

The Cultural Landscape Foundation®

Pioneers of American Landscape Design®

RICHARD HAAG

ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interviews Conducted

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The Richard Haag Oral History Transcript

This transcript documents two video interviews with Richard Haag. The initial seated interview which took place in November 2004 was conducted by Charles Birnbaum at the office of Richard Haag Associates, in Seattle, Washington. A second interview conducted by Nancy Slade at Gas Works Park, Bloedel Reserve, two private Seattle residences and the Haag home occurred in May 2013. The transcripts from these two interviews have been combined and organized to avoid duplication of information and to provide the fullest understanding of the material. The text is from the 2004 interview transcript unless otherwise noted. Cheryl Trivison provided invaluable assistance in all aspects of both of these interviews.

BIOGRAPHY

Childhood

Memories of Growing up in Kentucky

BIRNBAUM: Are there particular landscape memories that you have from that period? For example, you've talked in the past about Teddy Klein and Theodore Klein at Yew Dell. I've never asked you, for example, about the Olmsted Parks in Louisville, if you went to those as a young person.

HAAG: I'm glad you asked that. Because strangely enough when school was out, an aunt of mine, would take us (my two brothers and three sisters and me) to the big rock, the big rock in Cherokee Park. So I have very wonderful memories of catching fish and feeling under the

rocks to get the fish that were nesting there. And so here we were from the wild country, we had woods around us that were scary for a young person, there were caves in them. But to go to a civilized park like Cherokee Park, that was a really big deal, you know? And years later, I have a photograph of myself and six or seven of my children on that same rock.

Yeah.

BIRNBAUM: *They've been restoring that part of the park, recently.*

HAAG: Have they? I know they had a tremendous wind storm there that just devastated those pioneer trees, old trees.

BIRNBAUM: *In thinking about Cherokee park and how the Olmsteds laid so lightly on that land with the circulation system, I'm just wondering that you being from that part of the world, what did that mean to you?*

HAAG: Well, I'm sure I was subliminally, subconsciously influenced by the landforms. But the other seminal landscape that undoubtedly influenced me was the Bluegrass Country with the grass, the big white oak trees, the fences and the tobacco barns and things like that. So I had a very rich heritage, rich reminiscences of Floyd's Fork and Beargrass Creek. We would try to find out where the creek began, you know. These would be experiments we'd do as young kids, finding out where it began and where it emptied into the Ohio [River]. We had camps out in the woods under big beech trees and the cave camps and so

on. So my father really encouraged us to be outdoors and my mother was always trying to domesticate us. It was a great mix to be in. Sorry, I'm digressing here. And then my father did many river estates up along the River Road on the Ohio River where the really wealthy people of that time lived. And so I would go out with his crew of men and I would pick up the string and do all the things that little kids can do around the landscape installations, and learning propagation techniques, and about the greenhouses and everything.

Well, I don't know if this is important for public consumption or not, but it seems like a lot of my life I've been right at this kind of a apogee, where opposite things were happening, pulling me one direction and the other. So my mother was this very devout, openly organized religious person. My father was a pronounced, announced atheist. So I grew up reading Darwin as a teenager. I couldn't understand it but I'm reading *The Origin of Species*. And as a young child I was very sick and I couldn't sleep, so I would be propped up in a chair with leather-bound volumes of Charles Darwin.

Not a Typical Southern Life

BIRNBAUM: Louisville wasn't the Deep South. It was incredibly progressive, but it's also a community where, you know, the Olmsteds designed a park for people of color in the '20s. One of the things I wanted to ask you about, being from that part of the world, is did that play any role in shaping the way you think about public space? If you could speak to that context a little bit because I don't know of any other practitioner from this generation that came to the kind of national notoriety that hailed from the south. I mean there were people

that practiced in the south their whole careers like Robert Marvin for example but in terms of the sweep of your career, I don't know of another practitioner that came from that part of the world during that time.

HAAG: Well, I, to answer that question, I can't say that it influenced me from a form giving point of view but I was very aware of discrimination. This was, again, I'm right at the apogee because my mother was from kind of a landed aristocracy from the south, and my father was from German immigrants. He insisted on hiring 50% blacks, black men, and 50% white boys for our landscape crews for running the nursery and propagating in the greenhouse and so on. This has had some influence on me, I'm sure. I remember him insisting that when a black woman would come once a week to do the heavy lifting around the house, why that she would have dinner with us. Our schools were segregated. And I'm sure that I, not like most southerners which carry the civil war around as an albatross, I'm sure that it affected me so that I'm so against discrimination. Now how that affected my space, or landscape architecture, I don't know. I would rather surreptitiously visit the black part of Jeffersontown which was across the tracks. It was sort of the swept-earth approach there, you know. It was a very different domestic landscape. Yeah, but I don't have a good answer for you. I know it affected me sociologically, but as far as landscape, I can't answer. I never thought about it until now.

BIRNBAUM: *And so with Louisville sort of fresh in my mind and knowing that here was a city that actually designed parks for people of color that was really progressive.*

HAAG: At the same time, though, when the planners got their mitts on in Louisville, they cleared out all of the tenement houses, the slummy areas to redevelop it and that just killed the economy of Louisville for a long time. Then they did the usual thing with it and put in malls to bring in people.

Education

The United States Army

Lessons Learned from his Service

BIRNBAUM: *Well, one of the things that Laurie Olin encouraged me to talk to you about your time in the army. He said that, people have really talked about your later travels in Japan through the Fulbright. But in terms of other travels during that time, that there hasn't been much conversation about that. I want to give you the chance to speak to that if you'd like to.*

HAAG: The best part of that military experience was the places that I served even on States-side. This really opened my eyes because I'm just a country kid from Louisville. I was out at Smokey Hill Army Air Base in Kansas, and I was at Hobe Sound, where there was this secret camp in a piney wood, studying radar. And here I am moving around like that. And then on a troop ship that went to Casablanca. We were looking for Rick's Bar, of course. And the moving on to Egypt and arriving in India before our supplies came, so we had to literally build our own airfields and everything.

And then we were flying into interior China and India. Oh yeah, this is a wild adventure that I've mentioned in writing about nutritional horticulture. I thought, these Indians, they have such a limited vocabulary of vegetables and all. So my father prepared this care package of vegetable seeds, and with some villagers that I'd befriended, I went out and we planted a victory garden. This is the first Peace Corps kind of a deal. Nothing worked. I couldn't figure out why they didn't have tomatoes. The tomato vines grew 20 ft tall but the monsoon knocked the flowers off, so nothing worked. So here's this American kid going to teach these Indians how to do things. I think that's the value of the Peace Corps. It is what people bring back and not what they tried to take that is important. So you learn something about bureaucracy and all, too, which serves you well later as a landscape architect. In the army you learn some of those lessons. So there were high moments, going to the pyramids in Egypt and in India, going to the Taj Mahal and the Red Fort and so on. Yeah.

Well, one of the strong memories I have is seeking out gardens and arboretums and seeing the trees that I grew up with, the beech, the oaks and the maples growing in a tropical situation. You know, it is kind of mind-boggling. Just like my tomatoes, they were quite weedy and different trees altogether.

The University of Illinois

Discovering Landscape Architecture

BIRNBAUM: *So then, shall we move on to college and to Urbana? How did you, how did that come to happen?*

HAAG: Well, I never graduated from high school for one thing; I just enlisted before the end of my senior year. I think there were 13 accredited landscape architectural departments and so I wrote to all of them. And [the University of] Illinois said, well, you don't have a degree, you don't have a diploma, but come up and take some exams and we'll see. So I went up and took the exams for three afternoons and amassed I think 38 college credit hours. So they let me in.

BIRNBAUM: *How did you know about landscape architecture?*

HAAG: Well, my father had this nursery as I mentioned and he had specimen trees. I remember particularly well a woman named Annette Hoyt Flanders who came down I think from Philadelphia or Pittsburgh, somewhere on the East Coast. These landscape architects would come to my father's nursery and pick out specimen trees. And so as I said, we were out at the end of the interurban line, so we had to put them up. And at the dinner table and the breakfast table there would be these learned people. And my God, I said this is what I want to do. I want to do what they do. Of course I had a really silly idea of what landscape was about. I thought it was just dealing with plants and wealthy people. I had no idea. But I believe I knew at a very early age that that's was what I was going to do.

Stan White's Teaching Style

BIRNBAUM: *OK, so the [The University of Illinois at Urbana] school accepted you of course.*

HAAG: They did and it was a little awkward because it's kind of like mid-term period or something. And then I ran into Stan White, he was one of the all-time great teachers. He was the greatest. He was the teacher that taught the introduction [to landscape] and landscape design courses.

BIRNBAUM: *So were you using Hubbard and Kimble? I mean, what were you using for a text?*

HAAG: We were mainly using mixed pickles; no we were mainly using Stan White. The course didn't seem to be based on any particular thing; although he would mention certain people that he had worked with and worked for. But he was just a genius that could get you to really think and feel and emote about the profession and how to approach it. In a very romantic kind of a loose way, he'd just be pulling you and pushing you. Some of his antics in the rooms, in the drafting rooms they've got to be retold and recorded at all time.

BIRNBAUM: *Tell us a favorite.*

HAAG: My favorite. [LAUGHTER] Well, I think it was a time when we were doing all-nighters. That's inevitable in a design studio; you know this from doing them. It was midnight or something, and Stan comes in, he's all dressed up, he's been to the symphony or something like that. He comes in and we were all slaving away there. And this one student had inadvertently spilled a cup of coffee on his drawing, over his stretched German watercolor

paper. So Stan just grabs another cup of coffee and goes up to the top of the board and just pours more coffee and just starts laying a wash over all of the student's work. That's one.

Another time, maybe the same night, another student who was very meticulous, and used his desk brush all the time, he never got any graphite on his drawing or anything. Stan just came in and looked at his drawing and just went down to the floor and went all over the floor with his hands. And of course in those days, everybody smoked, cigarettes were smashed on the floor, he gets his hands like this, and he goes to the guy's drawing and he just goes all over this drawing. And the student is about to die, and then Stan gets an eraser and pulls out the highlights. Well, that was just some of his gimmicks or tricks that he did. He was a really trickster, a coyote person.

Summer Travels with Stan White

BIRNBAUM: *Now I know that you went on a trip with Stan White, too, didn't you?*

HAAG: Yeah, I did, I finally got my mustering out pay from the army and I bought a war surplus jeep. It cost 500 dollars or something like that. I thought I'd do the grand tour on my own. So Stan was up for it. Stan went with his wife to Brookline, MA and so I met him up there and then we had about two weeks off. We went up to visit his brother, E.B. White, the great, New York writer. And we met Buckminster Fuller [who lived] across the field. Oh we just had a wonderful time camping out along the road and trying to drive up Blue Mountain in a jeep. We got into all kinds of crazy hijinks together. We stopped by Harvard and met Ian McHarg, working and slaving away. He took me out for a beer. He just put his work aside.

He was working on a dual degree in planning and landscape. Even though he was a complete stranger to me we went over to the [Harvard] Square and drank beer. And we went to the museums and Arnold Arboretum, at Harvard. So that was a great experience, touring New England with Stan White. And then a couple of summers, or was it the next summer, anyway, later I went with Hideo Sasaki in the same open jeep driving from Champaign Illinois all the way to California.

Lessons from Hideo Sasaki

HAAG: Talking about Hideo Sasaki and some early projects [I think] you are talking about Stoddard Acres. I know he did that when he was a young design teacher at University of Illinois. He was a master at grading and site-planning and nobody could touch him, probably not even today, nobody. There was an architect named Jurgen, he never used that name, though. He was always J. Edward Luders. I had the privilege of working with him one summer with Hideo. And we won a national competition for the Junior Chamber of Commerce headquarters to be built in Kansas. We worked on that nights in the courthouse in Champaign, Urbana, the courthouse that Lincoln had cases in. But anyhow, Hideo had met Luders at the SOM [Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill]. He'd worked there in the summer for Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, Chicago. And then Luders designed a house, I think it was the first house built in that project [Stoddard Acres] ; he designed everything oversized. He had been in landscape architecture. But his wife, I think her first name was Mary Vance, was the librarian at Illinois for years. She was to Illinois as some librarians are here to the

University of Washington or Harvard, they know everything and they just hold the whole thing together. They're unsung heroes.

But then, as I was saying, one summer I worked for Hideo. Hideo, I and my new bride, we lived in a lake cottage there in Greenville, Michigan designing an estate. It was maybe 40-50 acres. I'm just stuck. I don't know what the hell I'm doing. And you know, Hideo just said I'll show you what to do. Now if Eckbo were designing this estate, this is the form he would give it. And then he said; now this has got to be a little Thomas Church here. You know, he's go through all the big names, the big stylists, and then he'd says and this is what I'm going to do. It might have some remnant parts of the others, but it would still be a Hideo Sasaki project.

Lessons from Flora Bell Robinson

BIRNBAUM: *One of the things that strikes me about a lot of the other California folks, you mentioned Geraldine Knight Scott, but in terms of the people that knew their plants did you know, Ralph Cornell and Kate Sessions and Lester Roundtree?*

HAAG: No, I studied plants at Illinois under Flora Bell Robinson.

BIRNBAUM: *Did you use her flashcards?*

HAAG: Yeah. I have her cards downstairs. I was going to do a pin file deal where you stick a pin through, so you could pull out all of the hardwoods and all of the softwoods and so-on. It was a pre-computer crazy idea. I had the idea that I could take the rim of our four-by-five cards and punch all these holes in them, and then run a pin through there and pull out all the ones that have white flowers or are deciduous or easy to transplant or whatever. But of course, I had the advantage over even Flora Bell because of the nursery. If you really want to know plants, you have to grow them, take them from cuttings, grow them from seedlings and know how they perform. You know Flora Bell Robinson knew her plants pretty well, yeah.

BIRNBAUM: *Are there things when you look back on both Hideo [Sasaki] and Stanley White that you really took away? Or are there any particulars that you can point to, whether it was a project that you experienced together, or something that you learned from them as a student?*

HAAG: Well, again, back to that point I was making before about being where the action is, when I had both of them at the same time that was a marvelous kind of a Zen ying-yang kind of a thing. Stan was idiosyncratic and free-minded and then Hideo was very rational, and he could set out the principles of design, or at least principles of site planning. And Stan [White] would say, you can't teach design, there's no way you can teach it. What you can do is show examples, and you can energize and motivate someone. So to be at that crux there between the romantic and the scientific, that was really a wonderful experience. To be

pulled one way - great architecture is past us, and modern architecture is pulling us to the future. So it was like living with my mother and father who were on opposite poles of religiosity; and you get to choose and you get to learn. You really can match actions against words.

BIRNBAUM: *That's great.*

HAAG: I was lucky.

University of California at Berkeley

Hideo Sasaki Helps him go to Berkeley

BIRNBAUM: *Tell me about your first meeting with Hideo Sasaki.*

HAAG: I met Hideo Sasaki, when I was in the hospital [at the University of Illinois] having had my appendix removed. He came to visit me. He looked me up, you know, and was so worried that I was missing his first classes. He brought me my work to do it. Yeah, that was my first meeting [with him].

BIRNBAUM: *What year was that?*

HAAG: Yeah, it was '48. I started in '46, so it was '48. He taught at the University of Illinois for two years and then he moved on to Harvard. I said to him, "I'm dissatisfied here; I want

to go to California where all the action is.” And he said, “Yes, that’s what you should do.” So he helped get me into the program at the [University of California] Berkeley. And we drove out there together.

I got in that department and that was a tough go because there was [Robert] Royston and Geraldine Knight Scott and Punky [Leland H.] Vaughan and the students had all bonded for three or four years. Here I come and I am a newcomer. It was a good experience for me, though. And then we did that famous thing they used to do, and maybe they still do- the tours of the Thomas Church gardens and [Garrett] Eckbo gardens. Hideo [Sasaki] took those tours with me. And then he went on to Harvard. I finished and I worked for him that summer and then joined him at Harvard, because my education was an unfinished thing. So Harvard was necessary. And but I think the shining light at Berkeley was that I saw some nice small gardens of Geraldine Knight Scott and a lot of Thomas Church gardens in Atherton and down the peninsula..

One of the highlights that I remember was that during the first year I was at Berkeley, the American Society of Landscape Architects had their annual meeting at Ojai, California. And I have a photograph downstairs somewhere in the archives of all the people who were there standing on three steps. [Ian] McHarg is there, Hideo [Sasaki] is there, Stan White is there and so on. That was the profession then at that meeting. Of course, the native landscape of California was just outrageously exciting for me. Because here I’d been in the East, even before McHarg, you know, and you’d get off the bus out in the Connecticut River Valley and

you didn't see anything. But you go to California or Washington State and my God, there are lava beds and the surf is pounding in Big Sur country and the Redwood Forests and the mountains. Oh, my God, it's really something.

Straddling the Change from Beaux-Arts to Modernism

BIRNBAUM: Let's not leave Berkeley yet and we'll go to Harvard in a minute. Because the thing that I'm kind of curious about is, you know you have [Tommy] Church and [Garrett] Eckbo who are both ultimately consulting on that campus. And I mean it's a few years before Tommy Church does the Long Lane Development Plan in 1962 at Berkeley. But clearly it was a campus that was moving from what was a Beaux -Arts campus to It was sort of overtaken by the automobile.

HAAG: Yeah, that's something we haven't talked about. There was the whole shift from Beaux - Arts [to modernism]. So again I was at that kind of crux. Because [it was just] like at Illinois where they were still wanted you to do [draw] villas; and in fact even at Harvard, there was still one element that [wanted] you to draw all of the Italian villas before you could think of becoming a landscape architect. So that's another one of these cruxes that was in my educational background. I was straddling those two

BIRNBAUM: No, this is great. I think one of things that's interesting is people constantly point to the Pencil Point [articles] . But the more I talk to people that were there then, there are fewer and fewer people that really knew about them. It seems to me that it was a small

group, you know, sort of a Gropius/ Hudnut mafia at Harvard [that knew about them]. But in terms of the larger profession, was that something that you were aware of, at [the University of Illinois], Urbana or [University of California], Berkeley?

HAAG: You know how books are often a kind of a touchstone that really influences your life. It was Christopher Tunnard's book [for me]. However, I do have in my files a copy of those Pencil Point articles, those two or three articles, by [Garrett] Eckbo and [Dan] Kiley and James Rose. So I was aware of them. That probably came from Hideo. But I remember Stan White would be putting [Garrett] Eckbo's [ideas] on contemporary design down. And a trick that he showed was us, I still use it today. He would have a plan of a Villa Lante, and then he's have a Garrett Eckbo plan in a book, and he'd get a mirror, and he'd put the mirror there so he would double the image of Eckbo's plan. So his point was, they were just taking snippets of classical design.

BIRNBAUM: *You know, Larry [Halprin] said the same thing, by the way, about [Christopher] Tunnard as well.*

HAAG: Is that right? Yeah.

BIRNBAUM: *In fact, when he did a little slideshow for us, he included a couple of images from Tunnard.*

HAAG: I'll be darned. Yeah, it's amazing isn't it? And then there was another book, it was a French publication a big format magazine, but it showed gardens of some of the early French landscape architects that were using mirrors in the landscape and very geometric forms and illusions of space and things like that. I have it somewhere in my files.

BIRNBAUM: *So in terms of Berkeley, was any of the early [Garrett] Eckbo work for the Farm Administration considered?*

HAAG: I know that who thought very highly of that work was [Hideo] Sasaki. Sasaki introduced that to us, I know that.

BIRNBAUM: *Did Tommy Church come in and lecture, did you visit his office?*

HAAG: I barely knew him.

Harvard

[The following material is from the 2013 interview]

SLADE: *So let's talk about your Harvard years.*

HAAG: Harvard. Well, it was painful, but very positive. It was something I had to do, because I was unfinished after Illinois and California. I didn't have any confidence in my

ability. I kept asking Hideo Sasaki, you mean you can really make a living in this profession?

And he said, "Sure, if you provide a public service".

Actually the way I got in to Harvard is really maybe a back story. I was promised to be a lead designer planner for a small town up in Wisconsin. And the man that offered me that position but he kept me on a string and kept saying, well, I don't have the contracts in order. Just wait a few weeks, wait, wait, wait. And I waited, and then I'd call him, and he said not ready yet.

I shouldn't use his name, because many of you would know him. But I said, look, if I don't hear something positive, I'm packed. If I don't go up to Wisconsin to take on this project within two weeks, I'm going to go to Harvard. I'm going to, forget you. And that was a threat, an idle threat. And by gosh, I had to telephone Hideo Sasaki, and I say, Hid, I'm really up the creek here. Can you help me? Is it possible you could get me in? So he got me in there somehow. And it was three weeks after the quarter had started. And I had to play catch-up.

But I was not impressed with Harvard. No, I thought, I had better teachers at Illinois and California. The students here, were mostly all graduate students, but many from other fields. And anyhow, adjusting, getting in sync with them was good for me, I'm sure, in the end, but it was very painful at the time. As far as teachers, why, as I said, Hideo Sasaki was, again, my mentor and teacher. And I was happy to be able to spend more time with him.

Walter Chambers was a tyrant. He wouldn't graduate me even though my terminal project was really interesting. But he wouldn't graduate me because he said there was not enough landscape construction, engineering in that project. So I spent another three months there doing a project, all engineering. I designed the sewage, the roads, the water all of that. I was so determined to overcome this, to show off [to him]. Damn you Chambers, I can do this. It turned out to be wonderful, because I was able to work with Elbert Peets on an extension of one of his green towns, green villages.

But I did everything by Leroy. This was a mechanical way to letter, rather than just hand-lettering things. Anyhow, I passed out of that.

But Walter Gropius was there, and his crew from the Bauhaus. And I actually spent more time in his studio than some of his students, because I hung out there. I was an indentured slave to many of his architects on their terminal, or on their thesis projects. And I would be their landscape architect and help them with siting, and you know, putting the parsley around the turkey, as we used to say.

Remembering Fellow Students

And as far as students there, there was a man named Frank Schlesinger. And he and his wife Gene had a young boy who we babysat in our classes at Harvard. He was always bumming coins to go to the Coke machine. That kid was always high. And I remember he ran around

in a coonskin cap, because that was the year that Kefauver was running for president. I think he was out of Tennessee.

Anyhow, let's see in my terminal project I had only six people elected to help me, but four, four of those were architects in training at Harvard and two were architects from MIT who got permission to switch into Harvard to work on my terminal project.

But let's see. Richard Vignola was there. I had known him previously from the University of California, Berkeley. Let's see. There were some famous, a man that did the Grandville Island repurposing. His father was a famous actor that played Abraham, the role of Abraham Lincoln. I'll think of it before the interview is over, I promise you. Let's see. What else.

SLADE: *Bob Zion? Was Bob Zion there?*

HAAG: Oh, oh yeah, Bob and Beatie Zion were just presenting their terminal project when I arrived. And I went to all the presentations. One of the really great things about Harvard was the Tuesday night lectures. And of course, the East Coast, that's where all the brainpower is. They would have a wonderful lecture every Tuesday night. So that was a must, must go to them

So, oh yeah, and Ed Daugherty he was there. He gave his terminal project, which was designing a park around the famous granite sculpture of Stone Mountain. This is a park outside of Atlanta. He's presenting his scheme, and we're all sitting around including Gropius and Hideo, and in come this couple in blackface. And it's Bobby and Beatie Zion criticizing Ed Daugherty for, you [know being a] whitey designer. So there were quite a bit of hi-jinks at Harvard.

Oh, and one thing I will tell you about Harvard, too. I think every incoming class they had to make a model. And I remember, they'd have all of these models and they'd bring them out for the new students coming in. They would be like models like Rockefeller Center, to scale of maybe one inch equals 20 feet or so. And then next to that would be an African kraal. I think that is what it is called, a village of huts inside of a fence. And they would have all of these models of these habitations,. it was just mind-boggling to see the works of man.

Travels with Hideo Sasaki

HAAG: All right. Hideo and I we were good friends by this time, of course, after our time in California and Illinois. And one weekend he drove up and woke me up and said, "Let's, just take a drive. Let's drive down to Connecticut and mosey around". I said, "oh great, OK".

So he said, come to think of it, I'd like to go back and meet my old friend, [George] Nakashima. Nakashima had gone to Harvard and was a furniture designer now. He is very famous. His daughter's carrying on his work. And he says, "oh well, New Canaan, is where

Philip Johnson's glass house is". So we tootle in there about 9 o'clock in the morning. We drive up there, and jump out with our cameras, and who comes rushing out of there just using one expletive after another but Philip Johnson, the owner.

Can you imagine how stupid, or brash, unthinking, uncaring we young Turks were? And then Johnson's friend comes out of another building. It was really like a cave. He was a lighting engineer. He comes out and says, "What's all the fuss about"? And you know Philip's flouncing around there in his bathrobe saying, "How dare you come in"?

And then we went on to Nakashima's house and spent time with him. I knew that Nakashima had been educated in Japan. And the connection here is that later, when I knew I had the Fulbright, I wrote him a letter and said, "Hey, I have a Fulbright. I am going to Japan, what should I do"? And then I got a letter back on his letterhead where he had scrawled, *keep your eyes open*. And that was the best damned advice I could have been given. Yeah, I did. I did. I tried to keep my eyes open.

[End 2013 interview]

Summers Working with Dan Kiley

BIRNBAUM: *Should we move on to Harvard, then? Is that? You want to move on to Dan next? What would be appropriate?*

HAAG: Yeah, when I went to Harvard Hideo was teaching there. And he saved my bacon, because I got in there a couple months late but he got me in and nurtured me. Just before the summer break, we drove up to [Daniel Urban] Kiley's place and he introduced me to Kiley. I got a job there working with Kiley for that summer and the next summer. He was first at Franconia Notch, New Hampshire then he moved over to Shelburne, Vermont [and later to Charlotte, Vermont] where died many years later.

BIRNBAUM: *So tell me about that experience, what was the office like? What were the projects in the office then?*

HAAG: I was so impressed with Kiley and his rustic way of living. His office was in a ski loft above a barn. It was infested with fleas. Anyhow, he had a big potbellied stove and my job first thing in the morning was to take all of the mail, the junk mail that had come the day before, and start the fire to get that place warmed up, it is after all Franconia Notch, New Hampshire. Kiley had been preaching that everything is so simple; everything in life is so simple, simple. So the first project he gives me is to design this complicated water fountain for a Dr. Benjamin Fein in Philadelphia. I remember it to this day. I had no idea of how to design a fountain with complicated plumbing and pumps and everything. Life is simple, design is so simple. And I remember one thing he had and I've used it a few times. This guy had a real steep lot and big oak trees, and so he went out from the second floor and built a bridge right out into those oak trees. You know, wow! It's a great idea.

BIRNBAUM: *How big was the office then?*

HAAG: There was myself and then a young architect named Rod Carmosina. I don't know what's happened to him, but of course through that summer we got very bonded. Kiley would be gone for long periods of time. I was there when Kevin Roche called and wanted to talk about designing this atrium garden in the Ford Foundation. Yeah, I remember those conversations. Kevin is saying, "we'll have ozone, it'll work, Dan, it'll work, we can have a New England forest in this building." And Dan is scratching his head and finally Dan says, "yeah but Kevin, is it going to thunder and lightning in there"? [LAUGHTER] Oh boy. Anyhow, that was a great experience working there yeah. ,

BIRNBAUM: *Now, because we've kind of covered Dan and we've also talked about the California school and that period, I mentioned earlier that I wanted to ask you if you've ever been to the Miller and the Donnell Gardens.*

HAAG: You're going to stop the interview; I've never been to either.

BIRNBAUM: *Really?*

HAAG: Really, yeah. I used to go from Illinois through Columbus all the time and in later years, too, because it wasn't too far from Louisville. So I know, I knew the elder Saarinen's buildings there and some of the really great buildings there, but I have never been to Sonoma, to Donnell, and I've never been to the Miller garden.

BIRNBAUM: *Yeah. So you went back a second summer to Dan's office, I mean what were the big projects in the office then?*

HAAG: A big project the second summer was Kitimat British Columbia. It was a new town that was built [by the Aluminum Company of Canada (Alcan) during the 1950s. I don't know what happened to that. Another project I remember working on with him, which I thought was a wonderful project, was for an architect, Oscar Stonorov. I never met him but I would have long conversations with him by telephone. It was a housing project in Philadelphia. They took a block and took all the backyard fences down and made a common space out of the backyard, a real garden for everyone. Yeah.

Reflections on Harvard

BIRNBAUM: *Now, did you keep in touch with someone like Bob Zion? One of the things that I find interesting is that both of your guys had your own nurseries in your professional careers.*

HAAG: I didn't even know he did that. Well, like I said, Harvard was really tough on me. My first child was born there. I was very poor, the G.I. bill had run out, and Harvard was very good about giving me assignments to draw graphs for doctors and things like that to help pay the bills.

BIRNBAUM: *Were there any other people coming around that were influential in the program, or people that were on the faculty back then? Did Fletcher Steele come around?*

HAAG: Actually, no. Sidney Shurcliff was at the third year, he would come around. And well, I thought, I guess it's all right to say this now, I thought the landscape department was really weak except for construction which was ferociously strong. You'd have to design a cloverleaf and grade it and everything, you know. So I hung out in [Walter] Gropius' studio most of the time and just worked for his graduate students giving them landscape service.

BIRNBAUM: *Larry [Halprin] told us the same thing, you know.*

HAAG: So I, it was a tough love situation. And it was overrated, Harvard was. [LAUGHTER] but they supported me. And the last project which was to design Block Island, Rhode Island, design what Block Island, Rhode Island wants to be. And my scheme was so radical, but they still supported me. And I give them a lot of credit. They even gave us \$400 from these wealthy developers who were using Harvard as an idea tank to see how to get their lease holds and convert it into Monte Carlo, or something like that. I owe Harvard a great deal; I'll never be able to repay it. But it wasn't my happiest years, I'll tell you. Harvard really still does support me much better than anybody else, you know.

And the final project I did at Harvard was really necessary for me. It gave me the confidence that I could put any size project together by getting the right people around me and

breaking the project down. It was a Hideo trick of breaking it down into increments that you could deal with.

Fulbright

Winning a Fulbright Scholarship to Japan

HAAG: I went to say goodbye to the department Chairman Lester Collins, and thank him for Harvard's support. He said, "oh look Rich, here is a stack of applications for a Fulbright to Japan. They just came in maybe you would want to take one of these". So I said "sure". OK, so I took it, and forgot about it.

I went to Louisville, Kentucky and I worked for Miller Wihry, Camp Miller. And oh I did a disastrous thing on my own. I was the site planner and landscape architect for The United Mine Workers' hospitals which were to be built in Appalachia. I went out there and did the site reconnaissance. I asked the old timers how high the floods got and I almost got shot as a revenuer. Oh that was a wild summer there in the Appalachia. Then I went and got a serious job with Miller Wihry, Camp Miller doing feasibility, economic feasibility studies for shopping centers and subdivisions and shopping center design. But I was right, they all failed after they built them. But anyhow, this was such a bad experience that I said, "Where's that application [for the Fulbright]"?

So I filled it out and sent it off. And lo and behold, I was selected. So I was in the first group that went to Japan from the United States, there were about fifteen of us I think. Norm

Carver and his wife happened to be one of those. He was a Yale trained architect and he and I became good buddies and comrades and traveled extensively through Japan, photographing and just relaxing.

One thing, I didn't know was what I was going to find there. I had a real limited idea about Japan and Japanese gardens and all. So, on my application I specifically said, I am not going to Japan to measure and photograph the classical gardens. That had all been done. I'm going to study biotic balance, which is the stress of a growing population on a given landmass.

So anyhow I wrote to George Nakashima who I knew just very slightly from visiting him with Hideo [Sasaki]. And I said, I'm going to Japan, what should I do, what should I look for? And he writes back on his letterhead, "Keep your eyes open". And that was the best advice that anyone could give you. So that's what I did, I relaxed. But it influenced my life. I had a kind of epiphany there about design. But it didn't exclude some of the mean approaches I'd learned at Harvard, it was inclusive, but it was much more detailed and all. But anyhow, the Zen philosophy really changed my life, my attitudes about economy, about consumption and religion. And I'm not a Zen person. I wouldn't be a Zen person. There's a lot about it I don't like, I think it's very kind of self-indulgent to be a monk and so on. But it's a lot more than just breathing exercises, I'll tell you that.

Boy, I know in Japan I developed a reverence for old things and old ways and old methods there. I remember seeing a stone with a Shinto-ish rope around it and saying what's that?, Well God, it's just a fantastic stone. Or that old tree, well it's an old tree. You know, it was that stupid that I didn't see the soul of that relationship or that object. So I think maybe some of that did come from my observations in Japan.

BIRNBAUM: *Do you want to say anything else about Norm Carver? We kind of glossed over that.*

HAAG: Yeah, well, his book, *Form and Space of Japanese Architecture* that came out of that experience. It was the first of his series of books about indigenous architectures, and I think it remains the classic. A lot of his ideas about how Japanese architecture evolved are cockamamie ideas, but he did have an eye, and he did really understand spacial characteristics and economy of means and all that. So it influenced my design a great deal. It took me toward minimalism.

Mostly I roamed the countryside, very deeply involved in the agriculture. I was decided that rice was the most, single-most important activity of the Asian culture. The culture of rice was behind dance, drama, painting, architecture. And I could give you a nice lecture to make that point.

So I became very involved in folk architecture, pottery, and the old things that had survived in the back country of Japan, and down in Kyushu.

[Following material is from the 2013 interview]

HAAG: Yeah, I think that two-year experience in Japan was extremely important to me and to my development. It changed my life, it changed my attitude. It actually, was kind of a return to many of the maxims or ideas, the approach to life that my father had. He was, unknown to him, he was a monk. He was a Zen priest. And so I was imbued with that spirit, you know, subliminally probably before I went to Japan.

I was able to immerse myself in Buddhism. Not that I practiced it, but its precepts, the economy of it, the non-striving [appealed to me.] It is a term that I use a lot in design and teaching to reduce elements, landscape, and experiences, to their absolute minimum. And yet I was impressed by this [idea of] distillation, this concentration of emotion. It's more emotion than intellect; it's more feeling than thinking. So I was impressed by the pottery and the architecture and the honesty.

And many of the expressions I still use today. One of my favorites is from the man who was director of the folk art institute and foundation. And here it is. A thing, it might be a bowl; it might be a hammer, whatever, but a thing that cannot be used has something negative in its beauty. Now, think about that. He's not saying it's ugly. But take Mr. Chihuly here in Seattle with his glassware. It's so fragile, you really can't use it. It has no utilitarian worth. So

that's a good lesson to give people. Another Japanese expression is repetition. Through repetition, by repeating and repeating you wait for inspiration.

So there are. Those are the Zen things. And they are exhibited in the Zen temple gardens. I have a pretty darn good visual record of those. I spent many hours at Saiho-ji. It had a great influence on me. [Walter] Gropius came to Japan on a sabbatical when I was there, and I was able to spend face time with him, walking time, hiking, going to shops. And that's all going to be covered in Thaisa's [Way] book to some extent.

[End 2013 interview]

Practice

Finding Work after Japan

HAAG: Returning [from Japan] I was on the same boat, the Hikawa Maru it was the only boat that had survived the war. It was the only Japanese passenger ship and I think it was built in '23, the same year I was born. The trip took two or three weeks.

I came to Seattle and that's when I first met Fred Bassetti. And later, of course, I came back to start a Department of Landscape Architecture. But at the time there was not work here. Bill Teufel and Glen Hunt who were the two practicing landscape architects in Seattle were very generous with their time. They took a day off and drove me around, showed me their projects. But there was no work here.

In the end I felt time was passing me by, I had stayed two terms. I actually had to get a job over there to get passage back. And I had the strange idea, Charles that I would come back to this country, after two years and I'd go to California and I would take Japanese principles of design and would come up with a whole new California landscape architectural form. And that was stupid.

BIRNBAUM: *But you did go to California, right?*

HAAG: I did go to California.

BIRNBAUM: *And you went to work with Larry after that.*

HAAG: Yeah, I went to work with Larry. And that's when I did that case study house which had a lot of minimalistic things and Japanese special qualities, shadow and depth and distancing. But I was silly because the California clients wanted their Edens. They wanted their swimming pools. They were bringing in the water from Shasta or the Hechy Hechy or whatever, they were not going to go for a real Zen approach of just using natural and indigenous materials and such. So that was a silly thing.

BIRNBAUM: *One of the things in all this is the War, and I'm just wondering does this create a bond of any kind in terms of social concerns? –*

My war experiences were so different from Larry's. I was behind the lines, and I saw the war from a different point of view. I know that the planes that I was calibrating the radar for went in there and just blew the hell out of things. But I had a little different take on it. So I don't know, we never really talked about that. Those were pretty personal things, I suppose.

Working for Lawrence Halprin

[The following material is from the 2013 interview]

I called my friends in Berkeley. Don Carter had been a classmate of mine, and Jean Walton, and Richard Vignola, and Sat Nishita. These were all classmates of mine. That would have been the year 1949, 1949 and '50 at UC Berkeley. They were classmates. So I called up Vignola or Don, and they said, "Come on down here, there's plenty of work in San Francisco". So I actually got my first job with Ted Osmundson, at Osmundson and Staley. I worked on shopping centers and malls and things like that. I also worked on private residences, with Ted Osmundson. I can tell you a lot of good stories about Ted.

But after a while, why, I kept getting these calls from Larry [Halprin], and he said, "come on, you have to come over here". He was interested in my Japanese experience and all, I'm sure. So I jumped ship and went to Larry's and joined this crew of former students that spent a year with at Berkeley.

Larry Halprin's office at that time was on Beech Street, just above the Maritime Aquarium. It was a wonderful location. We had the back office and Campbell and Wong had the front one. Oh, here's a story about that time. Larry is quite well established at the time and so are Campbell and Wong who were a couple of California architects. But what would happen was that when some influential or some prospective client would come in, we would all go over to Campbell and Wong's office. And we would be busy over the drafting tables. And then when some wealthy or influential or potential client would come to Larry's, Campbell and Wong would send their draftsmen over and we would occupy ten tables instead of seven. And Larry would just open the door and say, "everyone is so busy with their work, but you know, we could take another project". So I learned so many of those kind of wonderful lessons from Larry. He was a very, he was very much of a showman. He was a showman to the end, a real character.

And I had my problems with Larry. I remember we drove to Sacramento, and he said, "well Rich, you've been here three or four months now, what do you think of my practice"? And I said, well Larry, it's great, but you dominate everything so much. I never see the client expressed in your product. And he was, "well wait a minute. They come to me because of my product, my process, and my work". And so, you know, I made a lot of faux pas like that.

One time, Larry comes in and he says, "Rich, you know, we have to go up to Sacramento to present our concepts for our community college. So bring the slides". And I said, "Slides"?

And Larry said, "Yes, I left word for you to put together a group of slides which we could talk

over, and make sure that our concept is on target". I said, "Larry, there's a screw-up here. I have no slides". So he says, "goddamn it, get some slides". And I said, "What"? He said, "We have to leave. Just grab a tray of slides". So, OK, I did.

And we went up there. And we're setting up in this big board of regents room, the screen and the projector are there. And Larry says, "Give me the slides, Rich". [I am going] "OK". So I said "oh my God" as he dumped all the slides all over the table and on the floor. He had these regents down there picking up the slides. And he said, "oh, I had this really great presentation that we put together for you, but hell, we'll just have to wing it, won't we Rich"? Oh boy.

HAAG: So these were my old compatriots, and they welcomed me aboard the ship there. Jean Walton, she was the plant expert. And because, I had studied California plants too, I thought I knew as much about plants as Jean. But anyhow, I didn't try to depose her from her responsibility. Larry ran a very wonderful kind of office. You were like assigned a project, and you probably would visit the site with him and nearly in every case, spend a few hours while he would be sketching.

And there didn't seem to be so much client interface, as I said, his works were his works. And then he would do a preliminary conceptual sketch [I hope, I'm sure they're there in his archives. And someone ought to do a study of those sketches], but to a neophyte landscape architect, they were some kind of phantasmagoric doodles. And he would give this to you

and say, “Draw this up, you know, draw this up. Draw this to scale. Make it work. Get the grades. Put the elevations on it”. And oh we would say, “OK Larry”.

The other people in his office were veterans by now. I had gone off to Japan for the two years, and I had missed another two or three years at Harvard, so by this time, they had four or five years of working with Halprin. They knew the ropes. And so they would say, “come on Rich, don’t fight it. We’ll help you”. And they were so gracious of their time. I remember, for instance, I tried to, tried to finesse taking the California examination to become licensed. And I tried to get grandfathered in, but I didn’t make it. So I had to take the three-day exam. And irrigation was a big thing, of course, in California. The exam had half a day on irrigation. [I thought] “Oh my God, what am I going to do”? Well, Sat Nishita who was the engineer, the technical person in the office, he and I stayed up a night, and he gave me all of these just rules of thumb. You’ve got to have this, and you’ve got to have that; and if you have a two inch pipe, you can run so many heads at this pressure. He gave me all of these rules of thumb, so I went in that next afternoon and I cooled that part of the exam, just by his graciousness. Yeah.

We were always doing many, many residences; we always had a dozen or so in the office at various stages. And Larry’s modus operandi was this. When you made the tour with him and tried to convert his preliminary drawings into some legible, readable drawing then you had to draw a perspective. [You had to make] at least one good perspective that give the client the best view of the scale of space and so on. And as I said, I had trouble with my

freehand drawing. One of the first ones I had to do was a courtyard for a school and the school was circular in form.

So I'm doing this perspective, and that was a hell of a problem for me. I didn't know how to throw a circle into legible perspective. But we all helped each other. It was a family, a really wonderful family. It was a great experience. I'm so lucky. When I think about this now, I work with Sasaki one summer, I worked with Kiley two summers and I worked with Halprin. I also worked with [Ted] Osmundson. Damn, I ought to be good, you know.

Developing his own Practice

After awhile I split off from Larry. I was so anxious to be, to do my own thing, you might say. First I tried to slither off in a way and work part-time. And Larry was not receptive to that idea at all. He said, "No, you're either in here or you're out of here". So I said, "OK." Then I set up an office in the old Ferry Building. It was very inexpensive rent. That was at the Ferry Building in San Francisco. I shared space with a young architect that was just starting, too so that helped a lot.

And I developed quite a clientele very quickly. [William] Wurster helped me a lot, and so did Thomas Church. By this time, he was being called back to remodel, or to reexamine his earlier gardens, but he'd kind of moved on, you might say. And he would say, "Rich Haag, get Rich. He'll help you". So I picked up half a dozen gardens with the blessing of Thomas Church. Anyhow, things just moved along and it was a ripe time to start.

So I had work, right away. I had to hire a person, and I was very lucky to get the right person. Well, I did teach at Berkeley. I forgot to mention this. I was what they call a guest critic. And I would come in and give design projects and short lectures and things. And again it was my Japanese experience that helped a lot. So that's where I met Don Sakuma. He had been a student of mine in that period; it must have been 1956 or '57.

[End 2013 interview]

Teaching

University of Washington

Developing a Landscape Architecture Department

HAAG: Well [Seattle] was just starting to be a boomtown in 1958, mainly from fisheries and forestry and Boeing. People were just beginning to discover Seattle. People who had been through here on the way to the war in the Far East and came back through here and then went home to Iowa, said, "Wait a minute, I think I'll go back to Seattle". This place was just really starting to hum along then. And then in 1962 Seattle pulled off the World's Fair. First they built the freeway. That opened about the same time and then the suburbs started growing. So it was rampant growth here, a lot of growth. But there were very few recognized or worthy landscape architects here.

BIRNBAUM: *So tell us about the program then and what it was, and what the nature of this was within that larger city context.*

HAAG: Well, I was charged with seeing if the University was ready for a department of Landscape Architecture. One reason I came here was because I did like the Northwest and the University had, at that time, a strong department of architecture and planning. And that's where I felt landscape should be. Landscape architecture is such a mongrelized profession, it comes out of forestry in some places and out of fine arts and urban horticulture and civil engineering in others places; we have many fathers. But I think our sister profession is architecture: the built environment, people who visualize and give form to images. Those are things that hold us together. And so I was delighted to be brought in here to do that. It was decided that the way to do this was to piggy back off of the department of architecture by setting up a parallel kind of course. I am teaching in the architecture department now and I had to do that until I got my own cadre of students. So I'm looking at those people and thinking, I can seduce some of the better people and get them over here [to landscape] and they won't lose any credits or anything. So that's how I'll establish a base for the department. So that strategy worked out pretty well, I think. We were accredited I believe in 1969.

[The following material is from the 2013 interview]

So I came here in the autumn of '58. I talked earlier about meeting Steinbrueck at that initial meeting. Anyhow, this was something I really had a desire to do. [I wanted to] teach. I really, I don't know why, but it's in my genes or something. I wanted to express myself, and this is a good way to do it, through others. And so one thing led to another, and I was

accepted. And of course you don't have a studentry, it is a word I like to use. [They didn't have] a student body, or a number of students to justify starting up a new department. So the first couple of years, it was a privilege to teach their advanced architectural students. And what a break that turned out to be, because that is where I met Grant Jones and Robert Hanna, Frank James, Jerry Diethelm, Frank Lockfeld, and all.

SLADE: *Laurie Olin.*

HAAG: Laurie Olin. All of these people, I subverted them from architecture. I proselytized them from architecture into a higher profession. I gave them problems like site planning, problems that really emphasized that you have to recognize the bones of the site. You can't do architecture without a site.] So all I would tell you, if we had time, about my giving them the esquisse projects.

Teaching: The Esquisse

HAAG: The School of Architecture was still teaching in the Beaux-Arts style. One of the things there in that technique was the esquisse, or a sketch problem. On Wednesday's, senior students, would be given an esquisse or a sketch problem. And this problem would be on an 8.5" by 11" sheet of paper, and it would say something like, "oh, design an intergalactic space station to be manned by the Hoss, a Jewish women's organization and the Yemeni government. I mean they were outrageous schemes that they were given.

And so it fell upon the new teachers to write an esquisse. So they said, “hey Haag, how about you? It’s your turn now to write this”. So I took an 8.5 by 11 sheet, and I wrote in cursive, design a tree. The students picked this assignment up at eight to ten o’clock in the morning and at eight that evening, they were supposed to turn in their project.

So it was fun, to see what the students turned in. I mean, there was one person who made a tree out of pipe cleaners. There were several sculptural attempts, and there were some people who actually went out and drew one of their favorite trees from the campus. But the joke was on them, and they realized it. The joke was especially on the faculty. I think they stopped doing the esquisse thing shortly thereafter, because they knew they had been duped.

I mean, hell, there is no way you’re going to design a tree. A tree is the most marvelous green device that has evolved through eons of time. And we now know how to read the economic value of a tree. We can quantify and qualify the economic value of the services that a tree provides in producing oxygen, sequestering carbons and slowing rainwater. And this does not even mention the aesthetic or spiritual qualities of a tree. Anyhow, that’s a joke I pulled on the college.

Combining Practice with Teaching

HAAG: But by observing my students, I was able to see how they thought and worked. I thought Frank James is the brain behind many of these team projects but he never speaks

up. He's very shy. And so I pulled him out of the shadows and said, "Frank, I want you to work with me". So, they all came. Very seldom did I ever have a student who was in the program still doing his studies who worked for me. They would want to but I'd say, "No, no, school comes first. School is first. When you finish maybe then we'll get together and work together". So Grant [Jones] and Laurie [Olin] and [Bob] Hanna all came as full-time people and Ilze Grinbergs worked for me for quite a while too. I think I saved them from a life of maybe not [being in] the top rung of architects, but they certainly are right in the top echelon of landscape architects, yeah.

[End 2013 interview]

BIRNBAUM: *Now tell me about your practice during this early time. Because you start the practice the same time right in 1958.*

HAAG: Yeah, I did. Yeah. I started almost immediately. Well, at first I did whatever young person does, residences, Yards, Backyards, front yards, side yards. There were a handful of Harvard-trained architects here; they had some knowledge of benefits of bringing a landscape architect in. So for two or three of those, I became their person.

BIRNBAUM: *So this is people like Ibsen Nelson and Fred Bassetti --*

HAAG: And there were others, but at that time I didn't need many jobs, I didn't have any staff or anything. But I began to use students. It was an office sort of modeled on Hideo's

[Sasaki's]. Although when I knew Hideo, he didn't have an office that was before he set one up with his people. Anyhow, so I went through these periods. There was a lot of campus work then because the population was expanding. So I worked on many campuses, sometimes master planning, but I'm more known for project design.

DESIGN

Process

Developing a Personal Philosophy

[The following material is from the 2013 interview]

HAAG: Yeah, in 1958, autumn of '58 I came to the University of Washington. I developed these strong ideas. I'm sure I'm very eclectic- taking from [Stan] White who took from other people. And I am taking ideas from Hideo, the rationalist approach, modern architecture, and taking all of these things and feeding them through my computing system. I have a really strong belief about emotional intent and that some of these things are very difficult to intellectualize. And that's important to do, we need both, we need this yin-yang, some coming together of these things, of that emotion. But generally we're not trained to deal, or expand our emotional attitude towards things. I think that's a shame, I really do .

Crafting the Right Design for your Client

SLADE: *And what makes a good client, Rich?*

HAAG: A good client is one who gives you some program that you can work toward, and is engaged, and that gives you their complete confidence. And when any questions come up, well they will say, "Ask Rich. Ask Rich". That's a good client.

In the [client] questionnaire, I try to, in an abstract way, ask the clients for their suggestions and their memories. Do they have favorite [memories] from childhood and from previous places that they've lived? Are there plants that they would not entertain having that should be avoided? And we ask them about the degree of care. Do you want a manicured garden, or can it be manicured by zones close to the house, and get wilder and wilder and sequence into wild spaces?

So there's some preliminary thought given by the client regarding plants; because plants are one of the main space-giving, form-giving, quality-giving elements of any garden. It's the material that separates the profession of landscape architecture from sister professions. And you could think of horticulture and all, but horticulture does not think of plants as design elements.

So it's worked out. I have one client, a recent client who is really a plant-philia, I suppose you could say. What would it be? Arbor-philia, or a plants person. And she's experimenting, which is great. She wants one of everything. And that's fine, she's the client. But generally, I try to work with a more restricted palette. I try to make a plan where each plant is important in the scheme of things; a plan where the plantings bring in color in a different

season or fragrance. It's an incredible profession. We have this vast range of materials to work with. Landscape architecture is the ultimate art form, because it's inclusive of architecture and engineering and all the other arts, sculpture and painting certainly. So it's the end-all and the ultimate art form. Yeah.

Defending your Design

SLADE: *Is there something about the environment in Seattle that makes landscape architects working here different?*

HAAG: Well, these deep questions, I think it's in my DNA. I have a kind of a perverse nature. And maybe it's a kind of dark egotism or something. But when I'm told, you can't do this, I question, whoa, wait, why not? Why can't we? Let's not reject it. Actually, going back to Hideo Sasaki and Harvard, he was into a thing at that time, it was called general semantics.

And he gave me a book on it. I have it right here on the shelf behind me, by a Polish mathematician and engineer named Alfred Korzybski. And it's called, the title is, *Science and Sanity*. He was the father of what came to be called general semantics, and that was a big deal at that time in the early 50s, or late 40s. Anyhow, there are a lot of rules in there. And one of them is, you must date everything you do, because that date applies to that particular time, and that's when that was true.

Avoid either or and black and white. The answer is going to be somewhere in between. So do not state, you can't do this. I can't? Why not? Wait a minute, let's try this. So then I remember landscape architecture went through a phase where Randy Hester and Paulsen at Colorado State were calling it defensible design. You must be able to defend your design. And this brought in public input, community input.

I said, wait a minute. "I'm designing this project here". Let's say I am designing a playground for young children, I happen to know something about that. I've studied how children play and I have thought a lot about it. So am I going to listen to some Boy Scout master or some parent teachers group about what should go in this playground and what should not go into it and what's dangerous? Children don't go to playgrounds to be safe, you know. I always say, if you don't make the playground challenging, they're going to go play on the freeway.

I went through a whole sequence of designing playgrounds and parks. One trick I used to use was to get the parents together, maybe have a drink or two, you know, and just get them talking about their childhood experiences what they remember from them. And then "wow" I say, "so then, excuse me, are you going to deny that level of adventure to your own children"? Tricks like that, you know. It was a lot of fun a lot of fun.

Anyhow, so thinking about this defensible design, there was very little defensible about Gas Works Park. There I had a park superintendent who was very open-minded. And he'd say,

“oh, you’re nuts, you’re crazy, you know? But go ahead, go a little further, go ahead, study it a little further, make a good case”.

So this problem of ours, maybe it isn’t a problem, of having a kind of adverse point of view, or a strong view of advocacy and design ego. Its fine, you know, to be on the fringe, somebody has to be out there, just to move things to the middle. So by taking a, maybe a far-out position, you can always retreat. Strategically, you can always pull back. I’m giving away a lot of my secrets, but I’ve found out if you give an idea, if you are generous with giving ideas, you get better ones back every time.

I think that’s a very important role for some people to play. Someone has to be out there, taking chances, taking risks, and giving ideas. I can tell you this for damn sure.

Give an idea, because you’ll get a better one, a bigger, better, answer in the end. Bring people in that way. But I always say, study the project, know the site, get the program. The program can be manipulated; the site cannot be so easily manipulated. So know what you’re talking about, be there, be intelligent, get ahead, be ahead, stay ahead, and then let’s see what happens.

[End 2013 interview]

Principles of Design

Consider the Min-Max Concept

HAAG: So the min-max is actually a very rational approach. I'm going to use materials here, well what's the finest material I could use? Oh, the material could be sand, it has certain characteristics, it blows and gets wet, and all that. And then on the other hand, what's the largest stone I could use? So your design is going to be somewhere in between; you're going to use elements in between there. Space, space is the glue that holds it all together. Space is an element especially for landscape architecture. And because we work with living, changing space, you can go from terrestrial to celestial and to human space.

So I can do lectures on this whole thing and build up two or three different points of view; space as distance, space as human behavior, space as a spiritual aspect. So I have spent a lot of time analyzing these elements this way and I call it the min-max just to simplify it. It's a trick, it gives you a grasp on things. But it's a tool. It's a tool, a computer's a tool too, but damn it you have to put something in that tool.

The Universals of Landscape Architecture

HAAG: The thing I'm working on now and want to work on more is an idea that I call the universals of landscape architecture. And those are experiences that you get mainly through the landscape that you can't get through other art practice, art form; and that, I laughingly or jokingly call design with DNA. This is a take-off on my old buddy Ian McHarg, *Design with Nature*. And [Dan] Kiley is onto this, too, [ideas] about human nature. So these are our instincts or drives, our desires that have evolved in us. You have to be a good strong evolutionist to begin this, you know. These things are encoded in us, and one of them is to

reach for light. You can take amoebas and take them in the dark and they all get over here, where there's some change in the environment. So [another drive is water]: to get to water, to be in water, to find water, to get into it, and hopefully to get it into you means it has to be good water, good quality water. So these are drives and they are inherent in nearly every organism and certainly culminate in this beast.

Some of them are really simple. You can explain the ideas of prospect and refuge this way. To climb, the will to climb, to surmount is a drive that you see in young children. You can put a bunch of milk crates around and they'll start climbing up and asserting themselves, king of the mountain, and queen of the mountain. So this is just inherited, it's bound into us, immutably, an immutable bond with nature, a natural process. So we have the will to climb. There are nearly always a couple of opposite feelings, too. If you have the will to climb, then you have the will to encave, to get down and protect yourself. And little kids will do that, too, they put the blanket over the card table, and they hide in there, and they get behind a piano and you can't extricate them. And that's a way to begin to look at landscapes and to design landscapes. We should try to appeal to these universal drives which are in every organism and especially in us because we can create, control those. So that's something when I become bed-ridden or something, I might work on.

Elements of the Design

[The following material is from the 2013 interview]

HAAG: OK, yeah. In talking about the sequence of spaces and scales here, you've noticed there's quite a variety. In fact, it's kind of a stroll garden [the Seattle residence]. When I think the magnitude of elements that you should assemble in designing gardens, the first is space. The space is an all-inclusive element and takes you from the sky, the celestial, to the terrestrial. And then within that, you carve out, in this space that is under your domain, you carve out and relate things by the scale, by human scale. How do we feel? How we can talk across a space? How we can call the children in for dinner? There are a whole range of scales that are all based on human activities.

Then you get into circulation. Halprin was very big in this movement, the movement, the cadence, the dance. It was the relationship of spaces through circulation, moving from one spot, one place to another.

And then after that, you get into your physical elements, such as water [which is] very prime, then earth, and you have water and earth, earth and water and then plants come in. And there you have the whole sequence of the major, major functional aesthetic, practical aesthetic elements of landscape.

Well, you notice there's furniture here, that teak English-style garden bench which is down that long axis. It is an off the shelf [piece]. In the old days, we used to design everything. We designed all the benches and the gates, and everyone was different and custom. I learned a lot about wood detailing in my two years in Japan. I would pride myself on being able to design these wooden carpentry elements without using all of the things they have today,

like fasteners and connectors and ties. And then, lately, if you subscribe to Landscape Architecture Magazine, why there are some companies that are manufacturing everything, you just specify by catalogue number. And it's a shame, in a way, because the things are just so mechanical. They lack that handmade quality.

On the other hand, I know [this from] working with Halprin and designing every bench. [we would] custom-designing every bench. I would say, Larry, our behinds aren't that different, you know? And of course, towards the end he developed a kind of a style or order of benches which could be repeated and modified slightly. But I learned a lot working with Larry, detailing with Sat Nishita and Don Carter and his crew. We were really into fine-tuning and detailing every garden element, every fountain was different. And it's a lost art, it's becoming a lost art, I'm afraid. Yeah.

[End 2013 interview]

BIRNBAUM: *Do you want to talk a little bit more about landform and sculpting of the land, the clarity of shape? I've heard you speak about abstract imagery before.*

HAAG: Space is the primary element of all design. Well, maybe literature and of course music is different, because you have a sequential thing going on there. But for architecture, landscape, city planning, floral arrangements, whatever, space is primary. You need to develop a kind of an understanding of spacial manipulation, or elaboration or control. And then everything else just fits or floats in that. So that is the primary thing. And then in my

teaching, well then I go through a whole sequence of things from space to time, and then you get into circulation and movement.

And then that's the esoteric part of it. Of course first you start out, even before that with relativity, relationships between objects, elements of space and time. But then you would go to the earth, earth forming and shaping is one of the most sensuous things that we work with. I just seem to be able to visualize that. I'm getting more and more this way, too, of doing things in the field. It is almost intuitive, like [the landscapes] Ed Bye was doing. Of course it depends on the client. For public work, you have to make detailed drawings because it always gets put out to bid. But if you work for wealthy clients or others, you can develop different techniques and approaches.

But anyhow, I go through the relativity, space, circulation, earth, water, vegetation, and then I start to mix all those up in the site planning and landscape design.

I have several lectures on plants. See the plants are the one element that we [landscape architects] work exclusively with as a design element. Others use plants of course, in all kinds of ways; but we exploit the aesthetic of the plant, its performance. That's not to say that we don't use plants in utilitarian ways, too, to give shade and shelter and all those other wonderful attributes, but to me that's the cream. Plants are the one element that I really feel comfortable with. And having a nursery really gives me that platform. That's because there I get to see relationships I would never design. And it's a very psychological

or emotional. My nursery is my cathedral. So I'm up there nearly every weekend. It is an escape from wonderful clients and employees.

Thoughts on Change

Considering the Ephemeral Aspect of Landscapes

BIRNBAUM: *These are not things that I'd planned on asking you, but they're just sort of coming up. Can you speak about patina?*

HAAG: Patina?

BIRNBAUM: *Yes, patina, antiquity, weathering and then speak to scars and warts and wounds.*

HAAG: Well, I think it's very important to use elements that do weather, that show age and process and all, rather than plastic and some of the modern materials. I'm just drawn to natural materials which do eventually probably fail. But anyhow, it's the natural process of aging, and it gets more and more beautiful over time.

It's what I liked about those old Japanese houses. But then again, that is a Japanese thing, too; the simplicity and movement against the very simple. It is the empty stage approach to design. That's kind of a minimalist idea that people add in the color and the movement and

the voices and glasses clinking together; and they animate these very simple stark, empty stages.

About materials, well, I was trying to develop that idea. I was thinking about how materials take form from the natural elements. Think about sand and gravel and how all they tend to grade themselves out in a sandbar. It is almost as though there are universal principals driving those natural forms of process and growth. It can get pretty esoteric, I think.

BIRNBAUM: *Well, that's the thing I wanted to come back to. I want to talk about the alders and the second generation woods at Bloedel.*

I think about the recent big controversy along the Druid Hills Parkway designed by the Olmsteds [in Atlanta]. The community came out in big numbers and chained themselves to the trees to stop the people who were cutting down the trees. And there were about a dozen trees or so that were razed. And the first thing that the community did after they had saved the other trees is they got rid of those stumps and they planted new trees. You know, the wounds were too fresh; they didn't want to confront them. And again, just thinking about these elements in both of these designs [Bloedel Reserve and Gas Works Park] that really I think define them and mark them quite differently from other projects of this post-war period, that are part of the {Peter} Walker and [Melanie] Simo survey in Invisible Gardens. I don't know of any other projects in that survey that really force you to confront history and its wounds.

HAAG: An ephemeral element of landscape, is the dynamic effect of time, especially on growth and then you have diurnals, and the shadows and darkness and light. And so that's one of the wonderful things about dealing with landscape, it's very difficult to factor those wonderful processes into your design. As far as, growth, that would have been a problem for [Dan] Kiley. He planted one of the roads into Columbus, Indiana with willow trees. They are fantastic for maybe ten years, but they're very short-lived. So what do you do? You let the windstorms and the snow break them all up and then you replant [them]. At Bloedel we had that happen. There was a weeping willow on the pond, and that damn willow would have gotten so big in four or five years' time that it would own the pond, instead of the pond owning the willow. So we cut the thing down and plant another one.

And the walk at Bloedel which goes through those trees that were planted in the late '50s, three feet on center, they made this sort of incredible vertical space, well now those trees are killing each other out. So the feeling of that walk is entirely different. So what do you do? So I said, let's go out in the meadow and let's make another plantation three-foot on center in both directions, and weave a walk through there. Just like in historic preservation, to what period do you go to? You can't freeze it in time, you know. These are tough questions to answer.

The Effect of Time on the Landscape

[The following material is from the 2013 interview]

HAAG: I consider landscape architecture to be the ultimate art form, because of its breadth of space and scale. And another thing is that we work with living material that is out of doors, that responds to the seasons, the ebb and the flow of seasons. So it's a very unique profession, and this has its great advantages of course, but there are disadvantages, one of these being that landscapes often mature.

So this is one of the problems of landscape architecture, it is a living, dynamic art form. And in preservation or restoration of historic landscapes, to what period do you try to take a landscape back to or bring it up to? So the element of time and weathering, all of those things very much enter into the works of landscape architecture. And so we have to recognize that and be flexible; society changes, values change, times change and neighborhoods change. And you know, we have to embrace change, it's going to happen one way or another.

I think I told this story about talking to Larry [Halprin] back at his 80th birthday. He said, "be prepared, you will spend the first 30, 40 years designing, and the next 10, 20, 30 years defending what you designed".

It's a double-edged sword. You have to respect and expect change. At the same time, your landscapes, they're part of you. And you have trouble letting go. And what can I say, each project is different?

SLADE: *Do you feel that landscape architects should be involved in the decisions of change to the landscape?*

HAAG: Well, I think that I should do more. For my private clients, I send them notices every now and then. Telling them you know, this is an extreme draught period, make sure your irrigation is working, or it's time to feed your blueberry plants or your nutritional part of your garden. And I do that almost annually. And so they laugh and say, "I thought you were finished". You know, "well, you've got me for life. I'm your landscape architect for life".

But of course the public work is quite different. There you have a different master. The demographics change, we go through booms and busts. Neighborhood change high-rises come in and then we have things like urban renewal. Fortunately that's changed a lot these days. There used to be slum clearance. Remember when really dynamic neighborhoods were often destroyed by freeways and other public works. So each case is different. It needs to be analyzed from many points of view. But of course, I like to stay involved.

Let's take specific examples. For instance, at Bloedel I suffered a blow there, you might say, a blow to my ego. I think the profession lost out, too. I think the Garden of Planes was pretty damn unique, and that that was erased by Hey, the thing to be avoided is these committees. Avoid the design review committees. Because, just like at the Frye Museum, a different administrator comes in and says, "Hey, I don't particularly like this feature, let's change this" [and your design is changed].

So my point would be that it'd be really wise to somehow sew yourself right into the project and the program [so] that you would be under contract to return every six months, every year at least, to review your work. You should check out how it's being maintained, if it's coming up or it's surpassed your vision, see if it needs modification then you can make recommendations for that. But anyhow, just bind yourself right into the maintenance and the longevity of a program. That's something that ASLA ought to work on. [They should develop] a contractual form which ties you into this living, moving, growing landscape form that you've developed so that you keep your oar in the water and so you have some say about it. And hopefully there will be respect and you will be conferred with before modifications are made. It would be nice. Wouldn't that be nice?

[End 2013 interview]

Respecting the Past While Planning for the Future

HAAG: Well, the landscape has so many aspects to it and that's why I think it's the most challenging, and why I call it the ultimate art forum, because you deal with space. Certainly as painter, as a sculptor, as an architect, you deal with space., but all of those other art forms can be included in the master art form of landscape architecture. And then you have this additional element which you have just referred to, the progression of growth, scale and decay. How do you deal with that problem?

Here is that problem at Bloedel again. We had this huge stump there and everyone was saying, “my God I think that tree was 600 years old”. And now the trunk is starting to rot. Well what do we do? Do we build a copper roof over that? Do we inject that stump with an antibacterial, anti-fungicidal solution? What do we do? Do you let it go? So we tried to save it, but it’s failing now. We tried to preserve that dude. But, oh God, that’s where we are in landscape architecture. There are a lot of lessons out there. You have to respect the past and grow with it and on it.

BIRNBAUM: We probably only have a few minutes left, if I’m not mistaken. As we sort of are now ending and we’re sort of looking at this design, historic preservation interface and also nature and culture, is there anything that you’d want to share just philosophically as sort of guideposts for yourself? You touched on many of these things already, through some of your universal principals, just wondering if there was anything else you might want to say?

What’s your message to landscape architects today when they approach a place? You and I have talked in the past for example about Skyline Park and its recent redesign and other things like that. What’s the message that you’d want to share with people who are embarking on this career and students of landscape architecture when they approach a place like you did with Volunteer Park, not knowing what you did when you came to look at the Olmsted’s 1910’s plan for that park. What’s the message here?

HAAG: Well, specifically, I can talk about that. At Volunteer Park specifically, I tried to cut some of the carriageways out of there. They were important in Olmsted's day to show off your fine horses and everything but once that park became a short cut for commuters in hot little sports cars, I don't think Olmsted would want them going through there. I don't know.

You know, I can criticize Olmsted. In the 1920s, they were still designing roads like the automobile wasn't here. But at the same time, [as a designer we have to] just take it easy with remodeling or reshaping or redesigning the parks, and again look for those sacred elements and relationships. And well, you know, [you have to] develop a lot of ways to try to save your work. But I don't know if others will feel the same when they come along.

Change is inevitable. It's like my old father used to say, "ain't nothin' wrong with progress. It just goes on too long". Yeah. That's a great line.

Ideas for Future Gardens

HAAG: At Bloedel there is strong influence from my Japanese experience. I was trying to create a sequence of events which really gets down to these landscape universals. And, if I can confess a silly idea I harbored for awhile, I'd still like to try it [and create] the seven steps of Buddhist meditation. For awhile I carried the idea that I would try to give those physical form in a sequence of gardens. And the last one is an idea of something that I'd really like to try. Well, it comes out of ideas from the writer Camus. I'd like to dig this hole in the earth, you would descend into this hole of darkness, and you would see the North Star light, through some opening, the magnificent, the magnificent indifference of nature.

That would culminate there in those levels of experience. But, we're really getting into philosophy there. But I want to be into the motives side of it, you know. There's a lot to be done, and lot of nice, wonderful people coming on to do these things.

Thoughts on Development in Emerging Economies

[The following material is from the 2013 interview]

HAAG: I have been just in the last year on a couple of trips to China. And I have come to realize that China is just like out of control. It's the way our country was right after the War, after we won the War. We had the production capabilities and sprawl and automobiles and the whole thing got out of control. And so I haven't really thought much about that until this idea came to me after being in China and seeing what, what the hell is going on there, you know. They are just emulating our methods and it seems to be completely out of cultural control

[End 2013 interview]

PROJECTS

Western Washington Campus Work

BIRNBAUM: *Is there a particular campus that you wanted to, or that you might want to draw attention to right now [OVERLAPPING VOICES].*

HAAG: Yeah, I would like to tell you about **Western Washington**. Well, I think, yeah it was [Fred] Bassetti who got me on that campus. He was working there on several projects. It is a very steep site and architects seem to have a problem with sites that aren't flat. So I began to design stairways. I know how to get work on campuses by telling them that you're just going to inventory the plants, and then you get a foothold there. And then you say, well we're going to look at the circulation patterns, and God once you get that, you're planning. I mean you're giving form to all kinds of spaces and everything. So I had a lot of influence. In fact I was working there just a couple of years ago on a project that I predestined to happen, way back in the '60s, and that is to take the main road, that cuts the campus right in half and, to get it out of there. So that was the main thing we were doing was taking roads and parking lots right out of the campuses. It's so obvious, that's what you do. But yeah, I have had a lot of projects there at Western. Now, site planning for the Western Washington dormitories I mean, boy, we controlled that. I think you would have to go to Sweden to find better site planning. [Bob] Hannah, Grant Jones, [Jerry] Diethelm, Frank James, all these guys were right out of architecture school and working with me. So that's when we had the energy and they were smart guys and so we're doing a lot of really good work there.

Seattle Center

HAAG: A big break came in '72. After Larry Halprin who was first the master planner for Seattle Center, I was selected to be the landscape architect for the conversion from the 1962 World's Fair into what it is today It is a sequence of civic gardens. It was a big break I had, a big break. OK.

BIRNBAUM: *We may not come back to this project, so I don't know if you want to say anything else about it.*

HAAG: This area is kind of an oasis in Seattle. It has matured into a great sequence of civic spaces and all garden. And now the intent [is] to run a monster, I call it the monster rail, a monorail, right over the people's heads. So I've been fighting the intrusion of this wonderful green area, in Seattle. [I have been] fighting to reroute the monorail from destroying it.

And this is one of the early spaces that I created there. There had been many buildings on this site and the contractor was hauling materials and dumping them into Lake Union and causing islands to appear there. So I interceded and we kept all of the surplus soils and made it this kind of park. They called it the Indian Shell Mound Park. It was a way to preserve this from becoming a parking lot and at the same time, keeping this what you could call an act against nature, the dumping of soil into Lake Union [from happening]. We didn't have good controls in those days, environmental controls. OK.

And then this is Jordan Park. It grew directly from the work at Seattle Center. It was the same contractor. And so he said, you know, help me, why can't we save this soil and make something of it?

So that was done in '72.

Bloedel Reserve

[The following material is from the 2013 interview]

SLADE: *You could start with saying where we are.*

HAAG: Oh, this is the Bloedel Reserve, located on Bainbridge Island, about 50, a 40 minute ferry ride from downtown Seattle. This is part of a 120 acre reserve that Mr. Prentice Bloedel developed over 50 years. It is now open to the general public.

We're here on the deck of the famous, world-famous guest house that was designed by Paul Hayden Kirk, a famous pioneer, a Northwest architect who got into the Northwest regional design. This building is a wonderful example of a wooden structure that combines some of the best features of Japanese architecture and also some elements derived from Native American Indian longhouses.

The Residence

HAAG: Behind us is the mansion that Prentice and Virginia lived in. They bought this house, I believe, in 1955, from the Callus, Collins, who was the previous owner. He built this house as a kind of a retreat, a reserve, a hideaway from their busy downtown Seattle life. But anyhow, in I believe 1955, they moved out here and he began to construct a real system of driveways, and build a bridge off here to my right. The mansion which is now open to the

public has a library and restroom facilities, and they hold concerts and possibly weddings and so on here.

But that house was designed by Lister Holmes. He was an early architect who was still working in rather the classical style. Mr. Bloedel took up residency here, it was their prime residence, and he lived here until his death, which was a decade or two ago.

Meeting Prentice Bloedel

SLADE: *And can you tell us how and when you meet Prentice Bloedel, and the circumstances of the competition?*

HAAG: Yes. My first introduction here, Nancy, to Mr. Bloedel was, he brought me on-site about 1969 to review a project that had been started by Thomas Church, a famous landscape architect from San Francisco. Mr. Bloedel was looking for a landscape architect or a designer to finish this unfinished project, the reflection pool, a hole in the woods; you might say which Mr. Church had started. And so Mr. Bloedel gave me a tour of the place and retained me to come up with concepts to finish that project.

The Design Competition

*[Haag describes how he came to win a design competition at the Bloedel Reserve and his plan for the garden. **This transcript is organized to follow the order of the sequence of***

spaces that you travel through when you visit the Bloedel Reserve. This is not the sequence in which the gardens were designed and constructed.]

SLADE: *Was there a design competition for this property?*

HAAG: Yes. But nothing happened for about 10 years, and then Mr. Bloedel decided that he would bequeath portions of the property and open it to the general public. So about 1980, he held a competition, a limited competition between four firms. Grant Jones, of Jones and Jones, and Arthur Erikson, a world-famous architect from Vancouver, British Columbia, who had just finished designing and building a house in the highlands for his daughter, Virginia, Virginia Wright.

And Yung, Yang and Gerard, the third firm, which was a satellite office, originally from Eckbo Dean and Williams' that had splintered off, Yung Yang and Gerard, out of Bellevue, Washington and then myself. Each firm was given \$2,000, two months with access to the property and four questions to answer during the interview. And by some fortuitous constellation of events, I was chosen.

SLADE: *When the competition was held, can you describe how you presented your plan, and how you won the competition?*

HAAG: Yes, about that competition, fortunately I was the last one to present; that's where you always want to be. You want to be the last, because then you're the first when they

make the decision. So I had a large aerial photograph, one inch equals 40 feet, of this 140 acres. I rolled that photograph out on this table. I had the thickest graphite pencil that you can have. It was like a crayon. And I began to draw and trace over this aerial photograph. And there was a crease in the table so at one point, I ripped the drawing. I think I used some obscenity. Anyhow, Mr. Bloedel was sitting just to my right, and it happens that his right ear hearing was great. But it turned out that he had some problems with colorblindness. And our drawing was just black on yellow, you know, so he could really follow that, whereas some of the other presentations were very elaborate. They had used before and after photographs and music and very expensive, elaborate, wonderful presentations of their solutions to the four problems. But anyhow I think my rustic approach somehow touched a nerve.

SLADE: *So once you won the competition, had you already come up with the design sequence of the different gardens? Or was that part of the competition? Or did that evolve as you worked through them?*

HAAG: Yeah. Actually, the four questions that he asked, one of them was how to enlarge or carry the great lake, the central lake into the forest. I thought that was not a valid question. So I ignored that. I know the other teams did make a lot of studies about capturing the water and having different devices to lower the water, I can't think of the term now for those boards that you use. But I really just ignored that. I thought that was not possible, or

shouldn't be done. And it took a while to convince Mr. Bloedel that that was a bit over the top, over the top, yeah.

I did have strong ideas about the circulation. There used to be a road that went right to the main house. And when I was here once and I saw the milkman just zooming down this road and the dust from the gravel went right to the house. And I went, God, they just destroyed the tranquility of the whole reserve. So I made that a big central feature that I was going to erase that road and build a service to the north, along the northern property line. And I would turn another road into a walkway, a ceremonial walk that maybe only the governor and some of his best friends, and of course his landscape architect could use. But otherwise, it was restrained.

Working with Mr. Bloedel

SLADE: Did Mr. Bloedel try to heal the land by creating these different garden spaces, since it had been so heavily timbered? Was that part of his plan?

HAAG: Yes, Mr. Bloedel really identified with, really bonded with this property. I would come out here every Thursday, and we would walk tirelessly through the forest. Mr. Bloedel did have trouble going through the underbrush and so on, but he had a great walking stick, and he would just beat the sallow down and walk right through the woods.

And so he had this idea of turning this place into a kind of a living museum. He thought that it would be a place that, he would say, ordinary Joes, meaning the common man, could come through and be moved by the qualities. It's in our genes, this, the nature gene that, that goes back to our evolutionary heritage. That was one of his central ideas.

SLADE: *So you and he must have had a very coming-together of the minds on that, because that is certainly central to your design philosophy.*

HAAG: Well, we did. We had a great affinity. I came to look upon him as my father, or godfather figure. I remember one thing he would say. We need nature, and nature does not need us. And his interest took him to Asia, to Buddhism and so on. And so there was that kind of background. Fortunately I had been able to spend a couple of years in Japan, so those ideas were central to many of our design decisions here. Yeah.

Creating the Series of Garden Spaces

HAAG: The Reflection Pool Garden had been finished by 1970, so then when I came back later in the 70s, why, Bloedel showed me more of the garden that's right surrounding us now. It was designed by Fujitaro Kubota. Kubota was a Nisei, I think, a second generation Japanese American. He worked here for quite a while, and did this really elaborate Japanese garden that this guesthouse overlooks. So I was rather ginger about that, gingerly moving around these other remnant gardens.

And Mr. Church had designed what is called the Church Walk, which is down through the woods here. And I always thought it's misleading to call it that because people say, well, "where's the church"? And you know, it's named after Thomas Church. And I had to redesign it and actually propose a complete relocation of that, because the original arboreal feeling, you might say, was being lost as the trees thickened and died and so on.

These other gardens started coming online in the 1980s.

I worked on the property, I think eight years then. And every summer, why, we would do a major move, a major project. And that's because here in the Northwest, the climate, this soil has a very high water table, and so on. Anyhow, we did one garden at a time.

And I did do a master plan, but it was very sketchy, and we just worked our way through, as I say I came out every Thursday, and walked the property in the morning, had lunch with Mr. And Mrs. Bloedel and thought about designing certain areas in the afternoons. We did one project after another. And I could go through that whole sequence.

The first thing was the road to the north. We started by erasing the road that came right through the middle of the property, and then designing a circumferential road around the perimeter in the north. That was a major problem project. Then the bluff, down below the house, I wanted to lower that about 30 feet. I wanted to extend the view from the mansion, from the main house, out across the water, and have a kind of a, you might call it the infinite edge lawn which just dropped off.

So that was a major earth-moving thing. And my alternative design to that was to build that great blue mound in the meadow just north of this guest cottage. So I took that soil and used it as a positive earth form. So it went on like that, a major project every summer.

And so it's developed in a very sequential way without many construction documents. We almost never prepared plans, except for a couple of bridges and things, but mainly we worked with sketches. We found that this work is so demanding, or so subtle, it's such a response to the nuances of the site, the ancient trees and so on. It's the kind of work that you do not do complete working drawings and put them out to bid. So we developed our own crew to do these constructions through the years. And as I mentioned, every summer, we would take on a major project, make a big move that had to do with earth movement and all.

The Garden of Planes

[The first in the garden sequence of spaces was the Garden of Planes.]

HAAG: And one of the very last projects that I worked on, actually, was this, the conversion of the guest house swimming pool. There were a couple of reasons for that changed to the pool, the mechanics were becoming dysfunctional and it was a maintenance problem. Also, the reserve was beginning to be open more to the public, and there was an accidental drowning. So he [Prentice Bloedel] asked me to think about what to do with that primary area, just north of the guest house deck here.

So at first, I thought, hum, an aquatic garden, of course. But then I thought, hum, on the south side, there is already an aquatic garden. So then I came up with the idea of the garden of planes, which was a very simple conversion. I kept the pool and knocked a hole in the bottom of it and took out some of the exposed aggregate concrete deck, leaving some squares and rectangles. And then I developed this orthogonal, I call it origami, or origami, like, [these] folded planes. And so the deep end of the pool, I made the deep end of an inverted pyramid, a negative pyramid. And the west end, I made into a ridge pyramid, or elongated pyramid. So it had a very enigmatic quality which very much appealed to Mr. Bloedel. As the observer, you can never see the seven planes from any position walking around the garden or the deck; but your mind tells you there are seven planes. So it has this quality that the Ryoan-ji, a famous raked sand and gravel garden in Kyoto has, where there are fifteen stones, but the observer can only count fourteen.

Then another thing I used, I called it a memorial honoring J. Appleton, who is the English geographer who came up with a brilliant theorem, or hypothesis, about the two most essential elements of landscape architecture- prospect and refuge. And he takes that back to our evolution, coming out of the trees, and retreating to the trees, prospect and refuge in the trees. So in landscape, when you bring those two elements prospect and refuge together, close together in the same composition, you have something going for you, that's for sure. Yeah.

Well, as this saga goes on here, why, Mr. Bloedel was handing over the reins of possession, and not making any of the design decisions. Instead he set up the Arbor Fund, Foundation. And they, they released me from my duties here and replaced me with another firm. And somewhere in that transition, unbeknownst to me, why, the Garden of Planes was erased, you might say, by a Japanese landscape architect, and was converted to a raked sand and stone garden, which you will see today.

But it was a great blow to my ego, to come bring a group of architects from Europe out here, and bring them around the corner, and be presented with this raked sand garden, which is a kind of a takeoff of Ryoan-ji, Ryoan-ji without the walls and so on. So it's. And in fact, Mr. Bloedel had always told me, I want the Asian character in the gardens, but I don't want the symbols, copycat, stone lanterns or things like that. So the Arbor Fund came in and took over. But it's OK. It had its life. I'll build it again somewhere where it's more appreciated.

The Moss Garden

[The Moss Garden is the second space in the sequence of gardens.]

SLADE: *So Rich, why don't you start by telling us where we are and how this garden came to be? What it was like when you originally, you and Mr. Bloedel came to this site?*

HAAG: OK. Well, this [place] was a thicket. There's a stump right there that is 120 years old or so, a cedar. Anyhow, this area had been left and abandoned and it was chaos, chaos. The

exotics had come in, English ivy, Salmonberry and English Holly. Mr. Bloedel despised English Holly and sent crews out to take it out.

Anyhow, this was an abandoned, chaotic bog. And the idea here was that we would create a sequence, a walk through this place to get to the pool, the reflection pool, which Thomas Church had designed. Mr. Bloedel was a little bit worried about the idea of thinking of stumps as monuments and so on. But I showed him some pictures of things in Japan. And I think that one person that finally persuaded him was Dick Brown. He was the curator here for many years; Dick Brown and I had gone to Vancouver, to a convention and had seen a moss garden there which was a replica of Saiho-ji in Japan. And so we sort of double-teamed Mr. Bloedel and said to him we can have this sequence, this moss garden, [as part of] a stroll garden that you move through. We'll just create it by editing out the chaos here and opening up vistas and growing moss, let the moss cover everything and create its own ambiance. Yeah.

SLADE: *Was there ground water on this site?*

HAAG: [That is a] good question about the geology here. The geology has its great benefits and also its handicaps. What we have here is a sloping plane. It slopes down to the salt water from the ridge. And under us is what we call Vashon Till, the glacial till which is consolidated and compressed. Did you know there used to be an estimated mile or more

depth of ice over this, over Puget Sound in the Ice Age? That was about 11,000 years ago. So this impervious layer is under us. The rain cannot penetrate this.

So as Tom noted, the water's just oozing up under our feet everywhere. And that's the basis of the moss garden. And when we go into the reflection pool, you can see the actual water table. And even in the driest drought, driest months, the water table doesn't drop more than a couple of inches, which you can see recorded on the inside of the concrete containment for the reflection pool.

So when we did the clearing, and had bare soil here, why we, hum, how do we create a moss garden? So we had the idea of growing sagina [subulata], which is actually a small perennial ground cover. We grew 2,000 trays, 12 inch by 24 inch trays of Irish moss. And those trays were cut into two-inch by two-inch plugs and they were planted in the entire area. It's about three acres here. And that sagina then was overtaken; we might say it served as a nurse crop for the native mosses to come in and subsume it. So if you know Irish moss, you might be able to find some remnants of it around here, but mostly what you will find is a variety of native mosses.

The Reflection Garden

[The Reflection Garden is the third space in the sequence of gardens.]

HAAG: We're in the Reflection room now, and having come from the Garden of Planes, the old Garden of Planes, through the Moss Garden, into this rectangle.

Mr. and Mrs. Bloedel came from a trip in Europe where they had noticed these pools, very simple pools in the French landscape. And they talked to Thomas Church about them. It was Neil Twelker, working with Church; I think who actually picked out this site. He was a wonderful old-time geologist, who said that we have a very high water table here because of this the layers of soil or compacted till, so that anywhere we dug, we would find water. And so they came in and dug a hole and built this concrete rim around here. And the area around it was just a construction site. It was just terrible and then it sat that way for several years. And then Mr. Bloedel retained me. He said, "What are we going to do with this unfinished landscape"?

So I thought about it, and I thought, it needs a frame. It needs to be further defined from the dense forest, from our second-growth forest. So on an envelope; I drew a rectangle within a rectangle, with the pool, a rectangle within a rectangle. And so I persuaded Mr. Bloedel that it needed some sense of containment.

And then the question came, well, what kind of hedge material should we get? And so then I recommended the taxus, Irish taxus which you see here, which was planted, I think, in the 1970s, early 70s. Anyhow, this is a remarkable, phenomenal feature in that what we see here is the ground water table. And if you notice, you can see the rim, the edge. Why because the water level varies only maybe two inches, from the rainiest, wettest season to the driest.

It has no bottom. That is the water table. When we first built this, why, the water was almost black; it had so much tannic acid in it from humus or the rotting vegetation around it. And through the years, it's getting lighter and lighter. It's so light and transparent now that at one time we were experimenting with dyeing, believe this or not, dyeing the water black because of its increased reflectivity.

The experience is just so simple; it's almost spell-binding. You come through the dark woods and the muted sounds, the canopy of the Moss Garden, and you break through the hedge and come into this space. And if that experience doesn't take your breath away, I'd be surprised; because it's just totally unexpected to find this window to the sky, this opening in the dense forest. So it's breathtaking.

I notice now some things; water spiders are coming in and swallows come in to catch the mosquitoes. Sometimes ducks land in here. It is a different kind of sequence in the symphony of nature and natural processes.

The sense of arrival is very important. And it's something I think I learned about in Japan. And you know, compare yourself to Frank Lloyd Wright if you dare. But he was really into this turning, moving, climbing, descending, and going through dark shadow, bursting into bright sunlight. [Lawrence] Halprin was into this, too, with his cadence and dance rhythms and all.

I noticed it very much in Japan by going to the temples. You go through thick hedges and wild places, and then you would break into a space and my God, there's a temple in this open space. And so that's very important. Again, and I just can't emphasize this too much that space is the main element that we have to work with. And then what we do in that space is that we ornament it, decorate it, clean it, and clear it out and we fill it with plants.

The Bird Sanctuary

[The Bird Sanctuary is the forth garden and terminus in the sequence of gardens.]

SLADE: -- *Please talk about what you wanted this experience to be.*

HAAG: OK, well now we've arrived at the terminus, the termination of sequential experience from the Garden of Planes, the Moss Garden, the Reflection Pool, and now we're at the Bird Sanctuary where our spirits are subdued, or subsumed by nature again. So this is excavated bog. It is an extension of the original irrigation pond, which was created to capture this high aquifer groundwater table to provide irrigation for the lawns and to supply some of the other lakes.

So here, after going through almost a quarter of a mile walking through the woods on our forest trail why, you come out again into the sunlight, like we found in the reflection pool. Only here this is a wild assemblage of islands in a bog. Here wildlife, birds, aquatic birds are drawn in. It's a great eco-zone, because behind us we have meadows with the grass birds,

and we have shrub borders and those thickets for the kind of birds that look for food and cover in hedgerows and thickets. And then we have alder, the deciduous forest and behind those we have the coniferous forest. And then we bring the water up to the surface, and we have edge and mud and things that the swallows and the wasps need to build their nests. This was a kind of terminus of the sequence of landscape events or experiences. And we've really created a full circle, from the most manmade, contrive landscape you could imagine to a wild wild place.

The Concept behind the Sequence of Gardens

So at one point, then, the ASLA announced that they're having their annual competition for design awards, and so my wife Cheryl said, why don't you submit the Bloedel? And I said, well, it's all these pieces and remnants. So at the last minute, we pasted a drawing together of various sketches I had made, and called it the Sequence of Gardens. So I don't think we even entered it as a garden. I think we entered it as a work of art, or something like that. Anyhow, that's, thanks to Cheryl, that's how that came about.

Well, when we entered this in the ASLA competition, we called it the Sequence of Gardens. And taken as a group, the four interact and respond to each other, and are foils, counterfoils to each other. We just saw the pure geometry of the Garden of Planes, or we talked about what had been there, was the Garden of Planes. And then to leave that and come through this sequence of extraction from the, the very essence, the fragrance, the

sound, the wildness, the controlled chaos, you might say, of the garden, of the moss garden here, is a complete opposite.

These four gardens complement each other by their contrast, which sounds like an oxymoronic idea. The pureness and refinement of the Garden of Planes compare that to the plasticity, the movement, the birds, the sun, the plants, the ground plane, and the water expressing itself. It's a complete opposite of the experience of the Garden of Planes.

Then we will see, as we move into the reflection pool, there is geometry, but again, it's embracing water, movement of water, bringing sky through the dense shadow of the forest. So it complements the Moss Garden, and refers back, in a way, to the pure geometry of the Garden of Planes. Then, you see what we have going here? [There are] these couplets, couplets of experiences. Then after you recover your senses and move on from the reflection garden, or reflection pool, [you go on] a long walk through the woods to rather decompress.

Then you sort of discover the bird sanctuary. And here, you're just an observer. We thought you would just sit in a bird blind and let the birds and the nature come to you, rather than you immersing yourself into the landscape. So that's what we have going here. There are two couplets, but all four of them are acting in concert, and yet in stark contrast to each other. [It's] a pretty interesting idea.

Developing the Spiritual Path

SLADE: *So when people consider the garden sequence that you created did you had a certain spiritual path that you were designing?*

HAAG: Yes. That's a very good way to put it. It was a spiritual path because at one time I harbored a ridiculous idea to try to give landscape form to the seven stages of Buddhist meditation. And for a while, I carried that idea and I had several projects which were never realized here.

But the Garden of Planes was to be the first in that thought. And the [first step] is awareness, the clap of your hands; you announce yourself, give yourself to the spirits. And then you start to gain the attention of the person that's going down, down, down through the stages of meditation. So that was the first awareness, you know. Oh wow, what is this? Explain this. What is this all about? So it was obviously a manmade intervention. It is pure geometry.

And then you go through the sequence into the moss garden. And that garden is completely freeform. And then you go, zap, into the next space, the reflection pool room, which is again pure geometry and abstraction, a distillation of water, forest and sky. And then a long, long walk through the woods down to the bird sanctuary, which is to get you back into nature. You're an observer there. You are not meant to walk around the ponds at the bird sanctuary. And that design has also been modified.

Light and Shadow in the Garden

HAAG: The play of light, the time of day, these subtle landscape things, that's why in the sequence that I developed the visitor would come in from the west, going down the north trail, crossing through a meadow, coming upon the Garden of Planes, walking south through the moss garden, south into the reflection pool, and southward down to the bird sanctuary. Now, if you look around you right today, you get the idea of the backlighting. Backlighting is so important. So the architect, landscape architect that came in after me, he reversed that. So you're always walking with the sun at your back. And it seems like a subtle thing, but it's really important. I'm glad you picked up on that. [It is] very important.

SLADE: *And the use of shadow in your garden? It seems like you extend the shadow by your plantings? Or do you create opportunities, like at the reflection garden?*

HAAG: Yes, you're on to something there about the shadow, sunlight and space. It all goes back to manipulation of space, and people moving through it. The one thing, the one principle I did learn in my two years in Japan, was that although spaces are rather contained sometimes, like Ryoanji with the earthen wall, always there is an escape for the eye.

And this goes back to J. Appleton, the refuge, the prospect. It's somehow in our genes that you want to know what is in that darkened space. You want to go down the river, around that curve, or over that hill, or through that sunlight into the shadow. So the interplay,

counter-play of these elements, so simple and so basic, but it's often lost in our designs.

Yeah.

[End 2013 interview]

Gas Works Park

BIRNBAUM: *Well, let's move on to Gas Works and then we can come back to some of these things.*

HAAG: Oh yeah, Gas Works. Well you know the story on how I got that, do you?

BIRNBAUM: *Well, I think you should tell us everything. We really want to go deeper with this project more than any one because the hope is that we're going to turn this [talk] into a larger education module. Now let me just sort of begin by saying that everything we've done so far is really for the profession and for the record. Keep in mind now that part of this is the record, but [we plan with] part of this [talk] we're going to hopefully reach [out] to younger people, which I know is important to you as well, in terms of the future of the park. So keep that in mind that this will be for a project where we're looking at for middle-school students through to adults.*

Discovering the Gas Works

HAAG: When I came to Seattle and was out on Lake Union and discovered this blackened space. It looked like a bombed-out area or something. So I, what is this? And people

working there we should go over there and we will show you what it is. And they had seen it from the lake a lot. And so we would go and break through the fence and just marvel at that kind of wasteland of this industrial ruin; the smell, tin flapping in the wind, and all these deserted buildings. There was a novel which came out about that time by, maybe it came out earlier, by Richard Brautigan called *Watermelon Sugar* which describes a forbidden area called the Forgotten Works. It was kind of like a psychedelic place. One of the people that worked for me was Frank James and for a long time he had wanted to work on the [Gas Works] project. He thought we should be studying it. And I think he even said, “Why don’t we make a proposal to the city to design something for that [place]”? And so we did. And I know it was for a fee which was just utterly ridiculous; I don’t know what we thought we were going to do. But anyhow we never got any response from the city.

How the Gas Works Project came his way

HAAG: Gas Works, the deserted abandoned works, got into the news in a big way in 1963 because the city had decided to acquire that site from the Washington Gas Company. I think that’s probably one reason we sent in a proposal to design a park there, or something. The city was going to pay for it over a ten-year period, so things quieted down. And then we had the forward thrust. People voted to tax themselves a lot of money, millions, to clean up Lake Washington. It was one of the early projects and they [the City] also tried to acquire properties for parks. And they did that, which was smart. And anyhow, there became a plethora of parks to be designed, and we got more than our fair share of them. And one of them was the Olmsted Park, Volunteer Park. We did an updated master plan for it.

Anyhow, a huge [new] park was going to be a conversion of the Fort Lawton military base in West Seattle, Magnolia. It's about 500 acres with some tidelands and all. So the city had a request for qualifications. And I teamed up with a San Francisco firm. Anyhow, we presented [plans] for Fort Lawton. We did a hell of a good job. We always try to be last in these presentations. But just as we are leaving, rushing up comes Dan Kiley. I had heard that he was going to make a presentation. So I get back to my office and everybody's waiting, it's like 5:30 in the afternoon, and they all want to know what happened? I said I came on like gangbusters, I really did a good job but guess what, Dan Kiley came in after me. So we waited and about an hour and a half later, the phone rings and it's Al Baumgartner, the chairman of the selections committee. And he says, "Rich we have a real problem, here. We're divided down the line between you and Kiley. So here's the deal, would you agree to work for Kiley, with Kiley". I said, Al, you're asking the wrong question. You reverse that. You ask Kiley if he'd work with me. In the meantime Kiley had flown up to Vancouver, so they had to wait for him to land and then make contact with us. This is before cell phones of course. And so apparently he said, "oh no, if he'll work with me fine, but if not, forget it." So that word went back to the selection committee who by now we're eating and drinking, you know. So they made a deal. All right, we will give Fort Lawton, now Discovery Park, to Kiley, but Haag is going to get the Gas Works. There won't be any competition or anything. So that's how I got it. It was a booby prize, a consolation prize, some consolation, some booby, huh? So that was it.

The city didn't have much experience in writing contracts. So I said, "don't worry, we'll write the contract for the scope of services, the approach, all of the steps, and construction documentation and specs". We really wired ourselves in good and tight. Then we found out that there were three great holding towers on the Northwest corner and that the city had already let a contract for the contractors to cut them down for scrap metal. This is December of 1969 or something. I had already hired [Laurie] Olin. I can show you his wonderful sketches of what we could do with those towers. So I went to a contact of mine, a group of wealthy women, they call themselves the *Committee of 33*, with Olin's drawings and our ideas and said, "What we should do is you ladies should buy off the contractors. The profit that they're going to make from cutting them down is . . . (sound fades). Why don't we as a group own these towers? We can always cut them down, and the price of scrap metal is probably going to keep going up, so let's invest in those towers and in the meantime we can see if we can convert them". But we lost the fight. They couldn't get together, and the contractor kept cutting them down, and they're gone.

Developing the Site Plan

HAAG: So I haunted the site, I slept around there in a sleeping bag, and I did as much research as I could. And I realized, man this is something; I've got to save this. And at first my thought was I'll save the one tower, the one big tower out at the end, the mother tower, I called it. And so then I began to expand my ideas. And just like when I teach site planning, one question I always ask is, when you're on a site, what is the most sacred thing on this site? Maybe it's a contextual thing; maybe it's something around the site. Anyhow, what is

the best thing? You know what is the conscience of the site, the genius of the site, where is it, where does it reside and how can we save that and build around it? Conversely you ask, what is the most hostile or worst part of this site? What can I completely recreate, or have to recreate?

So I decided [I wanted to save] the outboard tower. But then as I went around there more, I thought, well God, that would just really look strange [to save just the one]. Then I thought hey, this park is going to be named for Councilwoman Myrtle Edwards, and her husband was always with her, kind of in her shadow, and then they had children, so who would break up a family? Hey, maybe we can save all of them. So I just kept dreaming about the site. I had no rock outcroppings and no sacred trees. Not much there except these wonderful iron totemic structures. The more I was around there; the more I bonded with those things. And I thought yup I've got to save them. And like with the towers, those tanks, I mean, if I'm wrong, I can always take them down.

And at that time, I had no idea that there had been 1,500 gas manufacturing plants in the United States and they had all gone obsolete, become obsolete with the introduction of natural gas. I had no idea they were all dismantled or being dismantled. So I had a lot of luck, a lot of things were going for me and with me. In reading the deed of transfer, one of the things that I had to overcome was clearly stated in the deed, that the city would not accept the site until all structures were removed to grade. So this was troublesome.

Developing a Team

HAAG: As this project became known through the grapevine and through select students in my office that I was really thinking about hanging a park on the remains of these obsolete structures, groupies started hanging around me. Now this is in the late '60s, you know, this is after the flower children and a lot of crazy things that had been going on. And the term groupie was a very derogatory term to most people. But young people started hanging around saying, "can we help, what can we do"?

So I had a kind of underground team of people. One is now a very prominent attorney in Seattle. At the time he was just getting into the law. He had managed Sky River Rock festivals, which was Seattle's answer to Woodstock. And because of that he knew about the press and press releases and getting people there to photograph, he knew about timing and all. So he was on my team. He said, you're going to have to get a philosopher on your team. I said "yeah, that's right, we'll get a philosopher".

So we got a man named Adrian Ziegler who was a professor at the University of Washington. He had been a divinity student, he was now in law school and he was doing a study for the government about the effect of panhandling on the U.S. economy. And this weird guy, Adrian Ziegler, is going to be my philosopher and tell us how play style lifestyle is moving and what is happening with people coming together in these mass groups, love-ins, be-ins, and everything. And this is where it should happen, right down here. We don't want them in the Olmsted parks. Wealthy people live all around those parks, they don't want

people making their own cigarettes and driving over the curb and everything. So we'll take all of those misfits and build them into our park.

So I had a meeting with Adrienne in a health food store up in the North End. I walk in, I'm introduced to him, and he gets up, you know, and I start to light up, and he says, "oh my son, my son, your body is your temple".

We get in a van and drive down there [to the gas works]. We have to break through the fence, we climb up one of the towers and his dhoti is just flowing. I thought he was going to blow off. Well, we got back, and he said, "Well, you're right. It can be special. It's not just flowers and birds and so on. But you'll never get people to buy into this unless you bring them to the site." So that was the idea about having an office on the site. And the gas company let us do it if we took out the proper insurance. So we turned the worst building which was the blacksmith's shop, into our office.

So we hung up banners, cheap plastic banners, we blew it out, painted it off-white like any good architect would do, and had a huge party down there. And we invited the mayor and all the big wigs to show them that you can take these dogs, these ruins, and you can make something of them. You know, you teach through demonstration. So there was a big storm that night, and the people huddled in there. But the gas company employees came in and the Gestapo came in and said, "You can't have [a party], get out of here", and that just bonded us all together. So I had a lot of good things like that.

Building Support

And the architects, they all came down to the site. I drove in on my motorcycle, drove right into them in a converted hall when I told them [about the project]. So we began to get support groups behind us, and the superintendant of parks was really worried about this. But he kept saying, “Well, go out a little further. But I know the mayor isn’t going to buy into this at all”. So I began to lecture and give strategies and develop concepts, do the site planning as we were taught to do. But since I already had the concept of what I wanted, I could skew everything; I could slant it a little bit. I learned so much on this project, I learned about all kinds of pollution, especially bureaucratic pollution. That’s the tough one to overcome. The pollution of the bureaucratic mind, to get around them, circumlocutic, I used to say. Anyhow, I would lecture at the drop of a hat and finally it came to show time, you know. And the Parks department, said, “This is outrageous; the Federal Government won’t support us or anything. And I said, “Well that’s in Washington D.C. We can pull this off out here, who cares what happens in Washington State?” Well, the Parks department said we should show precedent. So I took three months off from the University of Washington and I went to Europe. I thought I’d find bombed out places there as precedent. In England I found some but I didn’t find what I was looking for at all. So then my philosopher says, “well use that as a plus, you come out and say, nobody’s done this anywhere in the world, this will be a first.”

Working to Save the Structures

HAAG: So another thing, I made a model of black and white of what was existing on the site. And I tried to get as much of black in the black and white model, [I tried to get] as much black as I could on that site. And I photographed it from an angle that shows the blackness. And then I show what I intend to save, and I tried to get as much white in that picture. And so pictures don't lie, but you can kind of skew things a little bit. And then, the way you say things is important. If I say, I'm saving 40% of the structures; people are going to say 40%. But if I say, the structures I save will only cover 5% of the site. Oh, yeah, I mean the meanest banker will give you 5%. So I learned all these tricks about how to succeed. [OVERLAPPING VOICES]

BIRNBAUM: *Within that context talk a little bit about selective subtraction, which is a term I've seen you use in print.*

HAAG: Yeah, imagine on an old apple tree that's not been cared for an all, and you're going to try to bring it back into production. Well you climb up there and you obviously, some things just have to go. So that's selective demolition. And this site was so covered and complicated with these buildings that it [was very difficult to figure it out], maybe today with a computer you could do that. But it was so complicated that we couldn't figure it out. If you take this out, what kind of space are you creating? So I tried to approach it through this selective demolition or subtraction and take out what was obviously rotten, dangerous, and not aesthetic. And then I would step back and see what it is that we had. So I wanted to let multiple demolition contracts, but the city wouldn't go for it. So I was able to do just

two, but it was still an important process. And then I learned other, one technique, I called it the Khrushchev technique. Nobody knows what that means any more, but that is, you go in for more than know can possibly get, and then you can give something away. It's like playing chess, you can give this away and everything feels good. Ah, yes, he's flexible look he gave up on that shed, you know? But at one point, the park superintendant said, the mayor's heard stories that you're trying to save structures out here and all, so what am I going to tell the mayor? And the mayor wants to meet with you on Friday. So I bargained for some time, and I hired one of my students, and he did this outrageous watercolor, you know, the usual thing with the balloons, the French poodles, the candy, the striped candy, all that stuff, and with these towers almost hidden by all this froo-frah, and that was shown to the mayor. And he said, "Well, let him go ahead a little further on".

And then I had a great idea, Charles, and I think others ought to emulate this idea. I had this idea that if push came to shove, I would take all of this junk soil, and I would just mound it up over the structures I intended to preserve, and then years later somebody would be digging there and say, oh my God, there's a Gas Works plant under here. Look at this. You know, industrial archeologists would discover it. So to make a long story shorter, I used every trick in the book.

I got artists involved by saying if I gave you this assemblage of pipes to paint what would you do? And sculptors were coming out of the woodwork. As I said, assemblages were big, [there was] Tin Gailey and people. I put [down] a price of six million dollars worth of

modern sculpture. Who's going to cut that down? The mayor was on television and a good friend [of mine] was interviewing him, and the mayor said, "Yes, when the city owns this in '73, I'm going to be the first in the gate to start torching". And Frank, Mike James edited that completely differently. Oh boy, I mean some of the things that were going on.

I forgot to tell, I started and I forgot to talk about this deed. So this young attorney guy got me going on that. So we went to the gas company and we said, get your attorneys and what does this mean you're cutting everything down to the foundation? Does this mean the concrete foundations have to come out of that site and so on? Do you have any idea what that's going to cost? Well, we had cost systems. So you're going to have to spend all this money? Why don't you rewrite this portion here and get the city attorney to agree that we don't have to do that. And so we'll save you money. So we're going to save them, I think it was worth, \$72 or \$71. We are going to save you 64 thousand dollars. Oh, OK, great. So I said, now how about giving us that 64 thousand. But no, they wouldn't go there. But anyhow, we changed that deed of transfer and the city still lost control of the park department. And they didn't stand with me, so it became a hot political issue.

And at the time we had two major newspapers here in Seattle, one morning and evening paper, I think they're both morning now. But with the evening newspaper, I was successful in getting their editors down to the office that we had on site. And then we gave them a tour. And so they backed off, they started writing favorable [articles]. Paul Goldberger came to town. We took him out and showed him. He wrote a great piece saying that this park

could be the masterpiece of Seattle. So the battle was being joined. We were getting endorsements, and we were getting people up in arms about it. And so the park department, it becomes a political issue before the city acquires the site.

That's another thing, when do you ever get a project, that you have three years of lead time on? That was just the luckiest break in the world. It gave me three years to mount this educational campaign, you know. And not showing any plans concept. [We were] playing to the theater of the mind and showing lots of beautiful eye candy pictures of things in Europe, Tivoli gardens, World's Fair in Japan and all this stuff. This is what we can have. Open up your mind, new eyes for old. That's a Stan White expression, new math for old. Think about it. Yeah sure you can tear it down, but if you wanted to build this, what would it cost to build it? You couldn't afford it. So we used all these techniques, but finally it became a political issue. And I had to present the concept now, no plans yet, just the concept, the approach, to the open public meeting. There were 600 or 700 people in the Eames Theater. And I did the two slide projections.

There was a woman there, and she really tried to shoot me down right off. She was a really wealthy woman that her own plans for that [site] and she could have paid for it. Anyhow, the council stood by us and within a week, they unanimously voted to approve our approach.

Bioremediation

HAAG: So then, I had the big thing of remediation on the site, and that's when my chemical soil consultant, Richard Brooks taught me about bioremediation.

BIRNBAUM: *Now how did you communicate that to the general public?*

HAAG: By demonstration. That was exactly the question I asked Mr. Labos. [He was] an old man without a formal education but Brooks knew him and brought him out of retirement, out of the mountains. He kicked around there, and he said, you can get anything to grow here within a year. And we couldn't believe it. So how do we prove that? Do I bring in this bong from the Chevron office laboratories, they're all working on trying to develop bacteria to eat hydrocarbons, to digest hydrocarbon molecules. He said, "No, the best, the perfect bacteria microbes have evolved here from when they brought the first coal in, and the first oil in and so on. They're right here, they just need to be aerated, stimulated and fed". And I said, "Nobody's going to believe that". And he says, "Demonstrations". So we made three demonstration plots, 100 square feet, ten by ten and planted different things, and it worked. So that allowed us to know we could actually have a park without hauling everything away. It sounds pretty easy in retrospect, but later the Environmental Protection Agency [EPA] came up and said, "hey, they burned coal here, they burned oil, this is a hazardous waste site, this is a superfund site" We were able to fend them off for about five years, but they did find benzene pockets, deposits deep in the soil, but it was overreaction. It could never get to the lake. It couldn't. If it got to the surface, which it had to do, it would be eaten by our bioremediation process.

BIRNBAUM: *You've spoken to the process that led up to the park, and you've spoken to the soil issue. Now what I'd like for you to do is take me on a tour of the park. You're describing the experience, the spaces, the intent. Give me a short tour of Gas Works.*

How the Design Evolved

HAAG: Well, first of all we decided to use a technique they in Japan all the time which is to put a barrier of evergreen plants around [the site] so that you have an outside and an inside and you have to pass through this zone. That's the way their temple grounds are [designed and] always surrounded. So that was one thing. A major accomplishment there was a massive grading [to the site]. We didn't know where the worst polluted soil was [but when we found it] we did take that out. We start to mound it up. And there's another trick there that this site was artificially made. It used to have a soft margin by the lake, in fact the lake used to come way in where the towers were. And they [the gas company] took all the refuse, what we call the industrial afterbirth, and they just keep pushing it out, pushing it out into the lake. This is before [environmental] controls. So when you stood deep in the site, because of this plateau effect, you could barely tell there was a lake there. Visually, you'd see a float plane landing, or the masts of a ship go by or something. So we decided to cut the site down. We shaped it just as you would find in nature normally, no big cuts. So we sloped the site down in the area of the morning bowl and in the midday bowl, and then took all the worst soil and piled it up there. It is another great Japanese principle, dig here, pile there. It's really simple.

So [the plan was that] you would walk from the buses and cars through this buffer barrier, the screen of evergreens, and then come into this space with light, the lake reflection, the long view of the city and these forms in your foreground. The forms have a calling back and forth, it's a family of forms, you see? [And so it's related in that kind of an optical way. And it's still not finished. At the entrance there should be banks of monumental steps where ceremonies could happen, and right now it's just a temporary asphalt ramp that goes down. But the trestles that we retained, the concrete trestles, that would be a perfect way to enter through there. And from there then you would split up and you could go to various things, toward the great mound or to toward the great family of towers or you could go over to the play barn or the picnic barn which were renovated and saved. And so there's a great play of spaces, but also openness. That is the thing you don't get very much of in Seattle because of the nature of the city. You don't get much of a sense of openness; so this park does that, especially if you go up to the top of the great mound where you get a sense of light and air and just exuberance. And you can get to the water now. That is one of my universals. You want to see water, you want to be able to get to it, and if possible get in it. And well, they still try to keep you out of the water down there. But again there's that yin-yang in the site. You dig as deep as you can dig and you pile as high as you can [that is] prospect-refuge. What else?

It's rather under-programmed, but it'll accommodate a lot of people. I think one thing that's interesting is when an anti-war or anti- most anything movements begin, this is where

people kind of gravitate to as their home base. I think it's under-programmed because we really didn't, as Ziegler would say, we really don't know how play styles are going to evolve.

Creating Flexible Space at Gas Works Park

[The following material is from the 2013 interview]

HAAG: One thing in park design, you always look for context. You wonder how the park that you're designing, how it fits into the scale and the spectrum of recreational activities. So this park was purposefully designed to be rather freeform, without fields or boundaries or markers. We wanted to generate spontaneous play. It's quite different than say Seattle Center, which is really a very structured and disciplined. It is kind of like a front yard and we think of this park as the back yard. Here you can come and if you want to take your shirt off and roll in the grass and do free things, without structure. It is open to your imagination and open to your activities.

Now, for instance, the parkour movement is raging through the country. This is a seminal park for these people, these young thrill-seekers, to show their stamina and strength and do the acrobatic things that they do here. We'll see that maybe in the play barn later. They develop these sequences of moves.

So as we used to say, this park will be for play and activities that are not yet even dreamed of. For instance, in one of these towers, I proposed a circular billiard table. I wanted, three of them at different levels. Have you ever heard of that?

[End 2013 interview]

Protecting the Future of Gas Works Park

Friends of Gas Works Park

[The following material is from the 2013 interview]

HAAG: I have to get to the Friends of Gas Works Park. That was a group that my wife set up, a group of friends and allies of the park. We wanted to exert a kind of guardianship or sponsorship over it. I've always been fearful that the towers would be taken down at some point and so one of the things that we and they did was to set up bylaws. Friends of Gasworks Park became a watchdog group for the park. They became incorporated as a tax-sheltered 501c3, and they met monthly for eight or ten years.

A company tried to usurp a third of the park for twenty or thirty concerts on summer weekends and the Friends of Gasworks Park went into action and brought a suit against the city. The developers wanted to fence off the heart of the park, the play barn, the play shelter and charge admission for concerts. And the judge ruled that the Friends of Gasworks Park, because of their continuity and service had legal standing. That's very important. The judge ruled against the developer, the city and the entertainment corporation that wanted to privatize the park. We put out this poster showing their plan. Pictures are so important. We said that Gasworks Park is a treasure, it is not a commodity. And this is something you should watch all over the country, especially in hard times, the park departments and even

the federal government, will often try to privatize what is really part of our national heritage, for profit, yeah.

A National Register of Historic Places Property

HAAG: The history of becoming landmarked goes back to the Friends of Gasworks Park. They had a board member, architect Patricia Fells and she is quite a historian as well as an architect. She volunteered to be on the board. She is also on the Historic Commission of the [Washington] state. She really helped us prepare the applications to get it landmarked. I do remember that the park department was opposed to Gasworks Park becoming landmarked. But we were successful. And then the next step was we went to the State of Washington and we became a state Historic Landmark.

So then Patricia said, well, “We should go for the national designation”. And with some input from Charles Birnbaum and the Cultural Landscape Foundation we applied to the federal government to be considered. And the first time out, they declined to landmark us and the reason given was that I was alive. I was still alive and practicing. Anyhow, I refused to stop practicing. I’m not dead yet.

So we then presented it another time, and this time, we were successful and I’m elated over it, obviously. I think it’s a good example of perseverance and research. So in 2013, Department of Interiors listed Gas Works Park on the National Register of Historic Places.

Plans for the Future

HAAG: And the tower to my left, the big mother tower, we have plans to develop a camera obscura, a state of the art camera obscura for it. Can you imagine that? To be able to look through a periscope and to be able to see a 360 degree view of downtown Seattle and the Mountains and so on. So, and we have ideas for vertical museums in these towers.

We have to get the fence down. [He is referring to the fence that surrounds the towers.]

The fence is an insult. We will engender enough public reaction against the fence that it will come down. It's a real experience to be right here in among these gigantic, I call them gothic ironworks. Yeah.

[End 2013 interview]

Reflections on Gas Works

BIRNBAUM: *So as a Seattleite, going on now for five decades, you've made this park in a city of Olmsted Parks. As you look at Gas Works in that context, what does that feel like? What does that mean to you?*

HAAG: Well, do you know, Charles, that in Olmsted's 1903 great plan for Seattle, that he designated that peninsula, Brown's Point, as a future park? Did you know that? So, ah you knew that. Yeah, so it was in their thinking and all. And when you think about it geographically or physically or spatially, it's just a natural place for a park, this prow out into

the Lake Union. I would like to think I'm just followed right in his footsteps and he would have done the same thing or better. Yeah.

It is a project, though, that you had to be here [to get it done]. Because there's no way that the genius of [Dan] Kiley, and so on [could have done this]. You had to be here to take those crank calls and to put up the smoke screen or do whatever. And I've had some wonderful projects in other places, and they just didn't work, because there wasn't that thinking about it night and day and being on the site and of the site.

And part of this is drawing on the value of culture here. And it helped to have the University as support. And I have no compunction, is that the word? I have no reservation about using students to do civic-minded work. I think it's all part of their educational process.

BIRNBAUM: Now when you think about this in the context of the Brownfields movement let's speak a little bit to that and what the park might mean.

HAAG: Well, that was one of the incredible breaks that we had. We got on the site a in fact, before the city owned the property. We ran into a thing there, I'll digress a bit, about this bioremediation. We got permission to use human sludge from the metro sewage despot, the sewage treatment plant. And because the park was not open, it was under construction, the gas company still owned it. [After using the sludge] we had acres and acres of tomatoes that came up. And the park superintendant reported this in the newspaper paper. He

invited people down there to help themselves to the tomatoes, the bumper crop. He shouldn't have done this, the city was not liable, but then one of the newspapers said, uh oh. They interviewed the workers and they got sick. So holy moley, then our young scientist from Metro Engineers, he took those tomatoes and he chemo-spectrographed them with San Joaquin Valley tomatoes, and they had more heavy metals than the our tomatoes, so they dropped that whole thing. So that was another break.

But the break was being there before EPA was instituted. You couldn't do this today. So that's why I tell the students and other landscape architects that have these toxic waste sites, polluted sites. Probably the best thing you can do is to put a 10-foot fence around them and put up do not enter and hold it there for ten years and maybe by that time, the Environmental Protection Agency [EPA] and the departments of ecology will believe in bioremediation and natural processes. And then you can go in there and do something. But the way it is now, there's this unholy alliance between [the environment and] environmental engineers. I mean that is an oxymoronic coupling there. They make huge profits out of projects that natural processes could do, maybe not as fast, or maybe faster than their high-tech, hard-tech, high-cost solutions to overcoming polluted sites. Yeah.

BIRNBAUM: Anything else on that project you'd like to speak to? Do you want to talk about anything maybe from the design vocabulary that you might not have addressed?

HAAG: Well, it is the culmination of my projects, that's for sure. It's my opus maximus, or whatever, and it will be because it's a public [space] and it's strong form. It was quite prototypical, and has, I think broken new ground for people's ideas of what parks and recreation and even landscape architecture [can be]. It has a lot of my trademarks, the strong earth forming and kind of a holistic approach, I guess, I hope. I'm please with it. Yes.

Victor Steinbrueck Park

[The following material is from the 2013 interview]

SLADE: *So are we ready? OK. Can you tell us who Victor Steinbrueck was?*

HAAG: How long do you want me to speak about Victor Steinbrueck? Because he is a dear friend, and I first met him in 1958, when I came to Seattle to the University of Washington to try to institute a Department of Landscape Architecture. I came in September. It was the first faculty meeting of the year, and everyone was telling stories and so on. But I came in as a newcomer, obviously. And out of the group, one man turned and came over and shook my hand and said, "Rich, you don't know how long we've been waiting for you". And that was Victor, Victor Steinbrueck, an architect who had been teaching there for years, and who had been chairman of the department and so on.

Anyhow, Victor and I became very close friends, and we actually designed several viewpoint parks in Seattle. But I should mention that Victor was very interested in history and

preservation. His family home had been razed for the freeway that cut Seattle right in half. So he was a big opponent of freeways and progress in the form of urban renewal.

And what happened was this. The Feds, in alignment with business interests in Seattle, decided that the Pike Place Market was an anachronism and that they should tear it down and build a world-class hotel and convention center. So Victor began a campaign. It was Victor, Fred Bassetti, Ibsen Nelsen [and I]; they were all architects, and I was the token landscape architect, I suppose. We started Friends of the Market. We got an initiative passed by the public. And lo and behold, we stopped or we tore up 23 proposed schemes for the conversion of the Pike Place Market into this proposed trade center.

So that's how Victor and I worked together from the very early days. And then about ten years after we saved the Pike Place Market, why, with a lot of help from other people and so on, of course, then we were awarded the chance to design the, it was then called the Pike Place, Market Park.

This one acre site, actually, its 100 feet by 300 feet , is a northern extension of the Pike Place Market. There are two totem poles there. Victor and I went up to the great woods, the federal forest, and selected the trees which were logged and brought down and were carved by a Native American. That's kind of a symbolic feature there.

So we were awarded that design, as I said. The park was very carefully designed to be kind of rough and tumble place, like the people that live around there and who need the park more than others. So when you think about it, it's the only eye, belvedere eye over Eliot Bay. And it has the greatest view of the Olympic Mountains.

I think it was 1982 when the park was opened and dedicated. We had quite a limited budget for an urban park, which has a lot of hard stuff to it. And our first schemes were terraces and stairways and a lot of the budget went there. And then I said, well, hey, how about having a privately-owned operated garage tucked into the hillside? We can get three levels of parking for 300 cars. And then we'll have a tabula rasa, we'll have a platform to put the park right up at street level. {We will have] the whole, the whole nine yards, as they say.

So Victor resisted that for a while. He resisted it because of the idea of bringing more cars into the Pike Place Market which really is a pedestrian, a walking zone. However, the way the money was all being spent in the retaining walls and stairways, why, it became obvious that this was a really simplistic solution to the form of the park. And then another advantage to this was that by projecting this platform over the Alaska Way Viaduct, which is in the process of being torn down now, [it mitigated] the noise from the Alaska Way Viaduct.

Since then, there have been seven, I could document seven attempts to coerce or modify the park. And for some of those we had to go to court and file lawsuits. One condominium

developer with the consent of the Port Authority, wanted to build condos that would have taken about a third of that panoramic view away from us.

Charles Birnbaum knows about this because he came out here about three years ago and we had a tour of the urban parks in Seattle, including Larry Halprin's Freeway Park and Occidental Park. However, the park department would not let us include Pike Place Market or Victor Steinbrueck Park [in that tour].

The park was named after him [Victor Steinbrueck] as a memorial when he passed away, around 1987. The name was changed, I should mention that. And so now that, we have a strange situation where there is a Pike Place Market Historic Commission, who in my opinion, is the ruling authority over the maintenance and care and love of the park.

However, the park department, which in my opinion should be manage the park but not direct so-called, quote, improvements. Such improvements are number one, the lowering of the earth berms, the mounds, the earth works, the earth forms and two, removing the shelter. And this is where the Native Americans from California to Montana to British Columbia to Alaska meet. They meet at this shelter and under the totem poles. And so current plans are that the waterfront development would direct people right through that particular spot; I call it the last reservation.

There were earlier things that I could incriminate the park department for. For instance, I had an 80 foot double row of blueberry plants for the users of the park to forage from. The

park department changed those to a very sterile kind of an evergreen hedge. And [we had] an aspen grove which they allowed that to wither. I think they're all gone.

In the children's sunken play area, they recently allowed a sculpture to be built there. It is a monument for the homeless who die on the streets and have no monument. This is a righteous cause, no doubt. But homeless children are the largest growing demographic in the country. So they usurped that space for this other monument.

SLADE: *Is that the broken heart?*

HAAG: Yeah, yeah –The park was called the Pike Place Market Park, for obvious reasons. But after Victor [Steinbrueck] passed away, why, the City Council voted to officially change the name of the park to Victor Steinbrueck Park, as a monument and a memorial to him because of all the civic good that Victor did. He saved the market. He was the prime mover. He devoted so much of his time to saving the park. Yeah.

SLADE: *It seems that it's a very diverse group of people, who use the park, people come and go, and it's extremely active. It is very popular park with many different kinds of people, whether it's to come to see the view, or to just hang out.*

HAAG: Yes, there was a study made recently, by a Danish planning firm who spent a lot of time in Seattle surveying the parks. And they said that Victor Steinbrueck Park is the most

populated, the most heavily-used park and it has the widest range of humanity [in the city]. And you hear more foreign languages there. Down-and-outers come and panhandle. It's just a very rich milieu. And then the tourists come in, they're coming in now in their shorts and they will subsume the park for a while. But it's just a joyous expression. And it's a belvedere. A belvedere is a place you go to, it's like going to land's end.

And a [new] plan for the improvement of the waterfront is a plan by James Corner. It is directing a large-inclined plane right through the southwest corner of the park. And so it will become a concourse, a space of circulation. And this is not following the concept of the park, which was to be a destination, a go-to place to enjoy the view, a view that is denied to the people on the street, the common man.

Private Seattle Residence on Lake Washington

Developing the Program

SLADE: So Rich, we're sitting here on the, and I'd like you to tell us about how you came to this project, and where specifically we're located.

HAAG: We're located east of Seattle in a suburb of rather handsome and wealthy houses and properties, overlooking Lake Washington. I think the architect with whom I work on many projects brought me on board here. And this house was really a tear-down but because it was located so close to the lake the owners decided to save the footings and build there. Yeah.

So the property that it sits on was a tumble-down place and abandoned. The big cedar off to my left here was the only tree of significance on this side of the property. It's a very important symbol and an element in scale-giving to build around.

But the lot just tumbled-down into the lake. The slope was held up by a series of very poorly-constructed rockeries. They are an anathema to me. Rockeries are a kind of a cheap way to retain levels, to create levels on these steep sites. So they have all been replaced with a very structured system of walls and stairways.

In the original design, since the house is so axial, we did propose an axial scheme. It ran down just where I'm sitting. The main walkway was to go right down to the lake. However, we found that in years of irrigating the lawn here, all of the roots of this monumental cedar were right up here on the surface. So we did some air spading and discovered that. Why then we came up with this asymmetrical layout of pavement, stairways and circulation. The blue stone that goes down to the lake, the boat ramp, the piers and wharf.

SLADE: Did *the clients have particular program in mind?*

HAAG: Well, normally, a normal practice in my office is that we present the client with a questionnaire, a landscape questionnaire. And this helps us to get into the clients' ideas of a program, ideas about their outdoor activities, their priorities, their likes and dislikes. We

even ask them to give us their collections of cutouts from magazines, tear-outs and tear-sheets. And we ask them about gardens that they have come to admire and about their childhood and their knowledge of plants. It can be quite elaborate. Some clients laugh at it, and some are very diligent. And some, we don't dare ask because they would feel like it's an invasion of privacy.

SLADE: *Well, when you got their questionnaire back, did they have specific recommendations or things that they wanted in the garden?*

HAAG: Well, they did have some requirements about some of the usual things that we find even here in the Northwest, although in California, it's always the pool, the barbeque. Here, it's more apt to be the hot tub, or the sauna, the barbeque is of course, very favorable. Areas of pavement that get warm in the day and generate heat after the sun goes down are popular. A lot of those tricks that we're quite familiar with [when proposed to] the clients they usually listen to us. They respect our judgment. And it works out, as I think is exemplified here. It is just an incredibly beautiful place. It is so young, yet so beautiful.

Building the Garden

SLADE: *When was this garden constructed?*

HAAG: Well, this garden was really constructed within the last year. The styrax trees behind you were brought in just about this time last year. So we were able to get some quite

mature plants to this particular location. We used Mr. Olaf Ribeiro the world's foremost tree pathologist, to save these big trees on this property and restore them to health. The whole procedure was just a joy of collaboration. It went very smoothly. Yes.

SLADE: *How long was the design in process from when you first met this client until the garden was finished?*

HAAG: Yes, this project took only about a year and a half, because we were on a very aggressive program here. We moved right along, working simultaneously with the architect. The construction was quite a problem, because as you can see, if you study the plan, that this waterfront was cut off from the access. This happens quite often on these waterfront projects that we have to build the garden and build our way back from the lake to the access roads. So that was a bit of a problem. But we had weekly meetings and the client she sat in on the meetings and in fact provided wonderful food and drink for us. And that was quite a ceremonial event to have the weekly meeting all of the consultants in attendance. Yeah.

The Elements of the Design

Spatial Hierarchy

HAAG: Yeah. Well, spatially here, we have a nice hierarchy, or a sequence going on. This ancient 100 year old native cedar, right here to the right off camera, relates to a very large

katsura. That katsura is about 30 feet tall. We carefully moved it in here and planted it. It serves a very good function in this scale: you go from the cedar to the katsura to the house to the people to the furniture, to the detail of the bluestone. Bluestone is one of my favorite paving materials, and here we used in a very architectonic way, architecturally its modular and it's easy on the eye. It doesn't give you the glare that some pavements do.

Plant Material

SLADE: *Do you want to just talk about the plant palette that you chose for this garden? It's very restrained.*

HAAG: We used a quite restrained palette; or I try to. It just simplifies things. Our lives and our clothes are so colorful and with movement and all. I like to have more of a bare stage, you might call it, an empty space and stage for their performance, and their flexibility. The client can have weddings or bar mitzvahs and various ceremonies here. We try to have some open lawn. And we like a kind of non-striving and minimalist palette, it helps with maintenance. But we do bring in some seasonal color, of course.

We have a nice vista down here to the lake. Well, we were talking about the plants and I was explaining that I use a rather limited palette of plants. I got onto this trick when I was in Japan. I asked for a list of the plants that I could expect to find in the temple gardens. And I was given a list in short order of 23 plants. And I said, "Wonderful. Now, when do I get the next installment"? And Mr. Nakuru-san said, "huh, what? This is it". So I said, holy moly, you

know, the least common denominator plant list. So I try to stick within a very narrow range of plants that I know that have form, foliage, flower, fragrance, fruit, and I will add that are photogenic.

Qualities of the Site

SLADE: *So can you tell us a little bit about how the lake is an important part of landscape here in Seattle?*

HAAG: Oh yes, water. This is an incredible, incredible place to practice landscape architecture, because we have the long-views. We have the distant views that are in the background such as the mountains, which we do see when the sun's right. And we have this climate which is really an outdoor greenhouse. It is really a very benevolent climate. Things just have a great propensity to grow and flourish here. The properties are around the lake, and the sun, and the clouds are reflected on the lake. And then you have the boating and all the aquatic activities that the lake affords. And so it's a great extension of recreation right from your front yard, you know.

And I would like to say, that I am really appreciative and indebted to this client, this particular client. Although I hasten to say most all of my clients are just wonderful people, but this family here have been especially gracious and grateful, and just a pleasure, a joy to work with. Yes.

[The interview continues and moves to the front of the house].

The Design of the Forecourt

HAAG: OK, I'm ready to talk about the stone. Stone is used for the wall that I'm leaning on, the cobbles, the chimney and you might have noticed the hot tub. All of this stone came from Montana; and that caused a bit of a problem because the quarries close when the bad weather comes. But the stone for those urns, they are actually Chinese rain barrels that we import from China.

Another element of this courtyard is that we had to carve down the hills, the terrain behind us to create this open space here. Another feature that I often use are these honey locust trees planted like that [singular and close to the building]. It's kind of a climate change thing. They leaf out very late in the spring, and when the weather gets cool in the autumn, why, they drop their leaves very conveniently. So we get the sun when we want it, and when it is too much, when is overbearing, why, they give us that protection. Anyhow, I just like their rugged, scraggly, gnarly form. And this structure contrasts greatly with the fine bi-pinnate leaf pattern that they have. I hear the birds in the background. I hope that's coming through the recording. It's quite quiet here at the moment.

The allée behind us is another stereotypical thing that I often use, a symbolic thing, an allée of katsura trees. And I first discovered katsura *cercidiphyllum japonicum*, in Japan. And then I later found there's a fantastic katsura in front of Dumbarton Oaks. There is one at

Swarthmore [Arboretum] and at various eastern arboreta. But it hadn't been used here since Olmsted used them around the turn of the century. So I reintroduced it to the Northwest, and I also brought in the *cercidiphyllum magnificum*, which is even better than the *japonicum*. But anyhow, it's one of my all-time favorite trees. It just catches the backlight, it's beautiful in every season of the year, and you can do everything but smoke it. I haven't tried that, actually. Maybe it does, would work.

Private Residence in Seattle, Washington

[The following material is from the 2013 interview]

HAAG: This is just another wonderful client. I have a great cadre of great clients. And it seems like each one is better than the other. This residence is in the city of Seattle. It is a rather enclosed space, an enclave. The garden itself is enclosed by walls of *taxus* and other hedge materials both formal and informal. And the thing that happened here was that the owner bought a house to the north side which had fallen into disrepair. That house was, as they call them here in Seattle, a tear-down. So that house was removed, and this cabana, which you will see, and the swimming pool were added.

And we had the same crew here [as the first residence] Sullivan Canard were the architects and the contractor was Toth, T-O-T-H. The landscape contractor was John Crutch. So we had the same team of the usual suspects, you might say, here.

Developing the Program

And the design problem was to connect these rather disparate spaces; one was a completely raised site, with our other mature landscape. We managed to save the great trees, which gave us a sense of stability and tied us into the neighborhood at large.

I think the design problem here was designing this area that I'm sitting in right now. We had to build terraces that would tie the old house to the new cabana. We were dealing with rather difficult forms, geometries, and grades. And rather than try to disguise the connection, we thought of it as a joint, or a knuckle. Joints are often thought of as points of weakness, but they're actually points of strength. So rather than ignore or deemphasize the joining of properties, we thought we would make a feature of it. So this hot tub that I'm sitting on the rim of, can be turned into an ornamental fountain. And it's even fun to be in the hot tub with the water cascading down on you.

The stone used here, some of it is from China, and some of it is from the Cascade. [We used] boulders from the Cascade Mountains which have been shaped and sawn and so on. And again, you will see rather rectangular or geometric patterns, rather than loose flagstone.

Although this is a single-family residence, we were able to surround it completely with landscape. And so, doing as we just did, coming in through the front entrance, you realize it can be thought of as a stroll garden quite literally. You move from position to position and you feel a part of the surrounding garden and then you move on to another garden. Some

are completely shaded, some are in the sun. [In the sun] is where the roses, for instance, want to be. And then you come down to the big statement, an Olympic-sized swimming pool.

Considering Plant Material

SLADE: *Tell us about the plant material.*

HAAG: Well, all of the large plants that you see, the stewartia to my left, and the magnificent katsura, cercidiphyllum magnificum here and the honey locust all are providing shade for the upper terrace, when you most need shade. But when you want the sun to come to the terrace, the leaves fall off very conveniently for you in the autumn.

So the major plants here, the plants that are defining this space and really controlling it are propagated. I grew these plants at my nursery. I started a nursery in 1962 when I realized that the very choice material that I wanted to use was not available. And I thought, hmm. I grew up in a nursery; I know the problems and potentials. So I bought land and developed quite a nursery beginning in 1962. Yes, Nancy, it is unusual to have a nursery, especially an ongoing nursery that's gone on since 1962. I have many prime specimen plants there now. It's great to be able to draw from your extended family, bring your choice plants down and put them under the care of grateful clients.

One of the features here is the mini orchard. We're experimenting; we have plums, apples, pears and persimmon. We haven't harvested a crop just yet. I pride myself on having a deep knowledge of horticulture, plants, their habits, and their potential. And as I think we mentioned, we think about form first and then foliage and then flower, fragrance, fruit, photogenic qualities. And I think a lot about seasonal change. Here, we do not have the strong seasons that you have on the East Coast or in the Midwest. So to me, it's very important to emphasize the subtle changes that we do have by plants that flower and fruit and give fragrance to the garden through different seasons.

SLADE: *Do you consciously plant to attract birds to your gardens?*

HAAG: Why yes, that is a very conscious effort that we make. We're members of [the] Audubon [Society] and we have developed this list of plants [to attract birds]. They're not all native [plants], because some plants are better than the natives as far as providing food and cover for a range of birds. And the birds are very important to the landscape. Maybe you can hear the sound. You can certainly see their presence. They activate the landscape.

Water in the Garden

HAAG: Water is an element and a feature of the garden. It's difficult to imagine a garden without water. Water is the essence of life. Water brings in life and movement to the garden. And it is reflective and meditative. It can be natural or artificial, you can throw it in the air, you can let it run over rocks. And well, tomorrow we're going to the reflection pool

[at Bloedel Reserve], which is a unique experience, a window to the sky, just a rectangle of water cut into the forest. I always try to express the magical qualities of water in the garden in different ways, different scales. Yeah.

[End 2013 interview]

The End