A TEI Project

Interview of Raymond Kappe

Contents

1. Transcript

1.1. TAPE NUMBER: I, Side One (September 19, 1995)

SMITH

> Mr. Kappe, let's begin at the beginning. Why don't you tell me a little bit about your family background.

KAPPE

> Well, I was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 1927. My grandfather [Herman Kapelovitz] was a house and barn builder in North Dakota. My father [Phineas Kappe] was a hairdresser, and my mother [Betty Gold Kappe] was a milliner

and hat designer in her younger days. I lived there for the first nine years of my life. And I guess the only things that pertained to what I eventually became were, one, I drew a lot. I was always involved with drawing from the time I was a little boy. I went to the Walker Art Center and the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, a private art school. That formed somewhat the basis for my interest in the drawing aspect, at least, of architecture. I think Minneapolis is a special place in terms of the lakes, the parks, the trees, and the city. I think it's the general character of the city itself that has a certain amount of influence on my background as well.Other than that, when I was ten we came to California. We spent one year here at that time. It was the last period of time that I was involved in art classes. I went to Chouinard [Art Institute] when I was here while also attending school. Then, again, we went back to Minneapolis the following year, and we were there for another couple of years.I guess another influence upon my beginning was probably just the fact that, in traveling across the country back and forth, there were special places along the way that sometimes had an effect upon me. I especially remember stopping at some of the national parks and Glacier National Park particularly. The lodges always had a major effect upon me: I guess the spaces, the way they were built, the quality of the construction. Those things I remember having strong memories about. Also sometimes we would end up in some special little cabin over a creek. That was always quite unusual, because the majority of places in those days, in the late thirties, when you traveled across the country were little cabins that were not very interesting. So those are the important visions that I remember from my youth.My days in junior high and high school were really not involved with art much. I enjoyed math and sciences. I've always enjoyed sports. So I guess most of my energy and time was in those areas.In later years, I didn't take any additional art classes. I took some drafting classes, like many would. But it wasn't probably until about eleventh grade that I became really interested in architecture at all. Prior to that, I assumed I would probably go into engineering in some form or other, because that seemed to be my strength. But then I read an article on architecture, and it was spelling out what architects do and the combination of skills and talents that one needs. It seemed to me that it was about the only field that brought together my beginnings in art and then my later involvements in math and science.

Before you get too far ahead here, I want to ask you a few more questions about your early family background. The grandfather that was the barn builder, was that maternal grandfather or paternal?

KAPPE

That was paternal. Actually, he passed away when I was just four years old, so I never really experienced any of his buildings. But maybe just the fact that he was both cabinetmaker and builder, maybe some of that was passed down. My parents, again being involved in areas that did concern themselves with hands and craft and the making of things or doing of things, probably had some effect as well. So I guess that aspect must have been inherited to some degree, but it was never as conscious as it should have been. Had I been around my grandfather more, I probably would have been affected even more so. But it's just sort of interesting to me that without having done that certain abilities seemed to be passed down in some form or another.

SMITH

Almost genetically or something like that.

KAPPE

Maybe. That's the only way I can think of it, because it was never a conscious thing, you know.

SMITH

Did your parents used to point out buildings that your grandfather had built?

KAPPE

No, because he was in North Dakota; we were in Minneapolis. My dad wasn't very much interested in the field. I guess it was that as a kid he would work with his father sometimes, but he didn't enjoy the work that much. Either that or he didn't enjoy working with his father. I guess it would have been the old European ethic where one would be usually fairly strict when they would deal with their children, rather than being sympathetic to how one would learn.

SMITH

So your grandfather was an immigrant, then?

KAPPE

Yes. Both families immigrated from Romania, which also has a strong wood tradition as well. So I don't know how all that plays, but it seemed to somehow.

SMITH

Were your parents from Romania or your grand-parents?

KAPPE

My mother was. My father was born here. My mother was from Romania.

SMITH

Okay. And what were your parents' names?

KAPPE

Well, my mother's name was Betty. Do you want both names or--?

SMITH

Sure.

KAPPE

Betty Gold [Kappe]. My father's name was Phineas [Kappe]. Actually, the name originally was Kapelovitz, and then it was shortened to Kappe because of my father's work, which was hairdressing. My mother felt that the name was too long, so it was changed.

SMITH

It wouldn't fit on the sign outside the store?

KAPPE

Right, right. Or it didn't sound as whatever.

SMITH

He had a shop, his own shop, in Minneapolis?

KAPPE

He had his own shop in Minneapolis, right.

SMITH

And your mother?

KAPPE

My mother worked with him. But prior to that, when she first came over from Europe as a young girl, where she apprenticed as a milliner, she worked in New York, Chicago, and Minneapolis in her field. But once married, for a while she worked in her own field and then worked with my dad after that.

SMITH

What was behind the decision to come to California for a year?

KAPPE

I guess just the weather. My dad wanted to come here. He liked it better here and came out when I was ten, and then went back. Then we came back out when I was about thirteen, and we stayed after that.

SMITH

And what city did you live in out here?

KAPPE

Los Angeles. Actually I ended up going to Emerson Junior High [School] and University High School when we finally settled. So we were in West L.A.

SMITH

You also mentioned about this early interest in drawing and going to the Walker institute and art school, I guess, back in Minneapolis. So is this something that your parents encouraged? Or was this more your own initiative?

KAPPE

No. I guess my parents encouraged it really. They knew I had the interest, and I guess they encouraged my going on to do more. Because, as my mother said, I was always drawing from the time I was a little boy. I was an only child, and so I had more time to myself. And maybe being a little more introspective at that time, I just enjoyed drawing. But you know that later it became very

secondary in my life at certain stages, as I said. Through the junior high and high school years, it was pretty much sublimated.

SMITH

And that was because you became more interested in math and science or--?

KAPPE

I guess in other things. Maybe due to the fact that I'd spent so much time as a youngster drawing, and I just had other interests at that time, I didn't spend the time in that area. Architecture was really a later development. It's unlike many people in the field who, you know, are very much involved earlier and get inspired early. It wasn't that way with me. It was much later.

SMITH

And you said really it was this article that you read.

KAPPE

Right. This one article that seemed to put the material together right for me--you know, put it together in a way that it seemed to make sense. And I guess just being the way I am, it meshed properly, and it seemed like the best-- I always felt even though I did very well in all my math and science courses, I didn't feel I had a real strong bent, say, to be an engineer. I didn't have a drive to be in the sciences particularly. None of those things. I felt I could have succeeded all right in those fields, but I didn't feel that they were something real special. The fact that I could combine now two abilities and two talents, I felt might end up being a way to go that would work better for me. I always enjoyed drafting courses as well. I took them in junior high and high school, and always did well in them. And so that too. We did do some architectural drawing in those classes, but what you did wasn't so interesting that it really was pulling at me, I don't think. Really the fact that I could combine the best of my abilities, I thought, in this field was what happened.

SMITH

So even though you left the arts as you became a teenager, you still had the sense that you had a strength there.

KAPPE

I had a strength there, yeah.

SMITH

What high school did you go to?

KAPPE

University High School in West L.A.

SMITH

So right close here?

KAPPE

Right. I haven't traveled too far since high school. [laughter]

SMITH

And did your parents live in Pacific Palisades?

KAPPE

No, in Westwood. They also had a business in Santa Monica during the war years. They went into a women's clothing business, retail. So all those years they were in Santa Monica, we pretty much lived in this part of the city.

SMITH

It almost sounds like your parents took turns. I mean, your father had a hairdressing shop for a while, and then went into sort of a business that seems to be--

KAPPE

More related to my mother?

SMITH

Right, your mother's background.

KAPPE

Well, what it was-- My father had a problem with solutions. That created a situation with his hands breaking out, and he actually gave up his profession at that time. My mother had worked in women's clothing as well with my aunt

[Faye Lane]. They decided that maybe they would go into that business, which is what they did.

SMITH

So before you went to architecture school, what were your perceptions of what an architect did? I mean, you said you had read this article.

KAPPE

Right. Like any young person, you think of it more as just a person who designs houses particularly. It would seem like most architectural students think that way, more residentially rather than major buildings. I guess that's because one can respond or relate to houses more easily than larger structures. I don't know. I mean, I knew what an architect did, but in my mind it wasn't like some kind of major dream. I just looked at it as a profession that I could probably do all right with, and if not, I could always work as a draftsman. My goals were not, in those days, that high somehow. I hadn't read a lot about architects or architecture. I'd looked at houses and buildings like anyone would, but with no special insight, I don't think. Just fairly normal. It wasn't till later, you know, that I got involved.Do you want me to go on into my next period or--?

SMITH

I was thinking-- After you'd made the decision that you wanted to be an architect, that was in high school?

KAPPE

That was like eleventh grade.

SMITH

Did you become more perceptive of the built environment in Los Angeles?

KAPPE

A little. A little bit. I don't think I was that overly conscious at that particular point in time. It wasn't until later, as my education went on and as I became more involved, that my perception became more and more strong. But it wasn't earlier somehow. I don't know why; I guess there was nothing there. There wasn't a force that was working at, say, the high school level that made me think that way.In fact, my whole thinking process probably in high school

was nothing special. I did very well gradewise, but there wasn't any real consciousness of the world at that time. I didn't come from a family that was strongly academic in their background or really so conscious of these kinds of things. I think they were more into their own business or own world of fairly simple situations. It probably wasn't until I went to the university and really became more independent in my life that I began to really become more conscious of things, more perceptive, and begin to have a little more of my own thinking process. I don't think that's so unusual in the era that I grew up in, but I think young people today are more conscious of things earlier, which might make their life a little more difficult. I mean, if you are conscious too soon, things become more difficult, where I guess my life seemed quite simple to me. It's hard to know. Of course, I was in the army for a year.

SMITH

Now, were you in World War II or had it already ended?

KAPPE

I was drafted right at the end of the war.

SMITH

So this is 1945?

KAPPE

I graduated in '45 from high school, and then I went to UCLA for a semester, waiting, because I knew I'd probably be drafted. So I was just taking course material, I think, for one semester, and then I was drafted. I was in the service for a year in the United States Army Corps of Engineers, and actually ended up as a surveying instructor in Fort Belvoir. That's outside of Washington, D.C., in Arlington [Virginia]. I guess during that year, there were a couple of other soldiers there who were interested in architecture. I began to think more and more about it. And when I got out, because I was between semesters, I went to work for an architecture engineering firm in downtown Los Angeles and then went to [University of California] Berkeley the following fall. So I had about six months of work, then I went off to Berkeley that fall.

SMITH

What was the name of the firm that you worked at in the interim?

KAPPE

Donald R. Warren Company.

SMITH

And were they residential designs?

KAPPE

No. No, they were primarily an engineering firm. They did some architecture with their engineering. I was sort of everything there. I mean, I did a little of everything in that office, from surveying to working with the engineers to working with the architects to a variety of things. It was a nice experience just coming out of the service and having that introduction before I went off to school.

SMITH

So the army taught you how to survey?

KAPPE

Yeah. I had two weeks, really, of instruction, and then I became a teacher. Because what happened was all the fathers were being discharged at that time, and so there were a lot of voids, and so they took the best students and they made them instructors. There were about three or four of us who became teachers of surveying after two weeks of learning. It's pretty simple.

SMITH

But do you think that that gave any sort of--?

KAPPE

No. Those were all kind of natural things to me. I always lettered well. I did all those kinds of things well. But that's what helped me get the job when I got out--because I could print well and draw decently, I also could do surveying, and I could type. So they used me all around. It was really an office boy job, but I did a fair amount of drafting as well. I'd be with the mechanical engineers one time and the electrical engineers another time and the architects another time. But it was interesting for a beginning. It was not the kind of job I would have selected after I got out of school. But it was an interesting job even to

get. Just to get employment at that time, with no real experience, was pretty good for me.

SMITH

So did it cement further your desire to be an architect?

KAPPE

I guess. You know, I guess by that time I had made up my mind anyway what I was going to do. I felt comfortable in what I was doing, and it seemed good to me at that time. So then from there I went on to architectural school.

SMITH

So you chose Berkeley. Some particular reason that you wanted to go to Berkeley?

KAPPE

Well, there were two things. First of all, I applied at USC [University of Southern California] before. And USC after the war was jammed up, and they said I would have to wait about a year to get in. I didn't want to wait, for one thing, and, two, at UCLA, where I had already gone, Berkeley would take those credits directly. They also took all of my army credits, so the combination was much better for me in terms of just going up to Berkeley directly. And I think it was a good choice. That's the reason: it was more to expedite, than anything else, my education. I didn't want to wait. Also, I had always considered the UC [University of California] system better than USC. I had a pretty high GPA [grade point average] coming out of high school, and I couldn't understand why I should be waiting around for USC, which in those days was the school you went to if you didn't have the grades to get into the UC system. At least that's the way I perceived the two schools in those days. I think it was a good choice. I enjoyed going up to Berkeley and again remaining away from home, rather than being around home and having to be dependent. I preferred to develop as an individual.

SMITH

Now were you eligible for the G.I. Bill?

KAPPE

I was, yeah, which was especially good, having just served a year. I was just in that funny transition period. They really weren't interested in keeping us in the service, so we did get out then with a year. I think it got me just about through my whole education, which was about as little time as you could put in to max out total education. So it worked well for me that way too.I can go on. Do you want me to talk about Berkeley a little bit, or no?

SMITH

Yeah, why don't you tell me what the curriculum was like.

KAPPE

When you compare it to today's curricula, it was really quite meager. But we were in the transition from beaux arts to modern architecture at that time. The School [of Architecture] itself was really a four-year school. At Berkeley, you got your bachelor's at the end of four years, then a master's at the end of five, which was not the way architecture schools were later. Usually it was a five-year bachelor's and either six or seven to the master's. But at that time it was four. And actually the basic curriculum for the first two years was really general education with a couple of courses that were more just drawing-, graphic-oriented courses, not what I would call design courses as we would refer to them today. It was more ink drawings, shades and shadows--those kinds of things. We used sumi washes that were still part of the beaux arts training. We didn't really get into our architectural design till the end of the second year. There was one semester of design in the first two years and two years of design following that. So the total design curriculum was a two-and-a-half-year design curriculum, say, versus five years, which is more typical today. The one thing that we did in those days that we don't do today was that we had many short problems. Everything there was based on five-week-length problems. Today most problems are semester-long.I think the strength of that whole curriculum at Berkeley when I was there was the fact that there was no dogma. There weren't any really strong teachers. Students were left to their own devices if they so desired. You didn't really have to come to crit [critical review] sessions. The normal process of teaching architecture is one-on-one crit teaching, where you come into the studio and you work closely with an instructor day after day after day. At that time, instructors didn't really care if we came in or didn't come in, which was a little more like the European

system or the way the beaux arts system was. People were left more to their own devices. So there's a combination of learning from seeing and learning almost through one's own device of learning, more than it was a heavy-duty teaching program. For people who enjoy a kind of self-teaching or learning by themselves it's a great system. It's not as good for those who need a lot of assistance and a lot of help and don't like to make decisions for themselves.I think that I found it to be very, very useful for me, because I enjoyed self-learning and I also enjoyed almost testing myself against the person who is teaching rather than the other way. So when I would receive crits that were negative, I just wouldn't go back. I would turn in my project at the end, and usually I scored well. And this begins to give you a lot of self-confidence, because you begin to understand that you have to come out of yourself, you have to take a direction on your own rather than wait for somebody always to be directing you. And that quite often what a teacher says in a crit does not always hold up, and they don't always evaluate it the same way later.I find that too many students tend to lean on the instructor too much in the system that we have today. In their desire to get a grade and to please, they tend to, I think, lose sight of who they are and what thoughts they have and directions that they want to take. So I think your strength of character quite often comes out of working not always with but sometimes against the forces that are playing upon you. Anyway, I felt that it was a good process.Excuse me. The other thing I forgot to say very early on-- I'm going to backtrack for a second, because it's brought to mind something else. The fact when I was a child that we moved back and forth between Minneapolis and California quite a few times, and the fact that I had to change schools quite a bit and systems quite a bit, I think, was very difficult at first for me. But it became a very strengthening process. Succeeding within that kind of a process of change made it possible, I think, for me to become more independent in my own self, too--that I could succeed with this and needed less of a secure base. So I felt better about challenge and being able to push out that way.

SMITH

And that sort of translated to your experience at Berkeley?

KAPPE

I think so. I think that did make a big difference, and it did translate to the way I felt at Berkeley. I was always comfortable with that process and the idea of succeeding by myself. I felt in many ways I was somewhat self-taught. When I think about education, since I've been involved with it so much in my life, I think it's an important process. I know so many architects who weren't educated in a traditional fashion who become some of the better architects. I think there's so much indoctrination in the process now, and so often the professors are too involved with their own self-importance, that they forget what it means to make it possible for somebody to develop within themselves. They're more involved in pushing what they think is important on a student, and that can be pushed upon them or placed upon them at any point in time, which is not always consistent. I mean, I've seen so many young professors who change their points of view, and whatever it is at any point in time is the only thing that matters or the only thing that's important at that time. I think it gives a distorted emphasis and also distorts the education of many young people. If they're not strong enough to bring it out of themselves and to fight this type of mentality, or even understand that it can be argued with or fought, I think this leaves many without a strong enough conviction, really, when they get into the field.I think what ended up being the most important thing to me was the fact that that we had this type of education, which today would be categorized as non-education, you know. It's interesting. One of my classmates was Gerald [M.] McCue, who's the dean of [Graduate School of Design at] Harvard [University] and has been for a long time. Out of this same process come people who have been involved very strongly in education and have done well in the field. And there were as many successful, I think, architects coming out of that process as in the other process. I criticized it later when I became involved in education, because I thought it was lacking. But in retrospect I feel it was strong, it was good.So there were no real mentors for me at Berkeley. There were some nice people and teachers that were fine. The only strong personality when I was there would have been Erich Mendelsohn, who taught only in the graduate program. I decided not to do graduate work, because in my senior year I was working full-time. I only had design. I would work forty hours a week and I would just take off every five weeks for two days or so to turn in my projects, and that was my whole last year of education. Even in this process my grades were high and I scored high in design, so it was kind of odd. But working with firms in the city, I think

there was a lot to learn there. And I guess the second phase of my education is really in the practical world.

1.2. TAPE NUMBER: I, Side Two (September 19, 1995)

SMITH

So architecture school seemed like a very individual sort of experience for you?

KAPPE

Well, it was, mostly. I was more of a loner as well. I mean, some students were together, and they work in groups. In other words, they work their individual project, but they're always being more social in their interactions while they're working. My tendency was usually to work at my place rather than working in the other way. I had a few closer friends, some of them in the same fraternity as I was [Sigma Alpha Mu]. I had an older friend [Howard Friedman] who was a year or two ahead of me at school. He was usually helpful in terms of also interacting with me. There were some others in the fraternity who were also in architecture. We had that closeness, but then I also moved out of the fraternity house, I think, in my junior year. I wasn't around after my sophomore year. So there was a little more camaraderie probably in those early periods where we were doing more ink drawings and washes and things like that. Later, in the major design classes, I worked pretty much alone. Even among the students in my classes, I wouldn't say I was very close with anybody particularly. I've always been that kind of a worker, I guess, more where I like to work without a lot of people, a lot of interaction, and when I work, I prefer to be by myself. That was the way I was in school, and, I guess, that's the way I still am.I think learning from other students is more from seeing their work presented and just perceiving from what you take in through your own consciousness and your subconsciousness of other people's work, the same way that I think one learns architecture quite often by reading, by seeing, by digesting the work of others, whether it be Frank Lloyd Wright or Richard [J.] Neutra or any of the architects who preceded me in Southern California. It was just, I guess, the ability to understand their vocabulary. What you do in architecture, like you do in language, you build up a vocabulary of images and processes for working and comprehension of the way another

person puts something together and understands it. That was what I meant by self-learning too. It was the ability to do that. Some young people have that ability and others don't. Having taught now for many years, again I see that some students never are able to grasp things like that. They can look, but they don't digest. And that's strange. Others do it very easily. I don't know what that process is exactly. I have no understanding about it. So I did a certain amount of that. You learn drawing techniques that way, various ways of presenting your work. Some people have better abilities than others. And so you learn what you can do easily and what you can do well, and you lean on those things as you go through school. That was just part of the process.When you really take my education and put it down in terms of time, there really isn't that much time, because as I said, we really started design in the second half of the second year, the sophomore year. I had one [year], junior year, that I really spent in school. In the senior year, I was really working outside the school more than I was inside the school. I don't think I had more than six crit sessions with the professors during that period of time. So I was really working independently.My learning was in the office itself, and at that time I was working for Anshen and Allen. It's a good firm in the city of San Francisco, and I learned a great deal quickly there. I was always a pretty fast learner, quick to pick up. In fact, when I first started there, I was working too quickly and too fast. Those who were in the same position as I was were working so much slower than I was that I had to begin to slow myself down so I wasn't jeopardizing their positions.

SMITH

What year did you start with Anshen and Allen?

KAPPE

It was 1950, I think. Either '50 or '51.

SMITH

And how did you get that--? Was it a job or an internship?

KAPPE

It was a job.

SMITH

Did they have a tradition of hiring people from Berkeley or--?

KAPPE

No, no. Shelly [Diamond Kappe] and I got married my senior year, and I just came back with a list of architects that I thought were good architects in San Francisco. I just went from office to office and I showed my work, and they happened to have an opening. So I started there. And having had a little bit of experience before at Donald R. Warren Company was useful, so I had at least some experience. Then we had one class at Berkeley where we did a set of construction documents of a small house, and that impressed Bob [Robert] Anshen enough to hire me. But the general tradition is to hire young people in smaller offices particularly. And that was the way it was.There were many people in that office. It wasn't that large an office. But in the basic group there were several from Taliesin, so there was a lot of Wrightian influence. There was another person [Claude Oakland] who headed up all the [Joseph] Eichler homes, and he actually was educated by Bruce Goff, so there were some interesting individuals there as well. Bob Anshen was a particularly marvelous character. I mean, he was a real oddball, but a real character, had special talents. Steve [W. Stephen] Allen had other talents. And even in a short period of time, there was a lot to learn from all of them. I think that was very useful for me at the beginning.And after that, in I guess about the second semester of my senior year, I decided I wanted to get some other experience, so I went to work for a firm [Schmitz and Hartman] that did mostly schools over in Berkeley. I spent some time there. But that was really a dull firm. It was nothing. I didn't really learn much there other than how I didn't want to run a practice. There was no vitality. There was no design strength, and so that was short-term. I graduated, and then we left and we came back to Los Angeles.

SMITH

So were you mostly working on residential architecture in Anshen and Allen?

KAPPE

Both. I was working on Eichler homes for a while. They were also doing Standard Oil [Company] stations. So for a while I was working on Standard stations, and then I think one or two private residences. That was sort of my whole experience there. I went to this next firm, which was doing more of an

institutional-type work, and then we left and came down here. I can pick up on that if you want me to.

SMITH

Did you actually meet Joseph Eichler?

KAPPE

No, no. I don't remember ever seeing him come into the office at the time that I was there.

SMITH

And this is previous to his association with [A.] Quincy Jones?

KAPPE

Quincy Jones, right. Right. Anshen and Allen were doing his first houses, and they were nice houses. They were simple, but I think there was a lot to learn there. Both good and bad. I mean, the detailing was so simple that-- For me, it became the basis for what I did, but a lot of it must have had the same problems that we all have, a certain amount of leakage problems, not put together probably as well as they should have been in many ways. But it was still an interesting minimal detailing process. Honest buildings, simple buildings, but good ones. It was good experience, I think, for starters.One of the best things that happened to me in that office was very early on, when I was asked to design a built-in table or something of that sort. I went to one of the guys who was over me and I said, "Is there a detail that you've used before for this or is there something that I should be following when I do this?" And he said to me, "No." He said, "Everything is an invention. You do it whatever way you want to." That was really a great eye-opener, because for me from that point on, everything was dealt with that way. It was never "What is the conventional way? What is the typical way?" It sort of said, "You know, it's all open." That's the opposite of what you learn in most offices. Most offices would say, "These are our typical details. This is the typical way we do it. This is the way we want you to do it. If you're going to do this, you go to the catalog, and this is the one we will choose here." It's a very conventional method of approaching architecture, which is another way. It's another thing. I'm not putting that down. But I was glad that I became involved the other

way, which is more the invention rather than the tradition or the convention.And I think that's real important. Most architects who do surface as leaders in the field are usually inventing and working that way rather than always working through conventional processes. More of your service-oriented-type architectural firms work the other way more often. It's safer, so they try to be safe and not have problems. And the architects who are more inventive always have the potential to get themselves into more problems, but also sometimes we solve things in much more interesting ways. So that was good learning.

SMITH

The firm that did the schools, they took more of a conventional approach to their architecture?

KAPPE

Very conventional, yeah. And the office ran that way. The office was not inspired. It was, you put in your time, you take your coffee breaks, you take your lunch-- I mean, it was that kind of an office that never worked well for me. It wasn't very exciting. And from there, I came down here and went through the next layer of experience. I thought I wanted to go to work for a large firm when I came back to Los Angeles to see what that would feel like, because my last firm was sort of a middle-range firm. Anshen and Allen would be categorized as a small firm, really.

SMITH

What was the name of the firm that did the schools?

KAPPE

Schmitz and Hartman, something like that. But when I came here, I went to work with [William L.] Pereira and [Charles] Luckman. That was another quick experience for me. [laughter] The first few weeks were very good. I was waiting for some job, a bigger job, to break when I first started working there. I wasn't in the design department, but I was in production. I was given a small hospital addition to do on my own while I was waiting for something else to happen. At that time I was working with one of the principals there, Frank Gruze, and it was just a three-week project. It was a project that I worked on

by myself. After that, then I was into what happens to you in large firms, and that was that you usually get to do one phase. If you're doing bigger buildings, the junior draftsmen get to do the toilets or the stairways or those kinds of things, and that's what you're working on. I did that for a couple of weeks.Then, one day, I came back from lunch-- Again, it was another office that took its breaks. I never liked offices like that. I like offices where you didn't take a coffee break and you worked through, or you came in ten minutes late and you worked a half hour longer--you know, the hours were not important, it was the enjoyment of doing and fulfilling your job. I always liked to work that way, but again, larger firms have a whole set of rules. They want you to punch in usually on time, and they want you to break at this time and lunch at this time and so forth. They also have a whole set of rules on their drawings or even, "This lettering has to be this high and that has to be this and this has to be that." So there are many more basic rules to how you work.Anyway, one day I came back from lunch about ten minutes late, and the guy who I was working under said, "You know, we expect you to be on time around here." And so I gave him my feelings about all that. About a week later, I decided I didn't like working in big firms. That was six weeks total. So I left.I went to work for Carl Maston after that, which was, again, a firm more like Anshen and Allen. So quickly I had gone through two other scales of firms, decided I didn't like it, didn't feel I learned fast enough from those firms, and went back to the small firm where, again, with Carl, it was another very good learning experience over another two-year period.

SMITH

Was there any question after you graduated from Berkeley that you were going to move back to Los Angeles?

KAPPE

I don't really know why-- Originally, I don't think we were going to, but then our first son [Ron Kappe] was born. I guess we felt it would be better for the grandparents to have their grandkid around. I don't really know why we particularly left the [San Francisco] Bay Area. Both Shelly and I were from Los Angeles, and we decided to come back.

SMITH

So you met Mrs. Kappe in high school or--?

KAPPE

No, actually at UCLA. So I don't know, but we just decided to come back to L.A. In many ways I was glad I did, because Los Angeles, I think, was a more dynamic place to work than Berkeley or San Francisco. There was a great amount of work. The city had more problems at that time. There were more issues to become concerned with. I'm glad I made the decision, even though the Bay Area had its assets, which were, I think, a stronger tradition-- I think the clients were a different type from down here. They were both different, and I think Los Angeles was a good choice for me.

SMITH

But it wasn't necessarily anything that was going on in terms of architecture or building down here that made the decision for you?

KAPPE

No. Seriously, I can't remember exactly, other than the fact that our parents were here and our families were here and it just seemed like maybe it was time to leave and come down. I had been working with this firm and I didn't really enjoy it anymore--that school firm--and I wanted to quit that job. It was either going back and working with another firm in the Bay Area or I thought maybe it would be more interesting to move down to Los Angeles. There are probably more big firms down here than up there. I think Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill was probably the only large firm up there at that time that I can think of. Maybe there were others.

SMITH

So how did you hook up with Carl Maston?

KAPPE

Same way. In those days you just rolled up your drawings and whatever portfolio you had, and you'd wander from office to office. Again, I would always do it by selecting out architects that I respected from the work that had been published. I liked Carl's work. There were others that I had gone to see, too, but again, he had a need, and we hooked up. It was fortuitous for me. It was a very good experience. He was a pretty wonderful man, and I

learned a lot. It was really from there that I developed my beginnings in architecture. It was at that time that I began to have a base for where I wanted to go. SMITH: So what year did you start with Maston?

KAPPE

Carl would be right after-- 'Fifty-one, probably. I guess I was with Anshen and Allen in '50, and I guess that other school firm in early '51, and then later '51 I was with Carl. I was there two years. I don't know how far you want me to go with that or how you want me to get into that relationship.

SMITH

I'd like to hear about it. What do you feel that you learned in terms of design and profession?

KAPPE

Well, first of all, I immediately was able to be involved in design with Carl. I guess he was impressed that I had worked on Eichler homes. He took me in in a very good manner, and there was a lot of mutual respect. I think when I went to work for him, I was the only employee at that time, at that moment. He gave me a lot of responsibility. And I did the full works.Then I became, gradually, pretty much his designer. We worked very closely. I did most of the design development in the office. He would lead the project in terms of direction, but I would usually do the development. His practice was primarily residential and commercial. He had commercial clients that we would project buildings for. And they would be very quick. He actually worked with a real estate agent who had a lot of work up in Ventura County and various places. He would just say, "We have this building on this corner," and I would design the building in one day and draw the sketch and it would go off to this developer. Some of them went through, and some of them didn't. So those were a very quick kind of design process in which he really just left it up to me. He didn't really get too much involved with those projects in terms of design. In the houses he'd get more involved, and then I would usually work on design development and production drawing. So I did the full range of work in that office.Being in a little office is not too different from something like my office here. You hear everything that goes on. You hear all the phone conversations. You hear everything: the problems, the good things. And so there is an awful

lot of learning very quickly. Then in design attitude we were quite similar. I mean, the value of structure and the interplay, in and out. His work had its base in both Neutra and Wright. The buildings were simple, clean, direct, and well thought out in the way that he approached architecture. So there was a great deal of learning for me, even though I was also producing for him.Then finally I-- Well, I became licensed during that period. Then there was the opportunity to buy some property on National Boulevard that Carl had seen. He asked if I could get some investment money to do one, because there were two pieces of property, and he didn't have enough to buy both-- My dad was interested in doing some development, so we bought this land together with Carl. My first project was a small six-unit apartment building. It was a design-build project. Whenever Carl did projects for himself, he always built them too. It gave me the opportunity to do the same. So my first project was that type of project, and I could use the same subcontractors he used and the same people who worked on his projects. [tape recorder off] That was my first project, and it was very much in the manner of Carl. It was the same kind of architecture that we were doing in the office, and it was just picking up on that. It wasn't anything that was a big breakaway or anything. It was just a growth out of that process.I left and started my own firm at that time.

SMITH

So it sounds like he was very supportive. I mean, he was obviously getting some benefit from your work, but still he was encouraging you to go in on this deal where you could build your own building. He must have realized you were-- He was helping you launch your--

KAPPE

My career. I think most architects think like that--the idea that you're going through the office to move on. Some people don't. But in a small office, that's sort of the mentality. It's an apprenticeship, really, during the period of time where you're beginning to learn truly if you have the ability or desire to go off on your own. I guess he expected me to anyway, because I remember when he was doing a student housing project for UCLA, I'd just become licensed, and he asked if I wanted to associate with him, because it was going to be a spec[ulative] thing. And I said, "Fine." So I designed it. It didn't go ahead but-- So already we were sort of associating at that time. Then, as you surmised,

when we got into the apartment project, he was also encouraging me to move off on my own.And I would have anyway, because I was always in a hurry. As soon as I had my time in for licensing, I became licensed, practically to the day, and I was ready to move off into my own practice. There was work in those days. This was after the war, not too many years after, and I always felt that if I didn't get started early enough, the work would begin to diminish. So I was in a hurry.From the apartment that I did, I had about three clients immediately for houses, and another one for an apartment. The work came in very quickly after that first project, which was something that happened in those days. It doesn't happen as often today as it did then. But then you would build upon your work. There was no marketing. There was no self-promotion. It was just your work went up, people saw it, and they would come to you. I had many people in the aerospace industry, which was coming on very strongly in Los Angeles in those days. They were mostly engineers, and the engineers were all very good clients. That was the early work.

SMITH

So was it through Maston that you developed an interest in the post and beam idiom? Or had you been interested--?

KAPPE

Well, to some degree, yes. I was doing a certain amount of post and beam on the Eichlers, for starters. Then with Carl, we continued to do post and beam construction. Some of it was just not post and beam. Some was bearing wall and roof construction. But that's where the interest started. There were several of us at that time who were interested in what would be the best idiom for L.A. I think that's when many of us looked back at [Charles S.] Greene and [Henry M.] Greene again and tried to reinterpret their work through the way Harwell [Hamilton] Harris had looked at it--this along with some of Neutra's qualities in his work, which were pavilion-like and light and pushed out into the landscape. Some of that was incorporated in Carl's work as well, but not quite in the same way that I reinterpreted it.So then I guess the evolution that takes place is what I was trying to describe earlier. I think along the way there's certain things that go into your subconscious. There are things you see, things you perceive, things that you seem to store away. You don't realize you're doing all this storing, but that's what seems to happen in

this field. I guess it does in other arts and other fields. Then that eventually comes out. Some people consciously work to do something like somebody else. But this was never my goal, to do it consciously. It was sort of a subconscious process for me. It was usually problem solving, dealing with site, with the client's needs, the process of construction, putting things together. All of that was just part of the whole vocabulary and the way one begins to work.There are those influences that exist, and they are there through people who precede you. In our day, in my time, there wasn't any great desire to, I think, leave the established modern architectural base. It was really the idea of extending it. There wasn't so much modern architecture that you felt you had to find the new way. The object was really to be part of a continuum, the continuum of the people who had preceded. I think we were more of a force that worked together to evolve into more and more modern architecture. So it was a different point of view. Not that we weren't interested as well in the way we did it, our own development. But it wasn't so driving as it has been, say, in the last fifteen years to be the exception. I think we just wanted to be part of the total. So that's sort of the way it all evolved. People like [Raphael] Soriano or [Ludwig] Mies [van der Rohe] or the others that had worked in steel, this also was interesting to me. But there wasn't nearly the acceptance among the population for steel construction. There was much more work in wood construction. So my tendency was to deal with these issues in wood rather than in steel. I guess I was more interested in doing more work and learning than in maybe being so precious about wanting to do something pure like steel buildings. I always enjoyed that. I enjoy all construction processes, but I was willing to compromise that part of it. Harwell Harris was the best proponent of that, just preceding me and preceding Carl and preceding some of the other people. But it all comes out of the California tradition, which does go Greene and Greene and then Irving Gill and then Neutra, [Rudolph M.] Schindler and Harris, [Gregory] Ain and Soriano-- And then comes the next, the after-World War II, generation.

SMITH

So Maston learned a lot from Harris then?

KAPPE

No. Well, I don't know. He attributes more of his base to Wright, and yet his work is not Wrightian at all, I mean, in the sense that you would think of it. His work would feel more Neutra-like. Yet when asked was his strongest influence Neutra, he would say no. I didn't understand exactly why he felt that way. Or he would even talk to it in terms of being influenced by Bay Area architecture.

SMITH

Like [Bernard] Maybeck?

KAPPE

No, not that. I think more of the modern people, but because of the material he used-- There was more use of redwood up there and so forth, and I sort of brought some of that tradition down with me too. I don't think he ever mentioned the name Harwell Harris when I was there at all. I was more influenced just through the magazines at that time. Some of Harris's work was being published more. There was also another associate of his that worked with him, a young person named Gordon Drake. He had some small work being published at that time. And there was a certain influence from that. That work predominated more at USC. There was a whole group that began to work that way at USC early on. Cal [Calvin C.] Straub was one of them, but Harris had taught over there too. So there was that whole evolution going on there.

SMITH

Maston wasn't so much associated with what was going on at USC?

KAPPE

Well, he went to USC before the war, so he was already out. He knew Soriano in school, because Carl was also Italian. So was Soriano. And they had kind of a thing together. Soriano was kind of the oddball at school, always fighting the tradition. They also were in a beaux arts tradition at that time. Kind of coming out of it, but slowly. His first house for himself was not so much a part of--I don't think--the Southern California tradition. It had a uniqueness of its own. It didn't really follow anything particularly. It would be more like some of the simpler Case Study houses, but it had a different quality. And how it evolved? I don't know, because he was a young architect then, also growing and thinking.

You know, he was probably in his thirties. I was in my twenties. So it wasn't like he was already a fifty-year-old architect or something. He was evolving.

SMITH

That was something I was noticing when I did the research, that it wasn't that big a difference in age between the two of you, so--

KAPPE

No. Nor between Anshen and Allen and me-- These were all post-World War II young architects getting started.

1.3. TAPE NUMBER: II, Side One (September 26, 1995)

SMITH

I have a few follow-up questions from last session, the first being that you mentioned that you were moving back and forth--your family was--from L.A. to Minneapolis. I was wondering, why was your family doing that?

KAPPE

Well, first there was the desire to come out here when I was ten. I guess my dad [Phineas Kappe] opened up a business here which was going fine, but I guess my mother [Betty Gold Kappe] hadn't detached completely from Minneapolis, and I think the beauty shop he had was once again available. She wanted to go back. So they went back again for several years and then made the adjustment to come back again. Even though she had sisters and family here, somehow she was making the adjustment slower than he did. That was the only reason.

SMITH

So even though your mother was the one with relatives here, she had a harder time adjusting to--

KAPPE

Well, she had relatives there too, so-- She just didn't adjust as quickly somehow to California. Also, I guess the business there was a better business than they had here, obviously, because they just started. I guess she felt it was kind of silly to leave something that was going well for something that would

have to be built up. She was more that way. My dad didn't care about making money as much as my mother did. He had a much easier way of dealing with life. She was more determined, I think, to do well, and so she was always more of the pusher than he was. His idea was just to make enough to enjoy life, not to worry about accumulating money. So that was actually, I think, sometimes a factor in some of the decisions as well.

SMITH

Given your subsequent interest in social issues, I was wondering what role did politics play in your parents' lives?

KAPPE

I think they weren't that involved in politics, but like all people in those days, [Franklin D.] Roosevelt was a great hero. We came from a strongly Roosevelt-oriented family. He would show up in our family album as much as family would. [laughter] But I don't think that was so atypical of those days. I think he had that kind of a charisma and that kind of following among American people. So we were strong that way. My dad, I guess, was more of a person who would discuss political issues. I think he would be a moderate in a sense, moderate liberal, not a strong socialist. I had uncles who were more, I think, leaning towards a socialist point of view. Neither of my parents were that way.In fact, my mother was almost the opposite, which is sort of interesting, because the unions were so strong in her field when she was over here. She tended not to want to be part of the union. She was fairly strongly self-motivated. Actually, during days when people were not making very much money she was doing very well, because she was very able and very fast. They were working piecework, and so she was always doing really well and didn't like the union mentality at all. She's spoken to that, and at the same time she was, I think, probably more taken with Roosevelt as a man then maybe even with his political philosophy.I would say my dad would be different from that. He was probably better educated and a little more open than my mother was. My mother didn't have much education, and coming from Europe and coming from a country where it was difficult for them to get education, what she knew, she knew from really her own knowledge. Where he was here as a youngster and did go to school in the United States, so it was different.Anyway, but it wasn't a major, major factor. I don't really know why I

became involved as I did. I think my interest, say architecturally or planning-wise, came about more at [University of California] Berkeley where I was taking planning classes as well as architectural classes. I enjoyed that aspect of architecture very much. And particularly what one possibly could do for cities.In fact, when I first got out of Berkeley, I applied for the planning department in Oakland before I even got into architecture, and actually had taken the test as a planner and scored the highest on the test. But then when I went in for an interview, all they asked me were civil service questions. And I really wasn't interested in civil service. I was interested in planning issues. As a result of that, the orientation just didn't seem to match, so I left that goal, and I went to work for Anshen and Allen. About a month later, they called me back for the job, and I said I really wasn't interested because I didn't think we were really going in the same direction.After that, my idea was that rather than go through the process of working for government, it did seem to make more sense to wait until I was in private practice, develop a planning practice that way, and get involved through the private sector rather than through the public sector. So I guess that was a fast, very quick period of not appreciating really the government mentality about the way one does work. It didn't fit my time frame and the way I thought about things. But in school we did a project in Berkeley that was interesting to me, a re-plan of certain parts of Berkeley. Planning issues in those days were intriguing to me, particularly neighborhood planning and the potential that the future might have.So through planning the social issues interplay, because they are a strong aspect of any planning program. In this way I became more interested in social thinking. My first election, I think I voted for [Henry A.] Wallace, so I was already swinging fairly left-wing at that time. I think one works to better themselves as far as they can, but I think you always have to be concerned about the part of society that isn't able to achieve as much, and that those things should be shared. So I guess it came more from my own thinking than from my parents, but they certainly were more moderate to left than they were right-wing.

SMITH

What about the political environment as a whole around the Berkeley campus?

KAPPE

It wasn't too wild then. I was [there] pre[vious to] the real strong days of that kind of mentality at Berkeley. But I think it's a time when young people don't always know where they're going. In that process, I think, the idea of a society in which things are more equally shared always feels a little more satisfying to you as a young person. So obviously there was still that kind of thinking going on. And, of course, there was a left-wing movement that always existed.

SMITH

What role did religion play in your household when you were growing up?

KAPPE

It was interesting, actually. I'm Jewish. We lived on the same block as the temple when I was a little boy. I actually was fairly involved with the whole process. It was very easy for me to walk to the temple on Saturday mornings. And as a little boy I would get involved in the services and had a fairly close relationship with the rabbi. He would always come by our apartment, and I would always wave to him as well. So I kind of enjoyed the ritual in my early years. Because it was convenient, I had both Sunday school and Hebrew education when I was young.But what I think stopped everything is when we came to California on the first trip. At that time there was a cut in that whole interaction with, say, the synagogue. Out here we were not involved at all. Then when we went back to Minneapolis there were just a couple of years while I was going through the bar mitzvah training, which is until you're thirteen. At that point, again, we came out here, and there was, again, sort of the cut. I was quite involved with it as a young person. Then it was a complete cutoff until adulthood.So I would say through my whole high school years and junior high, and even in college, there was the great questioning of religion in a broader way, wondering about it. And, of course, with our children, we again became temple members to let them go through the process of experiencing and making their own decisions. My family--my mother and father--were not strongly religious people either, but they were not without religion. We did have ritual and the holiday celebrations. But we did not attend Friday-night services on a regular basis. The New Year would be celebrated, Passover would be celebrated, but that was about it. It was the festival of the religion more than it was the ritual that we celebrated.Had we remained in Minneapolis, I might have become much more involved in religion because of

my early beginnings, which were not enforced at all by my parents. It was just something that I did as an activity, a fun activity, to go down to the temple and be involved. [laughter] That's the way it was.

SMITH

So was the community closer in Minneapolis than it was in L.A.? Is that why it was--?

KAPPE

I guess maybe it was closer. But it may have been just that we happened to live in a neighborhood where it was very convenient. It wasn't what I would call a Jewish community. The Jewish community was stronger on the north side of Minneapolis than where we were on the south side, but we happened to have been adjacent to a temple, which was very convenient. The community was really mostly people who lived right around it, so obviously it would have a certain closeness to it. And then you would also go to school with the same kids as you went to Sunday school with. It was very much closer, I guess, from a proximity standpoint, than California. My parents weren't interested in getting involved in California, and neither was I. There wasn't any simple attachment. And the relatives who were already here were not that involved either.

SMITH

You also mentioned last time an interest in sports. I was wondering, what sports did you become involved in?

KAPPE

Well, I grew up immediately with baseball. I enjoyed playing baseball. I played a lot as a little kid. I was good. I was well coordinated when young. So baseball was one, basketball was another in elementary school and into junior high, and football. I played most all sports, all team sports, and enjoyed it a lot until I was probably at the end of junior high. Then I was small and I didn't grow very much. I was one of the shortest kids in the class by the time I was graduating from junior high.I didn't really go out for sports in high school--you know, team sports--until too late. I went out for basketball team my senior year. I played and lettered in tennis. I played tennis in high school. Then I grew

in high school, so then that's when I started to get back involved again. I still had the ability. I always enjoyed intramural sports. For instance, I played a lot of intramural sports in college. Actually I went out for basketball at UCLA, but that didn't last long. Not having been strongly involved, I think, in high school immediately--that was the break. But our High Y teams [sponsored by the Young Mens Christian Association] in high school always did well. So I enjoyed that level of sports.But as a little kid, I was very much involved all the time with every sport, and that tends to somehow take you away from certain other things that one would do. I didn't do as much art work because of that. Where when I was very small, I did a lot of art work because I wasn't into sports until seven or eight years old. So at least up and until that time, I did a lot of drawing. Then later, as I told you, I went to various art classes, but that would be mostly on Saturday morning. In Minneapolis we had a lot of empty lots around us too, so it was very easy to pick up baseball games very quickly and easily. At night people would just go out and play ball in the lots with dads and kids together. Kind of a casual process, but a good one.

SMITH

And a social one?

KAPPE

And a social one and fun. It was easy. It was nice. And of course, those are good times. The neighborhoods were front-porch-sitting kinds of neighborhoods. People were out. We walked a lot. Kids were on their own. From the time I was five years old I was on my own. I had a two-wheeled bike when I was three or four years old. I used to go riding anyplace. We could walk to the lake. It was very wonderful compared to what goes on nowadays. You were a lot more independent. A lot of chance to, I think, to make your decisions for yourself.

SMITH

Was L.A. the same way?

KAPPE

L.A. was pretty much the same way. I remember as a young person walking miles up to my aunt [Ida Berkus]'s house in areas around Western [Avenue]

and Vermont [Avenue], towards Sunset [Boulevard] and Hollywood Boulevard--that whole area that kids wouldn't be allowed to wander around today. So L.A. was pretty much the same, I think, certainly through all of my teenage years, and even through our own kids' years--they were pretty open by comparison to what goes on today. I think it's sad for young people today to have to be driven everywhere and have to have every minute accounted for. They can't sit in the house by themselves for five minutes without parents being involved. I think it's just awful. I think children need that time to themselves, independence, things that they can do on their own. I used to spend every day after school playing ball on the school playground. That was just part of the normal process. Now you can't even do that. It's terrible.Well, my wife [Shelly Diamond Kappe] and I were just talking about this other day. She'd take the bus from where she was and go out to the beach and come back. I used to hitchhike to high school practically every day--just stand out at Wilshire Boulevard. If you could get a ride before the bus came you'd hitchhike. The world has changed drastically. So instead of it getting better--I guess as many of us hoped it would be--than before, [laughter] it got a lot worse, much worse.I think our generation was a fortunate generation. It grew up in times, I think, that were good times. We went through a whole period right after World War II that was a very good period for young adults. We've always been very lucky compared to your generation. Being around cities like Los Angeles or other major cities is a much more difficult situation to grow up families in today. Maybe you can look at it optimistically and feel good about it. I hope so, because you have to. It just seemed that our time was very nice, though.

SMITH

You think that gets reflected in your architecture?

KAPPE

I guess so. I guess my being optimistic initially about life and about everything was reflected in the idea of what I thought architecture was about. I think the whole modern movement was really about democratization of architecture--the idea of buildings not being pompous and overly important but about being there for the people to use in a way that was much less formidable. I think the housing was meant to be more open and loose and free and the idea that we

weren't really closing ourselves in out of fear but being able to be more open.I think the only problem was that we did reverse ourselves from the street. Architecture tended to turn itself to the rear yard and close itself to the street side. That was probably a negative. I think the old--as I said earlier--front porch sitting was a nice way to engage the neighborhood, where by being private you tended to negate that neighborhood interaction. One of the things that is nice in this area where I live is the fact that people walk a fair amount, and I purposely tended to open to the street as well. Now it's more grown in. But when it was first completed, the deck was like a front porch. Only, of course, it's disengaged from the street by quite a bit vertically, but still somewhat that idea. You know, we were more open rather than totally closed to the street. In some areas there is a tendency to close to the street, but I don't think that it was as good. It separated everybody.I remember our first tract home that we moved into out in the [San Fernando] Valley. It was really great, before any fences went up. You know, we all moved into this sort of raw land out there. We had many neighbors. We had the ones behind us, we had the one to the side of us, we had the one across the street. And there was all this interplay that took place in the neighborhood. As soon as everybody began to fence their properties in, of course, then the neighbor who was at one time behind you now was separated completely from you. Now we were back to the people on the street or across the street only. And then, of course, in that situation, we were somewhat closed to the street other than when we were out on the street.So when it was wide open, it was much more interesting. In fact, at that time, I tried to get an architect who lived next door to agree to, instead of fencing ourselves off just on our property lines, allow each other to cross over in a sense so that we could have more land in common in various ways. He was really one who subscribed to communist principles, and yet he wouldn't go for it. He wanted the straight line, the strict lines, which was kind of funny to me because of his thinking. Immediately when it came to ownership of one's own place, he wanted it defined. But it would have been a different feeling if we could have opened up the lot lines.Actually, in Minneapolis, where I grew up, places weren't fenced off. Houses were not fenced off from each other. And that was primarily, I guess, because of the snow and the drifting that would take place, and so you would tend to just have yards open to each other, maybe making it a little more friendly. People would have their backyards open to other backyards across

the way and it was kind of nice. Kids could run from yard to yard, and not be closed off from each other.

SMITH

More space for the baseball game.

KAPPE

Right. But it was just a nicer way. Again, we'd go from yard to yard. We would, as kids, climb people's trees and get their apples and just move through rather freely.I guess that's enough reminiscing.

SMITH

We spent a lot of time last week talking about office routine. I was wondering what it was about the way [Carl] Maston ran his office that appealed to you so much.

KAPPE

Well, Carl ran an open office. There weren't separate rooms. The majority of phone conversations were pretty much in the open. I like that. I think you hear the problems. You hear what's going on. You get a little synopsis of what is being said to clients. It's just a nice way to know what's happening. In a large office, of course, you're more compartmentalized, so you don't hear. You don't get the same relationship at all to the projects. So I've always run my office the same way. You know, if you're not large-- Architects in general run open offices. The drafting rooms are large and are open. But it's different in one where you can hear. It's like my office: if I'm downstairs, I'm talking on the phone, anybody who's working with me hears what I'm saying. It's a good way to learn. That was it, primarily. And always he allowed me a lot of room and a lot of freedom. I had the potential to do a wide range of the architectural processes with him, from design to construction drawings to construction management. So in a short period of time you learned a lot about the practice, where in a big office, you learned very little except the portion of the project that you're working on. That was all. But his office didn't run that much different from other offices of the same scale and size. It was fairly typical of a small office. Anshen and Allen's office was the same way. The second office I told you about [Schmitz and Hartman] was a little larger. I hardly even knew

who the principals were. They were like disassociated from the firm. They had their roles, but they weren't integrated at all. And the same way with [William L.] Pereira and [Charles] Luckman. They would take their walk through the office once a week or every two weeks and make an attempt to be sociable with some of the people working there, but it was a separation, complete separation. That's quite different from being very close with the principal and hearing what's going on.

SMITH

Zelma Wilson mentioned in her oral history that Maston always felt unappreciated. I was wondering if you had the same assessment.

KAPPE

Of Maston or myself?

SMITH

No, Maston. [tape recorder off]

KAPPE

I don't think he received the recognition that he should have totally. He got a certain amount. I mean, he was the alumnus of the year at USC [University of Southern California], which is an honor. He won quite a few awards. He was president of the AIA [American Institute of Architects]. He was involved with the city; I think he was on the planning commission.But the difficulty, I think-- I think what Carl always felt strongly about was the fact he was not a person who pushed himself. He didn't have a strong PR [public relations] sense. I think he was more of a modest man. I think most of us felt somewhat similar in those days, in that, as I recall, there wasn't a lot of this pushing oneself and being out there and writing books about yourself and every other thing that people do today. [Richard J.] Neutra did, but nobody else really had that kind of mentality. Carl certainly didn't. I think one just expected to be appreciated by your own field and maybe that people would recognize your architecture. Our hope was that it came through the work rather than self-promotion.Compare [Carl] to [A.] Quincy Jones, for instance, who received a lot more recognition than Carl did, and yet I think they were fairly equal as architects. I wouldn't say that Quincy was a better architect than Carl, nor

necessarily that Carl was better than Quincy. But Quincy was much more recognized. But he also had a wife who had a sense of PR, Elaine [Jones]. And so she would help that process. I think it was more that than anything else. Carl never really had a good mate. He had this first wife [Virginia Maston]. They separated. And his second wife [Mary Maston] was a secretary who he remarried who never was real helpful to him, I don't think. So there were things of that sort that occurred. I think any architect who sits and waits to be recognized is going to have that same kind of feeling. I had some of that too. I do have a good mate, and I do have a wife who was always supportive and who is more public relations oriented.But today it takes more than that. Of the young faculty who came out of SCI-ARC [Southern California Institute of Architecture] who I had brought there, a couple of them had a tremendous sense of how you promote yourself and have really gone at it in a much different way, with a lot of promotion early on to get themselves recognized. It doesn't just happen. Frank [O.] Gehry worked at it very hard, very hard. He doesn't act like he did, but he did. I know what he was doing. Most people do today. You've got to create your own image, particularly in our world of these fast sound bites and fifteen-second fame. You can't get there in a nice, quiet, pleasant way. Everything you do has to be with greater bravado in order to be recognized in some form.It was true in our day too. I did a lot of houses with a reasonable amount of recognition prior to this one. But when this one was a major statement by comparison to anything I had done, it certainly gained a lot more notoriety than what I had done prior. And that isn't exactly the way I think it should be. I think the work should be able to stand on its own and be a little quieter as part of society rather than having to yell and scream and push and shove. And Carl knew. Carl wasn't a person who did that. His work was architecturally strong. It was very good and reasonably well recognized. But I guess not the way he would have liked it to have been. Zelma worked with him on a couple of projects at the end of his life. I think he was a very good architect. I don't think he got the recognition he deserved either, but he got a certain amount of it.

SMITH

At least within the profession?

KAPPE

Within the profession, with those who knew. But today, probably, I am sure you could talk to a hundred architects and mention the name Carl Maston, and maybe five might know who he is or who he was. I would think that particularly younger people, anybody younger than I am by say ten years, probably wouldn't even know who he is. Yet he taught at USC for many years. As I said, he was alum[nus] of the year not that long ago, maybe ten, twelve years ago. But it goes very fast in our field. People are forgotten very quickly. Most people today don't know [Raphael] Soriano, Greg [Gregory] Ain, or Harwell [Hamilton] Harris. They don't know who you're talking about.I don't think it's about that anyway. I think it's about the doing. And I think you get your satisfaction in the doing and you don't worry about the recognition. That's my feeling about it. I don't really care about that part of it. I think, in the long haul, that all that really counts is the process of doing and the process of being involved. That's the satisfaction you get as an individual and that's the enjoyment of anything one does in their life. If the other recognition is there, fine. That's a residual. If it comes when you're dead, who cares? It just isn't so important. Everybody likes it, everybody likes to be patted on the back. But it certainly isn't what it's all about. It certainly isn't what life's about.

1.4. TAPE NUMBER: II, Side Two (September 26, 1995)

SMITH

You mentioned last week that when you made the decision to enter the profession, to go to architectural school, that your aspirations really weren't that great. I was wondering at what point your aspirations became a little larger, and you thought maybe that you were to make a significant contribution to this field?

KAPPE

Well, I don't know if I ever felt that I was going to make a significant contribution. I think one has successes and, as there are successes, then all of a sudden your aspirations obviously grow. In my case, I did well in school. And then I began to think I wasn't interested in working for mediocre firms. I was interested in working for those I thought were the better firms. And then I was successful with all the firms I worked for.So then, of course, you begin to think of not spending your life as a draftsman in an office or an administrator of

some sort, but I felt I had some design ability. I was working in Carl's office. I was primarily a designer. A couple of years of that pumps you up a bit when you're really working very closely with somebody you respect and learning from them. I felt like I could do about as well as Carl was doing, which I thought was quite good. I figured, "Well, you know, that would make me happy too," just to be a good participant in the field of architecture and doing work that I would enjoy doing and was principled in the manner that I thought architecture should be principled. That was the beginning.Of course, then when I did my first project, and immediately was able to get other projects from it, I began to think, "Okay, I can be reasonably successful in this field." I guess that's about as far as I thought about success. I was just trying to do as good a job as I could each time and learn and grow and be as proficient as I could be in the field. I don't think there was anything more to it than that. That other people decided that they wanted to publish my work, or that I won some awards early on, that was something else. That's the other person's perception of what you're doing. I think you yourself perceive it in probably a different way. It's just sort of a growth process and a learning process. And I think that's about all it was. The rest of it is just a combination of circumstances that go together to make one person surface a little bit more than another person. It's usually a series of circumstances or taking advantage of a series of circumstances. I don't think it's any more than that.But from the days in high school, when I thought I could be satisfied being a draftsman for the rest of my life, I certainly changed that as a way of thinking about what I could do. But that was just because of an extreme naiveté, you know. I didn't go at my education that way. I always strived to do well. I always did well. I always had high grades in school, so obviously I had enough ego for that. I guess that same kind of mentality went along with what I did later--always trying to do as well as I could do. I never did it in a way to make myself sick over it--the idea that I'm so driven that I'm never happy. Knowing Neutra in later days when I hired him to come out to Cal Poly [California State Polytechnic University, Pomona]-- There was a man who had achieved more than 99 percent of architects. He was a special individual, a very brilliant man. He still wasn't satisfied in his seventies. At my age, he still didn't think he was getting enough recognition. I don't know what more he wanted. He had everything he could possibly want in the field of architecture. But he was so driven that it still wasn't satisfying. I can never be that way. I don't see driving

oneself to that-- Plus I don't even think it's intelligent or healthy. It just doesn't make any sense to be that driven and to be that pushing all your life. But there are people like that who do it till they drop dead, you know. It's all they care about. It's more, more, more, more, more.

SMITH

But you must have discovered some ambition along the way maybe that you didn't realize--?

KAPPE

No. I was always ambitious, I think, but I guess I also had the ability to be satisfied wherever that ambition ends. I worked hard. I can take on a lot more than other people can, during my better days, and still be able to move through it. So I work fast compared to most architects. I think one thing that is important: you always think positively. You always think you can do something. You should be naive enough to try things that maybe other people aren't willing to try. I think that's necessary in anybody's success.I think if you talk to anybody who has any success at all, they are always positive thinkers. They think that they can accomplish what they can do. And they don't have many fears about failure. They don't go at things negatively. They go at things positively. I think that makes all the difference. As soon as you start thinking more negatively, things don't work as well. You have to adopt this "I think I can do it" mode mentality. I think that's real important in life. I think that was what made it work for me. I always thought I could do things. I wasn't afraid to try.

SMITH

So do you want to talk a little about the National [Boulevard] apartments?

KAPPE

Well, I think I started last time talking about it, that it came about because Carl had found this land, and we went about doing it together. I thought it was a great opportunity for me.My concept was just the fact that I wanted to develop in apartment living a quality of individual space, so that people felt their spaces were--even though they were similar--differentiated enough to feel like it was a little home. I felt very strongly that they should have good

outside terraces and outside living, even though the units themselves were quite small, because I felt they were sufficient for people at that time. Actually, Carl's units were even a little bit smaller, so maybe it just came through this mentality of "How can you make a small unit be a very good one in lifestyle?" So his units did some of the same things; they just were organized differently. His moved up the hill one after another because of the nature of his site. Mine rotated and used the apartments below as decks. There was probably nothing more to it than that, and also the ability to move wardrobe units around so that they could have some flexibility. That was all mine was about. It was a nice project to do, and it was nice for me, as I said last time, that I could follow right behind Carl and use the same people that he had used for quite a few years because he always built projects for himself. He had a crew of guys that worked with him. And they later worked with me, so it made it very nice.I don't think there's anything more to say. Do you have any other questions about that?

SMITH

What did it mean for you as a young architect to have that featured in John Entenza's *Arts and Architecture*?

KAPPE

That was nice. John was a very nice person that way. He was always looking for young architects, and if he liked anything about what you did, he would usually publish it. I can't remember whether I went to him with the project or-- I must have in some way. I guess I had heard that John was open to young people and so I decided to go in and show it to him. At the same time, I had worked on another apartment, and I had drawings of that, so I took the two. I went to him at that time, and he published it. That was all. It wasn't so unusual. He was used to doing that for people. So that was nice.And then it won an AIA [Merit] Award locally immediately. That and another job I did [the Sherman Oaks residence built for Kappe's parents] won awards the first time I entered. That was nice too. But the fact that work came from it was more important to me. The idea that some other clients were intrigued by the job enough to come and have me do work as a very young-- I was only twenty-six years old. So that was nice to have at that time.

SMITH

It's remained a popular building, I think. It was a few years ago the *L.A. Weekly* named it "the apartment complex you wished you lived in," or something like that.

KAPPE

Well, that was just because the writer was a tenant. [laughter] He named it that. Which is true about everything in life. I mean, that's half the game, I think, in terms of public relations and the way the world works. A certain amount of it is networking. A certain amount of it is the person who is writing. A certain amount of it is the people you know. Awards are more related to the people judging than to the material that's entered. And I've watched younger people who really know how to network in the awards game. It's a whole different process. But the writing is the same thing. If you happen to know the writer, or the writer happens to call you up-- I mean, it's sort of circumstantial.Other times you're completely left out because they don't know you. It happened to me by a writer who comes from England. He teaches at USC. He writes a book on Los Angeles [*Los Angeles Architecture: The Contemporary Condition*], and I'm left out completely. He doesn't know who I am. He never bothered to find out. That's his take on L.A.

SMITH

Who is that?

KAPPE

Jim [James] Steele. He's written a few books. Quick writer. One of these, you know, do them fast. But he doesn't do all of his homework very well. It's pretty hard-- I'm not patting myself on the back but it's pretty hard to do Los Angeles and exclude not only me but Carl Maston. I'm not even sure if [A.] Quincy [Jones] was in there. I mean, they do the Case Study take and on they go. It's Case Study, Charles [W.] Moore, and Frank [O.] Gehry. There is a big gap in there. There's about twenty years of gapping. So they leave out a whole portion of history because it's never been written. You know, Esther [McCoy] didn't get that far. She only got to the second generation.But it's that kind of writing that makes you wonder sometimes. Interesting. Part of it is probably who that person talks to as well, and there are certain people who have their

own agenda. They want to leave other people out. History is written in very strange ways, as you know.

SMITH

It's not as objective as we might like to think.

KAPPE

No, not at all. Nor is it taught objectively, either. I can't believe what's left out of history classes when certain people teach it. [tape recorder off] They have their own point of view. They have a right, I guess. But it's certainly distorted.

SMITH

You said off mic[rophone] to me last week, I think, that really the significant publicity for you in terms of the National apartments was the fact that it was in the [*Los Angeles*] *Times*.

KAPPE

Not the National apartments, but houses after that were in the L.A. *Times*.

SMITH

Oh, okay. But that's really where the clients came from?

KAPPE

From the home section. If people didn't see the work or it wasn't from word of mouth from client to client, it came from the L.A. *Times* home section. It was very useful for young architects here. More than *Arts and Architecture* in a way. *Arts and Architecture* was very good in terms of what it did for Southern California all over the world, because it was a small magazine but it had a lot of appeal--in many ways I think not only because of architecture, but it covered all of the arts and music. So it had a little more extended value. But the home section was much better locally, as are consumer magazines in general. There were fewer in those days. There was *House Beautiful, Better Homes and Gardens*, and *Sunset* [*Magazine*]. All of these probably do architects more good than professional magazines.

SMITH

You opened up your own office in Brentwood. That was 1954?

KAPPE

Right.

SMITH

Is there any particular reason why you chose Brentwood?

KAPPE

Brentwood? No. Well, let me back up from there. My first office idea was really a portable office that I built and used on one of my early houses. Actually, the one I was doing for my parents, which is the Woodcrest Drive house-- On that one I had built this little post and beam and plastic screen office where I would have a drafting board. The telephone and the job toilet could be hooked up there indirectly. My idea at that time was to always be designing a job, drawing a job, and building a job. So I was going to move this from site to site. I thought that would be an enjoyable way of working. And as I was near completion on that job, I was getting more work than this kind of neat little package I imagined.And I was up in Brentwood village. In those days, it was a little nicer than it is now. It's still a nice little village, but it was even a little nicer. There was a nice modern furniture store in the village, the only one out on the Westside. Across the street was this little building, and I went into it to look around. There were a couple of other architects that were already in that building. I liked the little office, and I started there. Actually, from my office, I could see all the way to downtown Los Angeles. We were at that time living in the Valley, and the house I was doing just prior to that was in the Royal Woods area, which is just in Sherman Oaks. It was just over the hill and there I was in the Brentwood area. It was just one of those things. I guess I liked it and I just opened up there. Nothing more premeditated than that, I don't think. It just seemed like a nice place to be.

SMITH

So what happened to your mobile office?

KAPPE

That was the end of it. I took it down. I can't even remember what finally happened. But it was a fun idea. It folded on itself. You could take it away and

then put it up again. But I guess it was just a little easier to go this other way, and it was a little more conventional, I guess.

SMITH

I guess it's a way to save rent to do it the other way.

KAPPE

Right. It was one step away from having your office in your garage. The first house I did when I was doing the apartment was for the [Mr. and Mrs. Gordon] Goetschels, and that was out in Tujunga. That house came through a friend of mine [Bill duBois] who introduced them to me. I did it in my little bedroom office in our house. The next one was when I started this little mobile office.

SMITH

Was that for your parents?

KAPPE

Yeah.

SMITH

Was that going to be a house for them to live in or another investment?

KAPPE

No, that was for them to live in. We always lived in apartments. I never lived in a house growing up. We were always apartment dwellers. That was my dad's idea, the way one should live. He never really wanted to live in a house. He liked the freedom of apartments, and the idea that you didn't have the responsibilities that a house gives you. I guess as a young person, growing up in a house, he didn't like all the chores that went with it. So he liked apartment living. He really preferred to be more on the move, less tied down. The unfortunate aspect of the house that I did for them was that the day that they were going to move in, he died. [pause]

SMITH

But your mom moved in ?

KAPPE

No. I think his death could have been related to the fact that he never really wanted a house. He never really wanted to live in a house. No, my mother didn't move in either. We actually moved into it.

SMITH

It's a sad story.

KAPPE

Yes, it was. He had suffered a heart attack almost ten years earlier than that. Not ten, maybe six, seven. And he had a heart attack at the house. They were cleaning. They were doing the last day's cleaning. I always had a great relationship with my dad. He wanted to go on doing projects together where he enjoyed looking for land and being involved to that degree. So we probably would have done more projects that way had he lived.

SMITH

So what year did you move into that house?

KAPPE

That house? We lived there ten years. I guess '57. Let's see. When was it finished? I have '56 here. So I guess we moved in either '56 or '57.

SMITH

So you went from that house--

KAPPE

We lived ten years there and then this.

SMITH

To this one here. So who were your clients, then, in the early years?

KAPPE

Well, they were-- You mean what kind of clients?

SMITH

Yeah, what kind of people?

KAPPE

I think I said last week or last time we were talking, I had a lot of engineers, aerospace-connected people who were in the same age group as I was or maybe a few years older. They were young professionals just starting out who aspired to modern houses. They just liked that attitude better and that quality. So I had a lot of very nice clients. I enjoyed them. They appreciated what they got. They liked the fact that they could get a lot more house for not much more money. They were easy to work with and not overly demanding, so it was enjoyable.One of my first clients was Willis Stoner, who I did a house for in Naples near Long Beach. It was an addition. He was an engineer. Then I had Howard Waymire and his wife [Vern Waymire]. They were both school teachers. I had Merrill Friend. He was a doctor and a psychiatrist. So they were varied, I guess. But in my mind, I tended to think of most of them as engineers. Robert [M.] Hayes, Hal Erdley-- They were engineers. Howard Gates was an engineer. But I guess it varied too. There were clients who came from other fields.

SMITH

Were these people that had an interest in modernism or were they just looking for a good--?

KAPPE

Well, they just came because of the work. I know Stoner saw the National apartments, so he came that way. Art [Arthur] Enstedt lived nearby, and he wanted me to do an apartment for him. Howard Waymire lived near the apartment, and they had a lot up in Baldwin Hills, so that's how they became clients. The Friends [Merrill and Connie] became a client because they came by the house I was doing for my parents, and I had this little office there, and so I started working with them. Then there were clients like Eric Lowen. He was a friend of a friend. So some of them would come through friends, the kind of a thing where I would be recommended. Others would come directly from the work. And then these other people, I think, knew each other. I think Robert Hayes and Erdley and some of these people knew each other. Also Howard Gates. Then Leon Barsha had a Neutra house. That house was taken

out by a freeway, and he bought another lot, and somewhere he got my name. You know, I didn't always ask everybody where they came from. As I have said, it usually would be from either projects they'd seen, the L.A. *Times*, or friends. But there were a lot of them. I was just looking through my list here that we're talking about. In 1961 I had one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, a dozen projects that year. That's a lot for a little firm. I'd been in practice half a dozen years by then, but it's interesting how they started to come.

SMITH

Yeah. I was going to ask you about 1961, because it seemed to be a pretty busy year for you. Was that on the success on the Hayes house or--?

KAPPE

I really don't even know. If I go down the list-- Barsha, I told you, came from I don't know where. Bill [Willard] Beling--I'm trying to think what his profession was now. I think he was one of the engineers. Mel [Melvin] Brody is a doctor. I don't know where they came from. Might have been from the National apartments, I think. Howard Gates knew, I think, Robert Hayes. He came that way. Then I had a commercial client, Earl Gish, and I don't know where they came from at all. Stanley Meyer was an owner of Web Service. I don't know where they came from either. Ed [Edward] Reinhart came again through knowing some of the engineers. And the Vedanta Society [of Southern California] came to me from the apartment because they were doing an apartment unit. So it's hard to say. Paul Hammond also came from the apartment. Jack Etlin, real estate agent. I don't know what brought them. I guess by that time I had done enough work around that it started to build up a bit in terms of clients.It was interesting, because in those days, I didn't really do any marketing. I never marketed anything. I never did anything other than get a few things published here and there, and that was usually by somebody calling and asking to do it. So we just didn't do that much. 'Sixty-four was another year where there were quite a few jobs, in larger amounts.

SMITH

Did clients come asking specifically for post-and-beam-type houses or did you have to convince them that that's what they wanted?

KAPPE

No, no, no. My clients usually came from my work. And if a client called and wanted me to do something else, I usually didn't do the job. I turned it down if they wanted to do some Spanish house or something in one of the styles that I wasn't interested in. But it wasn't just that they had to be post and beam. As long as they were modern houses, I didn't care. But when you start out and you begin by doing what you want to do--and I was fortunate to do a project really for myself for starters--it makes life a lot easier in the field, because now you have people coming for something you wanted to do, not where you had to compromise. That is, when you have to convince somebody to let you do something else-- I didn't have to do that. I had it pretty easy really. I started out with something I wanted to do, and almost 100 percent of my clients came that way. I never had to convince people. So architecture for me was fun. It wasn't hard. SMITH: You built over fifty post and beam residences early in your career. Where are the advantages and disadvantages of--?

KAPPE

Of the post and beam system? I think in the early years, right after World War II, the object of most modern architects, particularly, was to develop houses that could be less wasteful of material, be more efficient in the way that they were made, express the way they were made better, and also have the potential to insert panels and systems if they were developed. I think the idea of doing stud walls never seemed to make a lot of sense to most of us. It was always, I think, assumed that we would have walls that would be made up with insulation and finished materials inside and out, be fully electrified, and have the plumbing in place. In other words, they would be prefabricated in a way that they could be inserted into a system of building, and the post and beam pretty much did that. The house was constructed in a way that used the minimum amount of support points and left a lot of openness that was either infilled with glass or this panel that I talked about. And the other thing that post and beam gave you was the open plan, obviously. You support the house at column points. You're not using bearing walls in the house, and so therefore you don't need walls for that support. They're primarily division walls. I think that was the primary reason. I think we also felt that it would probably work better for repeat housing and for multiple housing. You could have a more efficient system of constructing post and beam houses.And for a while it was

fairly competitive. The [Joseph] Eichler houses were competitive with the typical builder market. Many architects in this city, [Dan Saxon] Palmer and [Bill] Krisel, Ed [Edward H.] Fickett, were doing tract housing. The tract house we moved into, the first house, was a post and beam type of a house. They were very inexpensive houses.Eventually, the builders lost faith in it or felt that they could sell another package, or they felt that the modern house package could not be sold, and they did a reversal and started going back to more traditional-type homes again. Builders tend to follow builders. If somebody goes back and markets another type, and it's successful, then they all jump into the same game. After that it was then an uphill fight all the way to try to do houses in that manner. Really, after the Eichlers stopped, and he went out of the tract building game, it was pretty much over. Quincy Jones would get a few more here and there. There were a few other tracts here and there, but not like before. In the early years there was a great proliferation of modern houses.That was what the exploration was about. I think it was really a dissatisfaction with conventional building methods. It just seemed silly to build with a lot of studs. There are just more efficient ways to do it than that. There still are. But because it's the predominant way to build, it's still the cheapest way to build. And even the separation between costs of conventional versus post and beam has just grown exponentially over the years. When I started out, we would be maybe 5 to 10 percent higher than conventional building but we gave much more volume and a lot more in the house. Today it's not even close. It's at least double if not more. I think if at the time that those houses were being built there would have been more, and that would have been the predominant house built, that we would have found that it would have been a less expensive way to build than the way they're building today. But it never had a fair shake.I was interested in multiple housing. I was interested more, I guess, in the idea of the town, the community, the larger scale. If builders are not coming to you, you're not doing that kind of work unless you promote it yourself or try to go into your own development. So then the custom house becomes the way for me to explore the ideas in some form--never the pure form, but they gave me some opportunity to explore. I always used the custom house as a way to try out ideas. I only had one large housing development [Pepper Housing Project], which was low-income housing later on. And then when I finally got one, the

restrictions were set down so strongly by the CRA [Los Angeles City Community Redevelopment Agency] that I couldn't experiment.

1.5. TAPE NUMBER: III, Side One (October 2, 1995)

SMITH

We spent some time last week talking about the early clients that you worked with, and I was wondering if I could ask you just a general question about how you go about working with a client.

KAPPE

I think I do it pretty much in the normal fashion that probably all architects do. Usually you spend your first period with their program asking them a series of questions, the obvious ones, and then, of course, trying to get them to express any really positive things that they would like in their living environment-- special attitudes about materials that they like and dislike, colors they like and dislike, those kinds of things. That's it primarily. Most people have fairly simple programs. They usually state what rooms they want and what they want to accomplish in terms of their lifestyle. But since they come to me from work usually that they've seen, there's not a great amount of time spent in educating clients.I know that when I first began I probably used to spend much more time with clients than I did later. Partly that was just the enjoyment of it, getting to know people better and spending evenings talking about many things other than just what their program was-- But getting to know them better. That's primarily what you try to do. You just try to flesh out the kind of things that will help you to resolve the kind of programmatic issues that they want resolved. Other than that, the other issues, of course, are the site and the orientation, the location, and what the views are. These would be normal processes that architects would go through.Nowadays, I don't spend quite as much time. When you are on a percentage fee with owners, and as you become familiar, you spend hours and hours and hours in conferencing. They don't mind, because it doesn't cost them any more however much they conference. I guess about mid-career I established that I would work a percentage fee top against an hourly. That tended to then cut down the conference hours. Nobody would ever want to conference more than an hour--

SMITH

When they had to pay for it.

KAPPE

When they had to pay for it, and so that made it a lot better, because otherwise they would just eat you up in conferencing. And some of that's fine. It's socializing, but it also can become something you can't really stop very easily without being nasty about it. So this other way, I think, has worked better, and you also get to the point much quicker. That's what's happened.

SMITH

So when it came to a point of having to balance your career in education with your career in design, that was one of the things that you felt could be cut down a little bit?

KAPPE

I guess that would be about the time it occurred, right. Somewhere around there. Maybe a little earlier than that. But that was about that time. And, of course, that balancing was done with a partnership as well. So there were ways of working that made it work better for me, because I could spend most of my time in design and client conferencing, which could be shortened. That would be primarily what I would do. Quite often one of the partners would take the construction management aspect of each job. Not always in houses, but sometimes. Even the public work was the same way, where I was primarily just working as a designer, not as the ongoing person with the city or the agency. It was easier to accomplish what I had to accomplish in the two days I was in the office or the few mornings that I was in the office versus the time I was spending in school, because I always gave the priority to education. I think one has to, otherwise you start to really not do a [good] job at educating. If you tend to always put your practice first, you really can't be involved in education very well. Many people do it that way, where their practice comes first. But I've always felt it should be the other way around.

SMITH

Can you talk a little bit about the [Robert M.] Hayes house?

KAPPE

Yes. Bob and Alice Hayes were fairly normal clients. I think he was with Hughes [Aircraft Company]. I'm not positive about that, but I think that's where he was working. I can't remember why they came to me or where they came to me from. They had specific goals and needs.Most of my houses up to that time were usually on concrete slabs. That was so the house could have a better relationship to the outdoors in a direct way rather than a step down. They were particularly concerned about ventilation and the heating problem. So I know a lot of the discussion was about a raised floor and attic space versus exposed ceilings and concrete floors. We compromised. I wanted the major rooms to have exposed beams. So the main living, dining, kitchen, and the guest space were treated that way. The other part of the house, the bedrooms and study, were actually on a raised floor and had an attic. That allowed the major living room area to be directly on grade with the outside terrace, which was strongly trellised. And then we had some raised decked areas that would come off the parts that were lifted above the floor. Actually, if I remember right, I think just the living room really was on slab. Everything else had floor joists. But part of it had floor joists with exposed ceilings, and was fairly well insulated. The other part had an attic. So there were three different sections of the house, yet I think it all came together as a kind of a single unit. So many of the issues were about that.And Bob Hayes was a fairly strong-minded person. Later he went on to UCLA to become head of the [Graduate School of Library and Information Science].

SMITH

Oh, that's the Hayes.

KAPPE

Yeah. Did you ever come across him?

SMITH

Yeah, I heard him lecture a few times.

KAPPE

That's Bob Hayes.

SMITH

I didn't make the connection between that Hayes and-- Does he still live there?

KAPPE

Yeah. They still live there. I visited them--Alice was there that day--about a year and a half or two years ago. I had a young French architect [Pierre Mouton] who had come here and was interested in looking at my early post and beam houses. So we took a tour of some of the ones that I had done and saw her at that time. I didn't see Bob. But they were a nice client. They lived, actually, in the same neighborhood we did. The job was about a block and away from my house at that time. Were you over to that house?

SMITH

Never been to that house, no.

KAPPE

Because you went to [the Mr. and Mrs. Milton] Handman [residence], and they're right around the corner. But it's about the same time as when it was done. I have a student [John Uniack] now at 'SC [University of Southern California] who actually grew up in that neighborhood and was a friend of Bobby [Robert D.] Hayes, their little boy. He lived right across the street from the Handman house, so it's interesting that he had both of those connections. At the same time I have another client [Bruce Shapiro] who I'm doing a house for now who also grew up with one of the Handman boys. It's kind of curious how that happens.

SMITH

From the pictures it looks like that trellis is really the dramatic feature of that house.

KAPPE

It is. In the [San Fernando] Valley in the early fifties, of course, we didn't have air conditioning. There was air conditioning, but people didn't air condition usually. Because of that, there was always the need to have fairly broad overhangs and trellis areas, of course, that would break the sun down. Usually I would also include a little water play as well to give a feeling of cooling. So this broad trellis would provide outdoor protection and give relief from the

hot sun, and also help keep the sun off the rooms themselves. So in hot sun areas, the broader the overhang and the more protection you have, the better it is. I also try to pick up the cross breezes and control that way.So in areas where they live and areas that were in the foothills of the Valley, the Sherman Oaks area, we could get along pretty well without any air conditioning at all. I imagine they still don't have it today. Some clients later came back and put in air conditioning in the Valley. The Hayeses might have, because they had floor joists so it's possible to get under the house. But I don't know. I never heard. I never hear about things like that.

SMITH

That might be a blessing.

KAPPE

Yes, it is. You don't usually look for those things, because if you do get together, all you hear are complaints. You never hear anything else. [tape recorder off]

SMITH

So did a lot of your early homes in the Valley have trellises like that?

KAPPE

Yeah. Mostly they had trellises and overhangs. I think early on it was a natural way to deal with sun control. As air conditioning came in, I think, many of us got more sloppy with that process, because you rely on the conditioning rather than possibly using overhangs and trellising. Although my work usually had a fair amount of this just because I like the shadow play and passive control, so they continued normally to have more overhangs. They weren't tight glass boxes. They were usually pushed out and extended anyway. So it was sort of natural for me.See, early in those years, the department of water and power and the gas company were always pushing architects to use their power. So an all-electric house, for instance, would not be charged as much for the electricity. And those costs were not very great in those days anyway. Gas bills were very low. Electric bills weren't that excessive either. I think over time they kind of trapped people. After you've put in a lot of appliances, the bills seem to have climbed and climbed to where they're a fairly major part of

costs in some of these houses for heating and [air] conditioning.The other thing that happened, I guess, was when tinted glass started to also come into the design process. Quite often in very extreme sun conditions one began to use tinted instead of clear glass to control heat, and that was not only in housing. Obviously it was more in major buildings. If you look at major buildings, they had sun control devices probably in the fifties and sixties. By the seventies they were all glass boxes, skinned and glassed to cut down the heat. And actually that was probably more of a curse than it was, I think, a great advantage. It just stopped the buildings from having, I think, a proper response to the climate. We started to use all glass, which I don't think resolved the problems as well. But it was cheaper, so obviously the developer would go for the cheaper way, rather than the more intelligent way to deal with these issues.So a lot of things changed like that as the years went on, and sometimes created a process where one didn't think enough about sun control and sun conditioning and environmental response and so forth.

SMITH

So a lot of these things are driven by technology then?

KAPPE

I think so, yeah. Very much so. I think today there's a greater consciousness about these issues again among architects. And, of course, with the prescriptive energy codes, they also made us rethink and reestablish the way we dealt with these issues. But in those days we didn't insulate hardly at all, in the early days, say, the fifties, sixties. I had so much glass in the house, I never would even think about wall insulation at all. We had minor insulation in the roof. Usually anything from a half to one inch of Celotex was the normal kind of insulation for exposed beam or joist systems. Then a four-inch batt would be used if we had a ceiling and joist system. And those, by today's standards, are really way subgrade. I'm not so sure--in my own mind, anyway--about the quantity of insulation that's being required today, whether it really makes totally that much sense. I think it's almost an over-insulation in many cases. But that's the way the requirements are.

SMITH

Yet your early houses were still energy efficient.

KAPPE

I think they were. Not so many of the early ones were in my testing when I did my test.

SMITH

The Hayes house was, wasn't it?

KAPPE

I don't remember if the Hayes house was in it or not. I'd have to look up what I did.

SMITH

We could check that.

KAPPE

Yeah. You might be right. There were a few of those that were in there early on. We can check it later for another discussion.

SMITH

Yes. Sometime we will get back to it. Anyway, I wonder if you could talk a little bit about the pavilion version of the post and beam residence.

KAPPE

You mean the thinking of them more as a pavilion? The thinking process was this. I think we talked about it last week or a time before, about the redundant use of wood in a normal stud and plaster system. That's for starters. Then the post and beam allowed obviously a lot more glass infill, and it opens up the house in a different way in terms of its total use. And through that, I think, the quality of pavilion comes about, because you have the glass infill and the posts. There is a great lightness to the house. It doesn't look like it's held up with heavy walls or closed in. So it has a quality of floating in the environment and imposing itself on the environment in the least way, just the least amount of shelter to protect oneself in relationship to the outdoors and landscape. And the post and beam certainly was a way of creating that. There are other ways. Really a sheltering roof is what we are talking about. If you could float a roof and use an airflow system to cut off the outside, you probably have the

perfect kind of shelter, which is probably more true of island construction, warm weather construction, where people really quite often don't have much closure. It's really just a roof and some posts holding it up. So it has that kind of sensibility.I think after World War II, there was particularly a house that [Richard J.] Neutra did in Ojai, the Moore house, and at least the photograph of that house over a body of water had a very floating simple roof plane and glass and had a very strong pavilion quality to it. That image always was strong in my mind. And that combination with some of the [Harwell Hamilton] Harris architecture, which was not as pavilion-looking, was the way that I approached my early work. They had kind of a pavilion quality to them, a light quality. Actually, even in my later work it was just like where we are sitting here. Even with heavy enlarged beams, there is still a quality more like a pavilion with the glass and the connection with nature. I think even though it has a much gutsier quality about it, it still has a lightness at the same time. So that was just a goal of mine, and I guess the goal of some other younger architects.I think steel construction probably even did it better, because it was lighter. In those days you could particularly build one-story houses with very light steel. We never went over four inches on the columns and beam width and, of course, the steel decking gives a light quality as well. So there is a lightness which many of the steel houses had.It's just a continuation really of the California lifestyle that both Neutra and [Rudolph M.] Schindler spoke a great deal about and wrote about, and the idea that people would sleep outside and wouldn't separate very strongly from the elements. They were engaged with our climate in Los Angeles. It differed from where they had lived. I at least continued that mentality and felt the same way. Today the climate isn't as good as it was in the twenties and thirties when they were first here. I think it was warmer in Los Angeles. I think the evenings were warmer. Today it seems to cool off more. It doesn't work quite as well. Although even in those houses that they did, most of those sleeping porches were enclosed later. But it's an interesting notion. Not too many people today feel comfortable with that, either, because of security reasons. Many things have occurred that make lifestyles a little different than they were for most people. Anything else that you want to discuss about that?

SMITH

Why don't you talk a little bit about the Handman residence.

KAPPE

The Handman residence was very close to the Hayes house, so it also was in the Sherman Oaks foothills. Again, it's a post and beam house. The land was not totally flat. Most of my early houses were always on flat sites or mostly on flat sites because they were part of the period where-- Developers would come in and build flat shelves in the mountains, cutting and filling and developing flat sites. Since those were the most available early on, and, I guess, the least expensive, those were the sites that people would quite often purchase.Handman was one of the early projects that had a site that wasn't totally flat. It came off the street flat and then it dropped off. And it had some levels to it--not extreme levels, but I remember I probably had about a ten-foot differential over the site. As a result of that, I bridged this house to the entrance. It had a two-level split on one of the sides, and the car parking down below. It's also an odd-shaped lot. It had two street entrances as well. It had a little area that fronted on the cul-de-sac, and then it had a main street entrance as well.Again, programmatically there wasn't anything too unusual. I mean, it had the typical rooms. One of the main things was that they had one older son who wanted a room down below for himself. His was separated off from the other parts of the house.During those years, as far as the structural systems are concerned, I used various modules that I was testing for myself. They might be four feet or five feet or ten feet or various lengths attempting to accommodate the rooms in the best way. One of the major determinants in this are the bathrooms, which are the tighter rooms. They work in a five kind of tight and in a six a little more lenient. In a ten you can work with half modules. So this is an exercise in the way one might diagram a house along with the post and beam system. If you're in the six- to eight-foot range, you can use exposed sheathing, a two-inch t and g [tongue and groove] roof. Once you get to ten feet or so, it's too long a span for t and g and I'd use a joist system. So there were these kinds of explorations I was going through.

SMITH

When you say six, eight, and ten, that's one side of the square, right?

KAPPE

Feet. That's six foot center to center of the beams, okay? They are that far apart. Or if you're talking about the module in terms of the square and you lay

down a square pattern, then it would be six by six or three by three. But normally I didn't use a square module that way, like say Frank Lloyd Wright did. I think Harwell Harris did also. Actually, a lot of architects used the square as the base module. I would usually tend to modulate in the direction of the beams only, not necessarily in the other direction.The other thing I was exploring always was trying to establish comparisons between the flat roof and the pitched roof. Sometimes owners would request the pitched roof, and I didn't really have a choice. They didn't want a flat roof. The question here was what kind of spatial qualities one would get. I quite often used a pitched roof with a long gable, which would be the stretched-out gable versus your typical gable. Instead of, say, parallel to the walls, which would be your typical gable, it would run the other way. And that would give you a changing volumetric quality throughout the house. When I had clients who didn't necessarily prefer pitched roofs then I would usually go back to the flat roof, which is easier to work with, and then use it as a way of testing whether I could get the same volumetric qualities using flat versus using pitch.As a young architect, of course, you're trying to explore a variety of ways of developing space and using structural systems in exploratory ways. It's an empirical way to learn about what you are doing rather than trying to intellectualize it ahead of time. I was always more of an empiricist than I was intellectual about it. And I had the opportunity by having enough jobs and different clients that had different desires and wishes.This is a long way of building up to the Handmans' flat-roof house. It was an eight-foot module, nicely detailed, with large trellises both front and back, particularly the one in the rear. Because it was off the ground, there were wood decks to the rear. There was also decking over the carport area and a pool to the rear. That pool had access from the cul-de-sac side. If they had guests, they could come directly to the pool for pool parties. Other than that, it was just like every other job I did. One, trying to satisfy the client's needs and, at the same time, give me the opportunity to explore ideas that I was working on. There was a large oak, I think, or two, that certainly was a determinant in terms of how the house was sited.Was there anything you wanted to ask about it?

SMITH

Well, maybe you could repeat the story you told me off mic[rophone] about who came to own that house and built the security fences and the surveillance camera.

KAPPE

Later, Tina Turner became the owner, and at that time developed a whole degree of security that made me wonder why somebody would buy a house like that anyway. If you wanted that much security you'd think you would want to buy a more closed house with walls and controls that would allow the kind of security one wants. And so I'm always sort of surprised when somebody in the entertainment business, high profile, would want to be in one of my houses, particularly on sites that are really strongly protected by security in terms of the way you can get to the site. So anyway, that kind of ruined the house as far as I was concerned, because it just cut off all of the outside areas. For me it would be like living in a jail. But she was all excited about the house.One time--I don't know why I was there--I met with her on something. I don't know what it was. She was very nice. I was surprised how she was in person versus her other image that you see. She thought the house was great, and she thought she had done wonderful things to the house. For me it was a disaster. Now the people who bought it, I think, have left all that protection there too. It surprises me that they didn't take it all down. But anyway, there have been a couple of cases like that. Suzanne Somers was the same way to some degree, not quite as bad.

SMITH

Which one did she--?

KAPPE

She bought a condominium down in the Venice area that I did. Of course, that had more control just naturally. There wasn't as much exposure except on the beach side, where there was the ground floor terrace that was walled in. She had to wall it even more. I think that's taken down now. I think they have finally come to grips with that in a way that doesn't need the same security, but at the time--I guess there are enough crazy people who try to climb over the walls to see their favorite star--they needed that.

SMITH

But those modifications are a disappointment, given your design philosophy?

KAPPE

Oh, yeah. They're in complete opposition to my thinking. My own philosophy is the opposite, probably no security. Just accepting the fact that if you want to live a certain way, you live that way optimistically rather than pessimistically. But not having that kind of public persona, I guess, I can't really speak to it very well. My own theory is that people who rob houses come to places that are conventional. These houses are almost self-protecting because they obviously have plans that are not understood by somebody quickly and also the amount of glass is sometimes a deterrent because, I think, thieves feel they can be seen more readily. I don't really have, to my knowledge, very many break-ins in many of the houses that I've done.

SMITH

That's interesting. That's very interesting. It would be nice to have some sort of statistics to see.

KAPPE

I think they usually drive up to places where they can get into the driveway simply, and they know the plan and how to get to the master bedroom fast-- I think that occurs more in conventional places.

SMITH

This is my fourth time coming to this house, the Kappe house. And I still don't know quite where the master bedroom is in this. So I decided today that it's there, off the kitchen, but that's the-- Like I said, it took me four times coming here.

KAPPE

Oh, when I did this house, I really separated out the kids from us fairly strongly so they could have their own identity. We were really at opposite ends of the house, which is not too typical, either, because normally you have a bedroom wing. And quite often the master bedroom is in that wing. It usually occurs because when people have young children, they also want to be close to their kids. As the kids grow older, they really want to be apart. [laughter] So that's

one of the issues with clients that we talk about. But it's always the case if they're a young couple, they want to be close to the children for starters.

1.6. TAPE NUMBER: III, Side Two (October 2, 1995)

SMITH

Can you tell me a little about the Pregerson residence?

KAPPE

Actually, the [James and Jean Brady] Pregerson residence was the last of my strict post and beam houses. The Pregersons must have come from the Handman house or other houses that I did, but they liked the Handman house probably the best. The two have some similarities in their attitude.When the Pregersons came to me, they actually had a site, I think, in Canoga Park. They wanted to build there. During our first interview they asked me where I was going to build. And I told them, "Well, I have a site in the Rustic Canyon area, and I'd be building over there." I think they decided to come over and see where I was building. When they were here, they saw this empty lot next to the stream and became interested in it. They purchased that site and then sold their other one in Canoga Park.Having this stream as one element, together with their needs, the house evolved from that. The only thing that made it a little different from some of the others was that the site, being next to what was a riverbed, had a lot of alluvial fill, and I had to use a piling system. So it was a drilled piles, and then I expressed the piles with the column system above.Anyway, it's again a post and beam house. It was, I think, one of my best. I've always enjoyed it. It sites nicely. It has good qualities inside. It has a few changes of level, but not too much. Fairly straightforward and simple, and yet, I think, a nice quality to it the way it relates to its site. It's raised above the site purposely, kind of in the tradition of river construction, where, if you ever have an overflow of the river, the water goes under rather than into the house.I've always liked the house. And Jean has always been a client who would call me about everything. No matter what she's doing or what she wants to do, she'll always call and touch base. And so that's been nice.

SMITH

It's in beautiful shape.

KAPPE

Yeah. She keeps it good and cares about it. Have you visited it or--?

SMITH

Never been inside.

KAPPE

Never been inside? No?

SMITH

No. Just from the outside.

KAPPE

They keep it well.

SMITH

Does that ever actually flood there?

KAPPE

Well, one time they almost lost the house. I don't even remember what year it was, but a sycamore fell in the stream during the heavy rain. Therefore, the water started pushing out to get around the tree, and started to eat away the banks of the stream. That happened at their site, where it ate into their site about twenty feet or so. The piles were actually exposed under the house, but it was okay. You know, the house was in good shape, because the pilings were down below the riverbed. That was the only time, but the stream gets up pretty high in some of the heavy rains.There was a little bridge up at the other side of Latimer [Road] that took you back to Sunset [Boulevard]. And that bridge was washed out one time. But the neighbors left it that way. They wanted it out because it cut down any traffic through Latimer. Then it made a lot more traffic on Brooktree [Road]. There are battles with the [United States Army] Corps of Engineers. They always wanted to concrete in the stream, and everybody in the area wanted to leave it natural. But they have pretty good wooden embankments now that control the water. It's been under pretty good control lately. But if something falls in, like a tree, then that can create a

lot of damage.One part of that house that's interesting was that Jean became very much involved with cooking--cuisine. She became a teacher of cooking under the name of Jean Brady, her maiden name, and has quite a reputation. She holds classes there. Originally we made the kitchen and the breakfast area a little larger than normal to make it not like a true family room but larger than a small eating area. The classes are there. Over the years, she's redone her kitchen to make it more of a commercial-type kitchen for what she does. I think it's a lot nicer than what I originally designed, because it has more of a real kind of gutsy kitchen quality to it. The original kitchen was more typical of kitchens that I was doing at that time, which were nice, but contained your usual appliances. So that part's changed, and it's a little bit better. The kids' rooms that were once set up for two kids with a division, a sliding partition, were reworked too, so it's a little different now. It's one big room. I designed an extension for them onto that room. They've been good clients.

SMITH

Were you consulted on all the remodeling?

KAPPE

Yes. Just about. She did one kitchen piece that I didn't design, which I think is very nice--which doesn't usually happen. [laughter] It turned out very well. My younger son [Finn Kappe] helped her with a hood in the kitchen remodeling too. But normally she'll call me about changes. I might have been away when my son got involved. I can't remember.

SMITH

Julius Shulman photographed a lot of your early buildings. What was your impression of his work?

KAPPE

Well, I always enjoyed Julius. We always had to do a lot of setups. In other words, you always had to have the flowers, table settings, and these kinds of things early on, because commercial magazines always wanted that kind of a look, unlike architectural magazines that didn't care. So Julius usually shot for the commercial mags as well as for the professional magazines. He would take great pains to set up every shot and light them. He had a lot of time setting up

lighting. He was in his work different from, I think, photographers today, who don't. They operate a little differently. I think the film has changed. The ability to shoot without doing as much lighting and using more natural light is more prevalent today. But Julius used to take great pains setting things up.I think quite often he would have wonderful shots. Some of his photographs, obviously, were really important in many people's work, because they became the symbol of that work. I don't think for me it happened as much. I think he did very good work, but I don't think there were ever really very many photos that were maybe spectacular. Maybe I'm wrong. The shot of this house, I think, was a very good one--from up above looking over the whole house. It was very strong and quite effective.

SMITH

I don't know if I've seen that.

KAPPE

It's usually the one that's used all the time. It's a long, big shot. Anyway. No, I think he was an excellent photographer. You know, he grew up in the field with Richard Neutra. He shot with Neutra. Neutra was a master at illusion and I think taught Julius how to get illusion in many, many pieces of the work. And obviously I think he learned a lot from Neutra at the same time as Julius was doing some very nice shots for him. Julius was always an interesting person. He liked to talk a lot about his shots. He liked to shoot it as he wanted to. I never felt like I played a role in the decisions, because he seemed to not want to listen too much. He wanted to do his own shots.

SMITH

But you'd be at the site when he was taking pictures?

KAPPE

I was with some of the early jobs, but usually Mrs. [Shelly Diamond] Kappe would be at the site helping him set up and arrange things and talk with him about his setups. Sometimes we'd have to bring out our own pieces of furniture. So there was a lot more of that, versus, say, [Yukio] Futagawa with *Global Architecture*, who comes in and shoots everything natural, moves extraneous items just out of the photograph and moves through very quickly.

Futagawa shot six of my houses in one day, where Julius would shoot maybe one house in two days. Quite different styles of shooting, and quite different ways of approaching the job.Julius was always good. He was real important for most of the architects in the early days. He spent a great deal of time promoting your work for you, because that's the way he would make his money. So he would sell a lot. The nice part is when your photographer is also pushing the work out to the magazines and you don't have to do that. They do it. He shot a lot of the work for [the *Los Angeles*] *Times*'s home magazine though. They usually paid him for that. So most of my work, he did for the home magazine. That's why he shot quite a bit of the work.There were other photographers that I used, besides Julius, who would also shoot with the idea that if they placed it, I didn't pay for it. If they didn't place it, then I would. I always felt that the architect really provides the photographer with the opportunity to shoot and make money. The photographer always has the mentality that they're doing you the service and promoting your work. So I was always in that position of preferring to have my work photographed by people who were willing to make their money from the placement rather than the other way around.Maybe it's unwise. I don't know. People are better at marketing than I've ever been. They pay for the photographs to get just the right photograph. But that's hard. It relates to what's the climate, what kind of clouds are up in the sky, what time of day is the sun shining. To really shoot a project really well, one has to spend more than one day shooting--which is more typical, half a day to a day of shooting. Because if you're not shooting on a good day, you have a whole different photograph than if you have a very special day. And since the photograph is not necessarily the reality of the job but is an image of what it could be, that photograph sometimes is much better than the house. There are a lot of houses, a lot of work where the photographs are much better than the house, and vice versa. You have photographs that really tell a special story rather than what the house is. There are many, many shots that he took that were magnificent--that really captured a house in a very special way that forever stay in the heads of people. They can be very important to an architect, sometimes.

SMITH

It's a pretty significant contribution to the field, then.

KAPPE

Well, it can be, sure. Because that's the way architecture is communicated, right? It's a communication process. And I think it's important. You get this wonderful shot, but when you go to see the project, it has that element there maybe, but there's a lot of other stuff that interferes with that simple, wonderful quality of that one particular picture. When I was talking earlier about that one in Ojai, that was just a special shot. There are many images like that. But Neutra was really good also at knowing what shots to take. I remember a very tiny house that wasn't much more than 600 or 700 square feet. That house just had a whole different quality about it because of the way it was shot, but it's disappointing when you go to see it, because it doesn't live up to the shot. I mean, the photograph was way better than the way the house really was when you visit it.

SMITH

So in terms of influencing the way you think about design, the photography is more important than the house itself?

KAPPE

Sometimes it can be. It's hard. In most of my cases people always make the statement that the house is so much better than the photograph, rather than the other way around. There is something about the way I work that seems to decompose the volume in a way that the photograph never truly tells the story of the feeling of the experience. It seems that way. That's what people tell me. It's hard for me to judge that, because the photograph tells the story okay to me due to the fact that I read a lot more into it. But to other people, they always seem to relate more to the experience than the photograph.

SMITH

That's interesting. I want to get back to something that we talked a little bit about last time, and that is the issue that the whole post and beam idiom has been so relatively under-studied compared to something like the steel-frame Case Study has. I was wondering what your feeling is about that.

KAPPE

Well, it happened during the Case Study period because John Entenza was really interested in the steel idiom and also that *Arts and Architecture* really

produced many more steel houses than obviously wood houses. And even the wood houses they did, Ed [Edward] Killingsworth's houses, were painted white. They had much more of a steel look to them almost than most wood houses. They had a couple of Buff, Straub, and Hensman houses that are more the wood vernacular. But the majority of us were working with wood post and beam, not steel post and beam, in the fifties and sixties.It had much more of a total impact in the Los Angeles area than certainly the steel house had. Certainly all the students who went through 'SC, I would say, from the early fifties to about the mid-sixties were really well versed in wood post and beam construction mainly because of Cal [Calvin C.] Straub, and also [Conrad] Buff [III] and [Donald] Hensman. And that attitude prevailed at USC for quite a few years. There was a lot of work of that nature in the Southern California area.Then for some reason-- It wasn't an era where people wrote about what they did. It was really a doing period, I think, more than anything. So if it wasn't in *Arts and Architecture*--which was the magazine that really wrote up most of the work in this area--it wasn't, almost; let me just put it that way. If it wasn't in either the [*Times*] home magazine or *Arts and Architecture*, where most of it was shown-- Most of the tract housing that was done at that time, modern tract housing, was of a post and beam character. And there was quite a bit of it by several of the architects, primarily Ed [Edward H.] Fickett and [Don Saxon] Palmer and [Bill] Krisel. They did most-- And then there were the [Joseph] Eichler homes, of course, with [A.] Quincy Jones producing them down here. I think there was a great body of work in the post and beam mentality. I should say wood post and beam, because steel is also a post and beam process.About the mid-sixties, after Sea Ranch was published, was the point at which the post and beam tended to die in the Southern California area, because of the amount of publication it got. And the Charles [W.] Moore influence that took place after that-- It tended to stop the movement here by so many of the architects. I was one of the few that continued to work as before--not in a pure post and beam system, but I always continued, I think, more of a continuum of my thinking in architecture. Most of the people bailed out in some form or another. Either they began to do the one-way pitched roofs of Sea Ranch and stopped doing the kinds of things that they were doing before, or other architects who didn't do that really latched on to the plaster mentality that was influenced strongly by the New York Five [Peter Eisenman, Michael Graves, Charles Gwathmey, John Hejduk, and Richard Meier] and all

of their hype in the early seventies. So the combination of what took place in the mid-sixties with Moore and Sea Ranch, [Robert] Venturi's book *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, and then the New York Five--those influences from mid-sixties to mid-seventies changed many people's method of working. It was mostly that.I think what happens so often is that architects attempt to change their method of working for publication purposes, hoping that they will get published if they are of the day rather than staying with principles that they believed in or have strong convictions about. Obviously if one is willing to jump around a lot, their convictions aren't as great unless it's just, say, exploratory. But I think it was more than that. I think it was more a "to be with it" kind of a mentality. I never really bought into that at all. I pretty much tried to stay true to my own feelings. And even though sometimes the materials would change with certain clients or certain job types, I think the thinking process about structure, about environmental responses, about planning and programmatic issues, the progression through space--all of these things were always fairly consistent in my thinking. I just wasn't interested in styles or being with it or the need to change to be published.I was one of the few down here. Pierre [F.] Koenig was another one, more so than I, more strict in what he would do or wouldn't do and didn't change from the day he started until today. He still thinks pretty much the same way. But in the long haul, that seems to eventually pay off, because I think that the integrity that one has in this kind of a process is finally appreciated, because it has the quality of the individual in the work that makes sense. And it's not about changing your clothes every time there's a different attitude by the magazines. I don't believe in doing that, because I'm not a stylist, number one, and number two, I think it's pretty ridiculous to be dragged around by the press and influenced by the press, which really is normally predominantly driven by people who went to architectural school and were really the incompetent designers who were better verbally than they were graphically. They really were not good designers, but they were able to turn the word.So the power of the word being able to manipulate the designer has always been a game played by the press. You know, it's the same as in *The Fountainhead* that was written about fifty years ago by Ayn Rand. There's just the idea that Toohey, who was this writer, could drive the profession, and it goes on all the time today. They drive the profession, and I resent that. I resent the fact that the profession has no more integrity than that and can be changed so easily. Some of it is imagery,

obviously, that drives, but I think it's the word that does the same. And the selection by the editors of what they put in and what they don't put in their magazines are the forces that come into play. If you cave in to that, I think, you lose your own self in the process. I never was interested in that game. I'm glad I wasn't.

SMITH

A theme seems to be developing where we're seeing really how much power the professionals affiliated with architecture but not architects themselves have over the process, like the photographer, like the writer, like the critic, like the builder.

KAPPE

It's true. They all have a force on the profession. And it makes it difficult. Obviously if you're trying to establish a major business in architecture and that goal is very strong in your thinking process, you're going to cave in to developers all the time. That's your bread and butter. Most major firms were forced to do postmodern work whether they liked it or didn't like it, because that was now the accepted style in larger-scale buildings by developers. It was being pushed. Well, one has to decide for themselves which game they want to play. You don't have to do that if you don't want to.Many architects think of their own self-worth by how much work they get, how many people they have employed. That was never interesting to me. I didn't think that was very important. I think that for me it was most important to do what I wanted to do architecturally. It worked okay. It worked fine. I always had clients. It was good enough. Even in our partnership we never wanted to be big. We wanted to get other types of work. It's nice to do a variety of architectural work. We had diversity, but not a great deal of quantity and diversity, because we were not a large firm. So you don't get to do project types that you might like to do, because you remain small. I think you make your choices and you operate that way in your life. Today it's more difficult than before because of the fact that you're either big or you're small. You can't do like we used to do. You could be small and get big work. Today it's pretty hard to get big work and be small as a firm.Now, the other element is this process of selection. Who selects? Who are the people who are working, say, for the public sector? Who are those people? They also fall under that other category of people who are not usually

the strongest in the field. Usually you don't go into public work if you're a strong individual or a special designer. You usually are somebody who's more mediocre. Well, mediocre people make different kinds of choices, I think, than stronger people. I find it odd. I think a lot of people today select more and more to cover themselves, so therefore they will select the firm that they think will be good because it is big. That's not necessarily true. The people working for them could be my students. They're producing the work quite often in an office like that. But the selecting person doesn't know that. They go by the reputation of this corporate image, whatever it might be.So there's lots of odd choices like that. That's part of life. It's not just architecture. That's true in all fields. And one makes their choice here.How did we get into this? [laughter]

SMITH

So what were the factors that went in finally, do you think, that sort of killed the whole developer-built post and beam?

KAPPE

I think the developers felt that all the people who were going to buy had bought, and therefore they got cold feet and in a sense started to go back to more traditional kinds of housing types. They sold everything that was going to sell, generally speaking. And then if they had success because there weren't as many old-style houses around for a while, then other builders would follow. You get this buildup that way. They pretty much run the selection process for people, I think. You only can buy what's out there. And not too often do houses go unsold no matter what they look like. There's always a portion of the population that's going to like what they see. So there were more of those.The houses still usually had modern plans. They had many of the lifestyle elements that came out of the modern movement. They all have the same kind of kitchens and bathrooms that came out of modern houses, but they're dressed in another kind of a way. Externally they have a different image, whatever that may be, that builders think people wanted, obviously. Maybe they're right. Maybe they're wrong. I never knew which came first, the chicken or the egg, in this case. Because obviously there were plenty of people who liked the other house.It's hard to know. I look at the restaurant business. There was a time when if you did a modern restaurant, it had a really hard

time being successful. Just the look of a modern restaurant internally didn't go. Many started and closed. Today, it's the opposite. It's strange. And people have gotten used to these restaurants that have all of this high-design mentality about them. They all are completely different, but those restaurants didn't exist in the fifties and sixties. Every time you had a really pretty nice-looking restaurant, you would have a harder time than the red plush seats and the wallpapered walls and God knows what. So that phenomenon is intriguing too, which to me says, again, the public can be sold a lot of things depending upon how it's sold.I don't think modern architecture was ever sold well, and then, of course, from the mid-seventies on, the architects jumped into the postmodern thing. That killed everything completely, because now all of a sudden it was fine for them to do traditional work--people who had done modern work--and it became a mess for the next fifteen years. It just went backwards again. And that's been typical all the way through modern architectural history. The Spanish colonial revival that took place in, what, 1916 to 1920, that era, after modern architecture was evolving and [Irving J.] Gill was doing what he was doing. The Greenes [Charles S. and Henry M.] had done what they had done. And then all of a sudden there was a big jump backwards-- The exhibition around 1900 in Chicago that destroyed Louis [H.] Sullivan-- I mean, there were these movements that started and then were always killed. I think the past fifteen years was another movement attempting to kill modern architecture.There were a lot of faults with modern architecture, not so much with houses as in major buildings and what was going on with our cities. It's not all the fault of modern architecture; it's the fault of the whole cultural mentality. First of all, the typical fast-food chains and all these kinds of chain stores that were being built throughout every city, these certainly weren't quality places that gave our cities anything better. The major buildings were anonymous. Buildings--glass skins that I think people couldn't feel obviously very much attachment to symbolically. I don't think the planning that was going on or being implemented made cities very good. So all the things that were happening were not making life better, I don't think, in terms of what the goals were of the masters of the modern movement and the people who had projected various ideal cities.But you have to also look at the fact that this was over a period of, what--from 1945 to '75--thirty years. In thirty years, with the amount of building taking place, there wasn't enough time to think about what was really happening. There was no real true

evaluation. It was just go, go, go, develop, develop. No way of really comprehending what was happening. Suddenly you do huge developments and multiples-- The thinking process isn't thorough enough. So there were a lot of faults. And postmodernism in my way of thinking should have been a reevaluation of what had happened and a reassessment and a slowing down process in which one would then again reevaluate and set up a new set of tenets that would make sense. Instead, it really became another stylistic movement that was no better than before. And the processes were in fact worse, because it was retrogressive. It could have been valuable, but it wasn't. And that's why it died so quickly too.So now we're here again. Now you get a new young group going through somewhat the same process again. We're going back to where we already were and starting to relook at these same elements. Let's see what happens this time. But I don't any longer have faith in the way that things will change. I think we just cycle, we cycle, we cycle. Over time, we'll see what happens. I don't think our cities get much better, and I don't know that our architecture gets any better either. I think there's lots of good work. There always has been lots of good work. But there's an awful lot of bad work. That's not related to modern, postmodern, classical, or any style; it's related to the architects. There aren't a lot of good architects. Well, the majority aren't that good, and most of them cave into other forces as I spoke of earlier.

1.7. TAPE NUMBER: IV, Side One (October 2, 1995)

KAPPE

So anyway, I think the combination of architects that aren't real talented, and the idea that they do accept the forces that come from developers to persuade them to do what they do, has created more of the problems of our cities than anything else. Well, anyway, I think things could be much better than they are. But I think most of the architects who are the most committed and the most dedicated are not the ones that developers usually go to, just because they cannot force them as easily as they can others. That's kind of a generality. I think there are good architects who work for developers who attempt to do as much as they can do, but I think it's difficult. And since I was one who didn't work very much with developers, maybe it's unfair for me to speak that strongly about it, but I think developers generally do like to have a

strong say in where things are going. I don't think there's anything more I have to say in that arena right now. Maybe it will come up again as we continue talking.

SMITH

Okay. Well, why don't we move to this house, then, the Kappe house. It seems to mark a change in your architecture. In what ways is this house consistent with projects you've been working on earlier? In what ways is it divergent?

KAPPE

I think what happened here was a sense of timing through the early sixties. With some of the houses that we've been talking about, the many post and beam houses and the smaller houses--say, up to around to 2,000, 2,500 square feet-- [The Mr. and Mrs. Milton] Handman [residence] was one of the few that got up closer to 3,000. While I was doing the post and beam houses, I also was designing apartment housing. I just said I didn't do a lot of developer work, but I did have a series of units that I was doing with developers, maybe about four or five apartments during that period. The last one, which was in Palos Verdes, was-- I think it was about a twenty-four-unit condominium. During that process, I became a bit disturbed by the fact that I wasn't able to control the kitchens and baths and cabinetry as well from unit to unit as I would have liked to. It seemed like each unit would be just a little different. It wouldn't be as consistent as it should be. In other words, the dimensions were slightly different. Things would happen on the job from unit to unit. Just normal construction errors that occur. During the same period of time, there was also some work that we were doing in hillside house planning--hillside land planning, to be more correct. I remember for the city of Sierra Madre we not only did the land planning, we also did a large-scale model for them. And on that model we had to build many, many houses for this land-planning site in order to demonstrate the potential to them. Many of the houses actually were quickly designed. Again, being above grade rather than being cut into grade, they were supported on various kinds of tower units or support units and spanning between these units.Of course, Lou [Louis I.] Kahn had come on the scene through those years with his [Richards Medical Research Laboratories] and his discussion of the served and the service elements. In other words, the service elements being one part of the house--or building--

and other parts being free of those service elements.I guess the combination of all of these things--the dissatisfaction with the control, the explorations that I was doing with hillside ideas, Lou Kahn's philosophy--added to my already fairly strong attitude about the California group of architects and Frank Lloyd Wright-- All of that came together when I was doing this house.Well, let me back up a minute. Even before that, I had also projected some ideas of how to develop these units--what I'll call service cores. All the kitchens, the baths, and the stairways--in other words, all the special elements of the unit--could be controlled at one point. Then I felt that I could site-build these in a way where I could control them at one point where we built all of this in, and then crane these units into position on the site. Then I thought that I would span beams between these units, and then have a living and bedroom module as well that could also be craned into position. I think I began, then, trying to develop modules of various types with the service core being the key support, in combination with the beams.I had another apartment to do adjacent to the one I had finished in Palos Verdes, and I had projected this structure as the idea for that project. This was about the time that I was designing my own house, and the first set of drawings for the house were on a conventional foundation, actually. My geology showed that I could control the springs and that I could build a conventional foundation. So the house was first designed that way. When we started construction, the backhoe immediately sunk, and so the springs were not cut off. The water was just as bad as before.Because of my thinking that had been going on with these core units, I started to think, "Well, maybe that would be a better solution for me on the site, because I could touch down with much less area on the site using these service core units. They could have their own integrity as far as load bearing and taking earthquake forces, and I wouldn't have to have grade beams tying these units together." My thinking was that I would actually use a floating foundation on these towers. Then I'd just span between and actually just bridge the house, much like I was doing in some of these little models that we were doing for Sierra Madre. So when the first house didn't work, I quickly switched to this other idea. I actually designed the house more as a bridge. What began to happen was instead of the strict post and beam house, the next group of houses became a longer-span bridging mentality. And that's what I used on my own house here.That was, I think, the first change in design attitude. There was still a module in my house. It was based on three feet. It had to be

modular in many ways, because I was going to use tile on a one-foot module, and it also had to work out in even increments. The joist system was kept to an eighteen-inch module. The pieces of the windows and doors were all three feet and variations on three feet as they modulated out. So there were those elements that stayed from some of my earlier thinking, but now done in a different way than they were before.It was this combination of forces that came into play at that time. Also it was larger than some of the houses that I'd been working on. The scale was increased from the earlier houses. It seemed like using laminated beams to do this was a better way. Another factor was that the timbers that we were getting were not as good anymore. The laminated beam was a natural industrial move from normal timbers to now built-up timbers that kept their shape and had a different kind of integrity about them. So it was all of these factors that came into play and that influenced me to do what I did.Then after I did my own house, I was curious to continue the thought process that I had started earlier, to see, by using a common method of construction, the kind of differentiation I could get from unit to unit, house to house. For about ten years I became involved with this process of building, out of curiosity: What were the forms that I could work with it, and how it possibly could be differentiated. Even though they had a box-module mentality that could be used in repetitive housing types, for me it was intriguing to try to see what I could do with all my private houses. So I did designs that were as small as 700 square feet for student housing to 7,000 square feet in houses. It was a wide range, just looking at this process. And it was interesting to me.It happened at that time too that I had many sites that had soil problems. It seems sometimes problems come in series. After we'd used up much of the flat land and other stable hillsides, the next group was the series of land sites that had different problems. When I would have this, the idea of still concentrating these points of support made sense. I would talk about it with the owners and they thought it made sense too, and so I would explore. There were quite a few houses that I did in variations on the same theme. I also projected it for commercial buildings that were not built. They were projects. So there were quite a few houses and studies through that period that used this sort of same mentality. I then also explored another system, which was a cubic system, a series of cubes interlinked and attached. And that was, again, from thinking about it in two ways, both as a modular system or as panel system.So I was trying to evolve for myself a variety of

processes that could be used in multiple housing. In the late sixties, most of us architects projected that there was going to be a tremendous amount of housing of this sort, both in low-income housing or what is called affordable housing today-- We looked at a future of, I think, a tremendous amount of building. There were tremendous population increases projected. There were many factors that pointed to the tremendous amount of development. So I was interested in these multiple housing techniques.I always tended to look ahead to the future. What was the next thing on the horizon? That was just the way my head worked. I always liked to think as a futurist. Not something that's way out, but something that was doable, that had another element to it. And these ideas were always part of modern architecture anyway, looking at these kinds of processes and systems. Anyway, I just spent this time on these ideas. It was like an artist, I guess, who spends periods of time developing a single idea, rather than the idea that you do everything as a one off, where each project is a new idea. So I kept this same mentality going through my work for about ten years. SMITH: Even though this house was sort of a culmination of a lot of things you'd been thinking about, when the idea for design came, it came fairly quickly, in the way you describe it.

KAPPE

Well, it was quickly, because I had already been thinking about it. Therefore, when I applied it to my site it worked well. It just seemed to make sense for this particular site and for other sites as well and for other houses afterwards. It was a good scheme, but probably done the best in my own house. It was interesting. It was the first, and probably still ended up being the best, of all the later explorations. It was more clear in its thinking than what seemed to happen afterwards, where I would explore variations, and so some of them were not as tight as this one was. Also the site conditions here were special. That made the house come about in the way that it did. I think the way the site comes forty-five degrees to the house, which I wanted to be parallel to the street, created this very single large space that had many levels to it. It actually worked in two directions, but because of the way I sited the house-- It also was built above the site, not dug into the site.So there were a lot of things that worked out well at that time, and decisions that I made, I think, that were good decisions, which doesn't always happen. I think one makes generally good decisions, but sometimes they come together a little bit better. So the

[Bruce and Pat] Sultan house that followed this and the [Leonard and Judy] Gertler house that followed it and the [Henry and Connie] Katzenstein house all had similar aspects to them.Then there was one little prototype that I had done. It seems to me it was even earlier than my own house. It was the Curtis house that didn't go ahead. It was up in Topanga Canyon. It was like a small little variation of this too, and I think the thought process was before this house if I remember right. I can even probably check it here for you. A variation of that house was later built in Montecito [the Paul and Nancy Fink residence], and it's a small variation of my own house. Curtis was '65 too, so it must have been designed just about the same time as this or just ahead of it. So I was thinking that way fairly strongly. The idea here that I could take 4,000 square feet of house, touch it down on about 600 square feet on the ground and be able to let the land play through the house at the ground level, build the house, and also then come out at the roofline, which was just about the same level as the flat land up above made-- The roof becomes another extension of the land. So in many ways the land was being used three times rather than just once, like it normally is on most houses. So all of those approaches worked out pretty well. And the idea that even though the house is in the trees at this level, as you go up to the roof top level of the house above, you then have a panorama of a huge amount of trees and a great extension of the site.There were many things that I was able to get out of this house which I also did with the Gertler house. The Sultan house did a great deal of the same. Lifting it made a big difference, getting it off the ground. The Gertler site was quite heavily treed, and if one built down on the flat, you would be only in the trees. By lifting it up as I did, the same as here, they then have the long canyon view. It gave a whole different quality up at the living level. They still had the underneath of the house to use for the kids and the play area and other uses. Once again the roof was used. So that was the same mentality as here.

SMITH

Is the Gertler house the one that's built around the tree in the middle?

KAPPE

Yes. It no longer lives. For some reason, the tree eventually died. It was there for twenty years. It was a eucalyptus tree that died.

SMITH

They should plant a new one.

KAPPE

I don't know if they did or not. I don't think so. I think we closed up the deck at that time. But it was a very strong major tree. But there are a lot of trees on the site, and the same with Sultan. I think I built around every tree there, including one that I took up through the house, which I sometimes do. But that was another positive aspect of this system. It allowed me to maneuver around the site in a way to accommodate many conditions.When I did recently the Melcher/Keeler house, which is not that old, it had some of the same design approach as well. It was really on a three-point tower support with the inclusion of a couple of columns. I started to not be quite so pure with the system. I don't know why, but I'd use combinations of towers and columns if it made sense to do it that way. In my house, I kept very religiously to the system. I think both Gertler and Sultan do as well. Katzenstein was a combination. Other houses were combinations too. The idea of developing a variety of systems that could be built on the ground and craned into place all appealed to me. Unfortunately, when I finally had a fairly large housing unit to do in the late sixties early seventies the [Los Angeles City] Community Redevelopment Agency had such strict standards that we were forced to do what they wanted us to do, and I didn't really get a chance to again use the system. So even though I thought a lot about it, I've never been able to really do housing en masse.

SMITH

That was the Pepper Housing Project?

KAPPE

Pepper Housing, right.

SMITH

And what were the regulations that--?

KAPPE

It was almost stylistically predetermined. It was really the Sea Ranch mentality, only in plaster. It was placed upon us. Actually Carl Maston had done the first stage of this low-income housing. That was also set with this other mode, and we were supposed to keep consistent. So much of it was predetermined. Between that and FHA [Federal Housing Administration], there wasn't a lot of room for exploration. Plus there was a very low cost factor.But it would have been interesting to have tried this other scheme. The only time I had a chance at all was the student housing for Sonoma State [University], where we got all the way through it in terms of design and to the bidding stage, and then the developer [Martin Stone] decided he didn't want to do the student housing anymore. He backed out, so I didn't get a chance to test it. The only thing we did get a chance to do was bid it in a variety of ways.

SMITH

So that was a private complex that wasn't for the university itself?

KAPPE

It was for the university, but a private development.

SMITH

Typical?

KAPPE

That's typical. They go after developers for presentation of ideas and response to requests for proposals for housing development.

SMITH

So could you implement any of your ideas in the Pepper Housing?

KAPPE

No. The main thing we did in Pepper Housing that had any value at all was the idea of developing housing around a variety of large-scale courts. I think the idea of giving people separate outdoor living areas was important. Using the laundry as a social facility was another one of those ideas. We also had a hierarchical arrangement of walks and movement through the whole set of units in order to hopefully identify where you were. There were a certain number of units that were developed around a street idea. So we tried to

differentiate the site. It was more about planning than it was about architecture. It was more about life, amenities, than it was about architecture. There wasn't too much that one could do architecturally.I think the project had good attitudes about it. I think the biggest error was that the agency again set the density too low, particularly along the street. I think the street front could have been much higher density than we had and given a better street identity. Because we had a long, major street. That part, I think, was wrong. But unfortunately we weren't able to do another project from what we learned. At that time there was a change of [presidential] administration. I think [Richard M.] Nixon came in that time, and public housing was really put on the back burner. The amount of housing that we thought was going to be built didn't happen at all. So we never really had a chance to do another one then, to rethink it. SMITH: So you weren't so turned off by the experience that you were unwilling to try again if you--?

KAPPE

Oh, no, no. I think it was an important aspect. My thinking at one level is, how do you do make a better mass-produced kind of house? That's one level. The other is the idea of social planning, which is "Can you make a better place for people to live?" And because of the nature of FHA requirements and their not allowing hardly anything, there's not much you can do other than just minimal architecture. Maybe today there would be a little more freedom than there was then. But at that time, there was practically no freedom. Planning-wise they didn't care too much, but as far as the units, they had to be a certain way.I have different attitudes when I'm working in planning and when I'm working in architecture. The architecture itself has a more personal aspect to it. It's about a series of construction ideas and processes. The planning work is more of a group activity. It's one in which you can discuss ideas, I think, on a different level and produce solutions on a different level that provide, I think, a larger amenity and not necessarily only that personal one. It would be nice if both could be combined, I think. You'd get better units and better places. But I can still accept the fact that one can think somewhat differently about the two issues.

SMITH

But isn't the whole idea behind exploring a construction system that at some point you're thinking that this can be applied on a larger scale?

KAPPE

Yes. Larger scale that would allow you to cut costs through the processes and provide a better place. That's all. And do the kinds of things you do in custom work that could be done en masse. I think it can be done. It's that first gamble. How do you do it? Until the day, I think, that the architect puts his money on the line and becomes a developer and goes out and gets involved with getting the financing and has guts enough to say that "I know it will be successful," and is forceful enough to think that it would be successful, that it would happen-- Or by convincing some developer that you think it's a great idea--You know, I don't think until that happens good development will occur. Every so often it did during our time. I think we spoke about [Raphael] Soriano doing some experimentation, Gregory Ain doing it. But Gregory Ain was very frustrated, I think, because he always believed in this kind of housing, social housing, the idea of doing things that are more communal-like. But so far we've never really proven that they work very well. I don't know if we have any really great examples of these kinds of developments. Even during this period of Pepper, there were quite a few going on up in San Francisco--all through the country, as a matter of fact.I think the most successful of all was the one that a good friend of mine [Robert Marquis] did up in San Francisco--Saint Francis Square--that had two things going for it. I think they had a good solution architecturally, but planwise it was rather simple. But the key was that it was occupied by primarily Asians. I think that had a major factor in why it worked. The major successes were usually for housing for the elderly or, in this case, an Asian occupancy. It was difficult to make them work for the African American community. Somehow they resented large-scale developments. In other words, they felt that society was again placing another trip on them even though it was thought of as better housing than what they had. They didn't accept it on that basis. As a result, most developments--whether it was a major one, like Pruitt-Igoe, which was high-rise buildings, or whether it was low-scale buildings, like Pepper or others--had their problems. It was a bigger problem than just architecture. I'm not sure whether I'll ever have an opportunity to do any of the ideas I explored. Who knows? You never know in life. But I think without really putting in a tremendous effort on my

own part, I don't think it could happen. I don't think someone's going to come in saying, "Hey, I saw that neat idea you thought about thirty years ago. I think I'd like to build it." At times I thought I might try to develop my own project, but I just never have. I've done development, but not like that. Everything of this sort that I did was exercises, but I enjoyed them. I enjoyed thinking that way, and I don't have bad feelings about it. I don't say, "You know, I never got to do these things, and they were so brilliant." I don't feel about it that way. I think I would like to have had the chance to see if there was any potential there, but it's not so important.

SMITH

So what was the response to the Kappe house originally?

KAPPE

Well, I had a good response to the house when it was completed. The next phase of my career came from it. I guess there were just a lot of people who responded strongly to it, or enough people. Architects don't work for a lot of people. We work for a small number of people. Obviously there were half a dozen, a dozen clients who responded, and people still do. It doesn't seem to lose its appeal somehow, where other houses that I designed later, during the energy exploration, were just one job and very seldom other jobs came from them. I don't know why, but that's the way it was and the way it's been.

SMITH

So what has it meant to you to be able to live here?

KAPPE

It's been kind of great in a way. It's nice to have done maybe your best job for yourself [laughter] and to live most of your life this way. I remember when John Lautner last visited us. I think there was that kind of feeling that, as successful as he was in the work that he was doing for others, his own lifestyle wasn't in the same place as he envisioned for others. In my case, my lifestyle is the same as what I do for others and maybe better. And for a person who obviously couldn't afford this in today's market, it was a nice time to have done it. I happened to have built at a time when prices were still low, both for land and for building costs. Since I already had a house that was around 2,000

square feet, I guess we were pushing to another size to allow all the other amenities we thought we would want, which at the time was probably more than what I should have been doing. But in the end I think the choice was right, because the neighborhood has gradually built up to the level of what I did at that time. We had much smaller houses around us. And we made the choice. It was even an intelligent, economical choice.The house today still is no different than something that I would be doing now. So it's lasted well, I think, in terms of its time. I think it ends up being somewhat timeless. I think all of that is fine. To enjoy the things that you believe in, I think, is nice for architects to have. So for me, it's been great. And for our family, it's been great. I'm glad I made the move when I made it.

SMITH

Do you ever discover anything new about the house?

KAPPE

Oh, I think it's mostly a situation of what changes-- The way the growth around it changes. The light is most important, the way it responds to the sun during the day and the way it changes with different climate conditions. Those are the things which you find. Reflections are different--those things. But after you're in a place for almost thirty years, you've seen many of them over and over in different ways. It has life from the outside more than from the inside, because the inside has stayed the same. We haven't changed colors and furniture, because that isn't important to me as part of my lifestyle. But the light is important. On days like today it's extremely nice, because you get a certain amount of sun play and a certain amount of shadow play. And it's pleasant. At least I think so.

1.8. TAPE NUMBER: IV, Side Two (October 2, 1995)

SMITH

You mentioned that the [Los Angeles] Conservancy brought through a few hundred people yesterday to look at the house. Does it still give you sort of a thrill to watch other people go through it?

KAPPE

Well, to a certain degree that was always interesting to me from day one when we started with tours through here. How people would respond was important, because some people come up and really are elated and enjoy it very much. Other people get really disturbed by the lack of railings and the lack of those kinds of safety elements in the house. And for people who suffer from acrophobia in various ways, they come up a little more fearful. Yet other people are exactly the opposite from that, so-- I think there are more of those who enjoy the process than those who do not. Then there are those who, even though it's a very simple house, get somewhat disoriented. I don't understand it exactly, but I guess the visual impact that takes place in a house with many things to look at and many experiences is disorienting. Maybe. I'm not sure. But it happens that way. Usually I get nice comments from people. They really enjoy it. Some people really get into it, and that's interesting.One of the most interesting experiences for me was a historian from [University of California] Berkeley named Norma Evenson who, when I was chairing architecture at Cal Poly [California State Polytechnic University] Pomona, I had come to lecture one time. She was a real difficult person to break through, her surface. I know we went out to dinner, and she was very difficult to engage in conversation. Then she gave her talk, and she was still quite difficult afterwards. We brought her back here to stay overnight before she went back to Berkeley. She walked in the house and came up the stairs. It just drew her exactly the way that I had perceived moving people through the place. She was a completely different person through the experience. Experientially it just captured her, and then we had hours of conversation after that. Real open. Real animated. It was interesting. I never saw a person changed so strongly by an environment. And one who was not an educated person about architecture, who would really respond strongly.I had others, like [John Morris] Dixon, who was the editor of *PA* [*Progressive Architecture*], come in and almost have no response and sit like he was anywhere. Zero response. So you don't know. And then he came back twenty-five years later and he says, "I don't think I appreciated this house the way I should have when I was here the first time." So this is just a person who either holds his emotions in so tightly that he doesn't allow himself to respond to anything-- It's interesting. When you see a group of people, a large group--which was your original question--come through, you see a variety of responses.

SMITH

You've written that an architect should orchestrate movement within a building. I was wondering if you could apply that concept to this house. How does this house do that?

KAPPE

I orchestrated it from the street. You first of all come to the entry. I think in most cases it should be an experience, not the idea that there's the front door and you can see it--although sometimes that happens in my houses too-- And so the idea that you come up and you experience it in pieces and parts as you're coming up the walk is the first experience. Then because you come under a very low area, you're compressed as you're coming over the bridge, and you're hearing the water play, or you should. You're moving towards the entrance, and you come into the entry. You're in a stairwell really, and yet there's a skylight. There's a stair that confronts you that doesn't have a railing, so you have to immediately think about this as an idea, and as you walk up, there are glimpses that look into the studio and you catch that little piece of the space. You come over the separation in the stairwell of a piece of glass that you look down at to cross over. As you look down, you see the skylight above you, which is a strange illusion: as you're looking down, you're seeing up. Then you gradually move up through the next phase. Then you come to this very large space, and you're coming from compression into a high-ceilinged space. From there, because the house does move up as it does, there's some sort of natural drawing of people up past the living room, up through the dining room, and to the kitchen. That's the orchestration, the way a person should be drawn through the place. That's normally what people do.It always was amazing to me that so few people on a tour will come down into the living space, which normally should be one of the movements that takes place. But somehow the draw up is more powerful than the pull down at first. Of course, on the tour the other day they brought the people in the living room for the first discussion, so they did come down in. But normally that is not what happens. It's more of a movement along the gallery way, and then the movement up and out. So it's interesting.That's the dynamic of the movement of people. And I quite often do that, where I take them up through a progression and the whole house unfolds. It's a Wrightian mentality, I think. Frank Lloyd Wright was the master of that--of bringing people through places in a special way. But any good architect is really-- [Alvar] Aalto has wonderful

ways of bringing people through a play of spaces and movement from outdoor and natural spaces and walking across lawn, and then to the entry and the sense of the rail and the sense of the door pull. All of these things are all strongly thought about.Architects should think about those things. What's underfoot, what are the changes underfoot-- You sometimes move over uneven surfaces and then onto a wood surface that might have another quality, and then to another surface. Lou Kahn has moved people over gravel into a major museum, and that's a strange sensation to move through that and then into the main building. Or as the Salk Institute [for Biological Studies] used to be, that you come through this wonderful eucalyptus grove--a natural walk--before you start to go into this next layer. So all these things should be thought about in order to truly have a real feeling in and of a place.I don't think very many architects do that well. The masters do it really well. Most architects don't think about those things enough. They think about things you look at, but not necessarily all the things you touch and feel and sense in a different way. So that sensibility-- Either you have it or you don't have it. I don't know if you can even learn it. We often don't do the things that are pretty marvelous. Just the treatment of a railing. I still don't think about it the way Aalto does. I think about it as more of a visual thing than that sense of moving your hand from a metal rail to the wood rail at the point of turn or signifying the point of being up at the top or at the beginning, so that you have a different sense when you touch a railing at one point and another point. They are all nice ideas and notions. Or steel columns that he'll wrap, so that when you're touching it, it has a warmth rather than a cold feeling to it. All of those concerns are pretty great.

SMITH

Architectural historians have written about this house. I forget who it was exactly says that here you combine craftsman and International style in a unique way, and make it your own. How do you respond to that?

KAPPE

Well, I don't think it's International style at all, really. In my mind, International style to me is a term that would relate more to the Corbu [Le Corbusier] box type of house. Or a Miesian [Ludwig Mies van der Rohe] type of structure that would be more universal. I think in my case I obviously combine many

approaches and many ideas that preceded me. That's the normal way that occurs. I think you learn from what you've seen, what you've experienced, what you've done yourself, and so forth. But at the same time I'm certainly aware of many architects before, and I didn't exclude anybody. I can get as much enjoyment out of a Miesian piece of architecture as I could out of a Wrightian or an Aalto piece. So you're looking at a broad range of ideas that have different degrees of clarity in a variety of ways.There have been people who thought of my house as Mies in wood, which is rather strange to me, but there has been that kind of terminology. Others who felt a Schindleresque [Rudolph M. Schindler] character about it. Others relate some of it to [Richard J.] Neutra, because of the wall penetration or things like that. Others thought of it as Wrightian in its major ideas, Kahnian in the towers. So it's all of those things, but not consciously. It wasn't consciously done that way by me. It was subconsciously done. So my personality comes through in the way that I reinterpreted all of these ideas that preceded me. That's all.I think that's all any architect truly does. We're not inventors of great new ideas necessarily. I think anybody just takes what has preceded and maybe perceives it differently in another way. That's usually when ideas come forward or people talk about it as being creative in a sense. But I think it's just these combinations. You have a vocabulary just like you do in language, and you use it in various ways, the way one would use words maybe as architectural elements in somewhat the same manner. That's why it has these relationships.The craftsman relationship I am not sure about. Of course, maybe just because it's wood, and maybe because it's detailed in a way that tries to deal with the craft of architecture. It certainly couldn't be done the way [Charles S.] Greene and [Henry M.] Greene would do a craftsman piece, where you can have carpenters working and working over members and beams and shaping them and then dowelling them in special ways. We don't operate that way in our time. We can't afford it in that same way. Maybe you can in a table or a piece of cabinetry or something, but if you take the whole job, you can't quite do that. So it doesn't have those kinds of characteristics. But then again, it depends on who sees it and how they interpret it.

SMITH

The Sultan residence, it seems to me-- I see that picture more than even this house as far as representative of your work. What's special about that building?

KAPPE

It's the same idea. The glass was treated a little differently than it was here. I tried to incorporate a commercial glazing process with the wood vernacular in order to separate even more strongly the support from the glass. It was an aluminum metal system. I think in certain shots that the glazing does tend to strengthen the idea a little differently than here.

SMITH

Because it picks up the reflection of the trees?

KAPPE

Well, it picks that up, but also there's no wood. Wood has a sense of support in the mullions. Metal will tend to separate the elements. I guess because it does have reflectivity to it as well, it diminishes it more than, say, wood, which doesn't reflect and tends to be more static in its look and maybe more stable in its character. So in Sultan, where I used metal, probably if I were trying to do it today, I'd eliminate as much of the metal as possible and use more silicone with butt joints. This way it is possible to diminish the supports even more.I think the bridging space in the family area and the way that certain elements come together in the Sultan house are also dynamic. It's 7,000 [square feet]. It's almost twice as large as this house. So we can get many more types of spaces. It had a good site. In that it's sort of a similar idea. It also was a second design for that site, the first one being eliminated after I had taken it to a certain point, because the owners felt that it was going to be too expensive the first way. I redesigned it very quickly again. And [it was] redrawn very quickly; one draftsman and myself redrew it in just a short period of time. So it was, again, a fast house and a good one, I think. At the time some people thought it was excessively large. But on today's standards, it would not be that way. You know, 7,000 square feet is large, but when you talk in terms of 15,000-, 20,000-, 30,000-square-foot houses, it's not.Other than that, as I would say, it has the same characteristics as my house. It's just a different site, a different client, and it also doesn't have the overhangs. It

tends to be a tighter piece, in which there aren't as many extensions. I think sometimes the extensions are good in terms of protection.

SMITH

Did the Sultans see this house and what one might--?

KAPPE

Yeah, sure. They saw the house.

SMITH

Just like all the clients that wanted the Gertler, Katzenstein?

KAPPE

Right. They all liked this. And also Bob Harris--R.G. [Robert G.] Harris--the one I did on Malibu. Of course, in Harris's case, he was interested because he was an industrial developer. I still see him. I still work for him periodically. He still thinks that his house was done before this house was done because we used to do laminated beam tilt-up industrial buildings for him, so he thought that it came through the industrial building process. But it was the other way around. It was also an appropriate use there, because it was the least expensive way to build industrial buildings. But, of course, in industrial one uses a whole panel system. It's laminated beam plus it has perpendicular beams at four feet on center going the other way, and then the plywood panels. But the structure has some of the same mentality. I was supposed to do a resort hotel for him one time, and we were going to do it all tilt-up and lam[inated] beams. That would have been interesting for me too, because it would have been another idea that I could have used in a repeat way and see how it would work. But Malibu didn't buy it. And so far it hasn't been done.

SMITH

You mean, the city?

KAPPE

The city wouldn't allow the hotel on this site. They were anti-development in Malibu.

SMITH

What about the Katzenstein house?

KAPPE

They had lived on Sunset [Boulevard]. They had an old Spanish house. They saw this house and bought a site up the street and wanted something in the same character. The fun part there was really working with Henry Katzenstein, who's sort of a Renaissance man. He's a physicist and does everything from music to construction. So he was part of the whole building process and the thinking process too. He was a very rational thinker, so it was fun working with him. There I have a combination of the tower and a post and beam system. In that one I did a precut and predrilled laminated column and beam system, so it was almost erected like a steel job. We craned it all up in one day, and then infilled from there. But it was an interesting process too.

SMITH

And Katzenstein was involved?

KAPPE

He did a lot of the building, so he built all of his own cabinets. He's just a guy who could do everything that you wanted. He could do everything from how to choose mushrooms to playing the recorder to-- Now, actually, he has a huge business of growing seedlings, and he markets throughout the state, and has a huge nursery up towards San Luis Obispo. They now live up there in another house that was done for him. Not by me, but by their son-in-law [John Souza], who was a SCI-ARC [Southern California Institute of Architecture] student. He also started another business that dealt with the scientific field. He came up with a piece of computer technology that he invented. He's a really brilliant guy. He was a fun client. His wife [Connie Katzenstein] is a psychologist and a really enjoyable person too.Most of my clients have been interesting and nice people. They're fun to work with. I haven't had too many bad clients in my career.

1.9. TAPE NUMBER: V, Side One (October 11, 1995)

SMITH

Why don't we start today by you telling me a little bit about the design system for the [Sydney and Barbara] Penn and [Bert and Dawn] Hattenbach residences.

KAPPE

Okay. After I had spent the good part of ten years working on the systems we were speaking about before, I began to explore the idea of just taking a cubic volume with a similar floor plan--in other words, a square floor plan. And on these two houses, I developed a process by which I would put them together in a very simple way--just attaching one cube to the other cube.In the Hattenbach [residence], they were in line on two sides of the site. It was a flat site. The volumes had varying degrees of height, so that there was a differentiation from volume to volume. And starting with that, actually, I went to a diagram in which I used the corners as support points. In other words, there were two shear panels on each corner. There were four voids around the cube, and the attachment would be made at those voided portions, either the attachment or the extension to the exterior.So the idea of that, again, was two things. I thought, once again, we could make the panels ahead of time and attach the structural beam to that and be able to crane that up. Or, if the module was developed at a fourteen-foot module, some of these could be again prepackaged and driven to the sites. So it was a module base that would work, and the whole thing would go out as a unit. When we actually built the house, we did it the former way. One carpenter actually built all the panels on the ground with the beams attached and the joist hangers set. And those were craned up in one day, and then infilled with joists. Within a repetitive process just as before, I wanted to see how much diversity I could get again. It's that same general exploration which was fairly typical of explorations in the modern era. I think architects from the time I got out of school, and even just prior to that, and even going back into the twenties and thirties, were always looking at repetitive processes for mass housing. And this was just another one that I was exploring.In this case, not only was it the situation where the volumes would be attached in certain ways, but there was also the idea that the bathrooms, the kitchens--the areas that in my other system were the support systems--in this system they were really the attached piece. The structure was the cube. The bathrooms, the kitchens, the wardrobes, etc., became really the attachments. So it was a reversal. The other thing about the

Hattenbach house was that the attachment areas were really linear links, so that the units in that house didn't go adjacent to each other. They were actually separated by both a service core and a gallery link.The Penn house is down in Naples, also on a flat lot overlooking canals. And in that case, in order to get the better views of the canal, I rotated each of the units forty-five degrees. That way there were views out of each of those openings that I was talking about before. And in this case, the units were attached unit to unit, but at the point. After you rotate a cube forty-five degrees you'd be attaching at the point. Here again, the stairs and the bath areas and the outside decks became the adjunct areas.This house was pretty much a vertical house. Three stories in the front section. And it had elements like studies that overlooked the living room, and then there were openings that went up to a loft at the third level that was to be used by their sons when they came to visit. Both of them were already at a college level. Also in this house, there was an addition of a sun-control screen that was made out of bronze solar glass in order to keep the sun in the summer from coming into the house. It was about four or five feet out from the face of the building. Back at the face of the building was clear glass. So that was pretty much the element, the forty-five-degree turn, the solar glass screen, and the verticality of the whole. Again, in both of these houses, the interesting part to me when you experience them is that you're completely unaware of the system, which is in plan very regular. When you look at the volumes just in a massing scheme, they seem quite simple, but when you're in them, the houses are really complex in terms of the interaction, the interrelationship of the spaces. The Hattenbachs also had attachments of skylights between the units over the attaching points, so it tended to then separate the elements. But in the Penn house, just the evolution from the ground up to the roof deck itself and the various views and the glimpses and the visual experience that one gets really doesn't give you a sense that you're in three cubes. That was the interesting part of the whole and the interesting part of that exploration.I noted later that architects like Herman Hertzberger in Holland had done a very major commercial building [Central Beheer insurance offices] using much the same idea. Aldo van Eyck had done the same thing in the orphanage in Amsterdam in a way that was more of a straight attachment. It didn't have the complexity of the units. You could pretty much feel the unit-to-unit connection. But Hertzberger dealt with it much more the way I did, which was to get a vertical dimension into the

scheme, so that even though there was this tremendous amount of repetition, there was a great amount of diversity in the plan scheme. Other architects were working in a similar vein, and the reason for it, I think, is that it probably generated from ideas that Lou [Louis I.] Kahn had explored.What happens in the field of architecture is that through the process of communication obviously various ideas come into our subconscious or conscious, whichever way it is. Later you sometimes think similarly to others. Usually when that happens, I always tend to look back and see what was the source, because quite often I'm not even aware of that source. It's like I explained earlier. It's not a conscious, "Well, I'm going to do this because of such and such," but it was just more the idea from my standpoint. I was always curious about repetitive mass housing. Schemes that seem to have that potential appealed to me, and this was one that did.The other thing, I guess, in common with Lou Kahn from my thinking, or what I learned from him really, is the idea of the measured space that really doesn't feel measured. In other words, it's understood through its structure. It's very ordered in the way it's put together, but the experience doesn't allow you to feel that order totally. And I think that's a very important thing, say, versus [Ludwig] Mies van der Rohe, where you would understand that order. You see that order. You feel that order. And that order is fairly dominant. There's not much that breaks that order. So there's quite a difference in the thinking. I think the added dimension is one that appeals to me more, even though I also can enjoy the strictness of a Mies design or those who worked in that manner. But Kahn tended to break it, I think--order it and at the same time break it open. I think [Frank Lloyd] Wright probably did that in his way as well. There was always a base order, but at the same time it opened up more. So that always appealed more to me in my design direction.

SMITH

Was this the same system that you used for the Sonoma State [University] campus?

KAPPE

No. Sonoma was similar to my house and to Sultan. That system was the core unit, which was an eight by twelve by varying length unit, depending upon the site, with the beams spanning between, and the idea that the module, the

eight by twelve bedroom or living room, would be set between the beams. This other system is really either a cube that can be transported directly, as I said, if it has the fourteen-foot dimension-- But once you go beyond that dimension you can't transport it. Then it would be the idea of just developing panels that could be premade. That's all, which is nothing so imaginative. Just the idea that some of the parts could be premade just like any other prefabricated system, whether it be made of trusses or walls or panels or what have you, is a universal idea.At Sonoma State, we used a variety of ways to build the parts. We thought of it in terms of modules, again, that could be made off site. We thought of it in terms of panels that could be made on site, or the core units made on site. So we were trying to work it out as an on-site, off-site kind of a system. Part of the reason for Sonoma State was that we were into this and the builder and the owners were accepting the idea, because the weather was expected to be rainy all through the building season. It was a question of how to build in that period of time in an intelligent way. Part of it was, could we get a little industrial factory and pre-make these parts and just take them to the site, and that way we could keep it under control. That was the basis for the system going ahead at least in the design phase.The two systems we have talked about are different, but they have some elements in common in terms of, again, separating out the living element from the areas that really serve those areas. That again is a Lou Kahn attitude of the served and the service. The service elements are kept in these compact ways, which then allows the complete freedom of the other spaces, which I found to be a really enjoyable way to work, because it freed everything up that way. The better architects are the ones that have quite often organized their service cores anyway, whether they are in these vertical units or whether it's a horizontal organization. Quite often the service area of the bath and the kitchens are kept in a service line, with the other rooms being more open and being able to be free in their organization. Richard Meier uses an organization like that quite often with the service, the movement part, and then the living portion being more freed up. But it's a slightly different system. It's just a way of looking at a building that orders it in a particular way.

SMITH

What were the 1975 [California State] prescriptive energy codes?

KAPPE

Well, when it first came out, the code was primarily that any building could have only a 20 percent ratio of glass area to floor area. In other words, your glass area could only be 20 percent of your floor area of your building. In my case, most of my buildings were more like 60 percent, 80 percent, and much higher. They were three to four times what the code allowed, because my goal had always been to create the least amount of separation between outside and inside and to extend the inside to the outside, which was pretty much what most modern architects in Los Angeles were trying to do. Our climate was good. We were trying to extend out into the outdoors.When this happened, it made me really have to rethink what I was doing, because I still didn't really want to give up on what I had believed all of these years--for twenty-five years--in terms of the way that I felt design should be in the Southern California area. I had to rethink what I was doing, decide how to evaluate it. I was never one who really liked to accept codes or rules without testing them myself. I somehow had always needed that test so I could learn through my own knowledge, in order to then either decide that the idea of the prescriptive standard was correct, or the idea that it could be argued against.So I took fourteen of my houses. They're mostly in the temperate zone, so what I was exploring was heating and not air-conditioning. I took six other houses--usually of either people we knew or friends of our kids in similar areas--that met the prescriptive code. They had small amounts of glass and had the correct or less than the proportion of glass to floor area ratio. I asked all of my clients to keep their bills for a year and all of these other people to keep their bills. I was interested in actual heat used more than anything, and that I would get from the bills. What I did was chart all this data in a variety of ways. One was the heat use, the actual amount of both electrical and heating that was used, the orientation of the houses, the amount of heat loss that each of them would have due to their material use, the area of glass, the area of surface, the amount of volume that each of these had, the insulation that each of the houses had, and then I tried to correlate why or why not these would be efficient. To my surprise, actually, the majority of my houses were more efficient than the smaller houses. I didn't expect that to be, because I felt that the prescriptive standard made some sense. But it didn't seem to correlate at all when I went through my process.What seemed to make the most difference was the orientation of the houses and the volume in order to make them comfortable. So most of the houses that were the most efficient

were south-, southeast-, southwest-facing with the majority of the glass. They usually had high volumes so that it was possible to allow the sun in the wintertime to come into those houses, but the heat would rise to the ceiling point, and it would still be comfortable at the point in which you'd be sitting in a room. If the sun was coming in, the heat would be up at the ceiling. Then I realized that what happened was that by that heat sitting at the ceiling, and it stayed there all day until the temperature started to get colder outside than inside, that at that point, you would get a radiation effect from the heat. In fact, there was probably a certain amount of radiation that was going on during the day, but in the evening you got most of the radiation. Also, as the glass got colder, it actually drew the heat down from the ceiling by convection. So we were getting some residual heat--it was my assumption at least--from that change in temperature at that time of the day. So there was not necessarily just a straight heat loss, but we were getting some residual heat. That was part of it, or seemed to be the main reason that the houses did well.So the prescriptive code never did and still has never taken into account insolation, which is the sun coming into the house, as one of the factors. You don't get anything from that. The mass--which they give a lot of credit to, and I used in later houses as a method for developing passive heat systems--didn't seem to me to be so useful in the total. I couldn't see where the houses that had a lot of mass were more efficient than those that did not. My house has a lot of mass, but because of its orientation being more east-west with the major glass areas, it wasn't as efficient as many others. One of the smallest houses that I did, the [James and Jean Brady] Pregerson house, which we talked about earlier, was the least efficient of all of mine because it had north-facing glass, primarily. It would work well in an air-conditioning analysis but not in a heating analysis. So that house was not as good as many of the others.Out of all the houses, the one that was the most efficient ended up being the Penn house, which was intriguing to me, because it had the most surface to volume, which shouldn't have been good. It had many aspects that should not have been as efficient. Of course, it was facing properly in its orientation to the south and southeast, southwest. But the panels that I originally established to keep the sun out in the summer tended to also act like a heat trap in the winter, so that you didn't get as much heat loss from the glass, for one thing. Also because of the nature of the house being three stories and that heat rising was a factor, that worked, like I said, radiating and

by convection later. It just was an efficient house. It also had other things going for it. It had the chimney effect, because there was a door at the third story that went out to the deck. You could also be fairly comfortable in fairly hot weather because you could exhaust the heat. I also thought that if I used the heat that came to the top of the ceiling on colder days, I could probably use a fan and pull it back down to a rock storage area, and then use that heat again. Later on, in houses like the [Housang and Suzanne] Borghei or [Shirley and Steve] Cookston house, those ideas were used. In the following houses that I designed I would use various kinds of systems, both passive and active--active being solar collectors--in order to work through my next design phase. What I was curious about in the next era of my work was really what would be the formal responses to making a house more energy efficient or any building more energy efficient. I was trying to see if there would be a common characteristic to these buildings. I found that the formal aspect was not dominant. It was really the orientation and the way it would be manipulated. The look of the buildings could be obviously quite different for one from another.So that was the next period, again, of about ten years, with the major emphasis on these design points. It didn't negate any of the things I had done in the previous twenty years, the post and beam structures in the early period, or the second phase when I was looking at the kind of work we talked about. But now it was one more additive feature or process in the whole study of energy efficient houses. That's where I was in the next ten-year period.

SMITH

So in that distinct ten-year period, you sort of took what you learned from this study of your own houses and took the best features as far as energy use is concerned and applied them?

KAPPE

Yes. That's what I tried to do. Then I also included the greenhouse element, which was always one in which you could gain heat during the day by various control elements. You'd let that heat come into the green house space and then open it up in the evening, letting in that heat. If it was a lightweight structure, I'd use water mass systems. Your mass usually lags about six to eight hours in time. If you heat up, say, ten to noon, six to eight o'clock at night or so, you're getting your most heat coming back into the space. That system of a

little solar greenhouse or the area outside of the unit was one that was used in various ways in vernacular housing. I saw in Portugal quite a few houses made that way, where they would have this little glassed-in area outside of the room, which would gain heat during the day. Then at night obviously you could close it off, capture some of that, and let it in. I use that element a lot.I used the mass, as I said earlier, because it also has that lag time. But it also has a cooling effect. It's like in this house. It will be cooler in here than it is outside, even on a day like this, because the concrete in all of the mass is feeding back the coolness from the night into the house for the first several hours of the day. When it's cool out, sometimes that makes it too cool in the house for a while. But you do get that kind of effect. The mass, even though it didn't seem to make a lot of difference in my study, I still used it, because these were elements in the prescriptive code that would give you credit for it.The combination of these elements--orientations, solar collectors, etc.--was what I used. So there were houses that used these elements. In one house actually-- I was up against a rock hill. I used that as a method of developing a greenhouse over the rock hill, and letting the rock gain the heat during the day, and then feed it back at night. I also used various kinds of shading devices that I thought would work.So for me it was an interesting element of looking at buildings in another way than I had earlier. At the very beginning, as I expressed to you, we used to use a lot of long, big overhangs and trellises and those kinds of methods of shading buildings in warmer areas. But we didn't really have much concern for heating. It was sort of strange that California would have the first prescriptive standard, because we probably need it here so much less than, say, the East, in terms of the energy we use. As young architects we were more interested in making the places, the buildings, comfortable. It wasn't such a big issue about how much energy we were using. I think I explained earlier that in those days the energy companies were encouraging us to use more energy rather than less energy. So there was an emphasis that way. Gas was really cheap. Electricity wasn't that much. Those bills used to be like nothing. Today they can be rather major.So anyway, that was the exploration. There was a series of houses that always took energy into consideration, as well as some of the larger buildings, like the [Santa Monica Municipal] Bus [Lines] administration building, which also used energy issues as form-producing elements. Loyola [Marymount University] gym had many of these concerns as well. Most of the buildings that we dealt with in our firm later,

and the houses, all had these concerns in combination with design considerations that I had used earlier.

SMITH

Was there an effort to resist the energy code or--?

KAPPE

It wasn't so much to resist as it was to modify it. What bothered me is that I felt there were elements of it that were correct from an engineering standpoint, but I felt they didn't allow very much invention to offset energy issues. You don't get credit for many aspects. You get credit for insulation, double glazing and triple glazing, a certain amount of overhang, and mass. That's what you get credit for today. But they don't give you credit for some of the other ways that one can deal with these issues. Say, systems of gaining heat, as I said earlier, whereby letting the sun come in we gain heat.The other problem is that usually in the state of California, everything is governed by cooling or air-conditioning rather than by heating. And yet, in my case, so many of my houses are in areas where air-conditioning isn't necessary. For example, one of the larger houses I did which had a very large glass to floor area ratio, the [Esther] Benton house in Canyon View, is north facing. A north-facing building like that is very efficient from a standpoint of air-conditioning, which was the governing factor. That house is all single glazed. There was no requirement for double glazing in that house, and it has a very high glass to floor area ratio. It probably will have a certain amount of problems heating because it was north facing, but the energy code allowed it to be single glazed, because the governing factor was the air-conditioning.So I think that's where it gets strange to me. I think there's inconsistencies, and I don't think that it's altogether correct. Insulation is such a major factor in the energy codes. We have a tremendous amount of insulation in buildings today that we didn't have in the old days in this area. I'm not sure how much better that is or isn't. It would probably be wise for me to do another study at this time, look at the houses that have been designed since '75, get the same data, and correlate it again to see if the same results come out or if the factors of added insulation and double glazing in many cases make a big difference or not. But I haven't done that.

SMITH

What role did the availability of new technologies play in the design of those post-1975 houses?

KAPPE

Well, not too much. I would just say the only technology that I worked with would be solar collectors. Photovoltaics were too expensive; parabolic collectors were too expensive. So we were pretty much involved with solar only. The only other technical aspect was used in the Cookston/Borghei house. That house had a shading system that was developed in Europe. It was a roll-down system. Over in Europe it goes through even more configurations, where it can form an awning. It can roll up; it can roll down. It has perforations, so you can see through it. But at the same time you can control sun. So that would be a type of product that existed. That was primarily the only difference in technology.I wanted to bring up another point that I thought about when we were talking. One of the other factors that made it possible to even do this exploration during this period was the fact that there was a taxation rebate given to people who used various solar techniques, so that any element that you used on a residence that was for energy reasons was given a tax cut at about 50 percent. Well, that made it a little easier for clients to accept the fact that they might be putting in more money in collectors or other devices. They were only paying 50 percent for it, so they would go along with the idea of energy exploration at that point in time.And that's why, I guess, much of this ended after a ten-year period. At the point in time when that rebate was taken off, the government was not encouraging energy-conscious design. It was then very difficult to get people to go along with extra costs. They would go along with the double glazing. They didn't consider that somehow an extra cost. They just figured that was their glazing bid. But if you had various kinds of shading devices, they knew how much that cost. It was beyond what it cost to just enclose the house or the building. They needed enclosure. The other was a protection that was debatable whether it was necessary or not in their minds. So there weren't as many people who would go along with the idea of making it more energy efficient.Most people that architects work for particularly in these days who have a fair amount of money are really not too concerned about their energy bills. That's not somehow a major factor in their life. They don't care whether they're paying

an extra $100 or $200 a month for energy use. For them that first outlay is not worth it. That hurts more than the cost per month later in their life.

SMITH

It's too bad that that program had to end.

KAPPE

I think so. I think it would have been nice to have that encouragement, but I think a lot of that probably was due, I would think, to the oil companies. The United States never made a real commitment to alternative energy because politicians were usually encouraging petroleum products. I think until we run out of petroleum products, they will probably continue to be encouraged rather than switching to solar. Even though there are a great number of windmill installations that we see throughout California and there are solar installations that exist, it was never taken to the level that it could have been taken.And it's interesting now-- I would say from about 1980 until the last few years, that students had no interest in these issues. Everybody was really into formal issues in architecture only. Today there's a new interest--a renewed interest really--in energy concerns by the students. I think this is encouraging. I think we'll be going back into another phase of more energy-conscious design. There certainly is concern for sustainable environments, for reuse and recycling of materials. All of these things are much more at the forefront today than they were, particularly through the last period of time, which I think was all about many issues that I don't think were very important.

SMITH

In the seventies, wasn't a lot of this stimulated by the instability in the Middle East and the increase in the oil crisis?

KAPPE

Exactly. When we had the oil crisis here and the idea that the control was in the Middle East, then the United States was more interested in looking at alternative processes. Once that was no longer a major factor, it wasn't. The U.S. goes back to business as usual.I still find it just one more interesting element to work with in the design process. I always like problem-solving aspects of that sort more than just designing and building. I guess the one

thing is it seems too easy for me without all of these other kinds of ideas that one brings into the process. Most architects don't really like to deal with all of these factors at the same time. They tend to be more exclusive, I think, and exclude various things while they're working on other things. It gets very complex when you add everything into it. But I find that interesting.

SMITH

Did you find that other architects were doing the same thing as far as responding to the prescriptive codes? KAPPE: No. The majority of architects in California were not. There were some obviously, but the majority of architects in California just accepted it. It was a time when many of them weren't interested in large amounts of glass anyway. It was an excuse to go back to punching windows in walls. It was a simpler way to work. Where architects were more concerned with energy was in Arizona and New Mexico.

1.10. TAPE NUMBER: V, Side Two (October 11, 1995)

KAPPE

In Arizona and New Mexico, the approach was different. The Trombe wall became a major element in most of the designs, which is a concrete wall or a mass wall behind a layer of glass. What you do is you heat up this wall during the day, and you use it as a heating device at night. It's that same lag time. Sometimes they were much more into taking the buildings into the ground to control the heat and conditioning. So they tended to look more the same. It was an energy design look, which is perfectly fine.But here, I didn't want to set up a singular idea for how to make a building efficient. Obviously you can close a building down and put one window in it or a minimum amount of windows and insulate the heck out of it and it's going to work, but it's not the greatest lifestyle, unless you like to live in that kind of closed environment. There were architects and builders who came up with those kinds of solutions. The difference in what I was doing was trying to hold to the old elements of design that I thought were important in the California lifestyle at the same time as trying to incorporate energy issues. Not very many people were doing that.

SMITH

You want to talk a little bit more about the Cookston residence?

KAPPE

Well, the Cookston residence, as I said earlier, was one that used the ideas of the Penn house in a sense, but used concrete block, which was total mass, and concrete floors in the process as well. So volumetrically it had some of the elements of the Penn house, but in terms of material use it was completely different. The reason for that house, which was quite different from any of the houses I had done before, was because the original owner was named Borghei, who I referred to before. He was an Iranian, and he was more comfortable with concrete or concrete block as a material in the house. He also liked curvilinear shapes more than he liked rectangular square shapes, and was also interested in energy issues. So he was a perfect client for this exploration at the time that the house was first started. So that was the way the house came about.It actually was a house that in plan had a stairway core, and it went up in half levels from the ground up to the top. I had a full face of south-facing glass. I had an east-west concrete block wall, which was the wall to take the mass. This would be like the Trombe wall in the Southwest that I was talking about, but it was not a wall that was non-used. It was a wall that was a supporting wall of the house. What I used on the south face was this roll-up, roll-down screen of this European product in order to control the sun, so that it would hit that wall but wouldn't hit the other parts of the house to make it uncomfortable. In other words, we could control the house in this manner.The other thing that I did there was I had rock storage. I had a double-duct system that went up the stairwell. One fed the heat, and the other one had a fan in it and pulled the heat down from the very highest part of the house back to the rock storage, like I had projected in the Penn house before. Then the heat would feed back through the heating system and reduce the amount of heat that would be used later in the evening.The north side of the house was much more closed. It didn't have as much glass and as much opening. I had a skylight on the north side that also allowed the sun to come through to heat one of the rear walls that could feed some heat back into the children's section of the house. That was the major idea, other than the formal aspects, the rounded portions.Borghei was not able to finish the house because it was in the middle of the overthrow of the shah [of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi]. He lost control of a lot of moneys that he had in

Iran. He had a large amount of his money in the house, so he sold the house to the Cookstons prior to when the house was glazed. All the structure was up, everything was there, but the glass wasn't there. And none of the finishing was there. So they bought it at that time and finished it fairly much in the manner that it was originally designed. They did a nice job of completion, I thought. I began to call it the Cookston house because that was the owner that was there at the completion of the house.Unfortunately, their interest in energy wasn't the same as Borghei's was. We were going to monitor the system. We had an idea at the end of construction to have little monitoring devices that would allow us to understand whether the elements that we had put in for energy use were really working. This was one of the first houses that I built using some of the energy ideas, and I could have learned quite a bit from that. The Cookstons were not interested in putting money into that or spending the time to monitor, so I never really got to know what really happened with the process. Once again, I didn't ask them to keep their bills, which I should have done.So I never really learned anything from the house, whether it truly worked or didn't work as an energy-efficient process. Many of the other houses that were designed with energy uses didn't get built for a variety of reasons. It wasn't always cost. In one case it was a land condition that didn't allow a house to go ahead. Another one was a change in the economics for some individuals. In one case it was a situation, as I expressed earlier, that the owner wasn't sure whether it was worth putting the money into the energy aspects and was concerned that possibly the house would become much more expensive than what he had projected. So I didn't get a chance to really complete and explore the issues in most cases.

SMITH

How expensive were these houses comparatively?

KAPPE

You mean, the elements that we're adding?

SMITH

Right.

KAPPE

I don't know. These were not any more expensive than my other houses in a sense, except that if I had a device that was $15,000 or $25,000 for a control system, the owner knows that costs $25,000. Well, maybe they'd rather put the $25,000 into their furnishings or something else rather than into this one element. Solar collecting devices always cost anywhere from $10,000 to $20,000. So where we would put in collectors, they would have a dollar value. The question is, "How long does it take to get that back?" And it's true. It takes many years to offset the initial cost.In my own house I have a solar collector. It cost me $25,000. A 50 percent rebate made the cost $12,500. But it only really heats the pool. It was set up to heat the pool, the water heater, and feed into my radiant heating system because I can run the water through in it. I get a little bit of surplus into the water heater. And it's the question of how many years does it take to make up that $12,500, even if you're saving a hundred a month? So what's that? That's $1,200 a year. That's ten years before you're even back to zero again.Most people don't think that's worth it. If you're thinking in terms of thirty, forty, fifty years, really long term, that's something else. But because, I think, of the nature of the way people have not stayed in their place of residence through their whole life, it didn't work. In five to ten years, they were moving on to another house by trading up or changing their job location. And so it didn't pay off. It would have to be somebody who cared about the idea more than anything else. SMITH: Right. So what about the [Mr. and Mrs. Stanley] Block residence?

KAPPE

It had some interesting devices, but initially it was designed as a steel and metal-skin house. It was a bridge house. I thought of it as a bridge house, but unlike this bridge, which is laminated beams, I really wanted to do it as a steel house. The house was rotated on the site so that the living room and the bedroom would be south facing, used solar collectors to the south, had light coming in from the north, and used some greenhouse ideas. It was a house that had many energy ideas.The owner didn't want to do it in metal and steel. It ended up being a laminated beam and wood house, wood siding. The solar collector stayed. The north-facing light was eliminated. I wanted to express the solar collectors as the ceiling of the house with a north-facing skylight. In the Borghei/Cookston house the solar collector was expressed internally, and they're fairly nice on the inside--just a simple panel. But that didn't go, and we

just ended up with solar panels on the roof, so a lot of the ideas didn't really get played out there. And, of course, being in wood, I felt it ended up kind of heavy compared to what was originally projected for the site.Unfortunately, they also sold the house before they lived in it, because they created this one, and then went off to Hawaii to live instead. They sold it to an Arabian who really messed up the whole house. So it's kind of a disaster today. It needs a lot of work to even bring it back to where it was at the beginning. I think it was an interesting house initially. I think conceptually it was also a transition house for me, because I wanted to move away from wood houses as the only way I worked and get into steel and metal skins and other ideas that I wanted to explore.But sometimes that isn't as easy to do when you have developed a reputation for certain kinds of house types. People see those. They don't want the other, so they don't allow you to do it. So that general idea in a different way, of course, was used when we did the bus administration building in Santa Monica, which was now a commercial building in which metal panels and steel and concrete are more acceptable as building material types. So the house would have had more that character than what it had. But anyway, that's the Block house.

SMITH

Was that a tough site there?

KAPPE

Well, it was tough but nice. I was excited about it. I met with them the first day up there. His wife at that time said, "Can you design us a dynamite house on this site?" And I said, "I sure can." I immediately had the solution as I walked to the site. The nature of the site was so obvious that there was just no question what I would do there. It was a very fast design. The difficulty, though, in construction was that we had to use a helicopter for bringing in some of the steel and some of the frames. That was because we couldn't crane out that far. So that was interesting. It was the only house I ever worked on where we used a helicopter for construction.

SMITH

How about the [Donna and Gary] Freedman house in Santa Monica?

KAPPE

That was what I would call a one-off design for me. I never did another house like it. It was the first house that I had ever done where I went back onto flat land on a normal site in the city. Almost everything I had done in the previous--I don't know how many years--probably thirty-some years was always on hillsides without a housing stock that had been developed over a long period of time like Santa Monica has.So that was the challenge of the house. The emphasis is more on an internal house, around an enclosed center court. The context was difficult because the houses were small to either side. The owner, of course, wanted to use this piece of land to its maximum as far as what the code would allow. The house naturally went up to multiple stories, three stories. This was always difficult for me to deal with in terms of its scale and relationship to the other houses, even though I knew that probably over time many of those houses would become knockdowns and be built up the same way. But when you're the first one, it's a little difficult as an architect. So it really was just a plastered house initially with a nice plan, a reasonable orientation, and so forth. The stairway went up to where we had an outlook where you could see the ocean from Ninth Street, nine blocks back from the ocean. You could see at that height over the existing houses.What happened in the house was interesting, actually. I designed it, and then went off on a one-year sabbatical. I was gone a year, after I had completed the design on the house. The office continued with the working drawings. The engineer had to add some steel rigid frames. I thought I had enough shear walls in the initial design, but he said no, and I wasn't here to argue with him. So the office put in these rigid frames that he had designed within the form of the building that existed, which is not the way I would normally design. If I were doing a rigid frame, I would start with the rigid frame as a major element of the house and expose it. In this case, it was a strange rigid frame, because it didn't have the typical form. A rigid frame normally is just two legs and a horizontal, and there are welds at the connection points that hold it rigid. It can take all the seismic. This one was two F forms with combinations of pipe columns to make the whole thing come together.Well, what happened when I came back from Europe, the house had just started in construction. The only portion that was up were these F pieces that were in place. They were really interesting. They were really neat sculptural pieces. So I called the owner and said, "I would like to expose the pieces that are there, and then plaster the rest of the house as we'd proposed, where it's appropriate. And they agreed. So some of the

interesting aspects of it really came out of this rigid frame that was expressed afterwards. It was just one of those quirky things that I didn't even design. An engineer just designed it to work. I liked what it looked like and expressed it.We had a solar collecting system similar to some of the ideas in Block's. Everything in Santa Monica runs forty-five degrees to south facing. In other words, the lots are forty-five degrees off grid, so where I had the center core I wanted the solar collectors to face south and the north glass to light the whole center core. Again, this one went by the wayside because of cost. Solar collectors went on the roof, and the middle section was all skylit instead. I had this forty-five-degree rotation in the center at the skylight, and in order to circulate in the house at the second level, from the stair to the children's room better, I also rotated a forty-five degree bridge in the house. Those two moves in conjunction with the normal orthogonal grid make the house. It put the house in a little bit of motion. Those were the major factors.We had an internal garden. Originally we planted avocadoes and orange trees, trees that were California-like. On the street side, I used eugenia hedges, which were also typical on the streets of Santa Monica, and I wanted to repeat that. We used a set of palms that were also typical of the neighborhood. So the context that I tried to use was the plant material and the color of the steel, which was the same as many of the tile roofs. It was that color of steel which is a natural prime color for steel anyway. Where most of the houses have the garages on the alley, I took the garage to the front of the house in order to scale it down at the street side. So at the setback point was that lower element and twenty feet back the higher element. Then I also tried to step it from side to side. The house on the left side was a little taller than the house on the right side, and so I actually stepped the house down to the lower house. I tried to relate it that way. It was my attempt at context, which was probably a waste of time, but at least that salved my own conscience.I have found over the years when you worry too much about context, it doesn't make any difference, because as time goes on, more of the buildings begin to take the scale of the bigger building because of the land value. I saw that here. The same thing happened in Manhattan Beach. So I think about it, I care about it, but I don't worry about it too much anymore. Modern architects initially sort of ignored the context completely, assuming that everything else was bad, and the only thing that would be good was what they did. So we would usually demonstrate how to do it wonderfully, rather than the idea of how to fit into a neighborhood. It

wasn't until the eighties, when context became a buzzword and an idea that one felt conscientious about, that we began to look at it again. But even at this point in time, I'm not sure anymore which is truly the better way to go. I don't think you can really blend into most neighborhoods, at least where we were building. I'm not sure that it matters particularly in Los Angeles. If I was in Boston, New York, or Europe, it makes a lot of difference. Los Angeles is such a mixed bag of housing and houses that it doesn't matter.What matters the most is how many trees you plant out in front. Really. The trees become predominant with the incongruous housing types. What's nice about places like Santa Monica and Beverly Hills is that they had tremendous street trees when the cities were developed. So now you go down the street, you see a row of pines, acacias--or whatever the tree is, but the tree becomes predominant. The houses really are secondary to the street trees. But in areas where that doesn't happen, you get less separation. Where we live, it's the same thing. There's so much natural growth. Everybody can be an individual. Some of the houses you see, some of them you don't. The majority you hardly see.So it isn't too important that they're not similar in character, plus they're on different sites. Some are up on the hills, some are down on the flats. So you get quite a variation. The zoning is a little more forgiving, rather than the idea that everything is zoned exactly the same, where everybody has the same setback, side yard, and standard height of hedge, which is what the zoning codes tended to produce.

SMITH

You want to talk a little bit about the Manhattan Beach residence?

KAPPE

This is the [Lou and Jay] Scheimer house. These are people who have a [Richard J.] Neutra house, one of his last houses over in the [San Fernando] Valley, a very nice house, a very large house. They had this site in Manhattan Beach and they also wanted to have a weekend house. When I presented the first schemes to them, I gave them a rather straightforward scheme, and then I gave them a scheme that dealt with a round form in conjunction with another form. They tended to be more inclined towards round forms than they were towards an orthogonal or rectangular form. That's the way their house began.The living room, the major part of the house, was this round

form. The back part of the house off the street was concrete, because I had a swimming pool on the roof, which is what they wanted. So the back part of the house is concrete, and the front part of the house is steel. I also wanted to explore some kinetic ideas with the house, which they were willing to go along with. The round forms seemed to me to create the potential for things to move in this circular fashion as protecting elements and so forth. So that was one of the things beyond their desire for the round that made me excited about the round form.The house is on a very tight thirty foot by ninety foot site off a public way. So the combination of the public way, the extension of a wall at the base that can go into that public way at forty inches above the walk level to develop a planting area, and some of the intersections of the round with an element that went through the house at fifteen degrees off the grid made the composition. South was fifteen degrees off the lot grid, so there was one element that rotated fifteen degrees for the solar collecting element. The solar collecting element also was to have the potential to move from the forty-five-degree slope to flat, so that I could cut off this skylit vaulted area at night. During the day, then, the solar collector would go up to the point of collection. So that was one moving element. The other moving elements would be the closure of the bedroom and the way that we protect from sun on the south-facing side of the house. In order to get as much area and as big a house as they wanted, I could not get any sun protection out on the glass face. So there were these elements to work with, and that's what the house was primarily about.I guess again it was another house that had a different quality than some of the other houses that I had designed before because of the nature of the problem. It also was going to be metal-clad on the steel portion. In other words, I wanted to keep it light, versus the concrete part. We had actually drawn it that way, but when we got to that phase, the owners backed off on metal cladding. After going around on it for a while, they ended up using teak siding. That became rather complicated, because we had to make all the teak on the site. Jigs were made on the site, and each of the boards that were curved had to be formed there. It became very labor intensive, where the metal would have been very simple. It also creates problems. You have leak problems where you have wood and metal and concrete. You have materials that react differently. Where you have to connect them there's chances for separation and breaks that you don't get

when you're using the same material. That's about it, unless there are other questions about it.

SMITH

Are there ideas in these houses--the Block, the Freedman, Manhattan, Cookston--that you still believe can be widely transferred to mass housing?

KAPPE

No. None of those really had any of those ideas. Block had a little bit. The support points were similar towers. Part of the supports were similar towers to what I was using in the earlier houses. The reason they were round in the Block house was that I used them more like a hinge, since the house was first addressing the small part of the street for parking. Then the next part would rotate to get the south orientation, and then the next part would rotate for the bridge, and another one would rotate back to once again get the south orientation. I was using these hinging points as stairwells and supports. That was the only part that had any similarity.We explored the idea of the Freedman house being a tilt-up because they weren't in love with plaster. The house began with that idea, but the tilt-up proved to be too expensive. So that would be an idea that I would try later. If I had a lot of flat sites and it worked properly, I would find it interesting to work doing concrete tilt-ups instead of stud and plaster, which is never my favorite way to build houses. Other than that it's a conventional house, in terms of its being studs and plaster. So I don't know what else to say about it other than it's not much of a prototype. It's not anything so different than other houses, I don't think, other than probably the juxtaposition of the steel and the plaster. Also it was one of the earlier houses using smooth plaster. I mean, smooth plaster had been used earlier. But most people thought it was a concrete house because of the smooth plaster in gray.Then I think Scheimer is really a one-off. It only probably has value for houses of that scale or larger--people who want to really play around a bit--more than it has any value at a small scale. I don't think it's appropriate. The Freedman house obviously could be, but it is no different than what many architects do. [tape recorder off]

SMITH

Mr. Kappe, can you characterize what's been going on as far as your residential design in the last ten years?

KAPPE

The last ten years. Well, in a way, in '81 my partnership was broken up, mainly because of the attitude towards planning work at that time in various jurisdictions where they were more interested in implementation than they were in plans by planners. So we split up the partnership, and I returned to my studio to work at that time just on some houses that I had going. The Scheimer house was one of those houses. There were two or three others that were the energy-oriented houses that were going on at that time as well. So I worked that way for about three or four years.About that time--about '85--both of my sons, who had not committed to architecture earlier, decided that they wanted to become architects. My younger son [Finn Kappe] had been working with me in some ways but had not really totally committed. He had done the construction administration on the Borghei/Cookston house and spent quite a bit of time on that house. He thought he wanted to work in construction more than he wanted to become an architect, even though he was also going to SCI-ARC [Southern California Institute of Architecture] to get his architectural education. My older son [Ron Kappe] had worked with me before he went off to the University [of California, Santa Cruz]. I always thought he was going to be an architect, because from the time that he was a little boy he always was involved with drawing and making models when I was working at home. He then worked a year for me and did very well that year. He was really by that time fairly competent, certainly as a draftsman, and had design capability as well. He went to university at Santa Cruz, and was a fine arts major and a political philosophy major.

SMITH

Is this Ron?

KAPPE

This is Ron, right, my older son. So Ron graduated from Santa Cruz as a double major, and then went to work for an architect in Monterey [Will Shaw]. And he worked there for a portion of the year. But during that time as an avocation he became involved with some political action in the Santa Cruz

area, and became more and more intrigued with that. He felt maybe it would have a greater impact on society than being an architect or a planner. So he became involved with an organization that he actually headed up in Santa Cruz, and was there for nine years.

SMITH

What organization was that?

KAPPE

It was called CHA [California Homemakers Association]. It was a community organization related to careworkers. It started due to the fact that careworkers taking care of people in their homes were not being paid adequately, and so this was a young group of people who were trying to get them better pay. He became involved with this. Anyway, at the end of that nine-year period, he finally left the organization. He got married, and he again went back into working in the field of architecture and planning. At the same time, he did an independent master's study with SCI-ARC on low-income housing.

1.11. TAPE NUMBER: VI, Side One (October 11, 1995)

KAPPE

So Ron [Kappe] did a master's on low-income housing, and then after that pretty much did a self-study for the architectural exam and passed it the first time he took it. He became an architect I think around 1985, and because of his allergies he wanted to stay up in the [San Francisco] Bay Area. So we had an office that worked from both the Bay Area and down here. Finn [Kappe] in the meantime had continued to work with me in the office after the [Housang and Suzanne] Borghei job and had done production work and some design work on houses and then actually had supervised the California State University, San Bernardino, job as well. So he had a fair amount of construction management experience with that job, plus [he] produced most of the production drawings for that job.In '85 we decided--I think it was '85, right after Ron was licensed--to establish a new partnership, and we called that Kappe Architects Planners. Finn and I worked together down here, and Ron worked up north. The hope was really to build up a certain amount of

planning work again as well as architecture and actually build up an office not so dissimilar from the one that we had in the seventies. But what we found was that the nature of things had changed quite a bit. The diversity issue made it more difficult. Not being a minority firm made it more difficult to get public work. The fact that, say, four years had passed in which I hadn't been active in that particular arena made it more difficult to get back into it. There was much more competition in those years by more firms. Previously we were rather unique in this area, as a firm that cared about urban design and planning issues. But the residences kept on coming, so the firm primarily worked on a large number of residences.The main difference in this period--Because I wanted my sons to begin to establish who they were and how they could evolve as designers, we tended to approach projects not a priori like I had done before on issues that concerned me, but dealt with architecture more in terms of solving each individual problem as most architects do. I allowed more input from both Ron and Finn in the design process. That went on for about five years. Our staff was about four or five people, and we had a good number of jobs going. I think each of them was able to evolve and develop through that period of time.By 1990 there was a lot of work in the office. I wanted to do a development up in San Francisco with Ron, which was a four-unit condominium that he had been working on. Finn had been with me almost ten years, and I felt it was time that he really started do his own projects. He had done a couple totally on his own in the office--the [David and Margaret] Lederer house and another house. I can't think of the name of the owner right at the moment [Douglas and Michelle Knoll residence]. So in 1990 I thought, "Why don't we just split? Let Finn open his own office in Venice," which he did. Ron had his office in San Francisco, and I would just stay in the studio. I really didn't want employees anymore. I thought I would just work alone from 1990 on and do all the work myself. Both of them probably had enough work for about two years when we split. But with the economy in the nineties, the recession, things became more difficult. Both of them have continued to do work, but it's not as plentiful as it once was.I continued to have several houses going, which I did all the work myself on them. I actually set up a construction company [Archcon] in the interim too, and so that's the way the practice went. I started to move towards a retirement mode. I never thought I would retire from architecture. I always thought that I would probably work to my dying day. But there are factors now that make me

wonder about the process of doing just one or two houses a year. The combination of this litigious society, the amount of money you have to spend for insurance, the potential problems that one can have for the amount of income that you can really make just doing a couple of houses unless they're very, very large houses--and most of my houses now are more of $400,000-$500,000 range--just doesn't make it totally worthwhile. That's one of the factors.The other factor is that everything takes so long to produce. I'm sixty-nine. I'm pushing seventy. I don't feel old, but at this stage of life, you don't know how many years you have left. If every job takes three, four, or five years, it seems like an awful lot out of one's remaining life. So my general feeling is I'd rather put my time now into social planning issues, issues that I have always been concerned about since probably the day I graduated from university and did full-blown through the sixties and seventies.I'm interested in getting back to that. Whether it has any true community value or not, I still feel it's a better way to spend one's remaining years at a bigger scale of concern than just residence after residence. I still enjoy doing design. I certainly enjoy that aspect of the work. If it wasn't for these other factors, I probably would continue on designing anyway and maybe trying to make some arrangements whereby I would have others do the production of it and maybe the construction management, and I could then not be so involved with the nitty-gritty day-to-day problems of each project. But anyway, I think my decision to not do more residential work but to spend my time either in the other arena and teaching from time to time will be more enjoyable for the remaining years. That's sort of my goal at this point in time.Finn is building his own house now, and it's a couple of months away from completion. Then he'll have to decide whether it's going to be possible to keep his firm going or whether he's going to have to make other decisions. Ron is doing kind of both. He's working with a minority firm in San Francisco where he's able to get a fair amount of public work. He's construction managing and managing actually several school jobs that this firm received at the same time as he's completing a house up in the Oakland hills--it was a burnout--and also managing our units up there. So they're both in that transition period of trying to determine whether they stay as single firms or become a part of other firms.My daughter-in-law is also an architect--Finn's wife [Maureen Tamuri Kappe]--and of course she's been working mostly with large firms, not having the desire to be in her own firm particularly, and presently is with MTA [Metropolitan

Transit Authority] and has a management-type job there, fairly high up in management. So that's the combination of things. I mean, we have the makings of probably a very nice family firm if we would really try to put it together and go gung ho. But I think it's very difficult. It's a question of who wants to really get out and market. Everybody has to market pretty heavily. I'm not interested in marketing in my stage of life. I'm not sure either of my sons are. My daughter-in-law did do marketing for KMD--Kaplan, McLaughlin, Diaz--a large firm in San Francisco. So she's more into that, but presently is still more interested, I think, in working with larger firms and having the security of a job and that level of work.So that's kind of where it is at this point in time. I have about a year more before all the jobs that I have going now are complete. Two of them are close to completion. One is about halfway complete. Another one is just starting, still in construction. So at the time that's over, I think then I will probably go into the phase that I spoke about earlier. I'm teaching at USC [University of Southern California] currently. We're doing an urban study in the downtown area. Usually whenever I teach over there I like to do those kind of projects, because we're in closer proximity to the reality of the project.My intent is to teach at SCI-ARC next summer over in Europe, and once in a while teach there over the years. I only teach if they ask me once in a while to go over there.

SMITH

Are there any particular residences that you want to talk about from that last ten-year period?

KAPPE

One is interesting. The [Esther] Benton house is one that's particularly interesting to me, and the [Anne] Keeler house. I'll start with those. The Benton was actually designed over fifteen years ago. It was one of the energy houses during that period of time. What happened on the first go-around, the owner decided not to go ahead with the construction at that time because of lack of funds or questioning whether she had enough funds to really do it. She then came back later, and we reworked the project again, trying to keep more of the existing residence. There was an existing residence on the site that in the first design was to be taken down. The second design, later, was to leave the residence that was there, and then add the additional house to it. That

was the way we approached it on the second go-around.The house has combinations of things in it. It's all a glue-lam[inated] beam house with steel columns and a concrete base to it. It's on a nice site. In order to keep the existing house, a major retaining wall actually supports the upper house and the upper part of this site, and then the living room, family room, dining room, and kitchen are on the other part of the site below. It's a pretty strong house. Visually, it's connected to my own house or houses like it. It's primarily complete at this time.Again, during the process, the existing house was practically taken down, after we designed to keep the house. After we were getting into construction, she explored the roof, and it needed to be changed. Once we had to do that, she decided to take off all the rafters and joists, and we put in a whole new roof system that was consistent with what we had below. Once that happened, then the rooms changed their character, and so the house now looks like it was built all brand-new. It's probably one of my strongest houses, but contains none of the ideas we've talked about before. All the energy issues were out of it. The structural aspect of it is really a retaining wall more than anything else. The only aspect that I talked about earlier is the fact that it's all single glazed. It's north facing. It's on a nice site, and it's a nice house.The [Anne and Gordon] Melcher or Keeler house is a house also based pretty much on the same design principles as my own house. It's not quite as pure in the way it goes together. It's primarily structured on three concrete masses, but it has an additional two columns to it where the mass didn't make sense. It's a house that views the ocean. It's more of a vertical house. It's cut through with a skylight from top to bottom and has two access points from the street and from the upper level, which is the carport area, so there is an entrance at both levels. That's why it was designed with this glass spine, a glass skylight. It has glass floors through the gallery to get the natural light below. Other then that, it follows some of my original basic principles.Another house that's being completed in Manhattan Beach [Wendy Carson/Michael Lindsey residence] is also on a very tight thirty foot by ninety foot site, which is typical in most beach towns. It was interesting that I had several of these houses at one time. I had one in Venice that didn't go ahead because of the economy change. It was a speculative house. And this one in Manhattan Beach was for an owner, and it's being completed right now. The interesting aspect of those is that the envelope is very tight. The requirements of the building department are such that everything is just stretched to the

limit. Heightwise, widthwise, and every aspect. This owner wanted an interior court in the house as well. I wanted to get as much court as I could get, and at the same time get as much house as possible. So the whole approach is really solving the puzzle of all the restrictions.This house does have the linear service element that I was speaking about earlier. All the bath and service areas are all in line along with the gallery and stair. So all of these elements are about a six-and-a-half-foot element on the back side of the site. Everything else then has a potential for a view to the ocean. Because it's not right on the ocean, and it's back about four or five blocks with many structures in between, the real challenge is how to pick as much ocean view as one can in each one of these pieces of site. So it's primarily a box that has changes of level through it and with a court and a laminated beam structure based on a long span principle. It is another kind of a diagram from some of my other work.I also had another house in Long Beach that didn't go ahead. It was also on the same kind of site. So I had several that were these tight package sites that are similar in character in terms of the challenge.Then the last one of the houses that I'm interested in and I'm doing now [the Bruce and Julie Shapiro residence] is completely different from what I've done before. It is on a hillside not too far from here on which there was an existing house that the owner thought he might want to keep, depending upon his finances as we got into the new house. So that had to be taken into consideration in terms of giving him the option of either taking that house down or leaving that house as the whole project evolved. It's a concrete and steel house. The concrete is primarily a series of retaining walls as it moves up the site. Because there's a height limit, I had to dig into the site. I couldn't build on top of the site like I did here. It's a steep site, forty-five degrees. So I started with these concrete retaining walls, which become very important elements in the total project. He wanted to have as much view as possible, so I proposed to accomplish this desire with a series of steel rigid frames and let them be exposed. Unlike the Freedman house, in which it happened afterwards, in this house it was primary. It will be a steel and glass house with concrete floors and walls and just simple drywall ceilings. It will be a simple house, different in character than most of the houses that I've done. So it's interesting to me just to see how it finishes within that palette.Those are the residential projects that I'm involved with at this point. The house that's just starting [the Cathy and Steve Brown residence] is really just a rebuild of a house that was designed and built in the

early sixties but had a fair amount of damage in the [1994] earthquake when the fireplace fell and knocked down one of the major beams, and took a large part of the house with it. The owner and the insurance company opted for taking it all down and starting all over again. So that's the other house, but that's pretty much going to be a replica of something that was done before.The one thing I learned from it is that the early post and beam houses are difficult to replicate now in wood--a little more difficult because of the code changes in relationship to seismic forces. It was harder for the engineer to be able to get these forces out of this particular design the way it was conceived, versus others where the shear walls are more defined. Probably the wood post and beam would still work just as well, but on this particular project we were actually not getting direct shear walls. I structured it in a variety of ways with rotations. It was kind of pushing it, and it can't work today the same way, so I had to go to steel columns. We also went to glue lams [laminated beams] where it originally had timbers that we can't really get anymore. So there were those kinds of changes in the plan. But in essence, it will probably look somewhat the same. It was the [Stanley and Margie] Meyer house originally, but now it will be the Brown house.As I said, I'm also exploring with students at 'SC [University of Southern California], seeing processes by which we can densify certain parts of this city without intruding upon existing neighborhoods by selecting places between commercial and industrial and residential areas along alleyways. How to do it without impacting strongly, yet putting in many units in areas where there's many, many people who have moved into that part of Los Angeles who are going to have to be housed. So that's the challenge, how to house the great influx of Hispanic people who have come up to work in Los Angeles.

SMITH

Well, we can certainly talk more about that later when we get into planning issues. But I guess now we'll go back twenty-five years and talk about the decision for you to go into partnership.

KAPPE

Oh, okay. Well, in the early sixties, a group of us started working with the urban design committee [of the Southern California Chapter] of the AIA [American Institute of Architects], now called the [Los Angeles] Chapter. What

we were disturbed by was the cutting of the hills. The development was all cut and fill and creating these pads in the Santa Monica mountain area of Los Angeles and also the Baldwin Hills areas. But that was the typical way builders and developers would go in and cut and fill the land. We wanted to show options to that kind of desecration of the land, and how one could build and get the same densities without doing what they were doing. How better to build roads in the hills, and various other strategies.So we did our study [*Land Development Control in Hillside and Mountain Areas*] in the evenings as advocates of these principles, developed a whole set of principles for hillside development, did a model development to demonstrate how it could be done leaving the hills in a natural state, concentrating some housing in areas where the concentration could take place using multiple housing in conjunction with single families, and actually going even into a demonstration where we could actually double the density by adding some high-rise building--give it ten or eleven stories--down in the flat areas, closer to the point of where they could gain access without disturbing the hills as a whole. So it was showing a combination of uses that could give the builder the same kind of return but without doing all this cutting and filling. That was the first thing that we worked on.Then I chaired the committee for about three years. We did a gray area study [*Gray Areas: A Townscape Study*]. We did a transportation study when the first proposals came through for putting in the metro line [Metro Rail] that's going in now. We proposed an alternative system to that one too. We felt that a fixed rail system for the city of Los Angeles just wouldn't do the job, because it couldn't reach enough of the communities. It seemed that personal rapid transit or mass transit--we thought--would make more sense for a city like Los Angeles where you tend to replace the automobile with the much smaller vehicle that could also then be guided on the freeway system. You could get up to ten times as many cars on the freeway through this computer-controlled system--ideas that people are studying now. At the time we were proposing this as an alternate to the fixed guideway system. Everybody felt that what we were projecting was not state-of-the-art at the moment and that they had to deal with the state-of-the-art. Our argument was that by the time they get the system completed, the state of the art could change. We could probably look much further ahead.So that study was called [*Rapid Transit*] *197?* because we doubted whether they were going to get this fixed-line system in the seventies, which is what was projected. Now we're

having a hard time getting it in the nineties, so that's twenty years later. And it is said that there are many studies on the system that we had talked about earlier as an idea. I'm sure that some day that will have to occur in Los Angeles anyway, because I don't think the Metro Rail in the long run is going to serve enough people in this city unless we change our lifestyle and more people move into their homes as offices and don't move around the city as much. We have to eliminate as many home-to-work trips as possible. We'll have to see what happens. But if we don't solve our movement by changing population to work locations, we're going to have to probably solve it, I think, someday by electric vehicles that are smaller in scale and computer guide.The gray area study that I referred to earlier was the study that was given to us by the city of Los Angeles planning department who wanted to reevaluate parts of the city that they categorized as gray. Those are areas that could become viable again but were, at this point in time, going downhill. So we did a whole series of studies in both housing areas, commercial areas, and portions of downtown. A better proposal for the use of the river included linkages of some of our special places like Chinatown, the Japanese section of the city, other ethnic areas, and the old train yards.Then the group of us also worked with the new city planning director, Cal [Calvin S.] Hamilton, when he first came to Los Angeles in the mid-sixties on the goals project [Los Angeles City Goals Council]. My portion of it was heading the housing. [tape recorder off] So that was about six years of working together. The primary people were Herb [Herbert] Kahn, Rex Lotery, and myself. Then Clelio Boccato, who was an associate of mine, worked with us on some of the projects in producing them for publication, and Bill [William] Simonian--another individual who was working with Herb Kahn--was also assisting with some of the drawings.The group of us got to like each other quite a bit, and Herb Kahn and I first started talking about the idea of a planning collaborative. The idea was that we would have a collaboration of multiple disciplines, not only architects and landscape people and planners but behaviorists and engineers and sociologists, and make proposals or work on planning projects with the city and the various jurisdictions. So we became involved with that idea and approached Rex Lotery to see if he wanted to join up too. He was interested. Rex had a firm that was more like mine. Herb had a firm that did more public work, because one of his original partners was well connected. So he ended up with a lot of that type of work. His other partner was Ed [Edward] Farrell, who was up in

the Bay Area after he had left. But Ed became involved with the collaborative as well up there. He had also been one of the people working on these earlier planning studies that we were doing with the urban design committee.So we put together this collaborative and decided to also move into a building together. Our intent when we first got together was to have three offices within an office. Each of us had our own little section, but we were also together in this one large space, which was the old Santa Monica [Public] Library. We continued to operate our own individual offices as we went after work as the collaborative. Just before we decided to go together, I had also been interviewed and was one of the final people for this Pepper [Housing] Project over in Pasadena, which was a two-hundred-and-fifty-some-unit housing project. That was going to be one of our base projects to work on in the collaborative in our minds, which it was. So we had multiple tactics, and at the same time we were beginning to think about why don't we also try Kahn, Kappe, Lotery [Architects/Planners] as a firm as well. We had our individual operations and Kahn, Kappe, Lotery, with both Boccato and Simonian being associates, and we were three principals.What we found was a great deal of interest in what we were doing because we did have this background from doing these studies, and there were several cities who came to us to do similar studies. The planning collaborative idea was sort of suspect in many of their minds. They couldn't understand who was going to be what in that operation. They couldn't understand the idea that a collaboration of many people is not so different than a large, huge office that has many elements that are collaborating, but they usually don't bring in some of these other people. They treat them as consultants. You actually bring in a series of consultants and you are the major firm. So they had a hard time buying into that idea, even though we thought it was a good idea. I still think it's a good idea.So we decided that we would use Kahn, Kappe, Lotery as the base for planning projects. We went after projects that way, and that proved to be reasonably successful. One of our clients that came primarily through architecture was the city of Inglewood. We were interviewed for their corporation yard and got that job. While we were producing that job, Herb Kahn spent a fair amount of time with their planners and other people in that city and gradually told them about the firm, suggested planning ideas to them-- We were hired on as a planning consultant for the city of Inglewood. As a result of that, we obtained quite a bit of work with the city of Inglewood. We did a central business district study for them.

We later came back and did the physical elements in that plan. We had other areas of the city that we worked on in the same way. We rehabilitated much of their central business district. Then we also did a water treatment plant for them in conjunction with a group of engineers who really did the engineering aspect of it, but we wanted to make it a demonstration project in which people of the city could better understand the process in a water treatment plant and how the elements worked. So we consulted on that project.The main reason that Inglewood was so active was that they were willing to take federal funds at that time and use them for the betterment of the city. Other cities didn't want to have the federal government involved in their processes, and so they didn't take those funds. But as Inglewood started to demonstrate what could be done, other cities became interested in their employees and started hiring them as city managers and other positions. As that happened, of course, we got other jobs in other cities because of these people who now knew us as well. So we did work for the city of Santa Monica. We did work in the city of Beverly Hills and later in Santa Ana. So that became the base for all of our planning work, and it was enjoyable work.We also had the opportunity to do a new town plan [Newhall-Saugus project]. This actually came in through Clelio Boccato, whose father-in-law had a fireworks company out towards Valencia on a thousand acres that was called the Bermite Company. They were giving up the manufacture of fireworks, but they wanted a study for this acreage as a potential proposal for others to use. It had a research-based element to it. It was a town for about ten thousand people. It was an interesting study for us.Finally, the largest project was the [Downtown] People Mover system for the city of Los Angeles in which we were the lead on it and the urban design consultants.

1.12. TAPE NUMBER: VI, Side Two (October 11, 1995)

KAPPE

The way this came about--the People Mover--was that a consultant to the [Los Angeles City] Community Redevelopment Agency [Martin Wallen], who was really a transportation consultant and primarily was going to study the bus system in relationship to downtown Los Angeles, knew Herb Kahn and myself and Rex and approached us to see if we were interested in being the urban design consultants on the project. That came through that connection, which

was rather unique. It's the kind of project that normally would go out for request for proposals, but at that time that wasn't so. There wasn't a preponderance of those kinds of requests, and cities didn't have to do that at that time, so projects could come about in a different way. Because we had worked so much in a variety of areas and had done a lot of it pro bono, just as advocates--It was interesting the kinds of projects that we would be in line for, being a very small firm. We only had maybe a dozen people tops. But most of the time, it was probably the three or four principals and another four or five people. I know when we got that job, Daniel, Mann, Johnson, Mendenhall--DMJM--was really shocked, because they felt this was their area of expertise in transportation and engineering, and how did a little firm that did houses get this job? That was the way they looked at us.For us it was very exciting. We went in with the idea that it was supposed to be a planning project that was to determine whether the city should continue their bus system or actually enlarge the bus system to handle the traffic and movement of people downtown or whether they should go to an automated guideway system to do it, which would be a much larger expenditure obviously. In the study we had intended to evaluate which was the better system. But unlike our other projects that we did when we were advocates, this one about halfway into the project had a pre-determinant to it, in that the federal agencies had decided that it was going to be a demonstration automated guideway project. The solution was not going be the bus system.The reality of it was that the two were about equal in our mind, that it could go either way. The city could probably do very well with a bus system--minibuses in combination with trams and so forth--and succeed in handling everything that way. Or they could go to the other process and develop a little guideway system downtown that would later link into the metro system when it came.The other thing that they wanted to do was to test the possibility of having two major parking structures--automobile intercepts we called them--in downtown Los Angeles. One near the train station, and the other near the [Los Angeles] Convention Center. The idea of these intercepts was that all the automobiles would come to that point into the city, and then people would use the guideway system, and pedways and pedestrian access from that point on in order to keep most of the vehicles out of the city. The major bus lines that were coming in from El Monte now would also stop at the intercepts.Our proposal also was that the diamond lane should be used that way, and we should really get into using the

bus in a major way. Let it be the mass system instead of going to this metro. Anyway, those were the ideas, and the guideway system was a raised system.Many of the objections that did come into play were because of that. How would this look through the city? We did lots of drawings to demonstrate how that would be. But there was the question of what happens then at the street level. Do we take too many people off the street by this guideway system? Our feeling was that many of the buildings would actually have access at both the secondary level and the street level. At the stations, you would probably have greater potential for people to be on the street. You would still have pedestrian accessways that we were going to encourage. But anyway the cost of this system, which was really going to be covered primarily by the federal government, was voted down in an election.That was our last major planning project. Prior to that, as I was saying, we did a fair amount of recreation planning for the city of Beverly Hills. We did a fair amount of housing planning for various universities. We did some planning work for Loyola Marymount University. And some CBDs--central business districts. We did some transportation planning and linkages to the parking structures in Santa Monica. Again, a testing of a guideway system. So for us it was quite enjoyable through those years, along with our architecture, which was about 50 percent of the practice. Fifty percent dealt with public issues on a bigger scale, which I enjoyed a lot.

SMITH

So would you work individually on your own design projects and then get together to do the planning?

KAPPE

No. [tape recorder off] When we became Kahn, Kappe, Lotery, we dropped our individual jobs, and we did them all under the auspices of the firm. It was just during that first year, where we were feeling our way between the collaborative Kahn, Kappe, Lotery and our own little offices, that we kept that separated. But once we decided to be the firm, which was within that year, it seemed to make more sense. Let's just be what we are. We did it that way. Houses, however, still tended to be my jurisdiction most of the time, because they were coming to me, and the owners wanted that kind of personal treatment. In the jobs for the city, usually I would be the prime

designer.However, I can't say that one hundred percent, because we would tend to always sit down and discuss the projects. All the principals would go through the beginning process and resolve directions and solutions. We would take it from there, and we would take various levels of lead on various parts of the project. It was interesting. It worked well. We worked well as a team. Usually one member would be the liaison with the city officials. We would never mix that up. We would usually designate one person. That usually was not me, because I was involved with education at SCI-ARC. So I would usually work in the office on design. Then I would spend my other time at SCI-ARC.Both education and the partnership was coincidental, actually. When the partnership started, it was also the same time that I took the chairmanship at Cal Poly [California State Polytechnic University, Pomona]. So I was always dually involved through those years in education and the partnership. The partnership allowed me a greater amount of freedom during those years than I would have had in a single-practitioner practice.During those years Clelio Boccato became a partner. Then at the end of the People Mover system study, Herb Kahn decided to retire. He was a little older than the rest of us. He felt he had had it with L.A., and he wanted to move up to Santa Cruz. The firm became Kappe Lotery Boccato at that time. We tried to keep connected. Herb was trying to negotiate work up in the Santa Cruz area that was planning in nature. We supported that goal over about a two-year period. But then there wasn't enough work generated from Santa Cruz to make it make sense. That's when he separated.One of our major jobs after that was the [Santa Monica Municipal] Bus [Lines] administration building for the city of Santa Monica. Although it started first as a site study, it turned into an architectural project. Some of the other architectural work of scale while Herb was still with us was the gymnasium for Loyola Marymount University, which was a major job for us. We had some work for the city of Beverly Hills--the community center and corporation yard--that also had good potential. We had Charmlee [Regional Park], which was a regional park in which we were going to do a whole hike-in park. That was another combined planning and architectural job.We had those kinds of jobs happening at the same time as we had our planning work, our housing, our houses, and the public work. So it was a nice diversity, and the office was reasonably successful through those years. Unfortunately, a few things happened. Otherwise we think we probably would have continued on in a more major way.I think the gymnasium at Loyola Marymount was a key

project. I designed it with Clelio Boccato and one younger associate [David van Hoy]. It was a very rational project and a very good project. We tested what we thought was the best structural system for the 240-foot span. We came up with the cable system that in the early stages proved to be much less expensive than any kind of a trussing or space frame system. It just had a lot of nice elements to the whole project that went together well. It dealt with many energy issues. We had incorporated air scoops to pick up the ocean air, because it sits up on a hill above the ocean. We had big airplane doors to slide away, to evacuate the building at half-time at basketball games. We were trying to condition it without using air-conditioning. It also had an element of an amphitheater, which when these doors opened up could become part of the seating of the interior gym for bigger assemblies. It kept the original gymnasium as part of the complex, added an entrance element that used the solar roof element that I've used before. Only this time it would have been done right. The panels were to heat the pool and do some other water heating for the system. So that project was a real good one for us, and would have been a fairly major building on a campus.Unfortunately, the president of Loyola Marymount was really a tiger on the budget, because he didn't think that athletics should be given any more than the amount budgeted on an academic campus. Our earlier estimates that had been done outside by professionals proved to be a little off on the cable system. In order to take the flutter out of the roof, it added cost. But still it wasn't too far out. We checked it all the way, but we did come in a little strong. We didn't want to give up the cable, so we couldn't get it quite down to the budget that they wanted. Unfortunately for us, there also was a builder on the building advisory group who immediately stood up and said, "I could build it for you down at that lower price." Of course, then he cut about a third of the program out of the building and hired another architect to do it a different way. It wasn't the same building at all. But they got it in the budget and that was what they were after. I guess our stubbornness and my stubbornness particularly in not wanting to give up the major idea of the building caused us not to build it.But that building would have been important to us because right after that the addition to the Loyola [Marymount University] law school came about, and we were, with Dan Dworsky and Frank [O.] Gehry, the three firms being considered for that job. I think because Boccato was a graduate of Loyola and fairly close with many of the fathers, had the first project gone, I think we

would have probably gotten the Loyola law school addition as well. But because at the time we were having cost overrun problems, I think that probably took us out of the running on that building.It was a time that Frank Gehry was beginning to be considered for some larger jobs of this sort. Dworsky always was a larger firm. So we lost out on that. We were also one of the firms being considered for the space museum [Los Angeles Aerospace Museum]. Again, Frank got that job. It was a real key period in our time. Had we gotten either one of those buildings, and the gym, the firm would have probably gone on to do more campus work on a larger scale. We did get one campus job later, but that was for other reasons.The bus administration was another good building for us, and it came about because we had worked with a transportation consultant who we had brought in on the Santa Monica study. They were prime consultants to the city to do this bus administration building and the maintenance buildings for the buses of Santa Monica. They brought us in as a design consultant. Of course we took over major design on the administration building. The maintenance buildings were a rehab anyway. We did the design on them also, but the engineers were involved mainly with the interior and all that goes into the engineering aspects of the bus maintenance element.The enjoyable part about that building for me again was it had many levels to it. It had the aspect of metaphor, because it was adjacent to the freeway. It could be a freeway building. It had mobile homes on one side of it. It had industrial buildings on the other side. It had a whole bus yard on the other side. So the building itself had several elements: relationship to bus, relationship to mobile homes, relationship to the freeways, the ramp systems, and the overpass. We took these elements as the elements of the building, and it became metaphorically related to a bus in its design. I tried to stretch it out to give it elongation and movement. We clad it in aluminum, similar cladding to the buses, gave it the color of the bus system of Santa Monica, and used the ramp for the handicapped that was similar to off- and on-ramps to the freeway. Some of the structural elements of the freeway itself, the round columns, and the pilings that held the retaining wall, were brought up as round support elements of the structure itself. So we had all these kinds of things working.Then we wanted to be energy efficient. The city was supportive of that. So we did have our solar collector element, which again is forty-five degrees to the building. It acts both as that element, and it was to be a trellis element over the outdoor deck area that was to be used by

the bus drivers and the bus administration people. We used daylighting techniques. The fins that go through the building that we used were actually to take the reflection of the daylight and bounce it off the ceiling and take it back into the room to cut down lighting. We wanted to use mostly task lighting. [tape recorder off] So we had the daylighting primarily on the south-facing side, southeast facing, and also on the north side-- We had a way of getting in some daylighting from that side as well. I didn't want any air-conditioning in this building. We tried to scoop the air from the ocean and take it through a plenum and then feed it into the space. We had good west sun-control systems. Then we had another part that we tried to treat more like a greenhouse. In the circulation system, we let the late west sun come in, and then took that heat to warm up the nighttime room that was used by the bus drivers as a recreation area. We tried to have the building go from east, south, and then west and north, in order to treat each side properly for energy use.So the building covers many of those issues in its design. Most people, I think, seeing it, think of it more as a formal design or a style job rather than all the other things that I had going there. Also, the horizontal metal panels were cut on a module that worked for people sitting for that view. It was thirty inches high per bay. Then when you stood up, it also worked for viewing, so that module and the fins all worked in the process as well.A few of the things we lost on the way. The engineers weren't willing to go with the air scoop. They weren't sure that it would work, and they didn't want to put themselves on the line. Unfortunately, I'm sure they were wrong. Anyway, they did have the air-conditioning. The bus people didn't buy our leaving the ceilings exposed with the exposed trusses. They went to a normal flat ceiling. They also didn't want to do the whole with strictly daylighting and task lighting, which we thought they should. So they put in your usual ceiling lighting system. We had a double-height entryway that better expressed elements of the building, but they were self-conscious about that and didn't want to show that they were wasting room. So they put in some elements in that and we had to cover that up. We had an eating area and an outdoor dining space that they decided they didn't want to use. So there were elements like that. There was a certain amount of self-consciousness about spending too much money or the look of too much money. But on the whole the building, I think, turned out pretty nice and did a lot of the things we wanted it to do.So those were the two major buildings that we did during that time other than the

corporation yards. The one in Beverly Hills didn't go ahead, because it was opposed by the League of Women Voters. On that project we had taken the corporation yard underground. We had created recreation fields and a community center building just raised slightly above ground. The idea for Beverly Hills was that they wanted to change that whole industrial section to housing. There had already been some housing proposed right across from where we were doing this corporation yard. The city had made some trade-offs with the developer to give us some rights under their building, and they were given some rights in return.Anyway, the League of Women Voters thought that this was a whole scandal and that this whole project was being done for this one developer, which was not true. It was really a way of getting the corporation yard pieces--all the pieces that were scattered around Beverly Hills--together in one element, so that they could now use the area as a housing development. They got in the way of the whole project. It never went ahead. It would have been a very nice project, but they didn't let it happen.The same thing happened to Charmlee [Regional Park]. We had several toilet buildings and service buildings. Then we had one nice little museum. Not a very large museum. I think about 3,000 or 4,000 square feet. I'd designed the museum to be mostly underground and almost rock-like in its nature. It was made out of concrete with exposed aggregate, and felt much like the rock outcroppings that were around it. It was almost a nonbuilding, again with a lot of energy-efficient ideas in it.Unfortunately for us, again, this time the Sierra Club got into the act. One of the prime movers there happened to have been a young individual who had lived and grown up next door to Charmlee. He didn't want to see anything built on Charmlee. Charmlee was probably his playland as a kid growing up. He started a whole vendetta against the project. We always thought of ourselves as do-gooders. Now we were being brought down by two do-gooder-type organizations. When we got the project for Charmlee we had convinced the county that they should decrease the use by about a third of what they wanted to do. We also talked them into it being a hike-in campground and not a typical park where everybody can drive all over the place, so we concentrated the cars right at the entrance point.

SMITH

Can you actually camp there?

KAPPE

Yes. I think that's what they allowed. I'm not sure how it ended up. I think it ended up more as a picnic place then a campground. I'm not sure they allowed it. But at the time, that was the way it was proposed. A lot of the infrastructure--the electrical and plumbing and everything--was put in for hiking.So we wanted that, and then we wanted this nice little building that was supposed to be up there that was going to have displays about the Chumash Indians. Well, the Sierra Club knocked that out. They left the toilets, and they left the picnic grounds, and they knocked the community exhibit building out of it. They built the service part. So that's how much we got of that project. Then we didn't get the Beverly Hills job--that corporation yard job. So it's interesting.I didn't mention earlier--when we talked about do-gooders--Herb and Rex and I started an organization called Action for a Better Los Angeles Environment also back in the early sixties. This was an organization bringing together people--like the Sierra Club, the League, the people who are interested in the Santa Monica mountains, whatever citizen groups did exist, which weren't very many--to try to build a coalition of concern for the city. That coalition worked for a while, and then later it died out. But people who were part of that came back to haunt us later in some of our projects when we thought we were being very responsible and concerned both environmentally and socially and every other way.

SMITH

Were they the same people or were they new people?

KAPPE

They were new people, obviously, different people. The trouble with organizations like that are the strong leaders and strong voices. If you fall into something where they have a bone to pick, it's pretty tough. So it was interesting how that occurred. But that did happen. In architecture you have your wins, you have your losses. You have your buildings that build, you have your buildings that don't build. In my case probably about a third of the projects haven't built. I heard Richard Meier on--

SMITH

On Charlie Rose ['s television program]?

--Charlie Rose saying he got about 50 percent of his built. Most architects run probably somewhere between a third to 50 percent of the buildings that are never built. But unlike Richard Meier, my feeling about it after a while, particularly in the architecture--not so much in planning, but in the architecture-- I got to the point where when buildings didn't build, I almost had as much pleasure out of them as when they did build.In other words, to me they were real projects. If I had taken them all the way through the thought process they became reality to me, whether they were built or not built. I had built enough buildings, I think--of course, he has too, and many more--to satisfy the fact that I knew what they would feel like and what they would be like when they were finished--not a hundred percent, but mostly. I thought a lot of the ideas that came out of the no-builds were some of the more interesting ideas that I worked with. You don't always expect planning to be implemented anyway. So you expect it to drag and to go slowly and some things to happen and some things not to happen.As an ending to this--and it ties in maybe a good way--that was exactly what started to happen. By the early eighties, implementation became key in agencies rather than hiring planning consultants. Then it was a question of who was your development team, what was the potential for implementation, and how would you have it happen. So firms like ours were no longer being used as consultants in the same way as before. It was more important to put your team together than it was to work as a consultant. Not having worked with developers a lot, we didn't really have development teams. So the kind of work we were getting was not interesting any longer to any of us.That's when the firm broke up. First Herb went north. It happened so casually. We went out to lunch one day. During lunch, I don't know whether Rex said it to me or I said to Rex, "Is it any fun anymore?" [laughter] "Are you having a good time?"And whoever the other was said, "No!"So we said, "Well, why do we want to keep doing this?""You've got your houses," Rex said to me. "I would just as soon do planning consulting work for various places, and maybe get myself another position doing planning work. Why don't we break it up?"And that's what happened. It was very amiable. There were no arguments or dissensions that some people have breaking a partnership. But we always had a wonderful partnership. There was never bickering, never arguing, never dissatisfaction. It was about as perfect as you could have.I've in my life been very lucky. I've had

a perfect marriage relationship, and I had perfect partnership relationships, and even with my sons, it was a very good relationship. But it was just my desire that they should have their own identity. It was always difficult for me, because clients would come to me, and when I tried to pass the project to one of my sons, it wasn't easy to do that. Sometimes we could do it, sometimes not. Sometimes we could work together, and sometimes not. I found that a little uncomfortable, and felt it should work better the other way. So I've had a really wonderful architectural and planning life. I am very fortunate. I couldn't have probably written it any better if I were writing a scenario for practice. I really have no regrets.I mean, I would enjoy doing more community-oriented buildings. I would enjoy doing more work in planning as a consultant probably. But I have no desire to do huge high-rises or buildings of that sort. Obviously everybody would like to do museum-type or community-type buildings--theaters, or just community buildings for community use, whether they be for recreational use or whatever. I've never really had the opportunity to do a synagogue or a church or a religious building, which I think I could probably do very well. But that's not very big in the whole picture. I think I've had a really interesting life in architecture education. The opportunity to start a school that hardly anyone has had. I guess we can leave it there and go into that aspect one more time--the education aspect--and kind of conclude.

1.13. TAPE NUMBER: VII, Side One (October 17, 1995)

SMITH

We spent some time last time going over some of the public projects you are involved in with your firm, and I was wondering if you could just generally compare your experiences of working on public projects and working on private ones?

KAPPE

Well, generally for me, all of the public projects that were done with the firm I enjoyed in the same manner that I would doing residential work or apartment work or any private work. I was primarily involved with design on those projects, and I didn't have to deal with the day-to-day operations with the various committees or the people in power that one would work with. However, I never remember any of the partners complaining a great deal

about them. As I said earlier, I think the only problem with the [Santa Monica Municipal] Bus [Lines] administration building that I remember was that they were a little embarrassed, because they didn't want the building to look like it was too expensive and that they wasted any space. They were more concerned about that than anything else.The only bad experience I had was with [California State University, San Bernadino]. This was a job in the early eighties, and it was a project that I received from George [J.] Hasslein, dean of the school of architecture at [California Polytechnic State University] San Luis Obispo. He was always on the selection committee. He called me on this particular project and asked if I wanted to do it. I said yes. That experience was a little bit strange, having been involved in education and getting to do this job, which was a faculty office building, and knowing how generally the faculty offices are little cubbyholes that are uncomfortable and not too pleasant to talk with students in. They always don't seem big enough to me, and they always seem too closed up. I thought it would be a good opportunity to do a building that would have much more going for it than that, in terms of the kind of environment that a faculty member would have, and the ability to interchange with students in a better environment.This particular project had many factors going for it. The chancellor's office was concerned about the winds. They had about eighty-mile-an-hour winds in that area every so often that would blow through. So that was a problem. They had stated many energy concerns. When we got started, they wanted to introduce what they had expressed as good environmental factors.So in that project how it differed from a residential client was that I had to meet with the faculty, the dean, the various chairs of the department, the person in charge of construction on the campus, and the president of the campus. I set up these committee meetings in which I would work and present the work to all of these parties involved. Because it was the behavioral science school of the university, there were a good number of departments that I had to deal with. So my approach to the project was one in which I was going to define the building by the various departments and have them have their own little courts that they would work around, so that they would be in eye view of each other and be more communities of departments. That was one factor. Then in order to ameliorate the wind, the form of the building took a curved surface facing into the winds that would carry the winds over the building instead of hitting against flat surfaces.Anyway, the whole first process was received very well by

the committees, and this went very, very well. I had completed all the preliminaries, and then this was to be presented to the chancellor's office. When I went to the chancellor's office, the head of the construction for the campus plus the president came along, and they were there really to kill the project as it had been designed. They didn't speak up during the committee meetings, and they didn't put their point of view forward at that time, but they waited for this meeting at the chancellor's office to then really go at the project.This was a very disappointing process for me, because it was one that could have been up-front earlier and would have saved everybody a lot of time. The building might have been compromised in certain ways that would have still kept much of what I had done. But in lieu of that, I ran into this woman who was a planner and who was head of the chancellor's office building division who, with the president and head of construction, laid a trip on me at that point in time. I probably would have just told them to take the job and forget about it at that time, except for the fact that the contract also was the contract that the state puts out, and in it, there was really no clause for architects to leave the job. There was a clause for the university to leave the job. So when I looked at the contract again and saw that it would probably take me longer to battle it out in court to get out of the job, [I decided] that it was easier to just do what they wanted. That building ended up that way.But I think it was really unfortunate, because I think I had designed a good building, and instead we ended up with a building with a couple of large courts, and that was it. It was still better than most faculty office buildings would be, but it still is a far cry from what I had designed. That was about the only time that I had a bad experience with public work. It was just because I think everybody wasn't up-front. I think that probably can happen more often with committees than individuals--when you have many, many players--than it does in, say, a residential project where most things are up-front earlier. At least you're only dealing with two people or one person, and you can actually work those things out in a different way. Quite often there are changes of mind in those kinds of projects too, but it's not quite the same as this kind of a situation that I described. In those cases, in the contract that I normally use, which is an AIA [American Institute of Architects] contract, there are clauses for the architect leaving the job or the owner leaving the job if there's not a meeting of the minds, which is sort of a normal process. But this one that the state used was

rather strange. I guess it's just the difference between working with committees and working with individuals, which could be public or private.

SMITH

What was your impression of the bidding process from the public commissions?

KAPPE

The bidding process?

SMITH

Yeah.

KAPPE

Well, it was okay in the cases that we had. I don't remember anything unusual about them. It was normally put out to several contractors. The normal process was to take low bidder. We didn't have any repercussions from that. There are architects I think who do sometimes, where the low bidder isn't the best bidder. Sometimes you don't get the best firms. I think it's not so different from public to private. Public has to go through a different process. If nobody reaches the bid price, it goes out to bid again. But that happens sometimes, and I think that happens in private projects too.The main thing that I found was wrong, particularly in the university system-- I think the fees are way too low. At least in the state university system, the fees are impossible on smaller jobs to make any money. Why the architects have continued to work for these fees that are really several percentage points too low is beyond me. This was my first experience, so if I were ever to do it again, it would certainly be a negotiated contract. It would be one that I wouldn't take the job unless the fee was a positive fee. It seems strange to me that state or public institutions should do that, or even that architects over time have even allowed that to take place. On larger jobs it's not so bad. But on smaller jobs, it's pretty hard. This one was about a $3 million job, and working at it very, very tight in the office it was still pretty impossible to make any money on it. I can imagine if it went into an office that had many employees and much more waste, they would just have lost a lot of money on a little job like that. And yet I see large firms going after that kind of work. They know

they can't produce it and make out on it. They do it, I think, to just keep their staff together.

SMITH

Isn't there a prestige factor to have a campus building?

KAPPE

Well, some are, but the big ones are more prestigious than the little ones. [laughter] I don't think it's worth it. If you've never done one as a big firm I could understand maybe doing one that you know you're not going to make any money on. But normally that's not their case. They've usually done other work.When we did the Downtown People Mover [study for the city of Los Angeles]-- Just jumping to that for a moment. In that process, one of the difficult parts that I didn't have to deal with, but Rex Lotery, my partner, did, was that there was a great number of citizens involved in the decision-making process besides, say, the [Los Angeles City] Community Redevelopment Agency and the [Los Angeles City] Planning Department and others. But the citizen groups can become difficult in a situation like that, particularly where it isn't really citizen groups but there are other professional planners, usually educators who might get themselves on these kinds of boards or panels. They usually have their own agenda, and so that can sometimes be more difficult. Instead of working with you, they might be pressing for some other sets of issues, and so it becomes one of, again, more management and how you handle people than anything else.But that's part of our professional time anyway. You are always working with the client. You are always concerned about their psychological needs, their physiological needs, all of these kinds of things. So it's always a total process anyway. When you're into public work, you're looking at it from a public, social standpoint. The more difficult part about it is just that you have to make it work for many people in a society in which you have people that are all different. So it's pretty hard to come to a set of total understandings or a set of priorities that are going to make it work for everybody.One time we tried at school to get work on that kind of data. In the late sixties, early seventies there was much more concern at that time about behavioral patterns and the psychological and behavioral aspects of people relating to buildings and space. There was more desire at that time to study those issues. Then later architects gave up on the process, because they

felt they couldn't get enough information from the behavioral scientists to give them anything that would be concrete. It was a long-time research project to come up with anything. There's been some books written on it, but not a lot. So I think architects are always forced to go by the seat of their pants when they get into these projects and try to come up with whatever they can that they think will work for more people. That's a difficult thing to do.

SMITH

What effect did affirmative action have on awarding of public commissions?

KAPPE

Well, during the time that we were in practice as a larger firm, let's say from '68 to '81, it had practically no effect. A little bit. They wanted you as a firm to at least be open to hiring minority people. Quite often in our firm we would usually have a couple of minorities anyway, two or three. Sometimes we had several African American or Hispanic young people work for us. We always had women working for us. So that was not a problem. You didn't have to be a minority firm to get work at that time.Today it has had tremendous effect upon the profession, I think. It's almost impossible for a young architect who isn't a minority to get into public work. It's very difficult for even firms that were established to get public work if they are not a minority-owned firm. So over the past, I would imagine ten years, especially, I think almost all public work either went to minority firms or firms associated with those kinds of firms. Most firms then have to share their contract with a minority firm in order to get the project. So it's quite different than it used to be, and I think somewhat unfair.Quite often they're giving projects to minorities who are not as qualified as obviously are some of the Caucasian firms. I'm not opposed to the diversity programs and giving work to minorities, but I think it should just be to start them up, to give them a chance, and then I think they should compete on their own merit. That is still not going on. They just get work because they are a minority. Also it disturbs me that Spanish surnames are considered a minority. I don't think that's correct. I certainly don't think women, once they're established, are a minority. They are highly competitive and are strong. I think Hispanics who are true Latinos who have come up either from Mexico or grew up here and maybe some of the Central American Latinos are okay. I think African Americans need the assistance when they are

first starting out. But the process does need reevaluation.Even from someone like myself who generally is quite a bit left of center politically and supportive of the idea, I think it's gotten out of hand. My son is working for an African American firm now because he was given four schools up in the San Francisco area to do. They're mostly rehab-type jobs. He had no experience in that area at all. So all the projects were given to my son to manage. I don't think the principal is even involved at all in the process. So it's kind of a strange thing where, say, somebody who has had a firm who has done schools maybe a majority of their life, done them over and over, and doesn't get work at this point in time because they aren't a minority firm any longer. It doesn't seem completely correct. But anyway, that's the kind of thing that goes on.

SMITH

We talked a lot last time about the urban design committee [of the Southern California Chapter of the American Institute of Architects], and I wondered if you could just tell us what the charge of that committee actually is, maybe a little of the history.

KAPPE

Well, the committee obviously was just one of the committees of the AIA. There was never really a charge. I think the people involved in the committee determine the direction of the committee. If I go back in time to when I first became a licensed architect in '53-- But I think I joined the AIA in '56. The first committee that I signed up for was an urban design committee. I went to the first couple of meetings, and at that time Paul [R.] Williams was the chairman of the committee. Paul--as most people know--Williams was an African American architect, and a very well known one, probably one of the most acclaimed in Los Angeles before World War II. I went to the meeting and the charge that he gave had to do with the marina. It didn't take more than one meeting to realize that we who were going to be on that committee were going to be doing his dirty work, because he was going to go after the job. So he was using younger architects to do the work for him that he would then use for his own good. I got off that committee pretty quick, because I didn't like that.It wasn't until, I guess, the early sixties, '62, '63, as I said before, when there was a notice that came out from AIA that the urban design committee was involved with land development in the mountain areas, and anybody

interested should sign up. So I came back to the urban design committee at that time because it was an issue that I thought was worth working on. Then, of course, the people that I was with were people more my age, and we could work together pretty well. From that point on, we pretty much developed our own agenda, which projects we would do or not do, according to either what we were interested in or something maybe the planning department wanted us to study. But our goal was to do it not for our own gain but to do as a public service, which is what it should be, and for the city. Working on projects that either the planning department doesn't have time to do, doesn't have staff to do, or doesn't have qualified staff to do it--those kinds of projects or issues were what we cared about.So each group that heads it up or has headed it up over time sets their own agenda and works on their own issues. But usually one of the things that almost any of the groups will do is respond to issues that are out in the city at any point in time. Like right now there's a framework plan that's been put out for the city of Los Angeles by the city planning department. So the urban design committee of the AIA at this point in time will respond to that framework plan. Just like when I was on the urban design committee, when the transit system was being proposed, we responded to that issue. That's the way the committee operates, and it is active and inactive depending upon who the leadership is.

SMITH

What would happen to the studies after they were completed by the committee?

KAPPE

The hillside study [*Land Development Control in Hillside and Mountain Areas*] we published. It was put out. It was given to the [Los Angeles City] Planning Department, and when Cal [Calvin S.] Hamilton became the planner, he took it into consideration. Many recommendations that we made were in opposition to, say, the transportation department. Their idea of what a road should be going up into a hill was different than what we thought a road should be in terms of size, curbs, and sidewalks. They treated it like an urban situation, and we wanted to treat it specifically to the mountains. That was one set of issues. Of course, zoning would have to come to grips with our report in terms of the idea of mixed-use zoning. That was okay finally, because that kind of a zone

was established in the hills. So that report just probably floated around the building and the planning departments.The transportation study we did [*Rapid Transit 197?*] created quite a few meetings with the departments that were concerned with that issue. The architects and engineers were concerned, so that report developed some discussions. The gray area study [*Gray Areas: A Townscape Study*] generally didn't have too much impact. Again, it went to the planning department.The issue of the river and the damming of the river and the use of the river went to the [Los Angeles] City Council, however. They became interested in the idea of using it as a recreation facility. But the [United States Army] Corps of Engineers put that one down, saying that it was impractical. However, it wasn't more than about two or three years ago that they were coming up with the same kind of consideration themselves, but this time it was emanating from the corps, not from a group of architects.

SMITH

Their own idea.

KAPPE

Yeah. But the whole river project is constantly being shuffled around at this time. I imagine one of these days, though, they'll use that river in the summertime at least for recreation use, if the economy picks up some day and downtown starts to go again. Right now it's in a difficult situation, so during this time you're not going to see too many projects like that, I don't think.

SMITH

How about the state environmental committee for the California Council of the AIA?

KAPPE

Well, that was an offshoot for me from the urban design committee at the local level. I can't remember exactly how, but I got on that committee at the state level, and we would meet once every month or two months. At that time there was a state plan that was being developed, and our goal was primarily to evaluate and discuss that plan. I think the second year on it I was chairman of that committee. Then we put forward a paper on our response and our evaluation of that state plan. We took it to the [California Council of the

American Institute of Architects] to get it supported in order to be able to put it forward to the state. That was what it was all about. It was a state committee dealing with a plan that dealt with environment of the state and the plan of the state. So it was interesting. I enjoyed it too. It was just one more element to become involved with.

SMITH

But similar issues that you're involved in on in a local--?

KAPPE

Local level or a state level, yes. The environ-mental issues were a little more involved, because there was the whole coastline, there were the rivers. There was everything throughout the state, which was more extensive, obviously, than those kinds of issues in the city.

SMITH

What issues did you explore as the chairman of the housing committee of the Los Angeles Goals Council?

KAPPE

The statement finally when we finished was more of a motherhood type of a statement. It was the idea that there should be equal housing for everybody and everybody should have the opportunity to have affordable housing--all the kinds of issues that you would put forward as good notions about how you make a better society and have everybody housed properly and so forth. We talked about a lot of issues. They all ended up more like that, however. It's hard for me to remember back. It was almost thirty years ago.I remember spending a lot of sessions charting all these things and bringing up various aspects of housing. I'm trying to think now what they all were. I know at the end it was more of a generalized statement. I don't think it was very specific. Instead of separating out affordable housing, we were always advocates of incorporating it in developments at a certain percentage. The city had talked at times about 15 percent of every development must have affordable in it. That happens and doesn't happen. But we tried to take away the stigma of housing per se where it's mass housing. People don't really prefer that when they're in that kind of a situation. It says, "These people are in the low-income

housing over here. That's who they are." I think that's a negative. It was the idea of having housing that would be distributed more equitably through the city. We probably talked about densification, and the idea of changing some aspects of the city from being so matted out to densifying in various ways. But I really can't remember. I'd have to to refer to the report to be able to do it intelligently.

SMITH

What is your overall assessment of some of the earlier public housing projects in Los Angeles, like Estrada Courts, Pico Gardens, and Hacienda Village?

KAPPE

Well, the very earliest ones, I think, were not too good, really. They were low in scale. They weren't huge projects. But I think they look like low-income projects. The amenities weren't too wonderful. They were just buildings, and I don't think they were too successful. It probably was the result of FHA [Federal Housing Administration] standards and the kinds of standards that one works with under HUD [United States Department of Housing and Urban Development] or FHA.But also, I don't think anybody at that time really had a good understanding yet of how one would put together a housing project and do it well. Ramona Gardens was really one of those early ones which I'm more familiar with, because we worked on it later. The major problem there was the fact that there was just no planting. Everything was just destroyed all the time. Everything was just dirt. The place was cleared-out dirt, and just housing that was in reasonable shape around it. There were no amenities really for the people in these developments.Later, like the one that we did for Pepper [Housing Project], I think there was more concern for the amenities than there really was for the housing because the housing had certain limits anyway, so the amenities were important. The tree planting, the basketball courts for the kids, the places to ride their bikes--all of these kinds of things were necessary. When we got involved with Ramona Gardens, that's what we were being asked to do--develop recreation facilities for them and try to develop a better environment.But those are difficult places. You put all low-income people together like that, and you see an awful lot of broken glass and rock throwing and clods and junk, things all over the place that-- When you're trying to work in an area like that, even after we put in quite a few recreational facilities,

they still were not treated as well as they should have been by the people who were there. So it's not an easy situation. It's never been highly, highly successful. I think that's why it was stopped other than for the elderly. Those projects always worked well.

SMITH

Is that the one you mentioned earlier? Saint Francis Court?

KAPPE

Saint Francis Square, right. Thank you. You have a good memory. It was Saint Francis Square, which is an exception. Saint Francis Square in San Francisco was very successful because it was primarily occupied by Asians, and they treated it in the manner that it was developed. All the amenities that were connected with it were kept in wonderful shape. It had nice lawn areas. It had good areas for kids to play in. The housing was pretty simple, but there were some balcony areas that people could privatize. And they did, and treated it as their own place. It was very successful. The same model with a different group has not worked as well sometimes. But Saint Francis Square was particularly a good example.That's about all I can say. I think the other earlier ones still have their trouble. I think they're usually looking at them to redo. Yet they're still there. They've been there for fifty-some years, and so I guess they've served a purpose, whether they've been fantastically successful or not. Today we look upon it and say, "That's where the gangs are. That's where the problems are." And that's true in most of those housing developments. But that's not the housing. You can't blame the physical structure. You have to blame the process of it being occupied by low-income, uneducated people, with the drugs and all of the problems that exist in those kinds of areas.When you bring one people together, you're going to have more problems anyway. You know, where it is more diverse those things don't happen as much--that is, if you have greater diversity of race. I saw that happen even in private buildings. I don't know if I spoke to you about it before, but I owned and built an eight-unit apartment building in the Baldwin Hills area, which is a high-level African American neighborhood now. When it was first built, it was Caucasian. When African Americans were moving into that area, and it was starting to change over, I was determined to keep the building, because I didn't believe in selling out immediately when there was a change in ethnic group. So when the

building was occupied by both blacks and whites, it was really wonderful. In fact, the building operated almost better at that time than it did when it was all Caucasian, but when it turned to all black, it became a disaster. Once that happened, it seemed like there was license now to destroy the building for some reason. It became such a maintenance problem that it was almost impossible to keep the building.So that was one of these microcosm examples. I use these kinds of things maybe incorrectly and as sort of a generalization when I do this, but little microcosms tell you a lot, I think, about the world. This tells me a lot about what happens when one group is all together in an area. That even in an upper-class area, where they're paying pretty decent rents, there is a different attitude that does take place. So I think that's one of the bigger problems of affordable housing. That's why the process now of doing it more as infills is a little bit better. If you can get greater diversity, it's going to work better. But it's still difficult.

SMITH

You want to talk a little bit about the Housing for the Homeless project you're involved with in Las Vegas?

KAPPE

Okay. I'm not involved with it anymore. We were involved. The project set up to be, I think, a rather ideal project originally. One of our ex-students became head of housing. When I say ex-students, one of the ex-SCI-ARC [Southern California Institute of Architecture] students, who had left us and worked quite a while with the CRA [Los Angeles City Community Redevelopment Agency] and had developed quite a few housing projects in the city of [Los Angeles] himself for low-income use and homeless use, became the housing director for Las Vegas. So Arnold Stalk--it's his name--had this idea of bringing in a group of us from Los Angeles, firms that had fairly good reputations to do this housing for the homeless. The way he put it together was that our firms--my firm with my older son, Ron, working with me, Morphosis, Hodgetts and Fung, and then three firms from Las Vegas as well-- I think it was three or four.

1.14. TAPE NUMBER: VII, Side Two (October 17, 1995)

KAPPE

These several firms were to get together, and we were to do the project in a four-day charette. And a charette comes from "on the cart," which is used at school where the students used to continue working on projects even when they were being picked up. It's a beaux arts terminology. But we use it now when firms get together and interchange quickly and try to put together a project in a short period of time.This was four days up in Vegas. Our part was the housing. One firm had the social aspect of the project. Another one had the school of the project. Another one had the eating facilities for the project. One had a rehab of an existing building on the site that was to be used for overnight use only. The other parts of the housing were to be used for bringing in people where they would be rehabed and taken through a social process over a couple of months.Anyway, it was on a very nice site. The firms involved were good firms. The ideas were, I think, quite good. The four-day charette went reasonably well, I think, in terms of the way we processed it, and we land-planned the project together. Everybody had input in that. Then we broke down into our separate units to work on our particular project, but we had to interface with all the other parts. That was the trickiest part. Because we had the biggest piece of it, as the housing element, we always had to be the one who would try to hold it together, because everybody else was moving beyond the location on the site where they were supposed to work. They would always be pushing over their limits and stretching out. Also the firms that were used were firms that are categorized as avant-garde. Ours is not, or mine is not. The other Los Angeles firms were. Their projects were all configured in all kinds of ways. Ours was rather regular. First of all, it was the biggest budget element of the project. Therefore, it had to have some consistency and repetitive aspect of it that would make it economical. So we were always in this process of attempting to keep this thing together.But it was fun. It was interesting. It had a great amount of public relations connected with it, and at the end of it, there was a big fanfare in Vegas. But unfortunately the money--[laughter] which is always the case--from the feds [federal government] didn't come through in the amount that Arnold Stalk had originally thought it would. The project was caught short for money. So it was decided to phase it. The first phase was some of the housing. It seemed to me that where first there was a tremendous amount of support for this project, somewhere, politically, that support began to fall out. Our working with the Las Vegas firm who was responsible for production of the drawings was not

too good. I didn't think it was very successful. I didn't think they worked well with us. We had done the whole design and design development. So really they were just doing production drawings. We were not brought to work with their consultants. They were always feeding us information that didn't make sense to me from my experience. So that part wasn't wonderful anyway.But what finally happened was that the project was not funded. There were some political problems. Arnold left the agency. The project fell through as far as I know. The only other thing I can think is maybe one of the Vegas firms has picked it up. But where there was this great commitment for it and, I think, this kind of exciting idea, the funds weren't there. So it's a thing of the past as far as we're concerned. I think the housing got so bad working with this other firm, I'm kind of glad it ended for us anyway. [tape recorder off]

SMITH

How were you involved in the movement to save Watts Towers?

KAPPE

Well, that project again was connected with the urban design committee in a way. Herb [Herbert] Kahn, who was my partner later, had been involved with the Watts Towers project earlier before we ever really became partners, obviously, and concurrently with the time that we were working on the urban design committee. Herb had done a plan for the whole Watts Towers area because they were trying to put together a little art center for youth. They wanted to obviously keep the Watts Towers intact, so they were working on the committee, and made the proposal for how that whole development would take place. Rex's involvement and my involvement with it came later as support for Herb and his involvement.Our major role in it was for this community art center [Watts Towers Arts Center] that was for the students, and the three of us one weekend met. Herb had already designed the project. The three of us sat down and did the working drawings over one weekend pro bono. And we gave it to the Watts Towers committee.Later, when the project was finally built, the Watts community wanted to bring a black architect into the process, so they took the project over, did some redesign on it. Then the project was built. That was really all of our involvement in that particular project.

SMITH

I guess it's time to move finally to the educational career. I'll start out with this question maybe. How did you come to be involved in architectural education?

KAPPE

Well, first, I always had an interest in what was happening at USC [University of Southern California], which was the only school of architecture at the time when I first started practice. When I was working with Carl Maston--Carl was teaching there as well--I would always hear various stories from USC. There were other people working in the office who were going to USC at that time, so I would keep in touch with what was happening and found it interesting always to know what was happening. Whenever I'd interview people for work, most of them would be USC graduates, and quite often we would have a long discussion about their education and what was happening. Later, when I was in my own practice, Carl asked me to substitute for him several times at USC when either he had a conflict or he was going to be away. So I did that a few times through the mid-sixties. At that time, there was a change in the program. I was always in the process of evaluating USC and their education program.During this time also, UCLA had started their program in the sixties. It was a new program, and a completely different type. It was a graduate program. I was also interested in what was happening over there. Through those years some of the people--the deans and some of the planners and other people--that worked at UCLA and sometimes 'SC [University of Southern California] would be on some of the committees that I was on either with the urban design committee or other committees with the AIA. So I got to know quite a few of the people that way. We exchanged thoughts. So that's just sort of a prelude.What finally got me involved was being asked if I was interested in becoming the chairman of the architecture department at [California State Polytechnic University] Pomona. I had a friend who had just become a faculty member there, Bernard Zimmerman. He and one other architect, Richard Chylinski, were at that time part of the landscape department. There were two departments already in place, landscape and urban planning. In the urban planning portion there was also an option which they called an architecture option. They had a few students who were in that option, determining whether they were more interested in architecture or landscape or planning, but they did take that option. The vice president of the university [Hugh La Bounty] was very interested in, one, getting an architecture department and

developing an environmental design school and taking it out of the agriculture school at that time. So Bernard Zimmerman asked me if I was interested, and if I were, he would put my name in the hat.When he first asked me, I thought it was a little bit crazy. I didn't really want to. It was almost an hour away from where I lived. It seemed like a long drive to get out there. So first I told him, no, I didn't think I was interested. Then I thought about it for a while, and probably about a month later, I convinced myself that I was interested enough in education and interested enough in the idea of trying to put together a good environmental design school and putting ideas and criticisms I had of USC, particularly, into motion, and what I thought could be a better program--That interested me enough to at least go out and be interviewed for the process.The fact that I had spent at least five or six years prior to that interview involved with urban design issues and I cared about landscape and I cared about planning and cared about all the inner action of the various disciplines, I think, put me in a special place in the interview. It was not just Ray Kappe as a pure architect, but as one who really cared about these other issues. In my own firm, I had been considering this planning collaborative that I spoke of earlier, which was an interdisciplinary set of issues. So in going out and talking to the then chairman of landscape, who was the one making the decision, we got interdisciplinary discussion. With the vice president of the university, I got into the same kind of discussion. Then I made a presentation of the urban design work that we had done through those years. Because of this, I guess, they felt I was qualified and would be a good person for the job.So that's how I became involved with Pomona. The difficulty, though, was that at that time there was also a review being made by the state of California to determine which schools should have architecture in the state of California in the University [of California] system or in the Cal[ifornia] State [University] system. They had hired a consultant, Lawrence [B.] Anderson, who had been an educator at MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] and an architect in Boston, to come out and do this evaluation. So there was the potential that even though the university would have liked to have a school, and that there already were two legs of a potential school of environmental design, it wasn't for certain that Cal Poly Pomona would be selected. George [J.] Hasslein, who I mentioned earlier, who was dean at Cal Poly [California Polytechnic State University] San Luis Obispo was very much opposed to the idea, because he felt there would be great confusion on which Cal Poly was which, and that he

thought it should go to another university than Cal Poly Pomona. So he was in opposition to it.I went up and spoke to him about it. Even though we were somewhat friendly, he still didn't like the idea at all. I said that I was sorry that he felt that way, but this was a task that I'd been given. At the same time I felt that it was a viable one, and that it was probably the best school to have the program, because they were committed to it and, two, they had two legs of all the disciplines together already, and had viable schools in landscape and planning. So anyway we went through this process. The vice president said, "Well, do whatever you think you have to do to impress Lawrence Anderson that we can put together a school."First of all, we were in not a very good environment. We were in the agricultural building, which had the typical mundane campus offices. The landscape department had fairly decent facilities, but things didn't look like what I felt an architectural school should look like, or a design school. So we made some physical plant changes over a period of a few days and put up an exhibit and threw out the furniture we didn't like and brought in what we felt would work. Anyway, we tried to put together that aspect of it. I also knew some people who knew Lawrence Anderson well. One of them [John Cotton] was one of the first people teaching with us out at Cal Poly before we were reviewed. So we went through this whole interview process with Anderson, and then we had an evening over at the house, where we invited some people that knew him and the vice president and some of the faculty members.

SMITH

So it was just a year or so into the development of the program?

KAPPE

About a year, right. We first started in the option for about a year. Through that year, we were beginning the program. Anyway, what came out of it was that Cal Poly was selected as one of the schools, and the other one was [University of California] Santa Barbara. Of course, we were ready to go immediately, because we already had everything in place. It was just up to me to hire the faculty and to set the program and the direction of the program. So that's the way it took off.I think the program was very good at that time. I was pretty energetic in those days. Our program started out in an exciting way. The projects were avant-garde demonstrations. They would get publicity in

the press, and they were projects that students would build at full scale. So it was kind of gung ho, particularly in the first year, and then the other years were developed in various ways that I thought were valid.At that time I was very much interested in methodology that was going on at some of the other schools: how you design less subjectively and more objectively. I was interested in linear processes that might work so that students in their thought process would develop projects that would be more logical in their developmental process, and, again, not so subjective as architecture can be sometimes. I was concerned about environmental response issues. So our whole second year was involved with those things. Because they were issues that planning and landscape were interested in, second-year classes were taught together. I also thought engineering should be taught within the architectural department, not in engineering where they would take classes separately. So these were some of the pedagogical attitudes I had.I also thought that it should not be strictly a design school--that there should be other options and directions that students could take in architectural administration, construction administration, and urban design. I think I had about five directions that I thought students should have options for within our program.It was a great opportunity. I was able to select an all-new faculty, which is something that nobody hardly ever gets to do in any institution. Also to set up a program whatever way I wanted to was special. The landscape chairman [Jere French] was a good guy. We worked well together. The urban planning head was not. He was less responsive and more difficult to work with. But the goal was to teach together in the first two years. Architecture would then break away in the next two. Then there would also be graduate years. Even in the upper division areas, we wanted to have projects that would be done with all departments involved, so we would do projects with landscapers, planners, and architects together. That was the goal. There were many things of this type that I wanted to introduce. I was interested in having behaviorists on campus also be involved with us. That was sort of the nature of the program.My request was that architecture not grow any bigger than the other two departments, because I felt we should be equal in size so that we would be equal in power and money that went into the programs. That became one of the bigger problems out there. There were a lot of applicants for architecture, more than for the other programs. Cal Poly Pomona was really a college at that time of about ten thousand students. They were

interested in increasing their population, because they also wanted to gain university status instead of college status. The administration kept pumping more students into our program. We started with 35 people in the option and in three years we grew to 350.So we were growing at a tremendous pace, and we were always obviously behind in funds and faculty because that's the nature of the game. You don't get the faculty till you have the numbers, and they come a year late. So it meant that the architecture faculty was always being overworked in relationship to the other faculty. And although we didn't really mind, it just didn't seem like a fair relationship. We also had the most difficult classes because we took the first two years almost totally, because most of the tenured faculty wanted the upper-division classes, which are in many ways easier to teach and more satisfying. So there were all these issues. Generally we didn't mind that, though. We were able to live with that.I didn't like being bigger than the other two. I knew what was going to finally happen, that there would be resentment that architecture was getting too big and too powerful, and therefore taking over the whole program, and that was not the goal. The opportunity here of architecture being the third leg, I thought, was really great, because normally it was always the first leg of the environmental design program, like it was at [University of California] Berkeley, instead of the third leg. Here, being the third leg, I thought it could be kept in control, since it's the strongest design profession of the three. Whenever we tried to do projects together, the architects always took over, and the planners and the landscape people acted more like consultants, which happens in the real world, too, to a certain degree. I was hoping that we could keep it where we were less strong, and try to work it to where the three disciplines would work well together, because I knew Berkeley didn't work well, and I knew other schools didn't either. They would just sort of separate the two. Planners and architects would separate. They did that at UCLA and they did it at Berkeley. They did that at 'SC, but they were never tightly woven programs. We tried. I think the process of letting us grow too big was wrong.Okay, then, with that being said, my goal in education at that time was to spend about five years with the program, get it accredited, and then probably leave education and just spend my time in practice. I was practicing at the same time as I was heading this program. But it intrigued me to take it through the first stages. I enjoy beginnings more than housekeeping. I enjoyed this idea of being able to take it to that place.Also, because I was practicing, I was on campus only three

afternoons a week, which was the agreement that I had made with the vice president. That's what most of the faculty did anyway. They came for the studios that they taught. There was no reason to be around campus, as there is in some of the other disciplines. Our offices aren't too important on campus because we usually leave and go to our own office. We'd only be there to meet with students, when we had to. But, again, because we teach one-on-one, you don't really have a lot of need to always have meetings with students in your office. You're talking to them while you're in the studio, so it works differently from other programs. And it's not necessary to be on campus a lot to create problems [laughter], which is what happens. I was there primarily the three afternoons a week, although I'd come in other times when it was necessary to come for meetings. I chaired the program, and I also taught studio, and I also lectured. So I had a full load beyond what I had to have. I was chairman of architecture. I didn't have to teach at all, but I did, because we didn't have the proper number of people.I say all this just to preface the fact that I wanted to work as economically as I could when I would be there so I could get as much done as I could in the limited amount of time. There were meetings, obviously, with the dean and other chairs that we had to go through. There was a certain amount of paperwork that had to be processed to satisfy both the other departments and the school as a whole. We processed these, I think, very well. I had a very good secretary. I was fortunate. We were able to handle not only that kind of work, but we did all of our own applications. We interviewed all of the students who were applying to the school. They all came in and had personal interviews. We did everything that you would do in an independent school, like I later was involved with, except I didn't have to deal with the financial issues. We did everything else. [tape recorder off]So anyway, this process, I felt, was going very well, and the school was getting good. I think it was looked upon as being a good school in its first three years. It was pretty vital in the community already. My involvement with AIA continued, and so I was always fairly well known in the community of architects, which helped. It wasn't like somebody coming from someplace else. So this worked pretty well, and to the advantage of the Cal Poly program. SMITH: Did they help you track faculty or--?

Well, faculty were always fairly easy to get in Los Angeles. You can almost have your choice of who you wanted. A lot of people I already knew I wanted. Early on I tried to bring in practitioners that I respected, but I found that to not work as well in established firms, because as soon as they get busy, their tendency would be to be more involved with their practice than teaching. The balance wasn't always as good as I had hoped it would be. Where if I took young people who hadn't set up practice yet and who were more academically inclined for starters, that quite often worked quite well. Then if they were at the same time beginning their practices, that seemed to be a good relationship. I had a balance of both types in the process. I think we selected pretty strong design-oriented people, and so it started out pretty good. The difficulty that finally arose at Cal Poly was really one that was brought on by the dean himself. This dean [Bill Dale] was a planner, primarily. And what was happening was that I was starting to feel that he was creating a divisiveness among the different departments, and was creating this schism. In many cases he started to ask me to do various things over again, because that was not what came out of the meeting. I didn't exactly agree with that--what he was saying--because that was not what I had taken in my notes. I could start to see that he was beginning to play games, and I didn't really have time for those kinds of games. That was not what I was out there for. I didn't care to play interdepartmental games. I didn't care to play games with the dean. I was there to do my job, and for him to do his job. That was as far as it went.So one day I asked him to come into my office. I wanted to talk with him, because I found this was not satisfactory to me. I told him so. We had a long discussion that day. I guess about a week later, he asked me to resign as chairman of the department of architecture because he and I no longer were seeing eye-to-eye on what was going on. I was taken aback, and I couldn't see what was the reason for that other than the fact that I just had brought him in to ask him what he was doing, I didn't think that his processes were very intelligent, and that they weren't helping to develop the program.Anyway, to make a long story short, this all ended up being a big cause célèbre. What happened is I went through the normal dismissal process with the president of the university. Unfortunately, my connection with the vice president wasn't existent, because he was in Greece at the time, setting up some programs there for Cal Poly. His place was taken by the dean of engineering, who was not also at best terms with me, because I pulled all our classes out of

engineering. The president, Robert Kramer, didn't really know me at all because I had no relationship with him when I came in, other than probably meeting him once or twice early on. So they went through the process of meetings with tenured faculty having to be involved. Of course, everybody who was tenured in the landscape and planning department weren't going to stick their necks out for me. Maybe they felt, even though they never had expressed it, some negative feelings towards me. I don't know. The whole process took about two weeks, and the president also asked me to resign my position.There was really no real cause for it. By the book, there was no cause. At that time, they began to trump up causes such as not being on campus more than three afternoons a week--which was the agreement I had made--a few things, like that architecture wasn't extending itself to be a good college [laughter] friend of other departments. I mean, we weren't out there involved with the faculty senate and all these kinds of things. That was a dean's role, first of all, and not our role, and architects in general were not interested in serving on any of these committees. They are more interested in practicing if they weren't teaching. So we weren't the people who find it enjoyable to be involved with other committees and other issues on campus. I think we were probably nonexistent in those areas. [laughter] So that was a fault that they put forward.Anyway, that went through, but then what happens-- This cause célèbre was created. The architecture department had this big uprising with all the students coming together to question the decision of the president, which they thought was ridiculous. There was an all-school meeting over this. And there was a big brouhaha that went on in that meeting. We continued to have our meetings as well, with the students, for a period of a couple of months while all this was going on. I was really ready to leave anyway. At the beginning I thought, "Well, if they don't want me as chair, I didn't really care to stay on." Even though I was a full professor and tenured, I didn't want to stay on. I had even told the vice president when I first took the position that if things didn't work out that I would just leave, and they didn't have to worry about the position they were giving me, or the tenured position, because I wasn't interested in the tenure. So I was ready to leave, but then the other faculty, the younger faculty, wanted to keep this thing going.So then I got into it as well, and it grew, and it built to a point where one day we decided if the students were interested, maybe we should leave and start our own school--just leave the college and go on to our own program. And that's what

happened. We had this meeting, and we had students sign up. About 150 students signed up to leave the program.I came out to the Westside to look for buildings that could work. We looked at an automobile showroom that was vacant, and we looked at another industrial building that was vacant. We finally decided on the industrial building, because it needed less work to be made useable as a school. We invited all the students out, and we had a big party, and again, the discussion of who would come and who wouldn't come. From that meeting, we decided to lease the building, and figured we would have enough students. Even if we had 50, we would still go through with it--of the 150. What did happen was that we ended up with just 50, after they realized they couldn't get student loans and they couldn't get the support of their parents.That took us into this new process. So we had 50 and, I think in April and May, when the quarter was over, the students came out to the building. We started rehabilitating the building that summer. We got a certain amount of press going on with this just out of Cal Poly. It was in the [*Los Angeles*] *Times*. [tape recorder off] During that period of time, between April-May and October, when we opened, another 25 people had decided to come to SCI-ARC.

SMITH

People who weren't associated with--?

KAPPE

With Pomona, right. So that's the way SCI-ARC began.

1.15. TAPE NUMBER: VIII, Side One (October 17, 1995)

SMITH

Before we move on to SCI-ARC [Southern California Institute of Architecture], I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit about the Barrio Planners program?

KAPPE

Okay. This was a program that came out of my fourth-year design studio. Normally, when I would do studios, I was always interested in the social aspect of a problem. I think all the time I was at Cal Poly [California State Polytechnic

University, Pomona], the projects I would give would always have the city or a portion of the city as a base. And then normally an architectural project would be done after that initial study. Quite often we got into social issues when we were doing these projects.While I was at Cal Poly, I was called by a friend of mine [Alex Mann] who stated that in Ramona Gardens there was a project that he was interested in and he needed help in being able to produce it. He wanted to know if I had any suggestions or any way of dealing with it. I said, "Well, I have several Latino students in my class who are interested in these kinds of issues." I thought they might be interested in working with him. "I certainly would be interested in working with them. Eventually, maybe our firm might be or not, depending upon what we have." So two of the students I had at that time, Manny Orosco and David Angelo, were interested in the idea that they could really get into a real community project. They came along and worked with me on this first-stage project with Ramona Gardens. Out of that, there was another individual--I'm trying to think-- Villalobos. Frank Valenzuela Villalobos, in landscape. He also was interested. The three of them became involved, and they decided to call themselves the Barrio Planners. So that was my involvement with them.Then what happened is we got more into the project. Later there was another part of it. The first part was just rehabilitating some athletic facilities for them: some basketball courts and some things like that as the first stage. Second stage was more extensive, and at that time they asked our firm to take it on as a project. What we decided to do was to engage the Barrio Planners with us, so that they could be more of a part of the community. We thought it would be a nicer way to work with that community. So that was the first time we had worked together on a project.Today only Frank, the landscape architect, is left of the original group. But it's a fairly active planning, architecture, and landscape group in the city now. That was nice that it came out of a school project, and I'm kind of proud of that. When these things do happen, it's nice.

SMITH

What was it like to have [Richard J.] Neutra on the faculty there?

KAPPE

Well, Bernard Zimmerman and I were the ones who were primarily interested in getting Richard Neutra to come to Cal Poly. I don't think any of the other

schools had really ever asked him to teach. Since he was really the leading architect of Los Angeles, it seemed a shame that all his brilliance and intelligence was not used in an academic way. We recommended to the vice president [Hugh La Bounty] that he become a faculty member. He originally was being considered actually as potential chair, but I think his age was something that got in the way of that, because he was already, I think, close to seventy right at the time when the school started. I think they felt that it wouldn't work. Probably, also, his notoriety was so much greater than the other two people--the other chairs--that it would probably put the whole thing out of balance.Anyway, we decided that we would ask him to become a member of the faculty. I went with the president [Robert Kramer] and vice president to his house to talk with him about doing this, and they asked for him to do quite a few things besides teach, which I thought was a little outrageous. They wanted him to get grants and do this and do that. I guess Neutra himself really didn't care. He wanted, I think, to be involved with the teaching process. I think he also deep down wanted to record some of his thoughts in lectures that he would give, and have people who were there to transcribe them for him, to get some secretarial help and so forth, maybe get his slides copied. He had his own agenda along with the fact that we were proud to have him come out and teach. I think it was something pretty great for the students.A funny story. When I mentioned the recording being really important to him-- He would always lecture with two tape recorders, and he would always, about two or three minutes into the lecture, stop the tape recorders, play it back, and make sure it was recording properly before he would go on. So that was very important to him, the idea of getting all of this down, his latest ideas, and getting them into print.He was interesting to have, particularly since I had a great deal of respect for Neutra. It was interesting to see a person at that stage of their life come particularly into the studio. He was much less of a prima donna in that setting than I would have expected him to be. He would listen. He would interchange. He did not try to dominate the ideas, even though he had set down many of the ideas that we were working with at this time many years before in *Survival through Design*and many of his writings. So I found it intriguing to have him there. I was sorry that he died in our last year there when he was over in Europe. But it was a nice experience for the students who did have him for this little bit of time. He didn't teach studio. He primarily lectured.

SMITH

What percentage of the faculty left with you when you left?

KAPPE

Well, let's see. I guess you could say everybody left except the two tenured faculty, who stayed. I think one visiting faculty member stayed on as well, but the rest of them left with me. They were all younger faculty members. They were assistant professors. They probably would have been not allowed to stay on anyway. They probably would have been dropped, and other people brought in with the new chair. So it was sort of natural that they went along with me.

SMITH

And did this make up the founding faculty for SCI-ARC?

KAPPE

This made the founding faculty, and Shelly [Diamond Kappe], my wife, as well, was the seventh member of the faculty. Her role when we first started was to be involved with programs and public relations, some history and a variety of administrative roles. Once we got to SCI-ARC we also wanted to develop a night program, and she was in charge of that program. So that was her role, and the rest of the faculty were faculty members that had been at Pomona. Well, Shelly actually did come out to Pomona gratis as well. She developed some field trips out there for the students, and she also did our first big program at Cal Poly that she put together. So she was already working there, but not being paid to work. She was just doing it, again, because we were so "under-personed." [tape recorder off]

SMITH

What were the things that you were trying to do with SCI-ARC that you felt couldn't have been done at Pomona?

KAPPE

Well, the major difference when we left and started SCI-ARC--and it's a good question to pick up on, because that's where I wanted to pick up on SCI-ARC again anyway--was that in the university system or in a college system,

whichever, when you're putting a program together, you certainly have to work within the confines of the program in general. There are certain requirements that the college or the university has that have to be part of your program. Students have to take subject matter in certain areas as part of their curriculum to complete the program. Other things that one does are ways of teaching that might not completely fit the college program, but might be done better if you had more freedom.So when we left, even though the program, we felt, was in pretty good shape the way it was structured, my feeling was that it would be really a tremendous opportunity to begin from scratch, as wide open as one could be in one's attitude towards the curriculum. First of all, we had a program that was really a university-without-walls attitude. In other words, how do you use the full community? Since we were in an industrial building, we didn't have all the support that a university has, but we thought it would be advantageous anyway to be able to use the facilities of the full community. That was one aspect. So that immediately made it completely different.The other was that I was really concerned and interested in having a program in which the learning process was more the way a person learns in real life, which is by truly asking a lot of questions and usually having to find out for themselves how to get from A to B or A to C or A to D, whatever you're trying to do. The way information usually is gathered in the university never seemed exactly right to me. It's not the way we usually do it on the outside. We don't usually learn step-by-step-by-step. We have a problem, and we then devise a method of solving that problem, and that's by asking questions, making phone calls, reading whatever one does to get that information. So I wanted a school where people would be more self-motivated and self-actualized, be able to learn how to ask questions, how to get themselves information that way. That was one factor. The other was that--again, as I said--there were a lot of people, I felt, in the community, who are not connected to universities who are excellent people who have lots of information. And many of them would be very happy to share it on a one-day-a-week basis or a one-hour-a-week basis or two-hour-a-week basis, whatever it might be. So there were all these people out in the community, I think, that one could use this way, and ask them to participate in the process. We had that potential that I thought was interesting.What we did do, however, was that summer that I started to talk about before, when we were trying to get the facility in order-- And when I say, "get the facility in order," that just meant

cleaning it up so that it would be an empty building to start with. We also had meetings with the students about the curriculum that could be established around these ideas. So the goals that summer were established by a combination of students and faculty meeting together and coming to a base curriculum that we felt comfortable with. We set that up in a way that one could attack in a variety of ways. It wasn't a lockstep method. There were various ways that one could take these classes and interconnect them and develop a self-directed program. So this curriculum really was diagrammed in a particular way that almost looked like an automobile part, because of just the parts that would go in and the parts that would go out, the interconnections and so forth. But anyway, that was the basis of the program. There were some course ideas and attitudes obviously and descriptions that we would have anyway. And those were put down as a base curriculum.However, when we started the school, the first program was really to design our own environment. So we didn't start out with a typical curriculum right away. Everything was devoted to just how do we get ourselves into this place and how do you make a place for each of the students to work and to get their information in the best possible way. Through this, there were discussions and talks about how the building could be used. It was one large space primarily. There were other rooms, but there was one major space. And first of all, our idea was to have all the classes together. We wouldn't actually even divide the building up by classes, but people could sit anywhere in the building. They would be whatever year they were, but they could interconnect with other students and graduate students. So there wouldn't be that class separation. That was one idea and way of using the building. We wanted them to explore various kinds of systems that could be duplicated and be flexible and be taken apart. So there was this looking at a variety of systems. There were other kinds of organizational matters that we dealt with.The school started out with this being the first learning process, and the only other learning that would go on was that people would come in, just drop in, and want to give a seminar. So we would stop whatever activity we were into, and then we would have this seminar take place. There would be questions and answers, and that would go on. This would happen quite regularly, every day or two. Then students who had particular information about architecture, or it could be about anything that they were interested, in could gather everybody together and give a lecture

on anything that they were interested in. So this was what was going on in that first five weeks. There were other things that were happening. There were people out scavenging various kinds of materials that were available. There were various kinds of boxes that people were giving us, and other kinds of tops and things that could be used, say, in the process of making this school environment. In the discussions that would go on in the days, we started out by just having people first just get some door tops. They were given some door tops and some horses, so at least they would have a place to sit down to draw. We had everybody set these up where they wanted to in the first bay of the building.That was immediately an interesting study in the psychological takeover of space. Everybody went to the edges of the building other than a few who would sit in the middle. The majority of people always went to the edge, which is, I think, fairly typical of the way people prefer to occupy a room or a space. But then there are always those people who like to be center-stage. They will sit middle, so that was exactly the way it was set up. They had to take over the space that had a pretty high volume. It felt a little less confined than, say, a room would feel, where it had four walls and maybe a door into it or a window on a wall. But this didn't have the same confinement. The space tended to feel larger.After about a week, one day we came over to the school, and the students had moved all of their boards into one of the other spaces that had more confinement. It meant that they wanted something they felt either controlled them or they could control better than this other space that they had first. So all this kind of learning went on as you'd see these things happening. We'd talk about it. We'd discuss it. Finally, a scaffolding system was decided upon. A few students started to work with it. That became a basis, and then there were some students who wanted to be involved with it.We also had another system around the school that I forgot to talk about before that had evolved in Cal Poly in the last year. It was a series of rhombic dodecahedrons that the first-year class was putting together to do an experimental project on the campus. The rhombics were small, made out of plywood. They were to be occupied by one individual at a time. We took a place on campus at Cal Poly out in the fields and built these rhombics on top of each other. It was a fairly large development of units that the students had made. We wanted to explore this tight-packing habitation to see just what it would do to people psychologically in terms of their interaction. We invited the behaviorists to be involved.Anyway, when we left the campus, the

president suggested we take our rhombics with us. He was never too happy about those, because he felt that there would be various things taking place in relationship to drugs and sex. He didn't want these things around campus, so we took them with us to SCI-ARC. They were sort of a symbol. Actually SCI-ARC, when we started, was called the New School, with SCI-ARC being something we might use later, Southern California Institute of Architecture. But we didn't want to start out so institutionalized. The students disliked it. The New School is what they wanted to call themselves.So some of the students began making their place out of the rhombics in the New School. Some started the scaffold system, and some of them still didn't want to be a part of either system, but wanted to do their own thing, and they'd still be using either boards or other things they would put together. While these other systems were evolving, they were still doing these things. It was kind of intriguing, because it was, again, a study in urban development in which the design unit was gradually taking over this space, and yet all these people who wanted to maintain their individuality, like one who wanted to keep her house within a larger development, were fighting to hold their ground while this larger thing was going on. So that was intriguing to me too.I thought it was really a terrific first few weeks. There were lots of things to learn from it. But about, I think, the fifth or sixth week, a group of students who weren't satisfied with the whole thing called an all-school meeting. All anybody has to do is say, "Let's have an all-school meeting," and we'd all gather around. If they had a complaint, they could put it out. Some students started to say that they weren't satisfied with this kind of amorphous educational process that they were going through. They would be more comfortable if we'd go back to what we had discussed in the summer, and can we begin to institute some of the classes that we had talked about.So the faculty and I said, "Okay. Fine. We'll do that if that makes you happier." It seemed to me at least that we were in one of the best learning situations that I had ever seen, because there were all these things that were taking place. If you looked at them, they were again this idea of the microcosm of a bigger society. But that didn't quite satisfy their needs, so then we started to teach some of the normal curricular classes.It was a big burden on me, because most of the faculty members that went with me were not experienced architects at all. [They] really were very bright designers and young people, and very articulate, but they didn't have as much knowledge as I had. I had to teach structures, and I had to teach

mechanical systems, and I actually had to teach the urban design classes. So I had all this, plus studio, plus running the whole show, and they would do the parts that they did well, which was studio. Anyway, that's where we begin in that first year of classes.Gradually the scaffold system and the rhombics evolved more, and people would design their parts of them. They became quite nice, really, and the students actually paid for them themselves. We didn't. Two students would occupy a space, and it would cost them fifty dollars a piece to make it. So everybody was in for fifty bucks on the first go around. School didn't have to provide anything. And so we had that going for us.Another goal was that the school shouldn't own equipment. All the projectors and all equipment should really be owned by the student cooperative, because I felt that they would take better care of it if they had ownership. It wouldn't be a we-they situation. We wanted them to develop this cooperative ownership. At the same time, they wanted to start a student store. So we had these various things going on all at the same time.We had more space in the building than we needed, so we sublet to people that we felt would assist the program. We had video groups that took over a piece of the building so that we would have access to their video equipment as well; we didn't have to buy that equipment early on. Because we were strong on the idea of videotaping a lot of what was happening, including lectures. Students could then go back and access them afterwards. We had a preschool in the school as well on one of the floors, in which a woman was testing city building. And it was actually architectural in its nature. We also had a psychologist in the building who did programs and had classes. We had this kind of mix within the building, which was useful too to the school as a whole.This was the way it was. It was this mixed bag. And the students who came to the school also were a mixed bag of students. It was almost like a zoo at that time. Of course, those were pretty intensive pot-smoking days, in the early seventies, with the sixties mentality. All this was going on. Some students would live there and hang out there. It was pretty difficult to control. We didn't want to control it. What we did say was that we had all made this commitment, and they had made a major commitment. If we were shut down because of drugs or any kind of a problem like that, well, it would all be over. They would have put in this time and this effort, and now they would have to go back to another school or whatever they had to do.

But they actually lived there in the building?

KAPPE

Many of them did, yeah. They lived in the building. That was okay, too, because architectural students quite often work through the night, and so you never know whether they're living there or just [laughter] taking a rest. So the ability to do that was always something that we didn't frown upon. They could make their space in a way where they could have a sleeping bag and sleep there. It was fairly wild, but interesting. But we got through those days without any mishaps and without any problems. It was quite good.Little by little, the program became somewhat more orthodox, and that was more the way the students liked it. They wanted the program to be not so far out, a little more normal. Some of the faculty members were not too thrilled with the one large space. They found it difficult to teach in this kind of open atmosphere. There were just a few of us who could do that fairly comfortably. I enjoyed it. A few others did. So they started to take classes away to this other part of the building where they could be more confined and in control. That began to happen.The people who wanted to do independent study were encouraged, but they found that it was difficult to develop their own programs and to develop their own ideas. Gradually, fewer people wanted to do independent work. At first, I think, everybody thought they wanted to be independent, and slowly they wanted less of that and they wanted more structure. So the structure began to take over both physically and in the curriculum itself. Some of us kept looser, but the structure happened. We even had one year where the independents who were not successful independently wanted to be independent but in a studio together. In other words, they wanted the independence to be together. [laughter] There was still this need for association rather than complete separation or independence or working with a mentor. Only a very few could really cope with that. When they put their studio together, they thought that they would be more in agreement. They found even in that process, it didn't work very well. They even had one of the fathers who was a psychiatrist come into the program to see if he could settle out this idea of independent work versus structured work.So what, again, happens very quickly among seventy-five students to a hundred students is you can observe the potential for independence, question asking, learning on one's own, and making decisions

in one's own way. There are very few people who can really handle this. I think the percentage we had, 5 percent, was what I later read was the national average for self-actualization, a very small percentage. I think it always shows up in the classroom anyway. It's there for a reason. I think it's in our human makeup. I'm not sure whether any education system--although we never had a chance to try it from day one--would make it possible for students to do better in this kind of a process.It's kind of interesting, in the Million Man March yesterday, the statement was made that the education system had failed the African American kids because it hadn't taught them how to be entrepreneurs or run businesses and get into management, banking, and many of these kinds of jobs and professions that it takes to survive. That in all of their neighborhoods they don't run their own stores; that they are all run by people from the outside; that this is a negative in the eyes of many black Americans. But I'm not sure, as I'm talking about this, whether the education system can make somebody entrepreneurial or make somebody want to be a merchant, or to buy and sell goods in a day-after-day-after-day-after-day manner that makes you little increments of money day-by-day-by-day, that finally adds up to a fair amount of money after a while. I think that's the nature of some people and some ethnic groups and not others. I think some groups are merchants and others are not. I'm not sure it's a learned process. They didn't go to school to become merchants. They learn it through a desire to do that, or what their parents did, or just that idea of buying and selling is something that they like to do. Not all people like to do that. Not all groups prefer that. So by the same token, I don't know that you can teach people to be completely self-motivated and entrepreneurial through an education process and to be self-learners. Not all people want to learn through themselves. So I learned quickly that that was not going to be a viable way to go. Many things were like that. I wasn't a strong believer in having our own library. We had Santa Monica College close by. We had UCLA not far way. We had Santa Monica [Public] Library, that wasn't very far away. In my mind, all these libraries should be accessed by our students. Of course, I thought that the ability to access by computer was going to be much sooner, too. And so I was not for a library. I was really for the video aspect of it, but not the library itself. But the students began to want reading material. They felt uncomfortable without their own library. They weren't comfortable, even though they could go to UCLA's architectural library. They were welcome to go

there or any of these others. They still wanted something in-house. So we finally decided to start our own library. We took our books and started it. Our books were the first group of about several hundred books that were put in the library for the students. And then we subscribed to periodicals for them. So even that was something that, although I wasn't a strong advocate of the library, the students were.I guess the reason for that again, in my mind, was I wanted people to go outside of the building. I didn't think everything should be in the building. I wanted them to reach out. I wanted them to use the community more to find a wood or metal shop that somebody could let them use at night. We were close to think tanks. Could we develop any interaction with these people who were pretty intelligent people, close by, like you would on a campus? How could we make our little campus that was an industrial building in a society of other industrial buildings and other artists and shops close by--how could we make all of it our campus? I still think that's an interesting idea. I think it's a viable idea today, even, for schools like architecture to be more part of the community and be accessed by the community as well.I think it will occur more now that the computer is at the stage that it's in, and that people are now beginning to communicate through E-mail and video communication and various other processes. We are getting used to the idea that we can work in our home or our home office and not have to be necessarily with a group of people all the time, and that we can be again self-motivated enough to do our own work without somebody standing over us to tell us what to do or not to do.So I think as this process takes place more and more we'll have this opportunity to educate and teach in a different way. Even right now-- I'm teaching at 'SC [University of Southern California] this semester, and I was with a student yesterday who is bringing in his desktop [computers] with his drawings on the desktop, and he opens it up for me to view right there. Obviously, it doesn't take too much imagination to say, "Well, why are we doing this? I should be picking it up on mine at home, and I can just crit[ique] over the computer. Talking about it right-- I'm looking at it. You're looking at it. I don't have to run down here, and you don't have to run down here just today to talk about your project." So I think there will be much more of that happening. You won't get rid of the social aspect any more than you got rid of the idea that people like to be in a classroom once in a while. But I think the way we began to look at what that room should be like in lieu of a classroom, or what that social interaction should be, might be a different

thing in the future as well. I think a lot of the ideas that I had earlier are much more viable now than they were twenty-some years ago--whatever it was--Twenty-three years ago, I guess.

1.16. TAPE NUMBER: VIII, Side Two (October 17, 1995)

KAPPE

The other interesting aspect of the discussion with the student yesterday and-- I'll say a third of the USC [University of Southern California] students present projects that are computer-drawn. It's interesting to look at that versus the students who are still drawing by hand. The ones on computer turn out just a vast amount of work more quickly once they have it in the computer. They can rotate it, and they can turn out many, many drawings that are quite impressive very quickly. So when we have a pinup, there's no contest in how much more they produce. The other thing is they can get back into it more readily and keep on working at it. And this project that we were doing had a continuum to it, an additional problem using the first phase. So the computer is very useful already in the classroom, and it's going to move very quickly.Like the student with the desktop said that he wanted to present at the next presentation. He didn't want a pinup. He just wanted to bring in a video monitor and go directly into the video monitor with his material and just take it through that process. I've had that in previous semesters, where we used the video as the process for showing a work. One thing about it that's better, I think, is you can gather around the video screen in a more sociable way than you do in a typical crit session. In architectural schools, the typical session is very hierarchical. The critics, the instructors, sit front, looking at the drawings. The student is talking to them. Everybody else sits behind, and the faculty in general talk forward instead of to the student body. Behind them are the group of students. I find it a very awkward setting for this process, because it seems to me you want to face the people you're talking with, and you want to be more in direct contact with them, and not always with your back to them. The video screen tends to promote the idea of gathering around it. First of all, it is a little easier gathering process, and also you can kind of talk back and forth. You get a better interchange than you get the other way, an exchange among students.So I look forward to some of these things that are starting to happen, because they are so much more in keeping with my thinking process.

More of the class material, I think, should be on videotape for students to be able to review as often as they want to, rather than hearing a lecture once. If they missed it, they don't have the notes. Or if they've only had the notes, they've had to pick it up as they heard it, which is a more typical process of gaining information, along with books, of course. But the idea that you could also view it quite a few times and study it through the videotape, and then only get together to seminar, to discuss maybe nuances of the information, which we do in quiz sections in the university--this is probably always where I learned the most. I don't know how you feel, but I always enjoyed those more than just the stand-up lecture.In fact, at Cal [University of California, Berkeley], most of the students in those days--or a lot of the students--didn't even go to lectures, because they had what we called Phi Bet[a Kappa] notes. They were people who were professional notetakers who would then produce these notes, and then you would just pick up your notes and study from them. This process disengages you from the whole learning experience more so than a video would disengage you. I don't know how it goes on. I would never miss those seminars, because they were always the time where you would get into the finer parts. I think the more education begins to move that way the better it can be, in my opinion, whether it's architecture or anything else where time is spent more advantageously in terms of how you learn. *[You can see that I am not a fan of the lecture.]

SMITH

How do you think your own experience as a student at Berkeley shaped your education and philosophy?

KAPPE

I guess the fact that when I went to Berkeley--which was right after World War II, I started in '47--the program didn't have a great deal of doctrine, and the people teaching were pretty open in their teaching processes. At Berkeley, we really didn't have to even come to our crit sessions if we didn't want to. It wasn't a demand like it is today in most architectural schools. You came if you needed help. And if you felt you didn't need help, you didn't come to class. Each of our projects was five weeks long, and at the end of five weeks, you turned in your project. It was juried not only by your own teacher, but it was juried by a group of instructors in the school. So you might have four

instructors who would jury the projects.The interesting aspect of that for me was the fact that quite a few times when I received a bad crit from my design instructor and I didn't agree with it and didn't come back to class and then turned in my project later, I would score high. It gave me more self-confidence in my own decision-making processes. I had to stand up for what I believed, and I didn't have to take what the instructor felt was important. If I didn't take that, my grade would not suffer. So this kind of self-learning process that we went through, or I went through particularly and other students did also, was good for me. I also was a loner. I tended to work alone, and there were quite a few like me. A lot of students still worked in a group. They were like the kind of students I described earlier. They needed the camaraderie, and they needed this interchange with each other for their development. They enjoyed dialogue. I guess I didn't, for some reason, and I preferred to work and make my decisions on my own.What this did was sort of the obvious. The people who worked that way, alone, usually scored the highest--in other words, their projects were the top-graded projects--or they were the lowest. The students who worked together were usually the B students. In other words, there was a whole group of them that turned out good projects, but they were all sort of together. They were similar. They had similar qualities about them. So the people who work alone usually stood out one way or the other. So you took your chances that way, which again, I guess I didn't realize it at that time, but that was the way I was as an individual. I thought that was a good way to be, which is, I guess, a little bit egocentric. But it was the idea that this seemed to be a good way to learn and to do in my mind. It worked for me. I thought, "Well, philosophically it might work for others."But at the time, I didn't realize as much about the groups that work together and what that meant, that support process at school. I didn't realize it. In fact, in my own mind, I sometimes thought to myself, had I missed quite a bit because I didn't interchange? When I started at first getting into teaching, I liked group projects. I used to give students group projects so there would be that interchange, which was really almost the antithesis of the way I learned. So I was being self-critical first.It was interesting that later, when I started SCI-ARC, I reverted to the old kind of thinking process of how does one become more individual. But Berkeley was very important in making that happen for me. It's interesting to me that one of the other students in my class [Gerald M. McCue] who was the same way--always worked alone and usually always

scored high--is now the dean at Harvard [University Graduate School of Design] and has been the chair and dean there for many, many years. It was interesting that he went on to be involved in education and to develop himself that way too.That's why I felt like I did when I started the school. I understand the balance, and I understand why everything in society needs balance. I think extremes are interesting to get things off balance, but they're never the way to finally have anything work. You can't really work things at tremendous extremes. I think you have to wait for their time, and I think you have to balance them. There are obviously people who are going to have to project forward-looking ideas and be more avant-garde. There will be those who drag their heels. But at the same time, societies have to work in balance. I think education has to be balanced, and I think most things have to be balanced. I find myself being comfortable with that balance too--a certain amount of structure and then the breaking of structure.I think that's truly where more people are. How much structure do you really want and how much structure do you want to break? What that variation is is what makes each of us unique. I think in my own mind, and I would say this often, is that at the point in time that you realize what that balance is for yourself, that you're able to then put it into whatever work you're doing. In architecture it's sort of easy to understand the idea of structure and counter-structure. But in any field, I think, when you're able to understand it and understand yourself that way is when you begin to produce your best work, because you now are more at one with yourself in terms of the way you're comprehending things. You're not trying to push yourself to some place you can't be or pulling yourself back in a way that you don't feel comfortable either, so it's trying to reach that balance that's important. I'm sure that's true in any of the arts, and it must be true in any of the other fields.So I think education systems have to be that way too. They have to be balanced. They have to allow people to break the system when they want to and to be in the system when they want to. That was what was wrong with SCI-ARC at the beginning. It was encouraging everybody to break the system when they weren't ready to break the system or didn't feel comfortable. Most students feel comfortable being directed and getting information. That was amazing to me. The most important thing early on was they wanted information. Information passing was more important than how to gather the information. Again, it's the easier way. But it's the idea that I was encouraging them to go find the information. They were only interested in us

giving them the information so they didn't have to go find the information. That was the constant dichotomy that existed. It still exists. That's the way it is. As I said earlier, I don't know when it will change or if it will change or to what degree it changes.That was what the school was about. As it went on, the nice part about it was that we were always able to balance it and open it up and close it down and open it up and close it down, and we could be very responsive. First of all, it's a small school. You're in one building. You're aware of things. I always had my antenna out. I was very accessible. I was opposed to faculty offices and to people hiding away. I thought we should be accessible, and see what's going on. So I was always listening and willing to make adjustments immediately if I felt that they would work.That's the advantage of a school like SCI-ARC over any other school. We didn't have any delaying process. At least we didn't at that time. The school has more of it now. But at that time, we didn't have a process to go through, to muck around, to keep from trying something-- And for me, it was much easier to try something. If it failed, so it fails. You go on to something else. If it succeeds, you've done something that you didn't do before. That's sort of my philosophy of testing things. You run it up the flagpole. If it flies, fine. That seems to me to be the way to do things. Otherwise you're always holding things back from happening. The things that don't work fail. Everybody knows that immediately. If they succeed, they succeed. You don't have to worry about things like that. You don't have to sit there in curricular meetings for days and weeks upon end trying to make a decision when you can just try it, instead of worrying about it so much. A lot of that relates to territory and all kinds of stuff that people get into which I think is a waste of time. But it is also part of our society and part of institutions.Institutions will always be that way. And even though mine was an experiment in changing institutions, it won't. It doesn't. It can do a little bit, and it can be looked upon as open and free-swinging, but the reality of it is that I think SCI-ARC, through many of its years, looked physically more avant-garde than it really was in its curriculum itself. However, we did have faculty members who were more out there than most of the other schools. They were what was characterized as the avant-garde of L.A. And those that weren't appreciated in other schools would come to SCI-ARC to become instructors. So the school developed its reputation over time, I think, through this freedom--taking in the people who were willing to put their neck out and try things. That's why it happened. It was more through that

process. It's not anything else, I don't think--that and a certain freedom of allowing it to happen.It was interesting to me to obviously start a school that had, in most people's minds, a much greater probability of failing than succeeding. For it to have succeeded to the degree that it has, in terms of being alive twenty-three years later and being appreciated as one of the best architectural schools in the world-- The Bauhaus only lasted ten years, you know. The Chicago Institute of Design didn't last that many years. Black Mountain College went under in about ten years, eleven years. I was aware of this and other institutions like ours. So I was curious. I had read about them and why they failed and why they went under. So I also made sure that, in the process of evolving SCI-ARC, I tried to always avoid something people could attack, because one thing that gets you into a big mess is when there is something to attack. The best thing to do is to just tell the people to go do it. "I'm not going to fight you on this issue. Go try it and see if it works." Because what students or groups like to do is attack something that bothers them, and then sometimes you can get into such a battle that things can become pretty bad. But other things happen. Any group of people will become divided in certain ways after a time of being together a lot. It's the nature of things, and a certain amount of battling goes on anyway even if you try to keep it from happening. But anyway, it was a good experiment. It was a fantastic learning process for me. I think the school evolved. It grew to a proper number of students to make the school work well. We were even looking at that when we first started the school to see if we could establish the optimum number. I thought 150 students would be a perfect amount. But it wasn't really energized until it was almost up into the three hundreds. It's about 300 to 350. We let it keep growing until it felt right. Then it grew a little bit more into the four hundreds so that we could average 350, but that's about it. After that, it becomes redundant in its processes. So I learned that. I learned a lot about a variety of things.Even our social experiments didn't work. I tried quite a few of those. When I first started out, everybody was equal on the faculty. There wasn't a rank differentiation, which really meant that I took myself down from full professor to be equal with the assistant professors. That's about it. So we were all the same level. What I really did is we just said, "Everybody is a professor here, and we don't have to worry about going up the scale step-by-step-by-step." Because I didn't like that either in the California State [University] system. I didn't like the way people wrote about each other when

they had the opportunity--supposedly good friends were not such good friends when it came to moving up in the ranks--and how people would evaluate each other. I never really liked that very much. I didn't want that to be part of the process. I wanted the process to be one in which people taught when they felt they were viable, and they quit when they thought they didn't have as much to say anymore or that they weren't being successful. That's another one of those goals that wasn't too achievable. People, once they were there, stayed, and wanted to stay even when they weren't as effective any longer. It was hard to get anybody to realize in their own mind that they weren't that effective.So all these kinds of things were going through my head, all the things that I didn't like about various systems. I was trying other things. But even today, I would try to keep administration low and try to give the students as much of the teaching process for their money and not the administrative process. Try to keep that really tight. But after I stepped down seven years ago or eight years ago now, the new director [Michael Rotondi] has institutionalized the school much more than I had. It has many more people in the administration than I had. Tuition has doubled compared to where I was trying to keep it.So it does change, and it becomes a little bit more like other places in many ways. Its differences still relate to who the faculty are, I think. If you have the faculty--good, strong faculty--you have a strong school. If you don't, you don't. That's all there is to it. The students will all be from good to bad, no matter how you select them out--you know, involved or not involved. But if you have bad faculty, you have a bad school. That's all. If you have energetic people and bright people and talented people, you'll have a better place. And the day we don't have that, it will go down. And as other schools become stronger that changes, and it turns. I was fortunate that the people that I had selected early happened to have ended up being people who surfaced as really very strong architects and leaders in the community. Why that happened, I don't know. I guess it's just good luck on the first run of my selection. But that was what made the school vital, I think, and the hard work both Shelly and I put into it. We put a lot of work into the school in terms of keeping it going and getting out to the community, being out front when other faculty didn't have their credentials really yet in place. All the kinds of things that we did that worked right at that time.

Are there any particular faculty members?

KAPPE

That I'm talking about?

SMITH

Yeah.

KAPPE

Well, Thom Mayne and Eric [Owen] Moss were the two primary ones that have become well acknowledged, and then Michael Rotondi was one of the first students at school--one of the first graduates at school--who became Thom's partner in Morphosis. That was the firm that evolved. That's why when I stepped down I wanted one of them to take over, because I thought Morphosis was more at the front at that time than some of the others. There's a lot of other good people there. Coy Howard is strong, but he hasn't somehow evolved as an architect the same way. He's a good educator. Robert Mangurian is another one--a good educator--who hasn't had a chance to evolve as an architect well. Both Eric and Thom seemed to have it. You also had to be able to sell yourself. You had to do a lot of networking out there besides just be a good designer. They had a lot of things going for them, and that drive--whatever that drive is--to get there.So there are a lot of good young people now, but they have that same kind of waiting period before coming up the line. They also have to evolve, and so you see what happens in the next generation. SCI-ARC has never been a school that really went out and tried to buy the stars and bring them in. We tried to choose people who were young and were comers to make the school work. The university can do the other thing a little more easily. They can entice somebody by giving them special positions to come on in. But that doesn't work either, because those people don't have the same energy that the young person trying to make it does. Younger people have much more drive as they're coming up, because they are trying to make their place in the world. If you've already made your place, you do your job and you come on in and you may energize some people, but you're going to do it with a little less energy. Quite often you're older. You don't have as much energy for one thing. And two, you've been around the block too many times, seeing how it works, and what you're going

to get out of it. Where a young person [who] hasn't had opportunity--particularly in architecture--to design a lot is almost designing with those students. They throw themselves really into it when they first begin, because they have nothing else that's pulling them. They're kind of making their mark at that time, so they're very energetic.That's why I didn't think there should be differentiation of rank either, because I thought that the people who sometimes worked the hardest are your beginning professors, and your older professors or tenured tend to take it easy and rest on their laurels and don't really put out the same. So I felt there would be a way. But I found that differentiation is necessary. There comes a time where you can't keep it all equal. People who have been around the place twenty years don't want to be treated like the person who walked in yesterday. And that's understandable.

SMITH

Is there a tenure system now there?

KAPPE

Not a tenure system, but there's differentiation in pay, where in the beginning we didn't have any differentiation in pay either. It was all equal.The other story that I didn't tell is about the student-owned cubicles. The development of the physical plant was interesting, because as I told you earlier, the students paid for their places. What we did is we also let them sell them when they left the school, so each year there would be a turnover of these spaces that had been built. They would get different prices depending upon where they were in the building, and how well they had been developed. So it was, again, the kind of thing I liked, which is a self-learning process in economics. Pretty soon these $50 cubicles were selling for $500, and some were selling for $300, and some were selling for $200.So students were seeing the gain in the process, until one day, about our third year, a group of students got together and said, "Why do we have to pay for these anymore? Why doesn't the school own them, and then we'll just occupy them?" And so we had a big session in economics--various discussions about what is the difference in self-ownership or whether we own it and you occupy it, and all these kind of issues. But they opted for the school to buy them back. Of course, at that time, the school did have the funds to do that kind of a thing, and so we took them back. But from that time on, the physical plant got worse and worse and

worse. As they were owned by the school, and not by the individual, they became more decayed and they were not kept as good as they were in the early stages.In the early stages, everything was kind of primo in the school, and people also respected people's models and drawings and everything else. We could leave things around the school, and nobody would take anything. It was really great in the first years. But that broke down, later, when people would come in and treat it more as an institution again. It was a "we/they"--Actually, a lot of the same things happened with the equipment that was soon handled by the school. The student store broke down because the students didn't have time to run it. That didn't exist very long.So a lot of the ideas were tried. They didn't work. SCI-ARC today has a student store, but they hire people from the outside to run it, with students helping. It still isn't making any money. It's there, and it serves a purpose. But it is still difficult for it to be run.But it was a great learning experience, and it's made me believe, as I said--and I'll say it for the fifteenth time--the idea of watching a small microcosm operate, I think, is indicative of any larger structure up to major governments. They have the same failings and same strengths, the same problems. It's all the same.

SMITH

Just a different scale.

KAPPE

Different scale. That's all. It's a different scale. It's still human interaction. It's still a bunch of human beings that have their own agenda and operate in some kind of a--what can I say?--total humanity that has these varieties of individuals, and their needs are different and their mentality is different and everything is different. So as our little socialistic system didn't work at SCI-ARC, it wasn't that many years later that we saw the breakdown of the communist system [laughter] for the same reasons. Of course, when I visited China, then I visited the Soviet Union, you could see that obviously they were going to break down. There were just many things about those societies that obviously weren't working once they opened it up for people to come and look at them from the outside. Coming from a free society to that society, it was pretty obvious what was wrong with it.You know, now I'm more of an observer of SCI-ARC than I am, really, a strong participant. I don't try to say

too much. I really believe that things just evolve in a kind of a natural way, though. You can't move it around too much. We just had a meeting about two weeks ago, all-day session of the board for SCI-ARC, and some of faculty on the board and on the academic council and administrators. It was trying to set the goals for the future, which to me is, "Here we go again." It's not necessary to do that. It's not necessary to really have to go through that process, because it's easier to really operate on a much smaller scale. We don't need five-year and ten-year plans. They don't work anyway. I think you can have some goals where you think you want to go or some attitudes about where you want to go, but you have to get into it and get it going and then see how it either makes it or fails. So I can never get too excited about those kinds of sessions anymore, nor could I ever really. I always felt that it's much easier to let it go on. But when you're an accredited school, when you go through this process, people are coming to evaluate you. They keep wanting you to go through these processes of self-evaluation and where you're going to go and what are your goals and what's your future, what's your this and what's your that. It's just sort of a waste of time, but it's something we go through. [tape recorder off]I guess since I've reiterated some of the same ideas over and over, I would probably conclude with my feeling about education or about anything in life is to have the greatest amount of freedom possible without anarchy. What I always tell students, as I said earlier, is that they should really learn to understand who they are and always ask questions and not take anything verbatim and be able to evolve and develop through that kind of a process.Actually, to go along with that idea, we started a European program primarily because of the great change that was taking place in architecture in the late seventies, early eighties, in which postmodernism was becoming very much at the forefront of architecture. We had been doing some European programs in southern France and some in southern Switzerland in previous years. We decided, at that time, that maybe it would be good to have a permanent facility in southern Switzerland in the Ticino area, which is sort of the center of the rationalist movement from Milano up to the Lugano area. One of the reasons for this was that I felt that students should not--which was what they were doing--just take this new fad, if you will, or the new attitude towards architecture, which are really mostly Aldo Rossi's philosophical statements and statements of the Kriers [Robert and Leon], and just accept them without any kind of question. I thought, by going over into the area

where rationalism made some sense in Milano or in that part of the world, my hope was that they would see where it belongs in the world and not just accept it as a style of architecture that you put anyplace, anytime, anywhere. So that was that same thing again, trying to get students to ask the questions in the right place or see for themselves what makes sense so that they can make better decisions.So the school was developed. We bought a villa over there, and for a while many of the teachers were from the Ticino area and very strong architects in that area. It houses thirty students, and we usually send over close to that amount every semester. Students choose to go over and study in Europe. Of course, now it's different than it was then. Now that whole movement has passed by about four or five years ago. Now the school is just what we were doing when we first went to Europe; it is primarily a European experience. Not that it wasn't during that other period, but it was just the idea that they would have another opportunity.But I also had the feeling in those years--since we didn't want to expand the school any more than it was--that one way that might be interesting was to have schools in many other places around the world where students could go. You would have really an exploded campus that way. But the fact that we bought the one building probably stopped us from being as flexible as we could have been had we done it another way. Even today at the school, we're trying to reevaluate whether it makes more sense to be able to be in more places, even though we have had studios in Japan and studios in Mexico and various places--whether it would make more sense to not have the building that we have to worry about and to be able to go there when we want to and to go to other places when we want to. So I don't know what will exactly happen with that thinking, whether we want to continue on a three-semester basis or whether we want to have a little more flexibility, and now that's something to think about down the line. But it's a very good facility over there, and it's been--I think--very enjoyable for students to have that as a possibility at SCI-ARC.

1.17. TAPE NUMBER: IX, Side One (October 17, 1995)

SMITH

How do you understand the social role of the architectural profession?

KAPPE

Well, I guess I would have to drop back again to my involvement in it. My thinking about it relates back to why I became involved with the [American Institute of Architects Southern California Chapter] urban design committee in the first place: urban design issues. I think architects can be involved in that way by attempting to make better environments for people and being conscious of the underprivileged and caring about that aspect. As far as making places for people, that's part of the process too. So in total society, architects, when they do have the opportunity to do projects at that larger scale, should be both socially conscious and behaviorally conscious of the human condition.I forgot to mention earlier that one of the major reasons that I did get involved with education--which I didn't say before--was that I found during the years that I was involved with the urban design committee of the AIA [American Institute of Architects], from '63 to '68, that there were very few architects in the city who cared about these kinds of issues and who cared to put in their time to even project ideas. I felt that I was really interested, among other things, in encouraging another generation of young architects to become more involved as they entered the profession. Social consciousness was a strong part of what I promoted at Cal Poly [California State Polytechnic University, Pomona] when I started there. The idea of interdisciplinary action is the same thing.So all those issues that we've talked about before are part of it, but they were real important to me. And actually, when we went to SCI-ARC [Southern California Institute of Architecture], the early curriculum always established two studios for all the students. One was a design studio, and then there was another studio that dealt with urban issues, so that the students would be involved in community interaction. We also developed at SCI-ARC a community design center, which was a studio for students who wanted to be involved with community action kinds of projects and do work for the communities. So that was going on all through the years that I was there.Social responsibility I always thought was real important. It started to dwindle again during that same era, near the late seventies. There was less interest, it seemed, among students. And as the eighties evolved--I think maybe very early eighties--there was hardly any interest-- Many of the professors at the school were professing that architects had no place in these issues, that social issues were not important to architects, behavioral issues were not important to architects, architects cannot do anything about this, and that architecture was a design field. It was about design with a capital D,

period. Period. Period. You know, it was that kind of a mentality.One disgruntled student [Sidra Moore] in that period, who was a little older, came to me one day and said, "Ray, why aren't more architects involved with social issues? Why don't they care about social issues?"And I said, "I really don't know." I just told her the same story. Part of the reason I became involved with education was because I felt very strongly that architects should do this.She said, "Why can't we put together an organization or a group of students and faculty who care about this kind of a thing?"I said, "Fine. I'm all for it."She says, "Well, do you mind if I try to do it?"I said, "No. Get some students who you know who might care about these issues, talk to the faculty who you think might be interested, and any of the staff at school who might be interested, and let's start. Let's have our first meeting and see what happens."So this student got these people together. And those on staff who did care about such things, and the faculty who cared and the few students who cared, came to this first meeting of this group and we started talking. That group continued to meet for a while. Other people outside of SCI-ARC from UCLA started to come over and get involved too. We decided to call ourself ADPSR, Architects, Designers, Planners for Social Responsibility, and one of our staff members--her name is Rose Marie Rabin--was one of the people interested in this issue. She was a planner who had her degree from UCLA but was working on our staff more as an administrator and was a very socially conscious person. [She] gradually took over the lead of this organization. And it grew. Then the next thing we knew, we're hearing that there are other organizations like this in San Francisco and New York.What many of them took on as their major goal was really the same thing that the medical profession had, and that was really nuclear proliferation. The goal was to really fight this, and to have architects and designers and planners speak out against the proliferation which was taking place. So it grew to a national organization very quickly. I think the next AIA national meeting was in San Francisco, and the three groups from San Francisco, New York, and L.A. met. And we nationalized it under ADPSR. Then we went on to international places. So it was kind of interesting that out of this-- This is one of those examples of a student saying something, and you're saying, "Well, let's try it," and it grows into something very large. Today it's still in existence, but the goals are different. There are more social inner-city problems and the other kinds of things that architects should be involved with. The organization is more a part

of that.So I've always been a strong believer in this social responsibility whenever possible. I quite often give studio projects dealing with these kinds of issues. They're hard. It's pretty hard to do much in the black community. When you try to go into it, they're not really interested in outsiders. They are interested in trying to solve their own problems, and yet they don't have the leadership to do it, usually, which is too bad. It kind of falls apart. There's too much self-serving agenda that goes on there. It's very difficult. So you can get into it to a certain degree and then step back, and go in and step back and go in and step back. It's very hard to stay in close if you're not a member of one of the minorities in the areas that you're working in.But I do think that architects have been much better. After the last riots [spring 1992], there was a lot of interaction that was going on by architects in the city. And I think there are things that go on, I'm sure--I know--at UCLA and USC [University of Southern California], SCI-ARC, all over the city. Architects do care about these issues. Whether anything can be done about it or whether they can make enough inroads I don't know, but at least there will be a certain amount of work done through that process.I'm still interested. I guess at this phase of my life--I don't know if I stated it last time or not--I'm much less interested in doing projects for private individuals than I am for getting back into doing advocacy work, doing planning work, doing urban design work. Whether it has any meaning or it doesn't, I had very satisfying years in the sixties when I was doing it. And so I really feel like I'd like to spend my remaining years more in that manner rather than just doing another project or another project. I don't have a desire to build up a large firm. As a small firm or as a single practitioner, you can only do small projects primarily. I'd rather work alone on this other kind of work or interact with other people on it, either through education or through other processes. So we'll see what happens. But I am still concerned, and probably will be till my ending day, about these kinds of issues. Whether we can do anything with them or not, at least we can try, and hopefully young people will try in order to make this place a better world. If not, who knows what we are going to have here.

SMITH

Looking back over your career up to this point, what gives you the greatest sense of accomplishment?

KAPPE

Well, I was very fortunate. I thought we hit on this one time in one of our discussions, but-- My architectural career gives me a great sense of accomplishment, because I succeeded, I think, well beyond my expectations and had a very enjoyable career in architecture at a very opportune time when it was a lot of fun and one could do a lot of building. That was very good. Naturally, being able to start a school of my own and being able to see that school grow and evolve and develop is, I think, probably what other people would consider my greatest accomplishment. I feel it was a fine accomplishment also. But in many ways it is much easier than doing architecture that you enjoy doing or that reaches a good level of development.So I don't know. The school had a challenge. But once the challenge was met and was in place, it was just something that could pretty much go on by itself, which it is doing. But the beginning of it, and the challenge of putting that together, was really exciting. I enjoyed that a lot. But professionally those were all equal. The Cal Poly thing, of course, was cut short, so I can't really even talk much to that, other than the fact that we got it going at that point, and it was the embryonic form of what took place later. That's about it.I don't think any one project that I ever did in architecture was more fulfilling than any other project. They've all been pretty enjoyable. And I've had good clients. I've had good associates in my life. I've had good partners. I think I spoke about it before.I have an excellent wife. Shelly [Diamond Kappe] has been a very good companion all the way through and good support person all the way through and then a person in her own right as an historian. She's been honored by both the Los Angeles and the California chapters of the AIA. She is an honorary AIA member in both cases, and probably will get the same honor nationally. So we've had a wonderful life together. We've grown up together. We've had lots of good years in this house, which is another treat for an architect, I think--to be able to live most of his life in his own product and surrounded by the products of his kids, paintings and drawings. So I have no complaints. I guess I have much to be thankful for. And I would be very happy with what I have accomplished if there was no tomorrow.

SMITH

How about your greatest professional disappointment?

KAPPE

I don't know. [laughter]

SMITH

It's the same question.

KAPPE

What?

SMITH

It's the same question. It's in reverse.

KAPPE

The same question in reverse. I can't remember if I ever had. Oh, I guess, yeah. My greatest disappointment was what I discussed before, would have been Loyola [Marymount University] gym. I think the Loyola gym going ahead might have been a big difference in certain aspects of my career, and also I would have enjoyed seeing that building completed because I think it would have been a good one. Other than that, that's about the only one. The other 35 percent of the buildings that didn't complete didn't bother me as much, you know. They're complete in my mind, anyway, in many ways. But that one in particular was important. And I guess the fact that I've never been able to do real multiple housing schemes using some of the techniques that I had worked on. I think that was unfortunate that I never really could test that. Maybe I still will some day, I don't know. I don't see how at the moment, but who knows? So we'll see what happens out of all that. But those weren't big enough disappointments to make much difference in one's world.

SMITH

What's your overall assessment of architectural design in Los Angeles today?

KAPPE

It's probably the same as it always has been. I think there's a lot of good, strong leadership here. There are strong designers here. Then there's a lot of bad, bad design work here. There's a lot of bad construction that goes on here and a lot of bad stuff that we have around. It will always be that way, I guess. But L.A. has always had one aspect that other places don't seem to have, and that's that it has enough freedom, enough clients who are willing to

experiment and to explore with young people, to allow it to be always out there in front. And our climate allows us to build in a way that is a little less strenuous, if you will--what's the right word?--than in other climates. We can interact with nature a lot more. Most of the better architecture is still, I think, mostly in the residential work in Los Angeles. But there's some other pieces of work that are okay. I don't think in major buildings we're much different than anyplace else. Most of our major buildings look the same all over the world. I guess it's the nature of the beast and the process that they go through, but those buildings seem to be somewhat the same. I don't know. I think it's still one of the best places to practice. I think it will get a new life not too long from now. I hope the economics will turn around better and that some of the young people out there with some talent can have their opportunity to do their best in the field. I hope they have the same opportunity that I had.It will never be the city that I'd want it to be in total. It doesn't have the beauty of a city that I would like to see. It still has too much of a destructive force in it, both underlying socially and the physical development itself. I think it's pretty hard to have a great city built upon fast food and that type of development. It's hard where you have chain operations and discount operations as sort of the base of your economic society, and you don't have the opportunity for the better types of stores and individual shops. We have some of that, but not a lot. But that's the city, and that's our government, and that's our way of life, and that's our society. So I think one has to accept it, and kind of nit-pick at it is about as good as you can do. I don't think anything can be done in a major, major way.

SMITH

If there were no political or economic constraints, what changes in terms of planning would you like to see in Los Angeles?

KAPPE

I'm still one of the people who likes things to be more beautiful. I'm not a big advocate of chaos. I'm not a big advocate of things being kind of ugly for ugly's sake, as an avant-garde statement. So sure, I'd like to see more cohesiveness. I'd like to see more trees planted throughout the city. One would like to just have more of the better and less of the bad. We have some good stuff. There's a lot of nice places to drive and to walk and to be.I think we have to come to

grips with our life with the automobile or else decide once and for all that we're going to have another means of transportation that works maybe better in the city, and still works some way outside of the city. But I have no problem with accepting the automobile as a part of the process and everything that goes along with it. You know, it's easy to see a city without parking lots and without gas stations and without a lot of the stuff that we need to work with the automobile, but I think better we learn to deal with it as long as we want it. The day we don't want it, we can certainly do better than that, and still get us around on individual transportation. I still am an advocate of that. But I'd like it to be a more pleasant city.When you say no political constraints, that's the key. The cities that have always been strong in design have always had an autocratic society and a society in which one person's voice decides what the city should look like and goes about making a city that way. As long as you have a democratic process of any type that is a political process, and that isn't getting rid of the political scene-- As long as you have that and you have a capitalistic system, which is the economic aspect of it, you're going to have tremendous diversity and beauty and ugly and everything mixed up together, and that kind of society. It will be like everything else. If I were God and I were king and I wanted to make the city, I could do it, fine. I can make a nice city, I think. So could a thousand other people who in that position think they could do it too.And it's interesting. Of all the modern cities that have grown up in a time when they don't have this historical base of old cities, I always look at Singapore, which has a sort of a dictator at its head, but not a heavy-duty dictator, I don't think. But it's a very pleasantly planned city, you know. You come from the airport there, and you come through wonderful trees and plant growth. You come into a city that has--at least when I visited in the mid-seventies--a very pleasant quality about most of the city. The city had a good quality to it. So there was one that tended to work. And yet at the same time you have the cities made by Stalin or by Hitler, or by people like that, that are pretty heavy-duty in another way, that are not what I would categorize as pleasant but overbearing types of cities and overbearing architecture. So it depends on who heads it up whether it's going to be the Champs Elysées by Haussmann or an ugly example.All I can say is that I guess it all depends on the individual. And for me, I would try to get rid of more of the decay and make things more pleasant, and, even in those areas, try to work with them to make them a better place for people to be. I'm not a strong believer that everything

has to be turned back to a pedestrian city to be a good city. L.A. can never be that. It has to be a movement city. Probably if we did a better job of that, it would deal better with movement and mobility and all the complexity that comes with that. I like mixed use. I don't like a zoned-out city. I would prefer that there were multiple dwellings in areas like this and that I could walk a block to a little commercial place where I could get my groceries that I want for the day--you know, those kinds of things that are very European, but in a way that probably could be more balanced with our kind of a society than the European society because they were established more at a pedestrian level.I haven't really thought about it in the way you've addressed the question lately, I mean totally. But I guess that's what I want to work on a little bit in the next period of time, putting down ideas, spending my time drawing those things or thinking about them for whatever they're worth. If they're worth nothing, fine. Or if they're worth something, fine again.I just hope we take good advantage of the opportunities that we're going to be having with the Metro [Rail] process, that the station areas will evolve into good places and not a big mess. Because that's where a lot of the development is going to take place, unless the Metro is killed. But if it continues on, those transportation nodes are going to be the places of development and certain decaying parts of the city are going to be the others. Some of the changeover areas are going to take place in downtown industry and all those areas that have potential for change, the ones that we have in our gray area study [*Gray Areas: A Townscape Study*]. Those are all important. How they evolve through the next process-- And the way they're going right now, the way they've gone in the last period of time, I don't think has been very good. Nor do I think it's been very good since World War II.So we haven't done as well in the last fifty years as people did in the previous fifty, in my opinion. At least you had people who put some lakes in the city and some trees in the city, and thought about it as city beautiful. If it wasn't dynamic at least it was city beautiful. And many of those things that existed were better than now. Many areas of the city were mixed use. You did have your corner grocery stores, and you did have your multiple dwellings mixed in with your single-family, and you did have things that were a little more in tune with society at that time. I don't think we ever really learned to live with the next phase because we didn't have enough time. We were in too much of a hurry in the evolutionary process.There were also other issues involved. The lack of desire by people to plant street trees

anymore because of the maintenance or to build parks because of the maintenance and all of these kinds of things. The city needs a lot more green areas. There are plans that have been projected for green areas. That's sort of simple. That could be done tomorrow with a little bit of money and a little bit of care. That could be implemented. They would make the place a lot better than it is already. Hopefully the next developments would be better than before, but I doubt it, because I'm not sure people are spending any time learning from the recent past. There is not enough evaluation going on in the planning and architectural community. Something that probably should be done too. Maybe I'll do it [laughter] as one of my exercises. More the evaluation of what's better for our city and what isn't.Anyway, I guess that's about it. I guess I can answer this question even better in another ten years. Come back then. Come back then if I'm still around this place. Maybe I'll have something to show, only we'll do it on video so I can present all my little goodies.

SMITH

Is there anything more you'd like to add in terms of what your family's been up to?

KAPPE

What my family's been up to?

SMITH

Yeah.

KAPPE

Didn't I talk about my family at all?

SMITH

Well, I was giving you a chance to add a little bit more. You did say--

KAPPE

I don't know what I said before. My older son Ron [Kappe] is an architect practicing up in San Francisco, trying to balance out both the private practice at the same time as working with another firm doing schools, and trying to grow his family up. My younger son is building his house just like I did almost

thirty years ago up in Topanga Canyon, and I hope will have, with his wife [Maureen Tamuri Kappe], who is an architect also working with the Metropolitan Transit Authority--MTA--as an architect-- I'll hope they'll have a good life with that. My daughter, Karen, is a psychologist in Vancouver, Canada. Got some neat grandchildren who I expect a lot from as they grow up, and hope that they can have a society to grow up in that's worth living in. So other than that, I don't know. Shelly and I will just kind of go on with our good life that we've always had and probably spend some time traveling in Europe and teaching in Europe periodically and doing other things here that are involved with the architectural community, our family, and friends. I think that sort of sums it up as best I can. But I think both my sons have good potential futures. I hope they can have the opportunities to do enough work on their own.

SMITH

Do you have anything else you would like to add?

KAPPE

No, I think I've concluded it six times already. [laughter]

SMITH

All right. I think we've come to the end, then. Thank you, Mr. Kappe.

KAPPE

Thank you.

Date: