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This interview was conducted with Dr. Richard Francis, Professor Emeritus of English, on April 23, 2003, in Wilson Library. The interviewer is Tamara Belts.

TB: Today is Wednesday, April 23, [2003], and I'm here with Dr. Richard Francis, Professor Emeritus of English, and we're going to be doing an oral history about campus architecture and the Outdoor Sculpture Collection perhaps. My name is Tamara Belts and he has just signed our Informed Consent Agreement and now he will start.

Do you have a prior statement?

RF: Yes. I came in the fall of 1969. I was looking for an institution on the west coast because I was born in California and most of my family had been on the west coast. Western came to my attention some years before I even knew it existed through an article in *Fortune* magazine about great architecture on college campuses. Among the six that *Fortune* magazine had chosen was Western with its Fred Bassetti Ridgeway Complex. I thought, *ah, someone playing to my heart!*

I like campuses that have good architecture. I started out to be an architect, but then I discovered I had no mechanical ability whatsoever and I thought I'd design a bridge that might collapse like the Tacoma Bridge! So I stopped being one. Then I thought of becoming an architectural historian, but history didn't quite work out that way in my post-undergraduate career. But I've always kept up a strong interest in architecture.

Years later while I was here at Western I served on a committee giving advice for the making of a documentary for PBS to be called "The American Architectural Experience." I helped write some of the early scripts for that. It unfortunately fell through, at least in the guise in which we were going to do it, and it was later made by, actually, an old roommate of mine from Yale, who was then the professor of architectural history at Berkeley. He happened to know the right people with the right money in Washington D.C., people with the name of Guggenheim. He got the grant and we ran out of our initial fund and couldn't go on with it. But it was an interesting experience and I then got quite interested in the possibility of eventually doing some work with videotaping conversations with architects.

I was terribly struck by the Western campus. First of all, if you've never been here before, the first time you come up on the hill, of course, it's an extremely beautiful campus. I don't know anyone who's ever visited that hasn't said that about it. I arrived in the late summer of '69 when they were still, I think, sweeping the sand into the bricks in Red Square because they had just finished laying them all. I was stunned by how beautiful it was, having come over the now-destroyed famous Italian steps from High Street into the Square; an ingenious solution to the problem of how you experience that first entry into the Square. (I actually shot some eight millimeter film of it).

Interestingly, what I was doing one day later on (I think this is still true that the college and the university don't really open until late September so we can all enjoy that nice month of September when it's still summer here) -- it was about a week before school started, I came up with my camera again to shoot a little more footage. They'd put out all of the very nice sort of plaza furniture that Ibsen Nelsen had chosen to be in front of the Miller Hall Coffee Shop, which would give it a really European atmosphere. This Sunday morning, when there was nobody on the campus, I was standing there photographing and there was a truck backed up to the low steps that go down, beyond

Bond Hall there. This person was loading furniture from the plaza into his truck and I'm afraid I was terribly innocent then, I thought -- *oh, they're moving it around or something like that*. But no, somebody was stealing it, and all that plaza furniture that Nelsen ordered for the Coffee Shop was stolen. That was my first awakening to the problems of having such high caliber architecture and high aesthetic judgements on a campus even like Western's.

I had an office in the Humanities Building which I greatly admired. I think Fred Bassetti had gone on doing the kind of work he did up at the Ridgeway Complex, and I thought he'd done it very well. The Humanities Building, as those who have delved into its history know -- and Barney Goltz is particularly good on this subject -- is the last building which came out of direct funds from the legislature. After that, all the funds came out of those special funds they set up for construction on campuses, and it was wise because there was not enough money to finish that building as Bassetti had designed it.

It was originally going to be four stories, it got cut to three. The elevator got cut out. The elevator was not finally put into that building until the year I retired, 1992! And for a while we had this awful thing which was designed to take care of handicapped people, one of those chairs put on the stairwell which was never designed for it!

But still it struck me that what it was was a marvelous re-creation in American idiom of a Venetian palazzo. That whole wonderful sense of those eyebrows over the windows and the pilotis that are on either side of its front and back exits, depending on what you call the front and what you call the back (which you shouldn't really do for that building at all because they're both identical), looking out on Red Square. I thought, *oh, what a marvelous idea!*

Of course Bassetti, who loves marvelous little jokes, wanted an Italian palazzo and one from Venice in particular because Red Square had originally been a marsh, with just a grassy lawn there! This whole question is (and the foundations under that building, as he also discovered when he added on to the Wilson Library), can the soil withstand the weight?

These are the very same questions we later ran into when Richard Serra originally wanted to put his *Wright's Triangle* at the foot of those three steps that go down [between Miller Hall and Bond Hall], to go up the path to south campus. It doesn't show up much in some of the documentation of the time, particularly in [Sarah Clark-Langager's] account of it; but I was chair of the Art Acquisition Committee at the time, and we had to do three engineering studies on that site: one at the university's expense, one at the state's expense, and one at Richard Serra's engineers' expense. All of them said that piece will start sinking at about an inch a year if you put it on that site, unless you go down very deep with very deep foundations, because it weighs three tons I think. That's when it was moved to its alternate site, which is the one where it now sits, and that had all sorts of other problems which are worth discussing at some point in time.

Anyway, so this whole notion of this campus which, first of all, had begun very well back at the turn of the century because for some reason, maybe good luck, maybe because of the people who were in charge of it then, but it happened to choose from the very start very good architects. The architect for Old Main, for example, was originally Skilling and Corner, but then Skilling and Lee took over. Lee did the pavilion at the Columbia World Exposition in Chicago for the State of Washington. He was obviously a known architect in the State of Washington when he was asked to design Old Main, and as my former colleague Arthur Hicks used to remark, -- "This is one of the few campuses in this state and in many states which does not have a gothic administration building."

It's true, there's no gothic architecture on this campus at all, because Skilling and Lee decided what they wanted was an almost Renaissance-style palazzo, and the original designs, when we get all the ivy off that building, we will see around the windows is very much in that tradition. That notion of a renaissance architecture for a school which was devoted to training teachers was a brilliant idea, and it continued to have an immense influence on all the architecture.

Next we got Edens Hall, a neoclassical structure. Then we got Carl Gould's Wilson Library, a very Renaissance-style building. And then we got the original gym, which was in the same style, by Carl Gould, and on and on it went in that fashion. So that when Bassetti was given the chance -- Bassetti came with his immense background (sounding Italian with his father's name, but being very Scandinavian on his mother's side of the family) -- he had

this very interesting notion that we could do a kind of eclectic European architecture, but appropriately in an American modern idiom.

I'm glad to see that we're going to finally honor Fred Bassetti because Fred Bassetti's contributions to the shaping of this campus architecturally are absolutely immense. He's taken a lot of abuse over the years, as a lot of people in the architectural field have that have done good things for this campus! But that whole business of doing something which would be echoing the past but make a statement for the future was what was very much in his mind. That was very appropriate to the educational philosophy of the institution when it was first founded, and which it continued to expound until well into the '70s and the '80s when the focus of this institution began to change, and its architecture also began to change at that point.

I'm fond of the quote I sometimes like to use when I'm doing little presentations which is that, *art is metaphor and public art is political metaphor*. We could also say that practically all architecture involves politics, so that what you get on this campus is a series of buildings in which you had at the start people who were making very intelligent decisions about what would be appropriate to this school on this site. Then, as it expanded and grew and its nature began to change; you increasingly got, as the university became more and more a corporate structure (I think all universities are corporate structures these days) – you got people who were not primarily interested in that long rich tradition of art and architecture, which institutions used to stand for (they don't particularly stand for that much, anymore).

The architecture, as you move south on this campus, begins to change rather significantly, and that is quite interesting. When I did an interview with George Bartholick (which as I was saying to you earlier had to be destroyed because it was done in a pub in Seattle where the background noise was too much. George Bartholick as we all know was the campus planner hired back in the Jarrett days I believe, and maintained in the Flora days. Barney Goltz came about the same time, and the combination of Bartholick and Goltz, Goltz doing most of the political stroking, and Bartholick, who could be very difficult on occasion, doing the actual planning) -- Bartholick told me about the day they took the great model (in the old days you used to make a large model of the campuses for the master plan) – how they put in on a litter, literally on a litter, and carried it down across through Red Square and up the incline there to where the new south campus was going to be.

The further and further they got from this nicely sequestered old campus in front of Old Main and the Wilson Library, the more and more they became concerned about what was going to be up there because it was a very radical plan. It was designed to maintain the connecting passage which runs around the base of Sehome Hill. In many ways this is a very odd campus because it is laid out around the base of a rather odd-shaped hill. That's not your normal concept of a university or college campus in the United States. The United States impulse, as many books on the subject have discussed, is to have a series of quadrangles and a series of buildings around those quadrangles, and you just keep adding quadrangles and more and more buildings that way. What Bartholick had in mind was creating a series of open areas surrounded by buildings but maintained along a sort of serpentine or at least an angular pathway around the base of the hill. To that extent, he saw the whole development of the south campus as a series of those areas, and that was what the model showed.

Of course at the same time, there was also the decision made (sometime in the late Jarrett years) to create what we used to call in the academic world -- *the Santa Cruz of the north*. The University of California-Santa Cruz was created in the '60s (and in fact I tried to get a job there once, but my having a Yale PhD, there were too many Yalies there already).

One of the things that attracted me to Western was that Western was going to set up a series of cluster colleges as well, the first of which was to be Fairhaven. Fairhaven was built, as we all know, by Kirk, McKinley, and ... I always forget the third one's name -- Kirk, Wallace and McKinley! That was to be the last outpost on this campus. But then of course as we got into the '70s and the expansion of universities everywhere became very acute, they decided they would make some alterations in that.

They hired Henry Klein of Mount Vernon, who knew Bassetti and knew Ibsen Nelsen and knew all these people very well, knew Bartholick very well, knew Bumgardner (who did additions to the Art Building). What he decided

to do was to bring his very Alvar Aalto view, very Scandinavian view of the famous Finnish architect, to the campus. He wanted to do a series of towers at the various entrances. On the main campus, north campus, we've got [Mathes] and its complimentary building, which is Nash, done in a very Aalto style.

That was done in the first few years I was here, and I was terribly impressed because I'm a great admirer of Aalto myself. There was to be another one where Buchanan Tower now is, in the same style, two of them on each side of this entry road to the south campus. Unfortunately something happened at that point, the second tower was never built. Henry Klein's design for the original tower never got built either, and we now have Buchanan Tower, which is not, from my point of view anyway, a terribly distinguished structure.

The result was that at that time we were getting a rather fuzzy view. Meanwhile, the efforts to get started on the south campus was turned over to Ibsen Nelsen. Now there's probably no architect functioning in the second half of the twentieth century in the State of Washington who was more sophisticated, who had a greater background in the history of architecture, and who had a very clear vision of what he thought would be appropriate to this campus. The buildings he did on what we now call Red Square are a very good example of that. He had a very clear sense of how we could turn this almost into a kind of Sienna (maybe Fred Bassetti wanted Venice, but we were going to get Sienna). Bond Hall and the addition to the old teaching school, which then became Miller Hall, were very appropriate.

Of course, on one side of that square was Paul Thiry's Haggard Hall. Now Paul Thiry had been hired very early, back in I think as early as the 50s. But again, he was a very distinguished Washington State architect. He had done all of Seattle Center, or at least he was in charge of most of the design for Seattle Center. He is, as the history books usually describe him, the foremost modernist of the Northwest. That is, taking that style of architecture which was cultivated originally at the Bauhaus then brought to America by all those German architects, Mies Van Der Rohe and so on, who came here because they were forced out of Nazi Germany. They put their imprint on modern American architecture in a way which made it very international, which didn't have much personal American characteristic to it, but was nonetheless extremely good architecture.

Thiry began by doing the second Highland [Hall], Jones and Bindon had done the first Highland Hall (they were the original architects who continued after Gould). Then he did Higginson Hall in 1961 and the Viking Commons, which is almost across the street from it, in 1961. He did Haggard Hall the previous year in 1960, and he'd done the original addition to the Wilson Library, which the Bassetti addition wrapped around. I've forgotten what the date of that was; it was about the same time, 1962. He was given a series of commissions to do a series of buildings along High Street, which were very much in what he considered to be the appropriate architecture of the period.

Again, you know, there's this question of do you keep just replicating the old style or do you modify and adjust it and so on? But he was really a serious departure, but one that was well-meaning. When he did Haggard Hall, which he knew would be facing his new addition to the library (and the library needed a back addition where people could gain entrance because of course it was that famous rock sitting under those steps). It very much was a homage to Mies Van Der Rohe's famous hall at the Illinois Institute of Technology. It resembled that building very much.

At the time the decision was made to do something to that building (Haggard Hall renovation), one of the first things they were going to do was tear it down. But then they found out it was solid concrete and that was going to be terribly expensive (as they also found out removing the famous rock under the stairs was going to be much more expensive than they thought when they contemplated it). I raised a great many objections. In fact there's some very strong letters I'm sure in the Wilson Library files from me to who was ever then director of the library, raising this whole issue of whether we like modern architecture or not, it has a very definite place in the history of American architecture, and that was Paul Thiry's homage to Mies Van Der Rohe.

There was no campus in America except in Chicago that has a Mies Van Der Rohe building, except for Harvard, which let him build the Carpenter Center, and that was it - that stopped Mies Van Der Rohe at Harvard - because concrete has not generally lent itself well to an architecture which people on campuses feel happy with, and that of course was one of the problems. A great many members of the Board of Trustees as well as some members of the

faculty, they simply did not like Haggard Hall, so the decision was made to do what has now been done to it, but I will leave that for subsequent discussion later on.

So as the Board of Trustees followed George Bartholick and his litter with the model of these structures, which were of course only in plaster, or cardboard or a combination of the two, they had no idea what these buildings were really going to look like except their general shapes. They had hired Ibsen Nelsen to do it because he had done such a marvelous job on Red Square. As they got down there, they suddenly began to get a little worried, because these buildings were very odd looking. Two were built, one was the [Environmental Studies Building], and then Arntzen Hall. The [Environmental Studies Building] wasn't too much of a problem because at least it looked like a fairly conventional building even though it was poured concrete.

The problem with poured concrete, back at the time that building was being done in the early '70s, is that we did not really have builders in this part of the world who were very good at handling poured and placed concrete. Again, Ibsen Nelsen was way ahead of his time in some ways. They much preferred to work in either stone or brick. The costs for that whole complex down there I think Barney Goltz once told me, were excessive because builders kept overestimating because they had no idea what this was really going to cost them. It was an upsetting thing for trustees to look at these massive estimates on what it was going to take to build these buildings. But, to their credit, they built the [Environmental Studies Building] and Nelsen thought so highly of it that he kept a very large colored photograph of it in the outer office of his office in Seattle. I went in to see him once, and there hung [this huge photograph] -- gorgeous, fresh and new, concrete -- dazzling white -- it must have been three by four feet, there in the main entrance hall of his office complex in Seattle.

When other things were being planned about renovating the interiors and so on, I remember having conversations with him on the phone when I called him about something else and he'd say, "What have they done to the interior?" Because he became concerned.

That was the building as you may recall that we finished on the outside but we did not have enough money to finish its inside, so the top floors of the building were never done at the time the exterior was done. That led to other problems later on as well. But that's a whole other story.

They began on Arntzen Hall then. Now Arntzen Hall, I did not know this at the time, hardly anybody on the campus knew at the time, was to be part of a dual set of buildings, and they were going to put humanities and history and [liberal studies] that were outgrowing their space in the Humanities Building down there in what is now Arntzen Hall. But there were of course other departments that had other demands, like Sociology, and then for some reason they decided to create a business college, and the [College of Business and Economics] took over the top floors of Arntzen Hall early on in its career.

But it always looked rather strange, and I remember writing an essay for *Klipsun* in which I was really rather critical of that building. Ibsen Nelsen, who was a total gentleman, called me up one day, because he'd gotten a copy of it, and said, "Well you know, it's only half a building."

I said, "What?"

And he said, "Well, next time you're in Seattle, drop by the office and I'll show you the slides of the original model."

I have those slides now, he gave them to me. It was to have been two very open glass facades, which was still essentially what Arntzen is on its one side, and then a series of terraces on the back side, which would be planted so that in effect, the two buildings taken together would have created a hill. It would have complimented Sehome Hill on one side and the hill on which Bassetti's Ridgeway Complex sits on the other.

If the university had only carried through with that, we would have had one of the most strikingly exciting complexes on the west coast of the United States at least and maybe in the whole of the United States. It would have put us back on the map as Bassetti's Ridgeway Complex had put us on the map. But, we were in one of those

terrible budget crunches - *“will the last person out of Seattle please turn out the lights”* – the legislature was getting very fussy about the cost of buildings, was cutting back on the construction budgets, so the second building was never built. There was this curious half-built building and that’s what it still remains. I apologized to him for that and when I later gave a lecture on the subject, I made a public apology for the article I wrote (although it did have a few good things to say about the building).

I was stunned when I saw the slides of that model because I suddenly realized that something was not developing the way everyone had hoped it would. I do think what we had on this campus in the late 60s and early 70s was almost, from an architectural point of view, a renaissance. I mean, we were creating a campus of exceptional beauty by a series of architects who worked very well together, who had very much of the same point of view, who were extremely well educated in the humanities, and who knew what they could do to make this an incredibly unique campus.

It was about that time in the early 70s that things started to grow a little out of focus. The further we have crept down in that direction, the more out of focus from my point of view we’ve gotten. For example, the [Environmental Studies Building] was to be faced on its complimentary side by a new building of almost comparable size. When the other building that was to compliment Arntzen Hall was put up, in relation to that building, we would then have a great covered archway over those buildings and the steps going down to the lower part of the south campus. It was Nelsen’s idea that we could hold commencements and big public events in this space between the two social science buildings, as they were generally called on the blueprints. They would have been open-ended, and we could have avoided all those hot steamy commencements in Carver Gym, and a lot of other things which we have had to put up with since.

But, somewhere when Parks Hall was being envisioned in the early 80s, and we were now in a series of administrations that really didn’t care about these things – I hate to say that, but I’m afraid that’s true – and we were having strong necessity for student input.

I arrived here in the late 60s and early 70s when the Vietnam War was going on. Student protests had risen to a very high level. My office in Humanities overlooked a corner of the area in front of Old Main and I can remember all the students camping there. I can remember Jerry Flora coming down the steps of Old Main and giving them a severe lecture in his classic Jerry Flora style. They stopped, at least for a time being they stopped, but the effect of all of that, I think, was to seriously change the set of attitudes.

In the early 60s on this campus, students wanted to make gifts to the university. That’s how the [Steve] Tibbets [*Scepter*] statue, which is at the back of the Lecture Hall, was given. He was a student, it was commissioned by the Senior Class and it was put there. Another senior class bought an Ad Reinhardt painting which unfortunately hung in the director’s office in Wilson Library, and a sloppy janitor sloshed his cleanup mop against it and wrecked it. About then, the students decided they would stop making gifts to what was still then the college. But there was at least a positive attitude about art among the student body in the 60s.

By the time we got to the 70s – *“don’t trust anybody over thirty-five”*-- the hostilities with students to faculty, administration, to everybody else who was they thought guilty of the Vietnam War began to grow. That then began to create an atmosphere on this campus which demanded that we take students into the process of making decisions.

I became a member of the Art Acquisition Committee at the time the di Suvero piece was put in because the student protests against that were very substantial. They somehow viewed that square as their property because it was next to their student union. Mark di Suvero came to give a lecture. Mark di Suvero, who had been involved in the free speech movement at Berkeley in the 60s, was stunned to have these students attacking him. Mark di Suvero is one of the most literate, educated people I have ever met. For example, discussing his piece – he discussed the late Beethoven quartets. How many artists do you know who can discuss the late Beethoven quartets, being non-musical artists?

I wrote a very strong – because I’m famous for my letters in this community – I wrote a very strong letter to the *Western Front* defending him and defending that piece. As a result, Larry Hansen called me up, who was really sort

of vaguely in charge of the sculpture works because he was the contact with Mrs. [Virginia] Wright when she proposed the Di Suvero piece. He asked me to serve on the Art Acquisition Committee. I was on that for quite some time, in fact almost until the end. At some point, I looked through our memos of the meetings, which we had to keep very diligently because in those days the state required us to have minutes of public meetings. But we also had to put students on that committee. Larry had nominated a number of students from the Art Department and they served very well.

Well, back to the point--when Parks Hall was built we had to put students on the Architectural Committee. Now, there are very few administrators in the institution over the years I felt that knew anything about architecture, students know even less. And there was a great commotion about making it environmentally good and making it economical because at that time we were having terrible energy problems in the state and our erstwhile woman governor Dixie Lee Ray was imposing terrible constrictions on the universities about how long they could stay open and when the heat could be on and when it couldn't be on. I can remember weekends freezing in my office in the Humanities Building which is not an insulated building because it was built before we had insulated buildings, I actually had gloves on trying to type. There were all these concerns about the design of that building.

Fortunately, we hired an architect from Tacoma whose name was Robert Price--very distinguished architect--and he was given the commission to do that. Well, if you go back and look at the minutes of the meetings of that committee, or any in the art, and subsequently other committees, master plan committees and so on, you find what the real problem was. The real problem was, *the students wouldn't accept this, they wouldn't accept that, they wouldn't accept something else*, and unfortunately the vice provost who was chair of that committee was himself a very physically ailing man who simply didn't have the energy to try to deal with this problem. So, we ended up with the building we have. Although, to his credit, Robert Price refused to do it as the students wanted it done.

They only wanted a three-story building built into the hillside, which would not have done anything for the master plan down on that part of the campus. So he got it to like, what? It's now five stories I think--heavily poured concrete, deeply recessed windows, and heavily insulated--to conform with the basic design of the Ibsen Nelsen design of Arntzen Hall and the [Environmental Studies Building]. So, it came off better than anybody could have hoped; but it did not come off as well as it might have, had the original master plan proposal for the bulk and size of those buildings been conformed to, because then the complementary building to Arntzen Hall probably could eventually be built, but of course it never was.

Then we went through another one of these economic slumps, and the whole advancement and development of the science buildings was put off, and put off, and put off as long as there was space for them in Haggard Hall, in Bond Hall, even though they were stretching those buildings to their limits, they kept getting postponed.

Meanwhile, we got an administration whose primary concern was technology. Proposals went forward for the building of what is now the [Ross Engineering Technology Building], named after the deceased president who was behind most of this. At that time, there was vague discussion about how to connect the brick campus to the concrete campus. This building was going to come between Arntzen Hall and the Arts Complex, which had been started in brick and was more or less finished in brick, but was below the hill.

That hill where the Richard Serra piece now sits really was a dividing mark, and on Bartholick's original master plan, that showed very clearly. There was a group of extraordinarily beautiful steps which went up that hill, a double set of steps that went up that hill, to the new south campus.

But, President Ross had a son-in-law who was an architect in St. Louis, I believe (because I gave him a tour of the campus once when he was here). He was a quite well-educated, intelligent man. But at that time, the person who had won the Pritzker was this German architect [Gottfried Boehm] who no one had ever heard of (that's not unusual with the Pritzker Prize--the Pritzker's a big prize for architects every year) and he was doing sort of pseudo-brick, neo-gothic buildings in Germany, which may be appropriate in Germany, but weren't particularly appropriate to Bellingham, Washington. But somehow, the firm that was hired for that was [WWFL Associates] in Spokane (they had done the pavilion for the big Expo that was held in Spokane in 1974).

They excelled at concrete. One of the reasons they were hired was to do a concrete building. But, of course, that's not what their patron wanted. So the whole design got re-thought. Actually, if you want to see what the original proposal that they made was, I suggest you go down to Holly Street and look at the [Whatcom Educational Credit Union Building]. That is a watered-down version of what this firm from Spokane had intended for that site, and it was to be in concrete.

(I'm one of few people who reminds the university of that every once in a while).

Perhaps I should add that the 1980s were a period of transition in architecture, promoted by Philip Johnson's notorious Museum of Modern Art show on "Post-Modernist Architecture." In 1986, the Pritzker Prize Committee chose Boehm as someone who had been overlooked for his bravery in carrying on monumental tradition that is both modern and traditional. Having worked with President Ross on a number of art issues, I encountered how he sought advice. He consulted Gene Vike, who was then chair of the Art department but who knew nothing about architecture. Since what is now Ross Hall was originally to contain an expansion of the Art department, Vike wanted a building that could relate to the brick art buildings as well as Nelsen's concrete buildings. The model which WFML's glossy brochure from this period shows is a transitional building could be built in all-concrete or concrete-and-brick. They had recently finished the concrete communications building at Evergreen as well as the all-brick Padelford Hall at UW and importantly Kane Hall which combines brick and concrete. The original model had a freestanding concrete frame that responded to the lines of Arntzen Hall while the end nearest the art complex was a glass-topped pitched roof. It also had the slanted glass partition that divided the concrete part near Arntzen from the possible brick section near the art buildings. This design was abandoned in favor of the existing structure with the rounded brick end near the art complex. I have no evidence but I suspect that Ross's son-in-law brought Boehm to Ross's attention. Then, the only known buildings by Boehm that appeared in the American press were the town hall he had built in Bensberg, Germany, the year before he won the Pritzke, and one in Cologne. They contain rounded towers.

So, the president prevailed and we now have a building which doesn't fit in with either the brick campus or the concrete campus very well.

Furthermore, it was originally designed without a covered esplanade. To his credit, Nelsen decided to make four covered walkways on this campus. There were to be a whole series of buildings in which, as Red Square demonstrates, and on the new campus it was suppose to demonstrate, there would be these covered walkways. There is in a sense a covered walkway in front of Arntzen Hall, and there is one on the Environmental Science Building, and then they are also connected by interior covered walkways. But this building, as it was emerging, did not have anything. Then Larry Hansen got very strongly opinionated about the matter and said we need to have a walkway that's raised so we can look down into the Richard Serra.

He became obsessed with looking down into the Richard Serra. If you look at all the brochures (except for the one I put together), all the photographs of the Serra are taken from the roof of the [Western Gallery], and I said to Larry [Hansen], and I said to Sarah Clark-Langager, the present curator of the collection, "We are not birds, that is not how we see that work. We see that work at foot level. Richard Serra designed it to be experienced at foot level. On its original site it was set in such a way that it created a passageway that the students would take on their way to the south campus."

When we moved it and put it on top of a concrete bunker underneath which were all of the wiring connections to the south campus and the plumbing connections to the south campus, (because that was one of the few sites where we knew it wouldn't sink into the ground at an inch a year), it had to be set at a slightly different angle, and it did not encourage people to walk through it; although some people still do occasionally, including me when I'm up on that part of the campus, because he wanted us to have that experience.

Anyway, looking at it from a bird's eye is not appropriate, but the architects shrugged their shoulders, realizing their original proposal wasn't getting anywhere anyway, and put that raised walkway, which originally was there. It is now being eliminated because they've had to expand that building and those have now been turned into offices or whatever they have in the Technology Division (I don't know, I never go in there). But it utterly destroyed the concept of having a covered walkway which would unite the whole campus, so that design got thrown out.

It bit back the way in which those good ideas, which were there from the start, with architects rising to the occasion – I have an architect friend who’s fond of saying, *clients get the architects they deserve*.

If they’re not very knowledgeable or they’re not very foresightful, they get architects who -- maybe the architects are foresightful and knowledgeable -- but if they can’t communicate with the patron, they give them what they want. That unfortunately is what mainly has been happening from my point of view since the 1980s, once the original concept of the south campus was decimated.

Then of course came the construction of all the buildings that have been put up on the other side. Now in a sense-- though very different from Ibsen Nelsen’s original notion of an enclosed area--we have got another plaza. It’s not at all like the plaza in front of the [Performing Arts Center], or the plaza that is Red Square, or even though it’s grassy, the plaza which is in front of Wilson Library and Edens and Old Main, which is a very traditional plaza. It was to be something else because the buildings that were going to go up, first Chemistry and then Biology and then of course [Science, Mathematics, and Technology Education], were going to have to be built on the spine, which was the other half of that interesting kind of hill that Ibsen Nelsen wanted to create architecturally. The decision was made to hire an architect who would also work in concrete. A committee, headed by the then head of Huxley College chose Arthur Erickson, the distinguished Canadian architect who was probably the foremost user of concrete in the Pacific Northwest.

I remember when Ginny Wright brought up a group of dealers from New York to see the sculpture collection of which she was terribly proud. Andre Emerick and I were walking along down by the Nancy Holt [Rock Rings], and I asked him how the new Arthur Erickson house that was going up in Seattle for the Bagley Wrights was coming. He said, — Ω , it’s just poured concrete at the moment, but it’s absolutely gorgeous. The color of that concrete looks as good as the travertine at Lincoln Center in New York.”

I thought *I can’t believe this!* I said, — Θ h, I’d love to see it!”

He said, — Θ h, just ask her.”

Well, at that point I didn’t know Ginny Wright that well. But she very generously took me on a series of two or three tours of that--because it’s in The Highlands, you just can’t walk in and look at it--when it was being constructed and I took a lot of photographs of it, hoping eventually I could do a monograph on it. But the Wrights don’t like that kind of publicity so they unfortunately declined to let me do that. But anyway, I have all these photographs of it in its early stages and its completed stages and it is true---the color of that concrete is absolutely superb.

To hire Arthur Erickson to do these science buildings was a stroke of genius, I thought. Unfortunately, we had a new president who’s name was Mortimer, who came and who didn’t like concrete. He called Arthur Erickson in and told him he wanted those buildings in brick, and Arthur Erickson said, — Γ don’t do brick buildings.”

And Mortimer, in effect, said, — Γ hen you’re fired.”

So that Chemistry Building, while it has many of the characteristics of Erickson’s buildings, the glass façade, for example, and the covered walkway (he was carrying forward Nelsen’s design). It had to be finished by LMN in Seattle (because he was a Canadian and therefore didn’t have a contract, and when you have those situations you have to have what’s known as project architects--that’s somebody who has a license in this state). They were very sympathetic. Essentially they finished that building as it is in the Ericksonian style, but that was it. [They declined] to do the Biology Building.

I should back up and say, what Erickson did--because he was brilliant at it of course, he made his reputation on Simon Fraser University in Vancouver--was to do the master plan. Most people don’t realize that Erickson did not design all those buildings at Simon Fraser, even in the early days--he did the master plan for them. He dictated the design limitations which other architects had to stay within, and that’s what he was planning to do here. That is, he came up with a master plan for those three buildings, and it was typically *Ericksonian*. It would have been a

magnificent addition to the campus. But when he was let go and they had to find somebody to do the Biology Building, and somebody to do the lecture science halls, they departed significantly from the Erickson master plan.

For example, the lecture halls were originally designed, if you look at the Chemistry Building as it is completed, it has a concave wall facing toward the gym. Partly that was designed to accommodate the sculpture work which sits down at the foot of the hill (done one summer in an infamous symposium which we might discuss but probably should not, by the American female sculptor whose name I never quite remember, and it's got this endlessly long name...)

TB: *Islands of the Rose Apple Tree Surrounded by the Oceans of the World for You, Oh my Darling*, by Alice Aycock.

RF: Alice Aycock, yes.

[Anyway], the lecture halls were to reflect the concave side of the Chemistry Building and in the center of that would be that sculpture work. Again, it would have been a brilliant idea. Erickson has always worked very well with sculpture--the Bagley Wright House is a classic example of it. But they abandoned that, and decided to put the science lecture halls over on the other side of the gym. That contract went to Zimmer, Gunsel and Frasca.

I was looking at one of my memos commenting on that to the then-campus architect, saying it reminded me of that famous remark, which an English wag made in the eighteenth century about the Royal Pavilion at Bath, that it looked like St. Paul's brought to Bath on a litter. I said, --That looks like JFK center in Washington D.C. brought to Bellingham on a litter."

Because it's an almost imitation of Stone's Kennedy Center in Washington, which nobody likes anymore anyway. But, it was put off on the side, so it didn't relate to that wonderful kind of curve that Erickson wanted.

Zimmer, Gunsel and Frasca, I never get their names straight, were very good architects from Portland. They had done the county and city jail, which is across the street in Portland from Michael Graves' famous Portland building (also an object of much discussion, although I happen to admire it).

I was there for the opening, and *oh my!* The language that went on about that building was utterly praise-worthy and other people bumed on it, and it's always had that history ever since. ZGF was just getting started in Portland. They'd done a number of banks around Portland -- that's usually how architectural firms get started--they do banks.

As a matter of fact, I was the Northwest correspondent for *Architectural Record*. I won't go into why I had that responsibility, but I did. I wrote my good friend who was the associate editor of *Architectural Record* and I said, --I realize you don't get out here very much, but there's this good, new, young firm in Portland and they're doing a terrific job, a very imaginative job with banks, which after all, are usually more boring than interesting."

They'd done some other things, and then they got this big commission to do this very elaborate jail, that put them on the northwest map. They then got an invitation to start working on the Microsoft complex in Kirkland. They are still I think to this day the official Microsoft architects. They moved a big hunk of their office to Seattle because when Microsoft barks, you have to be nearby.

They got the invitation to finish this job because LMN was not willing to take it up. [LMN] felt the Erickson design should have been carried forward, and if you don't wish to get into feuds, and you just wish to be paid for the one building you did finish, you don't carry on with those people anymore. So, that's how ZGF got involved in the campus.

They then came around to design the Biology Building. I had--to the misfortune of this institution--been down in Santa Cruz visiting an architect friend of mine who had submitted a proposal, together with Arthur Erickson, for the new environmental science building at the University of California Santa Cruz. They didn't get it, but setting that

aside...when I was visiting him, he said, "Oh you ought to go up and look at it. It's by Zimmer Gunsul and Frasca in Portland."

I said "Oh, how interesting."

So I went up and I took some photographs of it because I tend to do that, I'm an architectural fiend. When I lecture on architecture, I like to use my own rather than have to reproduce them out of books, it's cheaper that way.

Anyway, I came back and because I was on the Long Range Planning Committee, we got to see their proposals for the new Biology Building. I took one look at them and I said, "It's a rehab of the building they have done in Santa Cruz."

Now, I'm not criticizing them alone. Big architectural firms, whether it's Skidmore, Owings, Merrill, you name it, they recycle buildings if they've had success with them for another client, who doesn't know anything about those other buildings anyway. I went to President Mortimer (I was reading my memos the other day on this) and I said, "Dr. Mortimer, I'm sorry to say this, but what you're going to get in the Biology Building is a carbon copy of a building this firm has done for the environmental science building at Santa Cruz."

Just then there had been a big article in one of the architectural magazines on Santa Cruz, and how they work with their architects, and here were photographs -- in addition to the ones I had, which weren't very good--of that building, and I sent all that to Dr. Mortimer.

To Dr. Mortimer's credit, though he did not like concrete, he called them up and said that he wanted them to redesign it. So the Biology Building which is now there is not their original proposal, but they had to go back and rethink it. I always considered that my minor triumph on this campus architecturally, that I finally got out of the president of the university something I thought was right!

But, as a result of that, that whole complex left that huge space in the middle open. I had been complaining for years, and files are full of my memos to the Physical Plant and the architectural staff and so on--*why don't we hire a first-rate landscape architect to do something about pulling this whole campus together now that it is becoming so [much of a] hodgepodge!* To their credit--although not to their best credit--they hired (because he had done some work for Erickson in San Diego, I think it was), this landscape architectural firm from San Diego to do the space between the new science complex and the original buildings by Ibsen Nelsen.

Well, what happened was that these people came up--as they're wont to do these days--and they held a public forum to which, needless to say, I went. President Mortimer was also there very briefly and Sarah Clark-Langager and then a whole bunch of other people, I don't remember now who they were--but they asked for our ideas. They had done a sort of general presentation of what they wanted to do in that space.

They had apparently seen a memo I had written to someone down in the Physical Plant architectural staff about a proposal by the student body to wreck the Fred Bassetti front to the Viking Union--those thin pilasters, which are almost identical to the ones on the front of Carver Gym. (When architects dislike buildings, they do everything they can to destroy them. Edens Hall is probably the classic example, that building was left to go to wrack and ruin until Arthur Hicks and I--mainly Arthur Hicks--saved it).

The notion of Fred Bassetti's original building did not suit the students because it was too recessive. They wanted to make a strong statement because of the Anderson addition that was put on the back (that was on the Garden Street side). They wanted to raise it up three stories or something; it was a pretentious plan. Well of course, one of the problems of this institution is the student union is paid out of student funds; they hired their own architect, they didn't come through the Board of Trustees. I took this up with, I've forgotten now who was president at the time, and they were forced to back down on that.

But I wrote a long memo in which I said, if they do that, they will violate what Bassetti was doing when he designed that very understated entrance, which was not to obscure the view of Bellingham Bay from the upper stories of Old

Main, particularly where the administrative offices now are because that used to be the library--the most important room in Old Main. I said, "[Old Main architect Alfred] Lee clearly had a notion of looking out over the bay."

Unfortunately there was, as there was in Red Square at one time, also a large pond right in front of Old Main, which was a breeder of mosquitoes and everything else that you have with large ponds. So the mound was made which is now between Old Main and its front lawn, and High Street, and that was planted to look like an island in the San Juans. Fred Bassetti responded very sensitively to that by keeping his entrance to the Viking Union low, so that the original view -- even though the trees have gotten awfully tall--would not be obscured from the second floor of Old Main. President Ross agreed with me on that, so they backed down.

Well, this memo apparently, a copy of which of course is in the architect's file--the "Hateful Francis" file--down at the architect's office in the Physical Plant. These people had seen it, so they looked at that space and said, "A! We'll create another group of San Juan Islands."

There was that large mound in the middle of it; nobody really knew what was under it. There had been a street through there at one time. But when the Carver Gym was built, they brought that street to an abrupt close. I think it was 21st Street. Anyway, they dumped a lot of stuff there and made that mound. As a result, the whole concept turned into something that was going to be kind of San Juan Island.

Well, that was interesting, up as far as it went, but it created a number of problems. One, we had a number of large pieces of the Outdoor Sculpture Collection down there. We had the Lloyd Hamrol [*Log Ramps*], which had been chopped down and reconstituted on another hillock. We had the Beverly Pepper [*Normanno Wedge*]. I was principally responsible for the Beverly Pepper. I had had to deal with her in Italy on long distance phone calls -- and believe me, calling Italy on a long distance phone call is not easy, because she was not coming back to the United States for over a year -- about how that was to be placed, and how it was to be handled in its relationship to Parks Hall, out of whose budget it came. There were all sorts of little things. There was the John Keppelman [*Garapata*], which had been deliberately put up on the ridge that overlooked down on the tennis courts and looked up toward the Ridgeway Complex, there was whole set of complex problems there.

Well, they came up with this design, and it was not bad. I didn't think it was brilliant -- Campbell & Campbell was the name of the architectural firm.

The question of what to do about the art budget for the science buildings came up. I was still on the Art Acquisition Committee, although I think I had retired by then because I retired early in '92. But I was an invaluable source. I was there from the beginning. I knew all the history and I'd been chairman of the committee for so many years. I had so many files, it was unbelievable!

The choice of Magdalena Abakanowicz is a whole story in itself. I've always wanted to write a book on public art called "With All the Warts." One of the largest warts on public art on this campus--and we might talk about this some other time, or whenever you want--was the choice of Magdalena Abakanowicz. I totally approved of that as the final choice, but how we got there took nearly a year.

But anyway, she came and she took one look. They'd been excavating the hillside for the Chemistry Building which was already under construction and for the Biology Building, and they kept hitting these huge, huge rocks because that was a huge rock collection. They were dumping them into the center space there.

I think what we were primarily interested in was one of her bronze pieces. The Outdoor Sculpture Committee has always had to worry about the problems of vandalism, which in the mid-80s reached a level which was just unbelievable. We wanted something metal, and she was working in bronze and that seemed sensible. We only had one other woman's sculpture, which was the Beverly Pepper piece, and so it made a great deal of sense.

She came though, to the campus and she looked at that space and she saw all those rocks and she said, "Oh! I could do a magnificent thing with all those rocks!"

She sat up the whole night making a little maquette and came to the meeting of the committee the next day with this proposal for the piece, which we finally did get, and for this other proposal. Virginia Wright was still on the Art Acquisition Committee at that time, or the Outdoor Sculpture Committee, whatever, the name kept changing all the time (the Outdoor Sculpture Committee I think at that point). She took one look and she said, “love it!”

Well, we had to adjourn for lunch, and while we were having lunch we sent Magdalena [Abakanowicz] off to figure out what the costs were going to be. Even an estimate meant that to move all those rocks around, even if it was natural material, was going to cost more than to simply import this piece that she had already cast. So we had no choice, we had to back down. But I still think it would have been a brilliant idea.

Some day I will put down on tape or somewhere, an account of that meeting, because I was sitting across the table from Virginia Wright. I think Virginia Wright never makes decisions hastily. It’s her money, after all. I think, had we waited sixty seconds more, she would have offered to put up the difference between what we had and what that new concept by Magdalena Abakanowicz would have cost. But a member of the panel from the Art Department moved the motion that we do the piece we now have [*Manus*]. I just saw Virginia Wright’s eyes come down on the table, that was it. Again, it’s another one of those marvelous missed opportunities on this campus, which I can cherish, but regret.

Well, out of the budget for the science buildings--and I was then no longer on the committee, President Morse had removed me from the committee. She thought I’d served on it long enough. Sarah Clark-Langager was shocked, so were several other people who were on there, and I was shocked because yes, yes, the files are full of strong memos from Richard Francis, but it’s because I was defending this campus and this collection. Virginia Wright once introduced me at a cocktail party in Seattle as her *point man* in Bellingham. I was a little taken aback but I thought, “Well, I’m sorry, she’s right!” (Laughter)

I had always defended the sculpture collection again and again and again. But anyway, she put Tom Schlotterback on there to replace me. Tom Schlotterback then had to write the long memos about the way the whole thing was being handled. But setting that aside for the moment...

So, they came up with this, well I have to back up a minute. At one point, we had been given a great deal of freedom about the Outdoor Sculpture Collection because there was a person in charge of public sculpture for the State of Washington named Sandy Percival, and she had been very impressed. After all, we were the ones who, thanks to Fred Bassetti and Ibsen Nelsen, took money out of their building budgets to acquire artwork for the buildings they were building. We started the *Percentage for Art* out of building budgets in this state. Barney Goltz will tell you that, everybody who knows that history will tell you that. We began it all, and we’ve never boasted enough about that as we really should, although it’d be great if we could be acknowledged a little more.

But in any case, the result was that that committee only had so much money and as these buildings got more and more expensive, we got more money, but the cost of sculpture got more expensive, too. Sandy Percival said about our collection, “You are dealing with integrity and a focus which is unique for collections like this in the United States, and while you’re supposed to come through this agency, you have a committee that’s been making sensible decisions for some years, just go on doing it.”

She went to London to head up a public art thing in London, England. She was replaced by a young man who had come here from New York who is perhaps best left nameless, who proceeded to take over in the most obnoxious bureaucratic fashion. He is the one who put together, without consulting anyone on this campus, the committee which was going to choose the Magdalena Abakanowicz.

I had--operating behind the scenes, which I like to do--I had put together a set of nominees for that committee which included the assistant director of the Seattle Art Museum, the chief curator of the University of Washington Art Gallery, Virginia Wright, and somebody else of considerable significance about what works well in the Pacific Northwest.

He appointed a jury which was entirely from San Francisco and Los Angeles who knew nothing about the Pacific Northwest, and who then started eliminating all these candidates. Well, there was a voting system. They ended up with a Chinese-American sculptor, who was famous for doing a chicken wire sculpture for the Walker Art Gallery in Minneapolis into which they were dumping refuse.

Well, Richard got on the ball and wrote all these very distinguished people and said, —Object!”

So, the Washington State Arts Commission started getting all these letters from the assistant director of the Seattle Art Museum, the chief curator of the University of Washington Art Gallery, from Virginia Wright, and then me-- famous for getting involved in squabbles--and he had to back down.

The committee was reconstituted and the mode of choosing the possible candidates was restructured, and that is how, fortuitously, we ended up with two people extremely good: Magdalena Abakanowicz and Bruce Nauman. They decided on Magdalena Abakanowicz, and I said, —God, good choice,” from behind the screens.

Ginny really would have liked the Nauman, but she ended up giving us this as her last gift, [the] Bruce Nauman, which is the *Stadium Piece*. The whole thing finally got satisfied. But anyway, the whole problem was that we simply at that point began to see that the whole system that had worked so well on this campus was no longer working very well, so I was removed from the committee.

They had to choose a sculptor for the new San Juan Island complex, and they came up with [Tom] Otterness. Otterness has always been famous for his quirky cute art, and what he came up with, and it was about the time that he was appearing on the cover of *Art News* and all sorts of things like that, with cute little bronze figures. Now to be sure these were bronze, but they were not particularly fitting in with what Sandy Percival had said was a distinguished characteristic of our collection. Our collection is basically what we might call —minimalism.” The metal sculpture certainly is big in minimalism. Minimalism has not gone well in America, although ironically, Michael Kimmelman of the New York Times, who was their art critic, recently wrote a long article saying, —Having been down to see Donald Judd’s complex in Marfa, Texas, I’ve decided that it’s minimalism that really distinguishes American sculpture in the twentieth century.”

This campus is loaded with it. Eventually, this campus will realize that, but for the time being we’re still in the transition period.

There had been so much abuse, in the mid-80s particularly, we reached the cellar in the mid-80s with the vandalism and the abuse, the failure of administrations to do anything about it. So much so that Virginia Wright wrote President Ross a letter in which she said that she’d never make another gift to the university because we weren’t maintaining the collection as it was.

I put together a statement which I then sent to all the early campus architects and all the previous artists and asked them if they would be willing to sign this in defense of Virginia Wright’s letter to Dr. Ross. Two-thirds of them were willing to do that. That’s how bad the situation had gotten.

Sarah took over that committee to do something about finding sculpture works to go in this collection of San Juan Islands. How the committee ever came up with Otterness, I don’t know. I wasn’t on the committee. I didn’t investigate it. I was so furious at that point with all that had gone wrong. I said, —No, I retired, I’m staying out of this.”

I sent a couple of memos to her to that effect. I said I would stay out of this. Of course, I started getting back in...but anyway... The upshot of it was that they chose Otterness and they came up with this [*Feats of Strength*]. Well, you know the controversy they created! Faculty members wrote outrageous letters to *FAST*, even students protested. No one liked those cute little Disney-like figures. What was more interesting--in terms of landscape architecture--was that that committee, nor anyone down in the Physical Plant ever bothered to consult Campbell & Campbell.

Now Campbell & Campbell had done a lot of stupid things in their plan.

We had had to reconstruct the Hamrol [*Log Ramps*] on the site where it now sits because it was chopped down by the campus architect--awed off at ground level with cantilevered log work, without consulting the Art Acquisition Committee--because they had to put the fence up for the construction of Parks Hall. That led to nearly five years of negotiating to get it reconstructed somewhere else. (Well, that's another long, complicated story).

Lloyd Hamrol chose the site where it now is, which even he admits is a better site than its original. The original was built as a summer class project. It was part of that long complicated problem which I fought the whole time I was on that committee, to find out what the master plan was supposed to be, so we didn't put sculpture works on sites which had to either be removed or torn down. I never made much impression on the Art Department, which is always obsessed with its site-specific concept of the campus sculpture. Well, the upshot of all that was that we had to reconstruct that piece.

Then Campbell & Campbell wanted to move the Beverly Pepper. Now since I was the primary person in getting all the details worked out on the placement of that piece and the mound on which it sat, to fulfill her description that it look like an Etruscan burial mound. They wanted to move it first; I said, "No, we do not move sculptures on this campus if we can help it."

Believe me, there are people in the Art Department who wanted to move a lot of things. They finally succeeded in getting the Bassetti [*Alphabeta Cube*] out of here, though that was designed for the library. I had the blueprints which show it was to be moved--when the terrace was still there--to the corner of the terrace so it would complement the Fitzgerald *Rain Forest* at the entrance into Haggard Hall. We all know where it now is, in obscurity being vandalized down in Fairhaven College.

Setting that aside for the moment...the upshot of it all was that I said to Campbell & Campbell, "You cannot move that, that placement was worked out with great detail."

In fact, its placement was fiddled with by Larry Hansen when he came back from a year's leave of absence in Los Angeles because the angle at which it sits conformed entirely to the conversation and communication I'd had with Beverly Pepper, and he wanted it turned around more. I said, "You can't do that, that's the way she wants it."

So it was left the way it was.

But what Campbell & Campbell did was to level all that land and turn that piece into sitting on a cone. Then they put halogen lights on either side of it so it would be illuminated at night, utterly violating what Beverly Pepper wanted in creating this almost historically antique Etruscan piece.

Well, of course, Richard writes memos, and Richard wrote Karen Morse a memo, I think only months after she'd been here. It was repaired.

Sarah called me up and said, "Have you seen what they've done to the Lloyd Hamrol?"

I said, "No, what?"

She said, "Oh God! They've planted birch trees all around it!"

I said, "No, no, no. Go back and look in the memos. There's an exchange between me and Lloyd Hamrol which talks about how he liked the new site even better because there were all those fir trees behind it, which blocked out the Serra piece, and it was like a sacred grove." Lloyd Hamrol is also an extremely well-educated man. I said, "Lloyd, that's a great idea."

It went where it now is, but open to the south because that was the most admired piece by the student body because it was where they could sit in sunny weather -- and still do. Here these landscape architects had put all these birch trees -- now I have birch trees on my property, I know how big birch trees get -- so, Karen Morse got another memo from me. Peter Harris called me up two days later and said, "They're being moved."

I got a call from [Jim] Moore, who used to be director of the [Northwest Regional Branch of the] state archive, he said, “Thanks for the trees, Richard!”

I said, “What?”

He said, “They’re around our parking lot now!”

Well, you can see these are things that have not always endeared me to the administrations of this institution. But, I did what I thought was essential to preserve the integrity about the architecture and the artwork on this campus from being violated by people who simply didn’t know any better because this institution has been--and I’m sure if you go through all my famous letters to *FAST* that have been published in that volume [*The Best of FAST*, 1991] you will see that I am fond of saying, *the right hand does not know what the left hand is doing around here*.

Much of the problem was there was simply not the kind of communication that should have been going on. When Bartholick’s office was moved out of Old Main to that building way out on the edge of the campus, what that essentially did was not only symbolically to take the campus planner and architect out of the mainstream of the administration, but it also was, in a sense, to push them off to the side and say, you really don’t matter. As a result, the people who worked here, now some of them have been quite good, over the years, some of them not so good, some of them have *edifice* complexes.

The whole problem with Edens Hall was one of those. Some campus architect simply wanted to tear that down to build a building that he was going to be responsible for. We had that beautiful building restored as it now is thanks to Kay Rich, over in Student Life... After Arthur [Hicks] and I fought the battle with the trustees, it’s Kay Rich who carried that building through and she deserves all the credit for it, there should be a plaque on that building in honor of her on that matter.

But anyway, so this whole problem of getting people to communicate with one another on these matters has been extremely difficult. I have always taken the view that art and architecture are essentially intertwined. When I was editing the [Outdoor Sculpture Collection brochure], which was the second one, I decided, using that famous phrase of Andre [Malraux] *that the museum is now without walls*. I mean, the whole nature of film and increasingly even in his age, television, and all that, was to give us this notion of a museum which was not merely confined by the usual building walls. And it seemed to me, as we put so much of this sculpture collection--because it came out of building budgets--hopefully, not always, but hopefully near the buildings out of whose budgets they came, (and one of the problems with the Serra was it was a great fight over that) but we endeavored to try and do some way of relating the works to the buildings. So my view was that all these plazas and these passageways were sort of an open museum in which the work was displayed, so I called it Western’s Outdoor Museum.

Virginia Wright thought that was a great idea, she had copies of it sent off to all her friends and all her dealers in New York and they all thought it was a great idea, too. Unfortunately, the next [brochure] was done by Sarah, and as much as I admire Sarah, the title became the *Outdoor Sculpture Collection*, which it remains to this day and you see there’s one of those birds-eye views of the [Serra sculpture]. I had to go to the Bellingham Herald photographer named Anderson for this photograph, which he took on campus and which appeared in some issue of the *Bellingham Herald* when they had an article on the campus, and I said, “That’s the only sensible photograph that I know of that we have of that piece, could I have it on loan from you for the cover of the brochure?”

He said, “Sure.”

So he let us do it.

I have a letter from the curator of the sculpture collection at the New York Museum of Modern Art and they were doing a show on Richard Serra. They wanted that photograph and I said, “Wish I could give it to you, but you’re going to have to contact the fellow at the *Bellingham Herald* because he owns it.”

They did, and he was in the show with that photograph. But that's, you know, one of those endless battles that I was forced -- and I think forced is the right word for it -- forced to lead around here in order to maintain the integrity of the collection of both the buildings and the sculpture work.

I think it's very nice that Sarah, somewhere in her [Acknowledgements' in *Sculpture in Place: a Campus as Site*] squeezes in a complete clause, but it's squeezed between two others by semicolons, the observation that -- if I can find it here somewhere -- semicolon -- "Larry Hansen, former Professor of Sculpture, who with a sense of adventure nominated some of the best artists of our time for workshops and potential commissions,"--semicolon--"Richard Francis, Professor Emeritus of English, who looked at the entire setting and reminded the campus community to think about excellent design in architecture and landscaping as well as art"--semicolon--"the Provosts and Presidents who have courageously championed the hard-fought, timely, and wise decisions that the various art acquisition committees, now known as the Outdoor Sculpture Collection Advisory Board"--semicolon--"and President Karen W. Morse, who continues to support our challenge of excellence in the visual arts."

Well, she did write me a very gracious letter about why she didn't choose to say any more about me than that, when she kept calling me up all the time to get all this information on me because there are memos in those elaborate files which don't make sense to her because she wasn't here at the time. But that's all right, I don't have a strong ego on those matters, I took satisfaction in what I did and feel that I accomplished some things that otherwise would have failed miserably.

I do have some difficulty with all of those kinds of minor acknowledgments. But, the problem is that we did not have a succession of presidents and provosts who courageously supported that. When we hit bottom in the 1980s, Dr. Ross was doing nothing about the collection. Virginia Wright, and again, very rare for her, wrote him a letter, which I have a copy of but has to remain confidential for still some years (it will eventually show up in either the state or your archives, one of the two, but I have to protect her on the matter). And he wrote me a note, which I do have a [copy] for, saying, "Would you help me write a letter in response to Mrs. Wright?"

I said to him, "What you need to do is demonstrate you are going to do something about the vandalism, and the abuse, and the maintenance of the collection."

There were other things going on at that time. There was this huge symposium that Larry Hansen wanted to run, for which he had no money. He thought he was going to get it out of Virginia Wright. My relations with Virginia Wright were extremely good at that point; she was doing all the complaining to me, she wasn't dealing with Larry at all. She has friends all over this state; she has a great many friends in Bellingham. It wasn't just me that was reporting to her what the problems were, they were telling her how abused her pieces were looking with all the graffiti on them, which wasn't being cleaned off, about how they weren't being maintained. So she just became very upset with him because he was doing nothing. He kept saying, "Oh, the collection's perfectly all right."

He was a master of suggesting that things were other than they were. He was a slight-of hand-artist in many ways. I had considerable respect for what he did early on, but toward the end it was a near disaster. She turned against him and she would not give him a nickel for that conference. And yet, he left the Western Foundation with the impression that she was going to make that gift so they could get the matching grant from the National Endowment. Again, it's one of those issues that I cannot discuss. You can check -- the controversy was carried all the way to the *Bellingham Herald* on that, in which I was accused of an awful lot of things. But as someone on the Western Foundation said to me over lunch some years later, "You were right, weren't you?"

I said, "Yes, of course I was right, because I was being honest about that matter."

There was a curious memo to [Vice President of University Advancement] Jeanene DeLille by me which must, in the record books, sound very strange because it doesn't seem to be saying anything at all. But I was calling to her attention that things were not as they seemed on the planning for that particular symposium. I didn't name any names, I didn't make any accusations, but I just told her she ought to look more carefully into it. I won't explain how that was solved, but there were not funds to go on with the maintenance of the collection because of the money that had to go into that symposium because it had already been scheduled. That's how the decay set in and how

Virginia Wright got turned off. And it wasn't -- I have great admiration for her -- it wasn't until Karen Morse came and reestablished contact with Virginia Wright in a way which Virginia Wright thinks very highly of.

Virginia Wright once said to me, —Now, the only two presidents I really got along well with, the first one, Flora, and the most recent one, Morse. The others, I don't know, I never seemed to [connect with] them.”

Now it's true that Paul Olscamp did not get involved, but Paul was a difficult personality, as we all remember, brilliant though he was -- what he didn't do was deal with people as potential donors to the university. He let other people, he let Barney Goltz handle that, he let Quinlan, who was his vice president, and he let me do it, because we were just better at it than he was. He wrote her and responded to her, he did not establish the kind of intimate rapport which both Flora and then subsequently Karen Morse have established with Virginia Wright.

She is not the kind of person that needs to be stroked, but she likes to feel that what she's trying to do--which is very meaningful and very significant in her eyes and ought to be in everybody else's eyes--is being paid attention to. But for many years it was not. The *Western Front* carried on--and you can go look through their records--an endless war against the sculpture collection. I'm an old newspaper editor, and I used to write them memos saying, —Stop this!”

I wrote one memo which accused them of all sorts of things, of course they all felt bad and said, —Oh! We're protected by the first amendment!”

You know, and all that nonsense that journalists always call on. But you know, it was during the post-Vietnam period, it was during the *All the President's Men* sort of investigative journalism, but their hearts were full of misinformation. One young man wrote a letter which they printed (they didn't bother to check with me), which said that the name of that piece was not Wright's Triangle.

I had to go back through the records and say, —Yes, it was not called Wright's Triangle at first. The sculptor finally chose that in honor of the patron who paid for most of it.”

I was for a couple years, the director of the ill-fated Pilot Program for the Core Curriculum and I had a lovely office over in Old Main which looked down on my favorite piece, which is the Anthony Caro, *India*.

One day a young man came into my office and said, —I'm told the reason we don't have fraternities and sororities on this campus is that there is a clause in Virginia Wright's gifts to the university that we can't have them.”

I said, —Where did you get that?”

He said, —Oh well, I have my sources.”

I said, —Well I don't care who your sources are, but that's a pure figment of someone's imagination. It's just simply made up. I know where it's coming from, it's coming from a group of people over in the Viking Union who simply dislike the whole sculpture collection and have been waging war on it for years, and it really ought to come to a halt.”

But we could never get out of any of our presidents a strong enough [statement of support]. I must say Olscamp did issue one statement, but it didn't have much force behind it. These students knew that there were administrators who also hated that collection. I could name names, but I won't. As a result, a great many things happened which did not make it a misfortune for students to be caught vandalizing these pieces. They were not penalized in any way. They just had their knuckles rapped. There was no strong enforcement from the security people to protect the pieces, although that did improve later when it became really very severe, the vandalism and the graffiti all over, especially the big pieces like the Judd and the Serra.

I did not in the least blame Virginia Wright for saying she would never make another gift to the university. She had done all this, she had put us on the map and there was simply no genuine appreciation of how we had to hold up our end of this by maintaining the works. So, the same thing continues to this day. Where is the [Fitzgerald] fountain

[*Rain Forest*]? The [Fitzgerald] fountain has been moved three times now. It was originally designed for the interior courtyard of Higginson Hall.

I didn't know that until George Bartholick told me that. George Bartholick said to [Higginson Hall architect Paul Thiry], –Paul, that's going to create plumbing problems in that building. Let's move it up to that space between your addition to the Wilson Library and your Haggard Hall. It'll look good there.”

So that, as you may recall, is where it sat for a while. Bassetti added on to the Thiry additions so it had to be moved again. We shoved it off in the corner there of the plaza, and it did pretty well there.

That's where--it was in the other corner that I wanted to put the Fred Bassetti *Alphabeta Cube*, and I got Fred to agree to that, and I still have the blueprints which show all that laid out for exactly that. Then suddenly Sarah decided she didn't want it there. It didn't go there, and it's now down at Fairhaven College.

Well, all those are examples of how we've had a terrible problem just trying to work all the various segments of the university together in a way that we do justice to these buildings and these collections which they deserve. I think I'll quit right there.

TB: Okay, well thank you very much.

Part II – Questions – Tape Two.

TB: I'm going to run through the architects now and get some of your general comments about them. So what about Paul Thiry?

RF: Paul Thiry was an early choice because again, Western looked to what was going on Seattle--just as the building of Old Main had been by an architect who had done the pavilion for Washington State at the Columbia World Exposition. We had tried to think of important people who could do a good job for this teacher's college. Paul Thiry was chosen because he had done such a superb job at Seattle Center. But he was a modernist; he was the foremost modernist in the Northwest.

They hired him first to do a master plan. He did a master plan which was going to include a whole series of very modernist structures running up High Street, which would carry the campus in a slightly different direction from how we had gone and how we have since evolved.

But they did give him a set of buildings to do; the first was Highland Hall, which was done in the late 50s. Then they gave him Higginson Hall, then the commission for doing the commons building added onto Fred Bassetti's student union, and then they gave him the commission to do the science building which was known as Haggard Hall. All of those are done in his concrete--poured concrete--modernist style. But he was not happy with what the college and then the university did with those structures. Thank God he died before we did our most recent attack on Haggard Hall.

One of the things he objected to was--he was a pure concrete man--[was the painting of Higginson Hall.] After Henry Klein did the Nash/Mathes towers, which were completing part of Thiry's original concept of having a towered entrance to the north of the campus, no gate, of course (oh, I think there was a plan for a gate at one time). It said *you are now entering the campus of Western Washington State College*. Those were done in Henry Klein's very –Aalto-esque” red brick, which everyone was beginning to like very much (for what had taken place around Red Square with all its marvelous rose red brick). The Physical Plant decided they wanted to make Higginson Hall more harmonious, so they painted it.

I can remember having at least--as chairman of the Art Acquisition Committee, and as someone who knew something about architecture--I can remember having at least three conversations with a whole batch of painters from the Physical Plant about what color we would paint it. It has been through, I think, at least three colors. Paul Thiry was not happy.

More importantly, when that building was built, the [Fitzgerald] fountain [*Rain Forest*] was to go in its open courtyard. But George Bartholick, who was the campus planner and a very wise and sensible man, told Paul that it wouldn't work there because young boys who were going to inhabit that hall took many showers all day long, and they wouldn't have enough water to run the *Rain Forest*. So he said, let's put it up in front of Haggard Hall which you're working on, and the new addition to the Wilson Library. That sort of placated him, but he wasn't happy about that either because again, he was a man who tried to integrate art into his buildings.

For example, if you looked at the retaining walls around Haggard Hall, concrete retaining walls around Haggard, they had recessed designs of natural objects in them. That was part of Thiry's ability to see the connection between art, nature, and concrete. And there are very few designers of concrete--Arthur Erickson just happens to be another one--who think about nature in relation to the material they use. Concrete is not normally thought of as a natural material.

He was unhappy with all of that, and he was unhappy when the south campus architect ([the south campus] which was to be concrete), was announced. It turned out to be Ibsen Nelsen, and he felt he'd been shunted aside.

Being shunted aside was also experienced by Henry Klein, who after his great successes with the buildings he did on campus, then notably the addition to the Music Auditorium, to his dormitories, to the addition to the Art Building, so he really felt he was being neglected when they called him to be one of the finalists for the building of the Technology Building. He was clearly shunted aside, and I happened to be at those meetings as a commentator, and it was quite clear that they really weren't serious about him, they just brought him along because they needed to give Henry something to do besides, you know, doing nothing for the campus, considering all he had done. When architects feel they are being shunted aside, they become a little bitter about whether anyone's ever really appreciated any of their work at all. After all, architects are artists, they have large egos, sometimes they're impossible, but most of the time, they just don't understand why they're not being understood anymore, and that's very painful, for any artist that's true -- I don't know if people appreciate what I'm doing."

I think that was Thiry's problem. I thought Haggard Hall in its original design was a magnificent homage to Mies van der Rohe's Crown Hall at the Illinois Institute of Technology. I could never persuade a president of this institution that that's what it was. There were innumerable people, including trustees and former members of the board who just thought it was terrible, thought it ought to come down.

TB: Okay, what about Mr. Bumgardner?

RF: Yes! A.O. Bumgardner, extremely interesting man. He got involved in the campus planning by really doing additions. Of course, Michael Graves said many years ago, we all start out doing additions to garages. So it's not that architects in their early careers don't have the humility to do additions, in fact, some of them find it rather challenging. I think Michael Graves is a good example of that. Although, his famous addition to the Whitney Museum was kyboshed and went through much trial and tribulation in New York and never was built, even though he went through something like five designs for that addition to the Whitney Museum.

But in any case, the problem with Bumgardner was that he liked doing things like the second studio annex to the Art Building. That's the one that's on the main path, which is extremely well done, I think. Very harmonious with Henry Klein's first addition, and with the original Art Technology Building, which is in that rather simple, almost industrial design brick with its industrial windows. I thought he worked in that very well, but he gave a much more sculptural-like façade for that whole complex there with that building.

He also, I think, did the addition to the [Steam] Plant, which no one ever sees, of course. (Laughter)

I had a conversation with him on a couple of occasions, it was fairly late in his career (he did die suddenly of a heart attack, very late in his career), he was teaching at the University of Washington Architecture School, and like a lot of those people, unless he could really get something he was really interested in doing, he just tended to turn down commissions. But I thought he was very good. He did some buildings for the University of Washington which I

think are quite good, again, a little out of the way, not well known, I think some of them are additions as well, but extremely interesting. Again, he's one of those architects that the "in" group of architects in the Pacific Northwest all knew and treated as, you know, one of them and got him involved. That's what Bartholick was particularly good at -- Bartholick was particularly good of giving a kind of little fraternity of artists who would do a coherent job for Western Washington.

TB: Okay, what about Bassetti?

RF: Well, we're having a conference next week when we're doing this [reception] honoring Fred Bassetti. When I got that announcement I said, *it's long overdue!* I would say that of all the major modern contemporary architects--let's say those who worked on this campus from the '50s on--no one has left a more significant imprint on this campus than Fred Bassetti.

First, it was his prize-winning Ridgeway Complex, which put this institution on the map for reasons I've previously indicated, it appeared in an article in *Fortune* magazine, which is the first time I learned about Western.

Secondly, his building of the Humanities Building and his subsequent additions to the library were all done with a kind of incredible sensitivity to what human artistic culture in the great western tradition means, which is then adapted to a modern vocabulary. The buildings he's done for the University of Washington plus [those] he's done here are all, I think, superb examples of that.

Furthermore, I think his Federal Building in Seattle is not in the usual mold of the usual imposed design in that period of time. The particular organization in the federal bureaucracy in charge of building these days is getting better at doing Federal Buildings than it used to be, but it used to do some really pedestrian things. I remember Fred saying in a conversation once that he wasn't going to do it in something that would make it look like every other federal building in the United States, and he didn't. And again, he did something significant, he purchased those Noguchi stones which sit in front of it and give that plaza real character on Second Avenue.

What he did for this campus I think was (in the building which he did for the student union, which he did for the gym, which he did for the Humanities Building, which he did for the library, which he did for the residential complex) to say, look--it's possible to take these echoes of a familiar European architecture, bring them to the Pacific Northwest, to a place which can respond to that kind of architecture, and make it an integral part of the educational function of the institution. It is extremely difficult for architects to do that. My undergraduate college, Kenyon College, has hired one of its own alumni, whom I urged on them many years ago, Graham Gund, who is a very famous architect in Boston, [to do] a whole new science complex for the college, in a campus which is extremely beautiful.

One of the reasons I've always insisted on teaching on beautiful campuses is because my undergraduate experience was on an extraordinarily beautiful campus in the center of Ohio -- Kenyon College. Those buildings which he's just finished (and now he's going to do a big new gym), they're interesting, but they don't really relate to what was already there. It's extremely difficult for architects to do that well. Clearly, one of the clues that made all these marvelous buildings by Bassetti possible is he looked at Carl Gould's library, Wilson Library, [and the gym, the original gym] and said, *that's it, that's the model we need.* Brick structures with interesting, intricate designs around the windows and doorways and recesses, with maybe even bricks that have got a design in them here and there. And that matters.

I once ran into [the professional photographer] Mary Randlett running around the campus, she was photographing brick structures. I said, "Mary, what are you doing?"

She said "Oh, you have such fascinating brick structures on this campus!"

I don't know what's ever happened to those photographs, I wish she'd give them to us! Ask her about it sometime. What ever happened to all those brick structure photographs she did on the Western campus?

Anyway, it's that sensitivity that would lead Mary Randlett to want to photograph the brick structures. It's what brings people who have the kind of art history background that I have, and I've trained under Vincent Scully at Yale, one of the great architectural historians in the United States, who comes and looks at a modern campus like this and says, *yes, I know it was only built five years ago, or ten years ago or something like that, but it's got depth to it. It's got an architectural history to it which is there as a kind of echo, as a kind of reflection.*

That's what Fred Bassetti did for this campus, and it's good we're finally getting around to appreciating it.

TB: How about Ibsen Nelsen?

RF: Well, I'm also going to say at the Noguchi conference that Ibsen Nelsen is right up there with Fred Bassetti in the sense that he brought to this campus an incredibly articulate and knowledgeable sense of the past--but wanted to do it in a much more modern medium than Bassetti did it.

If you look at Bond Hall or you look at the addition (which is now Miller Hall) to the old Campus School, and then finally look at the south campus, which was supposed to be the Environmental Studies Building, the Arntzen Hall, all being concrete, a la Le Corbusier. You see that what he did was reflect on the past, but to try to find a new way of doing it.

When you look at Miller Hall, with its original towers still in existence, and its back part still in existence (where by the way there's one of the few cornerstones, by the back door, which tells who the architects were. It's very odd; we no longer put up notices telling us who the architects of our buildings are, but Bebb & Jones, or maybe it was Bebb & Gould who did the original Campus School, they still were acknowledged in those days). But what he wanted to do was to make a modern statement. Now, there are questions of whether you would see that modernism as the same as Paul Thiry's doing, and obviously it's not. But there is also in that structure something that says, *this front part was not built the same time as the back part, nor was it built at the same time as the tower which is still on the front part, it was built at a different time, but it fits in with it.* Bond Hall is the same way.

What is Bond Hall? I suppose we could say it looks like one of those Florentine palazzos with its overhanging balcony, so you can shoot arrows down and kill all the people trying to break in your front entryway. And it has all those levels inside and so on, which look like kind of Italian architecture, but who knows what. But there's nothing as recognizable as say looking at the Humanities Building and saying, —~~A~~ ha! Fred wanted to do a Venetian palazzo, didn't he?"

Or, his wraparound to the Wilson Library, which has a way of saying something that well, this is just sort of —Gould Jr." It's taking Carl Gould's original building and doing a slightly updated version of it, but not that much updated. So they worked in very different ways, but they both made statements on this campus which had a great deal of integrity to them and were very important.

Most importantly, when you deal with Ibsen Nelsen, you are dealing with a man who, as I found out from my own experience when I wrote this rather pointed article about Arntzen Hall when it was first done, could be very gracious to someone who was terribly condescending to him, which in fact I was in that article, and who was very generous afterwards, despite that. I mean I've known architects who if you said something unkind about their building would never speak to you for the rest of their lives, but that was not true of Ibsen. Ibsen even invited me up once to his home up on Harvard [Avenue] in that beautiful [Seattle] district of old houses. And you know, and he did, a stone's throw from his own redone house built in the 1920s, he did one for Virginia Wright's father, one very distinct complex down on Harvard, which fits in absolutely perfectly, completely modern but fits in perfectly in the neighborhood because it's done to the right scale -- that's another thing Nelsen was very good at, scale -- done to the right scale, done with the right substances, right texture and right materials, but it's terribly modern. It's a condominium building on the corner where Virginia Wright's father (Mr. Prentice Bloedel) lived for many years in his final years.

Anyway, that's what I admire him about because he had this ability to say, we have a responsibility as an educational institution to carry on the traditions of the past. That includes an architectural tradition. Unfortunately,

that point of view, which I completely shared with him, never prevailed on this campus because we have never had more than one architectural historian; and very few art historians on this campus, so our students have never had the advantage which I had in Yale, of taking a course in-depth on architectural history with people who are absolutely the leaders in their field, indoctrinating students, because that's what you do when it comes to matters of art taste, you're really indoctrinating people. We have failed.

I think much of the objection to the sculpture collection on this campus during the '70s and '80s and still into the '90s is that we have simply not given the students the kind of art instruction which they need, to know why those are good works of art and why the early buildings we did on this campus were good buildings, whether they entirely like them or not. But when you've had a good course in art instruction, *art appreciation*, as we used to call it, you would at least begin to develop some taste in judgment on what is good, whether you entirely agree with it or not. We have never been able to do that, and that has been a serious problem on this campus. Even the architects that we have on this campus, and architectural historians (primarily Linda Smeins), don't really get consulted about anything. No one asks for their input.

Ironically, I used to be asked, because I complained so much, I used to be asked for my input more than she ever was because she doesn't complain, she's a very nice, gentle person. That was part of the problem. I think what Ibsen Nelsen didn't realize was that we simply did not have sufficient education so that that sense of the historical architectural past, which he tried to manifest, which Fred Bassetti tried to manifest in their buildings, would be appreciated on this campus. I said to president after president, we need to improve this question of art and architectural education so these kids get out of here knowing what they're talking about.

Let me just give you an example from my Yale experience. I was the director of my mentor's course at Yale which had 550 students in it, so I had all these readers to keep tabs on, but in those days at Yale we used to take attendance. (Ah! Remember the days when we used to take attendance? When I first came here we kept attendance, too.) Well anyway, the problem was that this young man who was taking attendance, in this course of 550, found it very hard to take attendance, but everyone had an assigned seat, so he checked the empty seats. He was captain of the Yale Ski Team. He came out first to teach at Charles Wright Academy of Tacoma because he wanted to ski, taught history. He then became the headmaster of the new prep school being built on the other side of Lake Washington. I saw this announcement in the alumni bulletin, I called him up, his name was Dean. I said, —O, Dean! I see you're moving up in the ranks!”

He said, —Yes, I'm in charge of this whole new campus that's just being built.” He said, —Come down, I want to show it to you.”

So I went down one day, and he took me through these buildings and talked about what had gone into them and what his views were on them and how he'd had to deal with the architects and so on. When he finished he said to me, —You know, I could never have done this if I hadn't taken Vince Scully's course at Yale.”

That's when I became convinced that yes, what you need to do is affect the people who are going to go out there in administrative positions of responsibility, who are going to have to make decisions about architecture. When I ran the Pilot Program for the Core Curriculum, one of the things we were supposed to do in that infamous program (which only lasted while Paul Olscamp was here and then when Robert Ross arrived, it got dumped and I got dumped with it, but anyway) -- was to set up a number of courses in which students were required to take courses in fields other than their own majors. I asked Linda to do a course in architectural history – Linda Smeins, the new course director of art history – and it was to be taken by students in the business college and in the engineering program. Now, the engineering program made sense, but she said, —Why the business college?”

I said, —Because at some point in time, architects are going to have to go out and make proposals to town councils and to corporations, and if those people that are going to be making the decisions don't have some background then they're going to not get their superior ideas chosen.” I said, —At least what we can feebly do in this program is take a few of these business majors and show them what good architecture has historically been.”

She bought that idea. That turned out to be the most successful of the pilot program courses we had. Not only because she was a very good teacher, but because it really was taking a subject which was getting no attention on this campus whatsoever and doing it to people to whom it ought to be done. That is, the people who, once they left this institution, were going to have to be making decisions about architecture.

TB: How about Robert Price?

RF: Ah, Robert Price, a very interesting person. I've already recited for you the problems of getting Parks Hall built. He was quite ill very late in that project [which] went on for several years. I had immense respect for him because of the work he had done in Tacoma; he did some really splendid buildings in Tacoma, some of them for some of those schools in Tacoma. He had also done some work elsewhere and I cannot quite now remember it, but it was impressive. He was a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects and you have to have done some really impressive work to become a Fellow.

He really was very pained about all these compromises he had to make to meet the clients' demands for environmental [concerns] and energy, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. That the building came off as well as it did I was quite impressed by. The final aspects of that building had to be handled by his young assistant whose name was Wagner. I later found out, ironically, that Wagner was the son of Virginia Wright's sister, whose married name, one of her married names, was Wagner. I didn't know that. When it came up, it's when the proposal was made to add a dining hall down at that end of the campus, and they were going to plunk it right smack in front of Arntzen Hall.

At that point, I was feeling very guilty about all the things I'd originally said about Arntzen Hall until Ibsen showed me that magnificent master plan for these two identical buildings inside this enclosed grand arcade which, by the way, it was going to be suggestive of the great one in Milan. There's a great enclosed five-story arcade in Milan, which is one of the great architectural achievements. Of course, all over America there are beautiful enclosed arcades, I mean it really would have been a brilliant idea as I think I earlier said. But anyway, the upshot of it was, I said, "No, no, no! We don't want to ruin what façade is left on Arntzen Hall, maybe sometime we'll finish this building."

What you need is a glass-enclosed addition in front of Parks Hall, that's where most of the eaters will be anyway, over in the Business College. Jim Talbot, I must say, who was still Provost responded rather well to that. Jim is a man of some taste and conviction and I must say was frequently supportive of me in a whole variety of things. But anyway, the upshot of it was, that they decided to go forward. I said, "Well at least turn it over to Price's firm," which they did.

But it was Wagner who was then the only one really left because Price had died. Well he came up with what has now been done, but he did it with great respect for Nelsen's original design and to keep it as unobtrusive as possible. And it was in all of that--I talked with him several times about it--it was in all of that that I found out that they were never very happy with Parks Hall as it was finished. They had rescued it as best they could, and then because of who his mother was, sister of Virginia Wright, he felt responsibility for trying to preserve as best he could this space in which several sculpture works were already placed. So it was extremely interesting.

TB: Is that Boyle Wagner, then? Because he also did the Archives Building.

RF: That doesn't quite sound right to me. No, he's a local. I don't know what he, Wagner's, doing with his career, probably living on his income at the moment.

TB: Okay. Do you have any comments about Royal McClure Company; I don't know if that's the person's name that did Buchanan Towers?

RF: Well that's currently Ross McClure and somebody else at the moment.

TB: Oh, from Bellingham.

RF: I have great respect for McClure, mainly because I've served on AIA panels and judged his domestic work, which I found to be quite good. I've seldom been agreed with by the rest of the committee. I was throwing away some material the other day and I at one point offered to do a course for extension or whatever it used to be called, on architecture, to make up for this loss that the art department wasn't doing. I was going to do it on northwest architecture. It was going to be the start of a book I was going to do. Only about ten people signed up for it, which wasn't sufficient as far as the Extension Office is concerned. I was looking at the list the other day; it included McClure, which I found very interesting. I thought, *gee, this is real flattering, he seems to think I know more about northwest architecture than he*. Well he just recently moved here, you know, so he's learned a great deal here because he's done some very good northwest architecture now.

But [Buchanan Towers] was a compromise. Again, it was imposed on the university by someone on the trustees, and I've never found out the full story for it. I've never found out why the Henry Klein version of Nash and Mathes was not continued down there. One reason was financial. That is, [two buildings] were to be on both sides of the current South College Parkway, or whatever the hell it's called these days, it keeps changing its name. It would have been very impressive. I think it was in the last years of Flora and the first years of Olscamp, what's the date on that building...I've forgotten...

TB: 1969.

RF: '69, yes. Okay. So it started under Flora and was finished under Olscamp. There was great protestation over the fact that the Ibsen Nelsen design for the south campus would eventually have created a courtyard in front of the [Environmental Studies Building]. The [Environmental Studies Building] was to face another building of a comparable nature and to have two buildings on either side, much lower, one of which was supposed to have the infamous underground parking lot, which has also never been built. That was going to take up an athletic playing field, and of course sent the Athletic Department into fits or something or other. Paul Olscamp, I think, made the decision that the fields as you're going down that pathway toward what is now [Bill] McDonald Parkway, those would be left as playing fields. So the buildings had to be moved to the other side, both of them, and Klein's design really did not function very well. Klein would have had to make a very significant and major revision, although I think he could have done it. But it somehow went to this other firm, for political reasons I think more than anything else. It's okay, but it's not up to the Klein towers by any stretch of imagination.

TB: What about another local architect who's done some small things, although he just did the new Campus Services Facility, is it Jim Zervas?

RF: Yes, Zervas did the [Viking Union] addition, I thought, a very good tower addition because they needed an elevator in the Viking Union, I thought he did a very good job on that. Jim also did something else, another addition around here...

TB: Carver Gym.

RF: Carver Gym, yes. The Carver Gym addition. Again, he's one of those marvelously more European-oriented architects. His wife is French and still these days spends a good deal of time in France, speaks in an accented voice. They're both charming, gracious people. He had submitted a number of proposals for some of the other bigger projects, but like Henry Klein, the general view became that he was too small of a firm to handle big jobs. So he didn't get them. Although again, I think where he's made additions, he's made them with great sensitivity and with an understanding of what was there and what its history was and how he could complement and add to that.

TB: Any comments about some of the bigger ones? ... like Zimmer, Gunsel and Frasca, you did pretty much talk about them earlier...

RF: Corporate, I'll make a succinct observation. Corporate architectural firms, like corporations and corporate universities, are impossible places. There are too many people involved, making too many minor decisions which never get coordinated by, usually anyway, do not get coordinated by anybody who could impose a kind of unified design statement on the end product. Unfortunately, these firms are forced to hire all these people because they do

extremely complicated buildings. Technologically-oriented buildings are extremely difficult to do, hospitals are even worse, and it's extremely difficult, libraries can be bad, too. So that is extremely difficult to avoid having to hire these big corporate architectural firms.

But the problem is they don't always get to respond to what it is the client wants in a way which is going to do both the client and the architectural firm the justice that the building should deserve. So beginning with Ross [Engineering Technology Building] in [1987], we've seen a steady decline because these contracts are, by and large, for the remains of the south campus and for the extension of it, to these big corporate firms. I find the new [Communications] Building pathetic. It's just a kind of Microsoft building brought to Bellingham on a litter. It's an unfair building, particularly in brick, to be put on the other side of Ibsen Nelsen's powerful façade-stated [Environmental Studies Building]--it deserves something better than that. Furthermore, it's built in such a way that the view of the [Environmental Studies Building] as you come up that pathway now from the parking lots near Fairhaven College will not be visible anymore.

And of course, I have a bone to pick with that because when they first talked about a computer center, I said, "Oh, go look at Berkeley, go look at Yale, they've put them all underground." Computers are so darned expensive and we used to have a lot of thievery over in Miller Hall in the early days when we had a lot of computers in there. I said "Underground with clear, locked doors to them or gateways, or at least with someone who is there twenty four hours a day keeping track." I said, "It would be magnificent if we did the way the Beinecke Library in Yale has expanded around the sunken Noguchi sculpture in the middle of a courtyard, to dig up all around the Fisher Fountain, and even to lower it, and to have a magnificent computer center underground. My usual comment always in Old Main or from the Art Department is, *oh what a great idea!* End of idea.

So no, no. I think when much of the computer department was still in Bond Hall, it would have been very easy, and as a matter of fact, it would have been sensible because one of the things we know with Miller Hall is, the footings for that building, original building, were not sufficiently good. That building has been sinking as the Serra sculpture would have sunk away, and it would have been extraordinarily intelligent to have ripped up all of Red Square and sunk a new solid, footed, concrete structure under it so we wouldn't get this business which we now periodically have to engage in--of resetting the bricks in Red Square because the sewers are up above the level of the rest of the square which is slowly sinking away. But you know, *great idea*, but that's the end of it.

TB: Okay, before we move onto the sculpture comments, I asked you earlier about the process of how we tend to stick with one architect for a while then it moves onto another, you had some comments about the process, would you mind sharing that again?

RF: Well I think there are two problems. One is, good architects have what I think is usually referred to in the trade as a signature. I mean, you could almost always recognize an Arthur Erickson building. I mean, if you didn't know better, but you knew Erickson very well, and you went and looked at the new Chemistry Building and said, *oh, you have a new Arthur Erickson building*, [you wouldn't be far off] because the quality of the design of that building has signature dimensions of Ericksonian nature.

I think the same could be said about Bassetti. The question is how much of that signature which goes on and on do you want?

There's an architect named [John Warnecke] who was very popular with the Kennedys, in fact, he did the famous Kennedy grave site in Arlington. He was originally to do the Kennedy Library in Boston. Jackie Kennedy thought very highly of him. He did a whole campus at Menlo Park, California, *whole* campus. Every single building is exactly the same, and it is now an incredible bore, and everyone admits it is. He did one of the early buildings, maybe two of the early buildings at Santa Cruz. But, Santa Cruz rightly recognized what the problem was, that to give those individual colleges individual identity, they needed individual architects, so each one has had a different architect, the seven or eight that have been built.

That, I think, is one of the problems. I mean, yes, we could have kept Bassetti on forever, we could have kept Nelsen on forever, we could have kept Thiry on forever, but we would have ended up with a campus more or less looking as

if it was all built at the same time, though I think that Ibsen Nelsen was much more expansive in moving on to other concepts as he went along. But still, that's one problem.

[The other problem is the inevitable problem--as anybody who ever tries to build a house, or deal with revisions in their house, or deals with builders or architects knows--you get to a point where you're ready to tear them apart.] The Bagley Wrights [Bagley and Virginia Wright] are the essence of gentility and politeness, although they can be sometimes rather strong-headed behind closed doors. They got to where they weren't even speaking to [their architect] Arthur Erickson despite the fact that they know, as Arthur knows, and those that have been to that house know, that's one of his great achievements--because he rose to the level of his clients.

But his clients also were very demanding, things they wanted done. That house took four years to build, because they could afford it. Institutions have the same problem. You deal with an architect for a number of jobs. And finally you say, *oh God, we're having that problem with 'x' again, or 'y' is not listening to us, or his staff is not really up to dealing with those technical details, etcetera*. So you tend to change simply because it's probably in everyone's best interest that you move on. But the problem is getting somebody as good as the last one you had. That's where the rub comes. In my criticism of most of the architecture on the Western campus [that] has gone up since the '80s is that it [has] not kept up to the level of what Ibsen Nelsen and Fred Bassetti achieved in the '60s and '70s.

TB: What about the Donald Judd [*Untitled 1982*]?

RF: Yes... Well, that's an interesting problem, we have to start, as we frequently do on this campus in the sculpture collection, with Virginia Wright. (Thanks to her gallery owner-friend in New York who said I should ask if I could come down and see the Erickson house as it was being built, because I was then going to write a monograph, (I still am one of these days), a monograph on Arthur Erickson. She invited me down to see it while it was being constructed.)

She called me up one day and said, "I'm commissioning Donald Judd to do a series of three cubic boxes done in the same concrete that Arthur has used in the house since everyone seems to admire it so much. So I'm sending my contractor up to Bellingham to see the site on which it would go. Could you possibly show it to him?"

Now I didn't choose the site. Larry Hansen was still essentially doing that--as one of Larry's prerogatives as the Resident Artist of the Sculpture Collection--that *he* wanted to deal with these people. He had persuaded Donald Judd who was here (I was not told he was here, he was visiting Jinny [Wright] about something or other; she'd just bought some of his works) to pick the mound.

There was a mound, a little mound, about where the old--and I think it still is there--where the old track was, below the gym, where 21st Street used to come up at least as far as Parks Hall, up to where the Biology Building now is--there was a mound there. If they'd asked me, I would have said, "Oh no, I'm on the Master Plan Committee, that mound's not going to exist very long."

But, I didn't get my word in early enough. Donald had chosen that site, or was persuaded that was the site, where these three concrete boxes [should go.] Now these things were pretty substantial, they were six feet by six feet by six feet, three of them. They would be arranged with about three feet between them, so it was taking up this whole mound. Actually, I didn't think the mound was sufficient for it, but I wasn't in the Art Department, I wasn't in charge of that part of the sculpture choices, etcetera, etcetera, so I didn't say anything.

[Virginia Wright's] contractor came up and looked at the site and went back and talked with Donald Judd and Jinny then called me up and said, "My contractor won't do it. He finds working with Donald extremely difficult."

Well, it's odd he learned it so late! Everyone in the art world knew that working with Donald Judd was extremely difficult. So Jinny said, "Instead, I'm going to get one of his steel boxes."

I said "Oh, fine, very good. It won't look good on that site. Furthermore, that site's going to be eliminated, so now that we're having yet another Judd piece, let's push hard to get another site."

She said, –Well Donald made up his mind about that.”

I said –Well, sorry, that site’s not going to exist and to move that heavy steel piece, you know the problems we’ve had with the Serra.”

She said, –Well alright.”

The photographs came of the piece we now have, they were always untitled of course; Donald never gave a name to anything. I had fortuitously--because I was trying to keep my interests up--gone on an art and architectural tour of Germany, the year of Documenta in [1980] I think it was. Is that when the Judd went it [1982]? I can’t remember, somewhere around then.

The complementary piece to this, it was a set of two: [in] ours, the inner panels go one way, the one in Germany, the panels went another way, but they were otherwise identical. The Documenta [Festival] was held in this beautiful old town called Kassel, Germany, which at that time was close to the East German border, a beautiful lovely wooded area of Germany, which was the summer home of the Kaisers, and there was a huge, horizontal castle built on the plains, in front of which stood the complementary piece to the one we have, and I took a photograph of it. I came back and I said –Jinny, I think we’ve solved the problem. Since most of your gifts are on the front campus anyway, maybe we could persuade Donald to put it in front of Old Main, and it would look very much like it looks in front of the castle in Kassel, Germany.”

There was this long pause from Jinny Wright, she said, –Well, if you can persuade Donald, fine, go ahead.”

But there was this hesitancy in her voice in which she was almost sure that this wasn’t going to work. Well, the piece was shipped out and Donald came. Two things happened: One, when it was moved off the trailer truck it came out on -- it was fabricated in Connecticut at a firm that’s famous for these, in which he’s had most of his big metal pieces done. His wooded pieces were something else, but his big metal, or his small aluminum pieces he had done there also, but these outside fabricated steel pieces he had done in this place in Connecticut. It came out and when they were lifting it off the trailer truck down at the Physical Plant, the grip on the thing that was hoisting it up slipped, and it didn’t fall very far, but it fell about a foot or so. If you look carefully at that piece, you can see that the side panels are attached to the top panel by a piece that comes to us in a little ‘L’ shape so that what fits over the side panels is only about oh, maybe less than half an inch thick, but the piece that is in the rest of it is about an inch thick. The one corner got slightly dislodged. Donald Judd came and had a fit! The piece had to be sent all the way back to Connecticut to be repaired and then brought back. And Donald said, –When you are ready to install it, I will come.”

He was then spending more time in Marfa, Texas, so he wasn’t coming from that far away, as coming from New York (well maybe it’s as far, I don’t know). So he came, and Jinny called me up and said, –Donald’s here and he’s staying with us and we’ve talked about maybe a better site for the piece.” She said, –You deal with him tomorrow.”

So he came, and I said, –Donald, you can’t have the site you were going to have. I don’t care what Larry told you, you can’t have that site. The site’s going to be destroyed. We can’t afford to move it, you wouldn’t want to move it, it might be dropped again.” So I said, –I have the perfect site for it. You know that piece--its twin piece--sister piece--in Kassel, Germany looks so great in front of that huge horizontal castle.” I said, –Come up to the front campus, we have Old Main. Furthermore, we could angle it in such a way that it would show between the openings between Mathes and Nash Hall.” I said –Donald, you studied with Vince Scully at Yale as I did, you know how famous he is about the siting of the Greek temples.” I said, –We have a Greek temple (there’s Edens Hall in ruins you know) next door. We have this beautiful [view] through these two new Aalto-like buildings” (thank God there was snow on the Cascades that day). I said, –Just absolutely superb!”

There was this long silence and he said, –Okay.” (Laughter)

Well, Sarah can’t put any of that in [her book] because first of all, it wasn’t Donald’s choice, it was my choice. Secondly, I overrode a member of the Art Department faculty who really thought he was in charge of all the

sculpture, I did it by using the persuasion of the master plan, and well, Art Mellon who used to be in the Physical Plant and really had a great deal to do with the successful installation of a number of major pieces here, came up and looked at the site and said, "I hate to say this Dr. Francis, but we have problems." He said, "You know, that used to be a pond. It's marshy as all get out." He said, "And this piece weighs..." – and I've forgotten how many tons it weighed – "we're going to have to put in a firm footing." He said, "Who's going to pay for the footing?"

I said, "Will Art, I'll inquire around and I'll see where I can get some money for you."

Well, we got the \$5,000 that was necessary to pour the concrete footing. The piece arrived back repaired. They very gingerly and painstakingly brought it up on a flatbed truck and attached the crane to it very carefully and the crane sat in the circular driveway in front of Edens Hall, which is paved. But, to get exactly to the site where it now sits, the machine had to pull off onto the lawn. (Laughter) And as it did, this suction, the tires and whatever just *sunk* into this soggy soil, even though we put this concrete foundation footing there. And the thing nearly hit the ground, but miraculously it did not and was lowered on to its position.

TAPE TWO – SIDE TWO

TB: [How about Anthony Caro's] *India*, I think that was your favorite piece?

RF: Yes, well for two reasons. My English Department office in the Humanities Building looked right down on that little square green. Originally, there was a fountain there. The famous British architecture critic [Reyner Banham], once wrote an essay after coming to the Northwest and said, "Why in the part of the country which has so much rain do you have so many outdoor fountains?" (Laughter).

We only had Fisher Fountain, of course, and remember, Ibsen Nelsen originally wanted Noguchi to do a fountain there, and Noguchi said, "No, I have a piece for you, no fountain."

Thank God, thank God for Noguchi.

But there was originally supposed to be a fountain there. At some point, one of my female colleagues in English, who was terribly active in women's studies, said that she had a perfect statue for that fountain that was never installed. There was a circular hole for it, and this was increasingly a problem because we were becoming extremely concerned in the university about blind students on campus.

You may remember that we had to put little footings around Bassetti's [*Alphabeta Cube*] because it sat right smack in the middle of that passage way [between Wilson Library and Haggard Hall]. In fact that was one of the reasons for having to move it at some point. We were going to have to get rid of those little concrete teeth we had set all around it, which didn't look good anyway.

So we had to put a barricade around that hole. But there was a fountain spike there and she had her office on the same side, and she was tired of looking at that as well. Anyway, she said to me, "I have a friend who does marvelous little fountain-like figures."

I said, "Well, what does it look like?"

She said, "Well, it's marble."

I said "Well, that's interesting, but of course it would have to be accepted by the Art Acquisition Committee and we're a little fussy about whether it fits in with the rest of the collection or not."

You know, I'm fending her off -- it turns out to be a [sculpture of a] pregnant woman.

I said, "Well, at the time we did the Beverly Pepper, we had the suggestion from somebody who was on the committee that we take a Manual Neri, a very famous California Hispanic sculptor, of a large pregnant women as

well with paint dripping over her bronze figure. I persuaded the committee to turn that down because I thought the Women's Movement would be insulted. I'm afraid I'd have to say the same thing about this." I thought, *oh dear*. Well, she dismissed me [as], you know, just one of those white Anglo-Saxon males who should be dead.

Anyway, the upshot of it was, nothing was done.

And then I went off to do a visiting professorship in Texas, or maybe that was the year of my sabbatical, I can't remember. Anyway, I was off the committee for a year. But Jinny Wright had told me that she had acquired a set of Caros for the new house. She found they weren't going to have to use them all. They have a piece on their cantilevered deck overlooking Boeing Creek, which is one of his biggest pieces called *Riviera*. I mean, it's really one of his masterpieces, it's huge. Then she has another one on the other side of the house, sort of a recessed area on the lawn, but she didn't have a place for this, though she liked it very much. She bought all three of them at once. She said, "I think I'll give it to Western."

I said "Oh, very good."

I was away while all this negotiating went on, and Rodney Payton had become acting chair in my absence, and he negotiated with Caro (I think some of that material is in Sarah's book). One of the things I knew about Caro was (because he'd made a number of significant statements about it), that he liked his pieces on the ground. He didn't like the nineteenth century notion of things on pedestals. So I thought, all right, we'll just cover up the hole in the ground, it can sit on the ground. But I wasn't here, so for once they lost the value of my being here. Anyway, the negotiations went on. When I got back, there it was sitting on that circular little raised pedestal that it's on. I was told it was necessary for two reasons. It was done because of the blind, who might run into that piece, which has rather sharp, sharp edges on that steel piece. And I said, "Well, I suppose so, but you know, I thought maybe that wasn't the best place to put it. We could have maybe moved it off-center, and just filled in that whole thing with some kind of stone design of some sort. We really didn't have to use it as a fountain." Oh what a great idea! You know, *oh my great ideas!*

Anyway, so it got installed. But, when I got back, I was doing tours with groups like the Contemporary Arts Council of the Los Angeles County Museum, the International Council for the Museum of Modern Art, and all of them when they pass that piece say, "Oh! How nice of Jinny to have given this--it's not supposed to be on a pedestal."

I said, "Oh please, don't tell me, I know that. I wasn't here when it happened, don't blame me, I'm not responsible."

Even the curator of the Contemporary Art at the Los Angeles County Museum as we were walking past it said, "That's my favorite piece in the collection!"

I said, "That's my favorite piece in the collection, too!"

Anyway, so there it sits. I then said, "Well, at least we can do something about where it sits. Caro is very English; can't we turn that whole area into a very English-like garden?"

Harry Skinner, who was on the architectural staff and responsible for some of the projects said, "Well, we can turn it into a rose garden."

I said, "Why would we want to turn it into a rose garden? Roses only bloom for a very short time in the Northwest. We need a boxwood hedge, you know, a perennial garden of some sort. [Look at] all these photographs of English gardens."

No. It remains what it is, a burnt-out looking rose garden that has some flowers two months a year, maybe, and all that hard soil, nothing else. I offered--*first time revealed*--I offered to Sarah to underwrite putting a boxwood hedge around that whole thing. The committee turned it down.

Anyway, so much for my landscaping effects on this campus.

Well, I did do one thing [in regards to] landscaping, I stopped the island [between Old Main and the Viking Union] from becoming totally a garden park, although I see there have been a few things that have crept in, but mainly it's reserved to rhododendrons and things that grow in natural situations. But somebody wanted to put perennial flowers out there, some garden club in Bellingham wanted to put flowers out there, I put the kibosh on that. I said —N, it's a San Juan island; it should be left in its natural vegetation. Just putting a few rhododendrons to keep students from walking over the hill all the time as they come out of their classes in Old Main to get to the Viking Union."

That's what we finally did. I also tried to get them to get a really first rate landscape architect. Ibsen Nelsen hired for his staff a young man named Olin, Laurie Olin. Ibsen Nelsen commissioned him to do—oh my, I've been here a long time—Ibsen Nelsen commissioned him to do those marvelous waterfall watercolors that used to hang in the coffee shop in Miller Hall, which I finally persuaded Sarah to remove when they decided to turn the coffee shop into a McDonalds and all that grease and so on. I used to know the editor of *Arcade* in Seattle, which used to be, and still is, I think, the occasional architectural magazine in Seattle. She was [Laurie Olin's] old girlfriend when he was in Seattle. She said, —O, you're in Bellingham, Laurie loves Bellingham."

I said, —Great! Maybe we could get him to do a master landscape [plan], because he is now one of the preeminent landscape architects in the United States."

He teaches now at Penn, he's written a huge new monstrous book on the English landscape, which just came out a year ago. He used to be at Harvard, he redesigned [Pershing Square] in Los Angeles, he was the original choice of Richard Meier for all the landscape architecture at the Getty Center. This is not a lightweight. But I thought, because I take his girlfriend to be right, he loves Bellingham, he loves the campus (he used to come up and visit it at off-hours in the summer), he would be perfect. I proposed that to president after president after president and have never gotten anywhere with it--so much for my influence on landscape architecture.

Anyway, back to where we were. Where were we? Oh yes. The upshot of the Caro was that I said to Jinny, —You know, it'd be nice if we could move it off center and just redo that whole area."

I went to Gary Nelsen, who was another campus architect, and I said, —What do you think about that?"

He said, —O that's good idea! It still is an obstacle where it is because even people who aren't blind run into it all the time!"

So he commissioned two women landscape architectures in Seattle to do this plan. It was absolutely gorgeous. I sent it to Jinny. Jinny was ecstatic. Jinny sent it to Richard Bellamy in New York, who was the one who handled her purchase of all the Caro pieces. He was ecstatic. I came back and said, —The people who matter approve it."

[Physical Plant administrator] Bob Hascall said, —Well, what are the estimates going to be?"

We got the estimates. It was only going to be about \$5,000. Bob Hascall set aside \$5,000 from some upcoming budget for landscaping, etcetera, etcetera, to redo that to this magnificent design that everybody approved of. It had to go to President Ross for approval. President Ross had wanted us to put three flag poles on the mound in front of Old Main. There is a flag pole there. It's the flag pole of the USS Maine. I didn't know this until [Professor of Art] David Marsh told me this, good old US Marine David Marsh. He said to me, —If Ross tries to move that, the Marine is going to come out in me!"

The president took the funds we had set aside to redo the Caro garden and built the now-infamous three flag pole plaza at the entrance of the south campus drive, on which we don't even fly a campus flag. Well, so much for landscaping on this campus.

TB: Do you have any other comments? Last comments?

RF: Well, sometimes I wonder, especially the last couple of days, I've been plying through all this pile of junk I have, was it ever worth it? I look at all the trials and tribulations I went through on a great many issues. But yes, it was, because I did feel I was defending both the art and the architecture of this campus, in ways which are permanent, whereas a lot of things might have gotten swept out of the way or dumped, or whatever happened, had I not been there fussing. And whatever little token of appreciation we see of that in print; I still feel it is an important thing for me to have done. And I really did love doing it. I really did.

There were lots of people on campus who didn't like the memos I did. I'm famous for my memos and my letters which could be pretty acerbic on occasion. But I've always learned at institutions--and this one in particular--that the squeaky wheel gets oiled. If you don't squeak a lot--and sometimes I shouted--things didn't get done.

As a result, I've tried to tell Sarah that when she needs to get something done, she just has to scream. It's not her character, it's not my character either, but you just have to do it to persuade these people that what they're trying to do is wrong or inappropriate, or [will] simply make things look worse than they already do. But Sarah is just a sweet girl from Virginia and it's very hard for her to do that. When the problem with the Hamrol and the birch trees first came up, she called me up and said, "Richard, have you been down to the south campus yet?"

Knowing exactly what I would do, which would be [to write] a blasting memo to President Morse. When the Beverly Pepper formation of the mound was changed, she told me to go look at it, because she knew what I would do, and again, I got it back. So you know, I did that service for her, but I kept saying to her, "What are you going to do when I'm not around, Sarah?"

TB: Okay, well thank you very much.

RF: I enjoyed it. I love talking and I love talking about things like that.