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JOSEPH Y. YAMADA

ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

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Interviews conducted July 18-20, 2011

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THE JOSEPH Y. YAMADA ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

The three day interview conducted by Charles A. Birnbaum begins with a daylong seated interview at the Yamada home in La Jolla, California. The interview continues at the sites of several Wimmer Yamada projects in San Diego and La Jolla and concludes with a seated interview with Pat Caughey and Joe Yamada in the Wimmer, Yamada & Caughey office. Separate interviews with Elizabeth Yamada and with Pat Caughey were conducted and are included as part of this document.

BIOGRAPHY

Childhood

The Family comes to California

YAMADA: My dad came here, and he was 15 years old. He came with his brother came and with my grandfather, his dad, and they landed in San Francisco [in 1920] just about the time the earthquake was just happening, or was just over. They came to San Diego because there were opportunities for farming. They farmed in the Central Valley and Imperial Valley, and even in Chula Vista area. And eventually my dad was more of a business person, and he got involved with different types of businesses. In fact, he at one time owned a billiard and card room, and eventually, of course, the restaurant. That was a big thing, I remember, because I was 10 years old.

My Best Friend Skipper

During my early time in San Diego, my big, my best friend, my best partner was my dog. I was given a puppy, a German Shepherd puppy when I was in kindergarten because my dad promised me if I didn't cry, when mom would left me at the school I would get a dog. Skipper and I went all the way from kindergarten to the sixth grade. And of course when the war broke out, you couldn't take your dog with you, you only could take one suitcase with you. We didn't know where we were going, or what to take in the suitcase. Whether to take cold or warm clothes, we just didn't know.

But during those six years, I'd say 40% of my so-called open time was with Skipper. I mean, directly with Skipper, not with my friends but with Skipper. And the one thing we used to get in trouble with our parents. My dog would do something he's not supposed to do, so he would get chewed out, or I would do something obviously, and I would get chewed out. So I told myself, you know, there's room underneath the house, there's a crawlspace to get underneath the house, and so we cleared out a nice little pad area [under there]. I brought Skipper under there with me, and we'd sit there together, staring at each other. Of course you couldn't talk to him, but we'd stare at each other. And then we'd figure out that the punishment was up, so we'd go out and do our thing.

When we had to leave for camp you were not allowed to take any pets at all, no cats, no dogs, no parakeet, nothing. And for six years, that dog and I did everything together. He used to wait for me on the corner. At 3:00, he knew exactly when I would be out of school. Only one time he did sneak into the school. I don't know how he found me, I guess he sniffed me, but he came in the classroom.

And Skipper cames in the door, and the teacher, Ms. McIntyre said, "We have a dog here, does it belong to any of you"? There was dead silence and I finally raised my hand. "Joe, Joseph, you know, you'll have to make the dog leave". So I go out there and say to Skipper, "you've got to leave, leave, go, go". And he's sitting there, you know, sitting with his paws folded patiently. And she said, "OK, you can bring him in for half an hour", because school will be out in a half an hour. I brought him in; took him into the [classroom] farm area. But the first thing you know, the barn falls down; the fence comes down, all these animals that were standing there they've all fallen over.

So Mrs. McIntyre says, "Joseph, I think you're going to have to take your dog home. I am going to excuse you a little early today. I know it's against the rules, but we cannot keep your dog in the barn. And he's not going to stay in the classroom". So I walked him home, scolding him all the way home.

[When we were sent away because of the war] we found this beautiful ranch where he could stay during the war. I went to look at the area. I knew the people very well; they were the ones who were going to rent our house for us. It was a beautiful big ranch. I was so happy. I said, "Skipper will be so happy out here. So when I left, it didn't even dawn on me that the dog would leave. It was such a beautiful setting.

Well, after two days the people who were taking care of the dogs, said "Skipper left and we can't find him". And three weeks later, he showed up at our home. I don't know, maybe 20 miles away. He found his way all the way home. He comes to the yard, and there's two kids playing. And the parents said to get away from that dog, we don't know where he came from, don't feed him or give him any water, just come back in the house. And when she called Mr. Cloud, who was renting the house to them, he would not go with him, no matter what he tried to do, he wasn't going to go. Well, he went under the house, and none of them ever saw him again.

But the first thing I asked for when I got home, three and a half years later when I saw Mrs. Cloud, I said, "where's Skipper, where's Skipper"? And her face just dropped and she said, "didn't your mom ever say anything to you"? I said, "what"? And she says, "Skipper came all the way home looking for you, and he crawled under the house and never came out". And he was my best friend. It was like losing my best friend. Like I said, I gained another best friend by going to camp. I found Elizabeth, so 57 years later; we are still together, so we must have been meant for each other. But that's my story.

Balboa Park was our playground

YAMADA: Well, Balboa Park was really a playground for the kids in our area of San Diego. Southeast San Diego, it's a pretty rough area. There were no city parks. The closest things to parks were at the city schools. But if you really wanted to get out and run around the lawns and roll down the hills and just have a good time, the San Diego parks did that for us. My dad and mom used to take us to the museum, and next to the museum, across the street was the

carousel and they also had a pony ride. And that pony ride was just, you know, went just around here and back around. They'd dress us up with the cowboy hanky and hat and little six shooter and put us on a little pony and we'd go around for about 10 minutes. Boy that was the greatest thing that ever happened. So it didn't take a whole lot to make us happy. You know, there weren't a lot of movie houses. Kids our age never went to movies. So it was things like Balboa Park where you could let yourself go. You could scream and yell, throw the ball as far as you could. I mean, that was Balboa Park, you could do it there, but nowhere else. So yes, we enjoyed Balboa Park.

Memories of the War Years

The Arrest

In fact, my kids, when they're reading history of what happened to us, and they said, "Dad, you and mom weren't in that, were you?" I said, "What do you mean? We were in the camp". And they said, "Well why you didn't stop them? Why didn't your dad stop them?" I said, "When the government says to do it", you know, the Japanese older generation, they said, "anything the government says, you're going to do, you do it, and you do it the way they say to do it. We're not going to fight the government. We're in their country; we're going to do what they say for us to do." So that was always the attitude.

When my dad was picked up by the FBI the men who had to make the arrests or came to the house were good friends. They were detectives that my dad knew, and they said, "Frank, I'm sorry, but you know, we really have to take you in." One of the things my dad was was one of the officers with the Buddhist church. So whenever the trading ships from Japan came into San Diego harbor, all the sailors would be entertained by the Japanese families. My dad was the number one referee of the kendo matches, or the bamboo poles, and also the sumo matches. He was the head referee for them. And after the matches were over, he would always take pictures with the admirals and the officers of the ship.

So when the FBI came and went through our photo album, they saw my dad with all the military people. They said, "Boy, I guess we have to pick this guy up, because he's here with all these soldiers." But he loved to entertain the young sailors from Japan. And in the peacetime, it was wonderful to see their ships come into San Diego harbor with their sails out. And we used to go down and greet them and so-forth, as they do nowadays to certain ships that come into San Diego harbor.

Santa Anita Racetrack

The second day of the war, my dad was picked up by the FBI as were hundreds of Japanese fathers because they were not allowed to have American Citizenship at that time. So my dad was put in a separate camp in New Mexico; so we didn't see him for two years. My mom had to do sell the restaurant but fortunately we kept our home.

The good part of the war, I met Elizabeth {Kikuchi, later Yamada**]** in camp. She was eleven years old. And she happened to be in the same camp that we were. They [the police] took us from San Diego to the Santa Anita racetrack. We lived in the horse stables where they had some tar paper barracks made. But the permanent camp was going to be in Arizona. We couldn't leave the horse stables, for about six months. They put in a front window on the door in the breezeway. And as you walked, the horses would walk along there. So you imagine the odor. There were double doors in the back, and that was a bedroom, you had a little corridor for two people to sleep. Every week they'd bring fresh hay and dump it in the middle of the street. You dumped your old hay out of your bag and filled it up [with the new hay].

So we lived there for about six months until the new camp was available in Arizona.

The War Relocation Camp, Poston Arizona

We traveled to Poston. Here was this godforsaken place, a huge desert area, just musky trees and bushes, and for as far as you could see [there was] nothing. But the military decided they wanted a barbed wire fence [to go] all the way around the camp. They had machine gun towers

about every 500 feet. And when we drove into this camp, I wondered, my gosh, are we going to a concentration camp or what? What are these machine gun towers for? They also had them around the Santa Anita racetrack. And what were they going to do if you left the camp were they going to shoot you?

There was one killing at one of the camps; a father went over the fence after his kid's ball. He crawled under the fence and was machine-gunned. We'd ask the soldiers, "why are you worried that we're going to leave? There's nowhere to go". It was miles and miles of desert. And we were told by the military, they said, "no, we're here to protect you". And I looked at that soldier and I said, "You're protecting us? Why are the machine gun towers every 500 feet around the camp? And they're not pointing out, they're pointing in". And they said, "well that's, that's an assignment we have to protect you".

But in a short time, the military realized, the fence isn't doing anything. I mean, keeping you away from what? The Colorado River was about four miles away and that was our playground. And if you had energy to walk in the desert for four miles, you got to the river. And that was really the goal of all young kids, to walk to the river and walk back. [We would carry a little lunch bag with a peanut butter sandwich in it, and that was your meal for the day.

But you know camp was interesting. I was there for only a year and a half out of the three and a half years. When my dad was released from his camp and joined us, we were allowed to live anywhere but the west coast. If you found a job anywhere else, [a] certified [job], you know, [a] labor contract, you could leave the camp.

But while we were in camp, we helped build our own school and our own auditorium. In fact, we built our own swimming pool. There were 14 separate blocks, and each block had 14 barracks in it and a big mess hall. And so your block was contained within this area.

We owned the restaurants before the war, and fortunately for us, all my uncles including my dad became the chefs of the restaurants. And they took the food that the government provided and they did the best they could with it. Everyone wanted to come to our mess hall because the chef for my dad's restaurant made all the pastries. So the kids found out that 322 is the block where you want to have lunch or dinner, because they're going to have great pastries. And we had to keep them away because each block had only so much food and it was for those that lived in the block. So we weren't able to share our foods with our classmates.

But we had dances just like you would at a junior high school. They took the mess hall, cleared all the tables and chairs and pushed them in a corner, dimmed all the lights, and played Glen Miller music all night. And it was, it was wonderful. And when I was giving a lecture to the junior high school people at the Bishop School, they said, "What was it like at your dances"? And I said, "Well, we dimmed the lights, you'd go walk across the floor, with your dance card. I said, "The key to the dance card was that there were four dances on there. [You had to] be sure you sign the bottom dance with the girl you want to walk back to the barracks. So you would look for the girl you wanted to have the last dance with".

And they said, "Well, what did you do after the dance was over"? I said, "You're right, you know, there were no soda fountains, there were no cars, and the blocks were like acres away from each other. And your job now was to walk your last dance person back to her block. Hopefully it was next to yours, but a lot of the times it wasn't. And so the girls, the junior high school girls said, "Well what was it, what was it like if you couldn't have a soft drink or even drive a car"? I said, "Well, I'll tell you what, when you walk across this acreage between the fire breaks, dark as midnight, when there was a full moon out it was beautiful". And the girl, the junior high school girls would say, "how romantic". I said, "It may have been romantic, but it was pretty bad". You couldn't even take them to get ice cream or anything. But that was camp life.

[In the camps] there were these old guys, they would hike all the way to the mountain and bring the ironwood back and make beautiful carvings of ironwood. And everyone tried to outshine the next guy. One guy had a huge pond with fish that he would bring from the river, and he would keep them alive, and when he needed a sea bass for lunch, he would fish it out, you know.

We had a hermit who lived on the river. Anyway, the hermit built his own structure. He didn't bring any food, anything from the camps. He had his own water, he had his own fish, and his son whenever there would be extra rice, bags of rice, would take it down to him. But his fish were right there anytime you needed it. And people in the camp were trying to do the same thing, but the river water was better at keeping the fish alive. It is hard to keep them alive in a fish pond. So they learned right away that you had to live on the river.

But they all had beautiful waterfalls, beautiful bonsai. I mean, when you walked from block to block, that in itself was exciting to see. What are they doing on block 323? Look at the shelter they did on 326. They built wonderful shelters.

So in a way, it captured some of that feeling of what you could do with nothing. You know, we're out in the middle of the desert with nothing. They would dump you out there and they'd say, "OK, do your own thing." They [the Japanese] helped the government install irrigation because they wanted to grow a lot of their own vegetables. They grew the best watermelons, cantaloupes and vegetables.

The government would deliver greens to the mess hall for their quota. And the Japanese cooks would look at that stuff, [and call it] garbage, because their lettuce, celery and bell peppers and everything that they grew in the camp was so far superior to what was being given to us by the government.

Since all my uncles were chefs, they knew the good stuff from the bad stuff. And they weren't going to cook with that old stuff if we could get really good vegetables. So in a way, our particular block was earmarked. If you can sneak in for one meal in cafeteria, 322, that was our block, do it, because you always can get a fabulous dessert and you always get the best of what the government was giving you.

BIRNBAUM: *You mentioned about building a swimming pool. I mean, when you say we built, I mean, how old were you? Were you physically building a swimming pool?*

YAMADA: Yes.

BIRNBAUM: *Tell me about the process of construction.*

YAMADA: OK. I'll start with the schools. Initially they took our regular barracks, one whole block of barracks, and made them classrooms by tearing down the walls and making them our initial classrooms. We had men capable of building these adobe blocks. And part of our job as high school, even junior high school kids, was building hundreds of these blocks. We had people in construction smart enough to be able to build these rectangular buildings that became our classrooms. So basically we built our own school. And then obviously there were no swimming pools in the camps and so everybody built their own.
The camp one, there were three camps, one, two, and three. Camp one was the first camp that was built and they built their own swimming pool. All they did was dig a hole in the ground and fill it with water and, you know, it was a terrible. You could jump in the water, but it was terrible.

Our guys, we had guys in our group that said, wait a minute, we're going to build a pool that we can all swim in. And we're going to make sure that the siding is done properly, we're going to put a diving board. We built our own canal from one all the way to three.

All the tractors were [stored] there on our block. So we took those tractors on the weekends and dug that pool, a huge pool. And somebody was able to get a long enough board, boards, to make a diving platform. But the pool was, oh, I tell you, it was a glorious time for us to have it.

And once a week we saw a movie, outdoor movie. They had these huge gas tanks built on stilts on every block with the number of the block painted on it. So that became a screen for our sheets. There were four men in charge of the movies. Ordering the movies, showing the movies, and everybody took their own chair. But we didn't have chairs like this; we built them out of all the wood that was left over from building the camp. So everybody would carry their little stool and walk over to whatever tank had the show and wait. You had to get there early enough so you could get the best seat. But it was interesting; some guys had really fancy chairs, chairs that fold with a back. Mine was just a box, and it easy to carry. But you know, everybody was designing their own boxes.

We designed our own walks between the units because it was so muddy, there was no concrete, no walkways. All the spare pieces of wood from building the barracks, was put in this huge pile. And the guys would go there and they'd build or find these slats. They had to be about three feet wide so that you could build your section from my door to his door. Then he would build his from his door to the next door. But everybody built their own walk up to the end, and then the community guys, all the fathers, would build the walk to the bathroom or to the laundry room.

And every block had its own shelter. They would go to the river, cut down these cottonwood trees. I tell you, the shelters those guys built, they all tried to outdo each other, see? You had 14 different blocks. Everybody's building their own. . . . .

BIRNBAUM: *So what did that feel like, when you participated in building, or if you were involved in the walk construction? And then it was done, and then you experienced it, what was that feeling like to a junior high school kid?*

YAMADA: Oh, I tell you. I mean, for me, because my dad was not there, I was the carpenter. My brother wasn't too good at doing that kind of thing. But I loved to build things. So I built our section, I built our chairs for the movie. I'd build [the walk] from here to the next guys. And I'd want to make sure that his was going to be as good as mine for the next, next 20 feet. So [to do that] we went to the yard over there, and brought back pieces of lumber. [But we had to] make sure there were no rattlesnakes underneath the wood. There were rattlesnakes and scorpions all over the place. And I first thought it was really, really scary, but once you got used to the idea of them being around, you were very aware [of them]. You would start by lifting up pieces of wood like this and you'd make sure that there's nothing hidden under them. The scorpions, they'd just crawl right up, right up your leg. So the desert, the whole desert scene was a mystery to us.

The unit we lived in was just four walls with nothing in between. So if you wanted privacy, you had to hang sheets between the beds if you felt you needed to separate the parents from the kids. And all the furniture inside was you built by yourself. Everybody bought an air conditioning cooler. You had to have that cooler. So I mean, it was crazy, the heat. And the block manager gave all the kids four salt pills to take every day to counteract all the salt your body was losing. So it was, it was certainly an adventure, to say the least.

Our camp was on an Indian reservation. Occasionally, we'd see a few Indians come by with their horses and as they walked by, they paid a real tribute to the Japanese that were in their camps. They were very proud of what the Japanese did during the time they were on their land. Even though there was no conversation with them. They were just amazed at what we were able to do with that land, and so were people after we left the camps.

Whoever owns that land, I'm sure it's still the Indians, they must lease that property out for mucho money; because from our camps to the river it's all green now. All green with whatever they're growing. And so, you know, they added a real plus for the area. And we treated the area nicely, we didn't chop everything down. The cottonwood trees, we spoke with the Indians

about them, and they said,"we're glad you did what you did because it restored areas for the other ones to grow." So for everybody it was a plus.

The Family Moves to Utah

My dad was a chef, and we had [before the war] a great restaurant in San Diego, where he used to make great Mexican food. When he was able to join us, we went to this one camp in Utah that was looking for a cook to cook for the labor camp. And there must have been probably close to 80 to 100 laborers, Mexican laborers that were picking sugar beets, and whatever other vegetables there were. They gave us a little dinky two-bedroom shack that really needed painting. It was an outdoor restroom, and that was our quarters.

And we, when my dad got over to the kitchen, the first thing he made for those guys were enchiladas. And the guys said," wait a minute. You cook Mexican food"? He says, "Oh, I can make tamales, enchiladas, burritos, chili beans, you know". He is making all this great Mexican food and these guys just couldn't believe it; a Japanese guy that could cook Mexican food. And so they came every day after work. They sent two to four guys to our house, to paint the house, paint the rooms, fix it up and they did all the clearing of all the weeds. I mean, they did not want my dad ever to leave. You know? And they just, anything my dad wanted, boy, they were there, you know?

Encountering Prejudice

There was a school in Tremont in Utah that my brother and I attended. And that was another kind of experience. Most I should say maybe all, I don't know, had never seen a Japanese person before, especially a student. They didn't do anything to you; they just didn't include you in anything. So my brother and I moved to Preston, Idaho where I attended the high school. My aunt lived there.

There was a little bit more animosity there. Even though there was a Japanese family living there, they had a restaurant in this little town. My uncle opened a restaurant across the street.

However, there were still people there that had never seen Japanese before. And some of them hated the idea that we were there. My brother used to get chased back from school from a guy who had an auto shop. He had to go around the block to come home. So that was a whole new experience for us.

Even on the train that took us to Utah. We knew that the military were loaded on to the train first, so we allowed everybody to get on the train. Then pretty soon the regular passengers started to board. And they [the conductors] said, "no, not yet". So the train was almost filled. Then they said, "now you can go on". So by the time we got on the train, there were absolutely no seats. There were military guys, rows and rows of soldiers all the way down the aisle. And my mom's sitting on a suitcase and my brother and I are sitting on the floor. The GIs were smoking and they would flick their cigarettes at my mom like this. And what can you do? Two kids in high school or junior high school? The soldiers all lined up, they just wanted to be mean to us. We never experienced prejudice before so it was kind of shocking to experience it. We finally reached Idaho, and I thought, I hope it's not like that here. But the students at Preston High School were very friendly; all the teachers were very receptive.

BIRNBAUM: Y*ou went from this sort of flat desert landscape with big night skies to Utah and then to Idaho. Are there things you remember about those landscapes, specifically?*

YAMADA: Well, of course I wasn't looking at landscapes when I was in, although junior high. But there was one in camp that really, really caught my eye. That people could take this whole forest of cottonwoods and build such a beautiful shelter. I mean, that opened my eyes to what's possible by just taking what is around here and doing something with it. Of course, in Idaho and Utah, everything was there. I mean, the city was just a little one-town city, Preston, Idaho. So the landscaping didn't even hit my mind at that time.

Education

Formative Years

Junior High School

After the war was over, we were allowed to come back to San Diego. Our family was the first family back to San Diego, because we were coming straight from Idaho. The rest of the people had to wait for the camps to discharge everyone. So my brother attended San Diego High and I attended Logan Elementary School. I never did get to graduate with the sixth grade, because when I was in the sixth grade, the graduation was in June, and they moved us out of our camp, in April. Anyway, coming back from Idaho to San Diego, I was certainly nervous. My brother was going to high school and I'm going to go to Junior High. On the first day, the principal said, "You don't have to come until 10:00, but I'd like you to meet me in my office at 10". So at 10:00, I took a bus from my grandma's house, because our house wasn't ready to be occupied. I came to the principal's office, and there was the principal, the vice principal, and two coaches sitting in the room. And he introduced me to them all. And he says, "Joseph", he says, "you know, you've been gone now for over three years and a lot of the students that are now here at our Junior High School weren't here before. Some have never have ever seen a Japanese person. We don't know what they're going to say or what they're going to do to you". But in the hallway while I'm talking to the principal, I can see the buddies from the sixth grade that remembered me and they're pointing to their lunches.

And at noon, two hours later, the principal said, "OK, Joseph, you don't have to go to class today, but tomorrow you'll start". So they excused me, and as I went out, all my buddies were waiting for me. They took me over to a place where we sit around this fire ring with benches and they asked me all about camp. "What did you do? What did they do to you? What was it like? And did they beat you up"? And when I talked about machine gun towers their eyes got like this [wide eyed]. You mean they had machine gun towers? I said. "Yeah". They couldn't believe all that.

But anyway, I'm telling them all these war stories and they're handing me sandwiches and tortillas and I'm sitting there eating. And this huge crowd all is around, they're all listening to

what I had to say. And I could see the coach, two coaches and the principal running toward this gathering. And they thought for sure they're going to ganging up on Joey Yamada. So they go through the crowd and I'm sitting there with these tortilla sandwiches telling these war stories. And the coach goes, "oh my God, I thought they were, I thought they were beating up on Joe". And he says, "Here are all these people listening to your story". And I was treated like royalty, I mean, at school.

The first thing they did was to get me to go to the boy's club, because they knew that I was a softball pitcher in camp. And they said, "We need a pitcher at the boy's club". So right after class, the first day of class, they all marched me over there and introduced me to all the guys.

So I joined their softball team, and I was pitching for the boy's club. And they said, "Well you know, you're such a good pitcher, and the last week of school, the ninth graders play against the faculty, and we want you to pitch for our 9th grade class". You know, I didn't burn them in there or anything. I was just able to wind up and throw the ball to the guy. So I went there and there's a whole bleacher full of all my classmates and the girls are yelling "Yamada, Yamada, hey Yamada. I'll pitch you the ball". So I was immediately accepted.

In the meantime, Liz's father, who was a pastor, was scouting around San Diego looking for people coming out of the camps. He was there to see if it was safe for them to come, were there enough places for them to stay? He opened up the church for all those that wanted to come to San Diego. And they all passed through the church, and then found places to live. Liz and I hadn't seen each other since junior high school. When we started the 10th grade we spotted each other, and like magic we were already going steady. [There's a picture of us in the hallway at age 16 or 15]. And so that was the greatest thing that happened to me during this whole internment was that I got to meet Liz. I lost my beautiful dog, but you know, Liz was there from that point on. We went all through high school together. Then she went on scholarship to [University of California], Berkeley. She, and her younger brother who was a wrestler, got a scholarship to Berkeley.

Learning the Garden Business

YAMADA: It happened because my dad was not able to repurchase the restaurant that he had before the war. The guy [who owned it] was making too much money. He told my dad "I'm sorry I can't sell it to you". So my dad and my uncles decided that they were going to do gardening. They said, "we know that, we know how to do it, and we'll just buy a pickup and we'll find a route". They had about 20 customers. I would go along on weekends and sometimes after school with them when they were busy. And I learned a whole lot trying to maintain materials and by going there and having that opportunity.

[It started] when one of our customers decided to have a new home landscaped by my dad that was a whole new venture for us. And like I say, in the old days, the nurseries did all the landscape work. They had their own pickups, they had their own plants that they used, it was a service. You want landscaping? We'll give it to you. Well I tried to convince the client that that was the way she should go. But she said, "No, no, no, Frank, you and your son are going to do this".

So I told my dad, "Well the first thing we need is a map. We have to have a map to see how long the driveway is and measure it and determine how many eugenias are going to go along there". The nurseries did this trick, putting two twisted junipers on either side of the entrance, identifying the entrance. Then [came] the hibiscus, they put color on each side, and a boxwood hedge lined the edges of the lawn. It was kind of a set deal. All we had to do was measure it and get it; it was like copying a plan, but at the same time, that experience was eye-opening for me. I mean, I never knew I would have so much fun planning a landscape for somebody else's house.

But it was the first learning experience for me. I think that's what led me [to landscape] when it was time to look for something professionally to do. And Liz had this wonderful idea that I should go to UC Berkeley. It made a lot of sense to me. And I was never sorry that she sent me that bulletin showing all the classes that the landscape architects needed to take.

Lessons from the Air Force

YAMADA: And I went into the Air Force for a year, because I didn't want to get drafted in the middle of college. The government had an opening for all 18 year olds to join any branch of service. You had two ways to volunteer for a four year term, one year in the reserve and then four years of active reserve duty. The other option was, you took six years in inactive reserve. I chose the Air Force, which meant that unless there was a real need, and there weren't enough volunteers in the Air Force, only then would they pick the reserve. Well, the Korean War had started, but nothing happened to me. I stayed six years in inactive reserve, but never went to one meeting. I got my honorable discharge. But the Air Force, for one year, what an experience that was.

When I went into the Air Force, you didn't know who the men in the barracks were going to be. And in my barracks, they were all from the Deep South. Most of them had never seen a Japanese person before. I think my sergeant probably realized that there might be some questions or problems. And so he says, "you're going to be a squad leader. I'm making you a squad leader, Yamada. And you will be in charge of these 24 guys". You know, each squad leader had like 24 guys. And so you were kind of a step above the rest.

But I know during the evenings, I think they would get to talking to each other and they would come on over and say we want to talk to you, Joe. And this one says, "you know, we've been talking and you're a great squad leader, we all love you, he says, "but aren't you Japanese"? I said, "I'm an American Japanese, yes. I was born in California and never been to Japan". And you know, they looked at each other like, well, you know, I'm sorry, but none of us had ever seen a Japanese before, we didn't know what to expect. I said, "Hey, I'm an American. I'm just like you guys. I may be a little different color than you, but you know, I'm an American". They had one guy who was the spokesman, he stood up, and he said, "Joe, you're a good Jap, because you're on our side". I had to laugh at that a little bit, but I said, "Yes, I'm on your side, but I've always been on your side". But he said, well you know, we have never seen a Japanese person before, so we're sure happy we have you as the squad leader. And so I was accepted

right away by people who had never seen a Japanese before. And today we still write postcards and Christmas cards to each other clear across the country. I am always being invited to Georgia and Florida and, North Carolina and we had a lot of guys from New York. But to me that Air Force experience was great.

University of California, Berkeley

BIRNBAUM: *Now, you started at Berkeley in 1950.*

Meeting Leland Vaughan

YAMADA: I had just gotten out of the Air Force and was wondering what I should do when Liz said, "you know, you had so much fun doing that project with your dad when you were in high school, there's a curriculum called landscape architecture at UC Berkeley. I'll send you the bulletin that shows you all the classes." It had great classes, you know, things that I liked to do, renderings, and lettering. It seemed to be the right, or potentially the right curriculum.

BIRNBAUM*: Tell me about Leland Vaughn and the kind of environment that he created for you?*

YAMADA: So before I really signed up, I met with [Leland] Punk Vaughn. He was called Punk Vaughn, everybody called him Punk Vaughn. It was hard for me to do that, but we did. He was the head of the department, and I really wanted to have a chance to discuss with him if I was prepared for this kind of a curriculum? Was it going to be way over my head or not? I gave him thoughts about my experience as a gardener, learning plants and enjoying the little bit of construction that I did do. He said, "I think you're, you would be perfect for our curriculum."

And so even though he was the head of our department, the one class, the only class he taught was history, landscape history. Oh man. What a class that was. We all sat in this class, and Punk had a voice that was just sort of one monotone, monotone, monotone. And if you listened to him long enough, even if the lights were on, you started going like this [Yamada nods]. He would turn the lights off, and show all the fabulous gardens of Europe. And they were

interesting and you wanted to listen to him, but if you kept listening his voice just kind of would lull you to sleep. And I hope he's not listening to me, he was a wonderful, wonderful man. But that one class, it was the only class, I think, that I didn't enjoy. Did not enjoy. I enjoyed the photographs he had when I was awake, but it was a class that I did not enjoy. I did see some of the beautiful gardens of Europe on my travels, and that made up for all the things I missed in that one class. But I think that that was my, the only one that I, that I wasn't really enthusiastic about.

BIRNBAUM: *But let's talk a little bit about who was on the faculty.*

Learning from Professor Harry Shepherd

YAMADA: Well, on the faculty, the oldest guy was Professor Shepherd. Harry Shepherd was the number two of the California-listed landscape architects. He was a jolly guy that enjoyed, and taught plant materials, which was not my specialty at all. It was nice to know about them, but when you're trying to learn 250 plants a semester and trying to retain those over a four year period, it just gets lost. And as a practicing professional there is a certain category of materials that really work for you, and those are the ones we try to and stay with. So learning 500 plants even 700 plants, was . . . Shepherd enjoyed it because it helped him test us, and he enjoyed those tests.

During the first session, we'd sit in a big round circle, all 25 of us, or 26 of us. And every week at the beginning of the week he would have these jars with numbers on them, and one type of plant material was in each one. And we'd all pass the jars around and learn what it was by looking at the foliage. Then he'd take us to San Francisco, Golden Gate Park. And he'd say; "OK, now you're going to see most of these plants growing out here. I'm going to walk you through the park and I'm going to point out the different trees and the shrubs that we learned."

And then at the end of the month, he would have this test and it would cover about four of our lectures, four of these passing-around deals. And he would have, he would have about 12 to 15

plants in these jars and he always had one or two ringers in the group. He was so good at splicing these plants together; he would have the leaf of one plant and a bloom of another plant. And he would sit there just like you are, grinning grinning away. And all of us are looking at these plants and saying, "God, what the heck is that. I think I know the leaf, but I sure don't know that bloom is." And you'd pass it around, and have to mark down what you think it was as it goes around the room.

And then he would collect all the papers from everybody and he would go one by one. "Joe you name the first bottle that was passed around." I said, "I think you're trying to trick us on this one, Professor Shepherd, because I recognize the foliage right away, but I didn't recognize that little, that little bloom or bark that you put on there." So I put down the initial tree that I thought it was. And he said, "Well, you're right." He was kind of disappointed I was right.

He really enjoyed the ones that everybody missed. You know, we could have missed it in the park and he would just sit there with a grin, he was so happy that we'd missed the plant. Anything that we missed, he was happy about. But you know, I enjoyed Shepherd so much, it's unfortunate that I really didn't take a real go at the plants. I learned what I could.

He, the one thing he did, though . . . There were three of us, Jack Vogley, George Walters, and myself, who worked a few weeks in the summer vacation working on residential projects that he was working on. He said, "I wanted to get your guys ideas on this plan." So the three of us would get together and we'd draw up these fabulous little drawings. He loved them, he'd say, "oh, those are very good, those are very good. I'll take those."

And by the time the summer was out for the first time they were issuing a license to people who, not did not have to take the test if you owned a nursery. You got an automatic license to practice. And so they all got licenses. If you were practicing and you prepared landscape plans, depending on where the information came from, they may or may not give you a landscape license. But the three of us, with Shepherd's endorsement, we didn't have to get involved in that test. I don't know if I'd have passed that thing. It's a pretty tough test.

BIRNBAUM*: You mentioned about going to Golden Gate Park when you were studying plants. Were there other field trips that you took as a group that, anything else that had an influence on you at that time?*

YAMADA: Well, the Golden Gate Park is certainly an influence. But it, it was more for the plant materials, looking at all the different varieties. He gave us 125 varieties of eucalyptus in our tests. And I'm saying, wait a minute, if you use six out of those 100 and whatever, that would be too many. But he insisted that we should know all the eucalyptus trees that were available to us here in the United States. He was certainly thorough. He wanted to show us everything. I mean, there may be a eucalyptus tree you didn't like, but he wants you to know it's available, this is what it looks like, and put it on your list. He was very good.

BIRNBAUM: *Finally, did any of the architects, someone like Bill Wurster or Catherine Bauer ever show up?*

YAMADA: No, we, we never had any [come], that was too bad. We all took, the classes like architecture one [and] architecture two, where they would speak on projects that the classes were working on. But it wasn't like hearing a big-name architect designing a particular building or complex. But we at least touched elbows with some of them.

BIRNBAUM: *So let's go back to some of the faculty then. I know that for studio you mentioned David and Mai Arbegast.* What was studio like?

First Year Students Learn Skills

YAMADA: Mai Arbegast was Professor Shepherd's assistant. In fact, she'd go out and collect a lot of the samples, and then she would bus us around. So her job was pretty clear-cut. S he was working for him directly. Dave Arbegast, he was Litton's right-hand man. And his job was to

assign a freshman project to us. Actually Arbegast and Punk Vaughn really looked at the first year stuff.

We used pen and ink, in those days it was pen and ink. And if you spoiled your drawing with the ink, there was no way of getting it off. That was India ink. And all the drawings that were submitted for competition all had to be done in India ink. Dave Arbegast and Punk Vaughn were the ones who kind of judged and graded these studies that we did. But Litton was the guy who really kind of pushed us forward.

David was really Punk's right-hand man, and he would assign a floor plan and give us each the same floor-plan, and then in pen and ink, he'd want you to add your landscape ideas. As a freshman, we didn't even know how to draw a tree, you know. He wanted to get a pretty good cross-section so that he could pass it on to Litton about who looked like they were in the right class.

I know that several of those vets that were in the class were really at a complete loss, and really shouldn't have been in the class. I think Vaughn felt sorry for them. The fact was that there was not a lot of things that these vets could study and he thought landscape sounded something that they might at least be familiar with. But their work was so far out; it looked like a junior high school kids drew this thing. And they knew it. They knew they were there for the GI Bill and not to be a landscape architect. They weren't trying to compete with the big five, so to speak.

And so he was very patient with the others. And Vaughn was very good that way. He would tell them initially, though; I don't think you should be in this class. I don't think you should be studying landscape architecture. There might be other fields that you are more adapted to. He said, if I really felt I could drop you from the class without hurting your livelihood then I would drop you. But he was so patient with these guys. You know, these guys all came back from the war with a leg or an arm missing. And they were trying to learn something.

I had trouble with the guys I was competing with. When I saw what they were doing in their first year design, you know, those guys are whipping out all these plans. I said, "my God, where did they learn how to do all that?" You know, I'm copying all these little trees and doing my little shrubs, and these guys have got these big flashy [designs]. But I hung in there, and I was at least part of the big five, as they called it.

[Robert] Litton was a very good balance, certainly, for Punk Vaughn. He understood the design potential of these guys. And he did organize the big four to come in. I just wish I could thank him a million times over, because that was the greatest thing that ever happened in my department.

Learning From Lawrence Halprin, Tommy Church, Garrett Eckbo and Geraldine Scott

BIRNBAUM: *OK. So let's take that from the top. OK, so who were the big four?*

YAMADA: {Robert] Litton was able to get the Big Four to attend our lectures, and to give us an actual crit time. The Big Four were Lawrence Halprin, Tommy Church, Garrett Eckbo, and Geraldine Scott. All four were real gems. I think the four years of college was nothing compared to what those four did for us in the short time they were with us. They were told that they could give a crit on somebody's drawings, or they could talk about the profession; whatever they wanted to do. Garrett Eckbo was very formal in his talk, and sometimes was hard to follow. But we knew how great he was and what he did; and just having him there speaking to us for that one hour was just unbelievable. And then we had Tommy Church come in, because he was just across the Bay. I personally loved his gardens absolutely the best. I loved the free forms and I loved the way he treated water and the different elevations.

The next one that came in was Geraldine Scott. A wonderful, wonderful lady, and her critique was right to the core. In other words, she would come to your desk to see what you're doing. She knew what the program was; it was a high school or something. And she said, "I think you

have a wonderful start, and I think you should think about where that parking lot really is going to be, because it is a large space, and you don't want it right in front of the school. And there are other opportunities to handle the parking." But she didn't draw on your drawings; she just mentioned here are the three things that look like they could have a little more study. And she'd go on to the next desk, and everybody would follow her and listen to what she had to say. So she, she gave us the most suggestions based on what you were doing on your drawing.

Larry Halprin, I'll never forget Larry Halprin. What a wonderful, wonderful man. What a talented guy, he's so powerful and could really handle any situation. He came to my desk, and I had my drawing out, and I had the concept pretty well laid out. He was going up and down the aisle, and he just stopped at my desk and he sat down. He says, "Well", he says, "I think you have a good start." And he had a bright red pen. He sat next to me, and he said, "Hey, have you thought about the driveway or the parking area that it could have a driveway that has a nice curving shape, and you could put the cars over here? And then you could open up this space for more landscaping." And he said, "Have you thought about doing the walkway other than just straight, that it could be staggered or stepped?"

But he had, he had all these ideas, great ideas, on top of my plan. He was going through this thing with his red pen, and all these guys were around my desk watching as he was doing it; and when he got through, what a magnificent plan, my plan. That's my plan. And anyway, I couldn't see one line of mine under that drawing. But everybody got such a thrill of taking somebody's drawing and converting it with different ideas. He liked where the parking was, he liked the way it curved in, and he said, "I like this, but this needs to be helped here."

It was mine, and I could see what he was doing, I could watch what he was doing and [understand] why he did these things. Probably in that one hour session that we had in that class, I probably learned more than I would in four years of college. I mean, just learning by experience and by seeing.

BIRNBAUM: *So what was it like to watch his hand? Tell me about that as a student where he's on your, at your desk, he's overdrawing, and so what was it like to watch his hand?*

YAMADA: Well, I laugh, because I didn't see any of my lines there anymore. It was his, there's a way in which he can move from one area to the next and see the big picture all the way through, even though he's starting in this corner. So when he got to [the spot] by his other hand, the whole plan made sense. But he started way at the beginning, the driveway and the parking, and he worked his way around the plan, and he had all the requirements of the school in the plan. And he showed us how he could adapt his style, so to speak, to the same piece of property that the students were given. And I'm sure every one of them just couldn't believe how his hand and his mind moved from one area to the other. It was like an artist painting; just like his [doing] his own painting. And he was painting like on a fresh piece of paper. You know a lot of the things that were on the drawing met the criteria, and there were no wrong spots, you know, OK. So that I'll never forget that as long as I live, that was the most wonderful hour I ever spent in my life, to watch him do that, and to hear him talk, boy that was inspiring, too.

BIRNBAUM: *Landscapes for Living. So tell me a little of what was it like to meet Eckbo? Were you using his book as a student?*

Yeah, Eckbo published the book *Landscapes for Living* in 1950. It was our freshman year at Cal. He was teaching at that time at USC, [University of Southern California], not at Berkeley. I guess it was Dave Arbegast or Litton, or maybe it was Vaughn, I can't remember, who assigned us to buy that book and to interpret the first chapter.

I opened that book and began to try and read what he had written, and after the first paragraph, I was already lost. I said, "This is impossible. I have to look up every word he put in that paragraph." And I asked the other freshmen, "What did you think about Garrett's chapter one?" They're all going with their hands in the air like this. We don't know what to do with it. We don't understand all of it.

So someone did a crit, I think one of the professors; he kind of broke it down in English terms for us. And we could see what his approach was, but the way the language was projected in the book, I was at a loss. I mean, I admit, I'm not a very good reader, but that book just about floored me. I figured if this is landscape architecture, I'm out of here.

But looking through the book, it is so amazing all the different kinds of beautiful projects; and how he handled the verticals and horizontals. But boy, it sure made a lot of sense the way he was doing things. I was, like I say, I was a Tommy Church man, so I liked things softer. But I still have that book, and I still look at it all the time. And in that book somewhere, he had actually laid out plans for one of the internment camps. He was a consultant to the government and that was exciting to hear. I wish we were in the camp, but anyway we were in awe just that he was there. We were honored to have him. It was a great opportunity for the students to see probably the best four in the country [and for them] to come and spend time giving us a crit on our designs. Absolutely the most wonderful year of my life, it really was. I was then encouraged and destined to be a landscape architect. I said, "If I get anywhere close to these guys, it would be a miracle." But I have had good teachers and certainly good people to follow, and hopefully I made some kind of a mark in the profession.

Competition is a Good Thing

BIRNBAUM: Were there *some things that you also learned from some of your fellow classmates?*

YAMADA: I think I had a little bit of a step on them [the other students]. We had some really talented guys. You know, Pete Walker, he was something else. One thing about Pete, he didn't stay with us during the senior year because he wasn't sure, at least this is what he told us, he wasn't sure whether he wanted to be an architect or a landscape architect. He was capable of being either. He was fantastic. He probably set a goal for three or four of us who were always struggling to be next to Pete, or trying to beat Pete.

We had a guy from Michigan State, Jack Vogley, and he brought a technique of rendering that none of us had ever heard of. He brought in this little spray gun. And all of us were using crayon spread and colored pencils to do our renderings. He came with a spray gun. Psh, psh, you know, all the trees, all the groundcover. I mean, I said, "Wait a minute Jack, you're doing a painting. We're trying to do a class rendering, and here you are with this spray gun." But he was very talented, his designs were outstanding. So we never crabbed about it because he was always giving Pete a hard time because they were both very good.

There were about four of us, I include myself, I was probably number four. And there was another guy, George Walters, from Hawaii, and man, that guy had such beautiful printing. We'd go to the lab to take notes and he'd sit next to me and he's printing as fast as I could write. He's printing the most beautiful letters, like a typewriter, just like a typewriter. We lost him early after he graduated. But oh, he was really something. So we had four or five of us that could really compete a little bit and try to be the best. And it gave us something to aim for.

We had 26 students, and we had only one woman, one gal. She happened to be from San Diego. I had never met her before or after. And I have never heard of her again. But we sure put her through the rings because all of us had to carry the transit up Strawberry Canyon to do our surveying. And when it came to be her turn, you've got to admit it, she was great. She would carry that thing up there, and she did everything she was supposed to do. You know, she was as good as any of us, I mean, as far as that goes. But she was the only woman landscape architect at that time.

We all got the same assignment, so we all knew we were doing, a school or an airport or a commercial bank or whatever; and was interesting to see more than five [different] approaches. We kind of looked over the top to see what the other guy was doing. But I think it made you a better designer. You observed what really is possible for the same space. Hopefully some of that went with me as I got out of school and practiced on my own. But I think those

moments of competition in school were really key for me, because I always wanted to beat those guys. And they were very good. And it was really a combined effort. We critiqued each other's ideas and designs. We didn't copy them, we'd just say, "hey, you know, that's a pretty good idea. Too bad I didn't think about that." But, you know, it was a wonderful, nobody was really competitive, competitive or really angry at anybody or disappointed because you didn't beat him. It was good; I think it was good because it was such a small class. There were only twenty five of us, and only five of us who really knew what we were doing. And so it was wonderful to have each other's critique.

The Berkeley Campus Inspires Him

YAMADA: Well, the first time I set foot on the campus, I had to find where the College of Agriculture headquarters was. The landscape curriculum was held at the College of Ag. And so I had to find that building. I lived on the north side of the campus, and so just walking from the dormitory to the Ag hall every day to the drafting room, you began to feel that wonderful sense of [the campus] . . . nothing was formal or forced. It was very rolling and very natural the way the campus developed.

They kept all the big trees. Any new building that went in, they worked around those beautiful trees. And [being] at Ag hall and meeting Punk Vaughn there, you know, he really gave me the confidence that this was my subject, that this is what I should be doing. The campus speaks to you here. I have walked through that campus I don't know how many times. Every time you walk through it, you see something new. And every time we visit our children in the Bay Area, we walk that campus. It will always be number one.

And I just bless Liz every day that she talked me into coming to Berkeley. Love it. All my children live up in the area. So that's good for us, because I get to see the further development of UC Berkeley. It's not as nice as the old campus, [it has] a lot of the new buildings and not quite the same feeling that it had, like the original library building . . .

So anyway, I was thrilled to be on that campus and thrilled to be in the field of landscape architecture because the campus really lent itself to the field of landscape architecture. Those pollarded London plane trees marching around the Campanili . . . Every year they pollard them back to the original cuttings, and then the new foliage comes out and forms that beautiful base for the Campanili. So you got to see formal, you got to see informal. It was so wonderful. A was a wonderful opportunity for me. It was the right choice at the right time.

Studying Japanese Language and Painting

One of the things that I never learned to do was to speak or understand Japanese. My dad sent me to the Buddhist temple for four years, but none of the instructors could speak any English, so I never knew what I was saying or what he was saying to me. But I could read like crazy, you know. When you're a freshman at Cal, you have a lot of electives to take, and one was beginning Japanese language. And I said, man, I've got to sign up for that. And the other was sumi brush painting. I said, oh, "Mr. Obata's teaching that, hey, that's great, that's great, I'd love to learn it".

So I go to the brush painting class with Obata, and his son is the architect [Gyo] Obata. There must have been 30 people in the class, about half women and half guys, and he was standing at the front with this big canvas in front of him and his sumi brush, and he would stroke, stroke, stroke, you know, beautiful lines with his sumi brush, and we all had the same equipment.

So he said, I'm going to walk through the class to see your work as you're doing your work. I was way in the back, and he would stop and talk to somebody about this and do this and do that. He came back to me, he came back to look at my strokes and he looked at it and then he looks at me and he says, "Are you Japanese"? I said, "yeah, Yamada". "Yamada? Japanese, right"? "Yeah". "[Get] out of the class". Just like that. "Out of the class". My brush painting was so lousy that he didn't dare have a Japanese student in his class that couldn't handle the brush painting. So I was out. So I said, "oh my gosh".

Because I didn't speak the language, I took the beginning class at Cal; I said I want to sign up for a beginning Japanese language. And the teacher, the professor looks at me and he says, "Wait a minute, with a name like Yamada, what are you trying to do, get a straight A? You're going to start in 5th year language". I said, "Fifth year? I can't even speak one year". He said, "Oh, you're just trying to crack A's in the class, I understand. And he said, "No, you can't take this class". So I didn't take the two classes I wanted, brush painting, and Japanese language. Thank goodness I could do landscape drawing for Punk Vaughn. But that was a side story from my Berkeley.

A Wedding Follows Graduation

BIRNBAUM: *So let's, let's look at, so what happens when you graduate?*

YAMADA: What happened? I got married. In fact, Liz couldn't wait for me to graduate. Graduation was supposed to take place in middle of June. Liz had already planned to get married on July the 10th. So we didn't have a lot of days for organization and so forth. And it was a simple wedding. Her father was a Protestant minister. [And now my oldest son Garrett is also a Presbyterian minister]. We had three ministers [at our wedding]. When our children were married, we had three ministers at every wedding, each of our kids. I said, you know, there's no way any of you could ever get a divorce. You had three ministers who performed your ceremony. So just think about it before you even think about trying to split up.

But no, it was right after I graduated in June, July 10th, it is just past 57 years that we've been married. And I was, I was very fortunate because she's [Liz] a wonderful woman, brilliant, loves art, and culture, and helped a lot in our growing years in the office. She did the same thing that Jennifer [Caughey]is doing for Pat. It's more than just a right arm, it's almost like both arms.

Practice

Early Practice

Who was Harriet Wimmer?

BIRNBAUM: Who was Harriet Wimmer? *What was her presence like? What was her background?*

YAMADA: She was born in 1900 in Corning Iowa. Her father was a dentist and moved his practice to San Diego. In 1920s she met John Wimmer at Stanford. And they were soon married. John's father owned a whole city block in Chicago, all the shops and stores and things, they were very well off.

But then the depression hit. Harriet and John had been traveling all through Europe on their honeymoon. John's father had this terrible thing happen to his business. They decided that they better come back to San Diego and regroup and decide what we should do with the rest of their lives.

When they returned, they both had studied at Stanford horticultural and gardens of Europe and so forth, they both decided to go to Oregon to the University of Oregon, and learn about landscape architecture.

BIRNBAUM: *When do you meet Harriet? Does that happen soon?*

Meeting Harriet Wimmer

YAMADA: There was a practicing landscape architect and architect who offered a job here in La Jolla with a firm called Mosher and Drew, architects. And I was one of his favorite students. And he said, "Listen, when you get out of Cal, come out [and see me]. You're going to be in San Diego, I'll be in La Jolla, and I'll see if I can get you a job, you know, drafting or whatever."

So I went looking for a job and I talked to several [people], but I went to this architect's office in La Jolla, and I said, "Is Richard Taylor here?" He says, "Oh you mean the landscape architect that was going to join us?" I said, "You mean he didn't, he's not here?" He said, "No, he never showed up." Well, I found out later, Richard Taylor stopped in Santa Barbara. He loved Santa

Barbara, and he never moved from there. But Bob Mosher, who was the architect in charge, said "I tell you what. There's a woman in San Diego named Harriet Wimmer. We give all our projects to her because she's the greatest. She's someone you should talk to."

And I really thanked them a lot for the lead. I had my roll of drawings from UC Berkeley, and I went immediately down to 5th Avenue to the Design Center where she had her office. At that time, she had four drafting architects who were draftsmen with an architect. The building was split in two, two thirds for the architect and one third for Harriet. And so she used the four draftsmen to do her landscape plans, because she wasn't very good at drawing.

So I walked in with my roll of drawings, and I said, "Mr. Mosher sent me down. I just graduated from UC Berkeley, and I would like very much to have an opportunity to work with you. I understand you're the only landscape architect that he [Mosher] would work with. I have my roll of drawings if you'd like to see them." So I put them down. She had been getting drawings from the architects and architects have a certain way they draw trees and shrubs, and they really don't look like trees or shrubs.

So I rolled this drawing out, and she goes, "Oh my, now that's what I call a landscape plan." She said, "I'll tell you what?" Let's try working something out for the next two weeks, and then we'll decide whether we'll have a permanent position." Two weeks turned into, what? 14 years. I know I had seven good years with her before, before she retired. But anyway, I rolled the drawings out, and she says, "That's it. I want you to come in and start drafting tomorrow. I have these landscape plans that I'd like to have done." And so it started with that.

BIRNBAUM: *So when you met her, I mean, the practice was how established at this point?*

YAMADA: There was a building called the Design Center, the architect was Lloyd Ruocco, his wife, Ilsa Ruocco had the furniture store underneath and also taught interior decoration at San Diego State. But they didn't have a landscape architect in the building. And Lloyd Ruocco said,

"this will make it a complete design center if we could have a landscape architect in the building with us." And at that time, Harriet was just doing little gardens for all of her very wealthy friends. They'd all call Harriet because they knew that she'd do a magnificent garden for them, which she did. And that's what she was doing - these favors for her friends.

Well, when I came along, she was already 51 years old, and I was looking for a job, and that's when I brought my drawings in. And John Wimmer says, "now that we have Joe with us, we'll have to charge a fee for doing whatever Joe does for your social friends." And the first job she took me to was a job in Mission Hills, right near the office, a big, big garden. They had a sloping lawn and a big swimming pool, and no place really to sit and enjoy the pool.

So I came in and I looked at it, and I said, "You know, Harriet, if we designed a deck, a wood deck and take all he slope out of it [the garden] and you'll have some nice steps down to the pool. And the owner says, "That would be tremendous, we could put all our beach chairs up there".

And I took the drawing to her friend, Mrs. Durr, and she looked at that plan, and she says, "What a great idea. What a great idea. Let's do it." I mean, they had money to hire a carpenter and they built that deck in a couple of days. It was fantastic. I mean, it was the first thing I ever sketched out that was built. And it was exciting for me to see it. But anyway, that was, that was kind of the start.

The Wimmer Style

BIRNBAUM: *What makes a Harriet Wimmer garden?*

YAMADA: Well, Harriet had a great eye for planning compositions and plants. One thing she loved more than anything was anything with white flowers. If it had red flowers no. But she was able to get a plant palette in either shades of green leaves or with flowers like star jasmine or

agapanthus, or others that have some white flowers. [She also liked] lacey things like bamboo and nandina; but the way in which she used them was the key.

And I learned very quickly why everything looked so good. She hand-picked every one of those plants at the nursery. We'd go to the nursery and there would be maybe 500 or 600 rhaphiolepis ovata and she was going to use maybe 50. Out of the 500, she would make the manager bring one after another until we got a match of 50 as perfect as possible. All the rest had to go back. The landscape plan was strictly diagrammatic. It showed a mass of rhaphiolepis like this. She would place every one of those plants. She say, "don't put the irrigation in until I have all the plants set so you know exactly where they're going to go. Don't plant any trees until I'm here."

There was a landscape contractor, George Yasuda, he was one of the first guys I met. The first time she took me to the site we were going to plant a specimen tree. We drove up to the house and George Yasuda was waiting for us with his crew. And as we we walked up and Harriet said, "wait a minute, what's that tree doing in that hole?" And Yasuda says, "Well that's where it's shown on the plan, right there." Harriet says, "no, I'm going to go in the house, I'm going to stand in that large window and Joe's going to stand right here at the fence, and I'm going to direct him exactly where that tree should go." So I'm standing here and Harriet's at the window, and she's going [Yamada motions this way and that] and then she goes, OK. And the guy, there are four guys holding this big old tree right over the top of the hole, right where George had dug the hole. So George knew where it was going to go, but Harriet wanted to have that last word. She wanted to place every item.

It was the same thing with the boulders that we placed on the sites. We had the number one guy in San Diego, an old Japanese man named Mr. Ito, and he had great eyes for getting the boulders and placing them. We drove up to the site and the boulders are place beautiful. Harriet gets out of the car, "no, no, no, no, Mr. Ito. They're not placed right. We've got to move them." And Mr. Ito, you know, he's an old-timer, he says, "You do it." And he goes and sits in

the pickup, just sits there. He sat like that for the rest of the day. He didn't say anything. And Harriet's moving the boulders around, but hardly any movement. And when she got through, it was damn close to where it was before. And Mr. Ito said, "I told you so. I told you so." But you know, Harriet wanted to have the final word.

But you know, that's why her gardens were so perfect, because she wanted to place every one of those plants, face it, turn it more, turn it more, OK, turn it, turn it more. And I thought, my God, first of all we get these guys to pick out [the plants] and then the contractor has the do the same thing in moving it around. But I think that's what made Wimmer Yamada's gardens so perfect. I learned from her, boy, you don't plant a thing in the ground. You let them bring those 100 rhaphiolepis, and you have the lay it out, and if you don't like the way it's laid out, you move those two over here, move those three over here. I mean, the plan is only diagrammatic so that we get enough plants to do the job. But I want to have the last word. Boom. And I think that's what really made the Wimmer Yamada gardens. The materials were all hand-picked and hand-placed, even when I was in it.

Wimmer and Yamada Become Partners

BIRNBAUM: *When does the firm become Wimmer Yamada?*

YAMADA: Well, it became Wimmer and Yamada because what happened was, I left for a couple of years, you know? I worked for the city schools of San Diego for another mentor, Jane Minshall, who also graduated from Cal. She was in charge of all the high schools, junior colleges, and junior highs. I moved from the residential things with Harriet after two years of just doing drafting and things, I went over to Jane's, for two years and I did plans with the high schools and junior high schools and so forth.

The great opportunity there was to meet the Park and Recreation staff. They, they showed me the reasons why they put the ball fields, where they put them; why they put the basketball courts where they did; how did the tennis court work or the basketball courts. I mean, they showed me all of the integral things of how you plan recreation for a high school or a college.

And to me, that was a big thing, because the landscaping was nothing. [For] the schools, they would give you lawn, a shrub, a tree, and that was it.

And after two years of that, I said I think I'm ready to go on my own, 1960. In 1960 I decided to let Harriet know that I was going to open my own practice. And when I did, she told her husband John, and John said, "Why don't you make Joe your partner? You like what he did, you like what he does, he's a good man." And so the next thing I know I get a call from Harriet. She says, "Joe, how would you like to be a full partner? And it'll be a Wimmer and Yamada firm?" You know, I could hardly speak. I said, "Harriet, I would love it."
I mean, I just felt that she had really confidence in me, and that we agreed on almost everything we did together. She was really strong in the plants, I was really strong in the architecture elements. My plant materials are still very weak. I'm glad I have Pat [Caughey], because I don't know one plant from another. But that was because I really didn't pay that much attention to exactly all the plants. I knew the ones that Harriet liked, and I knew how she would place them.

Once she retired, I was kind of on my own, what do we do now? But I had, you know, good guys like Pat around, and Ron Teshima, and we had about three or four guys that really knew plants. But [they had] a different style, they would use colors that Harriet would never use.

She retired in '67. During those seven years we never had a disagreement on anything. We never signed an agreement with each other. She left it up to me to run the office and determine the fees, the business part of it. And I left it up to her to select the materials. She had all the contacts in the world. So she had all the contacts and, I had the other side of being able to produce. My major, my major job there was really to determine the fees and to work with architects and engineers.

Sometimes architects and engineers used to be a little jealous of my fees. And in the old days, they would just pay you a little fee. Well, I established a pretty good fee because I

[knew] we're going to work for it. And they begin to see the benefit of really paying for our fees, because [they] look[ed] at the results. They thought- I could have gotten Joe Blow over there for this, but it probably wouldn't be anything like what Harriet and Joe did for me. So they just automatically [called]. We had a list of architects, and everything that they got, they just handed to us.

Harriet Wimmer Promotes her Partner

YAMADA: Everything I know, Harriet taught me. Harriet Wimmer gave me self-confidence. I mean, she said, "don't worry about this guy; he's no better than you are." Well being Japanese to start with, and [it being so] soon after the war, sometimes you would think that that guy's looking at me because I'm Asian or Japanese. Harriet never ever let me think that. We'd go for a meeting with the UCLA Regents, we were on our way to LA, and I see there's a little restaurant over there,[and I say] "Harriet, we could go have a hamburger." She says, "I wouldn't go in there. We're going to go to the Brown Derby for lunch." I said, "the Brown Derby." My gosh, in Hollywood, the Brown Derby was number one.

I had a hard time just relating to Harriet because she wasn't afraid of anything. You know, I told Harriet, I said maybe they won't want me there, or maybe they'll think I shouldn't be here. She said, "Listen, you're better than any of them. And she said; "don't ever think that you can't go anywhere."

And she said, "The next party you go to, you're going to have on a tuxedo. I'm buying it for you." And I'm looking at her, a tuxedo? I haven't had a tuxedo since high school graduation, or [one for] getting married in. But anyway, she said, "well, most of those high-end dinners, it's black-tie." And [here is] old Yamada-san here with no tails- . But she went out and bought me probably the most expensive tuxedo I ever had, and I had it for a long time. But any time there was a big function, or she was entertaining or going to an entertainment she wanted to drag me along. When I went with her to any function, she made the rounds with me, saying "this is

my partner, Joseph Yamada, I want you to meet so and so."

All these names, I couldn't remember all their names, you know. But here I was in my tuxedo, walking around with Harriet, thinking wow, what am I doing? What am I doing with this on? She said, "Don't ever be afraid of the clients that we have, because you're as good as or better than any of them." I mean, she was right in there, you know. I'm looking at her like, man, this lady's crazy, or whatever.

But anyway, she, she just made me feel so at home and so at ease. I'd go to the cocktail parties and she took me around to meet all these bankers and city planners and all these big shots. But she was almost proud of me, proud of having me, or having me with her. And, and I appreciated the fact that I could do that.

The most wonderful thing that happened from all of that was [that there were] all these nice homes and gardens that we did, and I was a part of the design team. I would always meet the husband and wife, and when they had a party, a garden party, she {Harriet] said, "I want them to meet you Joe, because you were responsible for the deck over here, and you're responsible for that pool over there, and I want them to know that this was designed by the Wimmer Yamada firm. And you're Mr. Yamada." So I mean, I was shaking in my boots for the first few of those but she just guided me along the right way. I hate to say it but [it was] almost like bringing up her own child. You know, she never had any children, so I was like probably her child. But she had a lot of confidence in what I could do and what I should do.

The first time I ever went to one of her cocktail parties, I was drinking an I.W. Harper or something, but I had ginger ale or 7-Up or something in it. And she saw me putting in the ginger ale and she came over [and said] "never put ginger ale or 7-Up in a drink like I.W. Harper. You never ruin a good whisky. Just put the ice in it. And if you need some liquid, you add a little water". So from that point on, I never had a 7-Up high ball. I just didn't realize that a lowbrow, that was me, would put 7-Up in good liquor. You know, if I got to party that one of her people

was hosting, and I did that in front of them, she would die. So she taught me things I would never ever have dreamed of or known of.

Even in retirement Harriet Wimmer Looks On

Harriet was a lovely, lovely person. And the white gardens that she did were spectacular. I mean, if you can envision the thing, all white and different leaf colors and everything done in masses. She never did things in little bunches like this. I mean, they were huge masses; and she hand-picked every plant whether it be agapanthus or star jasmine. She made sure that every plant that was going to go to that job, she looked at and approved. And I know the nurserymen got a little [cross] but they never, ever raised their voice to Harriet. And Harriet was very loyal to them you know, [always] buying material from them.

And so I learned from her that, that's what you should do. You should be loyal to them. And it may be a little bit of a hardship, but they know that you're going to come back and give them business. So it worked for her, and it certainly worked for me. The placing of material was very key to the success of her gardens. She didn't draw a plan and say, OK, those will all be rhaphiolepis ovata. She placed every darn one of those guys to make sure that the pattern read nicely on the job.

Because you can never tell on a plan what it's really going to look like. You've got to go to the job and lay it out, lay the whole thing out. Then you would be able to visualize, that tree's got to move over here; let's put two trees over there and put one over here instead of two. I mean, it's just like an artist doing a painting. Put two strikes over here and one over here.

The Practice Grows

Change comes to San Diego

BIRNBAUM: *Tell me a little bit about what the community was like here in San Diego then?*

YAMADA: You know, San Diego was always thought of as the end of the line, so to speak. Their waterfronts weren't really developed at that point. We had dairy farms all over Mission Valley, the whole Mission Valley was dairy farms. It hadn't stepped up to the plate yet to really be a city. Then shortly after that, and I don't know exactly what that date would be, but shortly after that we had that down-draft [it went on] for a long time. And then all of a sudden we had 300 neighborhoods, we had three major universities, we had these big medical [complexes], the Salk Institute and others. And all of sudden, San Diego became the focal point. Everybody wanted to be in San Diego because we had jobs here, we had climate here, and we began to really get busy.

Sometimes that's not good. We had so many requests for residential gardens from all her [Wimmer's] friends and friends of friends. Her friends would recommend us to their friends. I personally loved the residential work. There's something about one-on-one, or one-on-two, you know, as opposed to one-on-15, or a Board. And with those one-on-one arrangements, you have a dear, dear friend for life. They just love what you did, they appreciate what you did, and they want you a part of their social life.

And when things got really busy, I don't know why, but we all of a sudden opened an office in Arizona, and Pat Caughey went over there. When Pat came to see me after his graduation from Arizona State and wanted employment in San Diego I said, "You know, our office is full up, there's not room for one more draftsman. But we're thinking about opening an office in Phoenix, Arizona, Scottsdale. And we would love it, with your background we would love to have you be in that office with Ron Toshima." And that's how we got Pat.

But our office got so overloaded. I never wanted anything to go out of the office without me looking at it and giving approval or working on it myself. I wasn't one of these guys who saw a plan over there, [and said] OK, when you get it done, send it out. Harriet was that way, too. She would never let a plan go out of the office, you know, without her OK. I wanted everything that went out of the office to be a Wimmer Yamada registered job, not something that someone in

the back room did. And I think our clients really appreciated that because I would present the plans personally.

Sea World Opens Other Doors

YAMADA: Well, if it weren't for the architects that we had been working with, it's hard to say whether we would have received a lot of work. The major, major thing was we did that one job with the architect for Islandia which was seen by all the people at SeaWorld. And that opened the floodgates. We took pictures of SeaWorld and we hung them in a museum in San Diego. I hired Harry Crosby who took all these fantastic shots and we put them all up in the museum. People didn't even look at anybody else's work; they just came and looked at our stuff. They put the name down [Wimmer Yamada]. UCSD [University of California San Diego] called us right away. They said," we saw your exhibit at the museum of SeaWorld and we'd be very interested in talking to you."

Once that happened, all the other architects and people who had any kind of building that was worthwhile [called us]. I mean, the cheap-o guys they didn't want [us] anyway. But the ones that really had thought of doing a good landscape, for their buildings, whether it was a medical building or an industrial park, they really looked to us right away. And they wanted to negotiate with me on how I would proceed with their projects.

BIRNBAUM: *So give me a sense of what the office is like. What did the firm look like at this point?*

YAMADA: SeaWorld I think was completed in 1964. And immediately after that was finished we had tons of people who wanted to work for us. It was wonderful for me to have the opportunity to interview and select, the kinds of support that we needed. Whether it [was someone to] do drafting or mechanical engineering, [or someone doing] plant lists. And for some reason in the beginning it took a while for us to really get serious about hiring women until I saw some of the work that was being done.

In fact, Ken Nakaba at Cal Poly, he and I had a lot of conversations. I got a lot of people from Ken Nakaba. He was the first one that really gave me a tip-off. He says, "listen Joe, the women who are going through this curriculum [are] top notch. Give them a chance, and they'll show you." And sure enough, when I retired, I think we had eight women, two of them were associates.

Joining the San Diego Park and Recreation Board

YAMADA: You know, one of the boards that I served on that I felt really helped landscape architecture in San Diego was the San Diego Park and Recreation Board. I particularly wanted to get on that board because they the board did not understand the difference between an engineer, a civil engineer, and a landscape architect. And they were handing all of their parks to city, civil engineers. And they, the civil engineer would turn around and sub-contract it to us. And I said "bologna on this." So I made an effort to get on the board, the Park and Rec board, and served there for almost seven years. But I knew that for all the time I was on that board, that we [Wimmer Yamada] would not be getting any City Park work because of the conflict of interest.

But I made sure that the board realized [the situation], and they were surprised. They said, "you mean we were giving the park designs to engineers, and not the landscape architects?" And I said, "Well that's exactly why I'm on this board, and why I'm making you aware of this." And by golly, they turned it right around and had the landscape architects bidding for the proper work. The city engineers were a little bit upset, but you know, I thought it was very important for me to make that move. But even though we lost any chance of doing city parks, we were doing all the parks for the Unified Port District at that time. So we were doing our share of parks, we just, we couldn't do it with the city.

Clients and trust

YAMADA: But when we were working on those jobs together, she primarily just handled the whole placement operation. That was her love, and that was her area. Mine was making sure that retaining wall is like this, and the water spill is over here, and we've got hardscape over there. So I was looking after my own areas of responsibility first. Then I would go join Harriet, or she would call me over and say, "Joe, what do you think about this?" We'd have that dialogue right on the site. And that was probably one of the most important learning things for me, learning about her and her role. But when we had a discussion like that, I could say, "Oh Harriet, yeah, I think that's the way we would do it. I think if you added a few more . . ." She'd say, "Oh, I think that's a good idea, Joe. We'll go ahead and do that. We'll get another 50 of these." And so it was a give and take and go as you please.

Because in most of the private gardens, if we had to go back and we tell the owner, "listen, we're going to have to order another 50 or 100 of this ground cover", or whatever, they would say, "whatever you and Harriet say, that's fine with us." They'd never ever say, how much is it? They never ever asked what the price was. They knew if we needed 50 more gallons of this, you wouldn't have told us unless it was needed. And so the client relationship and trust, that was very, very key to our success. Really, my success was really her. She was successful in having them completely put her in charge. And she knew what she wanted. And if she wanted something different than what was out there, she would tell the owner. Nobody said, "Well, are those a dollar a can or five dollars a can?" You know, "is it going to bump it up another $500 or 1,000?" And the money, whatever it was, that's what they paid. But you know, they trusted all of us, they trusted her.

New Leadership for the Firm

YAMADA: Yeah, I think the, the one thing that made me happy that I had made the right choice was to have that gentleman over there, Mr. Pat Caughey join our firm. I mean, anything we needed, anything we wanted to do, Pat was always there to do it. And I tell you, it made retirement a joy because I could watch Pat grow. And he's still growing with the firm, he's carried the name beautifully. I'm proud to have [his] name attached to the Wimmer Yamada

name. And I couldn't have, I couldn't have selected anyone more wonderful, really, professional than Pat. And I still think he was the best President ASLA ever had. And I continue to praise Pat for his ability to stay afloat with all of the problems that are happening today. And we had a few of those during our years. This one seems to be a real bad one. And yet he's hanging in there, and he's got people still working and projects that he's still looking at.

Interview with Elizabeth Yamada

The interview continues and Elizabeth Yamada joins the discussion.

How Berkeley Changed Their Lives

BIRNBAUM: *OK. So let's start talking about 57 years of collaboration. What does that mean?*

LIZ: Yeah. It means give and take. You don't quarrel about the small stuff; you wait for the major issues of life and marriage. I mean, that's how we survived.

BIRNBAUM*: We learned earlier from Joe that you were the person that put landscape architecture on his radar screen.*

LIZ: Yes.

BIRNBAUM: *Did you think it would lead to this practice and a way of life for the two of you?*

LIZ: Frankly, I did not suggest landscape architecture to Joe, when I invited him to join me at Berkeley; I just sent him the catalogue. I wanted him to find a meaningful passion. And we are both so fortunate that it turned out that he saw the connection between gardening and a profession that had potential. [And a profession] which meant something to both of us, the land, the love of the land.

YAMADA: You mean you didn't send me that information because you wanted me to be near you?

LIZ: Yeah, well, it had to be, that was the main reason.

Working at Wimmer Yamada

BIRNBAUM: *So what was your role, then, in the office?*

LIZ: Well, my role in the office started as, as you were saying, you know, it was that kind of role I started before I was employed. I just went in to help with the billing, last-minute contracts, typing three-pages with carbon copying. So my role was just filling in at that time. But I had a passion for what he was doing. My brother's an architect, and design, arts and culture, that's my world. And so, you know, everywhere Joe went, socially, I went. And so all the architects and designers of the world became my friends as well; it was just natural that I became a part of the world of, and the profession of landscape architecture. And then it grew, my role grew.

YAMADA: And you started to get paid after that.

LIZ: In 1967 when one of your partners left, they needed, he needed my assistance in the office. He was pretty much solo then. And so I went in to help temporarily. It was the days of the yellow ledgers, where you put the paid and unpaid [bills]. And then the role grew, I'm the writer; I'm the communicator, PR, marketing, competition writing, and working with the staff-personnel. We were always a family firm, just as it is now under Pat. And I was, I felt I was there not as a wife or a spouse or a helper, I was there as a professional woman helping in a profession that I understood. So I think my role was very satisfying, after 19 years.

Participating in ASLA

BIRNBAUM*: Now, when the ASLA came to San Diego, you also played a significant role, tell us about that.*

LIZ: Well, when ALSA came to San Diego, I already knew the players from attending the trustee meetings when Joe was the treasurer. So it was easy for me to get involved, and I'm a planner by inclination. And so we're a small, no, we were a chapter then. I think Wimmer Yamada took the initiating role to plan the conference. And so I was very much involved with Ed Able, the director, and we planned the events. The sessions were very simple then, too. So it was all just our chapter, working together. We even wore matching costumes in those days.

YAMADA: You mean the shirts you girls made for us?

LIZ: Yeah, well, it started in San Antonio, and all the women dressed like Texans.

YAMADA: Cowboys.

LIZ: Yeah. And so when it came to San Diego's, you know, I found these bagpipers and marched them into the Hotel Del Coronado. But you know, you're working with only about 500 members. So it was very easy to get involved. But I also had the wonderful opportunity of knowing the profession and knowing the participants, the landscape architects, architects, speakers, you know, all that came under really my hat. So I had a great time.

BIRNBAUM: *So what's it like, Joe, when you look back, and you know, I think back to that conference in the 70s, and then there was the one around '89 or '90 and now we're on the eve of another conference here where there's going to be about 6,500 landscape architects. I mean in, you know, 35 years time, which is pretty extraordinary.*

LIZ: You know there is a difference between our conference and this year's conference. I can't even begin to imagine how they plan for 6,000 people to attend a conference. But Pat would know, because we went to the one in San Francisco. This size requires an entirely different planning process. The level of educational opportunities for landscape architects is

overwhelming. So it's changed in scale and depth and influence and importance. The purpose of this meeting of landscape architects, as Joe said, is to meet each other. But it is totally different from our experience. I think the sessions we planned were excellent, but it is easier to plan with 500 people. Yeah?

Dinners with Harriet

BIRNBAUM: *I know we talked about the ASLA but I also wanted to circle back to these Tuesday night dinners that we heard about with Harriet, and I was curious to hear about, from your perspective, were you there as a spouse, were you there as an employee?*

LIZ: It was mostly social. But Harriet always wanted to know about the projects. She would frown on some of them that she saw [when she went] on her private drives. But the dinners were mainly a social visit. Because by then, I think she had lost pretty much her interest in the specifics of our projects. She was still excited about what Joe was doing, and we were there as friends. We talked; we didn't talk politics, because she and I were on the opposite end. Joe said I was not allowed to say liberal things. Anyway, I did. But it was a time for them to reminisce, to talk about the community and her friends. And as I say, Charles, it was mainly social.

Serving on Community Boards

LIZ: I think my major contribution to the firm, even to this day, is that I have kept the name of the firm in front of the community by being out there. By being there, I mean all the boards and foundations that I have been involved with for 30, 40 years as a volunteer. I remember being criticized for it. But I also have to thank Joe, because he did not like to attend meetings, where it was a CEO talking, talking, and talking. But I listened. And for example, at the San Diego Foundation, which has become really a power house in this community, I could contribute something because I knew what the community needed [and] where we were going. So I was engaged in conversations about the city and all of civil society. And [I was] sitting with the president of San Diego State, who became my friend.

Because Joe said he didn't want to be on the boards, my contribution was to be on the board as Mrs. Joseph Yamada. About 10 years after volunteering, I became Elizabeth Yamada. So then I became not just a Wimmer Yamada [representative], I also became a representative as the one diverse person on most of the boards. They were always trying to get diversity. They had very few [people]. There are not too many Asians of my vintage or [people from the] Japanese-American community involved in community planning foundations. And consequently, I think that would be, I would say, my specialty.

I would answer that question about landscape architecture leading us to care about the issues of the entire community by saying that one should care about the community. It's not just about the profession. I care about arts and culture; I care about the academic and scientific development in San Diego, and the nonprofits. I care about the people. You know, it's not just about the land. I mean, it's the people really that you care about. And you care about the land improving the quality of life for people. So in the end, you start with the people. You want to preserve the Earth, the environment and to give people a better life. And that comes first before the profession or any, any specific role. I think you start by caring about people, and you give back what you can give back according to your talents. Joe had and the opportunities through design to help people live a better life.

BIRNBAUM: *This is going to be the only moment when we have both of you on camera together. Is there anything you want to say to each other?*

LIZ: Yeah, it's been great to be together not only in the family, with a family, but for me to understand his work. And I understand how important landscape architecture is as a profession. And it makes me really [glad], to have the opportunity whenever I grab someone, I can say," you know, this is what we do."

Reflecting on their marriage

YAMADA: Yeah. Here I go. Without a doubt, the absolute best thing in the world, in my career, was to have Lizzie.

LIZ: Yeah, well, [it was good] because we are so different. You know, I am English major. I love the arts and culture, I read; Joe is a golfer, a hands-on person, he tells great stories, he makes great fried rice, and he's funny.

YAMADA: And I love dogs.

LIZ: In my obituary, I would love to be known as a funny person, but I've been the more, you know, academic. But so, it's wonderful to have [things] in common, not only the kids, but the fact that we can share the story of the profession. And you know I feel that I've had a role with Joe, because he needed me, and I needed to be a part of it, too. So to answer the question, that was to me a wonderful gift that made our life and our marriage successful.

YAMADA: One more thing I want to add to this closing. I would not be a landscape architect if it weren't for Liz's mom.

LIZ: Yeah, not me.

YAMADA: When we were dating, her mom asked, "What college are you going to?" I said, "I'm not going to college because I want to be a fisherman like all my uncles. They were all rich fishermen." "You no go to college?"

LIZ: She didn't talk like that.

YAMADA: "You no see my daughter any more." But no, she really encouraged me to attend a university. And that's [it], all the credit really goes to Liz's mom getting me to go to college. And of course I followed Liz wherever she went.

LIZ: That's right.

Interview with Joe Yamada and Pat Caughey

The Interview continues at the Wimmer Yamada & Caughey Office and Pat Caughey joins the discussion with Joe Yamada.

Reflecting on Wimmer Yamada

YAMADA: Well, in 1954 when I graduated, there were only six landscape architects in the whole city. And we would assemble as many [as we could], to try and make a chapter out of the group. The Southern California chapter really was our parent group. We were a section [of them]. So in the beginning, there were a handful of landscape architects. Harriet always had meetings at her house and we would have a session among ourselves. I thought that was really nice, because we all cooperated with each other. Roland Hoyt was the senior guy and it was nice to have him involved. Of course I studied all his books in Berkeley, so to meet him and to hear him, that was really exciting.

BIRNBAUM: *So Pat, what is that like as a landscape architect for you?*

CAUGHEY: Well I think, because there were so few landscape architects, there was a lot of work at the time. San Diego was still a small time place trying to grow into a city. There wasn't a lot of outside influence. There were a number of local architects in town that were developing a lot of the projects. There weren't too many landscape architects to call upon. And I think as Joe has described earlier, this idea of, you know, breaking into the design world with projects like SeaWorld and UCSD, we were suddenly a known commodity. And Joe and Harriet would get the phone calls usually first. And I think that 20-some-odd years, from the 50s to the early 70s were significant because if you were going to do a project in town, you wanted Joe Yamada.

And marketing was nonexistent; you didn't have to market. You just waited for the phone to ring. And the way projects were done, it wasn't as politically correct as it is today. A phone

would ring and Don Nay from the Port district would say, "Joe, I want you to do this park." You know? "Or Joe, I want you to do this project." And there was no competition, there was no, you know, formal RFP process. And that's how a lot of projects got done, that's how a lot of work was done, very informal, very relationship-based, based on who knew who. And because Joe had, Joe and Harriet had this reputation; there was a lot of work coming in.

And it's interesting, because when I go back and look at the archives and see all of the projects that we've done, and I thought, my gosh. You know, it wasn't just one bank building; it was the entire bank branch covering 30 or 40 branches and all of the Port District parks. And of course what happens now is very different. But that's how that [time] was. The signature of the firm was on so many projects back then. You know, it was the stadium, it was the airport, the parks along the waterfront, it was Seaport Village, it was UCSD and it was City College. You know, for the most part, chances were it was a Wimmer Yamada and Associates project.

Pat Caughey Discovers Landscape Architecture

CAUGHEY: No, this is, this how I got into this. I was in high school, and it was probably 1971 or '72, and I was taking a horticulture class to learn about plants. My nickname in high school was Euell Gibbons, because Euell Gibbons was all about pine nuts. I knew all the plants but I didn't know what landscape architecture was. There was a speaker one day, this gentleman came in and he was introduced as a landscape architect. I had no idea what that was. And he was talking about SeaWorld, and he was talking about Seaport Village, and all these projects they were working on at the time. And I thought, this is amazing, who is this gentleman? And he was this well-spoken and very well dressed --

YAMADA: Well spoken, [with a] Bing Crosby voice.

CAUGHEY: I thought, this guy is just amazing, who is he? And this was in like '72. When I graduated from high school, and I went to work in the nursery business, I loved the nursery, I loved plants. So I went into the nursery business. Later on when my wife and I got married on

our honeymoon she said, "You're going back to school." So I went back to college. I went to Arizona State because the schools in California were impacted. In my junior year, I was over here [San Diego] for a summer and the only guy I knew, was the person from the [horticulture] class, Joe Yamada. I just got on the phone one day and I called him and said, "I just want to come down and get some information." I said, "I'm not graduating for another year, and I wanted to come in [to talk]." We had a long talk, and Joe said "well you know, business is kind of slow here, but we're thinking about opening an office in Arizona." Ron Toshima, who was his partner at the time, was going back and forth. And so we got through it, and I said, "yeah, I'd be interested. "

And I said, "You probably don't remember me. But I remember meeting you when I was about 14 or 15 years old." He goes, "Well when that would have been?" And I said, "Well, it was in my high school horticulture class." And he says, "Well I don't normally go out there." And he goes, "No wait a minute- my son Garrett was taking a class in horticulture at Kearny High". I was at Madison High, but the classes were so small, they combined the classes. So Garrett, unbeknownst to me, was in the class. And the only reason Joe came to that class that day was because his son was there. His son had talked him into coming in. And he said, "You know, I don't normally go out and talk to students." And I thought, "Oh my God, that was when I met you."

YAMADA: You know when he told me this story it was the night of my retirement. We were at our house celebrating all of this.

CAUGHEY: Well, so when I sat with Joe in '84, and said, "You know, I'm interested in coming back." He said, "Well you know, if you're OK to stay in Arizona, we might be opening an office." So I ended up helping Ron Toshima open the branch office in Phoenix.

So during my senior year, when I'm still finishing college and I've got a less than a one year old who was going with me to the studio, I'm helping open an office. And talk about an

apprenticeship, there was no apprenticeship. I just started running. And I was literally going out with Ron Toshima. He was my mentor. I actually worked closer with Ron the first couple of years than I did with Joe. We were going out marketing ourselves to different people. And I was always trying to get him back to the airport. But I literally was his go-to guy and helped open that office there. We kept the office there for four years. My first four years with the firm. Well for three years I was with the Phoenix office.

YAMADA: So when he came to San Diego, he was ready for anything that we could throw at him. And he was just one of several guys that we had in the office; he had to kind of work his way along.

CAUGHEY: Well, it was interesting. I was already, you know, an older student, and I didn't want to waste time. So I thought, well this is a great opportunity. So I literally was an employee of the firm, several months before I ever graduated, which was unique.

And I keep telling everyone now, when students coming in, I say, "you tell me how much you want to do. You won't be bored. I'm going to give you opportunities, because I was given opportunities." I mean, I was given carte blanche to go out and talk about the firm not even having that much experience.
But having the nursery experience and having some management experience, allowed me to think about the business. And I think that's why Joe had confidence that I could help. There was a period of time when the Phoenix office carried the business, because San Diego was so slow.

Pat Caughey Reflects on His Early Days at Wimmer Yamada

By the time I came on board, the firm had done a number of projects at UCSD, at all the different colleges. I remember one of my first tasks was another residence hall. It was the third college residence hall designed by Homer Delawie. And of course, [I came in] realizing that the firm [Wimmer Yamada] was well known, but nobody knew this guy [me]. The first, oh, ten years or so that I was here in this office, I probably worked on 20 or 30 projects over there [UCSD],

the biology field station, a residence hall, you know, little bits and pieces. And I and worked on the Thornton Hospital, which was the first hospital campus, because UCSD has a medical teaching program. And of course, Joe did that original project as well. But I suddenly got very involved in all those projects.

And there was one in particular where I think I hit the wall, literally. We were chosen to do this library walk. It was to go from the library out to one of the main drives. It was this main pedestrian promenade. I felt like I had done enough work out there so that they would start to recognize me. And so we came up with this scheme for doing this library walk. Again we were trying to create the urban edge, and the tree edge was to be eucalyptus trees.

And we came up with this design, and we thought it was great. We thought it was going to be so well received. We took the designer view board with probably more detail than we should have [to the presentation]. Hideo Sasaki was sitting on the designer view board at that time, and so was William Turnbull. And I went in there, Joe wasn't with me. I went in there, and said, "I'm Pat Caughey with, Wimmer Yamada and Associates and we have this idea. . . " And Hideo just shot me down and then William Turnbull got into it. And the two of them just, well, Hideo politely disgraced me in front of everybody. You know, that's just the way he was. But he just said, "Mr. Caughey, this is not how you do this. You've gone into the details, and we don't even know what the concept is." And we were thusly removed from the project.

And Pete Walker was brought in to do his version of library walk. It is there today and [it is] a beautiful rendition. [It is] very different from ours. For Pete Walker, it wasn't about the eucalyptus, it was this element down the middle and it is very successful. You know, we were trying to preserve the essence of the trees. And we still do projects [for them] today. We're back redoing the Muir College now, and we're doing the new Noah facility, which is part of the Scripps Institute. So we continue doing work there, but obviously there are a lot of other firms out there doing work [there]. I know many of the people that are the next generation that have been doing work there and they always refer back to Joe. And it's great.

BIRNBAUM: *Well, now that we've talked about UCSD, which really is truly a legacy project, let's talk about the idea of legacy. You know, here we are at Wimmer Yamada Caughey, you come in here, it's, there is this almost essence that it's a museum narrative on the evolution of the firm. So first I would say, I would ask you Joe, what does it feel like when you come in here?*

The Office Changes Over Time

YAMADA: You know, what they've done with this building and what he did [Pat], I mean this is unbelievable. If you could have seen the first office that Harriet and I were in, in the Design Center, it was like a hot house. It was all alsynite all the way around with some big sliding alsynite doors and the old alsynite cover. I mean, it was the perfect kind of a landscape office because you knew that this was where plants would grow, and there were plants of course inside.

But it came to an end because we were finishing a major project and rain came in. The alsynite leaked, and all of our drawings were destroyed. The architect who owned the buildings had his whole drafting staff come in and recreate every one of those sheets. He worked all weekend and all week, and then he said, "We've got to move you. We're going to move you into our building." It was an all-glass building. But anyway, you look at this, what Pat's done with this building, and the way he's displaying the history of [the firm and] myself out there, and I say, "Did we do that?" Did we do that? I mean, it is, [unbelievable] I mean, my eyes opened up. And then you begin to reminisce. Oh, I remember that job. That was so great, I remember it. So it is wonderful what Pat's done with this building. And he's got that room back there for the Harriet Wimmer memorial.

CAUGHEY: Well, the Design Center was only three blocks up. So you know, this is the third address on Fifth Avenue that we've had in 57 years. After the Design Center, Joe moved the firm into the old Frank's Pool Hall. [Frank] is his dad's brother. That [space] was down on 516 Fifth Avenue, right in the middle of the gas lamp district. This was in 1982. And what a great

setting; it was a 25 foot wide by 100 foot long storefront office. Before Frank's Pool Hall, it had been a Paramount movie theater. So we had this mezzanine space where the projector used to sit. And Joe and the firm did a marvelous job of creating a one of a kind studio space. In the two story space we had ficus trees growing inside. I used to hate it because I had to trim the trees.

YAMADA: You did a good job, though.

CAUGHEY: But we, basically it was a beautiful setting. It was truly the quintessential design studio of the 80s, and everybody loved it. So when the Gas Lamp [District] became so busy, we had to clear out because there was no parking. Clients wouldn't come down here because there'd be some event. I had a lot of parking tickets every month. A real estate firm wanted to come in and use it [the space] because of all of the condos being build downtown. So we looked all over, and I finally found this place. I said, "You know, I've got to do something special, because we've got to have this looking as good as [it was] down there." So we had some fun with it.

BIRNBAUM: *I just think about Harriet walking in the door to look up a plant in one of her books today. I mean, what do you think her reaction would be if she walked into this office?*

YAMADA: Oh gosh. She would think she's in wonderland. I mean, you know, it's hard for me to guess what she would say or do. But I mean, I'm shocked coming here. When he [Pat] remodeled this office and invited me to come see it, I mean, it was dynamite. The old building was just an old doctor's building. And they put in all these curved walls. Harriet would be beside herself. It just floored me to come in and see what a wonderful working space that the people have here. And this table was a favorite table at the other office. So we didn't dare lose it. This is one of the things that we insisted on getting out of that building to bring here.
CAUGHEY: Yes and over a second story balcony. We won't go into that. No, Harriet, as a great critic of design, and someone who was organized, and who was very specific in her ways. I tried

to do something here that would be unique, but still respectful of how the firm has presented itself. So it is a working studio. You know, we don't like to call it office, we call it a studio. I purposefully limited the size when we designed this. I have 12 work stations out there. That's about the most [number of] people I think, that should work together within a small office.

And because of that, you know, I think Harriet would look at this and say, well it's very organized, yet there's still room for creativity. I mean, I've been to the office down the street where it all started, and it's such a great space. Well, [here] we had four masonry walls. We're a half block from the park, Balboa Park, and so we all take walks every day through the park. So the environment is very conducive to that energy. Downtown it was a different energy, it was very urban, it was very happening in terms of what was happening in downtown San Diego. And this is a little quieter part of down.

Continuing the Legacy

But again, part of the notion of that legacy is reminding people, visually, [that we are] connected. You know, Joe and I are sitting here as partners and as principals of this firm, but there have been so many people that have gone through this office. And there's probably 100, 150 people out there that were part of this organization throughout those years. And you know, it's not only a legacy to the firm, but it's a legacy to all of those people who have been part of this process.

The nickname of the firm is Grandpa Yamada. It's not to his grandkids, it's to all of us [in the firm]. Probably another dozen or so firms started out of this office. They would learn their trade, and then they would move on to do their own thing. That's always been a great experience for me. I stuck around. But you know anybody who left to do their own thing, there was, you know, there wasn't animosity about it. Well now I've got to compete with so-and-so. It was like, you've learned your trade, and you've learned the way here, now go out and enjoy the profession. And so many [people] have done that over the years. I keep thinking one of these days we're going to have a reunion and I'm not going to be able to find everybody.

YAMADA: There are a lot of them.

CAUGHEY: There's a lot out there. So that is a big part of the legacy, is to continue that. And sometimes I feel like I'm a bit of the caretaker, because I have to kind of keep this going. And you know, I don't know where it's going. But you know, you want to keep that. Because [with] so many of the firms now, when I go to a website and I can't find the name of somebody, or a picture of the person, whether it's an engineering firm or an architectural or landscape firm, I want to see the person.

The last recession we went through, we reduced [the staff] from about 28 [people] down to four. So we were really rebuilding the firm. And the name of the firm had actually gone from Wimmer Yamada and Associates to WYA. And I think that was in that competition with SWA, POD and EDAW. But there was one time where we went after a project and we didn't get shortlisted. And we said, "How could you not shortlist Wimmer Yamada?" And they said, "Well who's WYA?"

YAMADA: They didn't know who WYA was.

CAUGHEY: And they said, "If we would have known this was Wimmer Yamada, it would have been a natural." I thought, OK, that's an eye-opener. So I said," we do need to change the name. I want to bring the Wimmer Yamada back." And so we did it. I graciously asked if we could add my name to the end.

YAMADA: Absolutely.

CAUGHEY: At the time I thought it was pretty daring. But I thought, you know, that was something we had to do to really keep the name going. And of course, people are always saying, who's this Wimmer guy? So when we moved here, I said, "We have to have something

for Harriet." So we went through the archives and found photos and we have her desk there. There's Harriet's room down there, too. So, because Harriet Wimmer and I never had the chance to meet I know her as a friend in spirit. But I've learned so much coming from her through Joe to me.

YAMADA: Yeah, so when Pat joined the firm, it was like starting all over. I'm Harriet Wimmer, and he's Joe Yamada. I mean, it was that kind of relationship, the age difference, the experience difference. And you know when you get a talented person. . . . When I was young, I was the talented person. But you know, I'm kind of old guy now. Pat came in, he had all the current ideas and knew how to do computers and, you know. . .

CAUGHEY: Well, we were going through an evolution, as we are now.

YAMADA: An evolution.

CAUGHEY: As we are now, too. But I have to take us back to where, the first time I met Joe, if that's OK.

BIRNBAUM: *I am thinking about this idea of spouses being engaged in the office. In the beginning it was Harriet and John {Wimmer] and then you and Liz, and it continues today with Pat and Jen. I can't think of another office where it [occurs.] That's another dimension to the legacy issue, I think.*

On Liz Yamada and Jennifer Caughey Contributions to the Firm

YAMADA: Well, I'm sure Pat would say the same thing about Jennifer, but you know, Liz, Liz was really an inspiration. And not only that, she is a lot smarter than me, Phi Beta Kappa in fact. Anyway, she could see the big picture. She loved organization, she loved art and architecture. I mean, I picked the right gal to marry because she really was the one who directed me in the right direction.

Liz did her little short-term first five or six years [here] with Harriet without any pay. She just wanted to be there and to help us. And then once she became a part of the firm, then of course she got paid.

CAUGHEY: Well, and this was never intended. You know Liz was a schoolteacher by training. And then she came in and kind of assimilated into the office. You know, when we were going through that last recession and we went from 28 [people] down to four [people]. At a certain point, we couldn't afford a bookkeeper. Joe was in the process of retiring and Liz had spent 19 years [here] and so she was ready. She was involved in so many other outside activities. We had to kind of let her go. So this transition took place. I had worked with Liz, all the way through the first 10 years that I was with the firm.

And so when we went down to such a small staff, my wife, Jennifer, her degree is in psychology, decided to come in and help do the books. So Liz trained Jenny and Jenny began doing the books. And what was going to be about a six month gig turned into 16 years. It was never planned. I mean, I keep asking "do you really want to keep doing this?" And it's continued. She's become, a full partner. And not being a landscape architect, she has been the best set of eyes outside of our trained staff to say, "You might want to think about that. Or you know, you've got to think about your audience, who you're talking to." It has been a unique partnership, a unique team, a continuing team. It was never intended that way. I don't know how it would be any different. And I don't think it was any different with Liz and Joe. You know, you do what you have to do. It is a small business.

YAMADA: And then Liz, you know, made so many friends through this process. And Liz ended up on nine different boards over the years; at UCSD, she was on the chancellor's committee at UC and San Diego State and the City of San Diego. So she, I mean, she enjoyed that part of it. She got away from the office and did her own thing. That made her really happy, to be able to do things for art and culture. That is her main effort here in the city.

CAUGHEY: Well, and a great ambassador. She has been the firm's ambassador for so many years.

Technology Changes the Way We Work

Caughey: We don't have any drafting boards anymore. We had all these drafting boards and parallel bars, and now it's all computers. We made that transition in the early, or mid-90s. Now everything is on computer, everything's CAD. And so Harriet would be amazed by that, because look at all of the work that we can do now. But it still goes back to the basic fundamentals. It's part of that legacy. I'm always strongly advocating, you know, [that one should] learn how to draw by hand. Learn how to communicate by hand, because you have to have that skill. We can do marvelous things with the computers, but we can't communicate as well as by hand. --

YAMADA: I think the biggest, my biggest disappointment with the students coming out of the universities these days [is that] they can't really draw. You know, in the old days, the guy that could sketch and draw and do all that, I mean, they were the ones who you looked up to.

And I'll never forget, we had a guy looking for a job at our old office. I was trying to get a floor plan drawn at a quarter scale for my son's property because I'm going to do a landscape plan for him. So I just needed the base plan.

He came in the morning, and I said, "if you can draw this at eight scale, here's the plan." And he, he took that whole day and never did it. I think he quit that day. He did not know how to draw or draft with any kind of T-square or triangles. He didn't even know what those things were. So it was kind of a, it's kind of a shock. And I agree with Pat on the sketching.

CAUGHEY: I certainly came through that transition where I learned to draft, and everything we did was on parallel bar and circle templates. There was efficiency to it. There was a speed to it if you really were good. You can imagine today when I show the staff a planting plan that we did

by hand and I say, "Oh, we did that in a day". You know, it's a lost art. It is an art. It is part of that hand to brain connection that is important.

I mean, I can't type worth a darn. But you know, the kids coming in [today], they can type so many words a minute. So they had that skill set, and they're intuitive about the computer and video gaming. They grew up with them. But there's a balance. And I know the pendulum swing. It went all the way over to where we got rid of everything. We got rid of the drafting tables, we got rid of the pencils and everything else, and it's all electronic. But it's coming back. And I think it's a nice balance between the two.

YAMADA: But you know, when I think about it, we had a big pool table at the other [office] and so you could get people on both sides working on the same plan. In those days, if you were doing a big park or a school and [the plan called for] tons of lawn and you wanted to stipple the lawn, you'd have everybody around that table going dit, dit, dit --

CAUGHEY: Yeah, stippling.

YAMADA: You know, I mean, when I think about what you can do now, you can just go, stipple.

CAUGHEY: Yeah, it's a stipple, push it. And there's an art to stippling. And there is a certain way to stipple and not to stipple. The joke was that we had an electronic stippler in the back, but it's broken so you've got to learn how to do it. But you know, and we would get eight people around on a plan working on it. I still have graphics that are 10 feet by 20 feet. You know, to draw a little tree 10,000 times and make it graphically look good . . .

YAMADA: Yeah. And the stippling it is interesting, because you can actually show the grades.

Landscape Architects as the Prime Contractor

BIRNBAUM: *So one of the things that you alluded to when we were talking about the campus work is this idea of the landscape architect being the prime or the facilitator, why is the landscape architect the right person to have that big perspective?*

YAMADA: Well I, you know, in all fairness, I think we seem to have a better feel. I think landscape architects seem to see the overall picture. I shouldn't say this about all architects, but the ones that we work with, several of them don't think about the actual [building] placement. They just plunk their buildings down. But I think that landscape architects go beyond that and think about shadow patterns and areas for plantings, because of the shade that the buildings are going to create. And so I think we try to talk [to them] you know, if you did this to the building then we [would] get more sunshine into these courtyards. They just had a courtyard. They said, "well, the courtyard's a courtyard." I said, "no, well it's really not, because if you, if you tip it a little bit, you'll get the full sun, advantage of the sun."

So, and they would listen. At the beginning you couldn't dare tell an architect to move his building, you know. But as we became stronger and they saw what we were doing . . . I remember a group of architects, the La Jolla architects especially, when I told them about that Tommy Church thing. They said, "From now on you are going to site our building." I mean, to me that was like, wow. You know, that was a major, major concession on their part.

But I think that they knew that we went beyond just placing their buildings or thinking about their buildings, but thinking about what it does from the, from the landscape standpoint, about the views, sunshine, and all that. So I mean, I think we made big moves in that direction.

CAUGHEY: And I think there's also been an evolution, just in the way architects and landscape architects have begun to blend. And I think Joe's generation, you know, when you have the Pete Walker and Hideo {Sasaki] and Joe telling that message, I think architects have begun to learn more about site design. And I think the architects today, through education, through

osmosis, whatever, they've become better at that. And I would like to think it's part of them becoming more open and aware to that whole setting.

You know, being the leader, being the prime is something that you have to be comfortable with because if you're leading architects or engineers or whomever, you've got to be able to take that role as the leader. And I think, there were examples, as Joe mentioned- like park projects; parks are a natural project where landscape architects can be the prime. You know, there might be a restroom and food concession, but for the most part, it's a park. And the engineering is important, but the engineering is subservient to the design. So on all our park projects, we are the prime. Even the park projects that Joe worked on, we were always the prime consultant. We would hire the architect, we would hire the engineers. And that [still] goes to today.

And whenever there's an opportunity to do something other than a park, where we can be the prime, we're open to it. We're welcome to it. Because I think we are also very good at mediating and facilitating. And I mean, talk about what landscape architecture is, you know, it's very hard to say what it is in a paragraph or two, because it keeps expanding. But the one thing we're good at is organizing and bringing in the right people. We may not have the structural expertise or the electrical engineering, but we know enough about it to say, we want this trellis and we want this light fixture, and we want the aesthetics.

And that's what we're doing now. We're doing a lot, we're doing more of it, and we'd like to do a lot more of it. Yeah, there's always a little rubbing with the architects, and there's a lot of architects who still to this day say. "Here's the plan, just shrub it up." And that's always going to happen. But I think there are those that do respect the profession and respect what we can do.

YAMADA: Yeah. Along these lines, I was hired by the City Park and Rec Board to be on their committee. And I really fought for that position. And the reason was the city Parks and Recreation [Board] did not know the difference between civil engineers and landscape architects. And they were giving all the jobs to engineers. Engineers would turn around and

sub-contract us to do their work. I stayed on there seven years knowing that our firm would be eliminated from doing any city parks because I was on the park board.

BIRNBAUM: *What's the difference between a civil engineer and a landscape architect?*

YAMADA: The civil engineers are not educated in the area of landscape architecture. They're trying to grade the site so it would drain properly, or to prevent soil from washing away. One of the first things I did do on the city [Park and Rec Board]was to help them prepare a land grading ordinance. That took those, took those one-to-one slopes all around San Diego out of the picture. They had to go at least one and a half to one slopes. And at least, something would hang on to it. With the old one to one slope the old sea fig would just wash down with the first rain. So they didn't even think about things like that.
So when I tell you, I was battling these guys, all the developers and civil engineers during my seven years on that board. So I think from the standpoint, the landscape architect was needed was to assure the potential homeowners that it's safe to buy these pieces of property. They were putting you [and your home] 15 feet away from a landslide. And until that thing slides down, or the slope slides down, no one says anything. So I felt that as a landscape architect it was important to make people and even the developers aware that this could happen.

Interview with Pat Caughey

Learning from Mentors

CAUGHEY: Sure. Well, you know, sitting next to Joe and realizing that this is, this was a once in a lifetime opportunity for me. And I couldn't recreate that process for anyone. I've been with the firm now for close to 27 years, and I obviously learned from Joe. He was my mentor. Others in the firm, Ron Teshima and other people in the firm were all good mentors. And when there wasn't a mentor, it was learning by the seat of your pants, which was good. And it really put me into a mode where I could tolerate bad days with clients or projects that went wrong, because you were kind of forced into that. And Joe gave us enough slack to do the job we needed to do.

If we screwed up, you know, he would tell us about it. But we had to correct our mistakes, and we did. And that was a very important part of the mentoring.

And so I have taken that same philosophy with staff today. No one comes into this office and is put into a corner until they're ready to go out in the real world. I've had interns come in who are given the task of working with a client day one, because client relationships and communication are so important. Communication is everything. You know, if you can't sell an idea on paper, you have to talk about it, or you have to be able to describe it. And so I'm always teaching others and showing them. You know, what would have Harriet done? Or what would have Joe done? Joe is very street smart, and because he grew up in San Diego, he had a way with clients, and he had a way with projects and other people. And I'm not quite a savvy as he is, but I learned from that, and I try to impress that on everyone else here. You've got to learn that this is a people business.

And so mentoring is an important part. Through ASLA I was involved in the ACE program early on as a mentor. Then I sat on the national board. And even at the ACE program, which was a high school level [program], you even have to start with kids earlier because you've got to recruit [them]. We are in a recruiting mode always; because you want to get people interested about this profession. So many people don't understand the profession, and don't know what a landscape architect is.

So I've had kind of an open door policy. Even though we haven't been able to do any hiring for the last couple of years because of the recession, I still don't turn away people who send in resumes and portfolios. And my gosh, the work that's done today in the portfolios is great, you know, you can't help but have them come in just to give them the benefit of talking about what they're doing. And someday it will turn around and they'll have an opportunity. So I have a lot of informational interviews.

I probably have an email list of about 100 individuals that I've talked to, and I'll keep their resumes and portfolios and, just in case. And if I don't have anything, I know someone else has

something, I'll say, go talk to so-and-so. That's part of the wanting to keep the passion going and keep the enthusiasm that they have coming in.

Business today

You know, the business is changing. We're learning how to do our business differently every day. It's very different. I think about, listening to Joe talk about the way it used to be. You'd wait for the phone to ring, and it would be the port director or the city manager and they'd say, "hey we've got this project for you, come on and start." You know, those days are gone. And I think Joe knows that. But Joe will ask me, whenever we get together for lunch, "well how about work out at San Diego State, and how about so-and-so, and how about . . .?"

And now we have to go through an RFP process [request for proposals]. It's a lot more complicated. There's a lot more competition. You know, Joe said when they started there were about six other landscape architects in San Diego. Well there are probably now about 60 firms now, and probably 300 landscape architects. So it's a very competitive market.

And this legacy that I have, you know, one would think, when you have a name like Wimmer Yamada, you could walk in anywhere. It gets our foot in the door, but there's no guarantee. And I can tell you, we've lost a lot of good projects because we missed something that maybe we should have thought about or should have been more competitive on our fees, or whatever it is. So you know, it's been a humbling experience. But at the same time, I always go back and say, you know, I should do what Joe did and just raise that fee 20% because we're good enough for it. And you know, sometimes we do it, we're lucky, but sometimes, most of the time it's, you know, we're in business along with everybody else.

Embracing the Past and Looking Forward

CAUGHEY: I am eternally grateful to have, as I said had the opportunity to do what I've done. And to learn what I have. You know, I always knew that I wanted to be involved in the environment in some way. When I learned about what landscape architecture was, it was a,

you know, an a-ha moment. I knew this was what I was going to do. I like to tell people that I knew that I wanted to be a landscape designer from the age of eight.

But the fact that I knew what I wanted to do, and it fell into place the way that it did . . . . You know, Joe could be very stern and expecting perfection. You know, get it right, do it right, do it over again. And we would do that. I could see, listening to him talk about his training, you know, the red pencil on the paper. You just had to expect that. And it's made us all better. And again, now that's my role to do that. And I think we're, we're trying to figure out where that goes to the next generation.

But it's been a once in a lifetime opportunity for me, as Joe said it was for Harriet. You know, Joe said in a quote, looking back at Harriet, that Harriet didn't just make him a better landscape architect; she made him a better person. And that is just outstanding to look back; and I certainly would say the same to Joe and to Liz. You know, they're pseudo-parents. They've been able to teach me and direct me; and there have been so many other people in the picture that we don't have time to name. But there are a lot of advocates in this town for what Joe has done, and what Harriet has done for the community.

And it's now my task to carry that on. It's a daunting task, but I'm going to do my best. And when I pass it on to the next generation, I hope they have the same enthusiasm and passion. Because you first and foremost have to love what you do and be inspired to get better at it. And this is a profession that you can start at any age, and you never have to retire; because if you really enjoy and love doing it, there's always more. I still want to keep learning. So we're, we're looking ahead now. And I think looking to Joe, he is someone who inspired me, and now it's my responsibility to inspire other.

Pat Caughey shows the office archives.

This is one of two archival locations. This one's here in the office, and I keep all of the drawings and all the files for projects about ten years back. The firm's been in existence for 57 years, so we certainly have lots of storage off-site as well. In these three bins I have probably 50,000 slides of projects going back to the 60s. And when our interns and some of the new hires come in here sometimes they'll just sit during lunch and they'll basically go through and look at slides of projects that are done, 20, 30, 40, 50 years ago. We can't use them for marketing because the resolution isn't very good, but it gives them a chance to learn about the past.

And then we have a lot of the project files and a lot of the drawings. When we do a presentation, we keep all of the graphics for projects like SeaWorld and the UCSD master plan. And these are all the hand-drawn graphics that were used for presenting our ideas. And we also have drawings for projects that are probably more current, in the last 10 years, which we continue to work on.

So everything now is more electronic, more digital, so we don't keep track so much of paper as we do now on the computer but it's good to keep all of this, and we have history going back, again, 50 to 55 years.

DESIGN

Mentors and Muses

Embracing Tommy Church's designs Ideas

I did visit Tommy's office, and in the waiting room, he had a bulletin board on which he had 12-8.5 by 11 sketches of the same house, on the same piece of property, in eight different positions. And every one of them was a gem. I would have taken any of them. But his whole trick was to take that house and not put it perpendicular to the street or parallel to the property line. He said,"tip it 15 degrees one way or the other, and he said you'd be amazed at what kind of landscape spaces occur all of a sudden." You've got an angle thing here; you've got a little recessed area there. The driveway and the walk are no longer straight up to the

door. The driveway is curved, and the entryway could be staggered. The position of the house in the front or back gave you real opportunities for your landscape.

I looked at those eight drawings and I memorized them. I said, "when I go back to San Diego, we were redoing University of California San Diego [UCSD] I'm going to meet with the architects and tell them about Tommy Church. Anyway, Church impressed me the most because it was most like what I would like to do.

BIRNBAUM*: So let's talk about meeting Tommy Church when you were a student and, were, was Gardens are for People one of the class readings?*

YAMADA: Yes, the Tommy Church book was used a lot by us students. For me, it offered the ideal landscape concepts that I would like to use. And I did use a lot of the ideas of Thomas Church; very soft curves and mounding [shapes] and different elevations. Nothing really formal about it, it was just really natural in its approach. We were fortunate to be able to see, I imagine about six or maybe even more of his gardens in the Hillsborough area in Palo Alto. And Tommy took us to a couple of them himself. He met the class over there and showed us what he did. Those were very important meetings.

I met him many years later when we were being interviewed at UCSD, and he still had his little visor that he wears when he's working, and his little apron, and he looked great. I mean, you went back about 20, 30 years and found this gentleman, this quiet gentleman with his little visor and his apron, telling us about the landscape plans that were on the wall. It was a sensational opportunity for us students when we visited the gardens.

He pointed out certain things that he wouldn't do again. But all, I think all of us would do that. We all make little mistakes. And his mistakes didn't look like a mistake at all. They were well designed and well constructed. And I think in the two weeks we had to look at various gardens,

they weren't all his gardens, but we took a lot of ideas and feelings back with us. [It was] very important, a very important time.

Meeting Burle Marx

YAMADA: The Landscape Architecture Foundation had a program to fly down and meet old Burle Marx. We got to see his home and have dinner with him, and he showed us his projects. It was exciting for me.I always, I always,[loved] the magic walkway, you know, with all the curves. And you know, what he does [his designs], Harriet does it on a smaller basis. For example, he would use maybe 500 agapanthus in a big sweep like this. And you know, Harriet used to do big sweeps, too, but with 50 or 80 [plants]. When he does any kind of ground planting, it's not just a little corner like this, it's a big mass.

And he's almost painting on the ground, with rows like this, and another row over there on top of it. And it would just flow together. And he, I don't know, there is something about the way in which he handled the street designs. I could see why people loved it, because the mass planting that he did just blows your mind. They would plant 4,000 of one plant and just cover the whole ground with it. . . .

BIRNBAUM: *What would Harriet have thought of his color palette?*

YAMADA: Oh, well, maybe she would have a little bit of a problem [with it] but the massing was terrific. I mean, he was he was not fooling around. And you could really read [it], you know, it's almost like reading one of his paintings. I mean, he doesn't stop with this and this, he does the whole show. And if that took 2,000 plants [it was] 2,000 plants. We saw a little bit of the man, too, because he traveled with the group. If you were traveling next to him, it was very good, because he talked all the time. But if you're out of the hearing area, you could just see his arms flailing away. But it was a wonderful opportunity, and Liz and I took advantage of it. We went with a landscape contractor and his wife, Joe Delgado. and he too, he was amazed at how they could get that many plants into the ground in a sweep. It would take ten nurseries to

grow all that groundcover, over here. Now Harriet did it on a much smaller scale. She did a lot of that same curving, massing of agapanthus, star jasmine, natal plum, rhaphiolepis but mostly with white flowering [plants]or just [shades of]green to create the image. It was a wonderful trip, a wonderful trip.

Garrett Eckbo Mentor and Friend

YAMADA: We saw Garrett again at IFLA, in 1964 in Japan. And I tell you, Garrett Eckbo is what they call a sensei, a teacher, a professor. You're the highest; you're higher than the governor and any politicians. If you're a teacher in Japan, especially at University, you're at the top, right next to the emperor, probably. So anyway this was the [International Federation of Landscape Architects] IFLA meeting, Garrett Eckbo held a meeting with all the landscape architects, a lot of young guys at the university and it filled this whole conference room. And Kubo introduced Garrett Eckbo, and first he said "Mr. Eckbo, your name Eckbo in Japanese means dimple." And Garrett Eckbo's has those deep dimples, you know. And he smiled and smiled.

And he said, "also I want you to know that Mr. Yamada named his first son Garrett." And oh boy he got me completely unexpected. I'm sliding down in my seat, and Garrett's is just, you know, he's grinning away. And I said, "Garrett, I had a, not a wager but an agreement. My roommate was a landscape architect, and we were both seniors at Berkeley, in fact, we were in one of your lectures. And we agreed that whoever got married first and had a son could name him Garrett. And it never dawned on me I would name my son anything else." Garrett. It's a great name, I told Garrett, I said, " I love that name." And my son's a Presbyterian minister. I was thinking, maybe if I have the name, that he might be a landscape architect. But he's very, very happy following in his grandpa's footsteps in the ministry.

So anyway, we became very, very good friends. And in fact, we had a couple of consultations with him on our own projects. And Arlene and Liz were really good friends, and they correspond with each other all the time. And then when I was ready to get my medal, my

Fellow's medal in 1979, I called Garrett and I said, "Would you please escort me for my medal?" He said", I would be honored."

So, in New Orleans during the ceremony, I didn't realize Liz had flown in my kids secretly, and all of a sudden during the ceremony, they appeared at our table. I was there earlier, and they weren't there but he had them hidden until we marched to the podium. And, so it was the first time my Garrett could meet the real Garrett. And that was, that was a wonderful, wonderful day for me, to have my son meet the real Garrett Eckbo. And Garrett was delighted and very bashful, almost embarrassed because I'd embarrassed him because of my son. But he loved it. He said, "thank you, thank you." So I have a Garrett, but not a landscape architect.

Working with Hideo Sasaki

YAMADA: There were three different [War Relocation] camps, camp one, camp two, and three. After camp, well a long time after, Hideo Sasaki was on a committee with Liz [Yamada] to do the [Japanese] memorial in Washington D.C. So they got to know each other pretty well.

He wanted to have a landscape architect from each of the 10 camps to meet with him at Manzanar here in California. He said, "I want to get your input as to what we should do with this camp. The government is making it a memorial to the Japanese". It was be something that we all wanted to participate in. So we met with Hideo. He's quite a good organizer. He is a wonderful, wonderful man. And he wanted to hear from each of us about what our thoughts were, because he had definite thoughts**.** Do we want to get the camp, or certain pieces of the camp restored the way it was then when we had beautiful fish ponds and landscaping?

Sasaki said, "Do we want to recreate those beautiful gardens, and when people come in and see this camp, they'll say, what are they crying about, look at this beautiful garden that they have. What were they crabbing about being locked up in this camp?" And so he said, "we don't want to do that. We want them to look at the camp today, which is all windblown and all the things are gone, everything is torn down." He said, "You know what I want to do, I want to build

the barbed wire fence at the entrance and I want to put a machine gun tower back that was there when we entered that camp." I want them to feel what we felt; going in there and seeing these guards up there with their machine guns and the barbed wire fence". And I said, "We'll wait a minute, you know, who's the enemy here? We're all American-born, what are you putting us here for in the first place?"

I've not been back to Manzanar camp since our meeting with Hideo. We had a two-day session to discuss how we might develop the museum there. There is a local landscape architect, Dennis Otsuji, who is a very good friend of mine and who was a big associate in my office for many years, he stayed on and they developed a program to develop the new museum. It didn't take 10 guys to do it. But he [Sasaki] wanted an opinion from each of us.
My pitch was, you know, I think we should show the public what we were able to do without having anything. I said, they'd be shocked at what we could do with our hands, with having nothing to start with but our brains and our backs, you know.

But he said, his opinion was, that isn't a strong enough impact for somebody coming into the camp and saying, gee, look at that beautiful garden there.

Elements of Design

Why Site a Building?

BIRNBAUM: W*hy should the landscape architect site the building? OK, you've told us about how this evolution happened. We can trace it back to your a-ha moment with Tommy Church's office?*

YAMADA: And thanks to that little charrette with Tommy Church. Once they saw what we did with the buildings, they said listen, We'll design the buildings, you site them on the site." I mean, to me, that was a big plus in our hat, you know. Because most architects will say, "well, there's a planter over there, and one over here, tell me what to put in that one and tell me what to put in that one." That's how it first started out. But once I told them that if we turn that

building this way, look at the great space we have opened up for additional landscape. And the architect Russell Forrester, he said, "I'm not siting another building without you. You're going to do the site [design], I'll design the building, you do the siting. You guys know how to do it, and you know how to create the nice landscape spaces."

And then all the other architects began to follow suit. Basically we're doing all the siting of the buildings. And to me, that was, that was a real feather in our cap that we could begin telling architects where to put their building. Not really tell them, but suggest to them that here's one way of doing it, and we could do this; and if you place it over here, we could landscape this. And their eyes opened up like this. And they used to be concerned about our fees, because I raised our fees. I think I raised it for the whole landscape architect group. They never charged fees like we did.

Whether it was an office building or a residence or even the UCSD campus, there are things that we did with their site plans, their floor plans, their requirements for parking where we were able to jostle this building. The architects could see, hey, that's not a bad idea. Look, you can get all this space over here, and look at all the landscape work we can put over here. Before we had just a narrow strip on both sides of the building and that was it. So I think we had to prove ourselves. And we did it through residential [work] first, doing the smaller buildings, smaller jobs, even if it was a doctor's office or something; we made them sort of unique. So everybody on that block had a building set like this, and we came in there and pull [the building] back, and developed all this [area]. And they said, "You know, those other guys are fools to line their buildings up like that." I said, "Well, you know, that was the easy way to do it." That's what the civil engineer got paid for. He says, ten feet in, ten feet in, 50 feet back, and they get paid this enormous fee for putting it on a map. So by tilting the buildings the way we did, they could see right away. it not only did something for the landscape, it really did something for the buildings. Because you're not looking at just one flat plane, by tilting it like this, it's amazing, now you see part of this building and part of this building. And for them it made a lot more sense to jostle

the building or shove it back a little further and get more depth in the front. So we enjoyed that aspect of the work, and they appreciated it.

The Perfect Tree Makes a Statement

BIRNBAUM: *What does the perfect tree mean to you?*

YAMADA: The perfect tree will make the job, [that is] for sure. I showed you that picture at SeaWorld, of that one tree. Now, what other tree could you have put in there that would have given you that much strength? That tree just spread and had the right branching, and it was perfect for the spot. I don't know if I could recommend another tree in its place. So the first thing to do is find the spot, find a typical spot that you're thinking about. That's why you go to these big nurseries.

Today it's a whole different story. Let me tell you about the perfect tree. We were doing a home in, beyond Del Mar, for a person named Kelts. He was the Vice President of Pepsi Cola. Anyway, he had this huge pond, it was a shallow pond about six inches [deep] but it was a 24-foot square, and nothing [was] in there. And I said, "You know, that would be a perfect spot for a beautiful architectural tree to fill that 24 by 24 foot [space].And I said, "You know, there is one, but it's too large a tree to ship down from Los Angeles." And his wife heard me say that. She said, "Will they helicopter it down?" I said, "Not this tree, it's just too big." "Will they bring it by barge?" I said, "Well, from the barge over here, you still have to get it over here." I mean, I was trying to discourage them but every time they would say something [else].

Then I talked to the nurseryman. Valley Crest is probably the biggest tree company down here. I talked to Valley Crest, and they said, "We can load that tree, and we'll tie the branches in as best we can". They had this huge coral tree, beautiful, for $25,000. Fantastic. Well, they [the Kelts] just spent more than that on a piece of sculpture, which only stood about as high as this. So money was not the big thing. They wanted something special for that area.

So the Valley Crest man he said, "I tell you what. If you get them to pay for all my tickets going down, we'll get the tree there." I said, "What do you mean all the tickets?" He said, "We can

only drive at night, or to a certain time in the morning and you only can move it a couple of miles, and then you have to stop and find a spot to [lay over] and then you move a couple more miles.

And on top of that we had to get that tree from the front driveway clear around the side [of the house]. We couldn't lift it over the house. The bulldozer had to build a road to bring the truck around. And that was almost $10,000. So I'm telling all this to Mr. Kelts and he says, "What the hell do you think we're doing? [Building] the Taj Mahal?" I said, "Well, it's going to cost you almost like the Taj Mahal." But he says, "Is it a beautiful tree?" I said, "Yes, it's the most beautiful tree there is". I tried to discourage his wife too. "Let's get something smaller because it's more practical." But she wouldn't give up.

So these guys came down every back road they could find that was not anywhere close to 101. They used all the back roads and they had to do a lot of wire cutting and replacing. They got a ticket every time they moved. They had over $10,000 worth of tickets. And Mr. Kelts says, "don't worry about that, we'll take care of that". And he says, "Well, what kind of guarantee do I have on that tree after you plant it?" And so I ask Valley Crest, I said, "we've got this $25,000 tree, $10,000 to bring it around with a bulldozer, I said, what's going to happen if the tree dies?" And the Valley Crest guy says, "It better not die." I said, "It better not die is right, because he's going to have you sign something to replace the tree with equal value or replace the money. So we did it, and we got it in that yard. And in less than a year, the two of them divorced, but the tree, I think, still stands back there. I mean, it just made their whole yard; they had this big yard, and this great big box of concrete and nothing else. I couldn't believe it. So by putting that tree there, it just filled in that whole thing.

And in fact [after that] the Valley Crest guy said, "Any tree you want, just let us know and I'll bring it and deliver it to you." So the coral tree over here and that sycamore tree in front came from Valley Crest, no charge. He says, thanks for your business. So, but you know, the tree is getting pretty big now, I don't know what I'm going to do with it.

But big single trees do make a difference to anything you do. We did some track houses, and the ones that really sold, in that particular area had olive trees. It made such an impact on these model homes, if you put four olive trees, line them up with your model homes; automatically the [client] says, "Wow." They don't realize it's the trees, along with some planting [that makes it]. The tree was what they were really eyeing, it gave it scale. They gave the house some scale because it wasn't a little five-gallon tree, and it was positioned in the right spot so that you walked by it or under it.
So the specimen, any specimen tree, no matter what you pick is good.

Color in a Wimmer Yamada Design

BIRNBAUM: *What was the office's approach to color?*

YAMADA: Oh, yes, the office's approach to color, [was] limited. I had no problems with adding color. But not in masses like we did with the white star jasmine or things like that.
Harriet, after we were together and practicing for seven years, she retired. But I retired her with full pay and with that she was able to have a chauffeur, a driver, go out and see all the jobs we were doing. And we, Liz and I, met her every Tuesday night for dinner at her apartment. And I'd walk in and she'd say, "Joe, what was that plant you used at in Ms. Bingham's place that has that red flower? I'm going, "uh oh".

Because what I tried to do with the new people was to give them a little freedom mainly on residential projects, and they would sneak in their favorite [plant]. And all of sudden you would see color appearing [in the gardens] other than white. And she would question me, "Why did you let them do that to the Bingham residence?" And I'd say, "What do you mean, Harriet?" She says, "Well I see some red flowers in there or pink, whatever it was. And I said, "Well, what I try to do, Harriet, is give some freedom to these designers. We're hiring these talented young people, and I'm giving them an opportunity to present their plan."

And if I think it has possibilities, I tell them, well let's go ahead and install it, and see what falls. But Harriet would catch every one of them. And we'd have this discussion every Tuesday. And she'd say, "well, I love what they did in so-and-so's garden." I said, "When did you see that?" And she said, "Oh, my driver took me there yesterday." But she kept an eye on everything we did even though she was retired. She wanted to be involved, even from a distance. She never came to the office. All the discussion was with me directly. And, but most of it was great.

Yeah, because I thought, if you're going to hire good people, you've got to give them a chance to see what they can create on a smaller scale. And let's do one, and see what it looks like. So you know, if that makes them happy, and it makes me satisfied to know that we have people who really know what they're doing with color and shrubs and trees. And so I kind gave them a more of a free hand than Harriet would have. But I always got questioned by her on Tuesday night.

Working with Stone

BIRNBAUM: *You had mentioned Joe Delgado to me when we were walking around SeaWorld yesterday. And perhaps you could speak to how that kind of project would happen with the rock work in the office in terms of --*

YAMADA: Mr. Delgado? Most of our work with Joe Delgado was building tremendous waterfalls for custom homes. He just had a way of handling Mother Nature. The other one that works with rocks was Mr. Ito. He did it Japanese style. It was a whole different style. What you saw at the [La Jolla Village] plaza was Joe Delgado. He handled boulders that were unbelievable in size, and placed them in places that you never see in a wall.

BIRNBAUM: *I mean, you know, we spent a lot of time talking about the Yamada bumps, we spent a lot of time talking about the legacy of planting that begins with Harriet and the palette, but really until this moment, we haven't really talked about this, this, the ways in which rocks*

are features, both starring roles and subordinate roles in a Wimmer Yamada, and now Caughey, landscape.

CAUGHEY: Well, if there are the Yamada bumps then there are the Caughey rocks. But it's only, again, after following such great examples. Joe Delgado was an artist, and we have projects today that are the projects that Joe designed 35 years ago, and we're redesigning them. And my biggest worry is to have to deconstruct a water feature that is 35 years old, because it needs a new liner and new hydraulics, and then put it back. And I'm just fretting with the contractor to take a picture. What Joe did 35 years ago we could never afford to do today and the contractors just don't have that mentality.

So it's all about the composition for a water feature. A water feature, it's about the weir, it's about the amount of water flowing over the weir. At the Plaza, every one of those points where the water flows over and creates that sound, it was done on purpose. And you can't recreate that unless you know what you're doing. But rocks are another material. You know, the landscape palette [is made up of] the hardscape, the paving, the rocks, and now especially with water issues we use a lot more rock because it's the dryscape.

Thoughts on Design

Yamada Bumps and Wimmer's Plantings Compliment each Other

BIRNBAUM: *This may not be the exact place to ask this question, I know that you're a golfer, I didn't get to ask you this yesterday, and I'm curious about, you know, from your time golfing, if it's affected the way you look at earth shaping and landform?*

YAMADA: I'm a lousy golfer, but those earth berms that surround every green, if you really study any golf course, you have earth mounds with sand traps in it. And to me, they made it look as if it was always there. That earth berm and that sand trap had a place, a natural place to

be. And when we worked with the golf course architects, and we've done a couple of nice golf courses with the Trent Jones people, their whole thing is sculpting the land.

You know, you don't see a golf course that's just perfectly flat that goes from here to there. I mean, a golfer would like that because then they know where the ball's going to end up. But if you, if you really study the landforms, the landform didn't change, it's just that they added a sand trap here and a sand trap there. So it's a natural thing to me, and that's why that golf course where they played the British Open is to me, one of the more beautiful ones. It's not smooth and tailored like some of ours, but very natural. That, to me, is landscape architecture. Take the natural landforms and take advantage of it. And if it's not there, create it.

And Harriet just loved what I did. And I loved how she took the forms that I gave and added her shrub masses to the same curvatures, as I was trying to do with the mounds. So I think as a team of Wimmer Yamada, she knew how to handle the natural berms that I was creating with the landforms and the walks and so forth. I think that was really our success together, we complimented each other. She loved what I was doing, and I certainly loved the way she handled the landscaping. So as a duo, Wimmer Yamada, that was it. I'd take care of the structural elements, and she took care of all the planting.

Maintenance is key

YAMADA: Yeah, and that's [maintenance has] always been a problem. The maintenance of the campus, or the maintenance of SeaWorld, if they did not have the right people it would really make us look bad. So I know when we finished SeaWorld we walked that site and watched the maintenance crew in action. Because I told Harriet, "if that guy doesn't know what he's doing, or he's not properly watering or fertilizing or whatever," I said, "we're going to get that guy out of there. Because all he's doing is taking home a paycheck, but he doesn't really know or understand what his role is."

So a lot of times at SeaWorld especially, we met with the gardeners right at the beginning [of the job]. George Millay said, "I want you to instruct these gardeners, because we have this botanical garden look, and we wanted make sure that it's properly kept up. Because we have children coming by and identifying the plants, and we don't want a dead plant out there." So we made an inspection and Harriet looked especially at the plants and I was looking more at the structures of the trees and the trimming of the larger material and the mounds to make sure that they were not getting out of whack.

So you needed a good contractor. And when we did the Japanese garden especially, we had a Japanese contractor, the one I work with on all our residences. And he really knew how to grade. Those mounds were his specialty. And he also did the one at Scripps campus. So anyway, we were lucky to have these guys who are really good at their job. And I think that was our success at Wimmer Yamada because we knew we were in good hands. And that really made it easy for me and for Harriet, because we knew George Yasuda was going to do this; and Valley Crest was doing that. And the only time we had a real bad time was when they started bidding these jobs, and you'd be getting these low-ball contractors that came in there and they'd try stuff. But they didn't get away with anything with us. As long as you're there telling that guy, "no, no, you get that irrigation pipe down there where it belongs." We did a job over in Coronado for a library, and the guy says, "Oh, it's all done." I said, "All done?" We hadn't seen any of the pipe go in. He said, "oh yeah, it went in according to the specs." We went over there and lifted one of those things up. It was buried in the ground about three or four inches. I said, "There's 18 inches here, or 12 inches [on the plan], I can't remember, but not three inches." I pulled them all up. I just pulled them all up, put them in the way they should be. That guy was sick, he says, "Oh, we just got through putting that in." I said, "yeah, do it to the specs or we're going to catch you guys." You know, everybody's trying to cheat you. So that was a major job for me, inspection.

What is a Japanese Garden?

BIRNBAUM: *There is a whole period where the Japanese influence is tremendous in terms of modernism. And so was there ever any conceptions that somehow, they would say, "oh, give me a modern Japanese garden to you? Did that happen?"*

YAMADA: Not that I could recall. I don't think I've ever done a Japanese garden. And when I, when people walk in here, they see this black pine and the stones and the water they say, "oh you've got a Japanese garden." I say "no, it's not really a Japanese garden. It's one of those fakey jobs". You know, as long as you've got the Japanese pine trees out there and certain materials, everybody thinks they have a Japanese garden. But I love the Japanese gardens and I love the things they did with them. But to do a true, true Japanese garden, you need the right person, I mean, from Japan. They know exactly how to [do it].They take rocks, and it's unbelievable, they take smaller rocks and make those rocks look like one big rock, with, you know, maybe with a crack in it or something. But you'd swear that it was one rock. No, no, those are four rocks put together. And they make them fit just as if they've split apart.

But there's a lot to these Japanese gardens. Like [when] we're pruning these black pines, or even trimming them properly from the top, it takes the right kind of people to maintain them. So I don't really recommend a real Japanese garden to any of my clients. Because I said if you know what you're getting into, that's one thing; if you want something that looks a little Japanese because you've got a black pine or some bamboo or something, I could probably help you. But I said, if you want a real Japanese garden, then you want to get the real pro, the person who really knows the placement of the rocks and how and where the pines should be shaped.

So anything you see around here that looks pseudo-Japanese, it's only because I am Japanese, and I love the black pine. And I love the bamboo, you know. And so the material I have here is not Japanese necessarily. But when people come in the front door, and say, "Oh, I love your Japanese garden," because they see the Japanese pines out there. I say, "Oh thank you."

BIRNBAUM: *The little garden that's in the courtyard, is that, was that designed by someone else?*

YAMADA: This guy is Takendo Ari. And he came from Japan and worked for SeaWorld. And he does private gardens. And what he does, he has a, I don't know if it's a car jack or what, it's on a tripod, he moves all these boulders with that tripod. He gets it in the air, and he swings it over, and he puts it down, and the he moves the tripod over. I mean, I'm talking about rocks the three of us couldn't carry. But he, he's very, very clever how he does that. He doesn't use an A-frame truck like the old guys used to do to get rocks around. He'd get a big crane with, or an A-frame, and move it in. But this guy Takendo, he does nothing but small Japanese gardens, and he never uses any heavy equipment. I hate to even watch him do it, because I think he's going to break his back. But he's just excellent at what he does.

BIRNBAUM: *When you went with IFLA to Japan, what was that like? Did it affect you as a landscape architect? What was that like?*

YAMADA: Well, it was really a learning experience for me to see the Kyoto gardens and to meet the actual designers of the various Japanese gardens and learn their philosophy.

They took us in a lecture room and he [the lecturer] would tell us, here's a small typical garden, and this is how we approach it. You must have the right rocks, you must have the right materials, or we don't do the job. In other words, they don't want to spend all the time looking for the stuff. They want to make sure that there are materials available to create their image.

The biggest thing that I think that was needed were the black pine trees. Most of them are at least 50 years to 200 years old. And they're already shaped a certain way, so they can only go in a certain position. They could be elevated and hanging down over the rock, or they've got to be low and sweeping up. So their job would be to find us the material, we'll look at it, and we'll make sure it will fit our need. And so in listening to them as they talk about how they approach

a garden, their clientele is interesting. I mean, that for their clientele that want these gardens, special gardens, money is not a question, a problem. So these, these homes that have these really beautiful Japanese gardens, they're paying a ton of money to that designer. And he's like a contractor. He designs it, but he's got to be out there, placing the rock, turning the rock, you know, taking that pine out of here, and getting another one. So that experience in Japan, I think, the Japanese garden was just one part of it. We saw a lot of other things they were doing, you know, like the factories.

But the real Japanese gardens that are enclosed, the rock gardens with no plants at all, just rocks and the gravel, you know, those are kind of one in a million. You know there's probably not too darn many of the old-timers left that do that work. But I sure learned by seeing. But I can't believe everything I see because I said, it can't be, I can't believe that he did that.

The gardens in Japan, were unique in every way. And if you get into certain gardens, you can really experience them by walking through them. You see the reason they take these blocks and they break them up. The whole purpose is that as you're walking, you have to look where you're going. So you walk along the flat area and then you step across. When you're stepping across to the other stones you're so busy looking at what's going on over here, that by the time you look up, there it is, right in front of you. And those little turns are there just to create that. As soon as you make your crossing, you'll look up, and say "where did that come from", you know? "Where did that come from?"

So anyway, that was the only time I wished that I was really Japanese, Japanese, living in Japan and doing Japanese gardens. I can't even speak two words of Japanese, so I'm out of it.

PROJECTS

The Copley Garden

BIRNBAUM: *Now, the nature of the work when you joined the firm, over the 14 years that you collaborated, was it mostly residential at first?*

YAMADA: Yes. The very wealthy ones, I mean, Copley Press, hired Harriet and Mosher's office to work together and do a garden for them. They [the city] only allowed one house on that 10 acres, and it's still that way. They can only have one house. That was a really the first job that I got to work on.

The first thing they did with me was [to say] that we'd like you to scribe out a horse trail through the 10-acre site. Would you enjoy helping us lay it out? Well, lay it out was this. Harriet was sitting with a bulldozer driver, and I'm in front of the bulldozer with a stick, and I'm walking through all the shrubbery looking for the logical place that horses could walk. And this bulldozer's right behind me. We carved out this beautiful horse pathway for the Copley residence. It was one of the biggest gardens in San Diego, and still is. It was a European-style structure, a fantastic structure. We helped with the design of the pool and all the hardscape and brought all the big trees. I mean, I couldn't believe I was even involved in something like that. That was the first major job that I was involved in. The Kunzel residence, that was probably the best Harriet Wimmer garden I've ever seen. It's over in Point Loma; and it was in House Beautiful and everything. And I would say from my standpoint that was Harriet's best landscape.

The Brooks Residence-and Kunzel Garden

BIRNBAUM: *Did you two have a favorite project together?*

YAMADA: Favorite projects? There's one, in this magazine that I was going to show you, the architect's name was Jones. It's a favorite because the building itself was nothing; it was just an L-shaped building, all wood, pretty much of a blah building. We created a stairway down to a pond, a reflection pond with an island in the middle of a square; and we planted a black pine or something in there. And then we put a trellis clear across that whole pond.

And it turned the house, this plain old house into a spectacular entrance. And I mean it even amazed me how well it turned out. Because when you're doing it on a plan, you're not always sure [that in] three dimensions it is going to be as good as you think it is. And it won all sorts of awards, architects awards.

And Harriet's most famous one is the Kunzel Garden in Point Loma. That is the one you talked about, that we talked about earlier. And recently, I guess both the Kunzels have passed on, so I'm not sure who's there now. But *House Beautiful* awarded it their top award for the house, and listed Harriet as the landscape architect. So her favorite was the Kunzel, mine was Bob Jones, the Brook residence. And certainly we did bigger ones, like Copley and many of her friends had huge, huge, like Tommy Church [type] estates.

In fact, we did over one of Tommy Church's places here in La Jolla called the Cockritz residence. Tommy was down to meet with them and suggested, that he didn't really have time [to do it]. And he gave them a few ideas of what might happen, but he said, "You should get Harriet Wimmer to help you." So that's what we did. So Tommy, Tommy had us in his framework of people that he knew that could do the work down here. And he was a delightful, absolutely delightful man to work with.

SeaWorld

BIRNBAUM: When did the work shift to more commercial and institutional? Tell us about that.

YAMADA: OK. When Harriet and I first started together it was primarily all the residential. The big break came in where one of the architects was designing a hotel in Mission Bay called Islandia. It was the first nice big hotel; it had kind of this Polynesian theme. It used of a lot of pine, black pines, and a lot of boulders. I mean, it was almost semi-Asian looking. But it was a great hotel. It was all wood. And what happened was that the people who were building SeaWorld wanted to have a hotel to stay in. This was right across the street from where the

[SeaWorld] site was. So they all stayed at the Islandia and they saw the landscaping that occurred all around the hotel.

They wanted to find out who did the landscaping. And we wanted to talk to them. Mr. George Millay, the young guy who was starting the whole thing said, "I love what you did over there." He said, "I want SeaWorld to be a botanical garden. I would like you to get many different kinds of plant materials. I want to teach young children that come to SeaWorld not only the sea animals, but I want them to have a botanical knowledge of everything that you've planted with name tags and everything." So our assignment first of all, was to go out and find as many big trees as we could.

In those days, we could still bring those larger trees in on semis [trailers]. Now they, you have to cut them up and they have to be 14 feet, I think. We have a photograph in a brochure showing that weeping acacia. That was a beauty, it's right at the entrance to the park. And that was a $10,000 tree at that time, $10,000 for a tree. I said, George, "you asked us to get the best and find the best", and we found it. And then once he saw that tree he said, "I love it. I love it."

But, he says "I don't know how I'm going to pay for all this?" He says, "Would you and Harriet be interested in taking shares instead of a fee?" I looked at Harriet, I said, "I wish I could do that, but I'm trying to support my family over here and I can't do it with shares." You know, at that time shares didn't even dawn on me, what shares were worth or how you buy shares or anything. Harriet said, I'd never do the shares. She said, you know, I'd have the money."

But George Millay, who was the head guy, just endorsed almost everything that we came up with. And in fact, we ran into Garrett Eckbo the very first time in private practice because he wrote the landscape documents for all of Mission Bay. Any hotel or any commercial building that was built in the whole Mission Bay had to abide by Eckbo's plant list. On that list were palm trees, not my favorite tree. But 20% of the trees had to be palm trees. Well, at SeaWorld, it's not too bad because we could put them all around the killer whale's complex. Just put them in

at angles and in clumps instead of singles. But when it got to the Japanese garden of SeaWorld, Professor Kubo who came over from Japan, he said, "Palm tree? No, no. We no want a palm tree on the diver exhibit."

You know, it [the building] was beautiful. They had the building built in Japan, then all taken apart, marked, and shipped. So it was like a puzzle. They put it all back together again with American Union [labor]. The union here said, "You have to use US union workers, but you can have a Japanese supervisor." So the guy who is supervising, can't even speak English, it's all marked in Japanese. This block goes with this block, and that goes with [that]. I mean, it was really hilarious how they worked together, but they became beautiful friends. The carpenters over here had respect for the Japanese carpenters. And together they got the whole thing put together.

And we had a chance to meet Garrett Eckbo. Because we took our plan, actually it was Professor Kubo's landscape plan, he was teaching at Osaka University, and he had a plan for SeaWorld for the Murata Pearl. And it was a beautiful plan. They shipped full-sized stones, maybe as big as this fireplace from Japan so that they would have an authentic Japanese rock. I mean, big boulders came from Japan on the ships from over there. And so we went to meet [Eckbo] out there in Pasadena and we had a private meeting with him, and we brought the landscape plan. And I said, "Garrett, Mr. Kubo is concerned that we have to use 20% of the trees, palm trees in the Japanese garden." I said, "We could use a certain amount of sagos and other things, but we, you know, we don't want these washingtonias and date palms." Garrett looked at it, he said, "You don't even have to unroll that. The answer is you can do whatever you want." He said, "I know you'll do a good job." He talked to me; "I know you'll do a good job." Kubo's over here and I didn't know if he understood everything he was saying. And he said, "I know you'll do a good job. We don't need any big palm trees." So I did have a chance to meet Garrett at that time.

The interview continues on site at SeaWorld.

YAMADA: You are on a Yamada bump. We had to dredge the sand up about eight feet high in order to get the root zone of the trees out of the salt water. And we dredged the sand, and put the irrigation on it for 24 hours straight, bleaching all the salts and things out of the area. The interesting thing is that for SeaWorld phase one, they took seaweed which had been dried out completely, and mulched it, and it made the best mulch for all the plants. They were testing it out, and it's worked beautifully. It had enough nutrients, and yet it held the water.

And one of the, one of the grounds men just decided to try it. He took a whole section of one of the beaches, dried the seaweed out, ground it all up, and brought it back to SeaWorld, and we tried it. I'm not sure what they're using today, but it sure worked for us in that phase one. It saved the owner a lot of money, and it was good mulch. The best thing was that it absorbed the water that was the key.

The Torrey Pines at SeaWorld

Yamada: I'm going to tell you a little bit of the history of these Torrey pine trees. They were widening highway five through San Diego, and we had an opportunity if we dug out the trees ourselves, to take those Torrey pines. Five of them went to UCSD, and the rest of them came here [SeaWorld]. The Torrey pines are native to the San Diego/ La Jolla area. At that time we told George Millay, our client, that we had these beautiful Torrey pines and that we could probably salvage the trees. I think at that time it was about $4,000 a piece to box the tree and move it to SeaWorld. That cost since has gone to probably $10,000 or $12,000 a tree now. And you can't even move a tree like these now. These weren't of course that big. They were probably two-thirds the height that they are now. But we knew they would grow, and we knew it would be the correct scale for that large theater. And I think we made the right choice.

I think the ability to convince our client to plant a specimen tree, whether it's an office building or a home, or projects like this, any time we can save big trees, that's a plus. And also if we can get something that's more in scale, even if it's a brand new house, if you put a little tree next to

this house, it's going to take 10 or 20 years for it to be a tree. So if you [are lucky and] have the right client and they say, "I don't want to wait ten years, please give me a specimen tree."; the philosophy is a little greedy in that you want to make the landscape as beautiful as possible from day one, and don't want to wait ten years either.

So if there was opportunity to get some nice-looking trees, salvage them, and not have someone else take them out of San Diego, I think, that was a job that I should follow through on. I wanted everything to stay here in San Diego. The Torrey pine, of course, is San Diego's tree. And to save those trees was a really wonderful, thing for my client.

Changes to SeaWorld

YAMADA: You know, I was down, I mean, really [down]. I mean, I was ready to turn around and go home when I first walked into SeaWorld. Pat says, "Come over and look at this." Well remember that picture that I tried to show you in our office brochure [of SeaWorld} which had a picture of the beautiful tree. And you look in there [now] and there is a big hole dug there and that tree's gone. I mean, I couldn't believe I was looking at that same area where that photograph was taken. And it just destroyed me really. I mean, I was hurting.

Salk Institute for Biological Studies

BIRNBAUM: *Joe, you just triggered something. What was it like when Salk got built- in terms of really putting the city and modernism on the map? Do you remember the first time you went there?*

YAMADA: Well, we, actually we consulted with the architects on the Salk Institute when it was first being built. We were the ones who recommended those star jasmines that hang down three stories from those blank walls. They had no way in which to green up those huge cavities that they made. But they had a planter at the very top, and we planted a whole row of star jasmines and let them trail down there. And you know, the architect was just pleased as could be. And so anyway, we had a beginning with them. It was really an architect's landscape. The

water features, the whole work; I mean, it was a gem by itself; it didn't need any landscape, really. The building stood by itself.

At that time we were doing work around UCSD, and so one of the higher-ups, I can't remember the gentleman's name, he was a lead architect, he authorized us to come in survey the building and see where we could help soften some of the walls. And Harriet came up with star jasmine; to let it hang all the way down that wall, it must hang 20, 30 feet down that wall. Otherwise would have been just plain concrete. So Salk Institute was the really inspiring kind of architecture. We were right across the street at UCSD doing our thing, but for us it was the architects [who got us involved.] Harriet and I never had to go out and try and solicit a job. They, [the architects] were calling us, and our problem was to be able to get a good staff together. I mean, I never thought that we would have that kind of volume of work. And of course, the major work came after the SeaWorld project.

Scripps Institution of Oceanography

YAMADA: The first really grading and [use of] the [Yamada] bumps occurred down at Scripps Institution of Oceanography. Dr. [Roger] Revelle was questioned by three admirals who lived across the street from the campus. They had a straight unobstructed view from their homes to the ocean. They had heard that the university was going to park 100 cars somewhere on this piece of property.

They marched into the meeting of the campus planning committee on which Harriet and I served. All three of them, were, I mean, powerful guys. "You are not going to build a parking lot in front of our homes." And I said, "Well, we're not going to." I told them that we had already studied what I thought we were going to do. I said, "Admiral", I can't remember his last name, anyway, "Admiral," I said, "will you give us a chance to show you?" I will you build a cardboard model. [In those days] that's all we used was cardboard. We didn't have the sophisticated

models; we used cardboard, nandina sticks for the trees, and pieces of gravel for the rocks. But I made a model of the entrance to Scripps.

There was about a 30 foot drop from the road, it just went straight down to the water. So we came in at the very bottom of the property and we dug out, dug into that hillside so there was a 15 foot high retaining wall all along the side. You didn't even see it from their houses because from the 15 foot [wall] up, we did all the grading and we created a stream that came with a bridge. In fact, you can see it down at Scripps. It was wonderful when the water was running. But they [the University] had trouble, the university police couldn't keep the kids out of the water, so they shut it off.

Anyway, there was a stream bed and a bridge and all these rolling mounds. And Dr. Revelle says, "What are those bumps out there?" I said, "Well they're earth mounds, and we're going to plant them." I said, "Do you play any golf?" If you go to a golf course, if you go near a green, you'll see all these beautiful creative rolling turf [mounds]." He said, "No I don't play golf." He said," Well what do you call those things?" I said, "Mounds." And he said, "no, no. To me, they're bumps. They're Yamada bumps and I love them." He loves them he says, because they are so windy and curvy.

And so, the three Admirals, they are beside themselves, they just loved everything. They came to the next three meetings just to say thank you to the committee for doing such a wonderful job. And so that, you know, gave us a big feather [in our hat]. Dr. Revelle, Dr. Revelle was the most wonderful director, but he never became chancellor.

YAMADA: Well, I should finish up Scripps Institution because; Lloyd Ruocco was selected by Dr. Monk, for the new IGPP building. Lloyd Ruocco was the architect. And he [Ruocco] said, Wimmer and Yamada are going to do the landscape. You know, we were always tied together with the architect; they always tied us in right away. I mean, we didn't have separate contracts with the architect; we had direct contracts with each of the owners.

But you know I feel, I feel strongly that in my early years, we helped the profession by establishing fees that were really acceptable; and we wanted our names on everything that we did. I think that made, that really made the difference.

University of California San Diego [UCSD]

BIRNBAUM: S*ince you both mentioned UCSD, let's talk a little bit about that and maybe Joe you can go first and talk about how the project came to the office. If you go to the UCSD campus today, what would we see that would be a Wimmer Yamada landscape?*

YAMADA: OK. Actually Tommy Church was the landscape architect that was selected for UCSD. But because of the distance from his office to San Diego, he felt that there must be a firm in San Diego with whom he could work. And we got the job because he saw our work. He wanted to interview us up there in San Francisco. And when he met with us, he said, "no question you and Harriet are going to be the recommendation that I give to UCSD. And if I occasionally have to come down and meet with you and critique your work, I'd be glad to do it." I said, "we would love to have you come down." He saw the work as it was going on and he never even questioned what we were doing. It was wonderful to have that opportunity.

BIRNBAUM: *So what were the projects that you did there?*

YAMADA: Well, we started our whole career down at Scripps. I told you about that park. And then we moved up the hill. The next project we did for UCSD was the married student apartments with architects Mosher and Drew who were doing those buildings. That was sort of the stepping block. The next one was Revelle College, which was a wonderful project. Risley and Gould out of Los Angeles were the original architects. They did the first buildings at Revelle. And at that time, because of what we did down at Scripps the new Chancellor came in and saw what we were doing, and signed us to be the landscape architect consultants for the UCSD campus.

We actually wore two different hats. We were consulting and we were also executive landscape architects. Meaning that first you helped master plan the landscape, you worked with the architects to develop the area, and then you were assigned by the architects to draw the plans and implement them. So it was hat over here to design the master plan, the hat over here to execute the project.

I mean, it was absolutely wonderful for us. They wanted us to establish a color for the concrete. So that it would be consistent throughout Revelle College. They didn't want to have one architect use exposed aggregate and another one use brick. So the landscape had to carry the whole thing. And that's why those eucalyptus trees that we fought so hard to keep were the element that tied the college all together.

Someone mentioned the walls. How did you ever come about building that wall out of the lava rock? It was something I happened to find at the quarry. We wanted to do a natural wall, not concrete block or brick. So I went to this rock quarry, and sure enough, they had this lava rock. I said, "You know, that would make a hell of a nice wall." So yeah, that is how that came about. –

Saving the Eucalyptus Trees at UCSD

CAUGHEY: Because again, I've had to step in, and get involved on projects that the firm did many, many years ago. He [Joe] mentioned Revelle College, [well] Muir College was another one. We're actually right now adding new buildings to Muir College. So I'm sending my staff out there, saying, you protect everything that Joe did 35 years ago, 40 years ago. The library, which is the icon of UCSD campus, [William] Pereira, who was the architect, Joe can tell this story better than I, but Joe was so influential in spotting the library. You actually had them move it.

YAMADA: [Yes,] 100 feet, 125 feet over.

CAUGHEY: To save the eucalyptus.

YAMADA: Yeah. To save the eucalyptus trees. Somehow [to] the architects, the trees weren't part of their problem, they just wanted to get their building in the best position, maybe, for the sun is or whatever. But they just plunked it [the building] right down. So I took Dr. Revelle out there with me, and told him which trees were going to be taken down. Oh, and then [I took] the chancellor, because Dr. Revelle had left. The chancellors were great, because they, they loved those trees.

And when you tell them that some trees are going to be destroyed, they said, "show me." So they roll up their pants and they walk out there with me, and we looked at the trees. I said, "See this area right here? There are 125 eucalyptus trees that are going to be destroyed because they won't move the building over." When you say that to an architect, they die because the structural engineer had all the plans drawn. [And they] say, "You're going to move my building where?"

But, [we won] with the Chancellor's support and their feelings for the natural landscape. The architect would say, "You've got 10,000 trees out here, what the heck's the difference if 100 trees go?" I mean [it means] a heck of a lot of difference for those trees, because they gave immediate scale to the buildings. Why take something out when you already have it? Why would you destroy 125 trees and then have to bring little one gallon trees and wait 25 years. Crazy.

CAUGHEY: I think there's an important historical context. You know, the campus where UCSD is, the land was all flat. There was not a eucalyptus tree out there. And actually, back in World War II, it was Camp Matthews, it was a military base. Well, the Scripps are known throughout San Diego, Scripps Hospital, Scripps Institute of Oceanography and so on; the Scripps family back in the 1800's planted the eucalyptus trees all over San Diego. All the different species were brought from Australia, and they were intended to be used for agricultural purposes. They were going to grow the eucalyptus for ships spars and railroad ties. Well as it grows the eucalyptus tree twists. And of course, after they planted hundreds of thousands of these trees, they realized that that was a bad tree to choose.

Well, when they planted them, they planted them on a six foot grid. So on the campus of UCSD, these trees are planted on a six foot on center grid. Now, of course, eucalyptus do not grow naturally that way, they need space. So where trees had space, they would grow into these beautiful, tremendous specimens 100 feet tall. But if you go into the grove that they refer to, there are a lot of trees that you can just see are stunted. They are actually they're second and third year growth because the old trees have died off and these are new little sprigs. And that, ironically, has been one of the mandates at UCSD. You have to respect the trees, respect the grove. And in some cases, I've had to recreate the grove. Horticulturally, it's the worst thing to do. But I've had to recreate the grove to give them that sense of the grove. And everybody has had to put the buildings within the context of the grove and make sure that they are protected. It's probably one of the strongest identities for UCSD. Each UC [University of California] campus has an identity, and at UCSD, it's the eucalyptus.

The Yamada Residence

YAMADA: We built this home in 1973. My wife's brother is an architect, we attended Cal together, he studied architecture, and I was fortunate enough to get into landscape architecture at that time. There was a developer who developed all these properties and the manager who was in charge of all the property sales, owned this lot. But he got a better commission if he went to Laguna Niguel up the coast. So he, he and I became friends. He said, "Listen Joe, come up and see the lot that I had reserved for myself. You might like it." He drove me up here, and there was nothing around here. That house was not there. There were no trees, except the one big eucalyptus. I talked to the owner of the development because I was interested in it [the lot]. So he said, "I tell you what, you're doing all these landscape plans for all these developments. He says, "You do my tree landscape plan for this subdivision, and I'll sell you this lot for $7,500."

I was the first Asian to own property in this La Jolla area. It just so happened I was landscaping the president of the realtor board in La Jolla, and he was handling a meeting in the morning,

and he said, "Joe, your name came up this morning, and you're the first Asian that is seeking to buy property in La Jolla. In fact, they said they understood it was already sold to you." And I said, "Yes, I bought it from Bob Walters." And he said, "Well, there are people in my realtor party that asked a lot of questions about that because they were not selling property to Asians or blacks or Jews in La Jolla, period." And so when they heard that Yamada owned a piece of property here, they questioned Bob Harper who happened to be the head of the realtor's board. And he said, "You people should be damn happy that Joe Yamada is even building in La Jolla. He's the best damn landscape architect in the country, and you, you guys are questioning why he should be in La Jolla? He's going to do a fabulous home and a fabulous job with his landscaping. Why are you guys even questioning this?" So they all quieted down. And we never heard a word; and no one ever gave us any problem.

BIRNBAUM: *So tell us about, how did you select your architect?*

YAMADA: The architect and I went to Cal together. He happens to be Liz's younger brother, and we studied architecture and landscape [together] for several years. So there was no question when I got this lot that I would have my brother-in-law David come and look at the property. And he designed the house without any of our input; except he knew that we had three children, so he had to make three bedrooms.

LIZ: We never discussed a concept or what the house should be. He just designed the house. And you know, at that point in our young life, just to have a house built for us was a gift. I mean, we were so surprised that we could even build a house. We just said, "Design a house for us". I think I visited the house once when it was being built. I was just excited about having a house. I had never lived in a house. I had lived in a church, lived in a barrack, lived in shacks. So why would I even ask my brother how to design a house? It was a gift.

Joe Yamada describes the process of constructing the landscape.

This has all been here for 38 years. And you can see the size of the boulders that they had to bring out. See that road? They had a huge crane sitting out here putting these boulders there. And then our whole waterfall area, all these rocks were all part of that delivery. The things we wanted were the boulders, the waterfall, the big sycamore tree, which wasn't that big. It was quite small, and so was this coral tree right over there; but the coral tree has given scale to that side of the property.

And the black pines have kind of made their own statement, including this tree, which came from our other house. We brought that tree over here. It was barely peeking over the opening. Now it's, now it's shooting up above. But people love these pines when they come by. But the landscape is pretty simple.

These rocks are set pretty much like you would find in Japan. There is no concrete. They set them up tight and made the steps as they went. But like I say, there are no hand rails. The whole idea is that you could provide a path without the use of handrails. Of course, now that I'm 80, I wish I had a handrail. But all these boulders all came in at the same time, all the way over to the [water] fall. They were placed by a young Mr. Ito. The father Ito was a real Japanese rock placement guy. His son Chuck took over the business, and he placed all these rocks. And so they kind of made the [planting] areas set. And then we just planted with them. This is the rhaphiolepis ovata. It's a white flowering rhaphiolepis. It was one of Harriet's favorite plants, or one of her favorites. And when it's in bloom, it is just solid white. The lilies are the same thing; they would have white blooms as well. And nandina is another one of our favorites, because it's very lacey, and a vertical plant. It just softens the whole foundation, all the way into the entry.

So that's basically, that's basically [it]. And the New Zealand, these are called New Zealand Christmas trees; they have such a great structure and they get full of red strawberries. You can see one or two of them hanging off that branch. We've kept the wavy natural look of its branching [habit]. Our sycamore is getting pretty big and it may need to be trimmed someday. But we just love the scale of the big trees.

BIRNBAUM: *So what, what did this look like? What was, like when you guys came here in the 70s?*

YAMADA: OK. When we moved in here, there was zero [landscaping], including all the stuff we have now. There were no plants along here and those eucalyptuses didn't exist then. So it was just flat, like those hillsides over there, just flat with some native growth on it, no trees, no shrubs. It was clear all the way down to that street. These lots that are in here now were not originally designed to be there. That road is a private road, and they were not to build any additional houses. But there was a dentist who owned that property, he agreed to put a road all the way through, all the way to that house at the very end.

You could see all the way up to the coast. And in the evenings, the sunsets are fantastic. But it was basically just a non-descript slope with some native shrubs growing on it. There was nothing out here. And this tree was just a little old tree, 15-gallon tree. We did bring the big sycamores in, that one and this one, and the coral tree. That coral tree was a specimen tree, but it was only probably 12 or 14 feet tall, and now it's got to be almost, what, 40 feet tall.

So yeah, basically there was nothing around and we had this great site, and my brother-in-law designed the house with, as you know, a lot of glass. You could not build the same house here again, with this much glass. That's not allowed the percentage [of glass].

The Embarcadero and Seaport Village

BIRNBAUM: *So now, you grew up here in San Diego. What was it like when you had all of this vast waterfront acreage that was then reclaimed for people?*

YAMADA: When I was, when I was a youngster, this land didn't really exist. A lot of the area was dredged for that boat dock and all that land was . . . We are in the area of Seaport Village, and the Embarcadero Park North. There are two islands, one to the south and one to the north.

The one that we're standing on is the one to the north. It was mainly designed for pedestrian walkways, shelters, and for sitting and walking next to the bay with plenty of picnic facilities. The North Embarcadero is one huge area of turf with a path all the way around. It was designed to be used for major activities, for the bands that play in the evenings, and for large picnics. And it wasn't intended to have all these little nooks and crannies and all the shelters and benches. It is pretty much an extension of the Seaport Village complex. There you can get the food and you do a leisurely walk clear to the end of the pier if you like. But what it was just a big area of sand from one end of the park to the other. And what we tried to do is to sculpt the land so it was not flat but rolling, and we called them the Yamada bumps. So as you are walking on the lawn, you can't see the whole body of people walking by, you can only see the upper half of the body. The mounds gave us the opportunity to get the trees above the salt line. So you see all the trees are planted more in the center of the site.

A lot of the activities that are planned here are exactly the kind of things that we're talking about. We needed a place for the kids to be able to run and to have the areas to play. So this gave them an expanse of open space. And I think the kids enjoy that, they can play ball on either park. When we were small kids, we didn't have a place like this to come to. As you see the park is being used very heavily by families.

It's been a great extension of the Seaport Village activities. And the port district has been very happy with what has happened here, because it takes a lot of people and a lot of automobiles. People are very happy to have a place like this to sit and have a picnic by the bay.

Seaport Village, of course, was a major attraction for this area. When I was little, not much existed along the bay front. This land was all dredged from the bayside in order to have land available for a park. Seaport village was the nucleus. We did the landscaping for Seaport Village and tried to spill a lot of the landscaping ideas into the park.

BIRNBAUM*: OK, let's talk about the wood, or what almost looks like wood, but it's not, is it?*

YAMADA: It's not wood. Its concrete made to look like wood, it is very effective. It's been here for what- 30+ years? And the grains and the forms are still almost as good as the day it was put down. It's just an extension of Seaport Village's boardwalk. We wanted it to continue in here, we wanted the people to move from a very active area over there, and bring their hotdogs and hamburgers into the park. And people love that, you know. They don't want to sit in the middle of a busy area over there. They all want to come here. So I it's heavily used. The trees that were selected are pretty hearty. They've taken a [beating] but when you put anything next to a bay, you're going to get a lot of, a lot of damage and a lot of poor growth. But in general, as you look around, most of the trees have survived. The selection was correct.

And you don't see a lot of shrubbery. In fact, that had a lot to do with the police. They didn't mind the mounds being there but they couldn't be so high that they couldn't see over them as they were patrolling the area. So the mounds aren't super high, they're nice and easy and rolling. So there were some restrictions that did held us back from really getting carried away with the mounding. But the police were very, very severe about that. They loved the idea of the mounds, but not any higher than three feet.

BIRNBAUM: *Was the idea consciously to group these trees? There seem to be collections of the same types in different areas.*

YAMADA: Yeah, it was purposefully done because we just didn't want to scatter different trees all over the place. We didn't want to have one of these and two of those, that kind of thing. So we grouped the trees together for parking and to help slow down that constant west wind. So we tried to provide things without building a big screen or a fence all along here to stop the wind. I think it was pretty well done. It's a wide open park, it was intended to be wide open, and I think the children enjoy it being this way.

BIRNBAUM: *And the other thing I did notice is that the lighting along the waterfront is only the bollards. There are no light pole standards. I'm kind of curious, is the goal here to have people come at night and stroll?*

YAMADA: Yeah, the bollards are all along the pedestrian walks. So primarily the idea was to start at Seaport Village, and make easy walks where people could sit and just rest or have their lunch and then take a different path back. There are lights throughout the interior walkways as well. They're not high lights. Sometimes the high lights are really distracting to the eye. We tried to make the lighting just enough for pedestrians to navigate. And of course, the police did a pretty good job of policing the area, so we didn't have a whole lot of things going on.

So that's, as far as the port district is concerned, this park and the one that we did, the north, south island, was very successful in their minds. They got exactly what they wanted.
But sometimes it is hard to accept the maintenance because you don't know what program they're on. You know, they don't have as many gardeners as they want. But as a whole, I mean as we walked the whole length of this walkway, it was pretty darn clean and the lawns were nicely cut. So I think they're maintaining it as well as any park in San Diego, or better than many.

The Plaza at La Jolla Village

YAMADA: OK. We are at the La Jolla Village Plaza in the Golden Triangle of La Jolla. And that happens to be right on La Jolla Village Drive and Genese [Avenue]. The project was complete in 1980, and consisted of these three large-scale buildings and a restaurant. It was done in three or four different stages. We did the original grading and initial waterfall under phase one. And we were fortunate enough to select, the architects to do the buildings.

I'd like to talk about how we graded this site, and what our thoughts were when we saw the property. The one thing that we noticed was that the traffic on La Jolla Village Drive was very, very heavy. And we thought by creating an earth berm that would almost surround the entire

property, that we could at least cut out the visual portion of the noise. We developed three different lakes. Each lake was completed when a tower was finished. We took the soil from [making the] lakes and created earth berms completely around the site. And the whole philosophy of the design was based on that philosophy; creating a focal point at the center of the site, using the earth that we took out for these lakes to create the protection of the earth berms.

The developers for the project were Ernie Hahn and Harry Summers. And Ernie was very pleased with the idea of creating a visual park in the center of this development. He hadn't thought about water. We told him that we could have a waterfall in the center, a mini park where all the people would look down on the park, and we would create seating areas for them so they would not leave the park for lunch. So my suggestion was to build the very first restaurant here; and it went in and was very successful. It helped develop phase one of the park. So the first lake went in it was just the beginning of the total development.

We were involved in selecting the architects and made sure that they understood what our concept was for the buildings. And the landscaping followed closely behind as each building went up. They [the developers] would take the money generated by the building to develop the next building and the next pond. And so as the buildings were completed, we were able to complete the entire park. And what you see today is the result of us working along with not only with the developers, Ernie Hahn and Mr. Summers, but the architects who were selected to do the buildings. And I think as a result, I personally, think this is my very favorite job. It is very successful, and today I can see that the maintenance has been spectacular over the years. I'm very, very proud to show this to anyone.

BIRNBAUM: *OK, so let's talk about the design of the waterfalls.*

YAMADA: The design of the waterfall came about because Ernie Hahn, one of the developers, lived somewhere in Colorado by a stream which had many waterfalls. And being one of the

head developers he suggested [the waterfalls] and I just flew with the idea. Having that kind of support from the key developer [was great]. In fact he used to bring his grandson here and they would sit by the first fall, just the two of them in the morning and listened to the water fall. And I would come here early in the morning to meet the landscape contractor, and there was Mr. Hahn and his grandson sitting on the rocks, just sitting there and enjoying the water feature.

You can see how tall the buildings are. So it really needed trees that were in scale with the buildings. Most of the time, we would have trouble telling a client that they need specimen trees, because it's a very costly item. But when we showed him [Mr. Hahn] how it would develop he was very, very supportive; and we had the support of Mr. Summers as well.

And when we finished building C, which completed the complex the design worked perfectly. It was very easy for the developers to lease the spaces out because people want to be able to see the park when they're working in the building. And it was very easy to sell developers on the cost, because we knew that something like this would sell the project more than some paintings or other things for the building.

The only thing I think this development had, that we don't normally have, was someone who was interested in art. We took their head man, his name was George Lattimer to Japan with us. And he found Mr. Ito, who designed the piece that's sitting in the center of the lake. Mr. Ito flew into San Diego and spent one week in our office, making these miniature scale sculpture pieces until he found just what he wanted. And so the centerpiece in the lake is the result of having a developer who not only wanted a beautiful job, but was interested in art. I think that was the success of this project. I think it's my very favorite project. I think it's so beautifully maintained that I would be proud to show this project to anyone.

The End