



CAROL JOHNSON

ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEW

Conducted

July 2006, Boston, MA

By Charles A. Birnbaum, FASLA, FAAR, James Sheldon and Shirley Veenema



Table of Contents

Day 1	3
Background – Publications and Writing.....	3
Childhood	4
College and Post College Years	4
Travels and Reading the Landscape.....	4
Harvard and Early Employment Experiences.....	5
Starting Her Own Firm	6
Energy Projects.....	7
Office Composition and Staff.....	7
Model Cities Program	8
Mystic Reservation	8
Travel.....	9
Campus Work.....	10
Work in Iran.....	10
Other Projects: Columbia Point, Kennedy Library.....	11
ADA and Accommodations for the Disabled	11
Kennedy Park.....	12
Agnes Scott College.....	12
Johnson Property in New Hampshire.....	13
International Travel.....	13
John Marshall Park, Washington, D.C.....	14
Taking the Professional Licensing Exam.....	16
Women and the Profession	16
Getting Early Work: Cambridge Common, near Harvard Square	17
Favorite Landscapes – Plea for Maintenance, Collaboration.....	18
Favorite Landscapes – Kennedy Park Fountain.....	18
Campus Planning – Long Term Working Relationships.....	19
What makes a Carol Johnson Landscape?.....	19
On the Idea of Subtraction.....	19
On Topography and Circulation	20
On Waterfronts and Their Revitalization	21
On the Future of Her Practice.....	21
The Role of Women in the Profession Today.....	22
On Harvard.....	22
Day 2 – Location Shooting.....	24
Harbor Point	24
MacDonald Park – Mystic Reservation.....	28
Charles River Basin – Cambridge Common	31
East Cambridge - Courthouse Walk	33
John F. Kennedy Park.....	34



Day 1

This interview begins with a seated discussion which took place in concert with a powerpoint presentation. This was followed by a walk around Carol Johnson's office.

I wanted to start by talking about what I love about landscape architecture and being a landscape architect. You can learn so much when you are a landscape architect. There's a diversity of foci and opportunities for artistic expression in three-dimensions. Possibilities for contributions of social, historic and cultural importance and these things have really turned me on for my whole professional career. You have an involvement in identifying and solving real problems with a community, enhancing outdoor environmental quality and meeting and interacting with the wonderful people who are involved [in] and supportive of landscape projects.

Background – Publications and Writing

You could have an understanding somewhat of the diversity encompassed in Landscape Architecture by a list of the subjects on which I've written articles for various journals over the years. For example:

Urban Land Restoration on the Water's Edge: Case Studies in Boston, which was published in EKISTICS 1: Landscape Design and Planning in [July/August] 1993.

One, *On Monuments; Their Environment, Theme and Construction* – that was in the IFLA Yearbook.

The Unconsidered Northern Landscape, which was a paper I delivered at the winter cities conference in Alaska. That was in the Journal of Alaska Design Forum, [Summer] 1994.

Current Trends in Campus Landscape Design that was in Landscape Architect and Specifier News in [June] 2002.

And another on *Contemporary Campus Landscape Design* that was in Planning for Higher Education in 1993-1994 winter volume, [1993-94].

Urban Open Space and Transit Development was in Landscape Architecture published by the Chinese Landscape Architects Society of Taiwan in 1992

Art and the Urban Landscape was in Landscape Design in [January] 1993

And then there was one that I did many years ago for a Spanish architectural publication [Cuadernos de Arquitectura] that was on the Carpenter Center which was way back in 1964

So, that you can see that I've written and thought about a wide diversity of subjects which are all part of the landscape architects purview. In fact, there are many aspects that I've been involved in that I haven't actually written about so that's an overview of how I feel about landscape architecture and then I can go to my background.

Ok - Regarding my background which is of course the basis of what we all become, my own work has been said to possess simplicity, elegance, quiet surprises and clarity.



I strive to create designs that are unique to their particular environment and that give to their community a special sense of ownership. I'm particularly interested in changes of the landscape seasonal and over time as someone my age might be expected to be.

Childhood

My childhood: I was raised in a suburban household in northern New Jersey. My parents were great gardeners and like many children I wrote poems. Mine were about physical features in the landscape: the Bayonne Bridge, the Courthouse tower. I enjoyed summer vacations on a former farm in Vermont. I climbed trees, hiked and camped out. The view of the Green Mountains, which is shown here, was opposite the hillside farmhouse and it was pristine woodlands around Mount Pico and Killington.

Now, Killington is a major ski area, the landscape is totally different. The Sherbourne Valley is no longer the dying agricultural community that it was when I was young.

We also vacationed on Martha's Vineyard in a house on Lake Tashmoo. The hurricane of 1938 broke through the land bridge and this freshwater pond where we took the clay that we found at the Gay Head Cliffs and made cigarette trays for our parents (people smoked a lot in those days.) Then we used to go to the Sound in a boat across Lake Tashmoo. In the hurricane of 1938 the landbridge separating the lake and the saltwater broke through and the lake is now saltwater, another major change in the landscape.

In 1935, of course, there were many fewer people on Martha's Vineyard and now with the density of population the landscape has changed a lot.

My 11-year-old brother started a neighborhood newspaper called *The Boulevard Bugle* when he got a duplicator set for Christmas one year. We lived on Midland Boulevard – his paper was called *The Boulevard Bugle*. His friends and I were the reporters and the delivery people. After 4 years I took over I increased the circulation from 20 to 400 and actually made money on advertising. This was a sort of foretaste of an entrepreneurial bent, which I developed later.

College and Post College Years

Then I went to Wellesley College which was the first designed landscape I ever lived on. The clarity of the Olmsted concept of building on the hills and leaving the valley open defined the landscape and directed the experience of students. After graduation, I bicycled and camped out in Europe with a friend. We saw some wonderful things. Here I am looking at Queen Mother Mary leaving the Wedgwood showroom in London. We saw many things – some of them have not changed in the ensuing 55 years, I've changed, but I still love the landscapes that I loved then. And I still love seeing people doing their daily activities and fitting into the urban and the rural landscape.

Birnbaum – Were there villa landscapes that you carried with you?

Travels and Reading the Landscape



I liked Hampton Court very much in Great Britain. It was more the experience of bicycling IN the landscape -- understanding the terrain, the vistas and the views. Camping out in Ireland: we camped out and it started pouring rain. A nice elderly couple in a little sort of hovel had allowed us to camp out on their farm, the man came out, leaned down over the opening of our pup tent and said we should bring ourselves and our things into their house because of the rain and we picked up all our sopping wet sleeping bags and tent and went into this little round house with a fire and we dried out there

Another time when we were worried we weren't going to get where we needed to go, a truck which carried some huge carcasses of beef or something put us and our bikes on board. So yes, I visited the formal gardens. But the experience of being in a landscape and being part of that landscape was quite memorable. I was telling some friends about sometimes when we hitched a ride on trucks it wasn't always so perfect. We were on our way from Brussels, where we'd been visiting friends to Paris and we thought we'd better hitch a ride and the truck put us and the bikes on board and the driver was ...a little bit ... soused. We got nervous with this character and he pulled over and he went to sleep. I signaled to my friend "Open the door, get out," so we got out, we got our bicycles off the truck we went into a field in the dead of night. We laid out our sleeping bags, in the morning we awoke we took the train, with our bicycles, into Paris. So, experiences like that, in the landscape, are just as important for a landscape architect as seeing Hampton court. I did see Hampton court and I did go to Versailles and I did see many things but sleeping out and bicycling and finding your way was very informative for my feeling about landscape.

The bicycle trip in Europe gave me an understanding and appreciation of a lot of landscapes. When I came got back I actually had a job in a wax museum in Florida describing the historic figures in the memorial in St. Augustine. That was interesting and fun and the people would come in from their yachts at the end of the day, that they would have tied up and come in and hear me lecture and then they'd invite me out on the yacht for dinner so that wasn't such a bad deal.

Harvard and Early Employment Experiences

Then I came north from St. Augustine and I worked at the New England Nursery -- that was an interesting job. I did a lot of plant propagation and I sold plants to various suburban people who were living around Bedford, Concord, and Lexington. I lived on the nursery. Some people when they came to buy plants would ask design advice, and I don't know why I thought I was qualified, but I was giving them design advice. Living in the nursery was actually how I got connected with Harvard Graduate School of Design (GSD). I've told this story to many people. I lived out in a little shack that it had I think 110 Sicilians (back before bulldozers did the work in the nurseries,) and they fixed it up for me and it was right next to the rail line that went from Concord through Bedford and supposedly that was how the inmates of the Concord Reformatory escaped. I always, was exhausted from working all day in the fields, I went to bed early and one night I was in bed and I heard voices and I thought OH! It's the inmates from the Concord Reformatory! Well, then I heard my name, and it was some students from GSD who were taking a summer program in plant materials and they had a friend who knew me and knew that I was living out there and working in a nursery and they thought they'd like to come and meet me. So, once I realized that they weren't escapees, I came out and we lit a bonfire and talked over what I was doing and what they were doing and they suggested that I might study landscape architecture. And they invited me to Cambridge and that was the link, but I didn't have all of the credentials. I had to take a makeup math course at Harvard, but they admitted me so long as I took that course. So that was how I got to Harvard. And I will never fail to thank the faculty at Harvard: Serge Chermayoff especially, Hideo Sasaki, Norman Newton, and Walt Chambers in the landscape department all gave me a lot of time and attention.

The GSD then was a sort of intimate place and people looked after you and helped you and you knew everyone and you were really part of the whole thing. That made a big difference to me.

I gained a lot of confidence, and I gained an understanding of design. And I LOVED studying under Siegfried Gideon, the author of *Space, Time and Architecture*. That was a book that the students that encouraged me to come recommended that I read before I got to Harvard. And then to arrive there and have the great man teaching a class which I took, this was a wonderful moment. So, that got me started. While I was still a student, I worked one summer for the Bucks County Park Board.



Birnbaum: Were there woman in the program?

Ah, for the first year there were about four woman students who were in the architecture program, I was the only woman student who was in the landscape program. In the second year, a number of additional students jointed us in the landscape program and there were several students who had perhaps tried architecture and gotten discouraged and then they were encouraged to try landscape. Beatrice DeWinthewisen, Sue Trautman, and Velma Blanco were in my class. There were so many new students in second year that the studio wasn't large enough and for some reason or other they decided to put the women in a small studio in Hunt Hall. The main studio of course was in Robinson. You know, we didn't complain because we just felt we were lucky to be students at the GSD at Harvard. However, of course there are people who have fussed and fumed about that ever since. As far as I was concerned, it led me to make friendships with first year students who were in the adjacent studio. But there were a number of people who felt that it definitely had some sexist aspects that they would grab all the women and plunk them in a studio that was more distant, that was not in the heart of things, but it didn't particularly bother me. I had the pleasure of working with some good students who were fun to work with. But the men students were also fun to work with. I learned from all the students, of both sexes. It was a good occasion when you learned as much from the students as you did from the faculty and I learned a lot from both.

After graduation from the GSD [in 1957], I got a job with Whitman & Howard, Engineers. That was the era when a lot of baby boomers were going to school and a lot of schools were being built. So I did a lot of site planning work for various new schools while I was with them. After a year I went to The Architects Collaborative (TAC). That was a good experience, there were a lot of, of course, *wonderful* architects there with whom I worked. I did some schools and some commercial projects. I worked on the gatehouse for Baghdad University. That had to be done for a deadline, because they were trying to celebrate a new government, so I stayed up all night doing the grading and the layout for the gatehouse project, which was then sent off to Bagdahd and it was built. Later, of course, that whole team went to Rome, but I wasn't part of that, I just worked on the gatehouse.

TAC was pretty nifty for women in those days because Norman Fletcher's wife [Jean] was an architect and she was a partner, Chip Harkness' wife Sally was an architect and she was a partner. So, there was no question that women were part of the scene at TAC. There weren't a lot of women on the staff because, of course, at that time there were not a lot of women graduating from the programs. I worked for Fletch and Chip and Jean. It was an enjoyable experience because of the fun things going on. The only thing that troubled me a trifle was that I felt the people in charge were really interested in the building ... and that I didn't get that 100% support for the landscape. I thought GOSH this is all about the building and I want to say something about the landscape and I'm not quite getting the opportunity. So, I was moonlighting for projects for various friends and the moonlighting was taking my evenings and weekends, and I thought gosh maybe I can just quit and do my own thing, which I did.

Starting Her Own Firm

I started out with a project for a church. And then a swimming pool for the family of a dear friend, followed by a number of gardens out in the Peacock Farm area -- those old farming areas that were being developed as sub-divisions. I did a lot of garden spaces for those new houses and it was good because you learned a lot about landscape detailing. There was a little creek, I did a little bridge and I told the clients (I had a structural engineer help me) this was not a load bearing bridge. Well, the first time they had oil delivered after the bridge was built, the bridge collapsed. So, I did bring in experts even though they were little gardens and I learned a lot about detailing the landscape. Soon, more things came my way. Cambridge Seven Associates was working on the American Pavilion for Expo 67 in Montreal. They asked me to join the team.

Of course, Bucky Fuller designed the dome, but all the exhibits and the levels were done by Cambridge Seven. It was very interesting because with the different levels and the way the terrain went up on Isle St. Helene, I had to make a new landscape, which would connect to the levels within the dome and even bring some vegetation in to the upper floor levels. There was one



magnificent elm tree which was sitting at the edge of the dome and the arborists thought we could move it, but when we tried, its roots were completely enmeshed in the rock of that slope, and so that was not a success. I got new trees, bring[ing] new trees in, to plant within the dome where I wanted the original tree to be. That's when I flew around then in the airplane, and selected trees from various farmers. The contractors had no nurseries then to go around and find good plant material. So it was a good experience and I loved being in Montreal which is a wonderful city.

The team, and seeing the whole concept of bringing in a new island were inspiring. I don't even know if we could DO the artificial islands in the St. Lawrence River with the various environmental regulations and with what we know now. But in those days, that was done.

Energy Projects

Another early project is the work for the Chevron Oil Refinery in Perth Amboy, NJ. Here, although there were some planting and buffers that I worked on, the interesting thing to me was that they let me come up with a color palette for the entire refinery. I tried to use colors which would blend with the environment. I invented a color called *dawn grey*. The air quality at that time in Perth Amboy, NJ, was not so perfect, and the color of the sky was dawn grey, so I painted various parts of the refinery *dawn grey*. Some parts of the refinery were more detailed. These were a dark grey, a sort of charcoal grey, and then I used a third grey for some of the structures. The interesting thing about that was it was hard to get my palette approved because Chevron was owned by a California company, and they had jazzy California colors and that was their standard. They started to insist that I use their standard California colors and so I had to go through a lot of negotiations about why *dawn grey* and related colors were better for Perth Amboy, and in fact they did use that color palette.

So, in addition to the oil refineries of which we did several, there was another interesting energy challenge. That was the work at the Bell site on Lake Cayuga. This work, of course, came from a lot of new regulations. When a lot of large refineries or power plants were expanding they had to respond and protect the environment and the public. On this particular site, the Bell site on Lake Cayuga, work had begun for an extension of the power plant which could be either nuclear or fossil. In NY there was a law that you had to have an alternative, so that they could choose which one they wanted. An early site contract had ripped this site up and there was a lot of blasting. As I did at Chevron in Perth Amboy, I had to give testimony at various hearings. In this case they not only had an alternative power source for design, but they also had to have an alternative site. The other site was on Lake Ontario, which is a much bigger lake than Lake Cayuga. So, in my testimony, I felt that the power plant on Lake Ontario would have less impact (my specialty was visual character and quality). I thought Lake Ontario (I went there and visited it), would not cause as much visual impact as the one on Lake Cayuga would. After that testimony the board chose the Ontario site. The power company took me to dinner and gave me the job of restoring the site on Lake Cayuga, and we restored it to a natural meadow landscape which I hope is just going through the normal process of becoming forest again.

Office Composition and Staff

During the Expo Period we were in a small office on Mount Auburn Street in Cambridge. And there were always 5 or 6 staff people. We had various schools and work with Cambridge Seven Associates, other projects with other architects. It was very hard for me as a woman to hire top notch landscape architects. Why work for an unknown woman when you could work for famous landscape architects out in Watertown, for Sasaki or some of the others? So, I had a very tough time. I had enough work, schools, colleges, and I had to hire people. I hired a sculptor, actually I hired two sculptors and turned one of them into a landscape architect and one of them went on to study architecture, but he said that being with, working for me in the office, is what gave him the inspiration to go on and become an architect. So, I had a bunch of somewhat less than perfectly trained landscape architects.

There was also a very odd law back then, that if people quit their jobs you had to pay unemployment. And here I was, struggling, beginning a firm, trying to build up that account to take care of somebody when you had to let them go. And in those days, in the



1960's, people would work for me spring, summer and fall and then quit and go skiing for the winter. And I had to use my account for laying people off, which is what it's for, to pay them unemployment so they could go skiing. I had a hard time finding people, but the sculptors and the people who were not exactly landscape architects learned well and I had to give them a lot of attention to help them. In fact there's a very successful architect in Washington D.C., Davis Buckley, who was a sculptor when he was working for me, now he's an architect. Leonard Newcomb has been teaching at RISD in the landscape department for years – he was a sculptor when he came. There were other people like that, but gradually I got more real live landscape architects. I had to do a lot of the work myself and communicate with these talented people what we needed to do. That was fine; it worked.

I thought I'd talk a little bit about some of the advantages of being a woman. The women's business enterprise regulations were a great help. There are other things that help young professionals and we all have them: we have relatives, we have friends. The women's business regulations certainly helped me build up my business. The work on the Central Artery was one thing that we were invited to be part of because of the regulations for women's business, but there were other things that helped me.

Model Cities Program

I taught in the planning department at Harvard for several years and what do planners do when they're going out in the world to serve communities? It was during the Lyndon Johnson Presidency, they had programs called Model Cities where cities that needed to be rebuilt and re-energized would get grants, and those grants were often for public open space, for school yards, for pedestrian protection. Fortunately, my planning students went out into the world and were administering some of these programs. What landscape architect should do their projects? Well, their landscape teacher from Harvard! The work in Lowell came to us because Christie Mathis, a planner who had been my student, was the planner for the City of Lowell, and we got into work in Lowell for improving the North Common. We also got into community participation, and that's not something that Harvard trained us in, I don't think it was really in the air when I was there studying. But it's such an *obvious* thing and the LBJ Model Cities program was based upon bringing together the community and building projects that the community would support. So, we started thinking of ways of getting the community involved.

We did a little questionnaire, and there was a list of things that might be on the North Common and we drew some sort of rough diagrams showing different configurations and different layouts and then we got votes from the community. We had people going door-to-door. Not our staff, but people from the agency, the Acre Model Neighborhood staff went from door to door. They had a little bus, and people could go on the bus and see the plans and the questionnaires. So we got a very high response from people who wanted lighting, there were safety issues; people who wanted a swimming pool, so we rated things according to response. It was a clear program of what people wanted on the North Common. And then once we had that program organized then we went into various design details and specific layouts. So, this was our first work in community response back in 1972. We've been working that way ever since.

There were several other projects that we did at Lowell, and we always had a group with whom we coordinated, a local group who could sort of feel the pulse, and bring us together with the neighborhood. We also then got really interested in environment and there are a lot of polluted areas in our landscapes, particularly in the old industrial cities that we have in New England and elsewhere. That was partly because of burial of polluted soils and there were salt marshes which may have been destroyed and the resulting areas had saline pollution.

Mystic Reservation

This is the Mystic Reservation. That was in 1978. We were asked by the MDC (Metropolitan District Commission which no longer exists in Mass) to develop what was in fact, part of Charles Eliot's master plan for the waterways of the Boston basin. And you can see in those old plan's of Eliot's how he envisioned the Mystic River would flow through the salt marsh, and, how the areas could become active and passive recreation. Now, after Elliot's master plan or even perhaps before there was a lot of dumping done



in the salt marsh, it became an enormous dump. And then, recently, the river was moved so they could build the great highway, I-93 and when they did that, they dug a lot of the saline material and dumped it on top of the industrial waste which was already there. So, it was polluted from industrial wastes, and so far as growing vegetation is concerned, polluted through the salt infiltration of the soils.

So we did a lot of studies of how to control that problem, and we came up with - some very good soils experts who were our sub-consultants came up with - programs for mixing soils and bringing in some of the organics that were needed and putting a 'gravel blanket' so that salt leech didn't come up into our improved soils. We had to do a lot of experimentation and testing. That was what it looked like when it was ten times greater than toxic to plants.

Then, we started with our layering. We had deeper layers where we were going to plant trees and we had our gravel layer to keep the salt leech from getting into our good soil at any depth. This [slide view] is under construction, working out the various soil depths and the improved soils. We kept the pragmatism area. We had a budget, and the pragmatism area seemed to have certain strength. We built a tall viewing platform that is right in there so that if you went up on the viewing platform you could see, although people say there is no wildlife in a phragmites swamp that's not true, there are lots of birds in there. So we used the phragmites and improved this whole area for recreation. And you can see how our soil work was successful. This is the same view after several years. The trees are still a bit small, we tried to put in some fast growing trees, some *Androscooggin* poplars, which make wonderful trees very quickly but they die early. We had slower growing oaks, maples as well as the poplars.

We put a little hill in because that way people would have a sledding slope. Now, that was a question. This was originally a salt marsh, so it's questionable whether geologically you should put a hill in, but it had long been completely disposed of as a salt marsh, so we were trying to follow through [Charles] Eliot's plan of having public use here. So we did do the little hill and lots of trails along the waterfront. And you can see from, the next slide shows how these trees grew. When they were little poplars, they were little two inch shoots. This was actually measured, this poplar was measured 6 or 8 years ago and they're probably, they're certainly much, much bigger now. So, the park does fulfill Eliot's goal of providing open space, recreation, and it connects to the Wellington Subway Station so people can ride their bikes and leave the bike at the subway station. It also provides a nice setting for new development and new houses along its edges. I've been out there when there were celebrations and big festivals and it seems to be not only a horticultural success but also a social and public use success.

Birnbaum— Interjection regarding the influence of Charles Eliot, F.L. Olmsted and the nature/culture connection

Well this is the key to what makes landscape architecture so fascinating: because it's nature, agriculture, horticulture, it's environment. But, environment, it's very hard to think of environment totally separated from people and culture. And some of our great landscapes are the right connection between the two – so this is the challenge that we as landscape architects face: to have an understanding of the environment and also the culture that blends appropriately to the environment. And, I've always been very interested in that, even before I became a landscape architect. So it was a natural extension of things I learned as a child, hiking and camping out in Vermont, and walking along the beach at Martha's Vineyard. When you go to Martha's Vineyard still, you go to Gayhead Cliffs and that's where the Indians are, so the whole connection between nature and culture is what we as landscape architects have as this gem that we can rally around and explore and keep thinking about for our whole lives. I just love having projects where I'm dealing with that.

Travel

Well I'm going to turn to some other activities. For a number of years, when I established my own office, after I left TAC and went out on my own, vacations didn't cross my path. I worked five, six, seven days a week. Usually I worked six, and once in a great while I would take a weekend off, but most of the time I worked. I was having fun, I liked my jobs, I was learning, and I



didn't mind not having vacations but the moment that things sort of got going so I could take vacations I did. And the lady who had been my assistant for many years was living in Kenya and I went to visit her couple of times. We went out on safari and we caused an enormous lot of commotion because the Kenyans had never seen women going on safari alone and they would ask, "Where are your men?", and so we would tell them that we were women from the U.S. and we could go on safari by ourselves. It was something that had never occurred to the people in Kenya. So, here I am in the northern desert in Kenya we were camping out at an Italian mission there and it's not, or then it wasn't totally safe so in the mission we were safe. There I am in my Marimekko dress that we all wore back in those days, (giggle) the 1960's and 1970's. And then, there are some other slides of that desert. The life there, the life in Kenya, depending upon which part of Kenya that you're visiting, is different, the landscape is very different. You can see the rift valley and you can see the camels going across the desert. So I observed and participated in a variety of landscapes on those trips.

Campus Work

Then I started doing quite a bit of work on schools and colleges. I was also asked at this point, in my mid-career in the 1980's, to serve on some committees and boards and some in Washington. I believe, again you can say that the women's business enterprise regulations assisted me and other women but also, the other, old boy contacts ... for example, this commission was established by President Carter. When he was coming up for re-election he wanted to have people thinking about development options for the 80s' -- a sort of restatement of the Lyndon Johnson's Model Cities. Our cities need help, and so he gathered together a group of *wonderful* people and we traveled all over the U.S. and visited different cities and looked for good examples of how to improve some of the cities that needed improvement. Also, this wasn't so much because of women's business enterprise, but because a friend of mine was the Deputy Secretary of the Treasury. He was putting together a commission on small business and my friend called me and said, "Are you registered?", and I had passed the exam in New York and I said "Yes! I'm registered in New York!" and he said "Carol, Are you a registered Democrat?" and I said, "yes," so I served on the Commission for Small Businesses for the Treasury Department. That was because, perhaps they needed a woman, but it was mostly because I was friends with the Deputy Secretary. So all of these linkages, whether they're women's business or personal linkages are always very helpful to anyone who's starting.

Work in Iran

The work that we did in Iran is another case in point. I had a dear lady working for us, Zari Santner. Zari is now the head of Planning and Parks for the city of Portland, Oregon. She came to the US, studied landscape architecture at Harvard and came to work for us. She had gone back to Iran I guess right after she finished her landscape degree and worked with an office there and then returned to the US and was working for our office. And the office where she had worked contacted her, they wanted to hire an American firm to develop some projects in Tehran. They were thinking of one of the more known firms and Zari said that I should do it, and so the people in Iran said they didn't know who I was. But, since she was so adamant about it if I would come there and met with them and they hired us that would be the job. If I came there and met them and they didn't hire us, they would pay my expenses. So, I thought O.K., I can do that. I went and I had a very good rapport with the Iranian architects and I even had their encouragement to learn more about that culture. On the weekends they gave me a car and a chauffeur to take me to rare and wonderful historic gardens, such as the Garden of Fin. I was able to be like a sponge and try to absorb the culture there in Iran, and then on a later trip, my niece came and because the Iranians respect family (they were always making me work on weekends when they didn't have a project that I could go and look at) so I took a week off and I told them "my niece is coming and we're going to go visit the gardens of Iran" and we did so, I really enjoyed working and travelling and learning about the culture that I was suddenly in the midst of. So, this of course talks about water and you learn about how valuable the water was when you fly over Iran and, at least in those days, where they dug the Qanots, the underground channels for water from the mountains. I learned a great deal and actually when the architect who had been working with me there came to the US we got some projects here because of him.



Other Projects: Columbia Point, Kennedy Library

The model city Farazahad, was just the beginning of other interesting and large projects. We did quite a few public housing projects when there was funding from Washington to improve public housing. This was called Columbia Point, (now it's called Harbor Point). This was a great competition for developers and architects. Columbia Point had become a drug dealer's heaven. It was badly built and there had been settlement because the whole thing was a filled site. So we worked with the architects Goody Clancy. When we finished with the housing development, we thought we were going to start on the linear park. Finally, funding became available and we were able to do the linear park and you can see people walking along. This particular site links South Boston with the Kennedy Library and there were racial issues. Making this community a really positive place meant that there could be linkage from South Boston all the way to the Kennedy Library and you see MANY people using the waterfront park now. We of course like to use a lot of historic interpretation because people love it, and so we have. There's a law that you must provide access to the water -- that was a law that was enacted by the early 17th century because people wanted to go dig clams for food. But you still HAVE to provide that access, so we provided a few staircases and on the pillars at the edge of the staircases we had interpretation about the Boston Harbor, about the vessels that were built there, about the fleet. Also there is a map of Boston Harbor that identifies some of the spots that you can see and look at from this overview point. We did get a handicapped ramp down to the lower level, and there's handicapped accessibility at the top. That was a little difficult but it was worth doing. We had another interpretive area where we had the nursery rhyme about the "flounder, flounder in the sea", and that's the point where, through the whole history of this site, even when it was REALLY dangerous, fishermen would come and fish. So we did an interpretation, like this one, only it's about the Grimm's nursery rhyme.

Birnbaum – A hallmark of your work is designing for people with disabilities (e.g. Houghton Chapel at Wellsley College and the Honeywell Visitor's Center at the Arnold Arboretum), can you talk about your philosophy regarding ADA?

ADA and Accommodations for the Disabled

My philosophy is that I want to make the accessible route so interesting and appealing that the 'able bodied' will find some value in using it as well. I don't like to have something pushed off to the side, sort of in the back yard for the accessible route.

For example, the Arnold Arboretum, Honeywell Center, there's a little platform at the top of the ramp with some benches. They never had that before. Now, when they have their little tours of the arboretum, their classes, you go there and you see the whole class sitting on those benches, which are ONLY there because we needed the platform to move the stair out. So, having the funds to provide the accessible route can often provide something that you wouldn't have had the funds to do, for everybody. That's true in most of our projects. We have these special places that have special interpretation. They happen to be along the accessible route. Right now, we're working on the Hartford Botanic Garden and we have a VERY tough gradient to negotiate. There's a straight stair where everybody who are in a rush can go flying down, but why not have a special winding path that shows off a lot of the plant material and label it? So it's really just a way of using the resources better for everybody that happens to accommodate the handicapped. I try to do that in every case, and we've had some wonderful opportunities, I'm looking forward to doing more of that because I think we've just begun to scratch the surface of how we can manage to make the accessible route the most desirable thing imaginable.

This shows the point where the fishermen always came, and now of course it's been rehabbed, and it's a *wonderful* point for getting a view of the City of Boston so we put a little shade structure there so that people could come and sit in the shade depending upon where the sun is of course. And also, I wanted to emphasize the thought that this is SAFE now, it wasn't safe before. So in the pavement here, you can't see it in this slide, in the pavement we put the patterns of certain of the constellations, ones that you see at different times of the year so people can come out at night and see what's in the sky and then they can look up and find it. That way it gives more value to the landscape and for the enjoyment of the people who are living there, and this new way of thinking about Columbia Point. They changed that name and that was part of it.



Kennedy Park

Then, there's the Kennedy Park and here again we had a lot of soil issues. There had been the old subway cars parking there many years ago. I remember when we used to come to the end of the line, get out and walk across the bridge to the Harvard football game. Both the cars and busses parked out there dropped a lot of crank case oil and other pollutants. So, we were able to bury that. There was a huge concrete slab below and we were able to put a lot of the pollutants and cover them with a granular cap. So we were fortunately able to do something with the polluted soils. The other thing that I wanted to do was to orient this memorial park to President Kennedy toward the Charles River Reservation because the idea was that it would be like Mystic River reservation, part of the larger riverine landscape. Fill had been put in so that the site sloped toward the Kennedy School. The Kennedy School was built before we undertook to design the park. The first floor windows were down low at what was then the grade which then sloped up to more fill and then down to the river. I thought that the attitude of this landscape shouldn't slope away from the river. It should slope THAT way, and if you put in the necessary fill to grade from the roadway up at a very minimal slope you would have a lightwell here outside the professors' offices. You would spend a bit of money on fill – more money than we had in the budget. I went through my reasons for recommending that they do this and the head of the MDC at that time, he's now been head of a group that's been working on sustainability, he got the funds and we DID grade slowly up. I realize geologically it was ALL a marsh and you're not going to rebuild a marsh, the building is here, so we put a berm up, and a fence there, and then sloped down. I think it makes a great difference in how this park feels, it's PART of the Reservation but it does link back to Harvard Square and I think they invested their money wisely.

The fountain was a thing I worried about. The Kennedy family wanted water because water is a symbol of life. I was hiking in NH and I saw water running over granite pieces and you could see the pattern of the granite and I knew the Kennedy family wanted some quotes from JFK speeches on the memorial and a water feature. I had thought of putting the quotes around the outside and the water in the middle and I then thought, "No, you want to see the water and the words at the same time," so that's what brought me the idea of putting the words on sloping granite sides that you could see through the water as I noticed in New Hampshire. There's a little overview point up here where people can look out and see the Charles River.

At Rollins College they needed better vehicular access. We laid out a driveway with some parking that they needed, but to get it past their tennis courts without cutting down some beautiful cypress trees, the sidewalk went along the road and I said, "Well, we'll take the sidewalk out and down to this viewing deck and bring it back when we're past the cypress trees." They raised the money; the President really liked good landscape opportunities. Here are the lovely cypress trees and we just took the sidewalk away from the road (which comes right down across there) and that sidewalk would have taken that tree out and made (and that tree too I think) ... they would have had to fill and put this retaining wall out about here. So instead, we just took the little boardwalk around, which gives people the fun of being close to the water and the marsh, then comes right back to the sidewalk along the road. It was a naming opportunity and there were several people who were pleased to have their name on it.

Agnes Scott College

This is Agnes Scott College in Decatur, Georgia. This is more recent. This is in 2000. Agnes Scott had a master plan and then they were going to go into landscape master planning, and our firm was not on their list but one of the partners at Shipley/Bullfinch looked at the list and said "Oh! You don't have Carol Johnson down." So they put us down and we won the job. The key thing, well there were a number of key things, but the first key thing is that there had been an old building here and they had put in granite walls and paved plazas. It was sort of a gathering place, but it was not very inviting. I really thought it would be good to expand the extent of their great quad and make it all a greenspace. Then you have plenty of paving down here where they can have their movies or their performances, at the entry to the new student center. But, as far as the quad is concerned, I wanted to maximize the green and let people sit on the grass. Put around trees a little bench or pavement where there'd be heavy intensive



use, but for special occasions people could use the grass and that's worked out very well. This terrace outside the Evans' Dining Hall used to flood – there was a stair going down here, there were a bunch of catch basins which I guess didn't have regular cleaning and the water would flood into the lower level of the building causing [a] tremendous lot of damage. I said, "You know, you don't have to put up with this. We will work on re-grading and you can get the water to flow another direction," which almost looked impossible, but I checked around and what we did is we got rid of the stair, which was here. We put in some drainage structures into this paving pattern. We used a sort of gothic pattern there because the buildings are all collegiate gothic. Then, we eliminated some stairs on the other side and re-graded this path, so if everything floods here it will flow out this way and down. Yes, it was a lot of work, but to solve this on-going flooding problem they thought it was worth the money and we ended up with a much more attractive, interesting terrace that they're very pleased with.

Let's see what other colleges ... We are working at Gettysburg College, and others that I like, but that's a good example of the methodology that I've used with the various colleges.

Johnson Property in New Hampshire

During this time I had a summer vacation home in New Hampshire and I did climb the 48 4,000 foot peaks in New Hampshire and you get special medal from the Appalachian Mountain Club. These are views from my house, I really loved going there every weekend and spending a month in summer because you can observe how the landscape changes, and change in the landscape is SO interesting. This was TOTALLY wooded, and I cleared out the meadow that you see down here, kept the place where there were the wild mushrooms, and provided an overlook to the distant view in winter, summer, spring and, fall. I got a little closer to some of the streams down in the woodland area, it was great fun to be there and have all the time in the world just to look at things and do these little sketches. That was the road that I laid out and you know went around certain trees and certain places and then came up to our house which was up here. I also dug out a pond there, which the fire department liked because it could be used for fire protection. So, in general the wildflower meadow with a creek running through it and the pond were really just making my own landscape. It was a sort of subtractive process: I didn't tell them to just clear the whole meadow, I put ribbons around and they cleared as much as I wanted one week and then I'd come and say, O.K., and then I'd move a ribbon. So, as each week passed, they cleared more and then they brought great rocks and I stood there and pointed where I wanted the rocks to make stairways up to the upper level, because we had the house designed so that it stepped down the hillside. That was great fun and unfortunately it's been sold now but someday I may go and see what it looks like now.

International Travel

Then I was traveling and I went to Vietnam. I had been to an IFLA conference in Moscow and I met a Vietnamese landscape architect whom I liked very much and she invited me to come. There was an IFLA conference on historic preservation, you probably were aware of that one. My friend Tui took me out to a project. She had established a program where she would bring tiny little trees to villages outside of Hanoi and the farmers would plant those little trees and maintain them and then when she was doing various embassy gardens in Hanoi she would come out and pay the farmer and take the trees into Hanoi. So, she was opening a new program and I went out and I did a little talk and then they asked me to plant the first tree so I'm digging the hole here to plant the tree and the people were so pleased – here's Tui. She's a terrific landscape architect. I haven't heard from her for awhile, I assume she's ok. So, that was my adventure into Vietnam. I didn't stay long enough to see all the wonderful landscapes that I would have liked to have seen.

Another thing that I did, I rented cottages in France and did hiking there and I took *Les Promenades de Paris* by Jean-Charles Adolphe Alphand – you know that great big clunk of a book – all around with me on the Paris metro and I would look at the squares and the illustrations in Alphand's book and then I would go and see well what does that one look like now? And the interesting thing is that the ones that they put parking garages *under* are, well they restored them, but they're not all that interesting, but the ones where they didn't put the parking garages under, they're just wonderful. They are what they were



supposed to be, little parklets, respites in the city. So I went around, I did all of them. It just gave me the sense that you don't have to rip things out – build a garage if you need parking, but to destroy these lovely little parks wasn't really a good idea and they lost a lot of great big specimen trees although I think they tried to keep some of them.

Then, ah yes, here's one of the early green roofs that I encountered. Some young friends of mine invited me to do the Annapurna circuit in Nepal. That was in 1994. We start down at a very low elevation. There are oranges growing there (it's sort of a semi-tropical climate) and you start up the trail. It's very steep and they grow their squash on their roofs as you can see on the left. You keep going, and every day we would stay in the little tea houses along the way in different settlements. Everyday, something was gone, the first day we had oranges and eggs and so forth, and each day, then the oranges were gone and I think we maybe had apple, but each day there was less and less until when you get up to the Thorang LA pass to the last rest place, you could have rice or noodles. My friend Doug, and his wife Cheryl, brought some special food, smoked salmon, and they broke it out the night before we headed out to the top of the Thorang La pass. We ate that, and here I am we're on the top of Thorang La pass and there's Anapurna. It was quite a day. We started about 5:00 a.m. and we got to the top about noon. We started down, which should be easy. We started quickly because it is 18,000 feet and you don't want to stay too long. I made a little mark on it to mark the space but other than that we just looked around. You've probably been up to 18,000 feet, but to me, to be surrounded by the Himalayas at 18,000 feet, and nothing but the Himalayas, was really like being on another planet. We started down and it was hard. It was slippery, but I had a stake and Doug and Cheryl helped me on the really steep parts. We got down to the first rest house. Then it was interesting each day as the things that we hadn't had would come back. There would be suddenly a little bread and then a little chicken and then gradually as we got down to more agricultural areas we got full meals again. So, it certainly demonstrates how climate controls agriculture and how people can live.

Recent activities -- Well, I'm still traveling and this is the Ponte Vecchio [in Rome] 55 years ago. It was 1952. That was the Ponte Vecchio when I was there in 2004. The Ponte Vecchio is about the same, I'm a lot different. I did a few more of those [matched photos] just because of changes in the landscape and changes in the people. This was also 1952, the cemetery in Florence where Elizabeth Barret-Browning is buried. Someone took this picture of me in 1952 so I asked to have one taken of me today in the same spot. Where are some of the other photos? That was on Martha's Vineyard and I'm still hugging, not climbing so many trees. But, this was in May in Granada in the Generalife. I kept saying to the guide, "Where are the cypress trees?" And he smiled at me, he said, "Those Cypress trees blew down about five years ago." He knew just what I was talking about; they had lasted but they're gone now.

John Marshall Park, Washington, D.C.

Oh I have recent activities, the John Marshall Park that one I thought might be interesting because how often does one have the opportunity to take a project that was built in the early 80s and rethink it? So if you want to have a look at that ...

This is the original plan and the idea was that it would be in three levels ...

Birnbaum – What was it like being a woman on the Pennsylvania Avenue Redevelopment team and interfacing with Sasaki, Kiley, and others?

Sorry we didn't put in the whole map of Washington that shows Pennsylvania Avenue, but, what happened with Pennsylvania Avenue occurred after the inauguration of President Kennedy. They had the normal parade up the Avenue and Kennedy noticed what a shop-worn and somewhat derelict area Pennsylvania Avenue ran through. It's the great avenue of the presidents -- the parade is always up Pennsylvania Avenue to go to the White House after the inauguration at the Capitol. But, Kennedy was not pleased with the condition that the city was in and he established the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corp to redevelop and improve and enhance areas all along the Avenue and there were a number of projects that were underway before we got involved. There was the Pershing Plaza, (I think that one is Friedberg,) and then there's the great I forget the name of the plaza that's just



beside the Pershing Plaza – Freedom it's called now. And then there's the Navy Memorial, which was a later improvement and a number of the historic buildings were improved and developed for new uses. And even I think one or two new buildings, well there's a new one now, the newseum, that's underway. So, the goal was to make Pennsylvania Avenue a really splendid avenue that's the heart of the capitol.

We were called down for an interview for some streetscape work. We didn't get that job but they came to me afterward and encouraged me to come again. Pennsylvania Avenue runs from the Capitol which is right there, all the way down past Freedom Plaza, Pershing Plaza to Treasury. It now has a lot of handsome streetscape work that Sasaki did. Of course the East Wing of the National Gallery is a wonderful building, a wonderful attraction. So, just across Fourth Street ... Fourth Street is still open up to Pennsylvania Avenue and then it is closed and it was closed to make a park – here. That park was the site of the boarding house where John Marshall (and many of the great figures in our early history when the capitol was just being built) lived. So, the decision was made to close Fourth Street and have a park called the John Marshall Park. The program was that it was going to be a place where cars could come in turn around and park, or turn around and leave. They were trying to get the Canadians to take this site for their embassy. When we got on board, that had just happened. The district courthouse was there and always had been. There's a key vista, which is even recognized in the L'Enfant plan, which goes out to the old city hall. There's this statue of Abraham Lincoln just up here. The first master plan that I saw had a driveway, parking and a turn-around. That was supposed to serve the Ambassador, the Canadian Ambassador, and possibly some people going to the courthouse. Now, there is a driveway which comes off Pennsylvania Avenue, goes to the Courthouse, there, and then comes out. So you didn't need a roadway here to give entrance to the building – you already have it over here. Does the Ambassador need to have a driveway up the middle -- a VIP thing with sort of park improvements around it? So, I suggested, "Why not put a driveway right here all the way through from Pennsylvania Avenue to C Street beside the embassy? You don't need to have a parking lot and a turn around here, you could have grass." When I made that suggestion they seemed astonished. Our plan was to get the parking lot which had been programmed for the center of the park, out of there and have the whole site as a greenspace. However, it was best to do quite a bit of pavement on Pennsylvania Avenue because they wanted to have a site where masses of people (not only for the inaugural parade, but other events) could gather. Steps up to a greensward in the middle, which would be less intensely used; and at the top, another paved plaza with two fountains. Our staff did research at the library in Washington and this site was not only the boarding house site where Marshall lived, but it was also earlier the site of the first public water supply. So we put these two fountains in to commemorate that. We thought that there would be people from along C Street who would come out and eat lunch so we had tables and chairs – the tables were vandalized early on.

I've been there recently and saw children out from a little pre-school playing in the grass, I talked with the woman who's the assistant to Justice Roberts (Justice Roberts and his assistant were in this courthouse) and she said she came out to eat her lunch and use her telephone and other people did the same. So, the park was used, but not very well maintained. You get some nice views of the Capitol from there. We used a paving pattern that relates to the L'Enfant plan on the diagonals. There were problems with utilities, a lot of trees have died, there's smoke pouring out of smokestacks which we never put there, and there are police vehicles parked in the middle of the park. When the John Marshall Foundation suggested to me that they would like to make the park into more of a Memorial Park about John Marshall, I was quite thrilled at the opportunity. I said to them, "If you can't raise enough endowment to maintain the park, don't waste your money and my time, because it's not worth it." They said they would do that. So, we have a new layout. It still has the three levels and it still has the central greenery, but we have broader access up the center. The handicapped access from the side will still exist, but we'll have other ramps where handicapped here and here. The view up goes from Pennsylvania Avenue all the way through to C Street and on up to the Lincoln Statute. What we've done in the new plan is we've moved the statue of John Marshall from here to here, you can hardly see it now -- we put it there. We've left open this plaza, you can walk straight in and there's sitting and a grove of trees on either side. So you can either come up these ramps or walk around and when you get to the top level, the oval, the ellipse has four places where there's what we call 'interpretive rooms'. When you get to the top – here – you can walk along here and there's a glass wall, four of them, in the four corners. And those glass walls will have etched in them major statements from the great Marshall judgements. This shows how that would look. Behind that glass wall in all four cases, there's a little interpretive room with a low wall and ceramic illustrations of Marshall's youth, his history, his experience, what it was that made him the great Chief Justice who got consensus on all of those many judgements that he did. So, this is what we took down a couple of weeks ago, and this is what the Foundation and I are hoping to



do: here you can see the grass ellipse, there's a curve then a walkway, the glass wall with the Marshall judgements etched into it (we're hoping this would be cast glass with a sort of textured surface. Then, the interpretive material probably with some color in the surrounding panels of his youth, his service as an officer at Valley Forge, when he was a diplomat in Paris. In addition, I think the only other Chief Justice of the Supreme Court who's served in the legislative, administrative and judicial branches of our government was William Howard Taft. Those two were the only two.

The fact that the newseum, which is I guess going to attract a lot of young people, will be close by suggests that there will be young people coming to this park. The John Marshall Foundation has had a goal for a memorial to John Marshall in Washington for many years. They didn't know about the John Marshall Park until recently. They came to me and discussed their goals. Their goals are that it really will provide a lot of information about John Marshall and the branches of our government. In fact there's even a low pillar called the Constitutional Pillar which we've included in the plan and that shows on each of its three sides the gentlemen who were in the judiciary, administrative and legislative branch of the government during John Marshall's service as Chief Justice. John Marshall is not so well known as other figures of that period. Our hope is that we can get the approval of the Fine Arts Commission and the National Capital Planning Commission to do a little more interpretation than is typical in a Washington memorial. In trying to use the ellipse form, and some of the more typical details, I thought that our design would fit in generally with what the other memorials do, but then there would be this added layer of interpretation behind the glass walls which would inform those who wish to be informed and those who don't wish to learn about that can just walk by the glass walls and read the judgements and have the experience of being in what will be a well-maintained park.

Birnbaum – Tell us the story of sitting for the licensing exam in New York.

Taking the Professional Licensing Exam

New York was the first state to pass the licensure law for landscape architects. When that came out, notices came from ASLA that this had happened, I thought, of course, that I wanted to take the exam, and get registered. I thought that it was a good step for landscape architects to be in the same sort of regime as architects and engineers because we do contribute to the larger environment and the safety of people using our landscapes, and I thought it would be good for me to get right on board. So, I studied a bit here, I was busy, and I applied to take the exam. I had a good friend in New York with an extra room so I could bunk in with them.

The exam then was two-and-a-half days. There was a part on history, there was a studio problem that one had to do, and there were some technical exams -- so it was a very thorough exam. I can't remember if it was the second or third day when we did the studio problem. We were given it first thing in the morning (it may have been as early as eight a.m.). We had until eight or nine in the evening to do our drawings and our whole design. So I came in and took a desk and looked over and at the adjacent desk was none other than Fletcher Steele - which was quite a surprise. He was very serious, he wasn't chit chatting, and he was going to take the exam just like the rest of us. Of course I was interested in, well, we all brought lunch because we had to stay right there working. What would Fletcher Steele bring? Maybe champagne? Pate? So I was always peeking over more at what he was eating than what he was doing, but it was quite fun for me to be sitting immediately beside one of the great figures of landscape architecture taking my licensure exam. I passed, and I'm sure he did to.

Birnbaum - Were there women present at the exam?

Women and the Profession

There were a few. Though there were not a lot of women in landscape architecture, but they were beginning to emerge, so they were like me, people who were trying to get established and get their qualifications.



To join the ASLA you had to have so many years of experience and you had to have someone write letters of support. And, as soon as I got the necessary years I asked Norman Newton (who had encouraged me to join right from the start) so as soon as I could join he wrote me a letter and I had the necessary years so I joined as soon as I could. Norman Newton was very positive about landscape architecture, he cared about it so much and the fact that he thought I should be a member -- that was enough for me.

Birnbaum - When did you start going to ASLA meetings?

I think in the first few years. I was the Secretary of our Chapter for two terms. Then of course I went to all the meetings, and went to the executive meetings. That was maybe ten years after I'd started practicing. They had some terrific people on the executive committee and we had some good meetings. After I was Secretary for two terms I still went to meetings occasionally but I didn't go to all of them. Then I became the Chapter Trustee, and that was quite enjoyable. We traveled around to different places and met, I met the other trustees who were usually very interesting. That was quite a good project, a good job to take on for the chapter because you sort of were a link between the national organization and the local. And I enjoyed that, I made friends with some nice people.

Birnbaum - Were there women that were trustees by that time?

Yes, by that time women were really becoming known. It was just when I first started there were few women. Then gradually there were more and more. After about ten or fifteen years there were lots of women. Some of them had architectural degrees and then a landscape degree, some of them were just landscape architects.

Well, it wasn't too long of course before women became president of the Boston Chapter and even of the ASLA, but in the early days that wasn't the case.

Getting Early Work: Cambridge Common, near Harvard Square

It was somewhat difficult. When I started out, I had a drafting room in my apartment for five years, and then I moved into Harvard Square and I had a very sweet little office. I had one nice big room and one little room. I had projects from friends, and friends of friends, and projects with architects with whom I'd worked at The Architects Collaborative, or with whom I'd been a fellow student at GSD. The first opportunity to be a prime consultant on a landscape project came up. It was Cambridge Common right near Harvard Square. I was terrorized because I had gotten jobs because the architect had the job or because the people knew me, so this was the first one where I would be interviewed as a prime consultant for a landscape project. I worried that they didn't give jobs like that to women, and they wouldn't give one to me. So I tried to figure out a strategy.

The strategy I came up with -- I had two very nice young men who were working for me. I thought hey! If they come to the interview people will sort of notice me since I'm the lead person, but they'll see these two men there and they'll take me seriously. So, we went to the interview. I thought it went okay, but another firm won the job. I was told that a woman on the board said, "We gave it to two good men rather than one good woman."

For other projects I tried very hard to bring a male project manager. It was very funny back then. Now, when I fly down to Washington early in the morning for a meeting the plane is filled with women. When I went down there in the 80s, I was the ONLY one. So there have been big changes, and what I had to do was use my friends the architects to bolster my qualifications that people didn't have the idea that you know I was a woman and not qualified. If I had worked on enough projects that fulfilled qualifications and I could demonstrate that I had these qualifications, people began to be more positive. And then, of course there



were the regulations that came on not too long after that for women's business enterprise and that helped a lot. But, it was not so easy to start.

Favorite Landscapes – Plea for Maintenance, Collaboration

Favorite landscapes – you always have to think about WHY is it a favorite?

Obviously landscapes that aren't maintained, you're just so embarrassed and mortified, that they're not your favorites. The other thing that I have the pleasure of remembering was my dear friend who was with me when I saw the water running over the granite

...

Favorite landscapes clearly have to be maintained so that they express what they were meant to express. But as far as other aspects of favorite landscapes, you have to think was there a wonderful contractor that actually collaborated and contributed? Was it something that I saw with my dearest friend and told him – he was so into my projects that he was kind of a sounding board. And I remember when we were climbing up a mountain in New Hampshire and saw the granite that gave me the idea of putting the Kennedy quotations and having the water run over it, we were in the middle of nowhere and we both were quite startled with the excitement of what could be done with this idea. So, it's often linkages to my personal life which gave me the insight to think of something that I thought would be worth studying and trying.

Favorite Landscapes – Kennedy Park Fountain

So, Kennedy Park is a favorite because of some of the linkages. Also, besides the fountain and my dear colleague John Gustafson, who's died now, was always available to help on fountain design. He built a full-size segment of the Kennedy Park fountain and ran the water over it to test the angle. He was always such a joy to work with because I'd talk to him about an idea, and he had a very full set of brains! His brain, I could see it start to operate thinking about how to work out this idea I had. So my projects with Gus like the one at the North Common in Lowell, and the Kennedy Park I remember with great joy having the great pleasure of working with John Gustafson. We used to have meetings up in Lowell where we'd be working until the last second, I had a little MGB sports car and we would just barely squeeze the boards in the backseat of the sports car if the roof were down, and one time we started off for Lowell with the boards in the back seat and the roof down and it started raining. Gus was a great big man, Gus was leaning over the boards in the back seat while I drove at 80 miles an hour trying to get to Lowell in time, trying to keep the boards dry (of course they wrinkled – we presented them wrinkled). But, memories of how we got to the design are almost as valuable to me as far as a favorite project as the design itself. So, that the kind of linkage because I've been blessed with friends who've taken me places or saved things for me and friends who worked with me on projects so I have a lot of favorites because of the sense of the place and the sense of the people both. So, I guess, Kennedy Park, Lechmere [CambridgeSide Galleria], the Lowell Model Cities projects, Harbor Point. There were people on the committee who worked with the design team who lived there. It was like living in a prison because they couldn't go out alone and when the project was taken over for complete rehabilitation it was going to be mixed income, they would keep the subsidized units. Those people really deserved it, they came to all the meetings and they in the end had a nice place to live. So, it was a lot of experiences before building the projects that make them special favorites of mine.

I particularly like even insignificant projects like the one I showed you where the privet hedge that separated Bowden College from the community is gone and you can see little vistas into the quad now from the main street. Projects where I've been able to achieve a linkage of community are favorite projects of mine also. It's a little complicated to talk about favorite projects because I can't evaluate them all on the same exact criteria. I get a little frustrated when the client approves a landscape master plan which is an overall landscape approach and then they don't DO it. So, I guess my favorite project is where something gets done and I haven't been just daydreaming. I dream, I think, and it happens. Those are my favorite projects.



Birnbaum – Is there a campus where you had a long standing relationship you'd like to speak more about?

Campus Planning – Long Term Working Relationships

I have several campuses where we have worked for awhile on and off – Bowdoin, Gettysburg, Rollins. Agnes Scott College is one where more of the landscape master plan that I developed has been done than at other colleges. It was very interesting. There was a vice-president there in charge of finance. He's a lovely person who really thinks landscape is important. I don't know that this would make me very popular with the architects, but he used to squeeze the architect's budget so he could get more money for landscape. For example at Bowdoin College, I really felt that the parking that somebody plunked in the heart of the campus is wrong. They should make people walk a little farther. There ARE enough parking spaces, but people won't walk. At Agnes Scott, there were cars and trucks littering the quad. They're gone. So the commitment to the landscape planning of the institution makes a great difference. You just can't accomplish things no matter how great the ideas are if they sit on the shelf. Landscapes are fragile. They need to have the support -- and once in awhile we get it and sometimes we don't.

Birnbaum - What makes a Carol Johnson landscape?

What makes a Carol Johnson Landscape?

Well, there are different phases. For the last 13 years Carol Johnson has not been president of Carol Johnson Associates, so you can see a variety of design statements now. I am thinking of campuses like Williams College and various others where I just let the green sort of flow. They looked natural, but, of course, they weren't. They did have a sense of being natural. So, for many years, particularly when I was doing a lot of work for Ben Thompson because Ben Thompson liked that and he knew that I could produce it and that he'd be pleased. After the third year of my practice until about the eighth year, I was doing a lot of Ben Thompson campus work and I tended to get that kind of lyrical green landscape. An artist friend said he could tell one of my landscapes if he were blindfolded and dropped into anywhere. After I stopped doing the lyrical landscapes for Ben, then I started doing things a little more urbanistic and that changed, I no longer had the space to let the greenways flow in the same manner. Then my training with Hideo Sasaki's more ordered landscape seemed to be the appropriate thing. Now, there are those people who do things in a more open landscape and in a more urban landscape. Today, I don't do a lot of the lyrical landscapes. We don't have sites that seem to benefit from that approach. I'm trying to make things spatially more appropriate. Often, I can enlarge a space by landscape treatment. There was a meeting of small college presidents, many of whom I had worked for, and one of them said, "Oh, we hired Carol Johnson." Another of the college presidents for whom I'd worked for many years said, "Oh well, she'll clean the place up." I have a reputation for taking out a lot of stuff. That's not totally, but partly because it can't be maintained, but also because you can reveal good architecture, you can reveal a sense of the space you can see the trees, you can make people's connections and vistas better. So, the one thing that I think would be consistent from the earlier period when I had the larger landscapes the more lyrical greenspaces to the more ordered ones that I'm doing now, I tend to get rid of a lot of the junk and have something fairly simple.

Birnbaum - Is subtraction as a concept an overarching principle of yours?

On the Idea of Subtraction

I am into subtraction so long as I can make something clearer more appropriate. I'm not just into subtraction for subtraction's sake. I have to analyze what it is that this landscape needs and if it doesn't need this stuff over here, out it goes. I try to be very careful I don't want to lose an opportunity of something that's there, something that maybe with a little different treatment would



be more satisfactory and successful. But, yes, subtraction is certainly something that I'm interested in, particularly when what's there makes a jumble a sort of incoherent space and if I can get rid of some stuff and make a coherent place -- then the subtraction is fine with me. And other people seem, in fact a lot of people say they can't quite imagine how different places can be after I clean out some of the stuff I'd like to clean out.

Birnbaum - Two more questions – topography and reading the topography from bicycle and spotlight form a design perspective circulation and plant materials. Can you speak to this?

On Topography and Circulation

I'll start with circulation and topography because that makes the orientation of planting. On circulation, of course, we're guided by accessibility and the kinds of slopes that you need to provide to give accessibility. Every landscape architect focuses on the vistas, on what we see, how we experience this landscape. So obviously I want to do circulation that gets people where they want to go, but you know I learned many years ago if you make the circulation almost straight or very subtly not straight people won't notice that it's not straight, but they will have a better experience. And also, you can manipulate so that they may even arrive where they're going more efficiently. So I try to examine that. Then, the sense of the flow of the circulation whether it's vehicular or pedestrian. I got unglued when people put a highway radius on a pedestrian path. Obviously, you don't want the pedestrians to cut across, on the other hand you don't want it to look like a high-speed highway and you don't want to put in more pavement than you really need. It's a subtle combination of topography, and maybe plant materials, maybe some small site improvement. But, the scale of the pedestrian system has to suggest pedestrian movement, NOT vehicular. I try to be particularly attentive to that.

I will work very hard to modify circulation to save a specimen tree, but you know you do that with a larger sense of how you can control the landscape. You're not just going to come up to the tree and pop around it. You're going to *re*-make the design in order to save that tree.

As far as the plant materials are concerned, I was blessed to have gardeners as mother and father who talked a lot about plants to me, and gardening. I studied botany in college and I worked in the nursery. The plant propagation was especially interesting because I didn't know anything about it so I learned a lot: softwood cuttings, hardwood cuttings and then, you know, going out in the field and finding the perfect specimen for a customer. But, the thing about plant materials is that it's really so complex, and so challenging that I really have enough background to know how little I know about plants. I have my own garden and I work in it (well I haven't lately and it needs attention.) One of the things that are so interesting is that if you do have a period where you're sick or away, that garden doesn't wait for you to come back. That garden is growing and I have to prune my garden about every two weeks or it becomes a jungle, and because it's an urban garden there isn't that much space. So, you know, you have opportunities to do (I think people talk about a 'no maintenance garden', there isn't such a thing), but I do try to experiment and explore different types of plants, but I wouldn't ever put a type of experiment into play without either planting it myself or knowing some other experienced person who's used that plant. But what's so great about plant materials is how form changes, and what it does change.

Shade is critical, and I was doing that presentation I told you about in Washington and our draftsman had taken up a perfectly nice looking green tree, but I meant for a tree to be a canopy tree that you would see under and the drawing didn't show that. One of the big criticisms of my design was that I was going to plant a tree which blocked the view. You do have to not only understand the mature form but how to plant a tree so that it will survive in an urban condition. Planting is the most complex part of our work. It's not only complex because of the selection and the detailing and the soils, but can you count on somebody maintaining this or do you have to use plants that will be absolutely minimal in maintenance requirements? So, you know sometimes you take a guess and you're wrong and sometimes it works out. Speaking of favorite projects, my favorite projects are maintained and the plants are flourishing and when I see that it gives me great joy.



Birnbaum - Can you also speak to visual and physical connection to the water and waterfront revitalization movement and the role the Landscape Architect plays?

On Waterfronts and Their Revitalization

That's a very interesting topic. I addressed that in one paper that I wrote. Because the water's edge in Boston was a commercial element, there were piers and wharves. Boats came in, goods were loaded, and ships left. So there's something a little bit awkward about making the water's edge in Boston Harbor a complete sort of park-like greenspace. What's been done is a plan for the Harbor Walk. The Harbor Walk is eventually going to connect everything. It already does connect quite a bit. So that people could walk along the Harbor, but the idea of bringing a lot of greenspace where historically it never was doesn't seem quite right. Of course, Boston is almost all on filled land, there are a few little spots, the Boston Neck and downtown Boston, that were here and built on to begin with. But, almost everywhere, Boston was filled in and the water's edge was commercial. I think that you can provide small parklets and pedestrian Harbor walks and still keep a sense of the commercial/industrial sense of the Harbor. When you get farther out, even though both are filled so it's all sort of a dreamlike thing, but when you get farther out near Harbor Point where there was a marsh that was filled, then you could have a little more of the sense of the greenspace coming up to the edge, but I think bringing back public use of the waterfront is *very* important. But doing it in a manner that can not negate the sense of the origin and the history is a good idea. Someone was writing that you should make the edge of the waterfront like an Eliot River Reservation. No. Those rivers that are the Eliot reservations are in the suburbs or in the outlying communities, but when you get to the heart of the city that's not the appropriate language for the water's edge. At least I don't think so.

On the Future of Her Practice

Oh sure, it's appropriate. I think about that occasionally. We have a branch office in Knoxville, Tennessee, and when I go there I'm SO comfortable. It's a little place, it has charm. They have a dog. I don't know for how many years I brought my dog to work. So, that place in Knoxville is just like this place was forty odd years ago. I think in the natural course of events you can go two ways. There was a certain time where one of my partners suggested that I would close the office and just keep doing studio projects myself, but Carol Johnson Associates would be finished, and I didn't think I wanted to do that. I feel that that's a perfectly legitimate and valid thing to do and many architects and landscape architects have done that. Then, there's the opposite direction where you bring people in and they are working under you but there's a certain time when they do take on the leadership role and you step back.

As far as what will happen to Carol Johnson & Associates in 25–30 years, I don't mind thinking that the present owners of the firm are bringing up people who'll replace them - you know the architects Shipley-Bullfinch, that's the way they've done it, Sasaki Associates certainly are doing it that way. There's so much work needed in the landscape field that I think having a fairly large office with a skilled staff contributes a lot to the environment and to strengthening the importance and value of landscape architecture. So, I don't myself see reason for changing the way we're going, maybe greater attention on exactly what the goals are at all times. I also don't see that it wouldn't be a bad idea to have a few of those small satellite offices like Knoxville, because we do have people going down there, so they have the experience of being in a small place and another community and I think that helps just like travel helps where you can observe and learn.

So I guess I don't have any magic change that I foresee. I think that landscape architects will become more and more important because land is more and more important. When I was in grade school the population of the United States was 130 million. And where are we now? 200? 300? So times change and needs change but I think that landscape architects will continue to be needed, it's a matter of preparing the landscape architects so that their minds are very facile and they can cope with the problems and they have a broader vision rather than something very narrow (that's really up to the educational system), and the offices where they begin their work and learn how to accomplish actual projects.



The Role of Women in the Profession Today

Well, I'll just translate that slightly. I think the future holds tremendous opportunity for PEOPLE, men and women, because good landscape architects are needed. When I come across someone who can help think through certain issues and help resolve them I don't care whether it's a man or a woman. That person is really contributing. And people who contribute are really what's going to make landscape architecture better. I remember when we first started having young women who'd get pregnant and then take three months off and then they wouldn't want to come back five days a week. That made it hard on me, but if I could get Ann James for three days a week, she was worth much more than the average person for five days. SO, I think women who really work on their skills and their ability to think through issues and solve problems have wonderful opportunities.

There will always be a shortage of people who really contribute. And whether they're men or they're women, those people are really needed. Our profession has limitless scope and possibilities but we have to make clear how we can help, how we can really be involved and help resolve some tricky things. I remember I was at a team meeting for the bridge going to Virginia -- the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. I was at a team meeting with some engineers and I was getting older and I wasn't embarrassed to make a stupid question. They had an enormous highway crossing over the little Potomac River and I - earlier I wouldn't have done this because I would have worried about being thought dumb - but I spoke up and I said, "You know, there's something that troubles me about this project, the scale of the bridge. The bridge is wider than the river is, and it's a little troubling to me to see that. Have you ever thought of splitting the bridge into two and having two bridges, which I think would be more harmonious with the overall landscape." The engineers batted their eyes and said "If we did that, we could super-elevate them differently and it would save us money." So, they weren't exactly overwhelmed with my reason for suggesting it, but they loved the idea. I don't know if that's what was built. That was a long time ago and I imagine things have changed. If landscape architects dare to speak out and have something really to offer -- which isn't going to happen every time -- but it did that time. We get a much better feeling of the value of our profession and its representatives no matter where they are and what they're doing.

On Harvard

The Harvard faculty really were my mentors, and Serge Chermayeff came to my desk and encouraged me and looked at my work and gave me some ideas of how I could do what I wanted to do, better. The other mentors, of course Norman Newton and Hideo Sasaki were very helpful. But, the thing that made the difference for me was that Serge Chermayeff was taking me seriously. That really meant a lot. After the Harvard faculty I did enjoy being at The Architects Collaborative and I did hear Gropius speak on some of his principles. So those were my key mentors. Many of the architects with whom I worked have discussed with me landscape site design issues and they would always bring their perception and I would link in my perceptions with theirs. I have had over time that sort of mentor relationship with a number of architects. I think those were the key ones which led me, generally, to where I am.

Birnbaum – In addition to mentors, were there muses?

Well, I, once in awhile I do a landscape that think has a little touch of Olmsted and of course I think a lot about the Olmsted touch. I am a great fan of Dan Kiley. I just think Dan's work is the best. Because of the order and the simplicity and the control that he placed on his landscapes. I'm also a great fan of Katherine Gustafsen, because I think she's a dynamite talent and does wonderful things. So, as far as the muses who have communicated to me, I mentioned Sigfried Gideon, *Space, Time and Architecture*, that opened my eyes to the larger sort of urbanistic aspect of landscape architecture. I guess I soaked up things wherever I could find them; I don't think I have a specific muse who is the one I can lay all of the responsibility on. I don't know if that answers the question.



Birnbaum notes that at this point we walked around the office with Carol, beginning in her “nook.”

This is my nook.

[Upon viewing plan for a new botanical garden] Some of the plans that Colt brought to Hartford are on display. But also they want to have plants that the various immigrant groups brought to Hartford and then they want some teaching gardens and teaching greenhouses. They want to maintain the sledding slope that they use now and they want to keep circulation through to the swimming pool. So the question is do you fence off anything? Do they need to charge admission? Or maybe there’s just a special area here that would be fenced-in for any admission charge so the people who are headed to the pool could still do that. There’s a lot work on this one before it gets going again.

Rollins College has some wonderful spaces, but there are some over here that are sort of monstrous. Then there’s some which can be better linked to the lake. So, we’ll be trying to bounce around some ideas about how to fulfill all these great opportunities that they have ...

Birnbaum - when was the campus founded?

Oh, it was founded back in about 1870 by some Protestant New England clergymen. They went to Florida for just a lark. I guess I don’t think the intent was to found a college, but that’s what they did.

This is actually a proposal that I made for some sculptural figures on the original John Marshall Park design.

That tree was the model that we made for the [Expo] Dome in 1967. This was done by Leonard Newcomb – my sculptor who I turned into a landscape architect – he made that. This is a scheme that we were hoping that would give more identity at Babson College, but I don’t know that they’re ever going to go ahead with it. Over there is a birdhouse by the same sculptor who did the marching figures. When the Fine Arts Commissioners didn’t like the figures, first I asked the sculptor to do something else and he did that lovely model, but Fine Arts didn’t like that either.

This model is the Cambridge School of Weston for which we won an award from the Boston Chapter of the ASLA in 2005. They had some ideas. The existing gym was inadequate and they needed to build another dormitory and another science building. They had ideas but no definite direction. Should they put the new buildings on the tops of the hills, like Wellesley College? Or put them down linked to the existing buildings. I told them, I went to Wellesley and I appreciated the idea of the buildings on the hills, but if you’re really trying to promote community (and these are high school students) if you’re trying to promote a sense of family, you don’t build a fortified town on the top of a hill, you build in the valley where the agriculture and the family life was. So, I recommended that they give up the idea of plunking the buildings on the hilltops. You fit into the valley here and there and that way you strengthen the idea of the family and the community which is important for students this age.

More walking – through the Office Library



Because Charles was a planner/landscape architect these friends of his are planners and they lived on one side of his house and I lived down the street, so we had good connections.

Day 2 – Location Shooting

The second day of the interview was held on-site at several Carol Johnson designed landscapes: Harbor Point, Mystic Reservation, Cambridge Common, Lechmere Canal Park and Centanni Way (East Cambridge) and John Fitzgerald Kennedy Park.

Harbor Point

[Let's move] to the center of the Mall over here, so that I can give you a sense of the structure. We were the landscape architects, not the architects for the community. The park was part of the whole development deal that the State was going to be involved in. The park was going to be a public park and so there are two phases. If we come over here to the middle of the mall I can explain to you...

I think maybe you can get a sense of the mall ...

This is Harbor Point a housing development it originally called Columbia Point and was one of the early public housing projects. It was not maintained, it deteriorated, it became the scene of crime, the police were even afraid to come and fire-engines couldn't come because of settlement they couldn't get around and it was simply a disaster. The government developed a plan so that there would be aid and financing to make this into a mixed-income community. There would still be some subsidized apartment units, there would be moderate rate units and there would be the market rate units, and that's what's here today.

The community is functioning, many of the people who remained here when it was so dangerous and in such a terrible state are still here. Those people came to committee meetings and helped us understand how they thought the community should be developed. They participated and at the end they had units here. But they put up with an awful lot to eventually have a good living condition. We're standing now right beside the central mall— that was an idea of John Goody, the architect, to have an identity to this community so that every one of these streets would relate to this mall. We went to the Commonwealth Avenue mall, we studied the dimensions of other malls, and we came to this dimension. We planned to have parallel parking right from the start and then have this double row of trees, some recreation -- you can see the tennis courts. But, it's mostly greenspace to give an identity and special sense of this place.

Now part of the whole idea was that everyone was joining in to make this project a success and the State promised to make a linear park along the waterfront which would be separate from the community (which was part of the private developer's property). The State did not have the money to fulfill its agreement on the waterfront park for a number of years. The community was here, but there was still a somewhat derelict waterfront. Finally, the State did raise the money for the waterfront park. One of the interesting challenges was that I had to find a way to define the property that was private and the property that was public. I didn't want to put a wall and suggest that the private community was walled away from the public park. So, I looked at a number of entry points and came up with the entry gate which you can see there which identifies the Harbor Point park, but it has the open fence, the metal fence, so that you get a sense of visual penetration so that you're not walled off, but that does identify this as a public park. The hope was that because this community would now be safe, that people from South Boston would use the park.

In the early days when this was a dangerous place, people from South Boston would go to the South Boston beaches which you can see over there, they would go to the public end of the beaches. But, to penetrate beyond the Expo Center to this place was just not



done. So, once this community became a desirable place and once we built this waterfront park, people were invited -- and in fact you do see people coming ... I separated the jogging path because sometimes if you have joggers and pedestrians and bikers there can be a conflict and I didn't want to pave a whole lot along the waterfront. The separate jogging path just winds through, and the joggers and the bikers can use this path and the pedestrians have a very special experience right at the waterfront.

I wanted to provide some shade and a special sort of focus at the end of the mall, and that's what you see there. There's a raised granite podium that has a map of Boston Harbor, and the two shade structures on either side. People can study and look out at the islands and get an idea of what Boston Harbor looks like in plan. Then they can look and see the islands in the Harbor which are so famous and are now going to become, and are, in fact, a public park. When I first was looking out here I remembered the paintings by, I guess he used to be Fitz Hugh Lane and now he's called Fitz Henry Lane, and I thought, "You know, that's exactly a Fitz Hugh Lane painting."

My thought was that the experience of coming along this waterfront park would be like being in a Fitz Hugh Lane painting. I really didn't want to put a fence up because in all the Fitz Hugh Lane paintings you enter into the landscape, you're part of the landscape, there's nothing that seals you off. So, I was hoping we would be able to edge this park safely, but still have the sense of being part of the waterfront and island landscape. We were able to obtain these large granite blocks that you see, and we were able to slope the rip-rap to the edge so it wouldn't be a vertical drop. That's how we got this big, nice, openness and the granite blocks that people can sit on, but also keep people, young people particularly, from tumbling over. I wanted to give some sort of interpretation about the history of the harbor, and there was back in the 17th Century a law that people had to have access to the clam flats. In fact the law still exists. We have several points along the waterfront where we have stairs that go down and give the legal requirement for access. At those points where those stairs are I have some interpretation about the history of the harbor and the boats that were made here. Then, at that end there was a place where even in the most terrible days of degradation of this site, people went to fish, so I have a little pergola there and a little interpretation about fishing. We show a view of, an illustrative view of the Grimm's nursery rhyme about *Flounder, Flounder, in the Sea*, **trying to make this a place where people would come and enjoy the view and enjoy some interpretation about the history and the opportunities over time that this linear park could provide the public. That's a general overview. Another thing that I think is important, because these are private dwellings and this is a public park we did want to put the driveway there so there's roadway access, and the roadway separates along with the sidewalk or this jogging path, from the private dwellings. I wanted to do something rather subtle. I wanted to orient the linear park out toward the islands, and I had to bury a lot of debris, so you'll notice this rather subtle little low berm. Underneath that berm is a lot of debris that had been thrown there. I wanted to have nothing major in an earthform, but I wanted to separate slightly the public waterfront path from the private dwellings. So that's why that little berm with the trees is laid out the way it is.**

I'd like to talk a little bit about the tree selection which was *definitely* a challenge, because I knew that trees planted out here would be subject to severe weather conditions, winds, winter storms, ice and I looked at a lot of trees. I had worked, of course, at Expo '67 and I observed trees out in the islands in the Saint Lawrence River that resisted severe winter conditions and I looked up and down the coast to study which mature trees seemed to be able to survive difficult weather conditions. So I choose a variety. I didn't want a monoculture because even though some trees may do well in certain conditions, you can never be absolutely sure what's going to happen on your particular site. So, I chose a diversity, I planted in groups, I wanted to get some canopy especially where the benches were to get some shade. Also, I wanted people to be able to sit on the grass and enjoy the view either in shade or in sun. Here you can see a good example of that little berm that I described. The berm was to give separation between the public dwellings on the other side of the drive and the public park here as well as giving a little sitting place. We buried a lot of debris that had to be buried under that berm and the grass is doing fine. I'm really pleased with the way the trees have developed. There is some canopy here, there is some green vegetation, and we even have cyclists coming along this bikeway enjoying it. It's useful I'm sure on warm days, today's a cool day, and the trees are looking fine. They're getting good maintenance and that's necessary.



We used these benches. This bench we developed – it's based on the historic Metropolitan District [Commission's] bench that was used in the early parks, the Eliot parks used a bench a little like this. We re-designed it a little bit, but it is essentially the same bench that you see in the old MDC parks.

Gradually as you come out to the end, even in summer, the sense of the Kennedy Library as part of this environment becomes apparent. It was not there when we first began our design work but was built a little bit later. The plan is to link this waterfront walkway all the way around past the Kennedy Library and the University of Massachusetts all the way to the last river in the Boston Basin.

You can see up here one of the stairways down [to the water]. And then we have small pillars, all the entrances have some definition between the private community and the public park.

Now, here's one of several of these stairs down. At this one, the interpretation talks about a famous shipwreck in Boston Harbor in 1782.

When we were working on designing this stair down, one of the members of the community said we should not put the stairs all the way down to low tide because they become slippery and dangerous, so they only go down to where they are safe, and that was acceptable for the permitting. That was the sort of thing that the people who lived here were very interested in and gave us very good advice.

Then we have some interpretation about the *Flying Cloud*, the famous clipper ship built in Boston by Donald McKay. So there are bits of history, sort of maritime history that we thought people would enjoy knowing about.

There was a lot of complication about the storm drainage system, making it acceptable for permitting. We had to have the outfall – which was originally located by the beach. I was very concerned that this was an important little beach for children and I didn't want the storm water coming out onto the beach so I asked that they move it here. I'm not pleased with it here, but I prefer having it here rather than as part of the beach.

That was the idea! I'm so pleased to see how well it's doing. There are a few weeds that I didn't plant, but the basic planting was mine.

So this is the old point where you used to see the fishermen, even when people were a little frightened to come here. And often when I'm down here I still see people out here fishing. We wanted to commemorate the flounder (and the fishermen do use the rocks), so we have 'flounder facts,' because Boston Harbor was famous as a place to go winter flounder fishing. We have a little bit about the flounder and then we have the nursery rhyme over here. Of course, when I was a child most children were told the story of the Grimm's fairy tale of *Flounder, Flounder in the Sea*. So we thought we'd put that there, we thought children would come, and fishermen would come, and there would be a little something for both of them.

Then, this is the little beach. It hasn't been so well maintained, but I think these people now can go over to South Boston and use the beach there. And there sometimes are some people who use the beach. I wanted to make it possible that it could be maintained and attractive. They still haven't improved that part of the site, but that will come and there'll be a waterfront promenade all the way to the Kennedy Library when it's finished (I was hoping it would be finished before this).

I wanted to show you the interpretation over here.

It's not developed very well, but it's there. You can get through. So, this was just sort of [to] entice people to come out and see this amazing view of Boston, and the view of the islands. And the constellations would be in different in spring, winter, summer, and autumn -- these constellations are visible from this point. It's a very special place and I wanted to have more things that people could do here, so we have the picnic tables just over there and of course we have a picnic table for the handicapped. I thought if



they were going to use the beach, the picnic tables would be appropriate here. I've been out a number of times and have seen families. In fact I even saw someone in a wheelchair using the handicapped picnic table.

I think that points out most of the features, there's another one of the stairs down past that central mall but it's pretty much like this one.

You can come over and take a look at the picnic area.

I wanted to have sun and shade, and I think we did pretty well. This is handicapped accessible -- the wheelchair can come right up there. This was the largest greenspace as part of the linear park, so that's why I tried to put some special features here for people who might be coming along the water's edge, or people who might be living in the community.

Were you involved where the houses meet the park?

Oh yes, I did the little entry pillars and the gateway down along the mall. That's why I was describing this little berm which is actually where we buried debris. But the little berm where the waterfront park gets close to the dwellings is supposed to give a little sense of separation. I didn't want to wall anybody off from anything, just give a sense that they're different.

What is over there?

I don't know. I think the fact that its sloping rip-rap helped. I'm not sure. It was certainly something that we discussed and went over and over, and this is what was acceptable to the community and I just thought it gave a totally different *feel* to being here. We were successful here, and we were successful at Lechmere at linking water to dry land and people's visitation.

It's very useful for the birds, this park! They've been pretty good about maintaining it. Only once did I come when it was just a mess of shells.

Oh gosh, we're out of luck we'll have to find someplace. You know we could go into the courthouse ... [a storm approached]

Birnbaum - When you come back and how did you feel?

Oh -- if the grass is green and the trees are growing and there are people using it and appreciating it and the things that I thought would be enjoyable to the public and it's all just the way I imagined. I'm thrilled! I'm SO happy!

When I go to a park that hasn't been maintained, and, you know, it's a failure I'm SO depressed!

So, coming out to one that is maintained that people really love just lifts my spirits.

That's what's so meaningful, that this is on-going. And, as long as the community supports and maintains these open spaces and people can use them in safety and security, then I feel that we're all together on this. It's my design, but there's an on-going responsibility to maintain it so that it WILL be available to the public. Sometimes people will call ... at Lechmere there were some issues about maintenance. But mostly I just have to come and see that what I did - with the support of the on-going users and people responsible - has together made something that really adds to peoples lives. And that's very meaningful to me.



We worked with the engineers to design this platform. How many pylons would we have to have to support the platform? How much open water could we have under the platform in order to get the approval to build that out to where I felt it wanted to be? You know we just *worked* at it until we got a solution that was acceptable to the permitting authorities.

I think it's [the storm] heading this way

There's Dorchester Heights, you come right out here and you can see where the cannon were that drove the British out of Boston Harbor. It's a very special place. In the old maps, of course, this was a salt marsh, but most of Boston was a salt marsh. So you can look at Eliot's maps and can see how he expected to have public use in some of the salt marsh areas. And now, there's public use along this waterfront.

Wow – now the dark cloud has an edge to it!

So – do you want me to go back over the connection?

Now we're in the public linear park. The Harbor Point community was actually built by private developers. And the public park along the waterfront was funded by the State and the central mall, which was actually the greenway that Joan Goody designed to have a focus for the Harbor Point Community, we extended beyond the Community all the way out to this focal point at the end so that this mall is a unifying element.

The artist, landscape architect in our office who did the work of the map of Boston Harbor was Judy Hanks-Henn. She's done this view of the arrival of Governor Winthrop's fleet, and the Indian watching the boats. This map of the harbor shows you where you are and where the different islands are that you're looking out at, out into the harbor. We're standing on a platform which I felt really would bring the community and the linear park to this focal point, and I wanted to bring it out into the water so people would get the sense that they're surrounded by water. We had to have our engineers help us design the platform so that we didn't have to fill too much into the actual harbor. That was a difficult design issue, but we were able to manipulate the water's edge and raise this platform up on caissons so that we were able to get the permit to build this out into the water.

This is even More of a Fitz Hugh Lane vista now.

[begins to rain]

Where are our colleagues? Are they already in the car?

Well, when I designed this I thought it was for shade – but it's good for rain too.

This is an experience I haven't had out here before!

Of course the plants like the rain, as long as there isn't too much erosion. Plants are doing really well this summer because there's so much rain.

Well, I can check the drainage, see if everything's working.

MacDonald Park – Mystic Reservation



They are keeping the sledding slope open. I'll show you - the Boston Symphony even had for the anniversary of Medford - well I think it was the Boston Pops - did a concert where the people all sat on the hill and heard the music. I'll show you where it was, over here. It's used for daily events and special events as well.

It's such a thrill to see the trees that I put in that were going to be the slow growers are now great big trees! Fifteen years ago, these were still little and the only trees you noticed were the poplar. Now the oaks, the ash, the maples, they're becoming real trees and we don't even need the poplars anymore. And, many of the poplars are gone. But for the first fifteen years of so, the poplars really did the work for the park. It's surprising to see how *few* poplars are left.

Again, I wanted to use a diversity of species. Maybe we'll go down here - we can go either way.

[This park's maintained by the MDC.]

The MDC doesn't exist anymore -- it's been taken over by the State, the State Environmental Agency. So, it's maintained, probably by the same people as when it was the MDC. I think the equipment and the staff were simply joined together.

One of the interesting things was the water's edge treatment because it was all open. We did a simple dumped rock detail. A lot of vegetation came in and some of that I would think of cutting down, but we'll see when we get down to the edge of the river.

Wonderful poplars - Look at those trees. They were nothing.

And that's that same modified historic MDC bench detail that we've used elsewhere.

As long as they keep the meadows open I guess I won't complain.

No, that's meant to be cut out in part. The issue was that we needed a vegetative edge to hold the soil and we put in the dumped rock to hold it temporarily. The idea was that you would have vistas out across the river and they have not maintained it so well.

This is where they had the celebration, they had visitors and people just entered into the park and sat around that little hillock and the Boston Pops were sitting down here.

They had a better view through at that time. But we did lots of calculations about the material that was here. We had to bring in some material - I think I mentioned yesterday - the soils here were ten times greater than toxic to plants when we started. My dear friend John Gustafsen did all kinds of research with his colleagues, the soils experts, to come up with a 'mixing scheme'. We had out here these little bins where we had different soil mixtures and we planted some grasses in those experimental bins to get the right kind of mixture with organics, the material that was here, and some sand. And, it seems to be working. Things are growing. I didn't plant these willows.

We located a little boat dock down here that has not completely stood the test of time, but I guess people still use it. The idea was people could come in canoes or kayaks, and there was a sailing program in the Mystic also.

I think the thing that's a little disappointing is that these were benches here so that people could sit here, look out and enjoy the view. Somehow, the seats got destroyed and they haven't been replaced which is a disappointment. But, the dock is still here. People can come in their canoes, climb up that ladder, and visit the park. Of course there's a lot of noise here from the traffic.

There you can see the dumped rock detail that we did. It was a *major* detail to figure out because of the long edge that we had to treat. It was expensive. The idea was we were going to be able to get vegetation growing in it to hold that water's edge. I would



have hoped for a little more maintenance than they've been able to provide, at least opening some more vistas through because it's sort of pleasant to be in the park with less of the traffic noise and still see the water.

That's the thing that disappoints me. They don't replace things, so there's a bench on either side. Of course when I did this I guess I wasn't thinking of handicapped accessibility but of course the handicapped can get out to here. They can take the view. The other thing was that I wanted to make it possible for children to lean way over, so that's why this detail is done that way.

It's just unbelievable to see the trees – they were these little spindly things.

That was here and the rest was just hydrofill from when they built that highway they pumped the hydrofill over here so the only thing that existed was the phragmites. Then there was no vegetation from all the rest of the park that we've been walking through because it was hydrofill. Saline polluted hydrofill. It was absolutely flat and just sort of this silty material.

We have a granular cap of a very porous material and then on top of that we have our soil. So, any leeching that comes up from the original hydrofill flows out to the Mystic River through the granular cap. There's not sufficient saline material that flows out so that it would cause a problem with the river. This was of course a saltwater marsh before they built the dam, but there is still some of the saline material that leeches upward at certain times of the year.

... when I've been out here on a good day a lot of people from those [nearby new apartment] buildings use the park. The idea of this park is to provide outdoor recreation, fulfill the vision of Charles Eliot that there would be these Riverway Reservations, and improve the value of the real estate. When we started there were some sort of derelict commercial enterprises but it was pretty dumpy on the other side of Route 16. A lot of new development occurred after – perhaps as a result of this open space. When I do come out and talk to people, they are often people who live in these new apartments buildings, and they really enjoy the park. Some of them use it to get to the subway station to Wellington Station. All of them seem to come out to jog, picnic, ride their bikes -- so it's fulfilled several goals. For the Town of Medford this improved quality of the real estate was important.

I haven't been to the bird watching tower lately, but there it is.

I thought it would be nice to have some special event that people would come to and enjoy as well as the larger green spaces.

Regardless of the earthwork beside Route 16, I wanted to try and control the noise.

[climbing up the bird watching tower]

There are a number of Ailanthus which have crept into the phragmites – there is quite a bit of birdlife in there, and it's nice to get this vista of Boston and Somerville. Every time I come here things have grown more. So you're getting two unusual views of the city of Boston – one from the South and one from the Northwest.

This has held up pretty well. It makes a little sort of punctuation point in the experience of the park.

The sumac has come a long way – it was solid phragmites.

Yes, that's sumac and I think some of these are actually the Ailanthus. That's the stuff that was here originally, yes ... and then you started to see the sumac, this time the birch have made really great advances. As long as they keep the open meadows this can grow naturally.

Birnbaum: This [bird watching tower] is a really nice feature.



I'm afraid I have to admit this is wacko Carol. I said I wanted a little bird watching tower and naturally I thought – like many of my great ideas [heavy ironic tone] – they would say 'Oh, we're not spending money on that,' but they said 'Oh, OK.'

I have been at the public meetings where people who are supposed to be authorities said "There is no wildlife living in the phragmites." Well, that's not true. In the first place, the phragmites is being superceded by other plants, but I've been here and seen birds in the phragmites. So, it would be something that somebody would take on as a point of interest how these spaces change and what wildlife does in different areas. That would be a terrific study I think and would interest people who use the park who'd want to know about it.

Birnbaum: The [earth berm] does make a difference [reducing traffic noise].

Yeah. I'm very interested in the fact that I thought that it would work, and I didn't want to build some big monster thing, just something that would look fairly natural and it does seem to work.

The Mystic Reservation is related to Charles Eliot's greater vision for Boston. The river reservations and the harbor edge, all of which he had planned for public use, public recreation. It's such a thrill that it's not exactly implemented as he planned, but it's moving toward what he planned with immense obstacles which didn't exist when he was thinking through his grand concepts. I wonder whether he would have thought of his grand concepts had these obstacles which have developed since existed when he fortunately came up with his grand ideas. People are still trying to implement them even though this development which has occurred makes it difficult. It's very exciting to be part of that history of the landscape of Boston that Charles Eliot actually envisioned.

Charles River Basin – Cambridge Common

This project was actually conceived of by the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority. Their staff developed the idea of the canal and the canal basin, and then the parcels of land around the canal and the canal basin for development. And, as you can see it's been quite a success – there's housing, there's offices and there's the commercial activity, the big mall across the basin. When we got on the job, the master plan the Redevelopment Authority had initiated had all the pedestrian movement up at the upper level. If you look across the basin you'll see people sitting up on that high terrace, you'll see stairways down. The level came over to the edge of the canal and the basin and there was a high retaining wall there so that people were on one plane high above the water.

We thought we'd like to have more place for people: we could have sufficient space for canoes, tourist boats, kayaks with a little smaller basin. By making the basin a little smaller we had the opportunity to have two levels so that the public could get closer to the water and still have the upper level for dining and for walking in and out of the shops, and that's what we did. So, this basin is a little smaller than in the master plan, has more space for people to sit in the little amphitheater that's over there underneath the shade structure, just different activities. Dining of course, over by the mall. So we gained a little land and I don't think we lost much as far as the water feature is concerned. We still have plenty of recreational boats that come in and we still have the fountain. We used the soft material for the lower level and I subsequently learned that is an issue with mechanical wheelchairs, so there are things that I've learned since. But, in this case, in order to make the budget we needed to use a less expensive material so that was part of the reason for that particular decision.

On this side of the fountain basin is all of the equipment for the fountain. It is underneath this shade structure. We have a special feature here that people can come to and enjoy -- be in a little shade in hot weather. We have, on the panels of the plexiglass, silkscreen interpretive illustrations of the original industrial development that was here along the Lechmere canal. I think now I



would try to find another way of doing that. We used the silkscreen. At night when the pavilion is lit up it's quite easy to read, but in the day, the illustrations have faded a bit so that they're not quite so clear and they don't tell the story as easily as I meant for it to be told about the industrial development.

There was a famous glassworks here, there was pottery, many interesting industries were located in East Cambridge and boats came along the canal and loaded and went back out to sea or whatever port they were headed for. Now, that gave us one great advantage because the early industrial development did create a lot of polluted material and we had to somehow dispose of that. Because the canal was so deep (for ocean going vessels) we were able to place the polluted material and cap it in the canal and still have plenty of water depth for the tourist boats and the recreational boats. So, we were able to take care of that problem and gain all of the necessary permits for the disposal of polluted material.

What I like a lot about the connection to the Charles River is that you really do feel linked to the City of Boston. Our walkways are at two levels and they take you up to the bridge. As you can see, there's a vine growing on the bridge. Originally, we suggested that the bridge have a little curve on it, but this was being funded by the highway department and it's designed for higher speeds than having a little rise in the bridge would make acceptable. We did design the lighting on the bridge. As you can see, we're getting some greenery on the bridge. So, a lot of our goals of linking and making this area a park, a very active urban park, seem to be fulfilled. We have some works of art on the other side we can go and see. This side of the canal is developed more to respond to the housing, which is in that building. The rest of the buildings are either offices or commercial.

I should mention David Phillips' work here. These bronze plaques beneath each of the rainwater drops are by David Phillips, the sculptor. He was interested in trying to describe the riverine environment and how water shapes environment. That's where we put his work and you can see how the rainwater drips down onto his bronze plaques.

You can see a little difference in the site furniture here. We were trying to do sort of more heavy-duty, muscular, 19th Century, industrial site furniture. You can see the pieces that we got out of some of the old catalogs were the base of the pavilion and the structure for the benches.

I bring people here all the time and for some reason it's just a big hit. When you come here with people from Europe, they love it.

The influence of this was the use of public investment to provide a focus that will make properties around that focus valuable commercially. That was the whole idea of the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority. So they came up with the vision and we came on to do the actual design. But it's their vision, and a great success economically I believe. So, we sort of hitched on to a successful idea.

We made a very strong pitch for custom design that would have a little flavor of the 19th Century but had a contemporary flavor [also]. We pitched it that quality was going to make this idea of theirs really go. And they accepted it, and they applied for various grants and I guess they did a good job! We were able to afford the kind of detailing that we thought would work best here to give this its special identity that would relate to this place.

[walking]

... just see if there are any of those murals on this side. Maybe it's just on the other side. Oh yes, you can see the red coats.

I'm happy about that Boston Ivy [Hedera Helix], it's doing a good job.

We have a pillar over there – we'll go around and take a look. The pillar is a collection of faces of people who lived in East Cambridge at the time we were building this. The sculptor collected them and made that pillar of faces.



I see there's a desire line that we didn't recognize. I wanted to have the weeping willow near the water just for romantic flavor and they seem to be doing fine. I also wanted to shape this sort of bowl shaped space in case there were sort of festival or something they might want to use that.

When we were trying to find a terminus for this upper level walkway we used the sculpture and the stair and the ramp up the side to provide that terminus. These were well-known people in East Cambridge at that time. So then you come to this point and then you have the raised level. Our pear trees have done beautifully and of course they're a great treat in the spring. Then you go back to the basin again. There was another detail issue when you come to the end of this: how to get connection to the fountain basin? We tried a number of different ways and let's go take a look at the one we ended up with.

I wanted to use some plantings that had a little of the flavor of Victorian plantings. They used a lot of colored leaves and evergreens. Those dwarf spruce trees would be characteristic. So, it was just an idea that since we were using the industrial metal pieces for our site furniture I wanted to give a little flavor of the planting that was done at that period. I didn't want to make a Victorian garden, I just wanted something sort of to give a feeling of the era that we were talking about in the interpretation of the industrial development of East Cambridge.

Although we tried many ways of connecting the canal to the basin, we ended up with just a simple curve. I think there were about a dozen other options, but this one seemed to fit, and it kept the emphasis on the pavilion on the other side.

Oh, lots of people.

Birnbaum: Didn't Rick Kattmann work on this?

I think he did. Actually he, as we went on and had some connection with the maintenance people, he was the sort of follow through person.

East Cambridge - Courthouse Walk

Well, I'm glad to hear that you hang out here because the idea was that this would become a hang-out.

It was hard to do a gracious linkage with that building in your face but we tried to have low vegetation that would sort of shield the bottom of it at least. And we tried to develop greenspace there, and toward the end we've got some trees that are doing well.

Sometimes when you come down here and you see groups sitting on the stairs it's nice.

The multi-cultural arts center. I think the development has been quite a success. And of course there were special tax-credits because of the multi-cultural Arts Center. So, it was a winning strategy.

... point of view I thought this was a special project: We have a Bullfinch [designed] courthouse, the multi-cultural Arts Center, I forget the original use of that building, and of course, the later courthouse, the Register.

Yes. You know this was a remarkable exercise in creative thinking that they put together the program to do this. Using the multi-cultural Arts Center, the tax credits for historic structures, and using you know, every grant they could ask for, and closing the street to make this a special gathering place and hang-out, there was just a lot of thinking that went on to make it all come out. And I was mentioning that we designed these flowerbeds so that fire engines can come under the gateway - it's high enough to get under and they can even drive over the planting beds.



When this is finished will it continue back down to the park down there?

I don't know, I'm not sure that's certainly what it looks like. That's what it looks like, but I don't believe we're involved in that. I'm not sure who is doing it. I don't remember that the master plan proposed to extend this down but it certainly would be a nice thing to do.

1987 was the beginning of the turn around. We had a lot of meetings with the East Cambridge community and they were very supportive because it was enhancing their neighborhood. They weren't being pushed out. It was just giving them work, jobs, around the canal where there would be stores and offices and improving the streetscape, sidewalks. So, they never had a fear that they were supposed to leave. They were supposed to stay here and enjoy the improvements to the area.

Who was Centanni?

He was one of the leaders in the community.

John F. Kennedy Park

So, the key thing to remember is that this is a sort of "node" along the greater Charles River Reservation. By acquiring this property and making it part of the Reservation you have the linear park running along the river and then you have these nodes, park nodes for relaxation, gathering. But you also have linkage to the greater urban scene: Harvard Square. So, this park and its connection, links the very frenzied urban activity to the more restful park Reservation. And I think it works quite well, you see a lot of people out here enjoying it in good weather. I also tried to link through, visually, some of the aspects. You'll find the walkway up there is focussed dead center on a main gateway to the Harvard house, I think it's Eliot House. This one isn't exactly the same alignment because it would have hit an existing tree and I wanted to get a vista of the river so I just bent it slightly. You probably wouldn't ever know that it's not really a direct line from the other walkway. We had issues about whether the people in the condos want to see what's going on in the park. So we planted a lot of trees to separate them. And then, as I think I mentioned yesterday, I really wanted to orient the park toward the river and the greater Charles River Reservation and the slope of the land when we started dropped down about five feet. So, this tilt of the land was completely part of the design theory of uniting this park with the larger river environment.

As far as the planting strategy, I wanted diversity, I wanted some evergreens. And then I had this manic idea that we must plant great beech trees because two generations from now they will be there and they will be wonderful. So you will see some beeches – they're coming along all right and we worked on the soils to give them a good environment and someday they will be more noticeable than they are now. I hope.

You can see just ahead at the intersection of this main through walkway and the walkway that goes to Harvard Square is where we located a fountain in memory of President Kennedy. His family wanted the fountain because water is a symbol of life and they wanted some inscriptions. You might have noticed at the gateway that we came in (there's another gateway at the end of this walkway and there's a gateway out by the intersection) where the pillars have some of the quotations of Kennedy that are very meaningful. I happened to have been in Taiwan teaching just before we designed this park and I saw the pillars that I.M. Pei had designed for Tunghai University and I have to say that they did influence me.

Ah the fountain is dry today – hmmm mid-summer. I don't know why it's dry.



We did have some trees planted here but they died. I think we should have done some different planting details in order to give them a better environment and the irrigation probably wasn't sufficient. We did have this raised up platform so that there's a sense that you have a very nice vista out over the park when you're here. Of course when the fountain is working you have these spigots, water jets, they run through these holes so that there are little spillways, the water goes down into that area. When it's dry I thought we'd have a nice pattern in the colored granite just so that there's something there when it's dry. Then the water runs over - in a laminar flow - these three sides and goes over the quotations of Kennedy which were very meaningful to his family and to everyone who comes to visit. We have that plaque over there in Braille so that blind people have accessible ramps on either side and they can read some of the inscriptions through those plaques that have the inscriptions in Braille.

It's quite a popular hangout. Lots of people are here in early spring, warm spring days and in the evening. I'm surprised that in the middle of summer the fountain is dry. Harvard maintains this public park, there's a little bit of maintenance that's done by the state but largely it's done by Harvard and I don't know why they don't have the fountain operating right now.

Now this allée was important to me because I wanted to have the feeling of arrival at this special memorial fountain. The developers of Charles Square were putting shops at a lower level so they wanted this pathway to slope down oh about four feet, to the same level of the shops, and then slope back up. And I said, "Oh, no." When you start down this allée of trees, you want to come at an even, gentle slope so that you were always arriving at the memorial fountain with a vista of the platform that we're standing on. I had quite an argument with the developer who made some pejorative term about 'that woman'. However, somehow or other I got support from everyone else and I think it really would have been absurd to arrive at the Kennedy Memorial going down to the shops and then back up.

Now I can show you over here the light well: you'll see what the level of the land was right here when we began and how by manipulating this grade in order to give an orientation toward the Reservation and the Charles River we unified the landscape.

The allée of trees does lead people down in I think a rather dignified and appropriate manner both in its gradient and in the sort of cathedral ceiling that these trees provide. In order to get that sense of the connection to the river we had to lift up this land. So that if we walk over here I can illustrate quite clearly what was really involved in doing that. The Kennedy Institute of Politics was already built and the level of the land is what you see at the bottom of this berm - so that level sloped up toward Memorial Drive and that whole park area was really oriented toward the Kennedy Institute and not toward the river. So, it's five or six feet that we had to pick up this terrain in order to get this landscape framework which I felt was essential to providing the dignity of the memorial in an appropriate park related to the Charles River Reservation.

At one time we asked about connecting to the front of the Kennedy Institute of Politics, and they weren't sure what they wanted to do and then later they did make a connection. Today, for Harvard commencement the Kennedy Institute has a big tent out here and they do use the park but it's also of course a public park.

I can show you a few of my beech trees if you're interested. They have a few years to go before they're what I want them to be. It's still important to think of the future when you're planting trees.

This park was completed in 1987. It was not too long ago. Just about 20 years, I think the dates are on the pillars. We can walk down the allée and look at the pillars. But there was always the concern that the park would seem like a part of Harvard and not open to the public so we did some fairly dense planting to separate the Kennedy Institute of Harvard from the public park, even though they have a gate and come out and use the park, it still has a certain sense of separation in order to be sure that people understand it's public.

Originally it was part of the MBTA, there were the old car barns and the busses and so forth. Then, when they built the red line through to Somerville and Alewife this land became available. It was a site that was going to be the Kennedy Library and there was a lot of dispute in the neighborhood about having the Kennedy Library here because of traffic or because they were all republicans or whatever. So the Kennedy Library was moved out to Columbia Point, or Harbor Point.



This site then was put up by the city as a development zone and they had various schemes for the hotel, the condominium, the Kennedy School, and a public park here. So I believe that the property was part of the development scheme of the city, but it may have already belonged to the state because the MDC had control of it. So the strategy of having a public park, the Kennedy School *and* what they were really trying to do, a development zone for shops, restaurants, and condominiums seemed to be the right mix that everybody could support. That was how this park happened; it was strictly balancing different people's goals and objectives in this part of Cambridge.

There's the beech tree which I love, and then there's the entrance gateway back at Charles Square, and we might want to walk back there. First I want to show you the beech tree.

... from cutting across. And so we have these pillars and sections of fence in the places where it seemed that there would be most likely the kind of desire lines that would cut across and wreck the grass, and we have fences along the sides. And they seem to be working fairly well. If you have a normal desire to go to normal places there's a fence there that keeps you on the path, where there's probably no strong desire line to cut a cross we don't have the fence which makes a better linkage to the reservation. And here's my beech tree. Look at that wonderful tree - in a hundred years it'll be perfect.

I have several of these beech trees, here and there and there's another one down there. I like planting trees that are going to be here several generations from now. They're going to be really a really magical focal point for this whole place. They aren't now ... but they will become that.

I wanted to have beech trees here because it should be here forever this park, forever for public use. And these beech trees are forever and they're always getting better and you can imagine what they'll be in a hundred years. They're doing pretty well, we had concerns about the soils and we did a lot of soils work to try and give them an environment where they would do well. So far, so good!

We mocked up these pillars with the graphics to get the size and the type. One of the things that was interesting - you know often when you inscribe text into stone you add some paint to bring out the letters. The color that was available then was black, and we didn't want to use black. So, my dear partner John Gustavsen was mixing up blue and other colors and he was putting it in the freezer in the office - he wanted to check freeze/thaw and that's how he did it!

For an entry you're trying to lay out a welcome mat and the semi-circle seemed to be a generous and gracious way of inviting people in, and that's all it is. In this case, we have a soft flowing layout for the path system. If the tree didn't have a lot of leaves on it you would see the issue that troubled me, I didn't want to line up on the corner of that big brick building upon arrival. It seemed it would sort of slice you in half. So, I bent the path so that your perception always is toward the larger part of the building or toward the larger part of the park.

The Kennedy Family picked the quotations. We did have granite slabs here but they were broken and they haven't been replaced properly. The fountain system has worked very well. I'm surprised it's not working today. The quotations in Braille are mostly the ones that are on the plaques there. There was a wonderful dedication and Jackie Kennedy and Ted and lots of wonderful people. But you see so many people who come here particularly in the early spring and in the fall and sit on this bench and look at the fountain and read the quotations by Kennedy and watch the water so it has worked out to attract lots of people and these ramps down the side not only give accessibility to the handicapped, but also there are some police vehicles that just drive down here to check on everything.

I've been really pleased that Harvard has brought in the people to do the pruning so we have this sort of cathedral archway. I think it's a rather splendid aspect. In the fall, these honey locusts turn an absolutely golden honey color, they're [a] brilliant warm yellow and the whole alleé is this color.



This is where the developer wanted the walkway to come at that elevation there at the bottom of the stair. so if we had built it as the developer had requested, that walkway would have started where you see it starting, it would come all the way down to that level and then gone back up to the fountain. Not an acceptable concept for an arrival at a memorial. And in the end, the shops failed and they closed most of those doors anyway.

The way I managed to get his consent: I took the detail that he had used around his building and I added that exact stair detail here so that it would look as if it were all part of his development.

What I particularly like is how you can pass through that alleé of trees from the Charles River Reservation and come into a very vibrant urban area. It's a connection that has its own spirit, and it moves people from one environment to the other.

... I wanted a sense of progression, so I took their detail which is over there and put it in here.

I was pleased that we were able to edge these walkways because the maintenance benefits from having some sort of an edge. And here we had to link into the existing stair and the existing doorway and we were able to do some modifications of some things that were here in order to get this descending, even plane arrival.

... about sustainability, but every project you've seen we've addressed sustainability in subtle and sometimes not so subtle means with ways of using storm water or collecting it or protecting against erosion and I don't think I emphasized that, but that's sort of always part of every landscape project. So I take that so much for granted that sometimes I don't talk about it as much as I might. Other than that, have I left things out?

I love the projects where the trees are already something that one imagines when one initially thinks about a planting plan. We've seen several, in fact I think all of the projects we've seen, the trees are providing a kind of pleasant amenity and sense of special place that they were intended to so I'm happy that we've been able to accomplish that.

Condominium owners complained about the trees. The MDC said that if I would be in charge of pruning, it would be okay to do tree pruning. I actually came here with an arborist and we examined all of these trees. We didn't cut them down which had been what the suggestion was, we selectively pruned and everybody was pleased.

[It's] only happened once so far but I have a feeling that it's going to continue. I'll show you the tree over here. Someone cut that limb and it was not the MDC or the State, or anybody. It was whoever lives in there wanted to get rid of it and wanted actually to cut the tree down. So that was when I was given the responsibility of reviewing the trees – I think that there were one or two that I did take out. But I did a lot of thinning and opening up, which actually was good for the health of the tree. It wasn't necessary to come in and say we have to cut everything down and so I was pleased that the MDC required that I be here in charge because it was perfectly possible to open up the views and not cut the trees.

- END -