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Professor Gerald L. Smith Interview Transcription

Gerald L. Smith
Utah State University

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Professor Gerald L. Smith Interview Transcription

Interviewee: Gerald L. Smith
Date of interview: August 22, 2013
Place of interview: Distance Education Building, Room 101, Utah State University Campus

Interviewer: Aaron Smith
Recorder: Aaron Smith
Recording Equipment: Tascam DR-05

Subject of interview: Gerald L. Smith's personal and professional history; The Department of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning, Utah State University; the profession of landscape architecture

Transcriptionist: Aaron Smith
Date of transcription: 10/18/2013

Brief Description of Contents: This interview was conducted as research for part of The History of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning, master's thesis by Aaron Smith. It contains information about Gerald L. Smith, former professor in the Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning Department (LAEP) at Utah State University, discussing his education, professional practice and experience as an educator at the Department of LAEP and California Polytechnic: San Luis Obispo.

References: AS = Aaron Smith (Interviewer)
GS = Gerald L. Smith (Interviewee)

TAPE TRANSCRIPTION

AS: Just as a way of introduction, what's your name and where are you from?

GS: My name is Gerald Smith. I go by Gere. Spelled about anyway, but my mother spelled it Gere, as a shortened name for Gerald.

I began a teaching career following five years in private practice. My first appointment was at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana from September 1965 to July 1968. I left U. of Illinois to accept a full-time teaching position at Utah State teaching in the Department of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning (LAEP) from September 1968 to the end of fall quarter 1979. At that point I accepted an academic position Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo, California. The program of landscape architecture at Cal Poly was young, begun in 1974. Initially, it was administered under the dean of the

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School of Architecture and Environmental Design. The School was re-organized into five departments in the 1979-80 academic year. I became the first department head of landscape architecture at that time. I held the administrative position for 12 years, stepping aside in 1992. I continued as a full-time faculty member teaching for another ten years, retiring in 2001.

AS: Where were you born?

GS: I was born in Ames, Iowa, but actually grew up in Boone, a much smaller town west of Ames. Boone's population was about 12,000 people. I would guess today it's population would be about 25,000. It was primarily a regional service center and shopping area for agriculture. During that time and even today it's got that agricultural focus to it. I lived in town, not on a farm. However, many of my relatives were farmers. One of your questions addressed, "Where did I stumble into landscape architecture?" I suppose it was in my pre-teen years. I spent much of the summer time in the country on farms, riding horses, playing games in the hay loft of barns, and helping with chores. Later, I became very involved in Boy Scouts, eventually becoming an Eagle Scout, and continuing on into Explorer Scouts getting involved with the Air Explorer program. All of that I mention because as I reflect back on some of those early years, they had a profound impact on my environmental and social values of today. Looking at and trying to understand how the environment functioned and how people responded to it. In high school I took physics, chemistry, and social sciences that were more academic. To really look at it through the eyes of a designer, that did not surface formally until my undergraduate study at Iowa State University.

AS: Were you aware of landscape architecture as a profession prior to...

GS: No, not at all. I was going into civil engineering, and again, because of the relationship of the land, I thought civil engineering was a pretty cool field. But a stumbling block surfaced my first year. Though I loved mathematics, I discovered that I had a form of ADD, attention deficit disorder. I had always been an artist from my years as a child, and had taken a lot of art classes whenever I could. I eventually discovered engineering wasn't a field for me. I took a series of aptitude tests at Iowa State that identified

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landscape architecture would be a good career choice. It was the first time I had ever heard that profession. The counselors suggested I meet with the department head of landscape architecture. He welcomed me into the program. I changed majors, and from there on I couldn't get enough of design.

AS: It's funny how you came out of civil engineering into landscape architecture. You see that a lot, from engineering to landscape architecture. What do you think it is that draws people that started in an engineering background to landscape architecture?

GS: That's a good question. I would say, in reflection, that having had two careers in landscape architecture, one in private practice after the other in education, students don't realize how much broader the opportunities are in landscape architecture than in the fields of architecture or engineering. Also, LA's spend much more time outdoors dealing with ecological, environmental, and social issues.

AS: Back to the program at Iowa State, can you describe the kind of trends that were occurring in the program in the late 50s early 60s?

GS: At Iowa State, the applied arts (architecture, landscape architecture, interior design) were focused on a beaux arts approach to learning design. It was not structured as we know of it today, in terms of process, programming, and analysis. In reflection, I do not remember hearing the terms 'design process or program' ever in my undergraduate education. A beaux arts approach was one of following an 'artful approach' to define what it was that was important to the client. The site as a term was discussed more in regard to topographic relief, existing plant material, presence of water, and views. In hindsight, I realize there was much lacking in my education as an undergraduate student. It was just simply fooling around with a pencil, pen, or brush, and trying to find form. Then justifying (selling) it to a client, a made-up client and a design program that the faculty member would have given you. My first place of employment opened a whole new world. I would insert one thing though, there were a couple of faculty that were invited guests at Iowa State from other midwestern universities. One of them in particular came from the University of Illinois, his name was Stanley White. He offered, during my senior year, an entirely new process of thought, an analytical approach to looking for

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design, a process of finding function, understanding form, and how those functions and forms related.

AS: Upon graduation, you go onto private practice initially, what was your experience with that?

GS: First, I had a summer internship between my junior and senior year with the Cook County Forest Reserve outside of Chicago. Two of my supervisors had been landscape architects for several decades, and they introduced me to the whole idea of analyzing a project from the aspect function first and searching for form afterward. It was an abstracted approach using diagramming to understand circulation and space.

I, along with a classmate, couldn't get out of Iowa quickly enough after graduation. We felt southern California would offer us much more than staying in the Midwest. We immediately found work. There was an abundance of work for young landscape architects just graduating from undergraduate or graduate school at that time. We both found work immediately. I worked for Cornell, Bridgers and Troller, a well known firm in the Los Angeles area. It was a larger firm, maybe 12-15 people. The rest of the firms were smaller, five to six employees. I was there for little over a year, before receiving a call from an architect in San Francisco. They were looking for another landscape architect with some experience. Following an interview, the position was offered to me so I moved from Los Angeles to San Francisco. John Carl Warnecke & Associates, at that time, had over 100 architects, and only three landscape architects working for the firm. Warnecke had a philosophy that every project in their office should have a mix of architects and landscape architects as a team. Obviously, with only three LA's, that meant we were working on a broad range of projects.

The best project I worked on with Warnecke's office was the Master Plan for the University of California at Santa Cruz campus. It was a utopian concept that the Board of Regents wanted to be built. The site was in a huge forest of old redwood trees. The property was located on a hilly site along the coast. The team was comprised of a collaboration of six architectural firms, and one landscape architecture firm, Thomas Church, and Assoc. John Carl Warnecke was the chief architect so all the work was

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completed in his office. There was a young architect and landscape architect assigned the responsibility of doing all the final graphics and drawings for the project. A young French architect, John Pierre and myself were given this assignment. He and I listened to all of the presentations by the architects and Thomas Church, who spoke about their interpretations of utopian dreams for this huge university campus. All of the architects had these incredible egos, and they wanted all of the architecture to be in competition with these 400 foot tall redwood trees. They would compete to see whose concept was going to win out. Every third day there was another presentation.

To keep all of the ideas into one drawing genre of media technique, it was essentially John Pierre and myself who took all of the drawings from the various offices and redrew them. This was in 1962-63, computer technology had arrived. This meant we did all of the drawings by hand using various graphic media. The drawings were three and half feet wide and eight feet long. We would spend all night, and most of the next day between meetings, drawing these up all in the same character. We arrived at a technique of sepia and black ink on vellum. John Pierre and I were very familiar with the medium. One evening, John Pierre asked if he could take the night off. He came in late the next morning from an all night party. I had stayed up all night working on the last drawing of the master plan that was to be presented that afternoon. He brewed up a strong pot of coffee, and came over with a cup full to see how I was doing. He sat the cup on the edge of the drawing board and presided to, bump it! The coffee spilled over a major part of the drawing that I was just finishing. I immediately yelled for him to brew a large pot of strong coffee! A decision had been made the day before to do the master plan in sepia ink. We diluted down a whole series of tones, using black coffee to very light coffee, and that's what we ended up rendering the master plan with. Of course you could imagine what that would do to tracing paper, it wrinkled. We had an iron and ironing board at work to touch up rumpled clothing. I grabbed the iron and we started pressing the tracing paper as we were doing the "coffee" watercolor wash. It smoothed out the paper pretty well. The experience became the story around the office about how it happened, and how it ended up to be one of the nicest drawings ever done. It became the model for all of the other presentations for the UC Santa Cruz campus master plan from there on.

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While living in San Francisco, I met my 'future' wife Sara Clark. I left Wornecke and Assoc. to get married in Indiana, Sara's hometown. Following the wedding, we took a freighter ship to Europe. After traveling a bit, I found work in Zurich, Switzerland. I worked for a landscape architecture office and design-build firm. We stayed there for a year before returning to the US.

We had decided to go to southern California where I went to work for a landscape architect by the name of Garrett Eckbo. He had a profound impact on me. He lived in the hills above Los Angeles and would invite anyone from the office to his home on Saturday mornings for coffee and talk about design philosophy. I was mesmerized by what Garrett had to offer. He went into subject matter that I had never been introduced to before. He talked about the importance of society in landscape architecture. The values of the individual, of family, of the community, of the neighborhood. Whatever the design project and its focus, it is the landscape architect's responsibility to elevate the breadth of the project to include the entire community. In other words, asking questions about what the role of the project had to the community, and vice versa.

Garrett Eckbo convinced me I needed to go back to graduate school. I applied for a teaching position in landscape architecture at the University of Illinois. If we pay attention to the cycles in life, opportunities do revolve around us. So it was with my introduction to the landscape architecture design process by Stanley White during my senior year at Iowa State. It was a destiny of sorts for me to be accepted on the faculty where Stanley White had taught before his retirement a few years earlier. An educator who invented, and developed the site analysis process, I was now at his home university. His old desk became my desk, his flat files full of his drawings and watercolor washes became the same flat file I was to use.

In addition to the appointment as a full-time faculty member (officially termed an instructor), I was also to enroll as a full-time graduate student. That was the uniqueness of the appointment. I needed to fit my graduate study in wherever I could, while teaching full time in the department.

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AS: So from your undergraduate time in 1961 to when you graduate from the University of Illinois, how did landscape architecture change? Were there emerging trends, emerging fields that you were being exposed to for the first time?

GS: Graduate school opened a new universe for me. I mean I had worked for five years in private practice, for different offices in Illinois, California, and Zurich, Switzerland. That professional experience was fundamentally structured around an intuitive search for design form and function. There was little design process and analysis as a way of learning about the community, site, and client. Before the appointment at the U. of Illinois, I was still searching for forms, scribbling around, doing all sorts of goofy things, talking to people, asking questions of yourself, trying to understand who you were working with, other professionals, what their points of view were. It was really very much an intuitive process for me. Now, all of the sudden, I was introduced vicariously to the father of site analysis, to the person who developed the vocabulary of understanding how to group and order natural systems, social factors, and physical elements, into a vocabulary for a designer to use. I couldn't get enough of it. At that point I realized how much I didn't know, and how much I needed to learn. So, I taught and essentially completed all of the curriculum requirements for the MLA degree at the University of Illinois in three years, while still teaching full time. At the same time I had a small private practice, because I couldn't let go of consulting, besides my wife and I needed the income. I was ready for a change in my life, and through many discussions with my wife, she became as excited as I was.

While at the University of Illinois, I met some very talented young people who were graduate students as well. Several had graduated from Utah State University and wanted to do their graduate study at the U. of Illinois. They were Vern Budge, Wendell Morse, Dave Kotter, Ted Walker, Joe Porter, Jerry Fuhriman, Dave Jenson, and a few others. There were also Craig Johnson, Frank Clements, and George Curry from Michigan State University. The USU students talked with me about the rich opportunities at Utah State, and particularly about the uniqueness of their department head, Burton Taylor. In 1968, Vern Budge and Wendell Morse told me of a faculty position at USU. I interviewed for it

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and discovered a part of the west I'd never been to. I accepted to offer and my wife and I with a six-week old baby boy headed west.

AS: Could you describe some of that, what some of the vision was at USU, when you first came to the department?

GS: The Department was located in the basement of Old Main at the time. All the studios, faculty offices, and department office were there. The enrollment in the department was small, in comparison to what it is today. Craig Johnson and Vern Budge had accepted teaching positions at the department a year and two years before we arrived so they helped to make our introduction to Logan superb.

AS: What did they have you teaching? Where did they plug you into the department?

GS: The first course was a sophomore design studio. It was the students' first studio involving site design. Everything I taught in that studio was brought from my experience at the U. of Illinois. It included the site design process, site analysis, analytical diagramming, and the fundamentals for the search for form. I had also been involved in teaching construction details, because of my five years of private practice experience in construction drawings, and grading. I taught the construction series, grading and drainage, and construction detailing, putting together a package of drawings, and road alignment. I taught road alignment under another talented mentor, Don Walker, at the University Illinois. I also learned about teaching planting design under Don, and his many uses of Stanley White's point of view of site analysis and functionality.

AS: Kind of looking at your time here, you started in 68?

GS: Academic year 1968-69.

AS: The department at USU started to change in the early 70s, as Burton Taylor stepped down as Department Head and Dick Toth arrived. Can you describe some of the changes that were occurring within the Department, some of the transitions that were happening?

GS: It was an important time for landscape architecture and environmental planning at Utah State. Dick Toth had been teaching at Harvard with Carl Steinitz and prior at the

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University of Pennsylvania with Ian McHarg. He brought to the department new techniques and processes of looking at land planning from a regional perspective. These approaches strengthened the environmental planning aspect of the curriculum, particularly in the graduate program.

Some of the other faculty who were at USU then and had a significant influence on the department and curriculum were Craig Johnson, Vern Budge, Jerry Fuhriman, Michael Timmons, Paul Salisbury, the campus architect, and Wendell Morse, the campus landscape architect, Larry Wegkamp, the Extension LA, and myself. There were others who spent a short time with the department or came after I had left. Each had their own area(s) of strength and complimented each other extremely well.

AS: Thinking about the issue of scale, what did Dick Toth bring to the program, how did that fit into the curriculum and teaching of design? Working at different scales is such an essential part of landscape architecture.

GS: That it is, and understanding resolutions of scale in design and planning really differentiate landscape architecture from other professions. It is a valuable ability for a student to learn. It was already strongly evident in the curriculum. It has to be in order to maintain a strong accreditation. Dick Toth strengthened the scientific principles of ecology and a strong regional perspective.

I need to mention an event that took place this time, maybe 1970 or 71. Burt was ailing, so the faculty had taken over some of the curriculum leadership, and we decided to go for a cup of coffee, you know just a break at mid-day. I think it ended up over lunch. Vern, Craig, Wendell, Dave Kotter, and myself were there in attendance. We decided to call it a meeting anyway. We were trying to decide who was going to teach what subjects the next school year. It was in the spring. Before that, we had just been jumping from course to course whenever a faculty needed to teach the course that quarter. We decided a better approach could be found to formalize the teaching assignments better. Instead of everybody teaching a generalized approach to landscape architecture, we should get more specialized. Everyone was interested in that. We went around the table and asked everybody what subject areas they would like to be more specialized in. It would mean

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individual faculty could each teach in a dominant course subject area in the curriculum. Craig was the oldest faculty member, by a year followed by Vern. I was next followed by Wendell and Dave Kotter. Craig said, "I'm really interested in planting design." Everyone thought that would be a great idea given his interest in outdoor activities and everything else. Vern was next. He said, "Gere, though you have taught construction and construction documents, I am really interested in that subject. Though I like site design, and I like graphics." So he said, "I would like to take over road alignment and all of the grading subject area in the curriculum too." I said that was fine with me. It was my turn and I expressed an interest in the whole design process. I wanted to stay with that longer so I could refine site analysis better. I wanted to bring in new terminology, deepen the subject further than Stanley White had done. I was already starting to do that with the sophomores in the fall design class. I also said, "I am interested in urban design. I have worked and practiced many major cities, and would like to get back to the subject of urban design, and bringing social issues together with the ecology of the city." Everyone was excited to hear that. Wendell said, "I like plant identification. I can only teach part time. That's what I primarily do now in the campus office." David Cotter said he was interested in history. We felt good about the process and assignments.

Jerry Furhriman in 1971 or 72. He was interested in graphics, and he is a terrific site designer, so he got involved with site planning.

Environmental planning hadn't really had a big chunk of the curriculum yet. Jerry Fuhriman was interested in working with the juniors and I was working with the seniors in urban design. I also would cover the planning aspects of site analysis with the sophomores. We pretty much covered all the assignments through the next year. Everybody felt good about what had been accomplished.

AS: How were you able to specialize during your time on the faculty? Were you able to go more in-depth into certain areas?

GS: I was. I wrote a handbook on site analysis. It became a classic handbook to guide students through the whole site analysis process. A lot of it came from Stanley White of course. That was really my first publication. I produced it here for many years, and expanded it

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when I left Utah State and went to Cal Poly. For me, urbanization was an exhilarating topic, because it was multi-disciplinary. I started writing some articles for different publications.

After my experience at the University of Illinois, I realized that I needed to become involved in ASLA. At that time CELA, the Council of Educator in Landscape Architecture, had another acronym. It was the same organization; it just had a different name. And I got heavily involved in both organizations. I continued my involvement in ASLA and CELA when I came to USU. When I arrived at Cal Poly, I became involved in the landscape architecture accreditation board (LAAB). Before becoming a member of LAAB, I chaired dozens of department evaluation visits.

Dave Kotter decided to leave education to work in the public sector. I expressed an interest in teaching landscape architecture history. I also had an interest in regional history. The next fall, Dick Toth invited a friend, Albert Fein, to the campus to talk about his research in landscape architecture that had been funded by the ASLA. The faculty talked with Dr. Fein about his views. I wanted to hear more from him about his feeling of teaching regional history. They were along the same line I was considering. The new course was offered that spring quarter.

At first it was an elective course, and in another year or two it became a required course. The title became, Examining the Evolutionary Character of Regional Landscapes. Obviously the course focus was the Intermountain Region, stretching from Southern Canada all the way down through the Western United States. There was a field trip as part of the course. So, I had two normal history classes in landscape architecture, fall and winter quarters, and spring quarter was the regional history class. I fell in love with that course. Again, I prepared a course manual for it. It became a reader for the class as well, for the students. We had students not just from landscape architecture, but from geography, geology, College of Natural Resources. I believe the class no longer offered it in the curriculum, which is a shame. But it became a point of view where I was invited to several other universities to share the reasons why it was so important, and of course I was using Albert Fein's justification in his report on the profession at that time.

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As you can imagine, the profession of landscape architecture is a part of my DNA today as it is in the other faculty. What was accomplished here played an important role for me in my career development.

Besides Cal Poly, what USU offered me were opportunities to teach at three other universities, the University of Melbourne, Australia; the University of Canberra, Australia; and the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada.

AS: Another sort of an area we haven't talked about much is the student body. I am hoping that you could talk a bit about the tremendous growth that LAEP experienced from when you started and when you left?

GS: That was another pivotal, important point of time for the Department, and it was partly because we started to get more graduate students, which made sense. I think what we were doing with the curriculum was starting to catch attention, not only on campus, but also in the high schools in the State, and the other Intermountain States. We were introducing another form of practice, academic practice. Dick Toth had brought the idea with him from Harvard, and it was, I don't remember what they called it there, but Dick ended up calling it here a Field Service Program, in which there would be a community or communities that would get together and needed some help whether for a master plan for the community, or for parks, or for open space study, or for a whole host of ideas for projects. At the beginning of the year, these contacts would be made to the department and Dick would ask around the faculty who would be interested in any of these, and would then also see if they would fit within the design studio that they would be teaching. The identity of LAEP at Utah State was expanded; its reputation was expanded by that activity. And it mushroomed from there, so we each had a greater increase of out of state applicants, generally the enrollment in other departments of landscape architecture in the west were also increasing at the same time. They were limiting the enrollment at the University of Arizona and Colorado State University. Berkeley was shutting down their undergraduate program and looking more at the graduate program level. Oregon was starting to again limit their enrollment, as well as the University of Washington. We were kind of sitting in the middle of the Intermountain area, perfectly placed. Some of the students who didn't like what architecture was doing at the University of Utah came here.

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So we had some ballooning of enrollment, and it became a challenge for the faculty. Later on, and I am not sure when it started, the faculty decided to limit the number of students who could go into the upper division. It was identified as twenty five at that time. It was mainly due to space limitations. We couldn't create sections of the site design class because we didn't have the faculty, budget to hire more people. Though Dick was able to hire a few people that would come in temporarily, for a year or two, maybe three and they would come from the private sector mostly. It was primarily the core faculty who were covering all of this huge balloon in enrollment that we were having.

AS: You mentioned the high number of out of state applicants. Were there any other generalizations you could make about the student body during your time here?

GS: Thanks Aaron for bringing that up, because that's an important topic. Sometimes there was a difference with students who were returning from Mormon missions. They had either started in landscape architecture, or were looking at it as a new major. It meant an increase in enrollment coming from a particular local group of students from the state of Utah, and from neighboring states. And then we had another groups of students who were coming from out of state, and they were not necessarily members of the Mormon church, but they had experienced education at larger universities in a more urban landscape. They enjoyed the winter opportunities of having several ski resorts nearby. There was always the challenge of the limited access to alcohol, and other issues that would stimulate parties. The out of the state students became labeled by some of the students, and even some faculty, as students who were here to have fun rather than take their studies seriously.

Some provincial points of view also existed. The faculty talked about it and introduced field trips to both urban and wilderness landscapes to expand the students' experiences. The department organized field trips to Wyoming, southern Utah, Arizona, to attend a national or regional CELA and ASLA meetings, and to bring students from different universities together for exchange projects similar to what CELA use to do nationally. Those field trip experiences became very memorable to the students as well as the faculty.

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AS: I am curious about your thoughts as to what were some of the accomplishments you have had with the publications, and advancements in these classes. How about in the classroom when it comes to design studio, I am curious about the culture of the design studio. What was it like when you were you here, during your time?

GS: I loved it. One of the nice features that I found, that all the faculty found, was a 'thirst for learning' in both undergraduate and graduate students. Understanding other cultures, how to design in an urban environment. How do you design for Cache Valley for example? How do you design an open space system when most of the land is in private hands or public hands? How do you look at these kinds of challenges from a designer's point of view? They could take experience of a project and transfer it to their own home in Nephi, or Payson, or St George. Eventually we were, as a faculty, thinking that would begin to expand the nature of landscape architecture to other towns through our students. And it sure did. A lot of times we would get a call from a mayor or a city council member, or someone who had project where they had bumped into a graduate from our program who had talked about the Field Service experience that they had. So a faculty member who knew that area would make a brief presentation what had been done before and organize a contract with municipality for a Field Service project. The USU Extension Service was a huge advocate for these student/faculty experiences. I think having a landscape architect working part-time with Extension helped significantly. Dave Bell and his predecessor Larry Wegkamp were key players in facilitating the opportunities.

AS: Are there any particular projects during your time here that you would like to reflect on that were great accomplishments, or particularly valuable or interesting?

GS: Within the class?

AS: Yes, but it can also be within private practice, applied research stuff during the summer, projects that may have involved students.

GS: I mentioned Jerry Fuhriman, and how close a friendship we had at the University of Illinois, and when he came here that friendship continued to the point where we went into a partnership, and created an office downtown. We rented a space in an old store. The name of the firm was Design Collaborative. We did some projects. Jerry, because of his

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experience at Minneapolis, Minnesota, he had met the director of the National Fish and Wildlife Service, and had done some Master Plans for a few refuges, elsewhere in the Midwest. When he came here he had that experience and the contacts with the national refuge organization. He was able to pick up a couple of very nice projects, one in Central Oklahoma. We worked on that in the office.

I became very close friends with the Mayor in Logan, and the City Council, as well as the City Engineer, Ray Hugee. The City Council wanted to increase city parks, but were having trouble communicating that need to the community. There was a strong feeling in town of why does the city need more parks when there's a large national forest next door? The City Council finally decided to hire Design Collaborative to do research and present it to the community. Jerry and I hired Dave Biederman, a recent graduate from the department. He worked full time for us. We eventually, during the summers, hire some other students from the Department to work at Design Collaborative. We worked on a lot of nice projects. There were baseball parks, a horse race track, the Logan Open Space study, with the Cache County Commissioners to develop a web of pathways and bike paths throughout the valley, research on the recreational potential of the Great Salt Lake and Antelope Island, and development for an expansion of Beaver Mountain Ski Area.

As a faculty, we saw the growth of commercialism beginning to develop in the City of Logan and elsewhere in the valley. We all tried to warn the city and county about it. Several wrote articles in the paper and talked at City Council meetings expressing our concern. Several of us used classroom projects to explore alternatives as to how the growth could be dealt with. All of my urban experiences in larger cities, as well as smaller communities, really came into play. We tried to figure it out, we knew the northern corridor of Main Street going to Smithfield, North Logan, Hyde Park, would become a major corridor. It was a US highway, and therefore, presented real problems for Logan. There was little interest in creating a bypass at that time for the highway. I decided to organize a charrette to try and look at the future of what the highway corridor was potentially going to become, and what kind of alternatives could be generated from not becoming a nightmare for the City and the County. We asked some practitioners from

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Salt Lake City to serve as team members with the students. There were several very interesting and creative alternatives presented to the City and County as to potential scenarios of what this corridor could become. Pretty much they ignored all of the ideas. Today you see what the results of what we were telling them would happen, has happened, and it is virtually a nightmare. Automobile accidents, pedestrians having no crossing accesses, bicyclists are at the mercy of traffic, it's just torturous to make any kind of left or right hand turns any more. It is essentially a speed way.

AS: Not to digress, but I work for the city right now, and when we talk about cyclical patterns, it comes right back to the same problems.

GS: Yes it does. To me, creating the design firm with Jerry Fuhrman was a high light. The dark side of it was, personally, I wish we had involved the entire faculty in the creation of the firm, and made it a real community outreach effort. In hindsight I thought that was a big mistake. I don't know if you would get the same opinion from the other faculty, but I feel that way. If it was to be done over again, that would have been the perfect alternative to the way Jerry and I formed the office. It did offer a spring board for the other faculty to get involved in another firm in Ogden, and I was really pleased that materialized. There have been many very good projects completed. I think it's been because the Department is here, and what the faculty have done for outreach, it's because of the efforts of those faculty that have been here, left, maybe come back, but have given their soul, their heart to this Department that has made this environment, this valley a better place to live. Now there are other issues that have developed such as poor air quality is a significant health problem. The Department had tried over and over again. I know Vern and Craig did a number of fascinating projects to try to identify greenways between the smaller communities, and to establish them as permanent open spaces. They protect the identity of each of those neighboring communities, therefore, not grow together. One greenway that has gradually disappeared is the one between Providence and River Heights. The one between Logan and Smithfield is, to a large degree, disappearing rapidly. How do you stop it once it starts? It's a cancer. It is very hard to stop that kind of growth. Las Vegas never made an attempt to stop it. The Salt Lake Valley is another example. Cache County

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supervisors and the individual city councils, and each of the communities can still slow it down and reorganize it, make it better. It's the will of the politician that's missing now.

AS: Am I correct that you served on the Cache County Council for a time?

GS: Board of Supervisors? No.

GS: No I didn't. At the time I was here there wasn't a special council for each county. It was called BRAG, Bridgerland Regional Association of Governments.

AS: Bear River Association of Governments.

GS: Yes, that one had started and it was funded state wide. It has done a pretty good service. I am not sure about what its status is today.

AS: Still working hard for us.

GS: Is it? Good.

AS: A graduate of our program and of Dick's program is in charge of the planning wing of it. Moving us ahead, stop me if there are other things, but I would like to talk about your transition from LAEP to Cal Poly.

GS: The transition was pretty easy for me because I took a sabbatical leave in 1974/75. I had heard about California Polytechnic State University and that a new program in landscape architecture had been created. San Luis Obispo is a wonderful place, and particularly nice because it is half way between San Francisco and Los Angeles. The city is about the same size as Logan. So I applied there, saying I was going to be on sabbatical, and if there would be an opportunity I would love to come and teach part-time. They liked the idea, and I went for two quarters.

I enjoyed it while I was there; I met the entire faculty, and got to know a lot of students very well. In fact they kept in contact with me, inviting me back for lectures one week each year. I continued to go back for almost five years. Then they advertised in 1979 for a Department Head position. The dean was told to re-organize the School into five separate departments. So they were looking to hire their first department head. I

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interviewed for it in the spring of 1979, and was offered the position. It was a hard decision for me, since I really liked the department here. My wife and I agreed that, professionally, it would be an excellent opportunity for me. The student enrollment, faculty size, and budget at Cal Poly were larger than at USU. The administrative responsibilities came naturally to me. I have always considered myself as a pretty creative guy. No matter what type of environment I am in, I am going to try and find the higher ground and look for creative solutions. A good analogy would be enjoying adolescence, and then when you get caught doing something that you weren't suppose to do, begging forgiveness. The program of Landscape Architecture at Cal Poly was in its adolescence when I got there. It had just received its first national accreditation, and the number one requirement was to have a landscape architect as its department head. So I did that and I just fell in love with the curriculum changes that we went through, and the faculty was energetic about it too. They were looking for new ideas, that were landscape architecture ideas, not architecture ideas. It was a tough battle with the Dean who didn't want to departmentalize that program in the first place. I missed the fiftieth anniversary celebration of LAEP here, because the Dean gave me a weekend long assignment, that weekend, to write up a report on something or other, I don't even remember, but I had to have it in his office Monday morning. He knew I was planning to go to Utah, and his assignment would prevent me from attending. That is why I'm looking forward to the seventy-fifth anniversary.

AS: With that transition, what do you view as your legacy, your lasting impact on this Department here?

GS: I have come back often. When I was here one of the things that we started early when Burt Taylor was still the Department Head, though he never participated, but he knew what we were doing. Several of us were from outside Utah, and it was important for us to get to know one another. It was time to find bonding. So every fall, before school started, the faculty would go fly fishing up to Henry's Fork of the Snake River. It would be just an extended weekend, but it was to develop camaraderie among the faculty. We did the cooking. We slept in a large tent at first. It was just a lot of fun, and we became close friends. As a result of that, it's been continued up until just recently. I am hoping that it

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will be continued, as there are many benefits. I have been invited to come back just about every year, and I have tried to come back when I can. If I can't it was due to a commitment.

Legacies for here? I think it was a collective legacy. I won't be so bold as to say it was mine, because I don't take ownership readily of things when there were several people that collectively created the uniqueness of the experience. I will say that I think I brought a lot of joy here, to the Department, a lot of opportunities to look at design from the stand point of fooling around in a jovial way, humorous ways, but in a very serious way, knowing that there are many ways to find solutions in design. Whatever it is, site design, regionalism, urban design, coming up with construction detailing, it's all design. How to break through that locked up nature that all of us confront in design, we don't know where to go from here in the design process. I think I brought some potential ideas to the Department, and to the students, that helped in that regard.

I don't know. My wife and I have travelled a lot since we were married. I had a research fellowship at the University of Melbourne, Australia. Spent a lot of time there, I go back often for lectures. Sally and I went back there for two months in 2011.

I don't know as I left a legacy here. That's something others and history will determine.

AS: Some of these next questions cover not just your time here, but into your time at Cal Poly, and sort of changes within the broader landscape architecture, and the first one was technology. I wanted you to reflect on how technology has changed landscape architecture education and landscape architecture in general.

GS: I won't elaborate on it too much, other than saying that technology is a two edged sword, or two heads. One, it is an absolute savior of time if we manage it that way. It can also be a consumer of time if we don't manage it well. All the way from initially large mainframe computer down to a laptop, a Mac Book Pro, an iPad, whatever brand one works with, iPhones, Blackberries, Samsung, they all facilitate and manage data for us at a sometimes 'magical' speed of communication and analysis. I've been officially retired, but that term scares me. I don't know what that word is. I am afraid of that word, if I did understand it, because I just have too many things going on in my life all the time that keep me busy

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and keep me excited. I would say management of technology is probably a key. One of the things that bothers me today about the role of technology is that I am finding that it has the potential of eroding away the eye-hand coordination of drawing and writing. Technology has that potential, if we are not careful with managing it. Even at a hand held device, if we are not careful we'll forget about the value of using an ink pen, pencil, or brush. We will forget about being able to communicate in a business office, or a face-to-face meeting with a client. How important is it to do a sketch of an idea, on the spot? Those skills are yet to be really institutionalized in technology today. There are ways to do some sketching, freehand sketching, and I know some landscape architects who can do that pretty well, but I would be cautious of depending on that technology too much. The potential of being categorized as a specialist in technology, or a branch of technology is huge. What we end up having are faculty, and practitioners who are specialists in that particular area. They feel uncomfortable when they get outside of that boundary of that specialization.

I grew up professionally as a generalist. Where I could teach, I could perform, I could practice in a number of different scales of design. I can do construction drawings and detailing. I can do irrigation. I can do planting design. I know what to look for ecologically. I know what maintenance means. I know a lot about how to speak that kind of terminology and those concepts to the client. A specialist gets lost. Of course, there are benefits in specialization. Possessing expertise in a specific area of research is always good. I would also propose that being a generalist can also be a specialty. Becoming a specialist who is a manager, who can understand the various whims and direction, and needs to pursue other things that aren't being pursued now. That is a specialty, being a generalist is a specialty as well.

As a close, I think there is a time worn comment, but I think it applies to landscape architecture more so than in any other profession, and that is that "the whole must always be greater than the sum of its parts." If you think about the real meaning in that, then that means that networking, those parts together, to a simplified, holistic solution is of immense value. Process is absolutely important. If you don't go through a process then we get caught in the downfall of those specializations. We find that the little answer we

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get in a specialized solution becomes more important than its relationship to all of the little, but important individual solutions. They have to, at some point or another, be nested together. Not everybody can do that.