

TRANSCRIPT

SCRC Series: Lewis Clarke Oral History Project – MC 00191

Field Notes: William Warren Edwards (compiled March 7, 2011)

Interviewee: WILLIAM WARREN (“WARREN”) EDWARDS

Interviewer: Yona R. Owens

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Location: Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Length: Approximately 72 minutes

This interview for the Lewis Clarke Oral Histories Project was conducted at Warren Edwards’ 100 year old house. A native of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, Edwards graduated from North Carolina State College (now University) School of Design (now College) in 1958 in landscape architecture. Between 1956 and 1965, he worked for Fred B. Stresau, O’Neil Ford, Richard Bell, and Lewis Clarke. In 1965, he opened his own practice in Oklahoma City where he was highly successful, especially with his large residential garden designs. His work has been featured in several publications including *Southern Architect* and *Southern Living*. In 1986, he won a local chapter American Society of Landscape Architects award. Edwards has been an adjunct instructor or professor for approximately 20 years in the landscape architecture departments at Oklahoma State University and University of Oklahoma

YO: My name is Yona Owens and I’m interviewing Warren Edwards at his home in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma on January twelfth, 2011. I’d like to start off with our first standard question. Tell me a little bit about where you’re from and how you got interested in landscape architecture.

WE: Well, I was born here in Oklahoma City and I have a degree in botany because I was interested in plant material. And I was having too much fun at the University of Oklahoma so my father sent me to Oklahoma State University where I finished the work in botany, but also where they offered courses in landscape architecture. It was not an accredited school, but they had a man there who was trying to establish a program and offered some courses in it. I took two as electives and became enamored of it as an idea, so that’s how—then when I had to go ahead and finish school and then I did two years as an intelligence officer in the Air Force, and then I had made up my mind to go back to school to study that and so that’s what I did.

YO: What made you pick [landscape architecture at the] NCSU School of Design?

WE: Frankly, it was because it was a new school, it had only been there about ten years—no, no, it hadn’t been there that long, seven years—and Dean Kamphoefner was very enthusiastic about the idea of his students winning scholarships and awards. Well, they had won more scholarships and awards than any school that I wrote to, including the University of California, maybe LSU—I’ve forgotten where else now that I applied—and I figured that if any of the schools had won as many they would have said so in their prospectus. So that, plus the fact that I enjoy the South as a region, so that’s why I decided to go to North Carolina because I figured they had had more winners, so it worked out.

YO: You wanted to see what they were doing there, huh?

WE: So it worked out, because then I won a summer scholarship from Dumbarton Oaks and at graduation, I won a post graduate Dumbarton Oaks research fellowship in landscape architecture, and that prize, at the end of ten years of the School's existence, made a hundred thousand dollars. That broke a hundred thousand dollars in scholarships over a ten year period.

YO: Wow.

WE: And Dean Kamphoefner was ecstatic.

YO: I guess.

WE: Ten years, a hundred thousand dollars. It spoke very well for the school, and because I had been the one to bring it to a hundred thousand dollars I was, for about five minutes, his golden boy.

YO: [Laughs] What year did you start and when did you graduate?

WE: I started in '55 and graduated in '58.

YO: And how many landscape students were there when you were there?

WE: Well, I really have no idea. I can call up most of them that were in the lab, but I was one of three that graduated in '58 in landscape architecture.

YO: I just wondered how big was the department. Not very big, huh?

WE: Well, I don't know how many students they had. See, the first two years were the same as with architecture. So how many were landscape there I don't know, but there were only about six or eight students, I think, in the studio.

YO: Right. Part of the landscape architecture curriculum included cross discipline classes like history of design and drawing. This meant you were taught by some of the noteworthy faculty besides the landscape professors. Who were some of the other professors and what did they teach?

WE: Well, one that comes immediately to mind was Willie Baumgarten. He was an Austrian architect and he left Austria in 1938, I believe. His wife stayed in Austria, she wouldn't leave, but he came and he taught the history of design and he was a typical European professional. He was always with a suit and tie and shirt and very formal and very German in some ways, but also he had that kind of what the Germans called *Gemütlichkeit*. It's a kind of pleasure in life, but it was kind of there under the surface. But to see him and all that, he was very much the German. But he had known the Austrian architect, Wagner, and he had known Behrens [a Dutch architect] and some of the people in the Bauhaus. He was their contemporary so he brought this enormously rich personal culture with him to the history of design and he was an, I thought,

excellent instructor, and he was all business. There was no first name thing. He was the professor and you were the student.

Then there was Cecil Elliott, who was from Oklahoma, and he taught also history of design and he was fun and a very good instructor also, very good. Then there was Duncan Stuart who taught descriptive drawing. Willie Baumgarten said he was the Michelangelo of the twentieth century because of the way he could draw, and he drew absolutely beautifully, I mean he was a spectacular kind of artist. If anybody can do it, he said he could do it, and so therefore it was not a challenge and he just did what he had to.

YO: And he taught drawing?

WE: He taught descriptive drawing and he also, I think, was kind of a mathematics genius. He worked for the Navy sometimes in the summer. He'd be gone all summer working on mathematical theories and things. I really don't know what he did. And he was fun also to be around, and he was from Oklahoma.

Then Joe Cox, he taught descriptive drawing also, and he was a very nice instructor, very good instructor, and pleasant to be around and a very gentle kind of—you never got any sharp critiques from him you just got encouragement and so forth. So those were four that I remember in particular, who were my instructors, and then the librarian of course was not an instructor, but she was from Oklahoma, Harrye Lyons, and very much the librarian.

YO: What do you remember about founding dean, Henry Kamphoefner?

WE: What do I remember about him?

YO: Uh huh.

WE: A lot of things. [Laughs] A lot of things.

YO: Well, how tall was he? Was he a—I mean I just wondered physically, because his reputation is so big, I just wondered what he physically looked like.

WE: Well, I'm five-ten and I think he was probably five-eight, and of course the deliberate hair, that wild hair was deliberate, and he always wore a suit and vest, practically always. I don't think I can ever picture him wearing anything but that. He knew all the students—it may sound unreasonable to say that, but it's true—by name, and so you had a sense that if you ever did anything out of line when the dean was around he'd know it. [Laughs] And so, the idea of discipline and so forth in the School was much more different. It was different then than now. So, of course we all wanted to—we didn't want to get crossways of the dean, because the dean ran the School. There was no question about the way he wanted to run it, and he was a wonderful administrator.

YO: I understand that the studio stayed open all night and you guys were noted for partying. What did Dean Kamphoefner think about that?

WE: Well, I don't know where this partying thing came from—

YO: Oh. [Laughs]

WE: —but the studio—we worked and it may have seemed kind of like partying at the time because everybody whined and complained a lot, but I mean, that was a great deal of fun, and you were not alone. There were other people in the building, and there would be a couple or three charrettes all going at the same time almost at any given time, and lots of music and conversation, and around midnight or one or two everybody would have to take a break and go down to the Blue Tower and have—

YO: What was the Blue Tower?

WE: It was like a Toddle House, next door to the Toddle House, as a matter of fact, on Hillsborough, close to downtown. In season they had the most marvelous ice box strawberry and peach pies with genuine whipped cream, nothing out of a can. And when they were gone, they were gone. When the season was up you didn't have it anymore, but you could always get banana cream pie and other pies that the cook made and they were superb.

YO: Reinforcements for the troops, right?

WE: Well, yes, until—that would get you through to breakfast time. [Laughs]

YO: Oh, I see. [Laughs] You mentioned Harrye Lyons, the librarian, and I was wondering, do you remember which professors came with Kamphoefner from the University of Oklahoma?

WE: I don't know that any professors did. I think he was the school at the University of Oklahoma and he took this job because—this is what I remember—he took this job because they advertised and they wanted certain things to found this school of design. And Henry Kamphoefner had a list, it was an odd number, I remember that, of seventeen or nineteen points, something like that, that he said they had to meet before he would do the job. So, they accepted the things that he proposed, that he thought would be required to develop a school of design, because they had, I think, architectural engineering at the time, but they wanted a separate school of design. So, he came and that's how he got the job. But now Cecil Elliott and Duncan Stuart, I don't know whether they came with him or not, but there were a couple of architects. Milton Small and Joe Boaz were architects in Oklahoma and whether they were his students or what I'm really very vague on that, but they went to Raleigh, and then Milton Small had his practice there and Joe Boaz, as a draftsman he was superb, just unbelievably beautiful drawings. I don't know what Joe did. He and Milton, I think, were in practice there for awhile and then the practice became Milton Small's. But I don't know who else he—I don't think he brought anybody else with him.

YO: I was wondering if Matsumoto came with him, or Fitzgibbon.

WE: No. Not that I know of.

YO: Right. Do you know any students that transferred when he changed to NCSU?

WE: No.

YO: Gil Thurlow was already tenured when Kamphoefner arrived. What was Thurlow like?

WE: Well, he was also very dapper in his dress. I don't think you ever saw him without a tie. You may have caught him sometimes on Saturday mornings without a tie but not often. Mostly it was a suit and tie. He was very interested in plant material and in planting design in particular, and that's what I went to school to him for, and he'd kind of slip around—not slip around—walk around, and maybe in the descriptive drawing lab if you were painting or something, or even in the landscape lab, and make comment on your work, unasked.

YO: Really?

WE: But it was all right. That was part of going to school. Everybody was exchanging—they were very blunt. We tended to be blunt with one another.

YO: Did other professors go into other classes and critique as well?

WE: Well, they may have come into a descriptive drawing class and said something. I don't really remember. Duncan Stuart sometimes, he would approach you, or Joe Cox. You could ask them if they were there and they might comment on what you were doing. But Thurlow did that, I think, in the landscape lab because he was teaching us also in the planting design. So I think he felt he had probably prerogatives there.

YO: Right. You met Lewis Clarke as one of your professors. What was Clarke like as a professor?

WE: Well, I think everybody wanted to please Lewis because Lewis had—we didn't call him Lewis, we called him Mr. Clarke. That undue familiarity came later, some years later, after I had left. Everybody, I think wanted to please him because he has a certain amount of diffidence about him, but Lewis also has charm. When he wants to be charming he can be quite charming. He was never cruel in criticisms or critiques, and was always trying to guide and helpful. You might try this or you try this, and this form does this because this will be the result if you pursue this so you might try this, and so forth. Then he would retire, but his office was there so he was always available if you wanted a critique from him. I don't know, it was—he was very popular. I think all the students were extremely fond of him and beyond—because he was fundamentally a very kind person. I think we felt that. Oh, that's what we felt. Whether that's true or not, I don't know. His wife may have had other opinions, but to us as students, he had that and he had charm and also I think, as I mentioned before our conversation, I think there was a certain sweetness in him when pressed or something like that sometimes that would come out and you would see it. He was always very cheerful and, I don't know, other things may come to me, but he was a very popular instructor.

YO: What was he trying to teach about the environment at the time? Do you remember anything about that?

WE: Well, you know I'm ashamed to say, not particularly. I think the whole idea of landscape architecture is so wrapped up with the environment in any case. It's just an accepted fact that we were dealing with the natural world all the time and therefore whatever we did, we did within the environment and what we did would affect the environment, even though it was perhaps something quite small, or up to hundreds of acres. In any case, it was just a matter of degree, but you affected the environment, which we seemed to be aware of.

YO: But it was a new field at the time though, right?

WE: Well, not so much new as thinly populated. [Laughs]

YO: Oh, okay.

WE: Because at the time I was in school, I think there were only a thousand landscape architects who belonged to the American Society of Landscape Architects in the United States, and now there are tens of thousands. This is, of course, a long time ago, but the first school was at Harvard as you know, in 1901, 1898, or something, like that, so given that period of time, a sixty-year span, there were only say like a thousand members of the Society. So, while it was not new, it didn't have a great many adherents. And then of course there are some very famous works of landscape architecture, many of which of course were executed by architects. You look at the Italian villas and the French chateaux and the English country houses, that kind of thing, but more in England than any place else those were created by people who were designing the landscape, so to speak, more than architects.

YO: Did you have Dick Moore for any of your classes?

WE: No. He came there I think my last year or something, but I—or maybe the last—anyway, I know I never had him in a class.

YO: Right. Realizing that the NCSU School of Design was quite small in the beginning, the notoriety of the list of visiting lecturers to the school during this time is quite remarkable. Can you recall some of the visiting lecturers?

WE: Yes. Thomas Church came and he gave a public lecture, and that was one of the nice things about the school. The lectures were all public lectures and it was very popular with the citizens of Raleigh. So, these visiting lecturers were disseminating their information and their knowledge to the community as well as to the students, and sometimes their personalities were really outstanding and demanding and amusing and what have you. But Thomas Church came and he was very quick to tell, in labs at least, that he was tired of smart aleck questions from students. Well, that put the quietus on any kind of smart aleck questions, not that we had any, but he was kind of a brisley sort of a fellow, but he was wonderfully interesting, and a great personality, and to be around him was fun.

Then Garrett Eckbo was there when I was there and he was sort of a different kettle of fish. There was Patrick Horsburgh. He was an Irishman, I think, tall, always wore a dark blue suit and vest. Then there was Bodfan Gruffydd. He was a Welsh landscape architect, did a book

on trees, I think, and he was interesting, lots of Fs and Ys and Ds and his name was a typical Welsh spelling, you know.

Roberto Burle Marx came twice. The first time I was not there. The second time I was there and he was one of the warmest personalities that I have ever encountered. He had great charm and he talked about the music, the seventeenth century music, of Brazil that had been written by Brazilians who had emigrated from Portugal primarily and so forth. Then he was a botanist, too, you know, and he would take trips into the Amazon and find plants, new plants that nobody had ever discovered before, to use in his designs. He painted a lot of his designs before he actually executed them, but he did things that you could only do in the tropics, which were absolutely, some of them, breathtaking to look at, but he also oftentimes had spectacular backdrops. Well, you know if you have mountains for a backdrop whatever you do in the front is kind of secondary in any case. But he did these remarkable color combinations and forms and patterns. One night after a public lecture, they came out to my apartment. They were looking for a place—I guess this was after I was out of school. So, I told them, bring him to my apartment. We can talk out there. So, they brought him and he walked in and he looked around the apartment and he said this is beautiful. I said, thank you. And he said, do not thank me. It is so. [Laughs]

YO: [Laughs]

WE: I have never forgotten it. Do not thank me. It is so. So, then the students started talking to him. But he was a wonderful personality, and not racy, but he was very open in his discussions about anything, so he was fun to have. Then there was—oh, there was Torroja, the Mexican engineer.

YO: I'm not familiar with that one.

WE: Well, he was there as a visiting lecturer. Then there was Pier Luigi Nervi, the Italian engineer.

YO: And he didn't speak English, I understand.

WE: Well, neither did Burle Marx the first time he came. I won't go into his discussions the first time he came.

YO: Okay. [Laughs]

WE: But Nervi didn't, no, but there was a boy in the class, Jack Vincelli, from Montreal, and his parents were from Italy. But Jack didn't really speak Italian because they spoke English at home, but he was the only person—I don't know why there wasn't somebody on the faculty they could use, you know, in the broader faculty of the University, but apparently not. Anyway, Jack interpreted his speech, his public lecture, [Laughs] and it was torture for poor Jack. I mean he didn't speak Italian, but he could kind of pidgin through it. Whenever we got through, Nervi told him what village his father was from. And his father was from a village of three hundred people, or something preposterous, because Nervi was an Italian expert, I guess you'd call it an Italian

linguist, and by the intonation of Jack's pronunciations, he could tell where his father had come from. It was just amazing.

YO: Wow.

WE: I was trying to think if there were some others.

YO: Brian Hackett, by chance?

WE: Yes, Brian Hackett came. I don't remember him. When I was a student, he came there, but it may have been after I finished school, but I met him and his wife. Well, Frank Lloyd Wright was there, but never while I was there. I think he came twice to the school. Then there was Moholy-Nagy, the Hungarian. I think he came early in the founding of the school. Kamphoefner had the ability to get prominent people from all over the world to come there. Oh, Richard Neutra, an Austrian architect who did a lot of work in California, came and he was fun. He had a topcoat that had belonged to Sigmund Freud, or so he said. [Another visiting landscape architect was Arthur Berger from Dallas who conducted a charrette problem with generosity and encouragement.] Then, well, I don't know. There were a couple of South Americans, but they were on the faculty. I don't remember other lecturers right now.

YO: Just an unbelievable list of people would come to Raleigh, North Carolina.

WE: Yes, and I was there three years and I'm talking about people that were there when I was—I don't know how many people I've given you, but I've probably overlooked some, but that was just for over a three or four year period. As I said before, their personalities sometimes were as informative and as interesting and so forth as the work they had done. You began to understand why they were successful, and why they were interesting people often, interesting personalities. None of them were dullards.

YO: Robert Royston, did he come to visit when you were there?

WE: I don't remember. Eckbo did. Royston might very well have. I don't remember him.

YO: Summing up your experience at the School of Design, what stands out?

WE: It was fun.

YO: [Laughs] It was fun.

WE: Yeah. And as an adjunct instructor at Oklahoma State University, I sometimes wonder if the students are having the kind of fun that they ought to be having, and I think we had fun—when I say we had fun, it was hard work and we put in long hours, but that was also fun because you were not alone. There were all kinds of people in the studio, and oftentimes in the whole building, who were all doing the same thing, working to achieve a certain degree of proficiency in what you set out to do, and the exchange of ideas, not just in critiques but among students, from the architectural students, the landscape students, and what have you. And there was an

intensity about it because there were always deadlines. At the time, of course, there was no such thing as a computer so everything had to be—you had to draw everything and that just takes time, sometimes with better results. The connection between the brain and the hand is somehow always more satisfactory, I think, than between the brain and the machine, and of course there is no comparison in my view with the drawings, that is of a good drawing. Some of them are quite—they have character and style. One of the architectural students, I remember, liked to do his final drawings whenever he could as a night scene, and the building was expressed by the light that flooded from its windows and its apertures, and they were absolutely stunning drawings.

YO: Wow.

WE: Stunning drawings, and probably not very many people could have done it, but he could accomplish it, very good looking drawings. But other than that it was fun to be there, it was fun to be in that atmosphere. It was nice to walk across the breezeway to the library if you wanted to look up something. It was a very—and the dean was always present. I mean, you could go see the dean about anything. He was not remote. He was a constant presence. We were always aware that he was there. And then of course the dean, on I think it was Wednesday nights in the graduating year, last semester, he had kind of like seminars at his house. And everybody had a night and you made a presentation of some, I think they had to be contemporary designers, architects, landscape architects. So then we would all go, and his dog, an Afghan hound, Tag—nobody sat in the Charles Eames chair because that was Tag's chair.

YO: [Laughs]

WE: Tag sat in the Charles Eames chair, so students beware. When we were through, why then Mabel, his wife, Mrs. Kamphoefner, would right on the dot—she'd come through the room and we knew that refreshments were on the way. But that was also pleasant, and I think possibly because a lot of this—it was personal, very personal, because everybody was in the same building, in the same facility with the instructors and so forth, and yet there was no undue familiarity. But it was a very relaxed kind of an atmosphere, fun to be there.

YO: Very intense, it sounds like.

WE: It was intense. It was intense, but I mean that's what you enjoy when you're young, isn't it? [Laughs]

YO: Yes.

WE: If it isn't you'd better look out. There's something wrong with you. [Laughs]

YO: [Laughs] The first job you had as a landscape architect, I believe, was with Fred Stresau, Sr. in Fort Lauderdale—

WE: Yeah.

YO:—during the summer of 1956. Was Fred, Sr. a taskmaster?

WE: No.

YO: How was he?

WE: His wife was a taskmaster.

YO: Oh, I see.

WE: She was a landscape architect, too. He was charming. He was absolutely the most charming fellow you'd ever want to meet. And he would give you something and then you could always tell if you disappointed him, but there was never any—oh, I don't know—unpleasantness or anything like that. He'd just point out what he had really hoped that you would do or how he hoped it would go. So, then of course you'd just kill yourself to please him because he was so pleasant. But Annie, his wife, Ann, was also a graduate landscape architect, and she did all the coloring of the drawings, and she had a little cigar box filled with pastels. So he'd say, Annie—we were always in a rush, always in a rush. [Laughs] The deadline to take the drawing, I don't know, thirty minutes before he had to leave or something, he'd say, Annie, we need some color. She would come in there—or letter—and she could letter almost as fast as she could type and she lettered, it was absolutely perfect. And she hardly ever drew a line, but it looked perfectly horizontal. It was amazing. Then she'd take a razor blade and shave these pastels into powder and put a little cotton on them and then she'd start on the back of the drawing and start coloring the trees and the flowers and the wall and all this with these pastels. She just worked—she was like greased lightning. I mean [Laughs] I don't know how she did it, and then flip that drawing over and it was beautiful. It just looked wonderful.

YO: Wow.

WE: So, they were a good team, but she was all business, all business. Fred was lots of fun.

YO: Was Fred, Jr. there at the time?

WE: No, he wasn't in the office. I think I must have met him down there. There was a younger brother, I think. But sometimes there would be an office party. Fred and Annie would sometimes have supper, that didn't happen very often, and there was another fellow in the office Pete Warren, I think. Anyway, he was a landscape architect from Cornell. He and Fred had been friends for years and he worked in the office. And there was a fellow named Bailey Breedlove who worked there. They were permanent. It was fun.

YO: Tell me about the Dumbarton Oaks Junior Research Fellowship you received in '58 and '59. What was that about?

WE: Well, it was about a year of travel and study in Europe.

YO: And that was courtesy of Harvard?

WE: Yes, yes. Well, it was courtesy of Mrs. Bliss [through Harvard]. The Blisses had owned Dumbarton Oaks and they gave it to Harvard in 1940. And she was a Francophile and was much enamored of gardens and she was responsible for getting Beatrix Farrand there to do that garden at Dumbarton Oaks and limitless funds to spend on it. She was from a family of New York. I think she was born Jones, Beatrix Jones. No, no, not Mrs. Bliss. I'm sorry; I'm getting ahead of myself. Beatrix Farrand was born Beatrix Jones and so she knew a lot of the New York families, the Astors and the Rockefellers, before they had money. [Beatrix Farrand was the niece of Edith Jones Wharton (*Ethan Frome*, *House of Mirth*, etc.) who encouraged her to pursue her study and practice of landscape architecture.] Her family knew these people going back a long time. So, the Blisses were simply a part of that same pattern of people so naturally Beatrix Farrand would be the person the Blisses would call on to do that garden.

But Mrs. Bliss was also a highly cultivated and cultured person, they both were, so she endowed the gardens and they set up these scholarships and fellowships. There is a senior research fellowship as well, but that's, I think, in architecture. But the gardens are beautifully endowed. I was disappointed to see in this book on Dumbarton Oaks that was put out called—well, I have it here—something, *Garden Into Art*, or something like that. The gardener there for many years was a man named Matthew Kearney [Kearney was an Irishman and the head gardener for over 30 years.] and he and Mrs. Bliss were—he was her confidante and the summers that I was there she would sometimes call, [With accent] Kearney—that's what she called him, Kearney. And she would want to come and talk, so she'd come to Dumbarton Oaks and he'd carry her parasol. And they'd walk in the garden and she'd talk to him about things she wanted in the garden or something that had come up with reference to Dumbarton Oaks and get Kearney's opinion because he was a wonderful man. And she had great confidence in his judgment and he was the one who was in charge of maintaining the gardens as she wanted them maintained. So, she endowed them so heavily, and as she told him, she said, I have set this up so the gardens are protected, and she said, Harvard cannot get their hands on the money without breaking my will, and Harvard will never go to court. [Laughs]

YO: [Laughs] So, you applied and —

WE: Yes, yes. It was a competition.

YO: And what was your submission about?

WE: Oh, don't ask me. I've forgotten. Well, we had to submit examples of our work and, I was going to say, what you wanted to do. So, I won it and it was an incredible opportunity.

YO: And you traveled in Europe for a year?

WE: Mm hmm.

YO: By yourself?

WE: Mm hmm.

YO: What was that, '58, '59?

WE: It was '58 and '59, and then, well, yeah, by myself essentially. And then I had cousins—one of my grandmothers had first cousins in Düsseldorf and the daughter of another first cousin's husband went with me to buy a used Volkswagen. So, from the time I got to Germany I was no longer walking. I docked in Sweden and [I was in] Sweden and Denmark and then came to England and then went to the Continent. So, then I went to Germany and these relatives went with me to buy a car and from then it was just incredible.

YO: So, you visited all the gardens that you could possibly visit, right?

WE: Oh, yeah.

YO: Amazing.

WE: And also I found—they had what they called the *Bundesgartenschau*, which is in the—what do I want to say?—the factory district, or something, of Germany, and Düsseldorf, which is on the Rhine. But they had this huge garden show every year and another cousin's sister-in-law had a mustard factory. So she sent her driver with me and he took me to Dortmund, which is where this show was, and that was beyond belief.

Then in Holland, they had the bulb show every year on an old estate where all of the professional growers have a plot. They have an area, done to this plan and that's where they grow their tulips or daffodils or lilies, or whatever it is that they're growing, and it's breathtakingly beautiful. They have a parade, of course, of floats all made from these flowers through the tulip fields, and it's quite remarkable. I've never gotten over it. It's just a beautiful thing to see. The care, the importance of what these gardens and this kind of thing do to contribute to public as well as private life is enormously appreciated, I think. You have that feeling at least, that that's true. So, I've always been grateful for that opportunity. I won't—

YO: It sounds a wonderful thing.

WE:—bore you with any more of that, but it was—and then people—the year before the International Society of Landscape Architects had had a meeting in Washington, D.C. and I had met some landscape architects there from Sweden, and Denmark, and Germany, and England. And so, when I went to Europe I called and got in touch with them. They were wonderful to me because they had had—they were enamored of the hospitality that they had received in the United States and so they wanted to reciprocate in some way and so I was the recipient of that, and it was —

YO: It's a very lucky thing that you did.

WE: Oh, it was quite wonderful, unbelievable.

YO: Wow. Well, you worked O'Neil Ford in San Antonio, Texas in '59 and '60, and I'm wondering did Ford still come into the office then?

WE: Yeah.

YO: He was still working?

WE: You talk about a character. He was something else.

YO: What was your impression of him?

WE: Oh, he was lots of fun. He didn't have a degree in architecture, you know.

YO: No, I didn't know that.

WE: Oh, he'd never gone to architecture school. He just was very talented. He had a brother, Lynn, I think was his name, who did all kinds of crafts and he did some of the most beautiful doors. But, you know, you see in Spanish colonial towns or in Spain, they did beautiful wood carving for doors and gates and that kind of thing—some penetrated, some solid, and what have you. And he did gates and doors and that kind of thing and he also did—I'm trying to think if maybe he did pottery. Anyway, his primary thing was wood, so he ornamented a lot of things for his brother's architecture. But O'Neil Ford dealt with indigenous materials and a lot of his buildings had standing seams—that's not the right word—but they were metal roofs. What am I trying to say?

YO: I don't know.

WE: Well, you would know—they had standing seams on them. I guess that's where the sheets of the metal overlapped or something when they put them together in bands. There's a name for them, but my mind's gone blank. Anyway, a lot of his roofs were like that, and then he used a lot of tiles, southwestern materials of all kinds, limestone. Whatever was in the region where he was, he tended to want to use those materials so his buildings are really wonderful in terms of their materials. Then he'd get his brother—there were a lot of craftsmen in the San Antonio area and he could get his brother and other people to ornament these structures with tiles, handmade tiles, and doors and all that kind of thing. It was a gift. He was enormously gifted and very popular. He was very popular at promoting himself, but he was easy to promote. He was interesting and he was fun to be around.

YO: Do you remember a project that you worked on there?

WE: Yes, it was schools down in the valley in Texas. So they sent me down to work with Alan Taniguchi who later became the head of the school of architecture at the University of Texas. But I worked in his office and then he had these schools, he was working with them, on some of these schools in the valley, and I got carried away with some of the native plant material there. So, when I came back to San Antonio to Stewart King's office to review what I was proposing, I got a dose of cold water poured over my head. Where are you going to get these plants? You know [Laughs] you've done all these great forms and things with?

YO: Right.

WE: Well, I didn't know. I was so stupid, inexperienced, that I just thought you go out and dig them up someplace, I guess. I don't know. But their native plant material down there was simply not available, so that all had to be redone. But it was an experience to be down in the valley. Then Alan was working on buildings at Roma, Weslaco—well, we were in Harlingen, in some of those towns on the river, on the Rio Grande, and I would go with Alan sometimes to talk to the clients down there, and it was a fascinating part of the country. So, anyway, that was —

YO: That was an experience at O'Neil Ford then, wasn't it?

WE: Yeah, and Stewart King, who was the landscape architect in his office, who really had his own practice, but he was a wonderful personality as well. He was the kindest, delightful man to work around.

YO: Wow. Well, you worked for Lewis Clarke's office between 1960 and '62. Where was the office located when you worked there, do you remember?

WE: I think it was on Iredell or—No, that's where I lived.

YO: Mordecai?

WE: Mordecai, it was there at Mordecai.

YO: Yes. So you worked in the basement of the Mordecai, of the house that they lived in on Mordecai.

WE: Well, it wasn't exactly a basement. I think it was at the level of the grade.

YO: Oh. [Laughs]

WE: [Laughs] The house was one story in front and two-story in back, as I remember. Anyway, yes.

YO: Who else was working there at the time?

WE: Nick Nichols—Nichols was his last name—he was the architect [William "Bill" Nichols].

YO: I want to say Terry Nichols. Was it Terry?

WE: No, he was called Nick. [Laughs] He was a great guy, fun. He was married and had about a zillion children, but I've forgotten Nick's—I think his last name was Nichols. I think Loddie Bryan worked there, and what about Charles? Charles [Burkhead] may have.

YO: Yeah, I think he was there.

WE: Those are the ones I can think of right now.

YO: Were you the first employee, do you think?

WE: No, I don't think so. I was gone you see. I graduated and then I was gone for two years and then I worked in Texas and then I came back to North Carolina, so I don't know who may have been there in the interim. So, I came back to North Carolina in, let's see, '59—'62 or '63?

YO: In 1960—you were working there at 1960.

WE: Okay, okay, 1960. Yes, okay, —

YO: That's why I'm thinking you were the first employee.

WE:—then—well, maybe, but I don't remember.

YO: I think so. [Charlie Burkhead was first; Warren Edwards was second.]

WE: Anyway, then I went to Texas, I think, and then I went back to North Carolina.

YO: What was Lewis like as a boss?

WE: Too easy.

YO: Too easy. [Laughs]

WE: Having been a boss, it was not enough supervision for people who could not work entirely on their own. It was all kind of free and easy, and you worked, but I mean I think that we should have probably had more supervision and been pushed perhaps harder. The more that's expected of you, most usually the more you accomplish.

YO: Right. Do you remember some of the projects that you worked on?

WE: I remember three shopping centers and a private residence in South Carolina, and there were other things that I don't care to mention or that I don't remember.

YO: Who were the shopping centers for?

WE: The Rouse firm out of Baltimore, I think they were headquartered in Baltimore. One was in Cherry Hill, Haddonfield, New Jersey, one was in San Antonio, and one was in Roanoke. Then the one that was—and they were all fun, but one of the ones that was most fun because it was personal, like a lot of this work becomes, where a couple down in South Carolina, and they were from New York, and they had, I don't know, I want to say ten thousand acres of pine forest. It was like a pine plantation. They were enormously rich and they just kind of moved from popular center to popular center. This was outside Camden, and they wanted a terrace and then they wanted vistas cut through the trees, or something. Anyway, maybe this was the thing that Lewis sold them on. Lewis was wonderful at that. He'd go in and he would start talking, this Englishman, you know, and people just stupefied by the things that he knew and what this

avenue would do and so forth and so on. So, I went with him once down there to talk to these people and then I went down by myself once when it came actually time to cut the openings through the trees. [Laughs] And you stand there and tell five or six or seven workmen, cut down these trees to that point, and then they start cutting those trees down and you think, what if this is a mistake? I mean there's no putting the trees back. [Laughs]

YO: Right. [Laughs]

WE: Anyway, they were fun people. They kept well oiled in the evening because they had a house rule, no drinks before 4 o'clock, but 4 o'clock rolled around and it was, you know, time to relax. And then you had supper and then stagger back to the motel. They sometimes had guests in and they thought—and I was from Oklahoma so they were not sure that I knew that a lot of things existed in the world.

YO: Right. [Laughs]

WE: But in any case they were good clients and fun to be around.

YO: And the project was successful?

WE: Yes, I think so. I mean, I went down there more than once I think. He was from Syracuse, New York.

YO: Do you remember their names?

WE: Groat.

YO: Groat?

WE: Mary and Bill Groat, and they had five children, and I was there one night—they had four boys and a girl, Katrina Groat. He was from one of those [old] Dutch families in New York State. The phone rang one night when I was there and Bill Groat imitated it later. He said, [With accent] I want to speak to Katrina Groat.

YO: [Laughs] Oh, no.

WE: Well, it seems that Katrina Groat was not at home, but this was a Bulgarian that she had met [Laughs] in school some place. He was an avowed communist, she was the daughter of a family that was enormously rich and so, I don't know how all that worked out, but it was one of those—and of course the Groats were just wildly upset, you know, but to hear him: [With accent] I want to speak to Katrina Groat. He was very hostile, this Bulgarian.

YO: Right. [Laughs] Oh, no.

WE: So, anyway, but those things were funny. But he knew—he grew up with in essence, Michael Rapuano, who became a principal in the firm of Clarke and Rapuano in New York City,

who had designed the Westchester County Parkway, which I don't think has ever been bested. Rapuano designed that. He was a Rome Prize winner and his parents were Sicilian immigrants. I met him in New York and here again, he's one of these people that has a great deal of charm, natural charm, and warmth of personality and so forth, so that was an experience. He had done some work for Groat on this house in South Carolina, and then I think he couldn't do any more. I mean, it's not the kind of work that they did, that Clarke and Rapuano did. They did highways and all that kind of thing.

YO: Sure.

WE: So. Anyway, that's what we were there to do.

YO: I want to go back to the shopping centers for just a minute with the Rouse company. You realize that those were the first enclosed shopping centers in the country, right? [This is not technically correct.]

WE: Well, if I knew it I'd forgotten it. The most successful and the most fun one was the one in Roanoke. I think the biggest most ambitious one was Haddonfield.

YO: Yeah, Cherry Hill.

WE: Cherry Hill, yeah, and I cannot tell you honestly that I remember that much about it, but Rouse's sister, Mrs. Pascault, kind of dealt with that so I think when the installation came I'm not even sure we were involved with that. She may have dealt with that. The plantings in San Antonio were very disappointing because nobody had any—we didn't have any control in the office. The one in Roanoke was more fun. It was smaller and huge ficus trees. Then I mean you'd run into all kinds of problems. I mean, it never occurred—tropicals are tropicals, you know, they grow wonderfully well and all that. We had I think half a dozen enormous ficus, *Ficus nitida*, which is mostly the one that you see in the flower shops, but these were trees with about six-inch caliper trunks and they went in raised planters that had seats around them. They shipped them up in special—well, there are people who specialize in tropical shipments. I think these came from Arvida Nursery. Anyway, these trees came up, they were absolutely stunningly beautiful, they were planted in the mall, and as we were working they began to shed leaves and every one of those trees dropped all of its leaves I think within forty-eight hours.

YO: Oh, no.

WE: I mean it was—

YO: Nobody knew that was their habit at the time, huh?

WE: Right. I mean all you had to do was to stop and think about it for minute. A thing in a growing condition and you dig it up, and you move it, and there's bound to be some kind of consequence to that. And in the case of *Ficus nitida* at least, it throws its leaves. You can do that, you can take it from outside and put it into a room where there's a gas stove and it'll throw its leaves. It's very tough, but it's also very sensitive under certain conditions. Well, they began to

come back out quickly also, but it was a terrifying thing to have happen. [Laughs] I mean here are these trees—

YO: Right, right. [Laughs]

WE:—you've spent tons of money on these six trees, and they look like they're dead as a door nail, but fortunately they weren't.

YO: [Laughs] Oh, gosh. What made Clarke's designs different from other landscape architects?

WE: I don't know that I'm in a very good position to judge that because I have not had that much experience in other offices. In Florida, it was all tropicals and you could do a garden in a week and it could look like it had been there for years, almost.

YO: Right.

WE: [Pause] What made it different?

YO: Well, here's a question maybe that might clarify that and give you a little more idea on how to answer it. You also worked for Dick Bell between '62 and '64. How was Bell's office different from Clarke's?

WE: It was much more production oriented, much more so, and they both had a tendency, which was wonderful for people who worked for them, they both had a tendency to give you a particular part of a job to do and [let you] do it, and then whenever you wanted advice why they were there. But they would give you free rein to do whatever it was they assigned you to do. It was more intense. Dick Bell was much more intense in his direction and in the product. You didn't have as much time to complete the project, or your part of the project, so it was more work intensive. Lewis was not quite that insistent on a fixed schedule. His schedule seemed to be much looser and so forth.

YO: Did their styles differ that much?

WE: Oh, yes, but don't ask. I—

YO: I mean their design styles.

WE: Mm hmm.

YO: We'll let history decide on that one?

WE: Hmm?

YO: We'll let history decide on that one?

WE: Well, I thought Dick would have an idea and then it didn't make that much difference to him what was in the way on the site to execute the idea. I may be wrong about that, but that's something that sort of stays with me. I think Lewis was much more sensitive to how you would handle the site. They were both very much concerned with grades, but with Lewis I think he treated the site itself gentler. That's something that stays with me, but then, you know, this has been a long, long time ago, but those are the things that seem to stick out.

YO: Those are two good observations, I think. You opened your own practice in '65. What do you consider to be your most outstanding project during your career and why?

WE: Well, I think one that initially was outstanding, but it's not today because gardens are so fragile, and unless you—the one that I have reference to, I did the design of the layout of the parking lots and the tree masses and that kind of thing. But some of the private gardens around—it's a hospital—but some of those things have been obliterated with expansions and then the changes that may or may not have been required. But a garden is very fragile and easily damaged and easily altered, so unless you can create, architecturally almost, masses through masses of trees, even though that does not always work, and architectural elements within the garden, which you would have to have a structure in any case, unless you can do that it's very susceptible to being altered through good or bad maintenance or what have you. But that project was probably one of the most pleasing initially.

YO: And that project was what again?

WE: It's a hospital.

YO: A hospital?

WE: It was forty acres, and I liked the sister—it's the Sisters of Mercy and I liked the sister who was the president of it very much. So, we got along beautifully. She told me a funny story. She was a Kansas farm girl, youngest of four, I think, or third of four. Anyway, she said, well, you know, Warren, this is the perfect life for me. She said, men don't like bossy women, and she said, [Laughs] I'm one of those women who'd probably marry about twelve times. [Laughs]

YO: [Laughs] Oh, no.

WE: But she said, so, this is the perfect life for me. She said, my religious sisters need guidance and I can provide that, [Laughs] and so, I got right away what her personality was all about. She liked to run things and she was good at it. I mean she was good at it.

YO: [Laughs] That's wonderful.

WE: But she was a great personality.

YO: Oh, that's wonderful. How did your experience with Clarke influence your own practice, or did it?

WE: It sure did, it sure did. I think always trying to take a rather low key approach to a client and to the solutions because as I remember Lewis never tried to overpower anybody. He had enough knowledge, and experience, and ideas, and he could verbally seduce a client often into doing the things that he wanted him to do, and that was interesting to watch. So, it's a thing I tried to practice. I mean, I didn't have his knowledge at the time, but that you do try and—because after all it's intensely personal, whether it's a commercial job or whether it's a residential job, it doesn't really make a lot of difference. As soon as you figure out kind of the direction the client's going, why then you can adapt your presentation to what he wants to how you think he can best get it to achieve that. So, I think that's probably one of the primary things, was a very soft, gentle kind of way, and yet being blunt, too, sometimes. On two occasions—you don't do this at first, but after you've been in practice awhile—on two occasions a client would tell me they wanted me to do something with which I disagreed. And I said, well, you need to get somebody else. I can't do that and this is why I can't do that. Sometimes people want to hear that because they don't really know. If they knew how to do it, they wouldn't have called you. So, I just said, I can't do that, and in both cases they said, well, all right. Once you explain to them why you won't do that then they'll go along with you oftentimes and then later, they don't have regrets, usually don't have regrets.

YO: You taught at Oklahoma State University and the University of Oklahoma. Looking back, has the definition of landscape architect changed?

WE: No, I don't think the definition's changed, but I think the way you practice has changed with all of the computerized elements. All the labs have computers now. When I taught I required students always to be—they had to do freehand. They had to develop a freehand design that we would both agree to before they could go to a computer because I think the connection between the hand and the brain is important and the touch—I don't know if my vocabulary is good enough to describe it, but the tactical touch of pencil and paper and everything is important. So, then they would go to the computer and I had some students that could turn out absolutely spectacularly beautiful drawings on the computer. And then a good student would turn out a drawing that was completely hand drawn and it was also beautiful, but it had character whereas the beautiful machine or computer generated drawing did not have that much character. But it was a great presentation drawing. So, they both have their uses. I just am prejudiced, not against the use of the computer, but I had rather look at a drawing that somebody drew rather than the machine drew. That aspect of it has changed, but I don't know that the urge to have a garden or the urge to have some association with the natural world, I don't know that that has changed. That may even be more intense or people may think about it as an aspect of their lives more so than they did perhaps at one time, but I don't know that it has changed. Certainly the definition hasn't changed.

YO: What will the landscape architecture profession look like in the future?

WE: I won't be here to see it—

YO: [Laughs]

WE:—so I can't tell you. [Laughs]

YO: Any projections though?

WE: No. No, I—[Pause]

YO: Just nothing?

WE: Well, no, I think that—[Pause] I would like to see in the profession some very, very strong designers come forward, and I know there are some that are good. A lot of them have a lot of publicity and so forth. Perhaps what I'm looking for is something that's not possible because there are so many more landscape architects now than there used to be and so, I think of maybe a handful of people that are prominent, but there's no reason why there couldn't be a hundred that are prominent in doing beautiful work.

YO: Right.

WE: I would like to see more and more of that, people rising to the top and not always necessarily being a firm's project, but out of that firm or an individual somewhere would—because that's really what most of it amounts to, is that one person is really probably the premier thought behind a design. And I would like to see more and more individuals, strong individuals, come forth and not all graduates submerge themselves in a practice. But it's an interesting phenomenon. The same thing is happening in medicine. Now, so many graduating doctors want to go into a large practice and get a very good income, be absorbed into this practice. Fewer and fewer are wanting to have a private practice and establish their practice. It takes much more effort and it takes longer if you go as an individual, or even with a partner, to establish a practice. You cannot generally express yourself as quickly with your ideas as you can perhaps going into a big firm, but I think sometimes the struggle is more satisfying and I would like to see, I think, more of that because I think those people are stronger. [Dean Kamphoefner advised us to beware of partnerships since they were like a marriage, but without the benefit of sex.]

YO: What's the one important thing to know about Lewis Clarke?

WE: Lewis is lots of fun.

YO: [Laughs]

WE: [Laughs] Basically, and he would be wonderful as an intimate friend. He was my instructor and I think we are friends, but we don't see each other but once every fifteen years. And you don't establish relationships or close friendships on that basis. But he's good company, and he and his wife were my hosts many times at the beach, and he's always up for whatever crazy thing you want to do. I mean, he's not a staid, everything by rote kind of a person. So, he's just fun to be around, lighthearted, and, I think I said, I think there's a sweetness in his nature in some ways that is very disarming.

YO: What's the one important thing to know about Warren Edwards?

WE: Oh, good lord. Well, I hope it is that I do what I say I'll do. I mean if you promise to do something or even imply that you'll do something then you need to do it—I think happiness—everybody's concerned about their happiness. I think happiness is more or less doing what's expected of you. If somebody expects something of you that's reasonable that perhaps you ought to do or that you can do to help someone or thing, then that's what you ought to do and that's what gives you satisfaction is doing what's expected.

YO: That's a good axiom.

WE: And then, beyond that I don't know what else you can do.

YO: Well, you promised me you'd do this interview and you have done it.

WE: [Laughs]

YO: That's all the questions I have for today.

WE: Okay.

YO: Thank you.

WE: Thank you.

Transcriber: Deborah Mitchum

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