, the two other neighborhoods there that got together and strapped themselves to bulldozer blades and did anything they could to stop the operation and they did it.

The mayor was distraught and anxious to get this out of the way, but everything was at a halt. For whatever reasons I got a call. I think it was through some friends that I had at the Park[s] Department in Chicago that I might be a person who could come and give some ideas to how it might be resolved. The call came from the mayor's office. I went to Chicago and got together with the folks and began a three-month study. They gave me three months to see to what degree there were any alternatives.

As you can imagine being driven through this rubble where maybe a third of the park had already disappeared. Without any request, without any issue being dealt with by the engineers. It was a huge, huge problem. I didn't see any alternatives at first glance, but the one thing that helped immediately, it always does, is when you ask a few questions. The question was who goes to this park? Who uses this park? Within a week or two of some thoughtful questioning of the community, we went around the community and worked with individuals.

We could establish that this was a park of many parks. It was not one park. It was plural park. It's got a collection of operational parks. This is by certain constituents in that part of the

city in different ways and rarely visiting another one of the pieces. So, that was the term that came up quickly is a park of park. Now, where was the freeway damage? Well, lo and behold it eliminated one of the most precious parks and the most delicate parks was the Stony Island park corridor. That's exactly where the roadway was taken.

Those who've tried to think about it early in the game, they thought that that was the edge of the park. Out on the outer edge and nothing was hurt because it was on the edge. It just so happened that the edge of the park was the center of the park. Amazing, amazing revelation within a week or two. Given that, we began to look at the park in terms of noise disturbance and visual disturbance and began to entertain a rather new term at that time, impact.

What was the impact on the rest of the park by the damage that was done? We used the word impact. Rather new to us and had all its common sense to it. We couldn't measure in great detail, but we tried to do noise and site measurements of impact zone. The impact zone was more than half, if not close to two-third of the park. The damage was much more extensive than the literal damage in terms of change of the park patterns. The implication of that was two[fold].

One is that the extension probably ought to be [built to] arterial rather than freeway standards. Arterial meaning it would be community connections to it on grade if it went down that line at all. Then secondly, if there was to be a freeway standard extension through, that it ought to happen in a place where it would be appropriately located between major pieces of the park, not through any center of the park. Although the suggestion that we did make on that



was it looked like it was in the center of the park, but it was really not interrupting any of the pieces of the park that were inherent and useful and perceivable. So, it was an interesting exercise.

At the three month point we reported that in great detail in front of WGN television and everything. The general idea that was proposed was that there was a way to bring the park back to its full park dimension. Still have an arterial moving through the park with proper kinds of design standards so that people and transportation movement could be dealt with in unison rather than one or the other.

It was a big move. The communities, Hyde Park and the other communities, agreed 100 percent that that was a fundamentally sound place to be, so let's then continue it. So, they go back and say given this sort of framework, continue to do the engineering, planning, and design with a kind of a new start. The community of Hyde Park said that that point was where everybody began to be able to talk rather than accuse. It started on being the very careful deliberate way of resolving the interchange where the park extension roadway would occur.

There was an interchange need there and it was right by the Museum of Natural History. It got resolved through a further detailed attention. Ten years later, Hyde Park came together again and asked me to come back and represent the logic. Their interest was to see how well the city had done to follow the spirit of what we were suggesting where people-use and transportation functions can coexist. They gave the city a new critique by reviewing the plan after ten years. I got a kick out of that devoted attention to the issue. Wow, what community in

general would have that kind of perseverance and enduring attention to a problem? It was very helpful.

## Chicago Lakefront

Regarding the Chicago lakefront, the plan for the lakefront as we expressed it, it was policy plan update. It was not meant to be anything, any more than policy oriented fundamentals, then it needed to be an update of what was already there, so it was a good deal of material to review. We familiarized ourself [sic] with it. But, that assignment came out of the effort to resolve the problem at Jackson Park.

A good example of this is in the Chicago Lakefront Study that was done in the [19]'70s regarding updating the current, at that time the current, the master plan or the policy plan for the lakefront. The debate was about how much development should go directly along the shore. It was human interest in probably high-rise development and the idea on the other side saying nobody should touch this shore again ever. But that in the process of debating this, the mayor came on the scene knowing some of the conversation going on and he said this way, the lakefront is for the people of Chicago. It should be forever open, free, and clear. Those were literally his terms.

The policy, then, was very simply stated on this end. It didn't deny the need for high-rise developments someday coming, but he described basically where it probably ought to go, and that is behind the lakefront, whatever that description is. What is the lakefront? How big is it? How deep is it? Whatever the case, the high-rise development will not go inside of it. It will be on the outer edge.

At that time the Illinois Central [Railroad] air rights over a hundred acres of land as rail yards were right in the Loop. The implication then is that the density would occur over those air rights, not along the shore. And that's what happened because of that basic statement forever open, free, and clear. That came from this side and the other side was simply allowing the fact that density was going to be dense. So, how do you put those things together? A very simple thing. They pulled back. Simple move.

On the lakefront, especially in the central city, is not exactly what was put on the plan. There was a symmetry that was half accomplished and the other half was not built and so on. So, there's a bit of disruption even in the departure maybe only because you couldn't quite pull it off with the expenses and costs and all. The Meigs Field was a gesture to begin some of that. It became an airport and luckily and wonderfully turned back into a piece of shoreline green.

I find those pieces of history kind of fun to look at and watch. It's even interesting. It gives something character to realize that a piece of it couldn't be done or wasn't done. It gives you a sense that then the whole plan had some recognition because you notice a piece wasn't done. That's good. I think the park, the lakefront park, Grant and the attributes now that have been added, I love it because it's fundamentally big stroke greens.

It'd have to be big. Not homogeneous so much as strong movements of groves of trees and extensive pieces of green to match the scale of those phenomenal towers that are clustered around the central part of Chicago. I like the big stroke pieces. They don't have to be all the same kind, but it needs to be long and strong and done with conviction. In there as well are the differences between each sort of module of green. There are other uses that call for

different attributes. The overhead covers and the form of sculpture and some of it traditional and some of it absolutely new moving kind of sculpture. It's fun.

That whole Millennium [Park] zone is full of joy and pleasure and celebration because of that, but it doesn't lose its place because of its big stroke treatment. That was very wise. I think it was a carry through of the original plans were so extensive, so big in terms of mindset and the length of the notion of 27 miles of lakefront. Those are big strokes. I think in this country the Chicago lakefront is one of the big stroke design victories in the whole country. It's a marvelous phenomenon what has happened. It was well protected by good policy. I appreciate the work those folks have done.

Because of the work there, then, the Mayor's Office asked that maybe we should take that kind of thinking into the 27 miles of the Chicago lakefront and update the policy plan. We started that in and it was about five years of work over periodic pieces that were delivered now and again with the fundamental principles if you could sum them up in a couple of basics.

There are two that were primary. One was shoreline continuity, that wherever there was a gap, extra effort would be made to plug that gap with ownership or some kind of responsible attention in accordance with standards to keep it a park. It would not be interrupted in terms of movement of pedestrians or bikes along the shore. It would be as connected from top to bottom as possible, 27 miles and there were a lot of gaps. I think over time that was a key focus of a lot of work.

The second principle was the east-west movement of cars and people, this is the [way that] everyone would hit the lake. We call them street end arrival parks, that every major

arterial street in Chicago in that 27 miles there would be attention to how it arrived at the shoreline. Not always the same, but given conditions that you would arrive with some kind of celebration or exposure or a visual delight, enjoying the water. There were many obstructions to street end parks at that time.

The implication of those two principles was that if there was to be high density development, high density meaning 50 and 60 story buildings, which are known to be coming, that they should be behind that zone of what we called shoreline priorities so that the continuity would be protected and the street end arrivals would be prime. You can see the Illinois Central air rights chunk full now of many, many high-rise structures, none of which are on the water. It was a fundamental. They would have liked to have been on the water as we can see in other parts of the country and Great Lakes and any shoreline values like that.

Those two things were key. Funny. At the time that there were some proposals by engineers to think about lake-bottom use. There was a proposal floating through those years of an airport location on the shallow zone of Lake Michigan along the Chicago waterfront waterfront. I don't think it would have gone anywhere, but we made note of that kind of possible set of suggestions of going into those shallow waters near shore and dealing with that sort of thing. We called it low priority and a long way off.

Anyway, I think the meaning to us a young firm and me being pretty young at that time was that being in early prior to some of these things happening, particularly the Illinois Central air rights. I don't recall the exact acreage. I think it was in excess of 100 acres of air rights. That was center city acres measured by square inches in value. Huge.

We were in early enough to have some input into how that was the beginning of negotiations with developers who were standing in the line ready to build like mad in that area and they had to comply with some of these standards. The Illinois Central air rights was dealt with in terms of five levels, I believe. Four or five levels from surface to level one, level two, level three, downward, because that's the way it works in the city. Wacker Drive is two levels and then there's lower levels. That's how that site had to be valued and sold off with various kinds of deals and negotiations. Very complex. We were in early and I love it.

### **Grand Valley State University Campus Plan – Allendale, MI**

Gaining an assignment that had to do with finding a site for a campus from scratch, that's really from scratch. It happened because I was working with the University of Michigan on some various projects and I got acquainted with the state architect, who was given the assignment by the legislature to go find a site for a new university in western Michigan. The assignment was simply that, that it would be in an appropriate place and you go find that. So the state architect gathered a crew together, the state engineer. I was asked to join it because I'd been doing some planning.

I was sort of the token landscape architect on the team. There were bankers. There were a lot of different kinds of folks. About a dozen members of that committee. We started into work and reviewed seventeen different sites that had been proposed by various communities vying for this location. They thought they would all gain great economic benefits from that location. It was salesmanship and a lot of pitching those sites.

What we said we wanted to do, and this was more on my end of helping with that committee, to find a site that had the ability in its earliest days to have a discipline, that it would not be out in the brand new open green fields, but that it would be constrained by some built or natural features that you could hook into so that the small beginning would not seem so lonely. So, I was looking for that.

We came across a site on a river equidistant between the triad of cities that were being served, Holland, Muskegon, and Grand Rapids, right in the center. Some people were pressing that it be done in the city. It would be an urban campus to begin with in Grand Rapids. The committee felt that it ought to be equal distance from these so that it would seem like all had the share in it, so we were being careful about that. In fact, one of the committee members says there's no reason why it couldn't have future branch campus elements in the city and have that kind of urban extension.

Lo and behold, we found this site on a river with these straight deep ravines poking into the terrain and filled with mature oaks and beeches. Unbelievably beautiful ravines. They drove deeply into the farm fields and seemed stable. So, the site was a rather large site of three or four hundred acres of farm fields, but [of] this a third of the site were these ravines. That's perfect, because what you could do is push that campus, early versions of the campus, up into those plateaus formed by the ravines and have immediate sense of place.

That was a good thing and they bought the site and we started in it. So, out of it came an assignment immediately. Would you go ahead as JJR and do the initial campus plan? Dove right into that. The first basic summation of a lot of early investigation was this chalk drawing. I love

to look at it because it was so expressive of what we were trying to do in terms of the ravines coming up and hugging the infrastructure of the campus, that they would be cheek to jowl.

The first versions of the campus, it was going to be a big university, the first pieces of it would be small by constraint, not by some desire to make them small per se, but they were constrained. Perfect size, about 30 acres for ravine plateau. Perfect kind of sub-campus to a great university. We knew that would be the case and developed the plan from that. I think that that diagram is particularly special and here it is. I hope you can show it.

That tells me, then, that the beginnings of the campus would be on that would gain quick approval by the students who went there. They loved the bridge that was built between two plateaus through the center of those mature beeches and trees. Here's the bridge. You know, you can sit here and look at the bridge. There it is. That was the first impression from the early visits to the site itself. There's the bridge. It was a delight.

From there, the campus began to accommodate a university that is surprisingly large. It's very extensive. I don't know the enrollment, but it's big. You can see it now today in all of its complexity. That was then beautiful because it allowed beyond the first skeleton of the plan, which you saw, it allowed a great number of different kinds of options on how a university could build out in the more open unconstrained areas of the site. A beautiful thing. Great opportunity. What a privilege we had to that early in our career. It was another one of the marks of distinction in our portfolio.

The Grand Valley initial plan was very much about the bones. Those bones formed the framework that because it was so strong and clear it was carried by the next series of planners



and designers and architects. They always carried that plan because it was so easy to carry. It was so clear. I think that's a good expression of a framework thinking that the clearer it is and the more simple and basic it is, the longer it will endure, the longer it will be carried by the subsequent people involved.

That relates to early, early, early. You can't get much earlier than being asked by the legislature to go find a place for this idea. Wow. I think that's true with a lot of landscape architecture assignments. That they do start with finding appropriate places. The site search. Many of us are involved with those early times. Take advantage of it. Get in there and clarify the long haul by these beautifully clear diagrammatic sketches of framework. It relates directly then to vision, the visioning process.

A framework diagram is very much a result of the vision that parallels it. The vision is clear. It's briefly stated. It's maybe one sentence and it describes everything about the future in those words. And the diagram matches that in terms of brevity and power and clarity. Clarity is so, so important in these early pieces.

### ***On Site***

What a delight it is to come back [to] a great campus like this knowing how the site was found being on that committee that found this landscape and then the framing the first campus piece of this university. It was a college then, Grand Valley State College. Then coming back and seeing how strong the early pieces were in the context of a really a great and growing university of enormous size. We never dreamed it would be this big, but we knew it was probable.

The basics were this, that the site chosen was equidistant between Grand Rapids, Muskegon, and Holland. That was somewhat of a given so that it was even and fair to the region. But, in that spot then and that general location what we were looking for was it had to be a greenfield site of farmed land yes, but we were looking for a discipline that would give early context, form, and intimacy to a small campus start. This is where we are now in this very spot in the middle of that beginning.

The idea was this, that these strong ravines coming up out of the Grand River Valley, very deep and full of oak and beech, mature, could be the way in which we could look at small pieces of meadow, plateaus, about twenty to thirty acres in size, a perfect way to form a campus that had a sense of smallness to it, even though it was in the middle of a grand greenfield site. Therefore, the ravines would be the forming nature of the plan and the service system, the infrastructure and the roads, would simply reflect that and the two would hook together cheek to jowl and one would enforce and inform the other. So, infrastructure and natural systems were at play. What a great idea.

The first indication of that was a little chalk drawing. I remember the night the drawing was done. It emulated this cheek to jowl association that I just mentioned. Beautiful little drawing. It attracted all those who reviewed it. It was approved in basic form. The first campus beginnings began to happen.

I remember the beginnings, of Bill Kessler and myself and my brother Carl coming out here and talking about what are the materials of buildings? At the time Bill was very, he was a Modernist, and he wanted something of the earth. The fieldstones that were part of the

vernacular in the farm country. It was agrarian. He picked the fieldstone as a feature. That piece of the language, I think, has been extended to other buildings as well. It's available supply. It's a good connector in a design sense.

The other connector is the land form. There was an interest in countering the flatness of this region because it is a farmland country with a more undulating earth form that helped to define walkway systems. When you see the plan that started and the plan today, that vernacular of meandering walkways, some broad, some narrow, is part of the connecting tissue of not only this first piece of campus, but when you look around the campus as a whole it exists just about everywhere. It's a nice way of having continuity.

As we discussed the building materials early in the game, Bill Kessler wanted very badly to have something of the earth to insert into the sort of Modernist thought that was in his mind about a building form. Very simple and rich in form. But the fieldstone was the thing that he chose to be of the earth, of the local area, ready supply, and be not only a feature of the buildings that were first designed, but would be available for use throughout the campus as the years went by. I think it's been used that way.

Bill Kessler was this great architectural artist of great skill. The buildings that you see in this portion of the campus are coming out of Meathe, Kessler [&] Associates. Then we, as a JJR firm finished the landscape details. So, immediately, almost immediately in the construction of four or five buildings it had a sense of completion. We knew that the great open farm land would be the base of future university development. We were hoping that these good bones to start with would carry the plan into the next 50 years.

Just a little note on the landscape. Some of the influences that were in my mind at the time and my brother Carl, we shared these thoughts, that the naturalness of the area and the ravines would make sense to follow with some of the things that we found dear in our understandings of the past in terms of openings and the gracious tree bounding spaces that happens in the early parks that we had studied.

The idea that these land forms, we called them lenses, and they happened quite a bit would be long and narrow and some short and different size and different heights, with trees coming out of them in a way of embracing space. That would be a language and it's popped up here and there and throughout our plan and I see it throughout the campus. So, that was another language.

### ***Continuity of Original Campus Plan***

And it was 50 years ago now and those bones are still recognizable. The road system is one of the early pieces of the bones that were so good and strong. I'm very encouraged that this beginning was a good solid beginning, as we thought it was at the time. As you come back now and take a peek at this, it still rings sound and beautiful.

One of the features of the plan was the bridge across a ravine because here was a chance to enter the ravine but not necessarily go down into it. You went through and saw it from above, just a beautiful feature to the first campus entity. It was very, very encouraging and it's turned out to be very wonderful.

It may be that what we started here in the first two campus pods that were [UNINTELLIGIBLE] next to the ravines, it may be that that vernacular might have been used

more throughout the campus. I don't know, but when a campus grows so big and the building programs are much bigger than the first sets of buildings, it's tough to hold those patterns. I think the walkway networks are the connecting tissue that are pretty strong.

In a large university like this one, the things that you look for are the things that unify and bring about a continuity, those simple natural pieces of form and the continuity of the walkways as part of that sense of bringing things together and making it a great university cohesive. We work hard on those things.

Here we are 50 years later than the beginnings of these buildings, Lake Huron Hall and Lake Superior Hall and the others, I can tell you that it's an emotional thing to see it. I have not been back a lot to see what has happened since these first days. I'm very encouraged. I'm just delighted with the way people seem to be walking through it and enjoying this spot. It still holds its original grace and intimacy and form. It's easy to understand it. It still holds. I go back to our point that we make so much in our field that if a place and plan has good bones, that continuity will endure. That's what's happening here at Grand Valley State. Good job, somebody.

### **Prairie Crossing - Grayslake, IL**

Countryside Landfill, at the time out of Houston, was the carrier. George Ranney [Jr.], an attorney, the husband of Vicki [Victoria Post Ranney] and the nephew of Gaylord Donnelley, was very, very strong and effective with Countryside Landfill, talked them into allowing a new permit if Countryside Landfill would abide by the outcome strategy that the designers would call for. If they would abide by a new way of finishing it up, they'd renew the permit.

There was a lot of money in that permit. He [Ranney] also arranged with Countryside Landfill that part of their profits would be devoted to rebuilding and creating a walkway network throughout the weed region to the tune of several million dollars. And they agreed to it. Pete and I went down to Houston and met with Countryside Landfill people. This is kind of new territory for Pete. He's not usually in there, but we tried hard to work out a way of forming the landfill that would match the terrain of that part of Illinois in the Grayslake area. It was gentle topography.

Pete had an idea that I really wish we could have done that this gentle form that I was promoting to kind of match the terrain of the area and then sort of make the landfill as a lump disappear. Pete was saying why don't you go the other way? It'll make ten homes, you know. You can imagine Pete doing that? That's a great one. I mentioned it to folks in Chicago and they were fearful of that kind of prominence, but it would have been fun.

### **Saitama-Shintoshin Station “Sky Forest” Plaza**

As Pete and I geared up to do the work that we meant to do in our concept of the partnership, two particular projects popped up that were memorable for me and very important. One was a competition in Tokyo centered around the complex of stadiums and gathering places of great sports events, a kind of a major urban complex in the center of Tokyo. The idea was to compete for a winning solution to a center that would be sort of the arrival awareness center for all of that complex, kind of an identity center.

During the visit and Pete and I went off to Tokyo and we gathered our Japanese crew that Pete knew about and we became a group of about six or seven folks. The idea that popped up

in Pete's mind, which is really a beautiful notion, of taking a piece of a nearby park, symbolically, figuratively, a square, and imagine picking up a piece of that green and transporting it to the center of this super urban complex pumping with activity, no green at all, and place this square of acreage of green in the middle of that and build a building on that vein of repeating that green including its soil layers on the edges of the building.

It was really an interesting idea. So, we went after how to explain that and to put it together. We filled two boards, as you can see in this photograph of sketches, and the diagrams and a little bit of narrative, not a lot of the narrative on how to think about that respite in the middle of this chaos. It worked. There were three or four hundred submissions as I understand it. We were notified when we got back to San Francisco that we'd won the thing and it's just a week's work. It wasn't much really, but it was clear and significant. So, the office went after that and did a beautiful job with others. Tom Leader was very much a part of that, and you can see his hand in it.

It was built. It's one of the things about the Pete Walker office and I experienced that when I joined it as a partner. Target down to completion, that was a theme of Pete's life actually. Complete it, get it done. Whereas I think in many ways when you're on the planning strategy end of the things, the completion often is the beginning of completion. So, there's a transition there and in the process between the large view and the targeted view there's a transition that goes on many times. Some do it all in our field and the others share it like we did. That project was significant. Saitama [Saitama-Shintoshin Station "Sky Forest" Plaza] it was called.

## Harima Science Garden City – Nishi-Harima, Japan

The other one was a garden city in the middle of the mountains called the Harima, I believe, Harima Science Garden City. The idea there was to build a city in the ravines between these great mountains. The tension was that the Japanese engineers and architects tended to say well, if you're going to work in the mountains, then you have to make flat spots. So, you cut the mountains off so you could work on a flat piece of ground. Here are these mountain stubs. Beautiful mountains just chopped off at the top and then you get buildings on it.

We were trying to think the connecting tissue for the ravines, they're full of the forest, the native forest, of course. And then these bottom of the ravines, the creases, were the transportation patterns and so on. Whenever roads would cross, we would call places. We tried to give dimension to the crossings of roads in the ravines. These became the places. There were many, many opportunities in those creases and crossings to build a community.

It didn't fully happen in terms of that clear clean pattern because there was still mountaintops that are ripped off and buildings in the middle, but it was a collection of some of the great architects in Japan at the time as well. Pete and the crew went on into great detail in that Harima Garden City with some very nice bamboo forested places that were just wonderful, mostly along the roads. The roads were the connecting tissues. Generally they were the dividing tissue, but we saw them as the unity. It was fun to do.

Those two projects were prominent in our work. Did many other projects. You know, the other day I thought how many projects have I been involved with? I started to count them up in



general. It's hard to note them in detail, but there are over a thousand projects. Isn't that remarkable? You see, the first one seems like yesterday. Isn't it amazing?

## **University of Washington Branch Campus/ Cascadia Community College -**

### **Bothell, WA**

I have a little example you might note. One of the NBBJ projects that came forth was an intent by the University of Washington to have a branch campus and that branch campus was directed by the state to include a local community college. The two would have to become married, a community college, small community college, [and] a major branch of a major university. The mindsets were very different and the need was a single plan on a very delicate piece of land adjacent to a community park of Seattle.

The approach at first was to do the due diligence to environment sensitivity. The architects and engineers quickly counted this one ridge between an upland and a bottomland as being crucial to protect, to stay away from it 69 feet at the top and 32 feet at the bottom. It was all measured and it was well done. It was a seepage bay. So that was set aside as a strip through the property. So the upland plains, and the bottomland was not wetland, were the two pieces they worked with.

There were different campus plans on the top and the bottom. All of them failed fundamentally because the two wouldn't allow a single plan because the centerpiece of a campus was not common to a community college and a great university. They're two different worlds, so we kept getting denials on various schemes of that sort.

One day a year and a half into this process, lots of money spent, an engineering group, aquatic engineers, were looking at the bank again and they just made a comment in our work session. You know we could take all that seepage and there are ways to pick that up lineal down this direction and pour it out into a basin that would solve that problem, but it would take some money.

Well, then another thought came up. Well, then, why not preserve the upper plateau, which was the remnants of a virgin forest, and the bottom, which was an old streambed about 40, 50 acres, and build a campus along that line? So, the campus then would have two ends for one and the other and the commons would be the stretch between, a rubber band. That's it. Aha. The campus then would replace the delicate little piece of preserved sensitive bank.

It would occupy that, rebuilt, but would then be reserved for perpetuity would be the remnant forest and to rebuild the hundred-year-old log flume into its former streambed of 50, 60 acres of virgin wetland and a new name called Wetland, which was introduced as opposed to opposed. So, you get the new campus, solve the problem of two ends, the library is in the middle of the line. It just fell into place.

That's about dialogue. To keep circling through dialogue and out come these crazy ideas if you're alert. Part of good results in a creative dialogue is to look for and expect answers to come and look for them, and that takes some training. I think you have to build a skill knowing how to spot an idea when it starts to form. And you know, as you do this work over the years, you get used to that.

You put little insignificant point A with little insignificant point B, which would be otherwise unnoticed. You put them together and you got the big one suddenly showing. It came out of nowhere, but it was there. Isn't that, that's amazing, but it takes preparation to look for those things. But you can get win-wins like that and it's exciting.

What I'm implying about the future is that we have ways and means of coming to grips with issues of all kinds and at every scale that we demonstrate and prove that have produced amazing results. Why not increase the scale of that to regional implications and nationwide thinking in terms of government regulations and so on, so that it's a creative part of that process and not leave it to bits and pieces as they arise. I think that's where we've got a revolution to come through and to somehow make that work better.

### **Snohomish County Campus, Everett, WA - NBBJ**

There was a need to expand in the downtown district of Everett, Washington, office buildings and a new jail, and attributes to that, that both those functions that would bring about accommodating all the new functions that were short on supply. But, more than that it was targeted on becoming sort of the center of the city.

The city struggled with the lack of a sense of place, a sense of center. This prospect suggests that the results of this could be the new center. As we'd begun to work it and I was working with NBBJ. They had the assignment. I was sort of the land/urban planning guru to help everybody else with what they were doing. I did these rather extensive downtown studies for context and putting it in the right place and all. It was very helpful. We came up on the idea of a

new front porch. We called it that because the views outward from that center city was wonderful into the Cascades and out across the flats.

The issue center to all this was that there was a great supply of built parking places in four and five levels already there. The folks who were anxious to do this kind of the expansion said it's well supplied with the parking. It's already there. We don't have to repurchase parking spaces. We're in the gravy here. But as you began to look at the area, you began to see that that parking structure system was obscuring every visual value that you could possible create.

There were some wonderful pieces of the historic architecture in terms of a library, an old city hall, neither of which could see other because of that structure. Finally, in trying to describe this, the implication was that you should remove the parking that's already there. Take it away and rebuild that. They were aghast at that idea. We've already got it. Why would we destroy it? The point was that you couldn't make place with it [the parking structure] there.

I had to illustrate that. This simple little almost primitive way of doing this, I put together a sketch made of about seven or eight layers that little piece by little piece I could build up the logic. I started with the view. With the parking structure in view and I took it away. Just removed it from the scene. It was a jolt. Because here we are standing in front of this beautiful historic library looking across now and seeing across kitty-corner for the first time the historic old city hall with its tower.

Now, it suddenly joined the family. We're here - that was dramatic. Then I added piece by piece as to what the program seemed to be suggesting, even a few of the lifted towers that were being thought about. Plugging them in. Very primitive drawing. I wanted to mainly show

the dramatic effect of removing this building and beginning to see the rather modest pieces added in terms of terracing and the underground parking structure as a dramatic renewal. It looks like a porch. It looked exactly like a big plaza overlooking the world. I made a sketch of that from the boat and it was very impressive. Folks said yeah, we've got to do this. And they did it.

They took out that structure immediately, began to think about the underground system and interestingly, the engineers felt that the best way to move up that grade, is a two-level grade, was a parking structure system that would be scissors. You'd scissor up. You're ramp up, ramp up, ramp up instead of flat portions that had to have connecting ramps at each end. A perfect way of moving up that slope.

So, we matched those ramping moves with terracing moves and you can see the effect of that in the eventual result of being a way of framing an outdoor arena. Small theatre-like setting for events made out of those scissor ramps. So, we turned the parking ramps into really park ramps. It was really easily perceivable. It was a delight because the engineering was so parallel to the environmental results we were seeking. It was accord immediately. The engineers who were designing the ramps were in delight that their moves were our moves. It was a good thing. It's all done. Everett is very much proud of their new front porch. And it was a great success.

### **Project Clarity - Holland, MI**

The new energy system that the city of Holland is considering and actually building right now as we speak is a state of the art improvements of an energy delivering system that is

probably second to none for a small city like this. It's a replacement basically of the coal-fired power plant. They call it a power plant that will be repurposed and become part of the opening to the shoreline development with a long-range future. But the shift has been across the downtown to another location that happens to parallel a water improvement strategy for the next 25 years in terms of the cleaning up of the river system, the Mackinac River.

They call it Project Clarity, paralleling, immediately paralleling the building of this energy park. So, energy, clean water, a new corridor of entrance from the freeway system into the downtown will be all part of that. All parallel. What this means to me in my terms is that I have the belief that anything that you can do to have infrastructure systems paralleling each other or overlapping each other where the same dollars will enhance the other is good common sense.

You do that whenever you can. Here it is, amazingly, in this small town, these big moves of multimillions of dollars side by side energizing each other in terms of enterprise. Wow, that's such good sense. Now, the new energy plant is now called the energy park. It's meant to be a green place on purpose. It's a beautifully designed new center.

These great turbines have just arrived from South Korea. They're now in place. You can see them rising up and they'll be quiet. Primarily a totally new improvement. The capacity is increased many fold. It will be a new source of supplying winter melting of snow on the well-travelled streets of downtown and some of the key walks that extend into nearby neighborhoods. They'll be forever free of snow and ice if the weather is sort of normal.

A snowstorm does overcome the heating system for a day or two, but it eventually melts. So, these are dry pavements in the middle of stormy weather. I find these things very amazing,

how they interrelate and they're part of a physical plant. They're part of a physical plant for the city. The corridor coming into the city will be shaped by this new energy park. It'll be a green park. It will be a park of distinction. There will be learning and awareness that will be emphasized in terms of environmental systems. It's just a great idea.

### ***A Problem-Solving Thing***

It's a good question and just I don't know if this is wanting to be on tape or not. I think it's a good question but I don't think it holds that it is a Michigan thing. That's a problem-solving thing. The reason for choosing these three projects was that they were easily available for us to look at and see. We can't easily go to Chicago and other parts of the country in this kind of a venture.

But I think what I'm talking about transcends any particular place. It's about the way you work. I think that is the thing that trumps particularly the place or that place. I don't see the great difference unless you get into the details of each unique situation that produced unique little answers in somewhat form-conscious ways.

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<sup>i</sup> Ian MacHarg (1920 – 2001) was a Scottish-born landscape architect who founded the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania. In teaching as well as in professional practice he advocated for an ecological approach to large-scale land planning. His book *Design with Nature* (1969) summarized many of his ideas about community design and regional-scale planning.

<sup>ii</sup> Here Johnson refers to Annie Dillard's 1974 work (33), "I cannot cause light; the most I can do is try to put myself in the path of its beam." (Dillard, Annie, and Tavia Gilbert. *Pilgrim at tinker creek*. New York: Harper's Magazine Press, 1974.)

<sup>iii</sup> James Richards is an urban designer who teaches freehand drawing classes for landscape architects and others in the United States and globally.

<sup>iv</sup> Holland’s Downtown Snowmelt was built in 1988 by the City’s Board of Public Works. It captures waste heat from local power generation and directs it through pipes built beneath the streets and sidewalks of the City’s downtown. The system helps to keep approximately 10.5 acres of downtown Holland free of ice and snow. (<https://www.hollandbpw.com/about-us/earthcare-community-projects/downtown-snowmelt>, accessed 12/2/2016)

<sup>v</sup> Bryant, Adam. Quick and Nimble. HarperCollins Publishers India, 2014.