

TRANSCRIPT

SCRC Series: Lewis Clarke Oral Histories Project – MC00191

Field Notes: David O. Lose (April 22, 2011)

Interviewee: DAVID OWEN LOSE

Interviewer: Yona R. Owens

Interview date: Wednesday, April 6, 2011

Location: Nashville, Tennessee

Length: Approximately 106 minutes

This interview for the Lewis Clarke Oral Histories Project was conducted in a conference room at Lose & Associates' office. A native of Louisville, Kentucky, David Lose graduated in 1968 with a degree in landscape architecture from North Carolina State University's School (now College) of Design. In 1982, he founded Lose & Associates, a landscape architecture, civil engineering, land planning, and architecture firm noted for planning and implementing public parks, recreational areas, and greenways. He is a Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), a past chair of the National Recreation and Park Association Board of Trustees, and a past chair of the Tennessee State Board of Architects, Engineers and Interior Designers. He has won dozens of ASLA Excellence Awards. One of his more notable works is the plan for the 125,000 acre Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area on Tennessee's Cumberland Plateau. In 2008, Lose sold his firm to four of his associates and made plans to retire. He is still an active part of the Lose & Associates team on an as needed basis.

YO: My name is Yona Owens and I'm interviewing David Lose at his office in Nashville, Tennessee, on April 6, 2011. David, I'd like to start off with our standard first question. Tell me a little bit about where you're from and how you got interested in landscape architecture.

DL: I'm originally from Louisville, Kentucky, or the east side of Louisville, Kentucky. I guess it's kind of a long story in a way. My family had a lawn and garden supply business and then that grew into wholesale, chemicals, for gardens and so on. I grew up when I was very small packaging seed individually at a time, you know, and sealing it, and all that kind of stuff and we always had a big garden. I thought that was pretty neat. Then we had a retail yard where we sold plant material. So, I always was associated with plant material even before I went to grade school. So, I thought I knew a little something about what was going on. Then we moved when I was sixteen to a new house and it was kind of on a slope and Dad thought that it was good for my brothers and I and he to build all these retaining walls to hold back the slope, which we did out of native stone. We went and got the native stone out of creek beds in the truck.

YO: Oh, wow.

DL: So, we loaded all of this up and we did that for, I don't know, three summers anyway.

YO: Not a weekend project, in other words.

DL: Oh, heavens no. Some creeks you'd go to and you'd carry a crowbar with you because every stone you'd pick up there'd be a snake under it. So, you pick up the stone and then you take the crowbar and kill the snake and then take the stone.

YO: Oh, my God.

DL: It was pretty intense, and that was when I was like fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, somewhere in there, rebellious ages, you know. Then we had a flat area—we had a walkout basement, which we finally finished into a game room and stuff so we could have big parties and so on, and there was a flat area so we said we needed a patio. So, I kind of designed the patio. It was three slabs of Bedford stone separated by brick, standard stuff, and I thought that was pretty cool.

YO: Yeah, that does sound cool.

DL: Then we had a friend, Mr. Wihry of Miller-Wihry, who was also a surveyor. He did some work at the house, I don't know, located the drive or something. I can't remember exactly. He saw what I did and encouraged Mom or encouraged us to look at the field of landscape architecture. I didn't know anything about it. So, I thought that was kind of cool. So, that's what we did.

YO: So, you started looking for schools for landscape architecture?

DL: When I was a senior, yes. Don't have any idea why State picked me. I went to the University of Ohio. I didn't like the campus up there. I thought it was old and it was huge. Mom wanted me to go to Cornell and I didn't want to go north. I've got too much Southern blood in me to go north. So, I applied at Wisconsin and then I applied at NC State.

YO: What year was this?

DL: '58, I guess. Don't know why NC State took me, have no idea. I think Mr. Wihry probably wrote a letter in my regard. In high school, I kind of multitasked, everything but studies. I was in a band, a dance band, and I worked on cars to make them go faster, plus I worked all the time. If you weren't doing studies you were working so, you know, you work on cars, you play in a dance band.

YO: Okay. But you got accepted at State anyway.

DL: Yes, I did.

YO: And did you go into landscape architecture at that time?

4:55

DL: Yes, I did. In high school I took mechanical drawing and I had a pretty good math background in high school. I took some real strong physics and had at that time, I guess, two years of algebra and, was it simple geometry?

YO: Mm hmm.

DL: So, I had some kind of a big physics teacher, which physics was always a good subject for me. At the end of the day, he took me out in the hall and he says, I don't know whether to pass you or flunk you. If I flunk you you're not going to graduate. So, he passed me, but it was a pretty good course. It was a College Board course. So, some of the guys that went to engineering school didn't even have to crack a book in physics because they already had it.

YO: Right.

DL: But, yeah, so I had the drawing and thought I could do it.

YO: Right. Well, the first two years of landscape architecture at that time, you sort of took the classes with the architect students as well, right?

DL: Correct.

YO: And you had cross discipline courses like drawing and things like that.

DL: Yes.

YO: Do you think those courses were important? Do you think that they're still kind of the courses that people should take?

DL: Absolutely. I was ill prepared, I would say, even though I was around plant material and I took mechanical drawing and all that. I think the visual arts is very, very important for a landscape architect and I thought those cross pollination of the two years—it just made you have a deeper understanding of what you were getting into. So, yeah, I would highly recommend it. I've always encouraged schools, whenever I've had the opportunity, to have a school of design where you have more than one discipline so you have that cross pollination. Whether it works or not, you get exposed to it. We had product designs and architects and landscape architecture, so that was great.

YO: Do you remember some of the teachers you had for those cross discipline classes?

DL: Oh, yeah. I had Bireline, had Cox, had Duncan Stuart. I guess those are the main players.

YO: What was Duncan Stuart like?

DL: He was a fascinating guy. From what I remember he had one eye, or something, that really worked.

YO: [Laughs]

DL: And he taught World War II pilots perception in the air, how you can see your target and coordinate the target with the perception of shooting it down, or whatever, and that was

fascinating. He was colorful in that kind of way. He had a lot of history that he would share with the students. I don't think any of those professors were—they were good student professors, let's put it that way. I guess that's the best way of putting it. Duncan Stuart, he'd make you try certain things. I remember the exercise of two straws tall and string [to] support a brick, you know, how you do that, and all those kinds of exercises, or what do you make out of triangles. So, those were kind of some neat things. Well, how do you do that? How do you take a brick and two straws high and put a brick on it and it supports itself.

YO: Right.

DL: So, yeah, I guess some of those things you just basically remember. Then I guess it was Bireline was into different colors, the color wheel, that type of thing. There are some things that you always kind of remember. I remember doing these little color things, the tubes with different colors, and how they kind of come off the board and that type of thing.

YO: Right. Did they teach the landscape architect and architect students differently than they did the others?

DL: No. They were all together, all in the same room.

YO: The product design, everybody's in the same room?

DL: Everybody.

YO: Well, that was a mix, wasn't it?

9:57

DL: Yeah, and you know you got—and that's when they started the charrettes because you'd always have these projects that would always last longer than you anticipated and you always waited till the last damn minute anyway. But it was great camaraderie with everyone and the fallout rate was, you know. They'd walk in and say, do you know why the freshman class is so big? Fifty percent of y'all won't be here next year.

YO: Fifty percent.

DL: Or whatever.

YO: A big percentage though.

DL: A big percentage and it was right. They were right. I don't know what the ratio of students to professors was, but it was very, very small, very small. So, we just had hands on I think from the first time we walked through the door there. We didn't know it. I mean we didn't know because we didn't have anything to judge it off of.

YO: Right.

DL: But it's true because then I went to—later on, I was with CLARB and then I was with the Accreditation Board. I worked accreditation for different universities for years and that was the professional and then you get to see exactly what you really had.

YO: Right. So, how did it compare with other places?

DL: Well, I mean we had—contact hours now is the big thing for justifying programs, the contact hours you have with students, and that's the way universities spend their money and there's pressure to keep so many students per professor. I don't think we had that at State in '58, '59, and '60. I don't think that was a driving force. How many students are you going to be in contact with? I think it was the end product that they were looking for. That's my personal opinion.

YO: Well, Dean Kamphoefner was the instrumental person at that time. What do you remember about him?

DL: He was so over my head. [Laughs]

YO: Was he? [Laughs]

DL: He was a great guy. The seniors—you go over to his house and you have cookies, and his wife was great, and coffee or tea or Cokes, and the book that we had was Tolstoy.

YO: What was it?

DL: Tolstoy, the Russian.

YO: The novelist?

DL: Yeah.

YO: Really?

DL: So, we had to discuss him around coffee and tea. I mean, here you've got somebody that's [Pause] me. I mean, it's great, but I really didn't care about what Tolstoy thought about what he was writing.

YO: Right.

DL: So, that was kind of cool. But I think he was a—he demanded respect. I think he was very pro design and I think he was a fair taskmaster with his faculty. You never heard faculty carping about him like you hear a lot. I'm not saying they didn't, I'm just saying I never heard it. As a student sometimes you don't hear that kind of stuff. But he commanded respect and, oh, I don't know what year it was, but we were kind of mad at him for something. I can't remember what it was. He did something we didn't like. [Laughs] So, we got these cabbage heads—you want that kind of story?

YO: Yeah.

DL: We got these cabbage heads and cut them out so they looked like Kamphoefner.

YO: [Laughs]

DL: Remember those big lights at the hall over at the Design School when you come in the main entry? They had those spikes on them?

YO: Yeah.

DL: So we put those on top of those spikes.

YO: [Laughs] Oh, no.

DL: We did crazy things like that.

YO: What did he say about that? Did he say anything?

DL: You know there was nothing said about it. We thought it was pretty cool. [Laughs]

YO: [Laughs]

DL: And, I don't know—we hung some toilet seats off the side of the building one night. I don't know why we did that.

YO: It made sense at the time though, didn't it?

DL: Absolutely, absolutely. Freshmen, again, I mean, you know, stuff students do, but we were working hard, or we thought we were working hard freshman year, and I guess we had Bireline. I'm not sure. But we had a lot of kids in there. So, we'd think it was cool to drink beer.

YO: Really?

15:05

DL: Oh yeah, so we had a big GI can full of beer and it was snowing or something, and the campus police, they'd come and check in on you. You know how they check. So they were giving us some trouble, and this is way off the line. I don't tell this a whole lot to people. But anyway, they were in there talking to us, and I wasn't a part of that, but I knew what was going down, and so some of the bigger guys went out when they were talking to us. They were riding around on those little cars—those little campus jeeps or whatever they've got—and they put it in the fountain over at Watauga Hall. I think the next spring Watauga Hall's fountain was full of dirt and flowers were in it.

YO: [Laughs]

DL: But anyway, it was a good life, and like I say around '57, '58, it was all male. And that was a pretty good atmosphere. Then of course everybody had to take ROTC.

YO: Oh, did you?

DL: Oh yeah, absolutely. But I was in the Reserve. I was already in the Navy Reserve so I said, well, I'll take ROTC, and because I was a trombone player, I was in the drum and bugle corps, which was kind of cool.

YO: Yeah, that is cool.

DL: Didn't have to have a rifle.

YO: [Laughs]

DL: So, you get to go the cherry blossom festivals in Washington, D.C. and all that kind of stuff.

YO: Now were you in a fraternity at State?

DL: Right. I was a Sig Ep.

YO: Sig Ep.

DL: Mm hmm.

YO: And, did you find that your fraternity activities interfered with your studio work? The reason I'm asking that is because I've heard people say that Kamphoefner was really opposed to people—

DL: He was. He didn't like it at all. He didn't like you to do that nor did he like for you to play football or sports because he thought that took away from the school. That's a true statement. I really didn't much care about that statement. We had one guy, I can't remember, he was in architecture and he was a football player and he was great at both ends of the stick. I can't tell you his name.

Yes and no. Basically no because the fraternity made you get your grades. So, you're down there by yourself, you don't know anybody. I didn't have anybody from Kentucky there, much less Louisville or anything. So, you get that camaraderie of a small group of guys and they make you work. I'm not saying you don't play hard, but at the same time if the fraternity doesn't get their grades then it hurts the fraternity and what they can do on campus.

YO: Right.

DL: No, I don't—maybe. But I don't think it was the fraternity. [Laughs]

YO: [Laughs] Now you didn't stay at State though. You had a broken time there.

DL: I did. Interesting story. We were doing a—I had Lewis Clarke, it was third year. We were doing this competition, a modular housing competition, and I was pretty much through that. I'm telling you in a round about way of getting there.

YO: Ok.

DL: I decided I needed a break. So, this one guy had a girlfriend up around, Lexington, Kentucky or something, somewhere up there, and I said, well, can I ride with you. My brother was going to the University of Kentucky, UK, so I went up and saw my brother, Larry, for a couple days and then came on back. Lewis asked where I was and I said, well, I had to go see family, which was my brother. But it wasn't design that got me. It was some of the side courses I wasn't paying enough attention to. They got me. Physics and some of the other things I was taking, analytical geometry or something like that. Those kind of courses hurt me. I'm not making terrific grades in design school, but I was doing okay. So, then I went home. Worked at the stores. I played standup bass, used to do that in the dance band, so I took a standup bass and had a '51 Ford convertible and I'd put that in there and go downtown. There was a piano bar so this gal would be—I'd back her up. [She was] playing the piano and I was playing string bass.
20:09

YO: That's exciting.

DL: It was exciting. And then I'd get up early in the morning and go around and see all the growers, see what the plants looked like, see what was blooming and then order for the three stores. Then Mom was really worried about me, and probably should have been. When I got finished with that then I went to the University of Louisville and I wanted to get my grade point average back up. So, I went there and took some fine art classes. They had model sketching, that type of thing. Took that and took some natural science classes along with business. So, I was there for about two years and came within taking business law and getting a degree from the University of Louisville. And I'd go to summer schools, too.

YO: Just going for it at that point.

DL: Well, yeah, but if I wasn't going to school, I'd be working at the stores, so you might as well go to school, right?

YO: Right. [Laughs]

DL: And play behind the piano bar.

YO: Right.

DL: Then I got married in '63, still going to school. Betti had finished her undergraduate degree and she was going to graduate school.

YO: And what was her major in?

DL: Ecology. Aquatic biology was her undergraduate and then she went into ecology. She was going to Western Michigan and then we just kind of hooked up, got married, and then she went to U of L. She was doing a little something for the hospital lab, separations or something. She's pretty good at lab work.

YO: U of L is University of—

DL: University of Louisville.

YO: Louisville.

DL: So, I was kind of finishing up a degree, and again, I had some free tickets to Churchill Downs and asked Betti if she wanted to go and she said, we can't go. She had to work. I went and came home and had some leftover tickets I didn't cash from races and she said, what do you want to do with your life? Is this what you want to do? I said, I want to go back to State, and she said, well, let's go.

YO: All right.

DL: So, we went back to State.

YO: What year was that?

DL: Had to be '64, I guess, because then it took me another two and a half years, or three years to get out of State. And I had my grade point average up. I mean business school is nothing compared to design school.

YO: Right.

DL: I mean, you can go to the business school then you can go to the bar and you can play bridge all day.

YO: [Laughs]

DL: And drink boiler makers and go home and still get up and make halfway decent grades, so that was a snap.

YO: [Laughs] Oh, gosh. Well, the landscape architecture professors that were on staff when you were there was Gil Thurlow, Richard Moore, David Teachout, Robert Phillips, Wayne Maynard, and Lewis Clarke, and I think Richard Moore was about to be named head of department when you got there. I think he was in '62. What do you remember about any of those guys?

DL: [Pause] While I was also away from school, I worked during the summers for Miller, Wihry, and Lee, which was a landscape architectural and engineering firm, and I—

YO: Could you say that again, please?

DL: I worked for Miller, Wihry, and Lee, which was a landscape architectural and engineering firm in Louisville. Campbell Miller eventually became president of ASLA and he was a [ASLA] Fellow and really kind of ahead of his time on some of his thinking, but we'll get to that another time. But anyway, I worked for landscape architects and engineers. So, I came back to school and I went into Lewis' office and I said I'd come back to go back to school. He said, what have you been doing? So I told him, I said working for, you know, landscape architects and engineers. He said you'll never make it. You've been tainted. I said, how?

YO: [Laughs] Oh, no.

DL: He said you've been working with engineers.

25:00

YO: [Laughs] Oh, no.

DL: So, he didn't have a real kind spot for that. So, I went and saw Gil Thurlow because we'd bumped around—and I don't know whether my timing is right, but this is all that's said. I told him, I said, Mr. Thurlow, I've come back to school. He said, I'll kiss your ass in Times Square if you ever get out of here. I said, all right.

YO: Oh, David, this is not very promising. [Laughs]

DL: So, anyway, I gave it my best shot and what I remember—I'll take them one at a time. Gil Thurlow—he always talked about imperfections and the wart on his face and all that kind of stuff. He always said, you know, that's imperfection. He was kind of the old school, so to speak, the old Harvard school. Plant material was king, grading was king, construction drawings were king, and if you didn't know that, you couldn't get out of the school. We felt as students there was kind of a blackball system. If you couldn't satisfy Clarke, Thurlow, Bob Phillips, and Moore, you weren't getting out. Period. Right or wrong that's what the students felt, and there was a high attrition rate when you get to the third or fourth year, people leaving.

But anyway—so, I was struggling I guess third year or fourth year. I remember Fred [Stresau] was still there. It must have been fourth year. Stresau was still there. Gil gave us a little thing to do about this house, do a little perspective of the house, and all that kind of stuff, and no help from anybody. All right, so I did mine. It turned out better than most. So, he started asking the different kids if I'd gotten help. So, I found out about it and I asked Mr. Thurlow I thought I needed to see him. So, I went in his office and he was getting out his grade book and he said, have a seat. I said, you don't need either one of those. I said, I'm not sitting down and you don't need your grade book. This is about integrity. I said, you questioned my integrity with all the students around here, to see if I cheated on this, instead of coming to see me. I said I don't appreciate it. From then on, I never had any trouble with him.

YO: Wow, that's pretty severe.

DL: It was, but—

YO: But that's how he was though, right?

DL: Yeah, but from then on he was a friend, you know? And I understood the value of construction drawings and I understood the value of grading because I had spent time with Miller, Wihry, and Lee sitting behind landscape architects that had to do that and doing the little tickertape for grading and cut and fill, and saw the value of that, and specs, and construction drawings. So, Thurlow and I made a turn there and at the end of the day when I graduated, at the graduation ceremony, he came up and said, when do you want me to meet you in Times Square? [Laughs]

YO: [Laughs] That's good. So, he was a good sport, too, huh?

DL: Yeah. I mean, he was. Bob Phillips, when I went there in '58, he must have been a senior or close to being a senior. When I came back, he'd already gone to Harvard, come back, and was teaching. We got along well. Some of his courses again were on the construction end of it. I think he did teach design, but a lot of it was on the construction end, and I understood what he was looking for. So, I made good grades in that. There was no problem there. Hell, I guess it was my fourth year—I guess I was in the fourth year, summer of the fourth year—I went to work for Bob Phillips. He had an office.

YO: In Raleigh?

DL: Yes.

YO: Oh, I didn't know that.

DL: So, I check in at his office. Okay, what do you want me to do, looking around, and he says, I've got this hospital down in Morehead. Here's the hospital. Here's the site plan. He said, I'm going to the beach for three or four weeks. I want you to finish it out and detail it out.

YO: [Laughs]

DL: I said, Yes, sir. That's when you did everything by hand, hand sketches and hand-sketched details, curb details and stuff like that. Right or wrong or indifferent, I had to do it. So, I did it and he was complimentary of my work. But that's my memory of Phillips. I think he was a real sensitive guy and when we had our critiques, he could be very brutal up in the round rotunda, but I always had a good relationship with him.

30:25

Dick Moore, I think, and Thurlow were at odds with each other at times because of two different schools, two different thought processes. Dick Moore wanted to bring in other disciplines besides landscape architecture, in what I remember, forestry or something like that. And he was very much to the point. He drove a pretty hard bargain with the students and I think he and Kamphoefner had words. This is from a student's perspective. And he was kind of sarcastic and critical and that was his nature.

YO: Now, did he teach design?

DL: Yes, he taught design, too. I say he did. I'm almost sure he did.

YO: Was he pulling on a West Coast philosophy at the time?

DL: [Pause] You know, as a student you didn't know between the West Coast and the East Coast, or I didn't. I knew that we had the McHargs, and we had the Eckbos, and we had those players, and we had the Browns, and so on. We had all that, but I think Kamphoefner kept some kind of balance there. We had some good sculptors there that taught sculpture and we had some real good, I would say, West Coast architects that we had to take our second year and we got the influence of that—cubism and all that kind of stuff from them, which I thought was good. We had to do models and so on and working right with the architects the second year in some of the design classes, I thought that was good. I think it was just kind of the Camelot years because everybody seemed to work together and I think the products that they pushed out were pretty awesome.

YO: But at the time you didn't feel like there was a real difference in—in other words you were getting a broad base of everything that was going on in the country at the time.

DL: Yeah, and studying European architects and stuff like that, so it just—I didn't feel it was there. Lewis was a students' professor. He was so damn smart. He went to Oxford [actually Harvard] and he's got a degree in architecture, he's got a degree in landscape architecture, I mean you know the guy's got—and he was very casual. We really made him mad one time that I can think of, as a class, just pissed him off. We had Burle Marx come in for a couple of weeks and Burle Marx is quite a show. The student body got all excited about it because he likes to drink wine and all that kind of stuff, paint on the walls, and pinch women and all that.

YO: [Laughs]

DL: But anyway, he came in and right before he came in, we were trying to get how we're going to entertain him and all that kind of stuff, who's going to cook what, and how we're going to buy the wine and get him paint brushes. We had this butcher paper on all these walls. We got him up and he started doing all this with the black paint on the butcher paper and—somebody stole it the next day and it has never surfaced, has never surfaced, not even one piece of it—but anyway, so right before he came, Lewis gave us a project. [Laughs] And we just kind of—he said something about the world or something. What do you want to do in the world as landscape architects, something really out there. So, we just kind of sloughed it off and we had some doors and we put now big things of the world and said, through these doors walk the best landscape architects in the world. [Laughs]

35:18

YO: [Laughs]

DL: And he got pissed.

YO: Did he?

DL: But that's the only time we as a class really miffed him pretty good. He liked the students working together. The ones that went off and did their own and came back, and there's some, I won't call their name—it was okay, but there was no interaction of learning between the students, and he wanted that interaction. I felt that he did. He'd give us projects that—he had projects that he had in his office and he'd come over and we'd, you know, so be it. [Laughs]

YO: So, you'd work on real life projects then.

DL: Yeah, right, right.

YO: Do you remember any of them?

DL: Not really. One was a multi-housing deal on a pretty steep slope type site, those types of things. What I think was pretty cool, Lewis and Moore had the big picture of practicing landscape architecture, i.e., we didn't do backyard design. I mean, you learned a lot of stuff about backyard design, but they were more—I remember Trenton was my senior thesis. Go out and find a town and do something with it.

YO: So, you picked Trenton, New Jersey?

DL: No, North Carolina.

YO: Oh, Trenton, North Carolina. [Laughs] Sorry.

DL: Which was very unique because you went right from the road into the city of Trenton, and it was an old mill town and it had live oaks. It's on the way to the coast. I think that's Trenton. I'm almost sure it is. But the fact was it didn't have this ring of decay around it before you got into the city. Why didn't it? So, we'd explore those kinds of things as opposed to backyard design. Now Thurlow on the other hand, I mean you learn a lot by doing small scale design, but I think the emphasis at State was more grand than that, and that was pushed I think by Lewis and Moore and Bob Phillips. I'm sure Kamphoefner was involved. We didn't know what the curriculum was as far as they were concerned.

YO: Right. What about David Teachout?

DL: Don't remember much of him.

YO: I don't really ever collect very much information on him, so I always ask about him. How about Wayne Maynard? Do you remember him?

DL: Yeah, but not like the others. The others were the power brokers, I think.

YO: Let's see. I hear a lot about the crits, and you mentioned in the rotunda. Did you have crits in the classroom and then have formal crits in the rotunda, or how did that work? And who were the crits?

DL: [Laughs] It depends on the subject matter. I think we probably had crits in the classroom, but those are not the ones that really stand out in your head forty years later, or whatever.

YO: Right.

DL: It's the ones up in the rotunda. You put your stuff up, and you've been working twenty-four hours a day for three or four days, getting it just the way you want it. And then you present it and then they just knock the hell out of you.

YO: Really?

DL: And I think it's good—and a lot of people quit after those crits because they just couldn't take the pressure. I've got two daughters. I understand crying and all that kind of stuff.

YO: Yeah. [Laughs]

DL: But one of them, she just collapsed. I mean, it was all over. Nice woman. I don't know whatever happened to her. Then, we had another guy that they said you're not getting out of here. That scenario, and he was a nice guy, but they said, you're not LA caliber coming out of this school, so. But what I remember about the crits is that if it was Lewis's class, he wouldn't do the crit. Moore would do it, pick up an architect or a practitioner, an architect professor. It'd be two or three people and they'd just have at it. [Laughs]

40:28

YO: I didn't realize they had three at a time. I thought—now they really gang up on you, don't they?

DL: Oh, yeah, it would be more than one person's point of view.

YO: Wow. [Laughs]

DL: And I can remember Dick Moore—and it was Mike Fowler, real smart guy, good designer, but he had used some kind of cartoon lettering on his thing, freehand thing, and Moore just ripped that to shreds. This lettering. Where did this lettering come from? Do you think this is a cartoon? Do you think you're in the circus? Or something like that. I mean, he just went on and on and on, and nothing about the design but just the presentation part. So, I think it's where the professors just kind of teed off on the students.

YO: Mm hmm. [Laughs] Oh, gosh.

DL: And they'd whip you, kind of into submission. I remember coming out of one of those, I guess about three days, I was married, survived, pretty good job, and there was a little—and we didn't have any money, but we were going to celebrate because the critique's over, or it was the end of the semester, or whatever it was. So, we went to this spaghetti place and I got through the salad, but when the spaghetti came I just fell asleep, right down there in the bowl of spaghetti.

YO: No kidding? [Laughs]

DL: And that was the celebration. [Laughs]

YO: Oh my gosh. So there were visiting crits and lecturers, too, right?

DL: Yes.

YO: Can you remember some of those? Well, you said Burle Marx, but how about some other ones?

DL: Burle Marx made a real impression. I think Bye came in and made a great impression and he was—he's from the East Coast. Had a nice practice and had some real neat stuff and kind of generated some enthusiasm from the students. The guest lecturers that they selected were really like cheerleaders. They'd come in, they'd get you all stimulated, new ideas, just a lot of enthusiasm, and it was great when they came in. Burle Marx did that. He was just a great guy. There was one guy that came in, I don't remember his name, but they were doing the new hotel down from the university and there was a huge oak tree there. He says, aren't you guys going to go out and see that oak tree? He got us all charged up with banners and boards and stuff like that, went out and surrounded the oak tree and wouldn't let them chop it down. It was a hundred and some odd year, hundred and fifty year old tree.

YO: Right.

DL: I don't remember the guy's name, but he dressed smartly.

YO: Was it Patrick Horsburgh, by chance?

DL: Could be. He was a tall guy and had custom made tailored suits.

YO: Was he British as well? Do you remember? It sounds like Patrick.

DL: Could have been, but I mean he was just, why don't you guys go do something, instead of sitting on your ass? Go save it. So, he got the city fathers to pay attention and we thought that was pretty cool. So, yeah, the guest lecturers, they always brought something special. I highly encourage them to continue to do that. It was kind of inspiring.

YO: You said Burle Marx stayed two weeks. Did the other ones stay—

DL: No.

YO: —for extended periods?

DL: No.

YO: They just came for the lectures and things.

DL: Well, yeah. There might be a two or three day, you have a quick sketch project or something like that and they'd be there long enough to kind of get a feel for them and they get a feel for you. It was more than just an overnight stay.

YO: I see.

DL: It was kind of like they would do that and then they'd get in the studio. They'd lecture to the whole school and then we'd have them to ourselves and have an opportunity to go to dinner with them or the students would get together.

45:08

YO: So, a lot of interaction time.

DL: Yes.

YO: Wow. Let's see here. Well, I was going to ask you about an underlying design philosophy of the landscape architecture department, but we've already said that you just felt like you were getting a cross section of everything that was going on, not only nationally but internationally in some cases.

DL: Right.

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

DL: [Laughs] [Pause] I don't think I can point to one thing. I think it was the gamut of the whole experience. I do think—Lewis had a class on the history of landscape architecture, of landscapes, which was really a great foundation to express yourself in other means. But the whole school experience, it was like—I really felt well prepared. I don't know whether it was because I was older or had some experience in a professional office, but when I left there I could do anything. They gave me the skills to do that. They gave you the skills to analyze. They gave you the skills to project yourself, to project the project. I don't know what professor said it but, if it's a blank piece of paper, you ain't done nothing. So do something. I don't know whether that was Lewis or Moore. Somebody would come by and say, where is it? [Laughs]

YO: Yeah. [Laughs]

DL: But what stands out is the quality of education we got. And those are the professors that you're talking about, what Lewis brought to bear to the table, the old school of Thurlow, the new Harvard of Phillips and Moore, and the Birelines, the drawing, and the sculpture so it's three dimensional. We might come back to that, but I don't know whether there's anything specifically that stands out except that it was a great time in everybody's life. Everybody really enjoyed what they were doing and the students enjoyed one another and they enjoyed the professors. There was still that student-professor relationship, but I think it was good. And us that did not work in Lewis' office felt like we were kind of put upon a little bit because we weren't working in Lewis' office, but hell, he wasn't paying anything so I wasn't going to work for him anyway. I had to make some money.

YO: Right. [Laughs] So what did you do after you graduated in '67?

DL: I was offered a—I think Lewis offered me a job and Campbell Miller offered me a job. And I went back to Louisville and worked under a couple well-seasoned landscape architects. And again, you're still in the ancient age of having to do your own drawings and that type of thing. Learned from them, I was there for a year, and then went to Nashville and opened an office in Nashville for Miller, Wihry and Lee. At that time, we were doing, or had been commissioned to do, a state park, Percy Priest State Park.

YO: In Tennessee.

49:23

DL: In Tennessee, and we just had finished state park work in collaboration with another engineering firm here in Tennessee. The chief planner at Tennessee Conservation liked what we could do so we got more of that work. So, I came down here, that would be what, '67? I don't remember exact dates but a year after I graduated. Then I went out, and there was no landscape architectural firm in Nashville at that time. So, I was kind of a new breed, and yeah, you plant bushes. It was that whole scenario of "bush guy," and there was a large firm here that had a landscape architect they termed, "planner," but there was nobody doing that type of work. And just go out and try to find the work, get the work, come back that evening, or those nights, and produce it, and take it back out. So, that went on for awhile. Then we started doing some Corps work. We've got a relationship with the Corps here so I started doing some—

YO: The Army Corps of Engineers?

DL: The Army Corps of Engineers and doing some reservoir management studies, carrying capacities, on the water and on the land, and visitations and all that kind of stuff. So, I was doing some of that and as we were doing that I was also able to do some land planning. So, I made friends with the planning director, Ferris Deep.

YO: What was that again?

DL: Ferris Deep. He had a client that he suggested come over and see me, and his name was Fred Webber. So, Fred came over to see me, and here I am, I guess mid-thirties or so, and he wanted to do this little infill in a prominent neighborhood in Nashville. I guess the infill was seven acres, maybe.

YO: Seven acres. [Laughs]

DL: But it was very small lots, houses close to the street, parks in the middle so you have big trees, road that went around in the middle that had green space. It became very, very successful and we had single-family homes in there, and we had some duplexes, we had a couple quadruplexes, so it was a mix of housing, and that was the first one in Nashville.

YO: Was this about 1970 or so?

DL: Mm hmm.

YO: What was the name of it?

DL: Gloucester Square.

YO: Gloucester Square.

DL: At that time, Roy Pender was working with me. So, I had Roy Pender down here. People would come from everywhere to see this thing, so that was pretty cool. We continued doing those for years, the infill stuff. So, it's not a new deal. I mean, they talk about infill. I said, well yeah, okay, and we infilled a golf course, that type of thing.

So, it kind of grew from there from having landscape architects, and then I got a good civil engineer because I couldn't get the engineers to meet my timetable. So, if you've got them in-house they can meet your timetable. It was back to the same scenario of the Louisville office of Miller, Wihry, and Lee where I had landscape architects and engineers.

Then we went on and did a lot of zoning cases, land planning, taking it from beginning to end, all the way through construction. During that process, we brought Sasaki in as a consultant, when we did the Riverfront Park. Worked on a lot of what we call pinwheel ball [park] complexes where they're in the round. I saw one, but that was basically generated out of this office and it kind of caught on. A lot of reasons for that. One, it doesn't take up as much land, it's easier to administer, it doesn't take as much personnel. I won't get into all that, but there's a lot of reasons to do that, plus they play most of their games at night. They don't have to have that relationship to the sun because you're playing at night.

Anyway, we went from that and just kept kind of getting bigger, and then we got the Big South Fork, which we got an honor award from ASLA.

YO: Now that's a hundred and twenty-five thousand acres.

DL: Right.

YO: That's a big project.

DL: That was a big project, and we had a year to do it.

YO: Oh, my gosh.

55:00

DL: It was a million dollar contract back then, so it was pretty big.

YO: Wow.

DL: We blossomed there and I had like—

YO: Now, were you David Lose Associates?

DL: No. Lose Associates didn't happen until '82.

YO: Okay.

DL: No, I was still working with Miller, Wihry. I put on two survey crews so now I had surveyors. I had a forester. I had an architect. I had a kind of environmental trails expert. I had about forty people. We had a year to get it done and we got it done in a year. It was a nice piece of work. Cheryl Barton was the project manager and she went on to the West Coast. I think she went on to become president of ASLA. So, I kind of trained her. I think she came out of Harvard. I'm not sure. [Laughs]

YO: [Laughs]

DL: So, I got pupils all over the place. So, we were doing that and we were doing the Riverfront Park, doing the Wave Country, wave pool, which is one of the first ones in the country. The first one was Decatur, Georgia, but we were kind of right behind that. Some major park work, so my guys are just busting it. I had Nico Young, I think, from NC State at that time.

YO: What was the name again?

DL: Nicholas Young.

YO: Nicholas Young.

DL: I had him from NC State and he graduated behind me. I had Tom Martin. Tom came later though. I didn't have him down there. So, I still had—you have those ties you kind of work with. Then Campbell Miller had offices in Washington and Indiana and Louisville and they were having a hard time. And they told me I had to cut my kids' salaries and stuff, and we were working overtime.

I'll never forget this. I was down at the mayor's office with all the department heads around this huge conference table and I was sitting there. I wasn't a department head. I was just sitting there. The mayor's sitting up at the front, Mayor Fulton, and he said, boys, you know what time it is? Everybody's looking around. Yeah, it's ten after eleven. He said, no. He said, you know what time it is? So, we're waiting for it. He said, it's six months, four days, and twenty-four hours till election time. I want that Riverfront Park finished.

YO: Oh, my gosh.

DL: Everybody said, yes, sir. [Laughs] And it was done, and I'll never forget this. There was a newscast, and the mayor was down there next to the Riverfront Park and the reporter said, I see you've got the Riverfront Park finished. The mayor said, yes, sir. He said, does it have anything to do with the election? [The mayor said], oh, no, not a thing. We were just kind of on time.

YO: [Laughs]

DL: Of course he got re-elected, but those kind of things are funny.

YO: How long is the Riverfront Park?

DL: It's about four city blocks. I can take you down there. It's on the Cumberland River. It floods all the time, so it was made to flood.

YO: The what river?

DL: The Cumberland.

YO: Cumberland River.

DL: Cumberland River, and the Cumberland River fluctuates all the time. So, it was designed to take that and to keep from eroding away, and it was designed to have major functions down there where you could tie up a barge and have—well, they tie up a barge and have the symphony, like on the Fourth of July, have the symphony, and there's enough room for four cannons and a brass band behind the symphony, so the *1812 Overture* really gets it.

YO: Wow! [Laughs]

DL: It's great to see something function the way it was designed.

YO: Right.

DL: I went down the first time and they had the extra bleachers and everybody had their blankets down on the grass, between the grass, and there's a step down and a rock wall in the grass, and everybody's having a great time and it functioned the way it was designed and I said, oh, boy.

YO: What a thrill.

DL: What a thrill, absolutely.

YO: That is a thrill and a half. Well, let's see. You've been actively involved at the national level in park planning programming and design for forty-three years, and you've won dozens of ASLA excellence awards. So far, which of your projects do you feel is your signature project and why?

1:00:10

DL: [Pause] Well, I think the Big South Fork is one, not just because of the size but it is because of the size. We had a tremendous amount of coordination to do, not just in the design area, just in the political arena. The administrating office was the Corps of Engineers. The receiving agency was the National Park Service. And this has only been done once before and that's when they did Yellowstone. The Army Corps came in at Mammoth—if you've been up there you know—and they set the standards and then the National Park Service took it over.

So, I had that to deal with—and also it straddles two states, Kentucky and Tennessee, so there was, what are you putting in my state as an attraction and what are you putting in the other?

So, that had to be dealt with. Then we had the local people, which had always run rough shod over this property. It's a hundred and twenty-five thousand acres. They would take their four wheelers and do whatever they wanted to up and down the streams or go deer hunting anywhere they wanted to, and that's when the four wheelers first came in, so you had these tracks. The federal legislation said you couldn't have the four wheelers in there. So, we had to deal with the local people. Luckily, the federal legislation said you didn't have to have them in there so I could tell you the feds said that, I didn't say that.

YO: Right.

DL: We had that and we had to survey certain areas in and all we had was logging roads. And it's very, very steep terrain. It's jagged terrain. It's Appalachian areas, so we could only do the surveying in the wintertime when the roads were frozen. Otherwise your trucks would just go up to the hub. And the timetable of a year, and I guess the magnitude of the preservation.

Again, it functions as designed. People are using it. There's a lot of hiking trails. It's a natural area. We did an equestrian campground, a lot of horse trails, a lot of blue water trails, a lot of canoeing, and it preserved a lot of heritage up there. There was coal mining in there and that story was told at one of the sites. It will be there for a long, long time.

It's very interesting. I came out of the Nashville Corps and we didn't get one of the reservoir jobs prior to this job and I was very upset. I mean, I went over there and saw my buddies and said, what's going on? I know we're more qualified than this. We should have had this job. It was Dale Hollerin. He said, well David, we've got a big one coming. I think you'll like it.

YO: Oh, that made up for it then, didn't it?

DL: With the Big South Fork, yeah. The Nashville Corps had never done anything of this magnitude. It was always water based, and this is not water based.

YO: Right.

DL: And then we had to staff up, you had to coordinate your staff plus the National Park Service came out of Denver and they came out of Washington, D.C. and I had the Corps, I had the colonels. So it was a big undertaking.

YO: It's phenomenal.

DL: I think that is a good piece of work, and everybody participated. I can't take credit for it. We just had the right people there.

YO: It's a big signature piece. [Laughs]

1:05:05

DL: Yeah. I mean it will be there after golf courses have come and gone, or whatever.

YO: Right.

DL: And I don't know, of course—one of my first jobs down here, again it got an ASLA award, but it was back when you could actually design playgrounds and didn't have the liability situation. It was for a daycare off of Woodmont Boulevard here in Nashville and you had the opportunity to actually design the tree house, you had the opportunity to actually design the bridge, and design these things. Heather, my oldest, was a little one, she was on a tricycle, so she was my model and I'd take her over there and see if she could pull the grade on the tricycle on the trail. That was kind of a neat experience because it was all hands on, and that was a small scale. We've done an awful lot of infills, and that's been very rewarding.

YO: What about your greenway work?

DL: That's new. We started doing that about fifteen years ago, and we've done about a thousand miles of planning, but we've got in the ground over sixty miles of greenways. And again, I think that's really a service to the community. Everybody uses them and the cliché right now is everybody's obese and everything like that, which is true. But people certainly enjoy that, and we probably have more experience on actually getting them [the greenways] in the ground and getting them to be sympathetic to the environment, to the watershed, and to what the watershed actually does to your greenways, because all of them are in flood plains. So, they're right there, whether you have a cut bank or it's flushing or it's water during a storm. We've been real good that they've survived. Some of them don't, but all of ours have been able to do that.

YO: Well, that's great.

DL: Yeah, I think it's the coordination of design, between design and engineering and geotechnical people, all kind of pulling together to figure out what the soils will take, what's the velocity of this water, what's the impact, what's the pressure. So, we go the extra mile when we do that kind of thing.

YO: In all these projects you've talked about how the landscape architect takes the lead in the project, and this is kind of an unusual arrangement these days, where the landscape architect is in charge. What do you have to say to landscape architects about taking the lead on projects like this?

DL: You're the best.

YO: Just take that attitude, huh?

DL: Yeah. If you take a look at the education base of what we got at State—and I think you could say that at some other universities—it's very diverse, it's very wide, and you got an arts degree and you also got a semi-engineering degree. Then you got kind of a social degree, and you're a people person. If you're not a people person, it's very, very difficult to practice, in my opinion, as a landscape architect because you're out in front. Now, you cannot have personal skills or that type of thing and be an engineer and work in the back room and figure figures all you want to. But the first impact's on the land and what comes up out of it might be an architect or an engineer, but I never questioned why we shouldn't be in control. I think Lewis, back when

he was doing the community colleges, he was the one that was doing the community colleges, the site plan and everything, and then the architects were coming in, and that's what he expressed to us. He said, that's where you are, and I agree with him. I don't like working with architects. They're egotistical. They think they're the best. I think they teach this in school, architectural school, or something. They've got egos bigger than this room, and they come in, and they expect you to genuflect or something like that, and it ain't happening here.

1:10:20

YO: [Laughs]

DL: Yeah, and I mean we have architects here, they're great, they're seasoned guys, they're older, they understand the total program, and they're not out building monuments. I guess that's what kind of chaps me about that. And you're always the last guy in. If you're working for an architect, you're the last guy in. Here it is. Make it look pretty, bush it up, cover my service entry, and you're done.

I'll give you an example. We do a lot of campus work. We just finished this huge roundabout at MTSU, Middle Tennessee State University, and it's the first one on campus. Us working with our traffic engineers, what can we do? It was a problem. It's always a problem on campus. Cars.

YO: Right.

DL: So, we did this, and I had a Congressman that said, I want MTSU to have history and culture and all this stuff. His name's Bart Gordon. He's not a Congressman anymore, but he wanted to take these columns, which we had from a renovation of the state capital, and they were out of granite, but they were out of Tennessee granite and Tennessee granite's soft. So, the elements had washed these things anyway since the Civil War. [So] we had these old columns that had [cord caps] and all that kind of stuff, and they were all broken into pieces and so on, over at the Old Penitentiary. He said, I want those. We'll just throw those around campus and do this and do that. They have a School of Excellence and he said, put them in the School of Excellence. Put them over there at the front entry. I said, Bart, we ain't doing that.

YO: [Laughs]

DL: So, anyway, when we did this roundabout—boy, this is a long story getting to the point—when we did this roundabout we took these columns and made them sculptural pieces around the roundabout, and lit them for night lighting, and they were in pieces so we had to dowel them, and they're different sizes. I mean a lot of work, okay? Then we had a pathway coming around. Well, the architect comes over here on this corner and puts a building, a new student union type building.

YO: Oh, no.

DL: He says, I don't like your sidewalk conforming to the arc of the roundabout. I want it to conform to the arc of my building.

YO: [Laughs]

DL: I said, bullshit.

YO: Right.

DL: Then the campus planner, Patty Miller, bless her heart, she's a great gal and she has an architecture degree from Washington and Lee, really smart. I said, Patty, we ain't doing this. I said, this is in, and the architect wants to change it so that from up in the sky, two thousand feet you can see that the arc and his building matched. No one's going to see it on the ground.

So, interfacing with architects sometimes is very, very difficult and they have a vision about their presence that—some of them are really good and some of them aren't. And you're always the last guy getting paid. You've got to run your own shop.

YO: Right.

DL: We do work with architects. We have them on teams when we feel like we need them for their expertise. We don't go out of our area of expertise, i.e., we're doing some of these big community centers, aquatic centers combined. We've been very successful at those. They're very, very nice, and we find the aquatic consultant we think that matches—

YO: That's what kind of centers then, aquatic?

DL: Aquatics, yeah, indoor/outdoor aquatics plus a community center. These buildings, they cost about eighteen million dollars apiece.

YO: Wow.

1:14:53

DL: They have outside swimming pools and all this stuff that get kids interacting with water. We don't profess to be pros at that and we bring them in, so wherever the need is we'll find the right consultant, we hope. Then sometimes you've just got to buy the name. You know our name—we go over and do work in Charlotte, North Carolina. We do work in Atlanta. We do work, you know, our main market I guess is Tennessee, Kentucky and Georgia, but we're doing work in Louisiana and so on, but it's not good enough sometimes in your own community. You have to have somebody out of Philadelphia or somebody out of Boston. It just kind of rips you up.

YO: Right.

DL: And then they finished this Parthenon, which is a big park here in town. It's left over from the World's Fair back in 1919 or something like that. They wanted this out of town design firm and they came in and did a great job, not practical, cost a hundred million dollars. It looked great, but they put parking garages around it because they don't want any cars in the middle of the park. That ain't going to happen. Now it might happen a hundred years from now, but it won't between now and then.

YO: Right.

DL: So, I don't know. I've tried to work with—Earl Swensson is a good architectural firm here, does an awful lot of good work, good buildings. I've tried to work with him. They didn't want to work with us because they think they're planners, too, and I think that's the other problem I have with architects. They think they can plan. Some can, some can't. So, don't work with them.

YO: That's the way it is, right?

DL: That's the way it is. [Laughs]

YO: Is the landscape architecture profession in trouble?

DL: [Pause] I think—no. I think our problem is we're not graduating enough bachelors of landscape architects. We're not graduating enough practical landscape architects. We're graduating a lot of landscape architects that are pretty good planners, but I don't know whether they get it executed. I think there's a strong need for landscape architects. Yeah, we're in trouble this year, last year, five years from now. So are architects, so are engineers, so are any of those kinds of professions that has to do with building. They're all in trouble, but as the norm, no.

That's my opinion, and why do I say that? Well, like I [said], in 1967 there was one landscape architect in Nashville. Now there's over half a dozen firms. Engineering firms have seen the need for that, to have that discipline, so they've hired them. I think it's just a matter of us meeting the demand. I think the demand's there. I don't think we're meeting the demand. I don't think the schools are meeting what the real demand is. I think a lot of the schools—big planning, big broad brush. Yeah, that's good, but—and I'll tell you, I had a guy—this was back in '82. He graduated from NC State, came and showed me his portfolio, and I said, what did you get from NC State? He showed me his portfolio and I said, what did you get from NC State? It was shitty.

YO: Really?

DL: I said, I'll tell you what. I'll give you a thousand dollars to start the legal action to sue the school because you didn't get what you came for.

YO: Really?

DL: He had nothing. I mean he had some trash. He had some big concept stuff, but he had nothing. State got in trouble there for awhile because I was on the accreditation board, but I think that's kind of—that works in certain universities that were in that kind of trouble, and I can't tell you which ones because I'm away from it. I know if I get an Auburn graduate, I know I've got somebody that can actually detail. If I get somebody from the University of Wisconsin, because I know a professor up there, I know what I'm getting. When Brooks Breeden was at Ohio, I called Brooks, I told him this is what I needed, and he would send me that kind of person. But I think the profession is in the hurts because there's not enough of them, and we go back to these contact hours again and the universities as a whole, the whole board of regents or whatever, are saying we've got to cut you or whatever. And they're trying to get you out in four years instead of five because of the load of how much it costs to send kids to college. And I think that's a mistake,

personally. I mean, I think if you get a degree in five years, you've got a master's in five years, hell, you ought to know what—

1:20:35

YO: A bachelor's in five years.

DL: Yeah, and now they try to get a master's in five years, fine, but if you get a master's in five years, you still got to know the bachelor's stuff. You still got to know the plant material, you still got to know the drainage and stuff like that. We got all kinds of criticisms from California when I was on CLARB because their students weren't passing the CLARB test. They went off on their own. [We said,] well, they'll be back because there's no reciprocity. Well, they came back two years later. I think a lot of that is driven by the schools, and I think they like the master's program because they think they can get research dollars and grants so it's not a big burden on the university.

YO: Right.

DL: From that point I think they're in trouble.

YO: What's going to be the solution? Is it going to turn around any time? Do you see somebody doing something differently these days than this? Because your complaint is very common. I hear that a lot, about the students coming out are just not trained to be the landscape architects that have the broad based knowledge that they need to start learning in the marketplace.

DL: Right. Well, the kids coming out, they need a lot of money, too, to cover their base and their debt, but you can't give it to them because they can't earn it—and I'll get off of this kick. So they go to the public side, and there's assets there, but as far as doing—now what was the other question?

YO: Do you see somebody doing something differently in the school system? Is there somebody who's caught your attention that they're starting to kind of approach the teaching a little bit differently?

DL: I'm a little bit removed from that now. At one time, I was kind of right on top of it when I was doing the accreditation and I could see the differences. I still think Auburn's got a pretty good school. I think Georgia's turned more to historic restoration and stuff like that, and plant material. I think Wisconsin's got Sam. [Sam F. Dennis] He's an NC State graduate. He's up there teaching. I got a good kid from him. But I think Indiana's got that philosophy they need to cut this and get a master's in five years. Can't use it. I mean, I could use a writer.

YO: A writer?

DL: Well, sure.

YO: Really?

DL: Yeah. Finding landscape architects that can write good is something else. These reports and stuff that we'd write for—

YO: Oh, that's right.

DL: And I think CLARB was right when they put in a writing section in the exam. I don't know. I don't feel disenchanting with—I guess I do in a way—with all the universities as a whole. I'm just saying we're not—I think sometimes we forget what our real mission is or what we think landscape architecture really is.

YO: What is that?

DL: Well, I'm not so damn sure. I still think it's executed work. I think the planning is great. There's planning degrees, you can do that. There's physical geography degrees. There's social physiology—you know, they've got it all broken down. But I think actually being able to interface and execute so that it is the real thing, it is a living thing—and I'm not talking about backyards.

YO: Right.

DL: We don't do backyards.

YO: Right. [Laughs] What's the one important thing to know about David Lose?

1:24:55

DL: [Pause] People use it a lot, but [Pause] sensitive. Team player. I want everybody to succeed.

YO: I can tell, just from talking to you, that that's very important to know about you. Well, David, I want to thank you for talking to me today. Do you have anything else you'd like to add?

DL: Yeah, I'd like to add the value of landscape architecture. [Pause] We—[Pause] Everybody knows we're kind of destroying our resources, and Lewis Clarke said this forty, fifty years ago, Denver's going to run out of water, and Denver is out of water. So is Atlanta. I think LAs still need to be natural resource based. I think how we deal with our natural environment, specifically water, is going to be critical to us, ten, twenty, fifty, a hundred years from now, i.e. the population keeps getting bigger. And we're not doing a real good job of managing that particular resource. I think some schools work with that, but I think that's very, very important.

I think in the interim another area is mass transit. I think we need to really understand that and the effects it has on the environment. You can go anywhere and you see subdivision marching across cornfields, and there's a diminishing return there. I think the mass transit where we can make an environment where we have high concentration and density and use and our basic needs in one area, it's going to be very, very important in years to come. We're doing a couple of those and I'm excited about it. It's changing the concept of how planning departments think about land planning. I think it's going to be the mission of the landscape architect. The planner's going to be involved, but I mean how you really execute that. So, I think those are cultural changes specifically in the mass transit that we're really going to have to deal with.

YO: By cultural change you mean like the change from using the car so much?

DL: Yeah, exactly, or the truck so much, the semi so much. We want our goods. We want to have strawberries in December and blueberries in January, and they need to get to us because we can afford it and that's what we want, but how do we get it without derogation to the environment?

YO: Would you suggest landscape architects become more involved in more of the planning commissions, local commissions, and committees, and boards and things like that?

1:29:37

DL: Absolutely, absolutely, if they've got the background to be an effective partner. Oh, absolutely. We have people that volunteer for that kind of thing, for the Design Center of Nashville and stuff like that. It's all over, it's all around. It's just a matter of where you want to hang your hat. But I think those are—cultural changes are very, very, very difficult, very difficult, and I'll give you an example. This is really off the wall.

I happened to be involved in this. This gentleman has developed a process where you can take radio waves and you put it in a car and it can tell you where the leaks are. So, as it comes across the assembly line you put these nodes in there and, okay, you've got a leak here or it's watertight. Why is that important? Because a lot of the cars have to go through a water bath, which is they dip them in water and see if there's a leak. If there's a leak it destroys the car so they tear it up and start all over again.

YO: Oh, really?

DL: And in Mexico you can only do water baths like three days a week because they have limited water resources. So, this guy has done this thing, it doesn't cost that much, and he's proven it with Volvo, he's proven it with Volkswagen, he's proven it with Nissan that this thing really works. And he got the green design thing of the year from whatever the heck it is. But getting the industry to change, that cultural change, because that's the way we've done it for years and years and years, and that's just a small example of how water's being used.

But, we're doing a lot of impervious pavement, a thousand acre parking lot or a thousand unit parking lot. That's just kind of the surface, and I'm not talking about green roofs and all that kind of thing. That's part of it, but it's so small, and I'm not talking about LEEDS because that's so small. I'm talking about what are we going to do? I think the landscape architect should be the one leading that charge, personally.

YO: Are you going to continue working?

DL: Probably, till they kick me out. I've sold the firm so I don't own the firm.

YO: Right.

DL: I don't have any human resources problems or financial problems. The firm is doing well and I stay in contact with a lot of folks and they'll find new folks.

YO: Is there a type of project that you've never done before that you would like to grab a hold of?

DL: Hmm. [Pause] Well, I've lost some I thought I'd like to have. [Laughs]

YO: [Laughs]

DL: We in the South do not have, or have very few, of the Fortune 500 companies that are around Chicago and a few other places. I'm rambling here, but they have the IBMs and so on that can spend a tremendous amount of dollars in making their facilities look great, the landscaping look great, the grounds look great, and so on. That's pretty cool, to be able to do a piece of sculpture or get a piece of sculpture into your design and everybody accepts it, i.e. MTSU. We're doing this boulevard. It's going to be great, but the funds didn't let us do the design that I really wanted. It's all functional, it functions very well, and it looks good, but it could look better. I wanted to use this piece of granite, the huge piece of granite when you come in off this roundabout, slice it, polish it, and put the shield of the university there.

So, in the preliminaries—that's okay, that's okay. So, I find the granite, and it's a blue granite—the colors are blue and white at the university—I find this piece of blue granite in North Carolina and how much it costs to get it up here, how much it costs for the guy to slice the thing, how much it costs to polish it, get all the figures. I put it in the landscape budget. So, we're sitting down and we're in budget. It's, I don't know, a four and a half million dollar budget and we're in budget with all the allotments and everything. They say, where's this sign? Where's the granite? I say, it's in the landscape budget. [They say] well, how much is it? Well, I said, it's just in the landscape budget.

1:35:00

YO: [Laughs]

DL: Well, it was about fifty thousand dollars, or something like that, and they made me take it out. Those kinds of little finesses that you can do to create interest or spark somebody's enthusiasm, a lot of times we don't have an opportunity to do that.

YO: Right.

DL: I wish we had the opportunity to do that more. Those are the kinds of things I'd like to do. We had a client, Dan Evins who was the CEO of Cracker Barrel. We do the Cracker Barrels all over the country so that's one of our corporate clients, that and Logan's, so we're registered in most states. But anyway, he had this four hundred acre farm. He said, this is what I want. I said, great. He wanted fields of wild flowers that you see and put a lake in. He had a little lake house that everybody would die to live in. It was small but very well done. The screened porch door was center core cedar. Then we had a little platform out there where you had the canoes, then we had a little wood structure, wood cottage, and it had kind of a wing that came off from the cottage and it had a little sitting area in the woods underneath this big tree, big oak tree, and screened and all that. We did reforestation on a hundred and some odd acres. That was fun, because he was willing to spend the money to do it.

YO: So, that came to fruition.

DL: Oh, yeah.

YO: Oh, that was satisfying.

DL: Yeah. He wanted to put his house on top of the hill and I said, I don't think you want to do that. He said, I'm putting it on top, and I said, Okay. So, he puts it on top of the hill and it overlooks everything, and it's great, and we settled it down into the landscape. And we had a couple of big stones we found on the property and that's in the roundabout, and of course there's a lot of comments about the big stones. But, yeah, that was cool, because the guy said do it and he expected it to be done. We don't have that opportunity a lot here.

YO: In the South.

DL: In the South, and I think when you find somebody like that it's just great to do. What would I like to do? I've done it most, I guess.

YO: Which do you like best? Do you like the public parks best or some of the civic projects? What challenges you the most?

DL: What challenges you is getting this guy's dream within the dollars that he has to spend.
[Laughs]

YO: Right. [Laughs]

DL: I guess it's advancing out and doing new or different ideas or different concepts in public parks, some of it. One in particular—they have what they call, “a miracle field.” It's for the kids that are physically impaired.

YO: Miracle fields?

DL: Miracle fields, mm hmm. And it's a small sized baseball field. Kids that are on heavy medicines have certain things that they can and they can't do, or exposures, and one is that they can't be exposed to a lot of sunlight, and they always have a support person. So, all the design stuff is all different because the dugouts are deeper, and they have more overhangs so they're shaded and the concessions are designed differently so there's shade there. And the restrooms are designed differently and then the family restrooms are designed differently because all these kids are physically impaired. Then you have a rubberized surface for the play area. Not just designing those facilities but putting those facilities in the environment that gets support from other people in the community, i.e., we put one of these in a four-field complex. So, I've got three fields for kids with natural abilities and I've got one over here that's physically impaired. And see the relationship between these kids coming over and supporting and yelling for these kids that are physically impaired when they play.

1:40:05

YO: And that wouldn't have happened if they weren't mixed together like that.

DL: Exactly, correct.

YO: Oh, that's wonderful.

DL: We finished this particular concept I think about four or five years ago, and I was pushing for it to be integrated, and it was integrated, and that's real exciting.

YO: That takes a little bit of intuition to read into the situation a little bit of a nuance there, something that the public benefits from and wouldn't have known it unless you had thought to do that.

DL: Right.

YO: You wouldn't normally think of that as being a part of a landscape architect's tool kit, but it's something very important.

DL: Well, yeah, you don't learn it in school, but when you talk about community planning and so on I think you need to be sensitive to that. Then when you start that process, you don't realize how many people have constraints, how many kids have constraints, physical and mental constraints. We took that and we did that and then our engineer, Mike Wrye, we got into supporting a day camp in Wilson County, which is right outside of Nashville, called, I don't know, Field of Dreams, or something, and this woman had nothing. She had the old fair grounds, one of those pavilions that you have the groceries in or whatever, or 4-H stuff, that's all she had, and the water play was a hose with these kids. All these kids are physically impaired and they've got nothing. And they come down there for a week or two weeks. So, we as an office said, okay, this is one of our missions, to see if we can't get our money and raise our money. So we did some free work, architecture work, design work, engineering work, and the banks and so on, and now they've got a program where they think they can raise some money. But there are a lot of folks that are less fortunate than we are, and I think we need to be sensitive to that. I don't mean just poor.

YO: Right.

DL: I don't know. What would you like to do? Well, maybe do a first class resort area. [Laughs]

YO: [Laughs] Sounds like fun.

DL: Yeah. Fred's done a lot of that stuff. I kind of enjoy talking to him about that.

YO: Fred Stresau.

DL: Yeah. But it's—you can get excited about some new stuff that stretches you some, and we're doing some stuff now. It sounds mundane, and it kind of is. We're doing a new RV park

for a small community because the mayor says if I get these people downtown, they'll spend money downtown and I can preserve the downtown core. They've already done a pretty good job. They've got a new library. So, it's an extension of that thought process. We've never done an RV park before, and this is a Cadillac. Private cannot do it because they can't spend that kind of money and the return's not there.

So, we're doing that and we're ready to bump this oil refinery type thing off this land along the river. The city bought it and said, you ain't building it here. Seeing those kind of things, where the land is actually preserved from something you know is a detriment, and you have some say or some impact in making things change for the better, the environment for the better. They've got a beautiful riverfront area where the land just slopes right down to the water's edge. Can't find it anywhere else, very few places up and down the Ohio River, and we have the opportunity to do that. The mayor says, I want this done right. I want it to reflect our community. Okay. And then you've got to deal with the councilmen who say, oh, I don't want to change this, and this little old lady says—there's a little old shelter over there that looks like crap—and she says, oh, don't change that! That's where everybody says it's such a beautiful—you know.

YO: You have to be a people person then, don't you?

1:44:35

DL: Yeah. You've got to pull them around, yeah. So, I've enjoyed what we've done. I think we've done some neat stuff. I think some of the stuff will be around for a long, long time. I think from the private side, it changes. You do something and fifty years from now they're going to bulldoze it, or whatever, probably. Public land is hard to get out of the public domain, so chances are things you're doing there, yeah, they'll change. Water park down in Chattanooga, one of the oldest, oldest parks. We worked down there as well as in Savannah, Georgia, a little park down there next to the Citadel. They all at one time had rose gardens and stuff like that. Well, they're not rose gardens anymore, but the land is still—the public owns it. Now we've got a fountain or now we've got a ball field or we've got open space, but it's not a rose garden, nor is it a horse track. So, interesting, you know. Coming from Louisville there's a lot of Olmstead parks in Louisville and there's the Olmstead Foundation. I think that's great and they're keeping that and they're trying to build on that in Louisville, and I think every community needs that kind of aspiration.

YO: So, it's up to the landscape architect to let people see these possibilities in their own communities, right?

DL: Absolutely.

YO: Well, David that really is all the questions I have for today.

DL: Good! [Laughs]

YO: I think we've had a good chat.

DL: Me, too.

YO: Thank you very much.

DL: My pleasure and I hope the best to all of y'all.

YO: Thank you very much, and you too.

Transcriber: Deborah Mitchum

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