

## TRANSCRIPT

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**Field Notes:** Geoffrey D. McLean (compiled May 4, 2012)

**Interviewee:** GEOFFREY D. (“GEOFF”) MCLEAN

**Interviewer:** Yona R. Owens

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YO: My name is Yona Owens and I’m interviewing Geoffrey D. McLean in Raleigh, North Carolina on April 4, 2012. Geoff graduated from North Carolina State University’s School, now College, of Design in 1969 with a degree in landscape architecture. Over the years he has been active in the community and the profession in many ways. He was a member of the Wake County Planning Board, he was a Board of Supervisors member for the Wake County Soil and Water Conservation District, and he was president of the North Carolina chapter of the ASLA from 1969 [correction: 1979] to 1981. Not only is Geoff a licensed landscape architect, he’s also a professional engineer. His firm, Geoffrey McLean & Co., has been in business since 1971. Geoff, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed.

Geoffrey McLean: It’s a big pleasure, Yona.

YO: To get us started tell me a little bit about where you’re from and what it was like growing up there.

GM: Okay. First off let me say this, that I was supposed to finish in the class of ’66 and did finish fifth-year design, all my design courses, but I had flunked and dropped, or whatever, enough courses that that strung out another fifteen months. I just wanted to clarify that.

I was actually born in Lumberton, but my parents left literally immediately after I was born. My dad was a banker and he took a job with the Federal Reserve as a bank examiner in Cleveland, Ohio, which I don’t have any memory of whatsoever. We were there two and a half years, came back to Winston-Salem where Daddy was going to work with Wachovia. He worked there for a year kind of as a trainee.

YO: That was Wachovia?

GM: Yeah, and then moved to Charlotte. My sister, Nancy, the one under me—I’m the oldest of four children. Nancy was born in Winston-Salem, Cindy was born in Charlotte, and my little brother, my late little brother, was the only one of us that was born in Rocky Mount. So, Rocky Mount was the fifth place I had lived in, in a relatively short period of time. We moved there and, boy, I was looking for a place to sit down, if you understand what I’m saying.

YO: Sure.

GM: It was the perfect place in the ’50s to grow up.

YO: How so?

GM: Well, it was a city of only thirty thousand, but it was a true city. It had everything that you would need, services, whatever, in Rocky Mount. Typical of eastern North Carolina towns—I need to make this brief—you got a whole lot of tobacco and some cotton mills, the main cotton mills being in the Piedmont. Rocky Mount had that but they also had, for its size, a big, big Atlantic Coast Line shops and yards down in south Rocky Mount, and I could tell you about the history of Atlantic Coast Line.

But anyway, half of my classmates in elementary school, their fathers were primarily engineers, some conductors, because they were still running passenger service, trainmen, firemen, who by that time were working on the diesels, and the crews worked out of Rocky Mount. Crews would take a train from point A to point B. So anyway that was the main rail line between New York—well, actually New England—and Miami, so that brought a certain amount of, believe it or not, cosmopolitan things to Rocky Mount because with that access to the cities all the way up the Eastern Seaboard. For example, our parents could get on the train Friday night after work, take the train to New York, see a play Saturday and shop or whatever, and get on the train I guess Saturday night or Sunday morning and be back in Rocky Mount in time to spend the night in Rocky Mount and get up and go to work on Monday. And that happened frequently. I remember my parents going to see the play, *South Pacific* with Mary Martin and Ezio Pinza, however you pronounce that name. It's just one example.

**05:23**

But now to tell you the truth, it was still an owned town by the landed gentry, largely because of tobacco, some because of the old Rocky Mount mills, and those families were intermarried and interrelated and they really did own the town.

So anyway, in 1957, I went off to McCallie's School in Chattanooga. My dad had been at Davidson College, a good Presbyterian college, Scottish Presbyterian college, and had been in school with the two headmasters of McCallie.

YO: Now, that's a military academy.

GM: That's right, it was then. It's not now. Something I'm sure Lewis doesn't know, and I don't talk about that much, but it plagued me certainly. It plagued me until probably just about the time I was finally getting my degree. I had a terrible reading disability. It's related to my being left handed, which I inherited from my maternal grandmother. They discovered it when I was in the fifth grade. [I was] brought up here to Duke and had a lot of stuff done, including wiring my head up and doing a—anyway, I was reading backwards.

YO: Dyslexic?

GM: They called it, at the time, "mixed dominance," but I think it was probably like a subdivision of dyslexia, or a specialty. It got so bad that as I was progressing through elementary school my grades were just dropping like crazy. So, I'm the opposite of Lewis in terms of being at State teaching by the time he was a twenty-six-year-old kid. [Laughs] So—

YO: Well, going to the academy, did that help?

GM: —I went back a year, I repeated a year in McCallie, so I got here a year late. That put me a—of course just about everybody else in the class—except LaMarr was on schedule, starting the School of Design a year after he graduated from Broughton High School. You’ve heard the interviews and the stories about Gil going back a year because of his soccer injury, Fred having to go to Catawba for two years before the dean would let him in, and—

YO: And you repeated a high school year—

GM: That’s right.

YO: —which put you in Raleigh in 1961.

GM: That’s correct. That’s exactly right.

YO: Now, how did you decide about coming to State? What was behind that decision?

GM: Well, let me back up a little bit further than how it began. In the place of the reading speed, I inherited most of my aptitude from my mother’s family—math, three-dimensional stuff. My mother was a brilliant concert pianist.

YO: Really?

GM: Brilliant. I mean she played a lot of things, like Liszt, and she loved music of all kinds. But she was born and raised in Farmville, and my grandmother had put her on a piano stool when she was three years old, and she and my great-grandmother raised mother as a prodigy, a child prodigy, about that piano. She didn’t get to go out on the streets of Farmville and play after she got out of school. She had to come home and practice that piano. She also was brilliant in other ways. She had a reading speed of over a thousand words a minute and just devoured books, just devoured them.

So, in the place of studying real hard—let me tell you about the piano. She tried to teach me. People asked me if I played and I said, yeah, I played in the dirt. [Laughs]

YO: [Laughs]

**09:52**

GM: You’ve got to remember too that we moved to Rocky Mount in 1950 and the post-World War era, the economy and everything else, was really getting cranked up. You’ve got to remember that it wasn’t until after we got to Rocky Mount that anybody had a TV or a room air conditioner in a house.

But I built a lot of things. I built the neatest tree house, which was really a platform with a roof over it. It was on the branch of two trees and I could sit up there, and this was in a t-shaped backyard that went from one street to another on a triangle block, and I’d sit up there in the rain and just watch the traffic. That’s me, to have me a niche, so to speak.

So, I did all that and built a lot of things, model airplanes, model boats, and so that was my thing, as opposed to my dad being a banker. From the very get-go, I couldn’t see anything the slightest bit interesting about counting somebody else’s money.

YO: [Laughs]

GM: That became a real big issue. My dad was the consummate do-right man, but he was also the perfect black and white person. There were no shades of gray. Everything was either right or wrong, and being left handed was wrong. I realized years later, after carrying around that burden all of my life—[Sirens in background]

YO: Sorry about that. I couldn't stop that one.

GM: That's all right.

YO: So your dad didn't—

GM: I realized that my being left-handed, to him, was the same thing as being red headed in the medieval days.

YO: Really?

GM: It was like you—even worse in some ways, I think, in the sense that he saw me as less than a perfect child.

YO: Did that make you—did you try to overachieve at things that you did?

GM: No, I just gravitated to building things, and I did some drawing, by the way. That's important. That's real important.

YO: Did you just pick it up yourself or—

GM: Yeah.

YO: —did you have a teacher?

GM: Just, yeah, just drawing things myself. I didn't do a lot of it, but I did do some. In fact one time I remember doing a watercolor from my book that my mother's older brother left me, Howard Pyle's edition of *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table*, which is highly illustrated with Howard Pyle's drawings himself. And there was one of King Arthur and the Black Knight jousting, going at each other, that had the coolest little castle sitting up on a hill with a winding roadway that went up to it in the background. I found that drawing years later after I finished college. It was done on notebook paper and I've got it framed in my condo now, because—I won't get into that right now.

Anyway, but I had never had any real drawing training. Now that's going to become real important to why I pursued drawing so hard. In descript—I put that in my notes to you, about nobody's remembered that all those art classes we had all ten semesters with design were all called, “descript” up through third year and then it became “advanced descriptive” work.

YO: Well, let's get you to State first. What was the process, making the decision?

GM: My mother exposed me to Frank Lloyd Wright's work. I don't know why—

YO: How did she do that?

GM: His residences back in the '50s, including some of the residences around the turn of the century, were in all the ladies' magazines. I can remember seeing Taliesin West in one of them, and man, that was for me, because it was different.

I've also, through my pursuit of all things American Indian when I was in grammar school, particularly those early residences, they looked like they just grew out of the site as opposed to the neoclassic stuff, which the landed gentry in Rocky Mount gravitated to, and I just hated that. I didn't know why. Some of them were very elegant. The Battle Home in Rocky Mount was huge—that was the Rocky Mount Mills family—real near downtown, three or four stories with a Palladian portico on it and Corinthian columns and everything else. That was not the same as the really just more plain Gothic lines.

**15:50**

YO: And what was the name of that one again?

GM: The Battle Home? It's been torn down.

YO: Has it really?

GM: Yeah, oh, a long time ago.

YO: So, you started seeing pictures of Frank Lloyd Wright's work in your mother's magazines.

GM: And to this day Frank Lloyd Wright is still, to me—we used to say in the School of Design that Frank Lloyd Wright was as good a landscape architect as he was an architect.

YO: Why is that?

GM: Well, just because there wasn't any drip line to his buildings. There was none of this plopped down on the site aspect of it. It was woven into the site, in the planning and everything that went with it, and working around existing trees, too. So I was exposed a little more to it by myself at McCallie School.

I can remember my first year there, there was a little shop. We'd go into town on a Saturday, usually go to the Tivoli Theatre, and there was a little magazine store at the end of Bailey, which was—in other words when you went downtown and the major streets, Market Street—

YO: Now this is Chattanooga.

GM: Yeah, and I spent all of my allowance buying a paperback book of Frank Lloyd Wright—it's a little larger than a regular, small paperback book. It was all text, but it had a picture of Fallingwater on it, and I don't think it was the first time I had seen Fallingwater. Then later at McCallie, our plane geometry book also had a picture of Fallingwater in the front of it. Frank

Lloyd Wright died in '58 and I was taking plane geometry that year, I think, and I wrote in there, "Died this day," such and such, 1958, under the picture.

Now, another very important influence—I was telling Lewis about this at the birthday party—Ryland Edwards, who also was a McCallie grad, although he didn't finish before he—when Pearl Harbor hit he went and signed up and went in the Army. He went to State. He was one of those people that was caught halfway between architectural engineering, and when Dean Kamphoefner came and moved all that to the School of Design—

YO: In '48.

GM: Yeah, and I think he spent two years in each, or maybe two and three years. But Ryland designed this really neat, very modern house for my parents. It was built in West Haven, which was the landed gentry, I call them the "Counts of no Accounts," but—

YO: In Rocky Mount?

GM: In Rocky Mount, yeah. There was a lot there that my dad found, and of course, you know, bankers are always chasing after the big boys, but the neat thing about it was, here's West Haven filled up with all this old stodgy neoclassical stuff and my parents, because Daddy had absolutely no concept of three dimensions, but Mother said that. It was Mother's house and Daddy just let her take it and run.

I don't think he understood the house until after we'd lived in it and he began to realize the light, because the house had a part of it, it was kind of fish-hooked, and a patio, really neat patio that Dick Bell had done when it was Godwin and Bell. And everything around that patio, the living room, the hallway, and then the study, and even upstairs—three of us had bedrooms upstairs, myself and two sisters—it had continuous glass and looked down on that patio. That was a southern exposure, too. So there wasn't a corner in that house that didn't have light. Of course I mean it had a lot of windows and it was not that—it wasn't as clear from the street just how extraordinary the house was as it was when you walked in. It had a little alcove as you walked in, but when you got toward the center of the house and saw how it was all wrapped around that patio. It was a reflection of Frank Lloyd Wright's continuation between the outside and the inside.

**20:51**

Ryland really outdid himself on that. It showed a lot of California influence, just in stuff like the fact that the upper part of it had some board and batten. It was brick and it had some stone on it and—

YO: Does it still exist today?

GM: Oh yeah, but you know the funny thing about it, through the years—it was a big house. It was five thousand square feet or something like that.

YO: Oh, good heavens.

GM: Yeah. But Mother worked—

YO: For that period of time that was huge.

GM: Yeah, that's right. Mother just worked with Ryland, and Mother always said that she could understand the plans and elevations in three dimensions. She could see it in three dimensions. Daddy couldn't. I mean, it was just pieces of paper with lines on them to him. He could see two dimensional patterns. Anyway, I'm getting too bogged down.

YO: Were you around when they were discussing these plans? Did you get to look at them?

GM: You know my sister, Nancy, remembers that, Mother and Daddy, or probably primarily Mother, meeting with Ryland Edwards. This was a big switch because the entire eastern part of Rocky Mount was—it had some big houses there, but it was primarily the middle class section of Rocky Mount because, by the way, the people that worked for the railroad, including the crews, made good wages because they were unionized from the unions in the North. They were the only thing in Rocky Mount that were unionized so they made decent money. But we moved—

YO: So I'm looking—around you there's your very influential mother that's artistic and you've got input from New York, for heaven's sake, in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, or you see the engineers and those folks. Where was the transition point where you started thinking, I might like to not be a banker. I want to do something else?

GM: Oh, I knew way before I finished McCallie that I wasn't going to be a banker. We lived at a big five-way intersection on the eastern part of town and it had a lot of pavement area where it all came together and we were the second house. It's still on that big grinder, as they call it in the Navy. [Laughs]

I can remember riding on my bicycle around there and thinking, and of course the pressure of my being the oldest child, and a son in the relationship of Daddy wanting his first boy to be just like him, and my understanding that. But I knew very, very early on that I didn't have my dad's talents as a banker, I wasn't the slightest bit interested in it. My dad did have his talents. He was a very good organizer. He was a real people person. He was a good manager. But the thing about counting somebody else's money, I just couldn't see anything in it. I can remember riding around that intersection thinking well, I don't know what I'm really good at, but I know I'm good for something. I knew I was not a halfwit from the reading problem.

YO: So, did a series of choices come up, like when you're—

GM: No. I just gravitated to it. I knew about the School of Design because there were about three architects, plus Ryland Edwards, that were older than I was, one of them a year older, that had gone to the School of Design and there was a lot of talk about the School of Design in those days.

YO: Had they returned to Rocky Mount?

GM: No. Ryland did, but the other one—let's see. Bill Stancil was the one that was a year ahead. Bart Bartholomew, who I later did some work with here in Raleigh, he and Bill Dove were like in the early '50s, I think. I think Bart Bartholomew had gone in the Air Force and then come

back and gone to the School of Design. So, I began to hear feedback from that, and as I say, it was just a lot of on the street knowledge about this hotshot School of Design in Raleigh, how different it was.

**25:27**

I actually applied to Duke and State—here's another important story that involved Dean Kamphoefner about that—State, for the School of Design and Duke for engineering. Well, I didn't get accepted at Duke, which really suited me fine. Of course that's where Daddy wanted me to go. I mean, he understood architecture, but just the prestige of going to Duke, that's what he wanted. So I wasn't too unhappy when I wasn't accepted at Duke because I wanted to go to that School of Design.

Now, when we went over to the School of Design, Daddy went with me. This would have been probably spring or summer of '61. One of his classmates at Davidson had gone in the Army and come back and was Dean Stewart's, who was dean of student affairs, I think, but also— No, Raab was dean of admissions. That's right. Dean Stewart, he'd also been a classmate of Daddy's at Davidson. Peyton Greyer was his name and he had a son, he'd already been in the military, married and had a family, and he was a classmate of ours originally. He was talking about how hard it was to get in the School of Design and he made the mistake—he somehow got confused and said, I'm an out-of-state student, and Dean Kamphoefner had really, really heavy admissions standards for out-of-state students, but he had to—and this came up—he had to admit anybody from North Carolina.

YO: Right. At that time that was the rule.

GM: That's right. That was the rule in the whole college. It was NC State College then. We started at NC State College and finished at NC State University. [Laughs]

YO: [Laughs] Right. So Peyton Gray showed his hand—

GM: Greyer.

YO: —at the wrong point, right?

GM: Yeah, so he said the best thing for you to do is enter in civil engineering and do that for a semester and then go see about transferring into the School of Design once you've got your grades established.

Well, we left there and somewhere along the way back to Rocky Mount Daddy said now the thing for you to do, and this was very much—my dad was a very, very positively assertive person. He took initiative, which was good, and hopefully I at least learned some of that from him, but I certainly wasn't as good at it as he was. He said the thing for you to do is early on go over there and tell them what your intent is. Well, sometime, not too long after that, Daddy gave me the check to pay my tuition.

YO: So, you'd got in at this point.

GM: Yes, accepted immediately into engineering, because that's how I applied based on what Peyton Greyer was saying. But he was drop dead wrong. I mean, I was still a resident of Rocky Mount, but it was the fact that I'd gone to McCallie. He confused that completely.

So, Daddy gave me the check to pay my tuition and I drove up here and paid it at the business office, which was in the old alumni building across the street from the School of Design. So I said, you know, I'm going to go over there right now and tell them that, what Daddy told me to tell them. I walked in the office. Lib Young was the dean's secretary. So I walked in there and started to tell—I may have started to tell Ann Craddock or whatever and she said go see her, Lib Young. Do you know where the dean's office was originally? It was right there inside the front door. You took a left coming in the front door of Brooks Hall. You took a left and went into a secretary pool area. The dean's office was back between that and the front door.

**30:08**

So I started telling her about this and she said, you're from Rocky Mount? She smelled a rat and she said, you stay right here a minute. So, she disappeared into Dean Kamphoefner's office, and you know what an imposing character he was. So she came back to the door a minute later and motioned me to come there, and she walked me in and stood me up in front of the dean who was sitting at his desk and boy, here came the laser eyes and all the white hair and everything. She said tell him what you told me. So I did. He said that's wrong. He snatched up the phone and called somebody over at admissions and just blessed them out. He said I've got a young man here, and went on and told the story and he said that's wrong! [Crashing sound] and hung up the phone.

So he said I keep about ten admissions that I do myself for people just like yourself, or some other similar situation. He said I've got maybe three or four of them left. If I offer you one of these positions will you take it? I swallowed hard and looked away a little bit and I muttered something about well, I guess I should call my dad first, or something. He repeated his question. He said if I offer you this position, will you take it? I looked him right straight in those laser eyes and said, yes, sir. He proceeded to tell me that my—I think they were using computer cards that early.

YO: Right.

GM: He said it would have civil engineering on it, and he told me to go find the desk where Ann Craddock was that did all that check-in stuff when you're first getting your class assignments and all that. He said your name will be on the bottom of this list along with a couple others, and he just systematically explained to me what I was supposed to do, and that was it.

YO: So you were in the School of Design like that.

GM: Yeah.

YO: No portfolio or anything. [Laughs]

GM: Nothing. But you know I always thought, and I have some reason to believe that it's not true, listening to some of the other interviews, but I always thought that the dean, somewhere

along the line while you were in the School of Design, put you to something he selected, which was an acid Kool Aid test.

YO: I kind of get that idea, too.

GM: And if you stood up to him and did the right things, you were okay, and if you didn't, then you probably might be lucky to get out of the School of Design. I think maybe some people flew below the radar screen, but I'm not sure that they had as good a chance of surviving some problem with the dean as those that he had checked off his little list.

So that was it, but that's an important story because from that point on—I kind of flew below the radar screen with him. I didn't go seek him out and say, hiya, Dean, how ya doing today? But as time went by, it got more apparent that I was okay in the dean's book.

YO: Well, that was encouraging at that point.

GM: It really was, and I want to tell some stories like that about Dean Kamphoefner because I believe that Lewis and the dean had a very special relationship. Lewis is so good at manipulating people verbally, and I want to speak to that further, too, with respect to students. It's real important. We used to joke that every time Lewis wanted a raise that he'd go in and tell him that he'd gotten an offer from one of the latest schools that was trying to steal him away from the School of Design, and he'd get it. The dean would give him a raise immediately. [Laughs]

**35:05**

YO: [Laughs] Oh my heavens. So you started in the fall of '61 and you started in architecture.

GM: Architecture, right. That's right.

YO: Now, what happened between the fall of '61 and landscape architecture?

GM: That's real important, real important.

YO: What happened?

GM: I started off in first-year design like a house afire. I made As, Bs in design, and an A in the one-semester technical drawing course we had. I had the first year that Grant Joslin—Gussow was still there. Grant Joslin was a steel sculptor and I don't know if he was there because of Gussow, but Gussow left not too long after and Grant Joslin stayed on. Brooks Breeden mentioned that he had Joslin, I think, for design, for sculpture.

The second semester they split up our section and I had Charlie Sappenfield, who was an architect. Boy, you know, I started off a little bit behind because they split our class up in two between two other sections so he was a lot more familiar with the other students, but I did some projects toward the end of second year that just blew Charlie—excuse me, that was the first year—blew Charlie away.

So here I was going into second year with these great grades, except math. Ironically, I had finished—I went back the year at McCallie in everything but math, so I finished McCallie having every kind of math course you needed plus a semester of college algebra and trig, or pre-

calculus it was called. We had to take some entrance exam about that when we got to State, during freshman orientation week or something. Damn if I didn't qualify to be put in a fast class, skip Math 101, and went straight into calculus, the engineering series, 102, which then was the only calculus course we had to take. Architects had to take two. But the deal was you had to pass the course that you were taking to get credit for the course you skipped. [Laughs]

YO: Oh, so you're in—

GM: So I flunked it.

YO: —an advanced math class.

GM: I got stuck in there with all the physics wizards and applied math wizards and man, and by that time of course it wasn't more than about two weeks that people were already leaving the School of Design. [Laughs] It wasn't what they expected.

YO: Right.

GM: They just didn't dig it. So, I flunked it and had to take it over again, but except for that I had just great grades, particularly in the design subjects, in descript and design.

YO: That's descriptive drawing.

GM: That's right, and I had George Bireline for a semester. Let me think a second. Let me get back to switching to landscape architecture after I start talking about how I pursued drawing. The first week, one of the first classes, George Bireline—because we had two guys in there that could draw well. One of them could draw like crazy, Robert Chartier. He had commercial art courses and could draw people just like unbelievably. George told us, he said we'd rather you not have had drawing training before you get to the School of Design. He said we want to teach you how to draw.

Now, after thinking about that, here's the deal. Robert actually began to have trouble in architecture design, I think maybe by third year or something like that, because the commercial art training—the art training back then was commercial art, which was draw what you see. And the potential was for you to not be able to visualize what you hadn't seen. They wanted you to develop your drawing skills with your design skills so there was no differentiation between the two. They wanted your drawing style to match and be developed with your design style, for lack of a better word, idiom, whatever you want to call it.

#### **40:18**

So, boy, I said well, wow, that's great. But I also was conscious of the fact that other than just the drawing that I had done—and I did take mechanical drawing at McCallie, and here again I was beginning to look more and more—because I took it in the place of chemistry. I took physics my senior year—but except for that, and I didn't count that the kind of drawing that George was talking about. He was talking about the freehand, artistic, for an overused way of putting it.

So, I got real busy and worked darn hard on my drawing. It was only a two-hour course and we spent about four hours just in class on it.

YO: Now you had this every semester.

GM: Every semester.

YO: For the first two years, right?

GM: And it was two—

YO: Well, it was quarterly system though.

GM: No, it was the semester system. I noticed that Charlie talked about the quarter system and it may have been back when he started school, but we started with the semester system, and it had been that way, as far as I know, for a good while.

YO: So, you got to have class with Duncan Stuart, and—

GM: Let me tell you how—second semester—maybe I had George that semester too. Second year there was a PD [Product Design] guy there that I had, not Bill Baron, because that was very important to the landscape architect, and then, oh, a name you'll never hear, Olsen, but I maintained Bs through that. And I worked hard, worked hard drawing.

So we got to second year and I got a professor—it's probably better for me not to call his name. Those that were in school when I was in school will figure out who he is because he was French. He was a Beaux Arts grad. He and I just—I couldn't communicate with the man. He didn't do a lot of communicating. He'd give us a problem and then he'd walk around the class and grunt and look stand over you and look, never commented, and you kind of had the idea that asking him any questions was only going to get you in trouble. So, I went from a—he gave me a—oh, and one other parallel thing that was happening at the time—first semester it was just, I mean it was drudgery, just drudgery.

YO: Well, that was the washout procedure, right, is to put you to the test.

GM: Well, that's what he did, but he also, by the way—something fairly important—he taught all the history courses. I think they called it, history of design, or something like that, up to Lewis's course and then Harwell Harris's course was the last one. That was the modern day, the modern movement. So, I got completely disillusioned, and another thing that disillusioned me, we learned about really well in Harwell's course was the distinction between the Frank Lloyd Wright architects, modern architects, and it goes all the way back to the Bauhaus, to Mies Van der Rohe, and of course we hadn't had this in history yet, but there was posters all up. And Mies may have even come as a visiting lecturer or something because I can remember seeing, it was relatively new—what was it called—the Bay Shore Towers in Chicago, the two apartment buildings, and man, I just—I couldn't buy into that. The dean later said that Walter Gropius, who was very beloved at—Yale, wasn't it, where he was—

YO: He was at Harvard and MIT.

**44:50**

GM: He was at Harvard, okay. The dean later said in his finishing course, his ideas of design course, that he was convinced that Walter Gropius, who of course really, I think, pretty much founded the Bauhaus, or was certainly a big part of beginning it, that he was convinced that Walter Gropius had no aesthetic values, but as far as I was concerned the things that I saw that Gropius did, they were better than Mies. Mies just—I'm telling you, it was just as cold as a—my feeling about those Bay Shore Towers or Lake Shore Towers, whatever they were, you can make an egg crate out of gold, but it's still an egg crate.

YO: [Laughs]

GM: Who would want to live in that? One other thing, very important, that influenced me generally was we had to read *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley at McCallie, and one of the things there was—that was the opposite of what I am, because I'll tell you right now probably as much or more than anybody, I've got the worst case of the Eastern North Carolina independence of anybody alive. I call it my Eastern North Carolina belligerence, because I tell you what's the truth, I can be very reactionary. I'll put in an aside and say one of the things that probably Lewis helped me with in a very general way was to put some polish on my rough edges, also in my work. He didn't do it completely, but—

YO: But you're an architect student at this point—

GM: That's right.

YO: —and being exposed to these different styles.

GM: And I was getting really disillusioned, first by the professor, and then by this exposure to that extreme of architecture. Now Harwell, one of his texts was—I think it's *Americans' Ambitions in Architecture*, in that sequence. It's a paperback book, and by the way, it had Harwell's work in there so by the time he came to State, which by the way the dean told us in the introduction course that Dick Moore and Harwell, both from California, were coming. He told it toward the end of—we only had to take that little introductory course one semester, I think, where he lectured to us once. We didn't get any credit for it, but he told us that, so that's when Dick Moore and Harwell both, and I think probably Harwell in a lot of ways was important to the landscape architects in the same way that Lewis was important to architects.

So, [dear man?], and I emailed Lewis I think last night, because he spoke about Harwell. That's something I want to get to later, I hope we'll get to later. I told Lewis, because he talked about what a gentleman he was and very soft spoken, and I said, yeah, I said you're right about Harwell, and I said when he spoke everybody all said, shut up and listen. [Laughs]

YO: [Laughs]

GM: He was such a gentleman and he did beautiful work. Wow. Just did beautiful work. So I found out in that book—

YO: So, Geoff, how did you change over from architecture to landscape architecture? [Laughs]

GM: I'm getting there. All right. Basically that book separates the architects, and I meant to try to go—I've still got my copy of that book. I meant to go back and try to look. He used names for the two classifications. One of them was Jacobites and I think they were the Miesian crowd and the other was the Frank Lloyd Wright crowd.

So, I was getting pretty disillusioned pretty quickly. I was getting nowhere with Buisson. Fred had the desk right next to me, maybe just second semester, I can't remember for sure.

YO: That's Fred Stresau.

GM: Yeah, because there was four out of that class—there weren't but five of us and Gil didn't get there until—no, he was there second year with us. He'd had his injury and come back to school in second year. So, we were pretty close, particularly after we got into third year. Maybe Fred was there first semester because, you know, Fred with his dad being who he was.

**50:15**

YO: But Fred was already in landscape architecture—

GM: That's right.

YO: —and you were still in architecture.

GM: So, I switched midterm, second semester—

YO: They let you do that.

GM: Huh?

YO: They let you do that.

GM: Yeah. I went to Dick Moore and told him I wanted to switch and, boy, he signed me up for that right quick, because when Dick got there he went out and did a lot of recruiting to get students. He went out to high schools and spoke to them because the classes behind us started getting really big in terms of what was left of us by then.

So, I switched and at the end of that term, Buisson gave me the option, get out of the School of Design or get out of the School of Design. And I just told him I wasn't going to do it. I mean, it was just as simple as that. I wasn't going to take his word for it because I didn't think he was a good professor. Lewis later commented—I told Lewis about that sometime later and he commented that this professor had never practiced anything. I don't think he'd drawn anything much.

YO: So how did your curriculum start changing when you changed from architecture to landscape architecture?

GM: I think first off I didn't have to take a second calculus course. I had to take botany in the place of something else, and I don't remember what it was, could have been second semester of physics. We only had to take the first semester of physics. Second semester was light, sound, and

modern physics, which except maybe for some electricity I don't think we missed a whole lot by not taking the second semester.

YO: Now, you mentioned that Richard Moore was there. He was head of department at that right.

GM: That's right.

YO: And several people came in and out, several professors came in and out while you were there, but basically, Gil Thurlow and Lewis Clarke and Richard Moore were the professors. Who did you—

GM: Bob Phillips came later, I think, because I remember Lewis—and I didn't have any contact with Lewis. We joked about this at the birthday party. I said I don't think you were ever on any of my juries, [Laughs] and he said something like that's probably good. [Laughs]

YO: [Laughs] So who did—

GM: Lewis has got a quick wit.

YO: —you have for—who was your first landscape architecture professor?

GM: That's an important part of this whole transition. I went to Dick Moore after this professor took me over to Leazer and told me over a cup of coffee to get out of the School of Design and gave me a bad grade.

YO: He took you over to where?

GM: Leazer Hall, which was the cafeteria.

YO: It was still the dining hall at that point.

GM: That's right. So I went into Dick's office and I told him what this professor had told me and I said do you think I should get out? And he looked at my grades—and this is important, Yona—he said well, you've got good grades in descript and I personally think that's really important. He said you come back and if you don't have what it takes, we'll help you get transferred into something else. Well, the first semester of landscape architecture, who do you think I got? Lewis Clarke.

YO: [Laughs] Oh no.

GM: He gave us a couple of real—one funny story, but it's something extremely important to me, he gave us the first little project and he gave us a topo with it. And to jump ahead a little bit I think it even had a pond—it had a bottom edge that kind of flattened out. It either had a pond there or I put a pond there, I can't remember which. Did the first—and by the way, one other thing about architecture, I got damn tired of working in black and white. This professor made us

use those damn graphos pens. Rapidographs had not come out yet. They had little bitty nibs on them.

YO: [Laughs] Right and you had to clean them all the time.

GM: We had used ruling pens, regular pens, the first year, but he made us buy a set of those damn graphos pens that had interchangeable nibs on them and you had to clean them all out and they were a pain in the butt. I hated those things and I got tired of doing everything in black and white.

**55:05**

YO: [Laughs]

GM: And here I am looking over there in the landscape room, and they're doing all this color stuff and, oh, man, I love color, love color. [Laughs] So, I did my first plan on yellow trash, Lewis and my both favorite—what would you call it—medium paper, or whatever. They made white trash too, but the yellow trash is just better.

So, I don't know, in a week or so we had to put them up on the wall, that first effort. They were all out there, third, fourth, and fifth year. Lewis went to Wayne Coulter's and commented on that first. Then he went to mine. Boy, in that split second I probably looked like a space shuttle rocket taking off from Cape Canaveral because this second-year professor had done me a lot of damage, too. I mean I was disillusioned. So, that was a spectacular moment, when Lewis went to mine second.

Now, let me tell you something funny, [Laughs] because by that time I was really—that was third year. I was picking up on my drawing because I'd worked on it so hard, and [Laughs] I had some paper, I must have gotten it from Mobley's or something. I thought it was interesting paper. It had a real sharp tooth on it. It was like wallpaper with no print on it and it had right much rigidity to it so I could curl it up and let it go and it would run back together.

I had designed this little grotto for the lake and I had done a sketch of it on this paper. Well, by that time we were using Rapidographs, I had a number two and I had tried a sketch of it but that paper was so—it'd just take the ink out of your pen. You couldn't draw a full line unless you drew it very slowly.

Well, I tried to sketch it. This little grotto had like a platform, an overlook-like platform, like Mickey Mouse ears with a radius in between. Down below it were two circular piers, which turned and then disappeared under the platform where there was going to be a park, probably a public park, so where they could store the boats, rowboats or canoes or whatever. I had done this drawing and had done a sketch of it, and to tell you the truth it looked like chicken scratch because it just sopped up the ink and you couldn't draw a solid line.

YO: [Laughs] Right.

GM: [Laughs] Lewis came up—this is typically Lewis too. He said—and here I was, getting pretty proud of my drawings. He said that's a terrible drawing, and it was and I knew it and I said, yeah, or something to that effect. He said, but I love the grotto. And I mean he was about to have a spasm about it. I could imitate Lewis, you know—hee, hee, hee, hee, hee, you know. I mean he was just carried away with my grotto. But that was Lewis. He would tell you something

equal. He'd always say what you did well and say what you needed to work on, [Laughs] and the way he did it with that—so that was two homeruns right there within the first couple weeks of third year.

YO: You must have started thinking you'd made a good decision in changing—

GM: That's right.

YO: —and sticking with it. [Laughs]

GM: I was happy as hell. [Laughs] And it got better through the semester. We also had—this is important—we also had Lewis for our tech course.

YO: What course?

GM: Our tech course, landscape tech course. We had design and landscape tech. The tech course was—let me think. That may have been—

YO: Would that have been your grading and staking?

**59:41**

GM: That's exactly what it was and I was going to tell you, because I reminisced about this with LaMarr recently. Lewis gave us these little simple grading problems, like grading a pad on a slope and things like that, and of course one of the primary things you did was work out the drainage. He said always have positive drainage, and what you could equate that too was like an emergency spillway in a dam, which is just a low channel on the outboard side of the dam structure itself, so you've got the primary spillway and then for flood flows you—well, what he was saying is always give it a way out. Even though you might have a pipe running under a pad for like a parking lot or a building, of course you're not supposed to put pipes under buildings, but storm drain pipes.

YO: Right.

GM: But he gave us those little grading problems where you just manipulate—he'd give it to us maybe on an eight and a half by eleven piece of paper, maybe two of them, and it would have spot elevations on something and we were supposed to grade to those spots with proposed contours. You know, existing contours are always dashed and proposed contours are solid.

But that really helped us a lot because to tell you the truth the engineers in those days, they couldn't drain squat. They saw everything through a transit. Most of what they did was highways where they did end area method, you know, cut and fill and whatnot, and just cut for a bank and fill for a slope, you know, for a depression.

They had no visualization of grading. That really helped us because when we first got licensed—and boy I could just about recite the description of the practice in that license. Hopefully we'll get back to this a little more later. But it had three things in there that were important. It said grading and drainage and somewhere else it said soil erosion control. Well, hell, nobody did soil erosion control in those days except SCS on farms.

So that skill of grading that Lewis started us off with in that semester would prove to be very, very valuable because we always had to do a grading plan, but it started with those simple problems that Lewis gave us that semester. I'm glad I got to say that because I think that was a very important thing.

But I got a "B" in design that semester and the next semester—and it was perfect timing for us. There was one semester in there that they taught every three years that was—I think it was—it's in that catalog. It was regional and urban design, and that's when we did that Cape Fear River Basin project. You've seen that. Do you have a copy of that?

YO: Yeah, I think—

GM: I hope you do.

YO: —it's in the collection. Why don't you—nobody's really— [It's been mentioned] a couple of times, but why don't you tell me kind of like—this was a student project and—

GM: It was an entire semester.

YO: But it was actually—

GM: It was extremely important, extremely important.

YO: Why was it important?

GM: We started off with the entire—first off we divided up into two teams because here again we're third, fourth, and fifth year.

YO: But you all studied together in the same studios, right?

GM: Oh yeah, all the time.

YO: So, the teams had some third-year, fourth-year.

GM: And design was all the same.

YO: Right.

GM: Now tech wasn't, but design was the same, I mean all of us, third, fourth, and fifth year, had the same professor, same—we just did it together. You might want to ask Lewis sometime. Lewis could speak to—and I think it's fairly simple, but I'd like to hear his description of it, how they differentiated between how—

YO: Yeah, for the different levels.

GM: —the different grades did.

YO: On the same project.

GM: Obviously, it was by expectation of what you should be able to do in terms of what you achieved.

YO: So, for the Cape Fear project you divided up into teams.

GM: Into two teams. Rodrigo Volare, I was on Rodrigo Volare's team. I think the other team leader was Wayne Coulter. We each did a scheme, each team did a scheme for the entire basin, and if you remember—I was listening to Brooks Breeden's interview—there is a sketch on the front of that that Brooks did. We were all standing around probably Brooks' desk, and Brooks used an orange and red magic marker which, just because of the color, looked kind of cool. But we worked out this thing. Rodrigo Volare had read—oh, what was it—one of Ayn Rand's books.

**1:05:22**

YO: Well, *Atlas Shrugged* was real popular at that time.

GM: That may have been it. But we divided everything up into metropolis, and it looked like a cartwheel, which was like megalopolis, or whatever. It went right down and it had circles in it. Brooks sketched that out and that became our new city and we had this gray—[Laughs] this is terrible—had this gray thing off of it into the middle of the existing cities so that the new cities were going to suck all the life out of it. It's like a virus on a bacterium, you know. [Laughs]

YO: And the objective, in other words the problem that you were given to come up with a solution was what?

GM: The intent of it was to work down in scale, increasingly smaller and smaller scale through the whole semester. Lewis told us from regions to Dixie cups on the table, and that was so valuable, changing scale like that. I can remember about midway through the semester I was—I mean, you're working at one inch equals four miles, or something like that, to begin with and then you get on down into more realistic scales, and I can remember saying, man, this is a hell of a lot bigger than I thought it was going to be. [Laughs]

YO: Right. [Laughs]

GM: But after doing the scheme as a team, it was divided up in sections, and I was lucky. I got the section that had Jordan Lake on it. Well, I'm a water man from the get-go, a coastal person. I need to throw this in as an aside because I intended to. Best I could tell Lewis put some type of water in every project he ever did.

YO: Yeah, I think so.

GM: That or it was beside a big body of water or something.

YO: [Laughs] That's true.

GM: And I tried to do the same thing in my practice, particularly in the early years when I had the better opportunities and was doing more of the pure, like what I consider pure, landscape architecture.

YO: So, you got the section of the Cape Fear project with Jordan Lake.

GM: Yeah, and I kept going down. Then I had this one city, I think, new city around the whole lake and I just really changed it into—I was developing the forms, which to some degree weren't copied, but they were inspired by Rodrigo Volare. I talked to Lewis about this at the birthday party.

Rodrigo Volare was from Monterrey, Mexico and was extremely talented. He had the bold abstract forms of the Mexican pre-Columbian influence, the Indian influence, and the very delicate details of the Spanish influence. I won't stop right here to tell you about it, but if we get to where it would be good for me to tell you about his fifth-year thesis.

But I worked out all these really abstracted free forms that began to develop into what, for lack of a better word, was my style, with the lake, and I remember blowing up an island that I had in the lake. That's when it hit me. Man, this is bigger than I thought it was.

YO: Oh you mean increasing it in visual scale, representation.

GM: Right, working down in scale, up in reality.

YO: Okay.

GM: Our last step, we had to pick a part of it and blow it up for the next step and keep doing that, take a part of it and blow it up, take a part of it and blow it up. The last thing I did was a marina on that island, and you can look in there. I had a nice watercolor in there. It's got that in that portfolio I have, had the original. I guess I had the boards at one time, but probably threw them away, but I kept that watercolor because it is a neat watercolor. Every time I could get by with it, doing renderings for other people or anybody else, if there was water involved, I'd have a sailboat.

**1:10:12**

YO: [Laughs]

GM: I love sailing. Backing up a little bit, I went to Camp Seagull my first summer in Rocky Mount when I was eight and the biggest thing that you did your half day at sea was they had a big old fleet of wood hull cloth sail Lightnings, and the cabin counselors would take boys out and we'd sail. So anyway, it had a—in fact a lot of those boats were Lightnings. [Laughs]

YO: In your picture.

GM: But if you look in that booklet you'll see that on one of the last pages of my section. Oh, by the way, I missed a step. We divided up all the elements that you need to study on a regional basis and each person got something. For example, I had the geology of the whole basin so I had to go scurrying and looking for geological maps and stuff like that, and that's in the front of that

book. Now we may have done that before we broke up into teams. I think maybe we did. But the value of that, the value of going from outer space in visual scale to going right down to a marina—as Lewis said, Dixie cups on the table—that proved to be extremely important, and I'll jump ahead just a little bit and tell you why it was in my case.

When I got back out of the Navy I was scrambling around for work like crazy because Lewis and Dick Bell, Jerry Turner—and I think by that time Charlie [Burkhead] had gone with Tom Anderson and they were Community Planning Associates—they had all the subdivision work wrapped up. My dad gave me a lead—are you familiar with the COGs, Council of Governments?

YO: Yes.

GM: They were coming into a big deal then because they were the outlet for Richard Nixon's revenue sharing program. And of course the engineers just capitalized on that because they wanted to do the 201 and 202 plans, or 201 and 301, I can't remember which—201 was the water, the other one was the sewer—and EPA was just funneling huge amounts of money.

For example, all through the '70s Raleigh's big waste water treatment plant—and this was a typical ratio—ninety percent federal funding, five percent state funding, so the Raleigh investment was five percent, but they had to have a land use element, a 701 element.

Well, engineers weren't interested in that. So, I went out to Ronnie Aycock, who was later executive director of the—not the North Carolina Municipalities. Maybe it was. I was thinking there was one for the counties, too. He was the executive director of region L out on the highway in Rocky Mount. So I went out there, and I was always—I spent a ton of money on my office brochure through the '70s. I mean major bucks, for me. He saw land use planning, and of course they were beating the bushes. He had a planner, a physical planner. See, they gave out money for medical stuff and healthcare and all that kind of stuff, too. They had doctors on their staff and the planner was an East Carolina master's in planning graduate.

YO: But you went to see him for what reason?

GM: Looking for work.

YO: And what did he have?

GM: And he saw that land use planning, or whatever I was carrying with me at the time, and it ended up I got the regional 701 element, wrote a contract, and that thing, I followed the same format we had followed in that regional—

YO: The Cape Fear project.

GM: Yeah.

YO: So, what you were learning in school—

**1:15:02**

GM: That region was Wilson, Edgecombe, Nash, Northampton, and Halifax Counties, I think. Now later Bob Quinn, the planner, went back home to New Bern as planner of, I think it was the Neuse River COG region. It was one of the biggest COGs in the whole state, from New Bern all the way to the—I think Jones County all the way to the coast.

YO: Right, well let's get back to school.

GM: Okay.

YO: You're still back in school.

GM: I wanted to tell you this.

YO: Okay.

GM: Lewis gave me an "A" that year.

YO: He did? [Laughs]

GM: That semester.

YO: Congratulations.

GM: So I had gone from "As" to a low grade back to an "A" in that short period of time, but I went back up a whole lot faster than I went down. [Laughs]

YO: Bless your heart.

GM: But that's very emotional to me—

YO: I can see—

GM: —to go back in there after just all the damage I had suffered out of two years and within a week or so for Lewis to pick me out, a third-year student, second. I mean that was a stellar moment for me.

YO: Well, that second year—

GM: I was going to tell you, it reminds me of that old Gene Autry song, "Back in the Saddle Again." [Laughs]

YO: All right. [Laughs] Well, during your second year the landscape architecture department entered a competition.

GM: Oh, yes, that's—

YO: Tell me about that competition.

GM:—extremely important. Fred [Stresau] and I had a desk—there was a room connecting our second-year class with the landscape room. It stayed closed most of the time, but I remember that it was open some during that competition. Now, the story was that the Oklahoma oil millionaires had gone to Tivoli Gardens and decided they wanted to buy it, but the city of Copenhagen wouldn't sell it to them.

YO: [Laughs]

GM: Because you know in those years one of those Texas oil millionaires bought the London Bridge and—

YO: And moved it, yeah.

GM: —moved it to Texas [Arizona].

YO: Right.

GM: So, they decided they were going to put on a landscape architectural competition nationwide. It was huge: Harvard, Berkeley, which by that time was George Matsumoto, who left just before we got there. By the way, he was the dean's drill sergeant.

YO: I can imagine.

GM: He was a real kamikaze.

YO: So, we have this competition going along.

GM: Yeah, we were in the room. In fact, I don't know that I did, Fred may have gone in there and helped people color in things or whatever. They sent them in. They thought Rodrigo Volare was going to win, but he didn't finish the presentation, which is kind of typical, come in and work all night and then be gone all day, including classes and everything else.

But Rod didn't finish his. They homed in on Sangster's. Anyway, they sent them in. They also thought—Dave Teachout I think was still a student. Dave Teachout, as I recall—and nobody said this—as I recall, he'd been a Navy or Air Force pilot, obviously which means he had to have had a degree and I don't know what it was. But he'd gotten hooked up with Dick Moore and he came from California with Dick.

YO: That's right.

GM: But he was still a student. So they thought Dave Teachout would do well. The results came back and State took first, second, and fifth out of five places.

YO: National competition.

GM: With all those graduate schools and everything else.

YO: Oh my gosh.

GM: And Rodrigo didn't even finish his. He could have been four out of five.

YO: Right. So, Kamphoefner was really happy about that, I guess.

GM: Well, [Laughs] yeah. Oh, yeah, no doubt, because in those days the school really lived or died by those competitions. Architects had bunches of them, one every school year, starting with second semester—I mean second year.

When we took architecture, we all had to enter the North Carolina Brick and Tile competition, which by the way Gil Wheless won. A landscape architect won. And by the way, on that competition the professor that Gil had was Joe Boaz. That class cleaned out all the places. We had a very, very intellectual guy who was communicating with Corbu—you can imagine how this Beaux Arts graduate loved that—in French.

**1:20:11**

YO: Right.

GM: He got an honorable mention. That's all our class got.

YO: I'll be darned.

GM: So, that tells you the effectiveness of this professor. It reflects on him.

YO: Right.

GM: But I wanted to point out that Gil Wheless won the damn thing.

YO: That's amazing.

GM: It is amazing.

YO: Well, not only were the professors teaching, they were also practicing landscape architects and sometimes they hired students to work on real life projects. And I think you have some special insight into the rather notorious project that's still discussed to this day, the 1965 Capital Area Plan.

GM: Well, the insight I have into it was the fact that—that happened in fourth year and nobody else has mentioned it, and I think that belongs in a prominent place in the “paradise lost” folder of Lewis's legacy. It was a fantastic plan.

By the way, Lewis emailed me back just yesterday morning because I asked specifically to give me some facts about that project and he wrote a whole description, a whole-page description of it, and I really appreciated it.

YO: Well, let's start at the beginning. The governor was Terry Sanford and he formed a commission.

GM: Lewis pointed out that the transition was made between Lewis's plan and Odell's plan during a governor's change, and I was trying to remember which it was, so it was when Terry Sanford went to—oh, what was the big mountaineer—which was a shakeup in the Democratic party. So, anyway.

YO: Well, Sanford formed a commission to study—

GM: That's right, and Brian Shawcroft was on that commission. Now the insight I had—

YO: Their commission of the commission was to come up with a remake of the plan of the capital of North Carolina in Raleigh.

GM: They had bought up all the property between Jones Street and Peace Street and actually either side of Salisbury Street and Wilmington Street, and the Governor's Mansion was on the outboard side of that. By the way, Lewis did a plan for that too that nobody's mentioned.

YO: Right.

GM: I don't remember that much about it. I may have a newspaper article that showed it.

YO: But they were getting ready to build the new legislature building.

GM: They had built the legislature building.

YO: And they wanted to just revamp the downtown sector.

GM: Well, they'd bought all that property up, which was, by the way, a beautiful old area. The houses had become rundown and a lot of them were subdivided into apartments and things like that, but they salvaged some of those including the Seaboard train station, which they moved from right behind the legislature building over onto the west side of Salisbury Street.

YO: So Lewis was not—let's see. Was he appointed by the commission—

GM: No.

YO: —or was he consulted by the commission?

GM: I think he said he had done some work—I got confused because there was an architect that I didn't remember the name of, Bob Anderson.

YO: Right.

GM: Now Pearson Stewart, I knew who he was. He was the chief planner for RTI.

YO: Research Triangle Institute.

GM: Right, and somehow or other—the commission may have gone to Bob Anderson who then hired Lewis, and Lewis—as only Lewis can do really—sort of took over the project. He worked out even those high rise buildings, which were repeated as a prototype high rise. As Lewis pointed out to me, they wanted to send the buildings up to leave room for the lake.

YO: So, I think you just mentioned probably what most people look at with envy, is that there was a lake—

GM: Oh, man, it was the coolest—

YO: —system and a lot of pedestrian pathways. All of the parking was under ground, several underground levels of parking throughout the city, so that the entire downtown was like a garden area.

**1:25:03**

GM: I think the parking was supposed to be under the lake, or subterranean. Now some of it still is. But now let me tell you what my insight in it was. And I haven't mentioned this yet, I hadn't gotten to it. I worked for Odell the summer after my fifth year, worked right under his nose, again because of those drawing skills. In fact, I came back that year and I said damn, if I can do all the renderings for Odell's office I can do them for myself, you know, for other people.

YO: Right.

GM: And just before I went in the Navy, I had worked over in the basement of Watauga for campus planning under Carroll Mann. Just as I was going on active duty Carroll Mann got appointed as head of the property control office, which is a very powerful office.

YO: The State Property Control office.

GM: Right. What did I say?

YO: I was just clarifying that it was with the state.

GM: The State Property Control. I can't remember the man's name, but the man that preceded and retired when Carroll Mann took over, he was on my dad's bank board because he was from down in Hyde County or something. I'm telling you, he was powerful as hell.

There was a family of engineers that really—you've got to remember that architecture used to be in engineering. I mean they controlled everything that was built in this state. Raymond Bryan with T.A. Lovette Co. [TALCO] was one of them. Willie York was one of them. J. Jones in Charlotte. But Carroll Mann's a pretty stiff guy, but now Goolie Odell, I said that that plan that he did, that tuning fork plan he did, I think Goolie was getting himself confused with either Le Nôtre or whoever designed the Champs-Élysées, or something. But it was—God, look at what it's turned into. It's an architectural dinosaur bone yard.

YO: So everybody wants to know—

GM: Now Harwell Harris did consult with Lewis on those high rise buildings and they were neat looking. One thing really important, it was extremely showy. Bill Baron and Dick Moore, they were in partnership in that office around there on Oberlin. I was renting a room from them upstairs when that project took place and Lewis hired—

YO: Now this is the house next door to the Player's Retreat.

GM: PR, little gray house. It's still there. One other thing that nobody remembers, but I want to say that Dick's—I haven't emailed him about this. Dick owes me a response to an email and I haven't heard back from him, but I thought about doing it anyway just about this question. Dick's firm I want to say was Envirotech with a t-e-c-h.

YO: Yeah.

GM: Because about the time Dick left was when Bob Burns, Abie Harris—he was assistant director of campus planning under Carroll Mann, so I had worked with Abie—Abie and Ben Taylor formed Envirotek, t-e-k, and I wondered if—. I don't know whether Dick's was a corporation or what, or maybe he sold them the name. Maybe they just changed it and used it. Bob and Abie became head of campus planning so they bowed out and Ben Taylor took the firm and ran with it. You know about Envirotek.

YO: Right.

GM: But Dick and Bill Baron, that was a partnership between the two of them, and Bill—I haven't mentioned this yet and it's very important—we had both semesters of descript in third year under Bill Baron. I think if you gave Bill Baron a handful of modeling clay and patted it out, and a nail, he could draw these sexy women. I'm telling you he could draw anything with anything. He used to tell us—he was a Chicago hood, to tell you the truth.

YO: [Laughs]

GM: I never saw him wear anything but a t-shirt and dungarees and white socks and military shoes. He looked like he was a student. But that alliance between Dick and—I thought the whole class had Bill Baron, but I don't think Gil was in that class.

**1:30:14**

YO: So, how did you—so you had a room over Dick Moore and Bill Baron's office and the Capital Planning Commission was working on the downtown plan.

GM: Well, where I was going with that is that Lewis had Dick, and particularly Bill Baron, to do the initial drawings on the thing, the sketches, and Bill did them on yellow trash, but he used multimedia, pastel, anything but watercolor. Pastel, grease pencil, probably prismacolor pencil and regular graphite pencil and everything else. His work was flashy and he did these cool sketch

renderings for that project that ended up in the paper. Herb Schaal and Lewis acknowledged this too. Later Herb Schaal took those renderings, because Herb was working for them, put them on like eight and a half by eleven Mylar sheets in ink and they were very neatly done. He used ink wash to get grays rather than just all black and white. But they just were scaled down copies, black and white copies of these color renderings that Bill Baron had. Later, Dick Moore gave me the whole roll of those renderings.

YO: Wow.

GM: Now there were some of them that weren't finished. There was a bird's eye perspective that was hardly presentable. I threw some of them away. I kept two of them and I think it was the two that were in the paper, the two better ones. I gave Lamar one of them, but Lamar doesn't remember. He says he doesn't have it. But I have still got the one I kept, and it perked Lewis' ears up that I had one of those original yellow trash drawings, because he said all that stuff went to the archives.

YO: It's in the collection. There's probably five or six folders or tubes of drawings and then we also have a copy of the presentation booklet that was put out.

GM: The sketches that Herb Schaal did are in that book.

YO: Are in there, exactly.

GM: He told me that Odell—you know he worked with Odell on a lot of stuff and I'm sure he knows Odell like I do.

YO: Oh yeah.

GM: My mother called him a martinet.

YO: [Laughs]

GM: A.G. Odell was independently wealthy. His family owned that Concord cotton mill.

YO: Right.

GM: In fact, I think somebody told me that he was a director, like one of the officers, like secretary-treasurer of the corporation, and that was a very wealthy family. Ryland Edwards, the architect in Rocky Mount, was his cousin.

YO: No kidding? It was a small world back then, wasn't it?

GM: Yeah. See Mother and Daddy knew Odell in Charlotte and right before I went to work— That was an interesting story, how that happened. I told Lewis I'm going to email him that separately some time, that and working for Carroll Mann. I had gone in there and interviewed for a job that summer with Hemphill who was Odell's chief lieutenant.

YO: Hemphill?

GM: Hemphill, Jim Hemphill. A lot of these people were Georgia Tech graduates. Odell, I think, went to Cornell, if I remember right.

YO: So, you went in looking for a job.

GM: Yeah, and right before that they had gotten through with the design phase of a new bank building for Daddy in Rocky Mount. Hemphill didn't make the connection. He took me in and Odell said yeah, yeah, you know, and brushed me out of the office. Somebody got the colors wrong on the—when you stepped off the elevator of that building at Tryon and Trade, they said it was purple walls. It was purple carpet and white marble, some real elaborate expensive looking marble behind the receptionist, [Laughs] and gold leaf letters, "A.G. Odell, Jr. and Associates."

YO: Really?

**1:35:02**

GM: Yeah, he was a showman. I mean he was a real showman. So Ralph Brice, who was a pretty good designer, he was not a State graduate, could do pretty quick magic marker renderings. He was probably one of the chief designers, although they were all in there. Jeffrey Huberman and—black guy that was mayor of Charlotte—Harvey Gantt were there and later left together and formed their office. But Ralph was pretty much the head guy, but he didn't do detail very well. It was people, with those abstract forms and whatnot, you know.

YO: So, you were there to take on that?

GM: Well, what happened was I came in there and there was a really neat guy there named John Cooper who was a Georgia Tech graduate who did the tempera renderings, the real almost photographs, you know. But they had all these sketches and they were needing to convert them into drawings and they had this one in particular. John Cooper told me later—I mean they had this park that had a lake in it and some building—this was Odell's *modus operandi*—had either some building that he had done or something that he was looking to do down at the end of the lake, but I mean the trees and the lake and all that kind of stuff, they just—John told me one time that Odell had come in and said can't anybody in this place draw a park?

YO: [Laughs]

GM: That was his mannerism. So, I came in the first day. In the meantime of course Daddy told Odell I understand my son's going to work for you this summer. So, I took a layout for two of those perspectives, including that park perspective, and my pencil technique was a broad stroke. They made an artist's edition of like a carpenter's pencil and I developed that very heavy. I'll send you some emails of some of those drawings. Two of them I've still got. I did a whole set in school when I was really developing my drawing technique.

So, I had two of them knocked out, including that park, by lunchtime. Well, here Odell came in, and he was very tall, you know, baldheaded, with a pink shirt on, I think, and gold cufflinks. He came in to speak to me, and Bill was with him, I think. I don't remember. But

anyway, I was working in the design section, which was not far from his office on the central floor of three floors that he had. He introduced himself and [Laughs] he looked at those drawings and he almost pushed me off my stool. He said what have we got here? He had glasses like my old original horn rim, you know, Buddy Holley, Groucho Marx glasses, and he was fumbling in his pocket and getting his glasses out and putting them on and he said good grief. He said, [Loudly] call Skip.

Skip was a little Filipino, older guy, kind of short, that ran all the reproductions stuff, and they were looking to make pencil drawings. They were just beginning to be able to do half tones by lithography on the plates, expose them without burning out the shade, you know.

YO: In multi-lith processing.

GM: Yeah, I guess that's right.

YO: Those thin metal plates.

GM: The thin metal aluminum plates—

YO: Right.

GM: —that they exposed with the sensitive stuff. They were just beginning to do that. They did that, the reproduction department, plenty of print specs and they did these presentation stuff too. So, not more than about two minutes, I mean he was standing around, fumbling, waiting for Skip. And in a couple of minutes here came Skip, running around the corner, because the boss had called, with this, what did I do wrong look on his face. [Laughs] Odell snatched up those two drawings and shoved them at Skip and said, print 'em! [Laughs]

YO: [Laughs]

**1:39:58**

GM: So, Skip disappeared around the corner and the majority of my job the rest of the—oh, by the way, the drawings for this were for his big city of Charlotte redevelopment plan.

YO: I was getting ready to ask: What was the plan?

GM: There was a whole set and those drawings were published in their booklet and they were later put in the NCAIA magazine. But boy, I had found my place right quick, and of course the thing about it is I had blown Hemphill away with that portfolio I was keeping.

YO: Sure enough.

GM: So, I went right straight to the design section. I didn't have to go down and work on working drawings and stuff like that. Now I did do some other stuff that summer, including some other renderings, including either an acrylic, or it may have been mixed, rendering.

YO: So, what I'm hearing is that they taught you not just pencil drawing or ink drawing, but you just got exposure to everything, silk screen printing—

GM: That's right. Now I stuck—

YO: —every kind of process.

GM: —pretty much with painting. I did sculpture one semester. But I wanted to key on the fact that Bill Baron was the first one that left—we started out the first year with just pencil, the whole first year with just pencil and models would come in, but when we got to Baron in third year we went to everything else, started going into pastel. A lot of the figure drawing, that's what Bill always used, did them with pastel. He'd do a, you know, laying it flat to make tones and whatnot, turn it up on its end to make hard lines, and just drew beautifully.

YO: We actually have some. Actually in Dick Moore's papers, we have some Bill Baron drawings and some Herb Schaal as well, in Special Collections.

GM: Well, those drawings that you have in that booklet about the Capital Area Plan were Herb Schaal's.

YO: That's good to know.

GM: Re-dos of these—

YO: Well, let's go back to that Capital—

GM: I want to make this emphatic statement about that Capital Area Plan.

YO: Okay.

GM: It was so good and it was so Lewis. I thought it was one of the most important things, and it was just so sad, with all this political rigmarole.

YO: Well, what were some of the—what was going on in that political arena that they decided not to do it?

GM: Well, first off Goolie Odell had a pretty—he had the Charlotte big political crowd behind him any time he wanted it and he would show his hand once in awhile. I tell you what he was after. He was after that Archdale Building which they initially called SOB #1, state office building number one, until it was named the Archdale Building.

YO: [Laughs]

GM: It was very striking and I kind of liked it originally, but it wears on you so much. I could see it from my office on Boylan Avenue from the second floor and I looked at that thing and it

wasn't very long I was saying, you know, some State student needs to climb up there some night with a bucket of black paint and paint "R.I.P." on it.

YO: [Laughs]

GM: It looked like a tombstone.

YO: And whose design is that?

GM: That's Odell's. That's what he was after in doing that Capital Area Plan. I can tell you, this is his *modus operandi*. On that Charlotte plan, he was after the big civic center, and he got it later on, too. But in that whole tuning fork plan he did, he was after that big Archdale [Building]. He proposed it on the plan and he got the commission for it. That's a big building.

YO: It is a big building. So, just politics. I thought I had heard that the legislators backed up the Charlotte folks versus the Raleigh and Rocky Mount folks.

GM: Dan Moore was the governor after Terry Sanford.

YO: After Sanford, that's right.

GM: And then Bob—oh, NC State.

YO: Kerr.

GM: No, Bob—

YO: Scott.

GM: Yeah.

YO: Scott then. So, the lament is that we went a long time—

GM: Man, we got a pig in a poke.

YO: We did go for a long time without downtown.

GM: And we went from this beautiful plan that Lewis did for that whole area. Oh, man. As I say that belongs in the "paradise lost" chapter of state history as well as Lewis' legacy.

**1:45:06**

YO: It gets brought up every now and then. It's something that people reference and study pretty much.

GM: But another important thing about it was just how Lewis took it over, which he can do. I mean Lewis, he's got that charm.

YO: But he was a landscape architect. How did he do that?

GM: Well, he was still an architect.

YO: Oh.

GM: But Brian Shawcroft I'm sure played a big role in it too, in maybe getting it funneled. I think Lewis said that he had worked some with him. Everybody knew Pearson Stewart. I think he came to the School of Design and was on some jury sometime or something. But it wasn't clear to me whether they had worked on that plan with Pearson Stewart or Bob Anderson, which apparently that was their architectural planning—what did they call it—firm, Architectural Planning Associates. No, Architectural Planning Consultants, I think it was. If that's the same architect that I'm thinking about, he did beautiful work himself. He did that beautiful library, which is very Frank Lloyd Wright, in Chapel Hill, public library in Chapel Hill.

End of Part 1 of 2

Transcriptionist: Debbie Mitchum

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