

ORAL HISTORY OF LAWRENCE BRADFORD PERKINS

Interviewed by Betty J. Blum

**Compiled under the auspices of the
Chicago Architects Oral History Project
The Ernest R. Graham Study Center for Architectural Drawings
Department of Architecture
The Art Institute of Chicago**

**Copyright © 1986
Revised Edition Copyright © 2000
The Art Institute of Chicago**

This manuscript is hereby made available for research purposes only. All literary rights in the manuscript, including the right to publication, are reserved to the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of The Art Institute of Chicago. No part of the manuscript may be quoted for publication without the written permission of The Art Institute of Chicago.

CONTENTS

Preface to Revised Edition	iv
Outline of Topics	vii
Oral History	1
Biographical Profile: Dwight Heald Perkins	156
Biographical Profile: Lawrence Bradford Perkins	158
Selected References: Dwight Heald Perkins	159
Selected References: Lawrence Bradford Perkins	161
Index of Names and Buildings	163

PREFACE TO REVISED EDITION

It has been more than fifteen years since Lawrence Bradford Perkins (1907-1997) welcomed me into his home in Evanston on November 8, 9, 10, and 17, 1985 to tape record his memoirs. Larry's recollections bear witness to ideas, events and personalities of the recent past and has become an increasingly important and much consulted resource for students and scholars locally and worldwide. His testimony has proven to be a vital link connecting the career of his father Dwight Heald Perkins (1867-1941), a prominent Prairie School architect, with the history of Larry's own career and that of the firm he co-founded in 1935 with Philip Will, the Perkins and Will we know today. To better serve the increased research demands of scholars and students today, we have revisited our original presentation and reformatted the text to read more easily and accurately, corrected typographical errors, expanded and repaginated the index and table of contents, and added biographical profiles for both Dwight Heald Perkins and Lawrence Bradford Perkins. Apart from these mostly front and back matter changes, nothing in the text has been altered.

Larry speaks with a voice of authority about highlights of his father's architectural career, recalling memorable events and personalities, speaking about his father's personal vision and the general mindset of his circle at the turn of the century, while revealing some of the more intimate details about the man he so admired. After studying at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Dwight Heald Perkins began his architectural career in Chicago as a draftsman in the office of Burnham and Root, in whose employ he worked on commissions for many buildings that are now landmarked. After the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, Perkins, with the assistance of Daniel Burnham, established his own office and built Steinway Hall. There, a group of architects who have come to be known as the Prairie School gathered together to share progressive ideas and their infrequent commissions. Perkins became an authority on school architecture: he was the Chicago Board of Education architect (1905-1910) and a principal in several firms (Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton, and Perkins Chatten and Hammond), architectural offices for which educational facilities were a specialty. Perkins felt his civic responsibility deeply. As his friend Tom Tallmadge said, "we think of Perkins as a citizen and patriot almost before we think of him as an architect." He was a dedicated conservationist, a tireless supporter of reform groups such as the Committee on the Universe and founder of the Prairie Club, an advocate of the small parks

and playground system, and because of his indefatigable and effective efforts has come to be known as the Father of the Forest Preserve System.

Following in the footsteps of his father, Lawrence Bradford Perkins' career was launched by a commission to build a school. In 1938 his young and inexperienced firm garnered a coveted commission and worked with the respected architect Eliel Saarinen to design and build the innovative Crow Island School in Winnetka, Illinois. Larry, like his father, became a respected authority on school architecture and design. Perkins and Will entered a period of phenomenal growth after the war when the building boom brought the firm numerous school, hospital, and office building commissions in the United States and abroad. Larry's recollections of his fifty-year career (1935-1985) are especially valuable as a connective chapter in Chicago architectural history because of the death of his former partner Phil Will (1906-1985) and because the management team of Perkins and Will has now passed to a new generation of architects and engineers.

Perkins' 8-1/2 hour oral history was recorded on six 90-minute cassettes that have been transcribed and minimally edited by Larry and me to maintain the spirit and flow of his recollections. The transcription is available for research and study in Ryerson and Burnham Libraries at The Art Institute of Chicago and accessible on the Art Institute's web page.

The Department of Architecture is grateful to the Cliff Dwellers Club for funding Larry Perkins' oral history. It is fitting that the club fund this effort because, as Larry recalls, it has played such an important role in the lives and careers of both Larry and his father. Larry has had the distinction of being the architect with the longest continuous club membership, since 1932, and was so honored by a celebration in his honor at the Cliff Dwellers Club in May of 1986. Regretfully in 1997, at the age of ninety, Larry Perkins died.

A selected bibliography for both Dwight H. Perkins and Lawrence B. Perkins has been compiled from sources that I found helpful in my preparation. For those who wish more material on Larry Perkins' career or that of Perkins and Will, one may consult the photographs of many of Perkins and Will buildings in the Hedrich-Blessing photograph archive at the Chicago Historical Society. One may also follow Larry's own suggestion to experience his architecture first-hand by seeking out the buildings themselves. Architectural drawings remain in the archives of the Perkins and Will firm in Chicago.

Larry Perkins deserves thanks for his conscientious cooperation during the research and recording phases of this endeavor, as does his wife Joyce, who graciously provided elegant repasts to renew our waning energies during our recording sessions. Kai Enenbach, our transcriber, deserves our appreciation for her careful attention to details of this manuscript using the modest equipment of fifteen years ago, and to Robert V. Sharp goes gratitude for his editorial assistance. To Annemarie van Roessel, my departmental colleague, who has coordinated all phases of this revised edition: scanning, repagination, reformatting, providing access on the Art Institute of Chicago's web page with exceptional skill, perception and judgment, go my sincere appreciation and thanks.

Betty J. Blum
May 2000

OUTLINE OF TOPICS

Dwight H. Perkins

Family Background and Architectural Education	1
Employment at Burnham and Root	4
Steinway Hall Memories	6
Committee on the Universe	9
On Being the Chicago Board of Education Architect	14
Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton	18
Vision of the Forest Preserve System	21
Fatherly Advice about Larry's Career Choice	24
Perkins, Chatten and Hammond	28
Abraham Lincoln Center and Frank Lloyd Wright	31
1922 Chicago Tribune Competition	35

Larry Perkins

Architectural Education at Cornell	37
Century of Progress Exposition, 1933, and General Houses	42
Meeting Phil Will	46
How Perkins, Wheeler and Will Took Shape	48
The Why and How of the Crow Island School Commission	54
Collaborating with the Saarinen	58
Opinions of Crow Island School	66
Recollections of Eero Saarinen	75
Perkins and Will Gears Up for the Post-War Building Business	77
Comparing Perkins and Will with Skidmore, Owings and Merrill	84
How the Perkins and Will Partnership Worked	87
Mies van der Rohe Effect On Perkins and Will	89
Site Fabrication	92
Form Follows Function	95
Publicizing Perkins and Will	97
Public Housing	99
Steel and Glass, a Miesian Aesthetic, Comes to Perkins and Will	102

Todd Wheeler and Hospital Work	104
United States Gypsum Building Commission	107
Commission in Mexico	110
First National Bank Building Commission	112
Architecture and Works of Art	119
Sketching in Europe with UIC Students	122
Travel	124
The American Institute of Architects	126
The Cliff Dwellers Club: Personalities and Events	129
Impact of Career on Family and Other Matters	140
Perkins and Will's Impact on Architecture	147
The Architectural Press	148
A Colleague Remembers Larry Perkins and Phil Will	150
Built Examples of the Perkins and Will Legacy	152
New Directions at Perkins and Will	154

LAWRENCE BRADFORD PERKINS

Blum: Today is Friday, the 8th of November 1985, and I'm with Larry Perkins at his home in Evanston, Illinois. Mr. Perkins, I'd like to begin with your comments about your father, Dwight H. Perkins, and then we'll work our way into your career, if that's all right with you.

Perkins: It's highly all right with me. My comments about my father will be strictly free from prejudice. I hope you don't believe that but he came pretty close to being a saint in many ways. He certainly was a deeply good person. He was a humorous and fun person but I don't think he ever laughed at anybody—with them, yes. He could come into a room—he was a very dignified, good looking man—anywhere, any place in this country or elsewhere, and people were prepared to like him before he ever spoke, and afterward, too. He was a very direct man. I remember once when Frank Wright told me, “Your father is a very simple man”—there is a very elaborate story that may appear later—and he was indeed simple but not the way Frank Wright meant it. Frank Wright's stock in trade, of course, was deprecating anybody that wasn't named Frank Lloyd Wright. Dad was simple in the sense of being very direct: right was right and you did it, wrong was wrong and you didn't do it and you opposed it. Completely uncomplicated. He grew up in a world where those distinctions were much more clearly black and white than they are today.

Blum: As you speak about your father, you are speaking about his character and the way you remember him. May we back up to place this in some historical context?

Perkins: All right.

Blum: Your father was born in 1867 and he died in 1941.

Perkins: Correct. He was born in Memphis because his father was the lawyer and military governor of that area during and after the Civil War. That was not the title they used in those days, it was called federal judge I believe. In any case the current term for such a person would be federal district administrator. He so conducted himself that the citizens of Memphis petitioned the federal government after the war to let him stay in that position, I think it says something about my dad's father who was a charmer. His health was broken by the war and when they returned from Memphis he went to live with his parents in Tremont, Illinois. They took care of him in his invalid years while my grandmother went to Chicago and worked first in the post office and later as head resident of Fellowship House to earn some money.

Blum: Was this when your father came to Chicago?

Perkins: My father grew up in Chicago. He was not old enough to get an accent by the time he left Memphis. His father died when he was twelve but they were already established here, perhaps they had come ten years before that.

Blum: Is it correct that your father was forced to quit school and go to work in the stockyards?

Perkins: That's absolutely correct. He worked. His mother was admired and I guess adored. I don't remember her; I was three when she died. Her friends rallied to see that young Dwight got off to a good start in every way they could. He went to work at the stockyards everyday, I presume, at 8am. He stopped when he reached the appropriate age. Mrs. H. W. Wilmarth, who later was Harold Ickes' mother-in-law, got up every morning at seven to teach him enough French so that he could get into the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and meet the language requirement. The money to go to MIT, which was far, far beyond their means, was loaned by Mrs. Charles Hitchcock, later to commission dad to do Hitchcock Hall at the University of Chicago.

Blum: During summers prior to MIT did your father work for the architectural firm of Wheelock and Clay?

Perkins: That's absolutely correct. He did work in this architect's office. I don't know what he did. I forget the name of the process where you get sort of purple and red ink lines. You make the original and put it on this gelatin mass and then put successive layers of paper and it picks up the stain from that.

Blum: That sounds like the hectograph process. Did your father ever tell you why and at what point he decided to become an architect?

Perkins: I really don't know when he decided to become an architect.

Blum: Did his mother encourage him?

Perkins: Oh sure. I think it was sort of inevitable, like with so many of us. A fond mother thought that his sketching showed talent, there isn't any mother that doesn't fall for that one. It called for very strenuous efforts and sacrifice to send him, just as it did for my mother to go to art school, there had to be sacrifice there, too.

Blum: In what year did he enter MIT?

Perkins: He was in the class of 1888 so he would have been there from 1886 until 1888.

Blum: Was it only a three-year program?

Perkins: It was a three-year program. He did not have enough money to finish the third year so they put him on the faculty to teach graphics so that he could finish.

Blum: Why did he select MIT?

Perkins: There were only two really prestigious schools in the country at that time.

MIT was much the more so than University of Illinois and that was the whole menu. I don't think there were any other schools of consequence. Presumably architect friends had indicated a preference. In any case, he went there and he loved it. He loved Boston. Incidentally, later it turned out that that was where my mother was in art school and one thing led to another, in a very courtly and deliberate manner, as was customary in those days.

Blum: What brought your father to Chicago?

Perkins: To come back home, back home to his mother. He and his mother were very, very close. He provided her with housing and so on.

Blum: According to what I've read he came to Chicago in 1888.

Perkins: When he came back from school.

Blum: And was his first employment with Daniel Burnham?

Perkins: I don't know that there was any other interlude in there or not. He was, very early on, employed by Burnham. This was just barely before the big push to do the 1893 Columbian Exposition. By the time he had been there I guess two or three years he was at the ripe old age of twenty-four. He was put in charge of Burnham's private practice while he and all of his associates, or a good many of them, moved out to the South Side. Dad started and finished up the Monadnock building. The actual, original sketches submitted to Mr. Burnham and Mr. Root were in my dad's hand.

Blum: You gave me a copy of a talk that you gave at the Cliff Dwellers in 1971. You spoke about the Monadnock building and about your father and Mr. Root. In it you used two terms: "designer architect" and "delineator architect." One term referred to your father and the other to Mr. Root. Would you explain the difference?

Perkins: Mr. Root was the boss and he is absolutely and correctly responsible for that

design. That was put before him by his designer draftsman, who, Earl Reed and I believe, was my father. There were two schemes. One had a more conventional cornice and was a classic thing and the other was the one that got built. Mr. Root, to his credit, had the courage to choose this one and that was what was carried out. Mr. Burnham's star force was off to work on the world's fair.

Blum: Are you saying that your father proposed the scheme that is now the Monadnock building?

Perkins: Yes. I am saying that. I believe it and people who knew his drafting and knew him and worked in that office believe it. But there is not one trace of proof.

Blum: Did your father ever talk to you about that?

Perkins: No. My late wife bullied and badgered dad to write his reminiscences. She finally took to writing him letters that he had to answer, which he did meticulously—but it was nowhere near the complete thing that she tried to get out of him.

Blum: Did she ever question him about the Monadnock building design?

Perkins: I don't think so. Earl Reed, who was very, very prominent in the Cliff Dwellers and I simply believe it circumstantially.

Blum: Was Earl Reed in Burnham's office at the time?

Perkins: He was some of the time. Again, I can't pin that one down. He had, as did I, cause circumstantially to know that this must have been.

Blum: What were some of the other buildings of the Burnham office that your father was responsible for?

Perkins: A quarter of the block that was Marshall Field and Company. Dad would tell with some amusement that he would go over with certificates for the contractors for payment and see Mr. Field. Mr. Field would look at them and growl, "When's your boss going to come back to work?" Dad did that kind of stuff.

Blum: This was all done while Burnham was working on the fair?

Perkins: Yes. When Mr. Burnham came back—this will have some considerable bearing on how dad got started working independently in architecture—he called dad in. He was a long way before becoming "dad" at that time. Mr. Burnham said, "Dwight, I can't reduce you to the ranks and I can't put you over Ernest Graham,"—later of Graham, Anderson, Probst and White—"so here is a year's office rent and I will help you get the building, for you to start with." That was to become Steinway Hall and it did come through. Dad got that. He won a competition for a school up at Steven's Point, Wisconsin, and got work for houses and anything else that came along. They got Steinway Hall built and occupied by the time he was twenty-nine years old, all fourteen floors of it. Dad, characteristically and somewhat like his father before him, spread a little too much sail and took for himself the top two floors of Steinway Hall, much more than he had the business to use. He invited a bunch of his friends to have their private offices on the 13th floor and they'd share the drafting room on the walk-up 14th floor. I have just the dimmest memory of that space up in the steel beams, with rafters and trusses, of this very much improvised but whole building space. People wonder why the Prairie School stuff all looks related to each other. Think about the people that were there: Myron Hunt, Jules Guérin the painter, Tom Tallmadge from Tallmadge and Watson, Frank Lloyd Wright, Walter Burley Griffin, Marion Mahony as she then was—I have to think to get some more of the names. They all had their private offices on the 13th floor and when any one of them got a job they'd all pile upstairs to work on it together. Of course everything looked related to everything else. Except the design leader—I'm sure he was not the design leader—was not my dad. He was the thing that they all had in common. He put them together and he collected the rent.

Blum: He was the landlord.

Perkins: Well, he was landlord, the eldest brother, if you'll pardon this, except that there was no corporate relationship between them. It was very much like Perkins and Will fifty years later, which I always thought of as a federation of small offices rather than one big office. Dad's was indeed a voluntary, informal federation of small offices.

Blum: You're talking about the arrangement at Steinway Hall.

Perkins: Steinway Hall. Perkins and Will, in a somewhat more formal way, was that way too. That is how dad got kicked upstairs into an independent practice of architecture. All of this was in the early to mid 1890s. They practiced there into the early part of this century. 1904 is when dad got the school board job which he did personally but maintained his private practice concurrently.

Blum: During the Steinway Hall days if, as you say, Frank Lloyd Wright was one of those people, did he dominate design influence among the people who shared ideas in Steinway Hall? Is that your understanding?

Perkins: Dominate? Certainly not. Stimulate? Probably yes. Looking up and down the street from here you would see if you were standing up, those buildings that were done in that period. The house we're sitting in that dad built came a little later, in 1904. They aren't enough like Frank Wright to say that he dominated. A much more dominant influence was Sullivan, who was a friend of all of them—a good enough friend that dad was one of the group that in later years paid Sullivan's grocery bill at the Cliff Dwellers rather than let him destroy himself with alcohol.

Blum: Did your father speak about Sullivan?

Perkins: Oh yes, lots.

Blum: Do you recall some of the things he said about Sullivan?

Perkins: I sure do.

Blum: Would you repeat them now?

Perkins: We'll get to that, yes, sure. That was the atmosphere at that time. As I think I told you, Marion Mahony Griffin sat here one time, in her own twilight years, and asserted what I think is utterly possible and utterly unprovable, that Walter Griffin was doing Frank Wright's houses before Frank Wright was. Frank Wright, like any other normal human being, was influenced by what he saw and artist enough to take it and run with it. Frank Wright, in spite of his belief to the contrary, did not invent either the door or the window.

Blum: What do you mean by saying that Walter Burley Griffin was doing Frank Lloyd Wright-type houses before Wright?

Perkins: I only know that this is what his adoring and highly prejudiced wife believed, and a good many other people believe to be possible.

Blum: What type of building do you think she meant?

Perkins: Much later examples are here on Wesley and Church in Evanston. I'll show you pictures of those.

Blum: Were they one-floor plans like Robie house?

Perkins: No, they were sprawling. The Robie house will do as well as any except the Robie house was a much more pretentious house than some of these. Walter, with Marion's superb drafting, later went on to win the Canberra, the capital of Australia, city-planning job. Interestingly enough, he beat out, for second place, one of my other heroes: Mr. Eliel Saarinen.

Blum: His name will surface again importantly a little later in your career.

Perkins: Indeed, yes.

Blum: You mentioned some of the people who officed at Steinway Hall. I have read that Jens Jensen, in later years, also had office space there.

Perkins: I don't know that. He was a close friend.

Blum: And Hermann von Holst?

Perkins: Yes, von Holst did.

Blum: William Drummond?

Perkins: Yes. Drummond and Purcell.

Blum: I've read about the eighteen people who had luncheon meetings, probably those out of Steinway Hall. The list looks quite similar to what you've been describing.

Perkins: There were some other people in the lunch group. The one that I'm sure of is Charles Zeublin, the sociologist, at the University of Chicago. The lunch meetings that you are referring to were a bunch of high-hearted friends who got together at I don't know what interval—maybe unstated intervals. They called themselves by the rather self-effacing title of The Committee on the Universe. Out of that came all kinds of things, including the Special Park Commission—I've probably forgotten some of the others, most certainly the Forest Preserve District, the Northwest Park District Commission, the South Park Commission and the West Park Commission. The West Park system was, of course, Jens Jensen's monument. The Cook County Forest Preserve, after twenty-two years of persistence, became dad's monument.

Blum: Was the Committee on the Universe an official group?

Perkins: Highly unofficial.

Blum: For what purpose did it exist?

Perkins: Just a bunch of friends who kicked ideas around. At that time in the world the popular heroes of that day were Gifford Pinchot and Theodore Roosevelt. The whole concept of conservation and saving the forests and all that was popular lore and a popular goal in those days. The parks around Boston—the Fens, I think they're called—were of that period. Of course, the national parks were initiated by people of that mind and of that period. This was a local microcosm of a national state of mind in those times.

Blum: It sounds like the world was a little different than it is today.

Perkins: The world was very different. Citizens knew each other and could take responsibility and know that they were being effective. It was long before the city was so vast and so impersonal that it had to be turned over to the professionals. Midge Perkins, my wife, used to believe that somewhere around one-hundred-thousand persons in a city was where you have to give up on amateur citizens running the town and you have to turn it over to the professionals. At that time the city was larger than that but it was still in the hands of the amateurs.

Blum: It seems to me that it also says that an individual believed that he could make a difference.

Perkins: Could and then went on to prove it. More recently Martin Luther King, Jr., was such an individual and this Jesse Jackson thinks he is such an individual. Both of them came from nothing and developed influence.

Blum: If eighteen people such as this Committee on the Universe got together and they all believed they could make a difference...

Perkins: Their vehicle was the City Club.

Blum: Were the eighteen part of the City Club?

Perkins: Yes, the City Club was where they had these luncheons with indeterminate attendance, very much like the first table at the Cliff Dwellers where any single person can join the group there.

Blum: Did your father ever tell you how the group selected the title of Committee on the Universe?

Perkins: No, he never told me that. Knowing my father, it was the kind of thing he could do with a quiet grin.

Blum: I think that title says a lot about the confidence of the participants.

Perkins: These were not bleeding hearts; these were normal, effective people. Being an architect wasn't all that great a way of earning a living and doing a good job and all that, but it wasn't a cause. Helping run and vote for how to run the town was expected. If I had to do a one-sentence sketch of my father, I would do it with this sentence: a sane person, by definition, takes his job and his work seriously but himself never. Pa sure qualifies on that.

Blum: Who were some of your father's close friends? Do any stand out in your mind as a friend of long-standing or especially loyal?

Perkins: At that time the people's names were such. Again, there were hundreds of people who have been in this house. Not in order of importance but Jens Jensen certainly was here, Lorado Taft was... Dad's closest friends, obviously, were his in-laws: my Uncle Ned, who built a house on this block, and Uncle Homer, who was superintendent of schools for thirty years here in Evanston. They were the Walkers and the Kingsleys respectively. The core of the family became the five Fitch sisters and their husbands. Their husbands were very close their entire lives. Those were his closest friends. There was Albert Whitney, who I was taught to call Uncle Albert, but he was not a

relative.

Blum: What about Daniel Burnham?

Perkins: He was always referred to as Uncle Dan in this family. They were close enough so that when my mother died in Pasadena, Mr. Burnham's widow Margaret represented the family and sort of managed things at that end for her departure. That was like an uncle-nephew relationship, but it was more than this.

Blum: Do you remember Daniel Burnham?

Perkins: Oh, no. He was gone before I was born.

Blum: He died in 1912.

Perkins: Oh?

Blum: You were quite young at the time.

Perkins: I was five, obviously. Anyway, no, I don't remember. I was mistaken in thinking he was gone before that. Incidentally, dad, with his puritan streak showing a little bit, told Midge one time, "As far as Frank Wright is concerned, you know I loved that man while he only had one wife." Dad and mother both took sides with Kitty Tobin Wright and the various children that she spawned for him.

Blum: What type of a relationship did your father have with Frank Lloyd Wright when they officed together?

Perkins: Dad used to say that he was the only person who ever dealt with Frank Wright who was not injured financially by it. For some reason or other he managed to get his rent from Frank Wright, which is an absolutely unmatched record by any other human being, I believe. He injured or

destroyed practically everybody else he ever had a business relationship with.

Blum: Something interesting happens in the literature as Frank Lloyd Wright talks about his Steinway Hall days. In comments of an early date he is very open and complimentary about it and expresses the same type of cooperation that you've been talking about, but in later years it seems that he expresses less and less of that and has become almost bitter about the recollections he has.

Perkins: One thing Frank Wright couldn't stand was anybody else getting credit. For instance, you were saying about Walter Griffin's part in Frank Wright's development, and that yes, he was one of the draftsmen. There's another Frank Wrightism—this is according to Earl Reed talking about having seen Mr. Wright at dad's office—and I guess Earl did work at the Steinway Hall time and years later Frank Wright drew himself up and said, "Yes, Dwight was one of my first disciples."

Blum: Did your father consider himself a disciple of Frank Lloyd Wright's?

Perkins: Influenced? Sure. Influenced by Sullivan? Most certainly. Disciple? Humph. He took what he thought was applicable to the things that he did. Disciple? Definitely not! Close, affectionate, respectful friend? Sure.

Blum: You mentioned Sullivan now and earlier you said that your father had comments or recollections of Sullivan.

Perkins: Many. One of the last ones, Mr. Sullivan came to see dad one day and said, "Dwight, how much money have you got in the bank?" Dad said, "Well, fifteen dollars, I guess." Mr. Sullivan said, "Give it to me." Dad, knowing Mr. Sullivan's deep, deep problem at that time said, "No." Mr. Sullivan said, "Dwight, I'm hungry." He got the fifteen dollars.

Blum: His problem was alcohol.

Perkins: Yes.

Blum: What do you remember of Sullivan at the Cliff Dwellers? Are these your memories or do you recall them because your father repeated them so often?

Perkins: I only remember that my dad introduced me to a Mr. Sullivan who was sitting there. This is my little boy sort of thing, “How do you do, sir?” That’s all. I just remember a man sitting there. I wouldn’t recognize a sketch of him in my own right.

Blum: You were going to speak about Jens Jensen.

Perkins: This was triggered by your question if Frank Wright influenced dad’s architecture. Of course he did, he influenced everybody’s architecture some in varying degrees. Dad and Mr. Jensen were looking at—I don’t know this for certain, but I think it was probably the Trumbull School at Ashland and Foster—and Mr. Jensen, a magnificent big old Dane with white handle-bar whiskers and a very gruff, hearty manner, said, “Yes, Dwight, it is fine. It is direct. It is strong. But is it kind?” Some of dad’s stuff is a little bit heavy-handed. That building, particularly now that it’s lost all of its setting in favor of the automobile, does look pretty stark.

Blum: Your father designed the Trumbull School?

Perkins: Yes. Critically, as I love my father, I’m afraid that that one sticks in and quivers. That has a little justice to it.

Blum: In 1905, was that when your father became the school architect for the Chicago Board of Education?

Perkins: Sometime in there.

Blum: You have mentioned some fantastic figure about how many schools he built...

Perkins: Forty. Additions and everything.

Blum: In 1910 he was on trial, a case that you said was conducted on the front page of the newspapers.

Perkins: It was indeed. I think I can find the clippings upstairs.

Blum: Do you recall a sense of the trial from him?

Perkins: No.

Blum: How do you respond to the quote that I read from the article that Peter B. Wight wrote about the trial?

Perkins: It's beautifully articulate and it's absolutely in accord with everything that I have ever known and believed. I am charmed and thrilled by the way he says it. I believe it to be accurate.

Blum: Wright's article was published in *Architectural Record* in June of 1910.

Perkins: Sidney Smith, who later was famous as the cartoonist who invented the Gumps—you probably don't even remember that there was such a thing, but it was a dominant comic strip for a good many years. Well, one of his cartoons on the front page of the *Record Herald*, or whatever the name of the paper was at that time, showed this very upright and whiskered person standing before a row of happy-hooligan-type puppets, each with a bell jar over his head in the shape of whiskey bottle. On the front page members of the board of education are portrayed as being drunk. In fact, the board president was so drunk one day that dad, in a mistaken bit of chivalry, allowed him to postpone the trial.

Blum: The actual charges leveled against your father were incompetence, extravagance, and insubordination. Was that just for public consumption?

Perkins: Sure.

Blum: What was the real issue?

Perkins: It was utterly simple. There were three cut-stone people on the board, one supplier, and two contractors, or the other way around. Dad, in order to keep their prices in line, used terracotta as an alternate for the trim on masonry buildings—either terracotta or cut-stone, whichever had the lower price. This stepped violently on their toes and upset their nice little arrangement. The form it later took, after dad was long gone from the school board, was done mostly through electrical contracting. This is much, much later, in the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s, and even into 1950s and 1960s, I guess. In fact I know because some of the aftermath of this washed off on us in one of our early jobs. We had the first out-of-house, as against in-house, architectural jobs and met this one. The first school in Chicago, the first one that was given out, went to us. What happened was that the electrical contract price was violently out of line with what you could get it for across Howard Street in Evanston, a hundred feet away. It was all salted through the estimates. Three-eighths instead of two-eighths and this is how the payoff from the electrical suppliers or whoever worked. How they washed it, I don't know. It was delivered to the appropriate board members for distribution.

Blum: Are you saying that this was what was happening with the stone people in your father's situation?

Perkins: Dad spoiled their little game. That was a very substantial part of what they called his insubordination.

[Tape 1: Side 2]

Blum: One of the things that the Peter B. Wight article points out is that everything that was passed in every budget that your father developed or any school board architect developed had to be agreed on by the board. He was spending but only with their approval.

Perkins: The budget, yes. For the bids, whether they did or didn't conform to budget, the board still had to decide whether to accept those bids, which they did. They were embarrassed to have to approve a bid that was too low to provide for their little funds. This caused them to bring charges. I remember that one of the stories that came out of this was about Carbys Zimmerman. He was approached to be Dwight's successor. His answer was, "What do you want me for? I'm honest, too." I think I started to tell you about what happened as soon as they got rid of dad. They promoted a man named John Christensen to be the school board architect. From then on through and pretty well toward World War II the Chicago school architecture was heavily classic with lots of cut-stone columns and cornices and all kinds of goodies of that sort, not very good classic but very determined and using lots of cut-stone. That took care of that. The depression wiped out a good deal of that. When business as usual resumed the technique had been changed. That was not as good a game as it had been; it was done through the electrical contracting.

Blum: Are you saying that someone always had a special interest in the contracts that went out for school work?

Perkins: Yes. For a while they didn't. I'm very much aware of Frayn Utley and that whole period of being on the board. During the whole Ben Willis era this did not get anywhere. It had a history of this kind and we were given the first school to be done by architects other than the school board office since dad's dismissal.

Blum: Has there always been an official Chicago Board of Education school architect?

Perkins: The Chicago school board architectural office is a very big architectural office. They take care of buildings and do maintenance and alternations and all that stuff.

Blum: What about building new schools?

Perkins: In building the schools they always appear as they hired an outside architect as an associate of theirs.

Blum: In 1905 your father was a partner in Perkins and Hamilton.

Perkins: Yes, and much later Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton. Fellows was Hamilton's hero designer and a very talented guy who was destroyed by making much too much money in Rixon stock to the point where he and his childless wife couldn't spend all their income. On the side Mr. Fellows became president of Rixon Hardware, too. He designed his own Packard bodies and stuff like that, which was more common then than it is now. He played a very good game of golf. He could have been great in the sense that Klauder, who did all the Princeton and Wellesley work for a long time, was great. He could have been that kind of great but he was bone-lazy.

Blum: What was his role in the firm?

Perkins: Designer, design partner. Hamilton was the executive and dad became the salesman. Once Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton was in place dad was, in their eyes, absolutely negligible as a designer. Leonard Hamilton once said to me that nothing architectural that they cared to mention ever came out of the school board period.

Blum: You're talking about the period between 1911 and 1925, which were the years of their firm?

Perkins: Yes. Hamilton absolutely dismissed that, although the Lincoln Park Lion House is more Hamilton than dad and is very Chicago schoolish, in my opinion.

Blum: How is it that the school board that dismissed your father in 1910 was willing then to hire the firm of Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton for subsequent school work?

Perkins: They didn't.

Blum: What type of work did Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton do?

Perkins: Schools for Evanston, schools for Wilmette, schools for Winnetka, in the suburbs and out of town. During that period they were some of the goodies. Manitowoc, Wisconsin—there was a beautiful high school there. Mishawaka, Indiana—the last job that dad was active on. His stroke hit him in the middle of a Mobile, Alabama, board meeting. Dad, by this time, was a national figure in the school world. He gave speeches to international conventions and stuff like that there, a point I have attempted to copy.

Blum: I have read various historians and each one seems to have a different nomination for the most successful school design that your father did. For instance, someone said that the finest design was the Cleveland Public School, someone else has said that his masterpiece was Schurz High School, while P. B. Wight, the author of that article, feels that Tilden High School was the most successful. What do you think your father thought?

Perkins: Let me chew on that one. I can get at it negatively. He was almost contemptuous of the colonialish Skokie School in Winnetka. It was too traditional to have dad's respect.

Blum: Was this one he did on his own?

Perkins: That was Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton by this time.

Blum: Yes, he was part of that firm, but not the designer.

Perkins: Oh yes. He loved Hubbard Woods, he loved the old Lincolnwood School over here, [pointing in westerly direction] but it's long gone. We had my mother's memorial services there. It's where she had tried out her books and dad had architected and whatnot. I had gone to school there. You can

imagine that anybody with the Steinway Hall ambiance behind him would not be proud of traditional, sweet and darling colonial, with cupola, columns, and whatnot. He liked Evanston High School in its early days, although he probably dismissed the Gothic towers over these two stair columns, but the grandeur of that big wall out in the prairie, that he liked. I think of the Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton stuff—he liked the status of Evanston High School as well as any. I don't know which of the Chicago schools he liked, but he had been sort of talked out of being proud of that.

Blum: Do you think he would agree with any of these nominations: Grover Cleveland Public School, Carl Schurz High School or Tilden High School?

Perkins: I'm quite sure he would.

Blum: With all of them?

Perkins: Probably. He'd say, okay, let them fight it out.

Blum: In your opinion what was his best school?

Perkins: I liked Tilden.

Blum: Why?

Perkins: It's a little better setting, a little warmer than Trumbull, which it is very much like. Again, Jens Jensen's comment sticks in and quivers.

Blum: Do you think this applies also to Tilden?

Perkins: A little bit less. It doesn't apply at all to Schurz. I guess I like Schurz the best. I took Dad there after they had added to it several times and he said, "Well, I'm glad that they saw fit to honor the original design."

Blum: Did you ever have the chance to make any additions or remodel a building

your father had originally built?

Perkins: In Winnetka, lots, yes. We tinkered with Hubbard Woods and with Skokie.

Blum: What was that experience like, knowing that you were adding to a design that was originally your father's?

Perkins: It was pretty straightforward. Sure I care about it, but it was a job of work and we treated it that way.

Blum: Thomas Tallmadge made a statement about your father.

Perkins: He was a part of that Steinway Hall group.

Blum: I'd like you to comment on it. He said, "We think of Perkins as a citizen and a patriot, almost before we think of him as an architect."

Perkins: Absolutely fair! Dad himself would look at the Forest Preserve as more his monument than any building.

Blum: Was hiking his hobby?

Perkins: Not exactly. Upstairs I have some of his early maps that he made while walking the boundaries of what he was going to recommend for the Des Plaines River system and the Chicago River system back when getting out to Palos Hills was quite an adventure.

Blum: What was his vision?

Perkins: I think his vision was basically the vision of a town of half a million people, spreading as it indeed has, pouring like syrup over a waffle into all the little squares as it went west, southwest, and northwest. He felt that it was utterly important to have green intervals in the logical places that had not been built on, in the river valleys and the hilly area of Palos, which was way out in the

country at that time. The river valleys didn't get built on because they tended to flood. Likewise the Skokie. You'd have four feet of water in your first floor, which was undesirable. Those were the opportunities. One of the battles that he lost was to include the Skokie as one of the green intervals. The lawyers on the county commissioners did not believe that it was forest. It was a big marsh. It has since been rescued as an item of flood control but the results are the same. The Forest Preserve District indeed owns the Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe, and it owns the land under it. The botanic garden has a ninety-nine-year lease.

Blum: Do you think it was your father's love for the land, or the benefit to people, that produced this vision?

Perkins: Probably more the benefit to people, but he did love the land. He loved people in the abstract. He was almost completely disinterested in the nose-wiping kind of welfare. Work for the welfare of individuals did not interest him as much as something that would affect one thousand or ten thousand people in the abstract. As this book that you have there will show, when he and mother went out to see one of the early Forest Preserve and he was looking like a happy man, according to the text, mother said something about how they owed it all to him. Dad dismissed it and said, "I didn't put down the rebellion alone, you know."

Blum: Didn't he go to court to plead the case for the Cook County Forest Preserve District to be created and funded?

Perkins: You've got it almost right. The essence of it was that he led what we would now call a lobby down to Springfield to get legislation to permit the formation of a Forest Preserve District with taxing power and so on. It was passed but declared unconstitutional by the courts. It was passed again several years later and turned down again as unconstitutional. It was passed a third time and by that time nobody was willing to be misunderstood or was interested. They thought that they were licked and so dad personally brought suit which appeared on the court record as Dwight Perkins vs. the Forest

Preserve. To his great joy he lost resoundingly. That established and released the \$11 million fund that had been tentatively appropriated for the purchase of the first land. The first parcel in the Forest Preserve system, which was acquired and dedicated, was what we now call Deer Grove. I do remember that I was present and there are pictures in my baby book. At that time I was twelve or so. That was the first one—the vision was of green intervals and people enjoying it. Dad was one of the founders of the Prairie Club. I don't know if it still exists or not. They were hikers and nature lovers and instruments of propaganda for this concept. Friends of Our Native Landscape was another organization similarly dedicated. In horse and buggy, and later an old fashioned Buick touring car, dad toured and hiked every single boundary of the first thirty thousand acres. He laid it out, recommended it, and, as chairman of the Plan Committee of the Forest Preserve, he never had as much power as that table. He had the influence of an idea. He, Dwight Perkins, never had any political power, but the influence of the propaganda that he had built up with all these similarly-minded people and the concept of the idea and the example of Boston, among other places, were his weapons. There is a line in Tennyson that also describes dad pretty well; it would be a little bit above what Frank Wright meant in his intended insult, apropos of a fellow named Gallahad: "His only weapon for defense was his formidable innocence." That was dad.

Blum: Let me refer to Peter B. Wight again, he titled your father as "Father of the Small Park and Playground System."

Perkins: And a member of the Special Park Commission that ran it for a while. Dad was on that component of the Chicago parks. He was president of the Northwest Park District Commission. They didn't have the West Park system in the beginning but little dabs here and there. There were several parks that were finally merged much, much later—well within my time.

Blum: We're trying to capulize your father's career in an hour. He certainly made an impact, not only architecturally but also socially and culturally. What legacy did he leave for you?

Perkins: A standard of honor that I have never come close to matching. He certainly got me interested in seeing with my eyes. I'll never know how that man knew the timing to where just one little tap would establish my career. That's another story. I guess you can sort this out and put it in its proper sequence as you see fit, that's your problem. I had been to the University of Wisconsin for a year; it was sort of a repeat of the fourth year at New Trier High School. I was an undistinguished student at New Trier and went on to equal lack of distinction at Wisconsin. I passed my courses but nothing in particular. During the summer after that I went out to visit my cousins that I had grown up with in the house next door. By that time they were living in Pasadena. Dad had bought the property next to their house there with the idea of building another pair of houses in this relationship, with the same cast of characters. I came back from Pasadena, having been mostly with my cousin Edwin Walker, known as Ted. He is still my beloved and close relative; he lives over in Hinsdale now. I came back and I got off the train and I called up my dad, who was by this time at 814 Tower Court, and said, "How about a ride home?" He said, "Good, I want to see you before you see your mother." His stroke had occurred eighteen months or two years before that and they were loading him heavily with bromide, which didn't do anything for his clarity or speech. It was not easy to see that happen. He sat me down in his office, which was that room right over the front door where the Wally Findlay Galleries sign is now. He said, "You have been up to Wisconsin learning to be an educated gentleman," with a slight note of derision, "that's fine. Time is running out. You know that my health has been a problem, you know that I don't have much more time. There is friction with my partners and this business may not survive in its present form. The time has come where you are going to have to make up your mind on what to do with yourself. You have talked over the years,"—we didn't go back as far as locomotive engineer and fireman—"about going into forestry, that's fine. You've talked about being a professional musician, that's fine. I don't think that there's much of a living in it and I'm not at all sure that you're that good. If you want to do it, I will back you." He ticked off some of the other things I had talked about in a rather grandiose way. He said about this, that or the

other thing, “If you want to do that, I’ll back you. The only thing I will say about architecture is that I can back you there with more than money.” A very true observation. He said, “But,”—and here came the key sentence—“the time has passed when you can go almost anywhere. You must head somewhere definite and you must do it now. If it’s wrong you may change; if it’s right you will have headed somewhere definite.”

Blum: What did he mean?

Perkins: He meant that a liberal arts education, heading nowhere in particular, was no longer acceptable. He must have known that the iron was so hot that all it took was that. The whole interview lasted about twenty-two minutes, by which time the telegram had gone off to Cornell. I didn’t get in that year because it was all full up. This was almost September and obviously too late for that year. “You must head somewhere and you must do it now.” We drove out to Evanston from Tower Court. Cornell and Wisconsin both had something in common. I knew that whatever I wanted to do with my life I would have to live in the city. This was the only time when I would have the privilege of not living in the city and still be moving purposefully. Dad was disappointed but completely generous about my not going to MIT, which, with advance standing, I probably could have gotten in.

Blum: Did you discuss your school selection with him?

Perkins: Oh, yes.

Blum: How did Cornell become your school-elect?

Perkins: We had been East college shopping and traveling and had been there to visit something or other when I was a little boy—twelve, thirteen, fourteen, maybe. Lake Cayuga, the sculls and rowing, which I later enjoyed doing... My sports, such as they were, were rowing and boxing. I was unimpressive in both, but I did it at less than varsity level—remind me later about Tom Kimball and MIT subhead, Henry Bigelow—anyway, the lake at Wisconsin

had a very good school and the lake and country were in both places: Ithaca and Madison. Madison was a much, much smaller city then. It was simply a pleasant life that I would not be able to enjoy as an adult. I wanted to live in the country while I was still irresponsible. He knew Professor Clarence Martin, who looked astonishingly like dad when you saw him, three-quarters from the back. I would frequently be startled at this and his whisker profile, sitting in his class later.

Blum: This was at Cornell?

Perkins: Yes. Everybody knew dad in all the schools, of course.

Blum: Did your father have any strong feelings about you going to his alma mater, MIT?

Perkins: None that he was willing to impose. With strong feelings, if I had been more perceptive and generous, I would have done it for him. This was clearly my, I think, more than usually self-centered self at that period.

Blum: You said you wanted me to remind you about Tom Kimball, MIT, and Bigelow.

Perkins: Dad and MIT. Dad was not exactly puny but he certainly was not robust. Tom Kimball, who later went on to be president of the American Institute Architects and who was a lusty buck, was his close friend. I forget whether they were roommates or not. They did things together at MIT. In the gymnasium there, where they used to go to work out, were this rather slight character and Tom Kimball. A very aristocratic, very athletic man named Bigelow, who was a student there, perhaps a year or so ahead of dad at MIT, was also there working out. He teased my dad unmercifully and ragged him in almost a bullying way. Tom Kimball said to my dad, "Look, you're going to have to tangle with this guy sooner or later. He thinks he's quite a boxer. Do you know anything about boxing?" "No." So Tom said, "Stall it as long as you can and I'll give you boxing lessons." The first thing I know, because he

did it for me, was that he taught my dad to make a fist. “You do it this way and not this way. There is a vast difference in hitting a man that way and hitting him this way.”

Blum: You're pointing out the difference between hitting with a straight wrist and a flexed one.

Perkins: That was the first thing that Tom taught my dad. They worked out. He said, “All right, it's getting pretty close. Tell him you'll meet him at 4:30 tomorrow afternoon and we'll have a little workout and see what we can do. At that time the sun will be coming through the west window.” He had drilled my dad on footwork. He said, “Get between him and the sun. As soon as the sun hits his eye you put your fist in it too.” The stories diverge from there. Dad said, “They had a workout and it was perhaps a decision in my favor.” Tom Kimball doesn't tell it that way at all. He said, “Bigelow finished the episode looking like nothing human and the teasing stopped.”

Blum: That's a college story!

Perkins: They stayed close all their lives. One of Tom's hobbies, later on in life, was raising gamecocks. He promised me some, but he never sent them. I was raising chickens and ducks out in the yard here at that time, keeping the Kaiser out of Evanston.

Blum: Your father terminated his partnership with Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton in 1927. How did that happen?

Perkins: Mr. Hamilton came in one day and handed dad a typewritten piece of paper saying this is the plan on which you will retire. Hamilton was a bear.

Blum: Did the firm continue after your father left?

Perkins: It became Hamilton, Fellows and Nedved, and then John Leonard Hamilton, and afterward it was terminated. By that time everything had been patched

up and Mr. Hamilton, who had had a very unsuccessful relationship with his own architect son, anyway he and I kissed and made up. He gave me a lot of photographs and stuff of that sort and spoke of me as his successor, which I had a little mixed feeling about.

Blum: You mean when your father left?

Perkins: He said, "This is how you will retire." Dad said, "Well, I'll look it over." Rumors were all over the city by this time and Herrick Hammond came over and said, "We hear that you're thinking of making a change. What about coming with us?" They made it Perkins, Chatten and Hammond for the rest of the 1920s and a year or two into the 1930s, I guess. That firm never did anything great, they did some buildings.

Blum: Did your father do primarily schoolwork? He certainly did it in the first decade and with Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton. Did that continue with Perkins, Chatten and Hammond?

Perkins: Dad's part of it was schools. The Perkins, Chatten and Hammond name was on the 124th Field Artillery Armory, the Lawson YMCA, and Northwest Tower.

Blum: Did they do mostly civic buildings?

Perkins: Those were conventional big buildings, not schools, but they weren't very much dad's either. That was really Chatten and Hammond.

Blum: What was the arrangement within the Perkins, Chatten and Hammond firm?

Perkins: Dad participated in the jobs that he brought in. Period. They gave him an office and some of the people in the office were ones that had been with dad at Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton, including Joe Kovar, who later spent most of his working life with me.

Blum: Was John Boyce one of the men who also carried over?

Perkins: No, John Boyce was my schoolmate. He was two years behind me and did a lot of the drawings for my thesis that I couldn't have done for myself.

Blum: How do you remember the principals in Perkins, Chatten and Hammond? That was certainly at a time when you were interested in architecture.

Perkins: I was working for them by that time. I worked for them summers. When the Park Ridge schools were there, as a bit of nepotism the way I see it now, I was put out on the field to supervise the three schools in Park Ridge: Lincoln, Field and Roosevelt. Jim Evans was over me. He made all the tough decisions but I was there every day to write reports and so on for a year and a half. I saw a good deal.

Blum: Was Todd Wheeler also working for Perkins, Chatten and Hammond at that time?

Perkins: I don't think he put in much time there. He did work for Hamilton, Fellows and Nedved. Todd did, very knowledgeably, the acoustical studies on what became the Winnetka Congregational Church.

Blum: At that time?

Perkins: Yes. That was done in association with Amar Embury, who was one of Hamilton's heroes. You asked me about Chatten and Hammond. Chatten was a fearful little man, but big physically. He agonized over details. As I saw them then, I don't know whether I would see them that way now, sort of mentally shriveled up a little bit. What you told me about Hammond came as a complete shock. I never saw him in any way except as a presence over in the far office who signed checks and went to meetings.

Blum: What did I tell you?

Perkins: That he had done some charming sketches that Jim Hammond showed you.

Blum: That's true. You'll see them in an exhibition at the Art Institute soon. You can judge for yourself. I think they are quite fine

Perkins: This absolutely knocks me lose from my underwear, which is the test of shock by the way.

Blum: You don't remember him with a pencil or a pen in his hand?

Perkins: It never would have occurred to me that he knew a drawing from a dish of applesauce. I never saw that side of him. He was pleasant, he was agreeable. Later he almost died of embarrassment when he suggested, after he had some work, that he wanted to live in Florida but would like to associate with us on that. I said, "Fine, let's do. Anything you bring in we'll make this kind of deal." Nothing ever happened. Everything I saw was architecturally negligible. The magnificent person there was Fred Starbuck, who was head of the drafting room. He had been a good Cornell athlete in his day. He was a major of artillery; he enjoyed his war very much. He was quite a man. He worked much too hard and knew every column center by memory of everything that went through that office.

Blum: He was with the Perkins, Chatten and Hammond firm?

Perkins: He was the head of Perkins, Chatten and Hammond. He ran the production of the office. He was away during the war and Bob Franklin, a much lesser man, was head of the office when Fred Starbuck was away at the war.

Blum: These are memories that you have from working in the office?

Perkins: Those are strictly a worm's eye view. I did not admire them terribly perhaps as much as I should have. Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton were an almost ideal combination. The only thing that wrecked it was just plain bad manners. Leonard Hamilton was bear-like; every contractor in town was

scared of him. They would do anything rather than incur his wrath. He could just flay the hide off—he could take filets off—of the side of anybody. His sneering comments on dad, who brought in the work was, I think, a major factor in breaking dad's health.

[Tape 2: Side 1]

Blum: Larry, as we are looking through some papers of yours and came across a newspaper clipping of 1972 about the Abraham Lincoln School Center renovation, you said there was a story in that. What is it?

Perkins: There are several stories, I hope I remember most of them. Basically the All Souls Unitarian Church was presided over by Jenkin Lloyd Jones, Frank Lloyd Wright's uncle, Uncle Jenk. He was a robust, hell-fire and damnation preacher of the old school. He orated, so I'm told, even in ordinary conversation. I never saw the man myself, but I've certainly heard enough about him. Anyway, he was, as you could imagine with that relationship, not exactly a negative personality. He and his similarly temperamental nephew, Frank Wright, were, of course, directed to prepare this settlement house. At this time Uncle Jenk, as he is referred to, was losing interest in the settlement, which became Fellowship House. He was transferring his interest and wanted to transfer my grandmother with it, from the head residency to running the Abraham Lincoln Center. Well, she would not go; she remained loyal to the Fellowship House—I won't confuse you with its earlier names. All the attention and the money from All Souls Church went to this. Frank Wright and Jenkin Lloyd Jones fought like a couple of alley cats. The drawings were rejected over and over again. Frank was arbitrary, Uncle Jenk was arbitrary, and nothing could be done. Finally, dad, who was a member of that congregation, was asked to see what he could do with this. Dad was, as I think I've described, a kindly and reasonable man who respected other people's opinions and all that. He could be reasonably expected to get along with anybody, but not Uncle Jenk. They went over and over again on one thing and another. Finally, this supremely ugly building, in my opinion, was erected on Oakley, wherever it is. The building was built with the title corner

saying, "Prepared under specific detailed directions of Jenkin Lloyd Jones by Dwight H. Perkins, Architect." As pure a Pontius Pilate washing his hands as you can imagine. Well, there are a lot of stories about the building of the thing. Uncle Jenk was a fiend. Clark Wright, later of Nimmons, Carr and Wright, was my dad's field superintendent on that job. He is also a person who matters to me. Anyway, Clark Wright was a man of few words and very biting ones when he wanted to be. He later went on to administer all construction for the army during World War I. He was an administrator and no nonsense about it. Uncle Jenk came to the job one morning after a rainstorm and there was two feet of water in the open foundation of the basement. Uncle Jenk strolled up and down with Clark Wright and said "And there is the problem! What are you going to do about it? I demand an answer as to what you're going to do about it!" Clark Wright stood it at long as he could and said, "Well, I'm going to get a bucket and bail it out." This apparently baffled Uncle Jenk. He had never had that kind of an answer. It was that kind of a job. This was the high watermark of the period that included Jane Addams and Hull House, Graham Taylor and the Chicago Commons, Leah his daughter—what's her name at Gads Hill Center? I knew her very well—and, incidentally, Fellowship House, which ties it to this. That was some of the trauma of building for Uncle Jenk.

Blum: The newspaper article says that the Abraham Lincoln Center building was done by Frank Lloyd Wright in conjunction with Dwight Perkins. Is this the connection they're talking about?

Perkins: That's a polite euphemism for what happened. I would say that Frank Wright was fired at least twice a week during his tenure and reinstated and fired again. I suppose dad was too.

Blum: What was the difficulty?

Perkins: Uncle Jenk. He couldn't read drawings, I suppose. He looked at what he thought he saw and rejected everything on sight. I think his mentality was to reject everything and what could be justified should survive. It probably

wasn't even conscious. I don't think either of them—Frank Wright or his uncle—knew in their personal relations that they were in many ways quite evil people. Frank Wright was evil in all of the ways that the musician Richard Wagner was. They were very similar people.

Blum: In what way?

Perkins: The best biography of Frank Wright that I've ever read was written about another man.

Blum: About another man?

Perkins: Yes. Deems Taylor, in his intermission talks on the radio gave an intermission essay on Richard Wagner entitled "The Monster." It went on to say how he had used people and rejected them and how he destroyed people and shrugged it off. Neither of them, Wagner and Wright ever paid a bill. It is a perfect sketch of one side of Frank Wright. It finishes with—I had used this as a paraphrase for Frank Wright's medal at Houston later—the payoff line, "but after all of the broken lives, and broken hearts, and broken pocketbooks—and in Frank Wright's case, broken buildings—that are left behind, there will be something left. It is to that something that we are giving a medal." They said this about Wagner, "but his legacy far exceeds the personal evil that he strew about him." The parallel is that people your age and younger think that Frank Wright was a great and noble man. The fact that he was unworthy to wear the legend as a person no longer matters. Everybody that he directly injured is dead. The flaming sense of standing up for what you architecturally believe in and having the courage to get yourself fired for your principles and all that—there is a whole generation of young architects that think that to be Frank Wright you have to be a bad-mannered and ungrateful. That's not the essential thing. The idea that you are not an architectural stenographer taking dictation, that you are there to be the creative master architect, has done far more good than harm. The fact is that the man himself was sanctimonious and a supremely selfish destroyer of people. There was a story about Richard Wagner, for instance—now

remember, this is a time long ago now so I probably won't be anywhere near accurate—that described how this very egotistical man would invite great singers to his house and sing to them and great pianists and play for them. He would present his operas to people who could have done vastly better and so on. I don't know what the parallel is on that except that he was the supreme egoist—both egocentric and egotistical.

Blum: After that indictment I'd like to ask you what kind of a relationship you had with him? I presume you knew him.

Perkins: Yes, but not well. Willits Burnham took Phil, Phil's wife Callie, Midge, and me up to Spring Green one time. We went around. Mr. Wright was there. With some awkwardness I was brought in and introduced. I identified myself as Dwight and Lucy Perkins's son. This was when he told me, "Your father was a very simple man, but your mother was a very clever woman." One thing led to another and he gave me a copy of his book, *The Disappearing City*. He autographed it and I have it upstairs. We stayed for dinner and then we came home. My mother and father knew where we'd been. My mother was so mad she could spit. She said "Do you mean to say, knowing what you do about that man, that you would eat his food knowing that it wasn't paid for?" I questioningly repeated this remark. Mother said, "Hmm, here's what's behind that." There was a culture club here in Evanston that met and the nice ladies heard an improving lecture from this, that, and the other person from time to time. Mother, because she, dad, and Frank Wright were in the office together and seeing each other in those days, offered get Frank Wright to come and give one of these talks. She was preparing him for this and telling him about how some of the culture ladies affected European culture. She talked, with some scorn, about gilded furniture of a nicey-nice, frenchified sort of way as being very high style, don't you know. One of the ladies drew herself up and she said, "I don't think I should tell the ladies that some people have gilded furniture that is solid mahogany underneath." Mother told Frank Wright this story in preparing him for his afternoon with the women, as she thought it was very funny. Frank Wright came out and that same lady was sitting in the front row and he repeated this story! Mother, of

course, never forgave him and she laid him out. His apology consisted of sending her, in his own handwriting, a note that read, "I think as I write as I am,"—it was his chest beating chant. Mother, who was very light on her mental feet, wasn't going to take this. She proceeded to parody it: "I talk with my mouth that's me. Nobody knows how wonderfully great I be, that's me." I have kept and framed Frank Wright's letter and mother's reply. My son Brad now has it in Scarsdale. Both of the letters are handwritten. Mother soon gave it to dad and said, "Don't you dare show this to anyone." It was much too funny not to and he showed it to a couple of other people in the office because it was pretty damn good. Of course, it got out of hand and, of course, it got back to Frank Wright. He said, "I put my heart on my sleeve and Lucy pecked at it." Well, she pecked with a pretty sharp beak. A good part of mother's humor was letting the air out of pompous balloons. This was something that she just couldn't resist, deflating that one. Oh boy, she did a job on him! He pompoused the wrong lady that time.

Blum: The literature pictures Wright as a very complex person. Certainly the side you're describing has been well described.

Perkins: Am I being redundant?

Blum: No, but in his correspondence that is published in *Letters to Architects* and in *Letters to Apprentices* he is not at all pompous. He has many sides, I guess.

Perkins: I guess. Anyway, that was the story behind what he said to me up at Taliesin. Obviously, from the one I've repeated at home about mother being very clever, she was not exactly impressed.

Blum: In 1922, we had an event in Chicago, which was the Tribune Tower competition.

Perkins: We did indeed.

Blum: You were just fifteen years old at the time.

Perkins: I was a sophomore in high school.

Blum: Do you have any recollection of it?

Perkins: I have very considerable...none of the competition itself, but quite a bit of the aftermath. When the Saarinens came here they were guests in our home and they occupied the third floor of this house for a few weeks. I guess it may have been 1923. They stayed here until they found their own housing.

Blum: Was your father a friend of Eliel Saarinen?

Perkins: He became so. He was active in AIA affairs and, as such, I guess he was put forward by the Chicago chapter or something.

Blum: How is it that Saarinen came here?

Perkins: They were second place in the competition.

Blum: How did they come to stay in your house?

Perkins: They were invited. Dad was of some prominence in the AIA. It was natural that an architect would play host, particularly to somebody who was coming on nothing but architecturally memorable prestige. Obviously, Mr. Saarinen remains one of my principal architectural heroes. I think we would have gotten maybe even better contemporary architecture if Sullivan and Wright had never lived and Goodhue and Saarinen did, and possibly Paul Cret. The evolution was underway with gallant resistance on the part of the eastern establishment, which was still dominated by McKim, Mead and White, John Russell Pope, and all those people. The classicists were well entrenched but still fighting a rear-guard action. The gentle probings into modernizing were done thoughtfully and with artistry. Eliel Saarinen's second prize design built more buildings by influence than the winner by one hundred to one. There are buildings all over the world that owes allegiance to the second prize

Tribune Tower design. The first and the third didn't influence anybody to speak of, except the American Radiator building in New York.

Blum: In terms of Saarinen's influence, you're certainly speaking from first-hand experience.

Perkins: I sure am. Also from walking up and down the street. There have been pallid attempts. There was something that was called the Steuben Club building—I don't know what it's called now—at Wells and Randolph that obviously looked hard at Saarinen's competition design without understanding it. It's clumsy but you can see what the architect was trying to do.

Blum: You were at Cornell from 1927 through 1931. What was the orientation of the school at that time?

Perkins: The faculty, with the exception of Dean Frank Bosworth, was very heavily classical. The ritual, except that we did not export our drawings for foreign judgment, was Beaux-Arts. We were given twelve hours at the beginning of a problem to commit ourselves to the direction we would go for that problem. We had a month to work it out. At the end of the month, at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday—not meaning 6:01—the guillotine fell. If your problem got in, maybe one minute late, but certainly one hour was not permissible, because that was twenty percent off your grade. That was Beaux-Arts. It was the same thing as not being on the charrette that picked up the drawings from the ateliers all around Paris. Working “en charrette” was—you'll probably remember all of this—if you were finishing your drawing while the tumbril was rolling toward the Ecole des Beaux-Arts for judgment. Charrette has gotten to be a verb now. That was the sense of it. We worked in that formula as far as procedure is concerned. The faculty, Dutton Seymour and Leroy P. Burnham—he was no relation to the Burnhams in Chicago—were classicists from way back. Burnham had been a draftsman in McKim, Mead and White's office. Seymour's best-known monument is the Perry Memorial in Lake Erie, which is one simple Doric column 150 feet or so high—it is very carefully detailed, but that's it—with some good Beaux-Arts landscaping. It's

very classical, geometrical, and so forth. The critic that Phil and I still worship for his mentality was Frank L. Bosworth—not the one who did the MIT buildings, that's his cousin. He would say, "What is it you're trying to do? What is the vehicle by which you want to do it? Well, then do it." He was pushing us, particularly in plan and reasoning. He'd ask us, "What would you do if you had a problem with two equal-sized things, one of which was more important than the other?" He gave talks on the theory of architecture in that spirit. It is that man who lit a fire under a bunch of us, certainly Phil and me.

Blum: What did you think his underlying message was?

Perkins: To plan responsively to a set of needs. I don't think he was a great cosmetician. I think he was a superb artist and planner. He got us fired up in that sort of way. Those were the three design people. The person that we all loved and got along with was Dean Young, George H. Young. He taught structures. Again, his whole mental process was "Well, here's a tangled set of requirements in this problem. This is not a design problem now, but before you add up or divide by anything, what's a reasonable answer? What's the general neighborhood that you expect to arrive in? About so-and-so? Fine, that's it. Now, work it out and detail it." We were definitely being compared with Penn, Yale and MIT in those days. Yale was much the best at cosmetic competition drawings. They could do a drawing that was pretty thin on subject matter but glorious in presentation. They won with some beautifully presented but quite bad designs. MIT, on the other hand, was dismissed—this is like any cartoon characterization, it's unjust and over simplified in practically every case but averaged somewhere near some kind of a truth—MIT students were dismissed as slide-rule boys. They were very mental about it. Cornell students were clearly not the glamour-pants types at all. The people who fill up *Architectural Digest* would be profoundly uninterested in us. But, as time went on, the glamour boys found themselves working for Cornell and we were more whole people: generalists and reasoners. We were trained for architectural service rather than trying to astonish with inventive whimsy.

- Blum: During these years, 1927 through 1931, which are the years you're talking about, there were modernist stirrings at the Bauhaus in Germany. Did any of those ideas creep into your training?
- Perkins: They did indeed. I got that during school rather late and not very well. Lee Schoen was a student and his father was very much of a modernist. He did interiors for the S. S. Leviathan, trains, steamships, and all that stuff. He was a modernist before I knew what that meant. I came, as a result of our year abroad in 1926—part of 1925 and a little of 1926—I came back all hopped up about Gothic. I was absolutely unprepared to be respectful about a little New England meeting house, which was our first problem. I tried to do it in Gothic. At that time Professor Burnham was somewhat inarticulate but disdainful about all of the Prairie School that we've been talking about; they were just some queer people out west someplace that didn't amount to much.
- Blum: This was in 1926?
- Perkins: Yes. All of them, including Frank Wright, were for all practical purposes dead between 1920 and 1936, when Howard Myers decided to exhume Frank Wright—I chose my verbs carefully—with an issue about him in *Architectural Forum*, which has since become a collectable item. Until then he was just an eccentric architect out in the prairie someplace. If they remembered him at all, Seymour and Burnham would manage a quiet smile.
- Blum: Was the work of Frank Lloyd Wright part of your architectural education?
- Perkins: In school? Not at all.
- Blum: What about the work of Sullivan? Was that brought to your attention?
- Perkins: We never heard of him at Cornell.
- Blum: Was there anyone in the Chicago area who had made enough of an impact to

filter into your architectural education at that time?

Perkins: Business-wise? Yes, Daniel Burnham.

Blum: You mean as a planner and an organizer?

Perkins: George Young, beloved character that he was, said, "Well, I think that Williams in Dayton, Ohio,"—who was a very good friend and a hell of a good architect—"and your father were right about parallel. Nice businesses—130 to 140 draftsman—and so on." Williams's two sons, Stuart and Roger, arrived at Cornell and proceeded to mow down everything before them, they did well. He said, "Yeah, your dad has a nice business out there."

Blum: This came from your professor?

Perkins: Yes.

Blum: Who were the architect-heroes of your school years?

Perkins: Bosworth, who himself was a Carrère and Hastings relative—I think he married a Miss Hastings—felt that the prominent names were, of course, John Russell Pope, Carrère and Hastings, York and Sawyer, and of course McKim, Mead and White. An upstart modernist was Ralph Walker, of Vorhees, Gmelin and Walker. Ray Hood was very nice to me and took me to a dinner that I will never forget. When I was a student, dad had just come from back from Europe on a boat with him. They just happened to be on the same boat. The Phipps estate, which was presided over by David Layman, who was a friend, was going to build something that later became the Beaux-Arts Apartments, which were in all the magazines for that period. Dad, having given Mr. Layman the opportunity to give him the job, which he didn't, spoke cordially about Ray Hood. This got back and Ray Hood, the day I happened to hit New York, had just been given the job. He was very anxious to do something nice for dad's son. He took me to dinner at the Architectural League in honor of Lee Lawrie, the sculptor. The men present

were Lee Lawrie, Ulric Ellerhusen, and everybody that you've ever heard of that was prominent in New York at that time, among them Ralph Walker—I'll talk more about him later. Lee Lawrie was very nice and modest, a self-effacing sort of a guy. We had a long dinner and then we all piled out and went to a nightclub. I was so euphoric that I called up my fiancée, who was living out in Queens, and woke her up at 3:00 am. to tell her what kind of an evening it had been. It was pretty great. There were stirrings of modernism in Harrison, Paul Cret, Ralph Walker, and so forth. Those were the young *enfants terribles* of that day, stirring and challenging the everlasting classic. If you want to oversimplify it you can say that the Renaissance is simply a box with classic detail applied to it. If you accept a fraction of that statement that is true, then the modernists were, by that time, applying less slavish classic detail. Goodhue came along with Lee Lawrie on the Nebraska capital building, which was a thrilling, fresh sort of thing. The Cornell faculty all this time thought that those were interesting bits of personal idiosyncrasy attempting to depart from basic truth—truth being what they believed.

Blum: Was this art deco style?

Perkins: That's what we now call it, I guess so. Again, that is almost as monstrous a bit of corrupted English as postmodern. I think that is one of the really bizarre bits of corrupting a language.

Blum: I used it because everyone would use it today and you understand what I mean when I say that. The term that I really had in mind was what's now come to be known as the international style, not art deco.

Perkins: That really entered Phil's and my life, as we then understood it. Remember, the names then were Lescaze, very contemporary... oh, I'll have to stir my back embers... In the house that they did there were steel panels bolted together. This was at the same time as when Fred Keck was doing a very intelligent job of solar energy conservation.

Blum: Was this for the Century of Progress in 1933?

Perkins: Yes. This was really the first effort of any considerable scale where we were exposed to moderne, as it was then pronounced, as distinguished from classic. All during our young career every job was a fight or a choice between traditional or modern. Modern had to prove itself. The safe thing to do for a house client was the colonial that they asked for, rather than the hopefully fresh clarity that we felt we were expressing with modern.

Blum: Was the fresh clarity that you thought you were expressing art deco or international style?

Perkins: I think it was international style. By the time we went to work for Howard Fisher I had gotten married and then when Phil got married, I introduced him to Howard and he became the designer for General Houses. By that time we had a wonderful organization to produce and manufacture and have job numbers for putting it through the factory and all that. The only thing that we didn't have was a house that anybody liked.

Blum: This was Howard Fisher's organization?

Perkins: Yes. Phil was one of the designers and Paul Schweikher was also one. Gerhardt Kaufmann was the best draftsman I have yet seen—I don't know what became of him. They drew this extremely unfamiliar Miesian stuff. We hadn't really heard about Mies too much. The in group talked about Mies to each other in a very knowledgeable way but us normal people didn't know much about him. Well, time went by and Midge and I, as the typical young American couple complete with dog but no babies, were asked to go to live in the first prefabricated house out in the North Shore. You are in the presence of an historic relic—me. We were the first prefabricated guinea pigs.

Blum: Was this a Howard Fisher house?

Perkins: It was. It was a General Houses house.

Blum: Where was it located?

Perkins: It is the third house north of the water tower in Winnetka, on the edge of the bluff overlooking the lake. It was his brother Tom Fisher's and his wife Ruth Page's house—Ruth was the premier danseuse, which we couldn't pronounce.

Blum: That house was taken down about two years ago.

Perkins: It has? I'm not astonished.

Blum: I didn't realize that the house was built as an experimental or model house.

Perkins: Oh no, it was their house.

Blum: How did you come to live in it then?

Perkins: I was working for Howard and they wanted somebody to live in it and write a report every day. Midge and I were both working in the city and we came out there. It was raining and the roof leaked, that was quite an experience. I came home with Howard one night on the 10:00 p.m. train and they went off this way to the big family house and we went off that way to Tom and Ruth's house which was ours for the time being. Our poor dog was sort of frantic but we let him out in time. It had been raining for two or three days. Some nice blue-eyed salesman had convinced Howard that a flat roof with some muslin and a little black coloring matter would keep the rain out.

[Tape 2: Side 2]

Perkins: Eleven hundred square feet for \$110, or some such amount, would keep the rain out. The rain hadn't heard this. We came home that night and two, four-by-twelve pieces of ceiling paneling that had been holding water for days had finally given up right over our beds. The insulation material above it was four inches of laminated corrugated paper that was then the popular

refrigeration thing for General Electric refrigerators. That was the insulation detail at that time. These blocks had that inadequate roofing: flat, just laid in the steel. It had just one fault; it didn't keep the rain out! We were unable to get anybody on the telephone and our open touring car was crippled for some reason or another and we didn't want to drive to Evanston. Anyway, it was a long night. We managed to get some sleep in the living room, one room that hadn't succumbed to the rain

Blum: Was that at the time of the Century of Progress Exposition?

Perkins: No. This would have been in 1935 maybe.

Blum: What was the experience like working for Howard Fisher at the exposition?

Perkins: All of his life we were very close friends. He was a supremely difficult and arbitrary person. I, at least, loved him dearly. His very impressive wife, Marion, had been the big secretary and assistant to, John Collier in the Bureau of Indian Affairs. We had everything in the way of procedures. The only thing we didn't have right was the major premise. All of the subordinate details were great. We didn't have a house that anybody wanted; it was much too modern. It would still be pretty red meat, pretty severe, even right now. Even at the height of the Miesian domination it would have been a little too austere. Howard was more rational than artistic and if it was unreasonable that an ornament be put there, then it wasn't there. Also, one of the things that meant was that it could never be inexpensive. We were living in a world that believed that the building business was an archaic handicraft activity. What we didn't understand was that there were some very intelligent people who had been in the building business for more or less fifty thousand years. All of them weren't stupid. We didn't realize that balloon frame construction, with a bunch of good Swede carpenters, could dance around us in terms of all of the improvements that we were going to make by assembly line procedures. Another thing that we didn't realize is that an automobile, which was our conceptual role model, had twenty percent of its cost in advertising, twenty percent more of its cost was in getting it shipped

from the factories to the dealers and so forth, and the actual manufacturing cost including profit of the automobile you drive was much less. So if you were driving a \$1,000 automobile then it cost less than \$500 when it was ready to leave Detroit. The cost of distribution is more than half of the real cost of a car you drive today or any other day. Shipping bulk goods to the site and assembling them there, and the economy of having your own real estate firm marketing these and all that... Then you are beginning to parallel the role model of the automobile. It took us a while and the loss of the company, to learn this. The mobile homes that we see today are supremely portable for one thing. They are exceptional in that they are not tied to a particular piece of land. A house that has a foundation has a place significance. We just believed that the ability to go out and build a house in a day would be critical. First of all, there were all of these costs of making it happen. Second of all there was the fact that steel is not a cheap material. A good carpenter, with studs and siding, could get the same result instantly and with far less material cost. We just underestimated the problem.

Blum: At the time you worked for Howard Fisher in 1933 and 1934 were you convinced of the merit of prefabricated housing?

Perkins: There was nothing else to do and I was convinced of the force of Howard's personality. I thought that if anybody could make the facts give up, he would. The facts even outlasted Howard.

Blum: Did you believe that prefabrication was a viable solution?

Perkins: I guess I did. I certainly came to disbelieve it as the obstacles made themselves apparent and effective.

Blum: What is your opinion of the Century of Progress Exposition? Do you think it had any influence or was it just a political farce?

Perkins: I think it had some tentative influence. Mostly I think it was taken as being frivolous, or if not frivolous just a good Balaban and Katz show. When the

fireworks were over, why it was over. There was some residual from it, in the sense that the 1893 fair, which Louis Sullivan deprecated—he said it set back architecture fifty years. Well, with Mr. Sullivan and all of his prestige, the only point he missed was the main one. The 1893 fair was incomparably more influential, and is today, than the 1933 exposition. It was the only thing that we had in America up until that time that had general planning. Any set of buildings, even with a limited palette of materials, on that plan would have been a great and noble thing. The white columns leading to the climax, it's the thing that our Northwestern University here just doesn't know that the University of Chicago does know somewhat because they inherited that same physical plan. Land planning has far more to do with the nobility of that architecture than the detail of any building. Sullivan's own building at the 1893 world's fair wasn't particularly helpful to the total effect. Scorn the classicists though you may, the white repetitive thing that culminated on that dome has had far more impact than the 1933 fair ever began to have. That fair was a too-planned set of individual chest-beating ego trips.

Blum: How important was planning in your architectural education? Was it a significant factor?

Perkins: We had a very strong landscape department right in the drafting room with us. We did collaborative problems from time to time. It was part of passing your history course to know the plan of Versailles. It was regrettably not so important a part to know the plan of the Katsura garden, which I think is superior to Versailles in every way that matters to me. As far as geometric land planning goes, we had our nose rubbed in it.

Blum: Was it in school where you met Phil Will? Or did you know him from Chicago prior to Cornell?

Perkins: He lived in Rochester. He was already a sophomore at Cornell when I arrived from our year in Europe. I had not known him before. He was in the architectural school a half a year ahead of me. He had transferred in the middle of his sophomore year to architecture. I was a member of Sigma Phi.

At Sigma Phi we'd take ourselves very seriously. For instance, we never had anything to do with the coeds, except the one I spent fifty years with.

Blum: Sigma Phi was your fraternity?

Perkins: Yes.

Blum: And Phil was a member?

Perkins: Yes, he was a member. I was already a member from Wisconsin, transferred. I met my high school mate, Porky Scheidenhelm, who became my roommate that year. There are quite a bunch of stories there. Phil became more and more a part of my life as we walked to class every day. We had most of the same classes and so on for years. When we had enough seniority we had the imperial suite in the house, which meant that we had a room big enough to turn around in.

Blum: You became good friends at that time?

Perkins: We became very good friends, to the point where we wrote letters to each other when he won the Shreve, Lamb and Harmon Fellowship, which meant that he worked for a year for Shreve's firm in New York. I lost it the next year to Ned Tourtelot, of Mittlebusher and Tourtelot. Phil was a real fun guy. As our time went on, Phil and Carol Sinclair, who he was going with, decided to get married. Midge and I had been married for I guess a year at that time. I went down to Indianapolis to be his best man—that's where Callie lived at that time. We came back and the Century of Progress was up and blocking all traffic in the area. For months Callie thought I was responsible for trying to take them to see the Century of Progress on the first night of their marriage, driving up from Indianapolis. We were in traffic and were just trapped. I couldn't do a damn thing about it. Phil said that was not one of the happiest nights of their marriage... They stayed upstairs in our house for a day or two, I'm not sure of that detail. I took him to lunch at the Cliff Dwellers with Howard Fisher. Howard tried to persuade him to stay here right then.

Howard was basically paying us in stock so that we would then share in the greatness of it all if General Houses ever had any. Phil said he wanted to go East to get his license exam all disposed of—I already had mine. The license exam is something you should do very promptly after school while you're still in the habit of knowing how to take exams. I have gotten much better grades than people who knew forty times more than I did. Fred Starbuck—I mentioned him earlier—flunked the Illinois State Board exam on specifications. He wrote the specifications for Perkins, Chatten and Hammond. They flunked him and I got a ninety-something, which is due to nothing more than the fact that I was more freshly out of school than he was.

Blum: This was for your Illinois license?

Perkins: Yes. Phil wanted to go East and take his, so he did. He came back and went to work as a designer. They found out that I wasn't much of a designer or much of a draftsman so they made me an executive. I shared a desk with Howard and wrote his routine mail. He rewrote it.

Blum: When you were in school and met Phil and became close friends, did you ever think then that you would be in practice together?

Perkins: I don't know what he thought. I was determined that there would be a Perkins, Wheeler and Will.

Blum: Did you share your thinking with Phil Will?

Perkins: Probably not.

Blum: So it was your vision?

Perkins: The firm is my baby, yes. They are my two best friends, Phil was my best friend in college and Wheeler was my best friend in high school. Incidentally, Todd and I are—I guess I told you this—polite but not friends any more. Todd Wheeler was the one who led the insurrection that broke my hold on

the firm. He is a compulsive champion for whom he perceives to be the underdog. He is also a compulsive anti-establishment person. I, coming from this house and what not, represented the establishment in his eyes. When some New York draftsmen turned out later to be god-awful pains and got us into a lot of trouble Todd got a sense of integrity out of rejecting personal loyalty and championing their insurrection against me, repressive conservatism or something.

Blum: Is this when you retired?

Perkins: No. This was about the time of forcing my retirement.

Blum: What was the relationship between Todd Wheeler and Perkins and Will throughout the years? He was off and on an associate.

Perkins: Do you have some blank paper? I once used to draw what I'm about to display.

Blum: You have drawn what you describe as a molecule.

Perkins: And the valence bonds between the various characters, as I have drawn it. Phil was not a person who attached people to him too much. He was content to be attached even though it hurt his ego at times. With Todd Wheeler there was no question that he was there and related to me. That again was not a driving force in his mind. With the people that I brought in, there was a very deep affection, a personal loyalty, between Starrett and just about everybody in the firm—he was really loved and respected. I think I told you the other day he was not only a creative builder but he did things for the art of profanity that have seldom been equaled in art history and human history.

Blum: In the very beginning, when you and Phil Will, your college friend, and Todd Wheeler, your high school friend, came together, how did the two of you, first of all, decide to go into business? Then, a year later, Todd Wheeler was added. How did that happen?

Perkins: That's not exactly the chronology but we were living in the Marshall Field Garden Apartments. Phil Will was on the second floor and we were on the fourth floor at 1423 Hudson Avenue. I was in an independent practice of sorts. I had been the tenth and least of the ten architects who did what later came to be called the Ida B. Wells housing on the South Side. This was because a family friend, Mr. Ickes, had directed that I be included. This was public works under his jurisdiction. I had used my privilege of hiring one person to hire Phil to be a designer there. I had some other work and it very quickly got to be more than I could do or even knew how to do with my hands. I went down to Phil's apartment. I remember sitting in the dining room with him and Callie. The conversation in which we formed the firm ran almost verbatim like this: Phil said, "Well it's obvious that you can write your own ticket, but I'd like to know what the ticket is." I said "Very well, the ticket is as follows: fifty-fifty on anything that we can make until we have enough work to include Todd Wheeler. Then it's one-one-one on that."

Blum: Todd Wheeler was really considered right from the beginning?

Perkins: Before the beginning, before I ever spoke to Phil. Not directly.

Blum: But Todd had a place in your vision, in your first plan?

Perkins: Frankly I think that is what I did. That and subsequently knowing that we needed business management. If we had left business to ourselves, we would have been gloriously bankrupt. I'm better about not spending money I don't have than Phil ever was. Todd Wheeler was above all that sort of thing. So anyway, I knew I needed business management. I knew we needed somebody that could get us taken seriously so that people would believe that we could build any damn thing that we could draw. Starrett was that person.

Blum: When did Starrett join?

Perkins: After the end of the war, I had a personal investment in something that was

called Princeton Park, out on 95th and Princeton Avenue on the South Side. There were 908 houses there and I was one of the investors with the Holsmans, who were the architects of it. That's a whole other, complicated story. Twenty-two years later we recovered our investment. There was a very acceptable return on it by then. It had been in desperate condition. Starrett was our employee. I had known him—he was also a high school classmate. New Trier is a great school for that matter. He used his personal prestige to get the contractors to trust him enough to finish the job.

Blum: The Princeton Park apartments?

Perkins: Princeton Park apartments, yes. When that was finished and about that time, Mr. Joseph Kennedy bought the Merchandise Mart and that left John Goodall without a job. I said, "Here's a business manager," to myself, "and here's a builder. Let them be the next partners." They came in still on a one-one-one basis. This was just at the close of the war.

Blum: 1946 or so?

Perkins: 1946 is about right, yes.

Blum: So your firm really went from you and Phil to being you, Phil, and Todd?

Perkins: Yes. After the war we expanded with Starrett and Goodall. The next was Lee Cochran.

Blum: What did Cochran add to this arrangement?

Perkins: He had been the chief architect for the Chicago Housing Authority. We brought him in with the hope that he would bring in housing the way that Jack Merrill did for Nat Owings. Jack Merrill lived right down the street here.

Blum: What did Jack Merrill do for Nat?

Perkins: He brought in highrise apartments. Merrill had connections with the FHA. He had been the chief architect for the FHA on highrise apartments. One of the first things they got was some highrises out on Ogden Avenue on the near Southwest Side.

Blum: You hoped that your firm would move into that?

Perkins: Into housing and so forth. Cochran, later on, got to be enormously accepted by the school people. He went to all school meetings with me. He was the trusted partner in charge on some of the big high schools in the west suburbs.

Blum: So the development of your firm was really very well planned. You had it sort of planned from the very beginning?

Perkins: I certainly planned the first three in the beginning and also as I felt lacks and needs up through and including Cochran and our employees, who were John Boyce and, early on, Ned Tourtelot. Ned never did understand why we took Todd Wheeler instead of him.

Blum: He never understood?

Perkins: Perhaps just a bit, but anyway it wasn't what I wanted. I'm fond of Ned, he was fun. He would say outrageous things. When the party was getting dull he would come through with a nice quiet, gentle, spoken thing like, "Well, we could chose up sides and smell armpits." This is a digression but it will fit; when we were at Cornell, Phil and Ned and I were taking the same course in reinforced concrete design. It was a course in which ritual and exact exactitude was absolutely demanded. The man who wrote the textbook was teaching the course and he was a no-nonsense man. He didn't explain if you brought it in with the right answer but used a wrong procedure. You were told, "Wrong. Go back and do it over again." As a sample of our three minds Phil got through the course with his all-time lowest grade while in Cornell, a seventy-three. That was a low C, which wasn't all that bad. A very high C or the lowest possible B was Tau Beta Phi, so it wasn't all that bad. But seventy-

three wasn't very good for Phil. They told me if I would please get a sixty on the exam they'd give me the course rather than have me back again. Tourtelot went through that course with an average on his daily work and preliminary exams—he didn't take the final exam—of one hundred. As an average, that's not bad. This was Ned's mind and it had the strengths and limitations that it implies. Life wouldn't last long enough for him to use a soft pencil to get feeling into his architecture. Granted a rather dull premise, it would be beautifully worked out. That's why I didn't go for Ned. Incidentally, Todd and Porky Scheidenhelm, who I told you was my roommate when I first got to Cornell, tied for the high grade in New Trier in their class. Phil was the high grade at Cornell in the class just ahead of me. I was not the lowest grade in both, but I was decidedly unimpressive scholastically. The one thing that I think I can look you in the eye and say I've done well in my life is to know what I am not and to recognize it in other people. Also to get them to be willing to contribute it to the pot.

Blum: Was this a sign of something your father believed?

Perkins: I told you the story about the steps over there.

Blum: Was that the story when your father said you couldn't do another man's job as well as he?

Perkins: That was part of it, yes. He told me that basically everybody you ever meet would know more about his subject than you do. You will do well to learn to use his brains. "You might as well start now," was the rest of the sentence. I was sixteen at the time. You'll recognize the story now that I've rerun most of it. That's the story of my life really.

Blum: Was your father's approach your example to that kind of thing?

Perkins: He knew that he needed Fellows and Hamilton. They'd looked all their life for the right engineer partner to make that the foursome that it should have been. They never found him. A fellow named Yardley almost made it, but he

was a fragile soul.

Blum: At the time you and Phil came together did you speak about what your expectations were? Your plans for developing a firm? Or did it just happen?

Perkins: We were in the depression and we were absolutely thrilled to get a job. I remember one of our very early jobs was at Carl Evans's house in Glencoe on Woodlawn and something, I can still find it, I guess. It cost \$18,000 or \$19,000. It had four bedrooms, three baths, and a two-car garage, all for that price. The architectural fee on it was eight percent, for which we managed subcontracts as well. We had a spaghetti dinner to celebrate. Not too long thereafter my cousins, the McNamaras—he was by way of becoming president of Scott Foresman and later became chairman of the board—were about to build a house. They were loyal, very daringly so, and worked themselves up to giving us the job. They did want Ed Mittlebush, who didn't stay with the job very long, to look over our shoulder because he was five years older and more experienced. That was our big, big job. That, more than any other one thing, may have gotten us the Crow Island job. Phil Will thinks to the contrary because he thinks his house over here in Evanston, which was indeed a factor, was what got us Crow Island. That's fifteen percent of the truth. One hundred percent truth of that fifteen percent I guess is the way to say it. The McNamara house was forty-nine percent of why we got the Crow Island school, because all the people involved in the Winnetka school board were close, close, close, personal friends of theirs who were in and out of that house all the time. It was finished in 1936. Of course, Washburne knew my mother's books intimately. He and his wife Heluize wrote children's books. They knew them that way. They knew Eleanor, my sister, as a friend, as fellow literati and so on. There was a tremendous interweaving. Of itself that would not have gotten the job had we not offered to share and invite Saarinen to do it with us.

Blum: How influential do you think the fact was that your father had established himself as a school architect especially in the suburbs?

- Perkins: Especially in Winnetka. Every school but one in Winnetka was already his, through Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton. Skokie, Hubbard Woods, parts of New Trier... Dad's work was overwhelmingly accepted. "But that's your father, we don't know what you can do," was the retort.
- Blum: That was more prestige for you than for another firm that didn't have that kind of heritage.
- Perkins: Of course. Without Saarinen they would have been awfully nice and very respectful but we wouldn't have gotten the job.
- Blum: The Crow Island School story is so important and has been told so many times, it is almost legend now. You were there and you were part of it. What really happened?
- Perkins: It's hard to know where to start. This was all of my life for more than three years. From the time it was a rumor and a hope until it was an accomplished building and starting to be recognized.
- Blum: When did you first hear about plans to build the school?
- Perkins: The very first rumor of this came from Todd Wheeler, who was an ardent member of the Co-op Society, and Rae Logan, assistant principal in a Winnetka school, who was also a Co-op member and a friend of Todd's. They said they were thinking about building a new school. Todd told me about it. This was, of course, a much more imposing project than we were accustomed to going after. This was in our house building days. A school would be branching out into a whole new field, except that I was the son of a man who had been one of the three or four most prominent school architects in America, and who had indeed done quite a bit of the work in Winnetka. One of his partners, Hamilton, lived in Winnetka and he was still alive at this time. It was way, way beyond anything that would be expected of us at that time. The principal accomplishments that we had of our own were most importantly the McNamara house on the edge of the Indian Hill Golf Club.

20 Indian Hill Road is that address. It is still occupied by my cousin Helen McNamara, who gave us that job as an act of faith. Phil Will's own house, which established us in his mind and others, as being committed to or at least considerably engaged in contemporary architecture. That in itself was not too much. In any case, I took Todd Wheeler's conversation and marched up to see Carleton Washburne, the superintendent of school who was himself the creative force of the Winnetka system. He was one of the brightest men I have ever known, ever in any field, but also a very controversial one. I went to see him in his office. He, of course, knew the McNamaras. He had been in their house many times. He, of course, knew my mother since he and his wife Heluize wrote children's books and my mother was dominant in the children's book field at that time. He knew my sister Eleanor socially and in literary affairs. He knew of my father who was no longer active in practice but was still enormously well known in the school field. That and social connections, friendly connections with most of the members of the school board one way and another, we touched nearly everybody that had anything to do with it. That, in and of itself would simply mean that we would be politely listened to. There were seventeen or eighteen firms that had some kind of a reputation or representation in Winnetka and ours was not one of them. Childs and Smith, who were the big school architects at that time, were indeed there. Bill Smith lived right down the street from Washburne's office. It went on and on with all kinds of heavyweight competition. We were decidedly lightweight. Washburne, in telling this same story, said, "This time I was sort of letting Larry down easy by being thoughtful about it." Washburne was talking something like this, "I don't really know what I want. I know that I don't have it. I know that I don't have it anywhere here. I don't know whether I want to get it by a school architect with a design consultant to give it that kind of importance or a design architect with a school consultant. Of course if we could get somebody like Saarinen, then we wouldn't have that problem. We'd have it all in one, presumably."

Blum: He said that?

Perkins: He suggested that. That was the end of quote. I took a deep breath at that

point, remembering that we were friendly with the Saarinens. We were working on a church job with them that never went ahead at Dearborn and Delaware in Chicago. The Saarinens were family friends because Eliel stayed with my family when he first came from Finland. I took a deep breath and ran one of the most outrageous and shameless bluffs that I have ever run in my life and said, I think that is something we can deliver.” At this point Carleton Washburne’s voice changed.

[Tape 3: Side 1]

Perkins: And his eyes bugged out a little bit and he said, “You can?” I dropped my eyes and my voice and said “Certainly.” We continued a pleasant conversation and I went home and proceeded to forget the whole matter. I had made a good try and I could tell my partners that I had been out promoting that day. That was that. A few days later the telephone rang. I was upstairs in the front bedroom—I remember this—and it was Washburne on the phone. He said that Bob Hammond—Bob was president of the Winnetka school board and father of Jim Hammond, brother of Herrick Hammond of Perkins, Chatten and Hammond, and brother of General Tom Hammond—was on his way to a Michigan football game that weekend. He would like to go and see Mr. Saarinen about what you talked about. I thought to myself, He would? I went down thirty floors in the elevator in one fast swoop. The Hammonds were all famous athletes at Michigan. He was going to a football game at Ann Arbor, a few miles from where Mr. Saarinen’s establishment was. It would be convenient for him to go over there and he would like to do it. I said, “I will call Mr. Saarinen.” I did. Mr. Saarinen was a very soft-spoken, reserved man. He did not gush at any time that I ever knew him. He spoke with careful restraint and said, “This is a school, I do not know.” He was polite. I identified myself with the Hammonds and Herrick Hammond was president of the AIA. I got to know later that the Saarinens took the AIA very seriously. This was helpful so that Herrick Hammond's brother would be very respectfully received. Restrained reluctance was the tone of voice that came back to me on this perfectly cold telephone call. I said, “I don't think you understand, Mr. Saarinen. What they

would like is a design that is acceptable to you. Mr. Hammond would like very much to see the work at the Cranbrook Academy that you've done." Again, with anything but warm conversation, his last word was, "Very well. I will see him." The weekend came and went and about Monday after the weekend I got a call from Washburne. "Bob Hammond has come back and he is absolutely delirious. Mr. Saarinen took him around and took him to lunch at his home and proceeded to turn on the very quiet, anything but gushy, charm. Hammond was absolutely ecstatic." He said, "The building committee wants to go over there. They would like to go over a week from tomorrow." A week from tomorrow was a cold day—I seem to remember frost and a little snow on the ground, but not very much. In any case, the day before Todd Wheeler and I drove over together to interview Mr. Saarinen and tell him about this. The sales negotiation ran something like this: "Mr. Saarinen, we are a young firm. I would like very much for myself and for all of my office to go to school with you. The most practical way to do it is to do it with a real building that gets built. We think we have such a building and we would like to do it under your approval. I would like to have you supervise us. The terms on which I would like to work are that you are the boss and your name comes first. We will do all the work and we will present it to you for correction and direction. We will bring the work to you from time to time. I think it would be necessary for you to come and meet with the school board from time to time. We will do all that can be characterized as routine. You can have any share of the profits that you want up to one hundred percent, which is my sticking point—there was a slight smile by Mr. Saarinen—and that's it." Again in a very quiet, very slightly accented voice, he said, "Mr. Perkins, there is no need of bosses. We can work together. I will take half." That was the last business conversation we ever had. The next day the building committee came and we went around Cranbrook in two cars. Ted Buenger rode with me in my unheated Chevrolet. The rest of the board was in Mr. Saarinen's middle-size Buick. We went to the school for boys, then we went down to Kingswood. We went into the dining hall there. Ted Buenger, who had a rather earthy sense of humor—you may choose to delete this when you're typing—he came out of the dining room there and got back in the car still gasping. He said, "Larry, that dining room affects me with the

same satisfaction as a very complete orgasm.” This was something less than hostile. At lunch at Mr. Saarinen’s house were the members of the building committee: Beatrice Rothschild, Hilde Warfield, Ted Buenger and Washburne himself. Those are all I can remember for sure who were there. We sat down and Washburne after lunch, I remember, stood on his feet to say this. He talked a little bit about the school that he wanted to build and what he wanted to accomplish. He outlined that he wanted an architect who would take the trouble to understand what they did have and what they didn't have in conventional buildings. Finally he finished up by turning the question to Mr. Saarinen, “Would you be interested?” There was a momentary silence while I aged several years. Mr. Saarinen very quietly said, “It is my business.” I took a breath after that and from then on that is what happened. In the almost a year that followed there was very little drawing of buildings. Incidentally, the site was not where the present Crow Island site is now: the first part of this program was assuming that it would be in the Edgewood area, north of Tower Road on the west edge of Winnetka. I believe they still own the property, or maybe the city does by now as a park. A somewhat smaller school was contemplated. The old Horace Mann School, where the post office now stands, was considered obsolete and badly located being in the business center. They wanted the school in a more residential area. The housing around what is now Crow Island was not as established at the northwest corner at that particular time. During that year the principal activity for me was going to Winnetka, sitting in classrooms, literally for weeks at a time, and telling stories to the kids in return for watching and plotting their actions. The result of the year’s observation, programming, study, reading, and talking to people... I don't remember what I all did. I just went to school there both as a student and as a teacher. I came up with the fact that there are about six things that affect elementary school kids, that relate to the physical plan. Having talked about it so much for a great many years I have come to formalize and codify these, although I don’t think I did at the time. The six things are: individual academics, that is to say the traditional classroom with a child sitting at a desk, a teacher in the front and there will be recitation, drawings, writing, whatever you do at a desk when you're sitting there and making like a student. Then there are group

academics, which is the story corner for little children, or the group committee, or anything that the class does as a whole of a subject-matter type of activity. There is individual activity, that's a little kid hammering nails through two shingles to make an airplane, and it is a somewhat older kid holding a Bunsen burner under a test tube of copper sulfate to make it lose its blue color and regain it by putting the water in—that's all individual activity at one level or another. Then there is group activity. Just to identify the period, this is when orange crates were commonplace. The train of orange crates took space—this is group activity now and the essence of progressive education is to come up on the blindside of a kid and get him hooked by something familiar into learning something—so with the train you ask the children, “Will we go to Rockford? Well, where's Rockford?” This was the geography lesson and it was the transportation lesson on why do you have a train and what do they bring. They bring daddy to work, they bring freight, and this and that. The orange crate train was that kind of geography lesson. The orange crate grocery store—which also took space—is your economics lesson on where canned tomatoes come from and the arithmetic lesson is in making change. Now we have four things: individual and group academics, individual and group activity The other two things have simply to do with physical things like handling coats and handling toileting. One of the things that we found out on toileting is that kids are supremely unselfconscious about it until we make them so. Therefore we programmed a single toilet in each classroom, except for the one that was presumed to be for the sixth grade, later the fifth grade, where we had two. As a footnote to that, the fifth grade was later moved in to what had been a third grade room with a single toilet and the crisis that was expected never happened. They paid absolutely no attention to the difference and went about their business. The fifth thing is provision for toileting and the sixth for clothing. With the little kids the teachers are sure of getting them into their snowsuits and all that takes space. Whether to do that in the corridor or in part of classroom was thoroughly debated in the course of this little more than a year, by, I think it is perfectly fair to say, at least eighty people, including faculty, the board, janitors administrators, citizens in general, architects, architects within my firm, and Eero Saarinen. Later in the job, when it was just about ready for working

drawings, Eero Saarinen was out of school and working with his father and I requested that his name be included with his father's on the title corner. This was very happily granted.

Blum: You went to school and you studied the needs. After you spent time studying the needs, how did the planning, how did the design take shape? In your office or Saarinen's? With what degree of collaboration?

Perkins: I found out very quickly that the planning of the building and programming was supremely uninteresting to the Saarinens.

Blum: You mean where things would be built on the site?

Perkins: No, the internal workings and so forth. When the Saarinens came alive was after we were up to half-inch scale elevations, then their pencils started to itch.

Blum: What did they do?

Perkins: Plenty. Their contribution, which was very real and very important, was mainly at the cosmetic level. Their usefulness went way beyond that when Mr. Saarinen spoke that enabled us to get decisions from the board that would have taken a lot more salesmanship and argument from us. Mr. Saarinen, with a quiet, expressed preference, could get a respectful decision in one short sentence that might have taken us maybe twenty minutes of demonstrated arithmetic. Their usefulness went way beyond that. In the actual evolution of the design John Boyce worked on several schemes for the individual classrooms. The Crow Island School is a string of classrooms hung together by corridors leading to the community center part of the building—the auditorium, playroom, library, and art room—which is the hub of the building. One of the things that came out of the programming was that the school should isolate the upper grades, the middle grades, and the kindergarten grades as much as possible from each other and relate them to their own playgrounds. The rationale of that being that little kids will get

short shrift in the playground if the big kids wanted to play some boisterous, rough game. Three wings and three playgrounds were very consciously programmed.

Blum: Exactly what did John Boyce do?

Perkins: John Boyce was working on the classroom all this time. In the L-shaped classroom, the foot of the L was an individual activity area and off that were the toileting and clothing provisions. The big area of the classroom itself—I have yet to meet a teacher that didn't want more space than what she had—this resolved itself. We tried but had to give up for budget reasons a twenty-four by forty foot classroom. It did shake down to twenty-four by thirty-two foot, plus the L for the individual classroom. In this size area were to be accommodated the individual academics, with moveable furniture—this was very important and very radical at that time—with a bay window or some such place for the story corner and the group committee. Also, there was space in the least well lit part of the classroom for the group activity, the orange crates and whatever. The space for that and the movable furniture resulted in a lot of relationships other than the authoritarian teacher facing and glaring at the students. This could be done in a classroom in the round, so to speak, where the kids burn out some of their hostilities on each other instead of the teacher. The classrooms then got to be strung together. The basic plan of how to arrange this was done by Phil Will. The composition of the plan was later changed—to this day I think not to its benefit—by Eero Saarinen. Phil had the main entrance related to Glendale Avenue so that bringing the buses into the property could be done easily. For aesthetic reasons Eero persuaded him to move the entrance into the corner—something I will never do again because you can't get an automobile into a re-entrant corner, whereas if it was out in the flat we could go by it. The basic plan, with the three wings and the hub center, was Phil's modified by Eero. That was the first time there was any real interest in the plan and it was still aesthetic interest. At that time I took much too seriously the detailed requirements of this, that and the other teacher, for this, that and the other space. I now know that many of the mistakes we made on this and other

buildings were done by being too specific. Mr. Saarinen had views on that. He said, "You design it for Miss Jones, but the next fall Miss Smith will work in that classroom." In the same sense that I have never met two women in my life that could agree on a kitchen. Any woman coming into another woman's kitchen would remodel it. I have yet to meet one who wouldn't. The same is true of teachers. Therefore, generations later, I would say that uncommitted permissive space is more valuable than over-designed specific space. I feel some guilt on some of the Crow Island spaces in that line of thought.

Blum: Was Perkins and Will responsible for over-designed space?

Perkins: Yes, Perkins and Will—in this case Larry Perkins specifically. One of the things that I cared about and had to go all the way to Springfield to get permission for were the nine-foot ceilings and light on two sides of the classroom. This was not quite illegal, but the county school superintendent—a man named Noble Puffer—had to approve this. I found this out when it could have been much too late and disastrous. He will always have a place in my high regard because of the way he handled this situation. Washburne and I, to a certain extent, kicking out from behind our goal posts, went down with our hats in our hands and the drawings of Crow Island, which were pretty far advanced by this time. We asked him to approve them and pointed out, since we didn't want to have him point it out, that it had a lower than customary ceiling—nine feet is lower than twelve, which is routine. "Could we have light on two sides of the classroom?" Puffer, in turn, picked up the telephone and called Springfield. His end of the conversation, which we listened to with great interest, was, "Is there any law that specifically prohibits me from approving the nine-foot ceiling?" We walked away from his office with both items approved. This was a major rebellion against the stock classroom of that day. The stock classroom was twenty-four by thirty-two by twelve foot—this is the conventional classroom that I'm describing—which the establishment was against when we rebelled at Crow Island. The establishment said that if the window head of the classroom was half the depth of the room then the light would reach the back row satisfactorily. This was before they invented light meters and found out

that that just plain wasn't true. 'The light did not reach the inner row as adequately as it should on dark days. This was before electric lighting and well before florescent lighting was commonplace. We felt that if we could get the light in from more than just a single source it would distribute better. It would be basically the shade of an apple tree and on a sunny day in a pasture where there was no direct sunlight but a flood of skylight from every direction, which is perfect reading light. We approximated that with light on two sides. The conventional classroom is predicated on thirty students, five rows of six each with fixed desks, twelve feet in front of the teacher's desk, with the activity and blackboard at the front. The wall on the window side projects far enough to cast a shadow on the blackboard to keep it dark enough and legible. On the inner wall, storage in the thickness between there and the corridor. The conventional classroom is predicated on several premises: one is that all teaching is done by putting kids in that rectangular pattern; the second is that the light will reach the inner row; the third is that ventilation of six air changes an hour must be achievable. The layout of the seating is based on the belief that all children are right-handed, or should be. Therefore, the light coming from the left is mandatory. Parenthetically, two of my children are left-handed and we find that we love them equally.

Blum: Were these the things that you learned?

Perkins: They sure are.

Blum: How did Crow Island differ in design to reflect these different premises?

Perkins: Good God! The movable furniture insured that difference; the individual patterns in seating would find their way. I found out that, even so, there were well brought up housekeeping-type teachers who went back to the rectangle, but not always. There were lots of them that had more creative ways of using the kids' energy on each other, rather than in a confrontational relationship with the teacher, which is what the conventional classroom does. This is the core of what really happened at Crow Island. It was the rejection of the rigid conventional classroom, which isn't dead yet—there are still hundreds.

Blum: How did you communicate these discoveries and perception of what was happening at Crow Island in progressive education and children's needs and teachers' wishes to the Saarinens, who were your collaborators but who had not gone to school as you had?

Perkins: Never did communicate that to the Saarinens before the plan was there. It really came alive after the plan was there. Mr. Saarinen dictated that we would use the same cornice as he had used on the Institute of Science at Cranbrook so we did. I knew that we wanted to use color, rather than janitor-centered brown on everything. Mr. Saarinen—I don't remember whether he did or I did—but we had the doors in colors so that Johnny, who hadn't yet learned to read numbers, could go to the blue door on that side rather than to room 103. The kindergarten curtains, long gone, were a delightful random pattern that I think Eliel Saarinen did with his hand. The design of the doorway was Eero Saarinen's, pulling it into the corner. The basic composition of the plan was Phil Will's. The chimney was something I'd always wanted to do and it became a trademark. The clock on the chimney—John Boyce and I were at Cranbrook one time and the clock was in the expected place, on the center of the chimney, and Mr. Saarinen, with his eyes crinkling a little bit and a trace of a smile, said "Oh, no. Let us..." and his hard pencil started swinging. He never made black drawings; they were always very light and gray, whenever I saw them at least. The clock slipped off to one side. It was done with pure whimsy and I said, "That's delightful, but how will I sell this to the board? What do I say to them?" He said "Oh, Mr. Perkins, I am not one hundred percent functionalist." He indeed wasn't. Later on he took me over to see a little carving on one of the pylons at the library, which goes in an interesting pattern around this pylon and finishes on a ball for no reason at all, but it's fun.

Blum: How did you sell an off-center clock to the school board?

Perkins: I didn't say much about it but we just did it. It is interesting that when the building was fresh and new, Winnetka divided right straight down the

middle not about the building—they didn't pay much attention to that—but the clock! Half of Winnetka saw it as a very subtle completion of asymmetrical composition. It was just the last little weight in getting the balance into an exquisitely balanced thing. The other half of Winnetka felt that their intelligence had been insulted. In any case, the war over the aesthetics of Crow Island centered on the clock and paid very little attention to the building itself. The building, particularly before the landscaping took hold, was not loved. It was feared and hosed by fellow educators and so forth. Before we leave the clock and Mr. Saarinen again, I have portrayed him with a very quiet and reserved sense of humor but it was a hell of a good one. He was telling us one day about the architects' convention in Stockholm where they had all been to school. He said, "It was the kind of a meeting where in order to get the floor you had to have a glass in your hand before you could ask for the floor. The glass was conical, with no base on it, like an ice cream cone. It was a good meeting. At this convention we all remembered the school that we had gone to. It was a big six-story building and in the front courtyard there was a wall and a gate. In the gate, on the side of gate, was a little niche and in the niche was a green frog. At the convention twenty years later nobody could remember what the building was like but everybody remembered the frog." He told this story when we were detailing the clock but that seventy-five dollar item rocked Winnetka.

Blum: It's interesting because there was an account published in which Joseph Hudnut, the dean at Harvard, commented on the building. He said that one of the features that he felt was just too Gothic or too romantic was the clock. He further criticized the idea of teaching through the vehicle of a Pioneer Room. How do you respond to his criticism about the clock being too Gothic for a functional school?

Perkins: As a person who loves Gothic, I don't understand it. I have to assume he understands Gothic. Is Hudnut still alive? I don't think so. That was a beautiful article he wrote. Do you have a copy of it?

Blum: The article appeared in *Architectural Forum* in August 1941.

Perkins: One of the great philosophical inputs in that same issue was written by Frances Presler, a very difficult and very gifted woman that we all put up with because what she came through with was so great. The Pioneer Room was one of her sparks that she threw off, and there were many. I think Dean Hudnut is full of prunes on that one. The room serves the same function as any other museum can. A museum where you can experience... look at the Museum of Science and Industry where you have buttons to push to make things work. The kids, who lived in Winnetka are pretty well sheltered from how you get food, clothing and shelter in this world, had the experience of what to do when you don't have everything on a button-pushing basis. I kind of think again that an idea is good while it's fresh. Any idea should be changed when it becomes part of the establishment. While the teachers are fresh and enthusiastic there is no program that isn't great, conventional or otherwise, as long as it is done with fire. Teachers are just as bad as architects. It would be great if there were as much as ten-percent artist-teachers, sixty-percent mechanic-teachers and the balance dull teachers. That's true of any field of endeavor. Walter Cocking used to say there were three-percent creative architects, twenty-percent intelligent followers, and the balance were followers of the followers.

[Tape 3: Side 2]

Blum: How do you respond to Hudnut's criticism about the art room being too far removed from the flow of the regular classroom in light of the fact that Crow Island actually incorporated little objects of art in the building?

Perkins: We'll come to that later. That story relates to Eero's then wife, Lillian Swann, who was an Olympic skier and so on.

Blum: How do you respond to Hudnut's comment?

Perkins: That's about the art. I respond to the fact that Muriel Kradiak, who was the art teacher and who did work in each of three individual classrooms, used it

well. It came alive and she could get them familiar with various ways of making marks on a piece of paper. It was a perfectly good piece of equipment in her hands, regrettable in the habit of a mechanical teacher. The room was a little extension to give Muriel a tool to work with.

Blum: My understanding of what he was saying is that a child should be as familiar with the tools of art as with the tools of writing, with a pen and a brush. Art should be an integral part of one's education and not limited to a special room in the building for an hour a week.

Perkins: If the individual classroom teacher is up to that and if Mr. Hudnut were a musician—which he may have been, I don't know—he would certainly say the same thing about music. That music is not something you go down the corridor for either. Are there literature teachers who can play the piano in every classroom? Probably not. You make do with the art room, the music room and all that; they were good tools in the hands of the teachers.

Blum: Are you saying that you responded to what you saw as the use and limitations of the teacher, or the way in which the space would be used?

Perkins: With the benefit of hindsight I think that we would try—as we have tried in many buildings since—to make more permissive space and let them improvise. There was one phase that people went through where there were no partitions and just a big open field where the classes gathered here and there in a big, open room. That had to fail, although I guess there were moments of enthusiasm for it in its early stages that may have done some good work. What's wrong with it is that each teacher is, consciously or otherwise, a somewhat dramatic coach and is responsible for building a mood of either fun to enjoy or quiet to think. To have distractions going on all around you, some noisy, some quiet—well, the individual classroom has tremendous survival possibilities. It has not been displaced. I remember once when Frank Chase at the University of Chicago remarked in a meeting, “The wake of education is strewn with the white bones of educational innovations.” Some like the big partition-less classroom building that had a

very brief life. For the most part I think we sat it out, as I hope we sat out the Miesian period. That was a lot harder to do. In any case, those were some, but by no means all, of the imperfectly perceived educational needs. Apparently, the kids who go there still turn out reasonably all right.

Blum: After completion of Crow Island, a letter by Carleton Washburne was published in *Brick and Tile* in March 1947.

Perkins: 1947 would be seven years after completion.

Blum: Apparently he wrote this letter in 1943 but it wasn't published until 1947. In this letter he says, "While the major credit for design, color, and materials in the Crow Island School probably belongs to Eliel and Eero Saarinen, since that was their major responsibility in this building, the detailed functionalism of the building was entirely the work of Perkins and Will."

Perkins: I guess that's right. Certainly the proportions and the working of the rooms and the relation of rooms to each other and all that, I'm sure that's ours. Now we haven't even started to build the building yet. Everything we've talked about so far is program.

Blum: How did the actual collaboration of building work? Was there collaboration during the building phase?

Perkins: Very little. We managed the subcontracts on it for eight percent.

Blum: I was asking more about your collaboration with the Saarinens.

Perkins: Mr. Saarinen made two or three trips and visited with the board. I remember one time when we were working on the flooring and the light colored flooring that we both wanted for lighting reasons and it was twelve hundred dollars more expensive than the darker colors. The asphalt was more asphaltish as you get darker and cheaper. I was getting all prepared for a great push to see if we could persuade them because twelve hundred dollars

was a pretty formidable figure. Remember, the whole building cost \$287,000, including architects. Those are strange numbers today. Later we built the same contents in Scarsdale for one million dollars in an equally stringent dollar economy but by then the dollar amount had changed. With the asphalt tile, Mr. Saarinen was in town then and came out to Winnetka. They asked him which he felt was best. He said, "This is best," in a very quiet tone of voice. It was not discussed again. Very well, Mr. Saarinen has spoken, so I guess we have to do it, was the unspoken response.

Blum: Was that generally the attitude throughout the entire process? If Saarinen wanted something, then it was done?

Perkins: There were very few such questions, but yes. I would have fought like a bearcat to see that they get done. It wasn't necessary usually. This was not a major part of their lives; it was all of ours—one hundred ten percent of my life during those years.

Blum: How long did the actual process of building take once plans were agreed to and set?

Perkins: We broke ground in September of 1939. The building was occupied, but with incomplete items, in September of 1940.

Blum: It was just a year.

Perkins: A very interesting thing happened in the construction there. About this time Janet Gordon Getgood had been killed at a Winnetka train crossing. Her husband was the head of Winnetka Community House at that time. She had been a classmate of mine at New Trier High School. Winnetka pulled themselves together and made the grade separation and dug a trench through Winnetka and sunk the railroad tracks. This resulted in four or five million cubic yards of clay. Crow Island was on land that flooded in the spring sometimes because this was a nice Skokie marsh, so we accepted the dumping of that clay. It was enough to raise our whole site five feet except

for the area of the building itself. The excavation at Crow Island for the foundations went down less than two feet. We brought the land up to the first floor, which is that much higher. The grade separation changed the whole nature to where if the Skokie flooded it would have to flood five feet deep to get to us. This had indeed happened, not the five feet. I remember one flood one summer on the site that we were working with. Carleton Washburne's son-in-law, just by way of a statistic, swam from Carleton's house two blocks away to the Crow Island site and back without touching bottom. He had to swim pretty carefully to do it; it was quite a flood.

Blum: For your young office to handle this commission did you enlarge your staff?

Perkins: By two or three people, yes.

Blum: Whom did you add?

Perkins: Fred Dolke really bucked through the working drawings. Phil, by that time, was much more interested in the Hales house, which is on Tower Road—the Bill Hales, not the Burton Hales, because they are next door to each other on Tower Road. Phil really didn't charrette with us—that word has become a verb, as we said earlier. He was charretting his own job. Parenthetically, Phil is basically a one-thing-at-a-timer. His mind did not enjoy keeping six things in the air at the same time, never did. He had both great strength and great limitations. We did add that. If you were to take the five feet away, Crow Island would look not like a conventional basement but like a daddy longlegs with all of the classrooms and everything else standing on posts. Occasionally, when a raccoon digs its way in there and lets cold air in under the floor, that's undesirable, but it's good working space and we were able to keep it warm underneath.

Blum: You mentioned the Hales house.

Perkins: Do you know it?

Blum: I've seen the house and it's very conventional. How did you equate doing perhaps the most modern school building for its time with a traditional-looking residence?

Perkins: We wanted to eat. That was what the client wanted and if we wanted the job we had to do it his way. For our own satisfaction we had to do it well and that was that. To do anything contemporary in the world that we lived in was a fight. The comfortable thing to do was something like the Hales house. Even the Tony Michels house on Oakley, which was fairly radical, was sold one night at dinner with a sketch that affected the design from then on. The sketch was goosed up with some nice trees and stuff—I made it at dinner, I know.

Blum: Perkins and Will was making its mark in architecture by coming out with this contemporary building, the Crow Island School and yet...

Perkins: We were freshening up, we were indeed. Crow Island did not bring us any work until well after the war. We broke ground there the same week that Hitler invaded Poland. There was no school building business to do, hardly, with the exception of Rugen School. In some ways it is a more interesting design than Crow Island.

Blum: The Rugen School in Glenview?

Perkins: Glenview, yes. It took about seven years before the real surge of Crow Island influence was felt. In the meantime, Lincolnwood School had been decided. A very opinionated lady board member actually voiced what would be the majority opinion of just laymen that weren't thinking too much about things. They ordained that the school I wanted desperately to do in this neighborhood and didn't... She had the force of airing her own opinion so that she was able to dictate that the Lincolnwood School was to meet five conditions. It was to be symmetrical, two stories, Georgian, beautiful, and not like that thing in Winnetka. She got her way and it's a good C-plus traditional job. She was voicing that comfortable opinion well after the war.

Blum: You are also saying, if I understood you correctly, that a school board has a great deal of power.

Perkins: They all have the power.

Blum: How did you find working with the school board in Winnetka?

Perkins: That was probably the finest and highest grade group of people that I have ever seen assembled for any committee purpose. During the thirty years that I stayed really close to that board—maybe more than thirty years—in their bad moments they sank to an A-minus. I'm quite sentimental about school boards in general because that's the least corrupted and most effective part of American democracy. They get higher-grade people than does the Congress of the United States. At no time that I was ever there did they ever have a board that could not match in quality of persons in a company like United States Steel or anything of that magnitude. Winnetka is, of course, exceptionally rich. They can command Clarence Randall, chairman of Inland Steel, Bob Hammond of the Whiting Corporation, Edward Bullard, one of the best corporate lawyers that the city's ever had, and Ted Buenger—the one who made the somewhat outrageous remark about Kingswood—president of Dovenmuehle, a big mortgage banking firm.

Blum: In other words, you got along well?

Perkins: Wonderfully. School boards in general, because they don't pay their members and because the relationship is so intimate between cost and the result of what they're trying to accomplish, seem to be in favor of kids.

Blum: What was the relationship between the school board, Superintendent Washburne, and you as architect? Who really had the final say?

Perkins: The final say was the board. They completely trusted, but not abjectly. The board was critically aware of everything Washburne wanted. When he had

his reasons for doing it, which he almost always did, he was almost always backed to the hilt.

Blum: Crow Island was done about a year before your father died.

Perkins: That is correct.

Blum: How did he view Crow Island?

Perkins: Without enthusiasm. Dad liked buildings that stood up. In the same part of his mind he resented the house two doors down from here because it is the nasty little house in the middle of stand-up big ones. He saw this ostensibly modest low structure as being sort of barracky. He was equally not at all enthusiastic about the faculty housing at the Cranbrook Academy. He never saw Crow Island with its full landscaping. If he had I think he would have changed his mind about Winnetka. Dad was not enthusiastic about that design at all.

Blum: The idea of Crow Island sited in a park-like setting was a concept that your dad had written about years earlier, that and a one-floor plan.

Perkins: His own Hubbard Woods School in Winnetka, to dad's thinking, was a much pleasanter building because of the pitched roofs. With the bright light of hindsight I would not willingly put a flat roof on much of anything. They have one fault, and that is that ultimately they wouldn't let the water through. That's undesirable. I wouldn't do that again. The brick that I wanted to use on Crow Island, and did use on that house that I built across the street from Phil Will's, is over-burned, soda ash Chicago common. Eero did not dictate but sold the decision not to use that brick but to use the yellow brick instead. To Scandinavian people, yellow is not as repulsive a color as it is to those of us who cringe at the yellow of the Techny Monastery buildings and so on. I didn't like yellow but, happily, weathering has darkened it. It has a much richer color than the mechanical yellow that Eero liked. It was one of the things that made the building unpopular until it

began to weather and get dirty. I love him, I admire him, but I sure disagree with him. Did, do, and always will on that point.

Blum: Through some of your working contacts you've described Eliel Saarinen. How do you remember Eero?

Perkins: I lived at his house during the war when he was working on the Willow Run Village and various other things. He asked me to work on the schools there, which I did. He had me locked up in a room with Charlie Eames. He put us there because he said we talked too much and this way we wouldn't disturb the rest of the guys. Eero was forceful, fun, and unbelievably hard working. When I was living with him we would get up pretty late in the morning and walk over to the office. Later, lunch would be brought in, our supper brought in, and we worked on until one or two in the morning. We would prepare something, he would come in, sketch over it, sketch over it, sketch over it, sketch over it and then we'd try this. We'd do that and then he'd come back and he'd just keep changing this and that until our eyes just wouldn't track. We'd go home at about two or two-thirty in the morning and sleep until eleven. That was the way he worked. He was a very devoted skier. He and his then athlete/sculptor wife would go out skiing. I asked him one time, when I went out with him in the hills—I had some boots and I was hiking—I said, "Are skis something that you can borrow or are they as personal as skate shoes?" Those are not exactly interchangeable and you can't borrow those. He said, "No, it is more like your toothbrush." That's one Eero Saarinen. Another—I was on a plane to Spokane and Northwest Airlines stopped in Minneapolis on the way out. I heard a very familiar voice reciting his name to the stewardess, "Saarinen." I moved back to sit with him until his sleeping pill overtook him. In the meantime, he was on a committee of three—Pietro Belluschi, Welton Beckett, and Eero. They were on Frank Pace's committee to approve or disapprove the Air Force Academy work of Walter Netsch. Since Eero was seeing Welton Beckett and we were doing a shopping center at Milwaukee and Beckett was to do the Gimbel's store and I'd never set eyes on the man, I asked, "What's he like?" Eero said, "Well, I will tell you, but you must not repeat this. If you and he were sitting on a cake of ice

in the arctic waiting to be rescued, he would eat you first, before he was even hungry.” Those two sketches will give you at least a beginning of the picture. One more word on the Saarinens: Saarinen, Sr., was much the greater “people” architect while Eero was much the greater “thing” architect. Eero could do an impersonally admirable job in the Miesian sense, but in no way copying Mies. It would be, throughout, an object of great clarity. Eliel could always come up with a nicer place to be.

Blum: Is there anyone else whose participation in the Crow Island School stands out in your memory?

Perkins: There is no way I can answer that without forgetting and insulting twenty or thirty people.

Blum: Can you do some selective remembering?

Perkins: I’ll do a little selective remembering and say that the actual management of the construction operations itself was in the hands of Todd Wheeler. He had as his more than full-time assistant—twelve or fourteen hours a day—Jim Hammond, son of Bob Hammond, who has appeared earlier in these remarks.

Blum: Bob Hammond was president of the school board.

Perkins: The president of the school board and it was, as far as I know, the only bit of nepotism on the job. Jim deferred his senior year at the University of Michigan in order to work for a pittance, maybe twenty dollars a week or some such amount, for a year on that building. It has been an education that has proved itself and paid off most generously in his career since. They had an unusually heavy job of architectural supervision because of the contractors—the largest single one was Coath and Goss and the plumbing, heating, electrical, and various other trades were also let separately from the general contract. It was their job to manage and coordinate all of these different entities that built the building for which we got an additional fee.

Instead of the usual six percent, we got eight percent for doing it with direct subcontracts. Jim and Todd managed this. That was not always a happy relationship but it was worth it. It enabled us to get the whole building built, including interior furnishings, for under \$300,000. The contracts, including architect, were \$287,000. The land and building cost the taxpayers \$340,000. Those were the characteristics that were central to that period.

Blum: How did the community respond to the building once it was up? Obviously you had the support of the school board and the superintendent.

Perkins: The school board had faith because of their intelligent awareness of the Saarinen's. Somewhere it says that nobody should be allowed to see a building half or two-thirds finished, this was one of our problems. I would say that on average the building was somewhere between disliked and hated by a substantial majority, until at least two or three years after its completion. Ugly and unfamiliar are related words; they aren't synonymous. An unfamiliar building is frequently dismissed for that and no other reason. This was certainly true of Crow Island School. The reason that the board had reacted so much in the opposite direction when they were visiting Cranbrook was that the landscaping had time to take hold and put the buildings in context. Now that Crow Island has a very rich and weathered context it is, I think, somewhere between accepted and loved.

Blum: Crow Island School has certainly proven its architectural significance over the years. It was awarded a twenty-five year award from the AIA. It has worn very well. In fact, that was the commission that launched the very young firm of Perkins and Will.

Perkins: It certainly did but the launching was a delayed reaction. The ship was kept in dry dock until after the war. It was interesting that during the war we did everything that we could to prepare. The general wisdom of the time was best expressed to me by the man who was then publishing *Esquire* and *Coronet* magazines, Dave Smart. He had discovered that pictures of naked ladies got attention. I was happy to hear this. I was in his office one day when

he was negotiating to use the copyright on the Twin books, which were written by my mother, Lucy, for some movies he was making. He was explaining to me why his offer to do it—that I must give it to him for nothing—was to my advantage. I was slow in seeing this. He then added this remark, “After all, the public is always wrong.” I looked unconvinced. He said, “I will prove it to you. You know what’s going to happen when the war’s over?” I said, “No, I don’t think that I do.” He said, “Well, you go out here and stop the first ten men that look as if they had any substance to them outside the Palmolive building”— as the building was called then—“and ask them what’s going to happen to the economy when the war is over. Eight, nine or ten out of ten of them will tell you that we will revert to a depression that will look like St. Francis talking to the birds compared to what they’re going to get the next time. The general belief is that it will be grim.” Here came the key sentence: “That’s proof enough. It won’t happen.” We were preparing for the postwar depression, which most monumentally did not occur. The avalanche of perceived need for schools, the war babies, and all the rest of it came with a whoop and a holler. As everybody now knows with hindsight, the 1950s were a roaring time of expansion. During the war, the old Rugen School, which was in the middle of one of the runways of the Glenview air base—this was felt to lower its usefulness as a school—had to be removed. We took lumber from it, some of the unspeakably antiquated plumbing fixtures, and I knew a fellow who had access to forty or fifty pieces of two by twelve feet and twenty-four feet long, and other materials that were restricted—this was during the war. It forced us to build a shed roof, California-type, bilaterally lit, school with five classrooms and a general assembly room entryway for \$55,000. Then this was very quickly followed by additions of four and five classrooms each time. Our school practice was following Crow Island for the first four years. That was one building period. It was urgent enough to have wartime priority for materials but we still had to reuse unspeakably antiquated equipment.

Blum: In 1944 when the war was coming to an end...

Perkins: We hoped it was, but we didn’t know.

Blum: Was Perkins and Will gearing up for a time of expansion?

Perkins: We were gearing up and working diligently for the Indian service on programming work for the Navahos, Papagos, Hopis for the Flatheads in Montana, and for the tribes in Rosebud, South Dakota. We tried to anticipate the need for public works that the Indian service, which was badly behind on their obligations to the Indians, could do. My beloved friend, Willard Beatty, who had been assistance superintendent at Winnetka, was by this time the director of education for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. We worked up to this program of anticipated public works during the closing years and months of the war.

Blum: Is that what you thought you would move into at that time?

Perkins: We did, we built some buildings.

Blum: You consulted Booz, Allen and Hamilton.

Perkins: We did indeed. Part of the firm, Ed Booz, lived two blocks down the street here and used to take his Sunday walks. We got part of our consulting by his rapping on my door as he went by to walk down to the lake and ask me if I wanted to go for a walk. So I promptly did. We had a nice time together.

Blum: It was not formal?

Perkins: It was that too.

Blum: It was formal and informal?

Perkins: Ed Burnell was the partner with whom we worked closely. He also became a close friend. He died on the golf course one day.

Blum: Am I correct to understand that with their guidance you formalized a

direction, set objectives, and moved into a broader program for Perkins and Will?

Perkins: You will hear that in a very, very different way from each of the partners.

Blum: How do you describe it?

Perkins: As a pleasantly interesting exercise. It did give us the courage to do some things. Phil Will took it far more seriously on how to construct a business. Since Phil was very good about the theory of business, but didn't participate much in actually doing the business, those of us that thought that building the firm consisted of going and getting some jobs and doing them, we took Booz, Allen and Hamilton gratefully and seriously. I was more interested in how they could help us know whom we had to know and what we had to know than I was in internal office procedures. One of the things that's hard to say where the idea came from—about this time a housing project in which I had done some architecture work, called Princeton Park, was coming to a conclusion. Cap Starrett, who was my close friend, fraternity brother, and high school classmate, was finishing it up the field. It was a 908-house row-house project at 95th Street and Princeton in Chicago. When it was finished it looked pretty grim and hopeless. It was done in association with the Holsmans, Holsman and Holsman, who were geniuses but made difficulties for themselves and everybody else.

Blum: Was this regarding the community trust arrangement?

Perkins: Yes. It got Bill in jail and even his father, Henry K., at the age of ninety had to do one hour of jail, symbolically. Cap was enormously helpful in getting the project at least completed. Preston Higgins, known as Jack Higgins, was the person who really furnished the financial stability. He ended up at one stage buying out the original sponsors, all except me. He ended owning six-sevenths and I owned another one-seventh of the project. Finishing up Princeton Park led to Cap Starrett being a perceived need, both as a human being and for his skills.

[Tape 4: Side 1]

- Perkins: I grabbed him. I also believed that administration was itself a profession and that John Goodall, having been assistant treasurer of Marshall Field's and then general manager of the Merchandise Mart, had a skill and a position that we needed. This was all concurrent with some of the Booz, Allen and Hamilton probing which lasted well past the initial Starrett and Goodall expansion. I remember being taken to lunch by Ed Booz, a lunch for Phil, Cap Starrett, John Goodall, Ed Burnell, Mr. Booz and me. Years before we perceived what he saw that day, Ed knew instantly that Cap's heart and brains were to be trusted, and he was right. He knew that John Goodall was a more questionable matter of heart, and he was right about that too. John Goodall did a number of very valuable things for the firm, but living with him was plenty difficult. They perceived our need for business management, I don't know who put it in whose mind first, but I certainly believed it. We wouldn't have had any money to lose if it had not been for John being very possessive. He felt that anything that we spent to do a job was money that he lost personally.
- Blum: Apparently it was a rather successful formula because by the end of 1950 or into the 1950s, Perkins and Will had fifty people on staff.
- Perkins: True.
- Blum: That was quite an accelerated expansion in staff.
- Perkins: It was violent. The first thing after the war was three schools in Park Ridge.
- Blum: Did you not only expand within the organization to accommodate and gear up for the need you anticipated, but did you also advertise in *Architecture Forum* and *Architectural Record* to make your services known?
- Perkins: We wrote articles, we got renderings published when we could, took a job

illustrating an advertising campaign for a lumberyard. We did everything, stand on our head, whistle, sing, stand on the street corner—that last part is slightly exaggerated. One of the most difficult jobs that we ever had was the one that U. S. Gypsum gave us. Marland Wolf, Gypsum's then advertising vice-president, called me up one day and said, "We take four page of *Architectural Forum*, and I called up to offer you those four pages to do with as you will. Surely you have a school welling up within you that nobody has seen as being what they ought to have. This is your chance to show it." On the fourth of the four pages we want to relate whatever you do to our product." Here were four blank pages and here were our unfulfilled souls. It was absolutely impossible to make the first mark on those pieces of paper. Until there was a problem to solve there was no architecture, but architecture response. It was then that I learned that it is far more difficult to state a problem than it is to solve it. In any case, we made some arbitrary decisions: this was to be a twelve-grade school, it was to be in Beloit because we were familiar with that city from some of our house work, it was to be on the banks of the Rock River, and it was to be on a ten or fifteen-acre site. In the process of serving kindergarten through twelfth grade, the response to it as it grew got to be the first statement of a campus school. That again did quite a bit for us, being expected to be pioneering. It was a very cottagy and I think pleasantly composed set of buildings on this site sloping down to the river. Until we invented a problem, there was nothing that we could do to solve it.

Blum: This was a hypothetical problem and a hypothetical solution?

Perkins: Completely. It was impossible until we got it out of the sky and into definite limitations.

Blum: To whom were the articles in *Architectural Forum* and *Architectural Record* addressed? Who was your audience?

Perkins: The powerful person in education in those days, more than now, was the superintendent of schools. I made my life out of identifying with and courting school people, getting myself invited to be on those committees to

give speeches. I can't tell you how many talks I have given to PTAs and educator groups and so forth. Quite late in my life I was asked to give one of the general talks to the general convention of school superintendents at Atlantic City.

Blum: As a result of Crow Island, you became a nationally recognized authority on schools. You also published.

Perkins: We sure did. I wrote articles on everything from love and religion—not really, don't take that one seriously. Of course I have views on those too, but they were not published. Todd, in his adopted focus of medical facilities—in as businessman-like a way as we knew—made ourselves members of the clients' club. Phil was the only one who diverted from that and paid his major extracurricular attention to other architects.

Blum: You and Todd courted clients, but Phil did not?

Perkins: Yes. That is what I'm saying in spades, as did my father. He had been addressing the national educator conventions. Much later in my life, a couple of hundred schools later, I had a similar opportunity. But this time at least three of the names that would always be considered for major consideration on a school architectural job would be Bill Caudill, of Caudill, Rowette and Scott, and John Lyon Reid, of Reid and Tarics. Caudill, Reid, and myself were probably symbolically the three people that occupied the position that John Donovan, of Oakland, William Ittner of St. Louis, James Bettelle of New Jersey, and my dad occupied thirty years earlier in school architecture. In my life I guess I was not a very complete educator and not a very complete architect. I was a pretty diligent errand boy between the two. I knew enough architecture to get the stuff back to the office and I knew enough education to get them to give it to me.

Blum: One story I'm not sure you've stated formally is how you, Phil Will and Todd Wheeler came together. Each of you brought different talents to that marriage.

- Perkins: And afterward we added Starrett and Goodall for other talents. Lee Cochran was the next partner, less bringing a different talent than a broad, expanding mind.
- Blum: As I think about what happened to your firm, it began small, with just a few people, and then grew and expanded and moved into other types of buildings. I see a parallel between your career and that of Nat Owings. He started his firm at about the same time as you did.
- Perkins: Four years earlier, and a very critical four years. He got to ride the Century of Progress opportunity.
- Blum: In fact, his career too, or the profile of his firm, expanded at about the same time. He had also gone to Cornell. Do you see a parallel between your two careers?
- Perkins: Something like the rabbit pie. When you don't have enough rabbit to finish the pie, you expand it with horsemeat: one horse and one rabbit.
- Blum: I don't understand what you mean.
- Perkins: A very, very great difference in scale. The similarity in form, yes. In quantity, nowhere near. Nat Owings is overwhelmingly bigger. I think I have made you listen to my views, that to this day, it is a one-man firm consisting of Owings, Owings, and Owings. Louis Skidmore was extremely talented and would have had a very good firm no matter what. It wouldn't have been this one or anything like it. John Merrill simply was an instrument for getting into highrise housing when that was a very scarce kind of commission to win. Nat did win them. I guess I did something similar in getting people with me that had access to this, that, and the other thing that we wanted to do. The unlimited energy and gall to go where taste would inhibit most people never stopped Nat. He was a rough and forceful character. He built a firm that no Gordon Bunshaft, no Bill Hartmann, no Walter Netsch, no Bruce Graham

could have built. They all would have had very good jobs, nice practices. Not one of them would have had the vision and the stubbly chin whiskers to make things happen that Nat had.

Blum: It is known that he gave promising young designers an opportunity.

Perkins: Yes, he did. They came and went but Nat was eternal, still is. He has departed this world for some time but he put those people in positions they never could have gotten for themselves.

Blum: Why did you say that four years in the 1930s made a big difference? Your firm was organized in 1935; theirs was also organized in about 1935.

Perkins: I don't know when their firm was formally organized.

Blum: It was right after the Century of Progress, which would make it around the end of 1934 and 1935. Nat was involved in the 1933 exposition.

Perkins: During the exposition he built a personal acquaintance and personal Tammany that followed him. I believe that he was as joylessly ruthless in his private life as he was in his professional life.

Blum: You make him sound cutthroat.

Perkins: There's no way that I could make him sound more ruthless than he was. I said to his face, and he thought it was funny—I've said this to you once before—Nat could stand on your face with spike shoes and it would not hurt him a bit. I remember once when he said to me—about a job that we both wanted—"If you're there when I get there, prepare to get hurt." He said it with a big, bellowing laugh, but he meant it. In spite of that liked the guy.

Blum: Were you ever in competition with him or with his firm for commissions?

Perkins: Yes. The First National Bank, for one.

- Blum: Was Owings directly involved with that?
- Perkins: He was plenty mad when he found out that his little Chicago people had lost it. The bank people had a little experience with SOM earlier and had not had a happy time because SOM used the leaf out of Frank Lloyd Wright's book that you had to be arrogant to be great. They didn't like it much so they didn't get it.
- Blum: The First National Bank commission?
- Perkins: Yes. We were in direct competition once in Schenectady, which is the General Electric capital. There were five schools to be built. There were two new ones that went to Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill. One new one and two additions went to us. At the end of that the winner would get the high school job. We were in that kind of competition. We got the high school. Nat said to me somewhat later—I guess in that context, I don't remember—but I remember that he said, "I've long since learned to be accepting about not getting things I can't have." There is grandeur to this pirate. With all of this that I have said—I have said this in his presence—he was the indispensable instrument of more good architecture than any man who has lived in this century. You can't sue me for that. The Bruce Grahams to him are like this [pointing to one of several pencils in his pocket].
- Blum: Do you mean he had the foresight or perception to hire brilliant design people?
- Perkins: Oh, yes. And he uses something called money, which we didn't have. Believe me, I am not deprecating the man. I could go way back to my own chiggerbiddies; not one of them developed the career I expected of them when I asked them to join me.
- Blum: Are you speaking about people you hired as designers?

Perkins: No, much more, as partners. Phil wasn't what I thought. I thought he would govern the design on all of our jobs. He didn't. He set some standards, maybe, but he didn't stay there to do it. He went off to the peripheral stuff of the AIA and the Cornell trusteeship and so forth. He sought prestige and some commissions.

Blum: Who then stepped in as design head when Phil's interest was elsewhere?

Perkins: A transient series, but no towering individual. I expected Goodall to be a major factor. I wanted him to do for us in the business community what Nat wanted Jack Merrill to do for highrise apartments. Goodall most monumentally didn't. I found out that he was a complete introvert, shy and stayed at his desk and barked orders. He said he would not ask his friends to hire us—I'm not sure he had too many—because he didn't think that we were qualified and he just wouldn't get off his butt. That was a complete surprise. We did get our money's worth for things that I didn't know I was going to get from him. By being disagreeable and selfish on our behalf, as well as his own, he made us do much more difficult things. Any damn fool can earn a lot of money; very few of them can keep any. He taught us that keeping it was much more important. Starrett, who would dismiss himself as just a practical hod carrier sort of a person; he had superb aesthetic judgement. He didn't think he had, but he was good. His real gift was a great heart. I told you that what he did for profanity is about what Paderewski did for piano playing. It was a work of art. I think I'll interpolate right here, if I may, a for instance. We were having a partnership meeting in Mexico City—we've had them in distant places, possibly copycatting SOM who had their meetings in Cairo and other distant places to freshen up their partners and, incidentally, get them well away from the telephone. We were doing it because we had just finished our job at Chapingo and I wanted all of the partners to see how great it was. I am deeply proud of that one. Bob Palmer was the designer. At that time, our New York office under Howard Juster was being very fractious and difficult. The word that they were throwing around was "autonomy." They considered it very much beneath their lordly selves to be in any way responsible to Phil, Bill Brubaker, and me, who were

riding around reviewing designs. They were very coy about not showing them to us until it was too late to do anything about it. During the meeting, on one of the mornings in Mexico City, we were discussing the procedures and getting agreements for this and that, and more autonomy and “well, but on the other hand...” and so on; we were dithering and getting nowhere. Finally, Cap Starrett couldn’t stand it any longer and he cut into the foggy conversation, which had gotten to the fogginess of thick tomato soup. He said, “I want to say something to you guys. You’re all worried about autonomy and working together. I want to say that if Jesus Christ were to walk through that door with a certificate from the Beaux-Arts, a certificate from Mies van der Rohe, and one from Eero Saarinen all saying that he was a great designer, and he started working with you guys, in thirty minutes he’d climb right back up on that cross.” This restored sanity and a certain amount of clarity to the otherwise fog-bound partners who had, I guess, wasted that morning. This was Starrett. Where we got into this tangent was that each of the principals in the firm did nearly exactly—but not quite—what I thought I was getting when I invited them into the firm. I got more internal management from Goodall than I expected, I got less design and more civic interest from Phil than I expected, and I got a great deal more aesthetic sensitivity, drive, heart, and polar attraction out of Starrett than we had any right to expect.

Blum: There must have been a climate that was comfortable because an architect who had worked for Perkins and Will told me about when he came for an interview hoping to get a job. This was in the late 1940s, I think. Apparently he came late in the afternoon and the office was taking a break for teatime—at other times there was penny pitching—and there must have been a nice feeling among the people in your office. He thought the teatime break was so unusual, and, indeed, it must have been in architectural offices.

Perkins: I don’t know whether it was unusual or not, but we had fun together. By this time we were on the roof of 309 West Jackson. I remember that I wrung my hands in anxiety over paying for the six thousand square-foot top floor, which had been a defunct club, a textile club, in the clothing district. This was

a twenty-two-floor building that the Alschulers had done in the 1920s. It is now in the shade of the Sears Tower. We had left the Merchandise Mart, which had upped our rent to where we couldn't stay. I really suffered over paying two dollars a square-foot for our rent, twelve thousand a year for that space. I don't know what it's running for across the street in the Sears now, but not two dollars. We were there and we could go out on the roof for penny pitching. John Goodall, the bear that was feared by so many because of his lashing tongue, was geniality himself when we pitched pennies. John was very, very good, but Yukio Kako was much better. One of Yukio's personal monuments is the Washington School here in Evanston They could, some of the time, actually lean the penny up against the wall part-time, which of course was good enough to win very profitably. Sometimes some people would make as much as thirty or forty cents a day at penny pitching if it was a good crowd doing it.

Blum: That speaks to a nice working atmosphere.

Perkins: We all had fun together.

Blum: You mentioned Mies van der Rohe a little earlier, in a very different context. In 1937 Moholy came to Chicago to teach at the Institute of Design. In 1938 Mies came to Armour Institute, now IIT. What was the impact of these new educational ideas on you and your ideas about architecture?

Perkins: I certainly knew them both. I would say that with Moholy the impact on me was zero. I watched with interest to see what he was doing with other people, but I don't think there is anything that I got any personal sense of interest or relation to. Mies, again, I did. I do think that the IIT buildings are very disagreeable, inhuman, and not very practical places to be. I'm very proud that we sat it out. I remember vividly a dinner which I, among a great many others, attended when Mies was being welcomed to Chicago.

Blum: In 1938?

Perkins: Yes. He made his speech in German. Arthur Woltersdorf couldn't translate it fast enough. John Barney Rodgers stepped in and did a very deft job of translating for him. Frank Wright was the featured speaker of welcoming him. He said, among other things, "I give you Mies of the Ruhr." I don't know how he translated it.

Blum: You mean he made a joke of his name?

Perkins: Yes, or a translation, at least. "I give him to you more than the world knows. I give him more than he himself knows." In short, "he owes his inspiration to me," would be the prosaic translation of this. Having finished and not waiting for the others, he just came, beckoned Olgivanna, and they stalked out.

Blum: How did the architectural community feel about Mies's coming? What kind of a welcome did they extend to him?

Perkins: A substantial majority, of which SOM was the real bell-weather, said, "this is for us!" They went all out to be as Miesian as they knew how, from then on.

Blum: Armour Institute at that time—at least the selection committee that contacted Mies—was a committee of very distinguished architects who were not only modernists. David Adler was on that committee along with Alfred Alschuler and John Holabird. They were all established conservative Chicago architects and they selected him.

Perkins: Mies, Walter Gropius, and I don't know who else, were the big noises in Europe at that time. Mr. Hitler did us a number of favors in that and other related ideas. No, I think that the architectural community gave him a much more effective welcome than they ever gave to Saarinen, who is a much greater artist, in my opinion—certainly, a pleasanter man.

Blum: Did you know Mies?

Perkins: To say “Hello” and “How are you?” I haven’t had three sentences of architectural conversation with him. I’d see him at meetings and sat with him at tables and whatnot.

Blum: You said that you sat out the Miesian fashion. Was that deliberate?

Perkins: Oh, yes. Neither Phil nor I could see it. Much later, Midge expressed it. She was in the Federal Center for three weeks on a jury job and got some very profound reactions of respect for the jury system. She said that being in those buildings, in those rooms, for that length of time was an evil experience. Of course, I think that the Civic Center, which is a great achievement in having eighty-seven feet by forty-four feet bays... When you said that, you’ve just about said it all. Somebody wrote about it as a people-shrinker. In my architecture, if I have one, the people who use it are made to feel effective and look good. We start from what is good for people and Mies starts from what’s good for geometry. I don’t think that he had the slightest interest in people’s feelings or in generating people’s feelings. You know my speech about puppeteering: if Mies could design everybody so that their hair was parted on exactly the same line and they were exactly the same height—but I hope not exactly the same sex—then he would be much happier if we all wore uniforms. To this I rebel and reject. This is what we sat out.

Blum: Are you also saying that the architecture of your firm was geared to people and this was an institutional effort on your part?

Perkins: Oh, yes. I have heard the word “humanistic” used in a derisive tone of voice. What I think it was supposed to mean I think we meant. We didn’t always achieve it but this is what we were trying to do. I hope that we didn’t reinvent the wheel every time we took a job but we didn’t repeat ourselves too much either.

Blum: As your firm geared up for the accelerated building program that took place after the war, in 1946, I found in *Architectural Record* a drawing for Greenfield Homes in Des Plaines. You should recognize the signature on that drawing,

it's yours.

Perkins: Yes, I believe it is.

Blum: After the war were you interested in residential housing?

Perkins: We sure were. These were rowhouses. They're still there. Kimball Hill was our client and before that we had worked on a site fabrication on 95th and Cicero. They got hold of some acres and we had a site fabrication project going on there.

Blum: For residential?

Perkins: Residential, small residential, which was, for that time being, the overwhelming and devastating answer to the prefabricated concept such as General Houses. We had site fabrication that was very nearly as good as if it were done under roof, but vastly better for being in place when it got put together. By having the whole package this, at least for several decades, was an unanswerable answer to the people who thought that they could model housing after the automobile business. This came just on the heels of that. A big building that is well organized is just as efficient as any factory, with the one exception when there are times with inclement weather when they are crippled. This was such.

Blum: These houses are traditionally styled.

Perkins: Yes. Those windows came out of a mill. One of the things that we heard ourselves saying is that there is a prefabricated product that we think everybody should be interested in: it is made out of a cheap material, it is versatile, durable, modular—eight by two-and-one-half by four inches—and it's called a brick. We felt that—again not in the Miesian sense of making it artificially mechanical—we wanted to take it for what it is and use it as we did at Winnetka or a hundred other places, using it for its natural texture and not for its unnatural, mechanical perfection. That is prefabricated.

Blum: You point out features in this article...

Perkins: The windows, doors, and the bricks. It had only one advantage and that is that we could beat the hell out of any competition of factory-fabricated larger elements. It wasn't the unions that beat the prefabricated bathrooms. It was the fact that you could do them better on site. That was the mental process of doing relatively conventional things with good enough organization so that it had the efficiency of manufacturing, as any high building is every bit as efficient as the assembly floor of a big factory. I watched Sears go up past my window. By the time those guys were past the third or fourth floor, it was so ritualized that it was like watching a well-drilled chorus line, except that the guys weren't so pretty.

Blum: You're saying this was in part a solution to the housing crisis that was prevalent at the time?

Perkins: Yes. It was part of a housing crisis and it was part of the solution to the supposed threat that never succeeded, or hadn't, until these trailers came along. There never was a central fabrication answer that beat this.

Blum: I was questioning why you did these conventional-looking rowhouses after you had made inroads in establishing yourself as an avant-garde...

[Tape 4: Side 2]

Perkins: Avant-garde still does not mean slavish adherence to a style. Avant-garde, the cliché, was taken to mean flat roofs and very Bauhaus-styled, blocky rectangles. The fact that slope roofs shed water and generate useable space fairly economically is not a stylistic concept, it's a water-shedding concept. Having lived in a very avant-garde, flat-roofed house that fell in and dumped fifty gallons of glue-soaked water onto my bed, I am less than reverent about forced rectangularity. I'm thinking about the Farnsworth house where mechanics were summoned to handrub a bunch of steel beams that came

from Gary. They were a normal stock fabricated form. I suppose now a ten, twelve, fourteen dollar an hour man doing that work actually symbolizes the weakness of that part of the avant-garde, including Gropius's stuff as well as Mies's. The weakness of the European invasion in our architectural style comes down to one thing, the ratio of labor cost to material cost. In Europe it was then and still is relatively acceptable to use a lot of labor to save a teacup full of material. Here, the precise and overwhelming opposite is true. You can throw away a couple of cubic yards of concrete if you save a man-hour in the process. That's just about an even trade on those two items. That being the case, it is better for us to do a column form that is straight and then dump the concrete in, let it set, and do it nicely. In Europe, if it were desirable to take that column form and use carpentry to shape it into something that was a little bit more sensitive, this is permissible. The whole Miesian episode does not have enough principle behind it to survive and remain dominant for the next fifty years. The principles are misunderstood and reversed, in my opinion.

Blum: One of the cornerstones of the Bauhaus, if not the cornerstone as I understand it, is that aesthetics and technology were used in a combined way. Isn't that what you're touching on, the technology?

Perkins: If they understood the technology enough, they would have gotten a better artistic result.

Blum: You just spoke about site fabrication. How did technology impact your practice after the war when so many new materials and methods had been developed?

Perkins: I can't remember a building that we've ever done or touched that was not a research problem to try to grow with and perceive what was happening now and not some theoretical concept. I know that aesthetically I didn't have any particular prefabricated rectangle that I wanted to unload on the public. I think that Mr. Louis Sullivan probably unwittingly is to blame for a lot of my attitudes—in fact, most of them. His cliché was not “less is more,” it was

“form follows function.” That’s a limited concept too. The interior requirements of a building can give certainly strong suggestions and inspirations for the form. Crow Island is one hundred percent derived in its picture-book form from educational needs and the arrangement of people within those spaces—well, eighty percent, I’ll withdraw from one hundred percent. I’ll give you what, in my opinion, is a supremely bad example of form following function: the Chicago Civic Center (now Daley Center). Those bay centers are an interesting achievement and the floor heights are too. I will withdraw from what I’m about to say if you say that part of the premise of that building is to imply not just the majesty but the superiority of government over individuals. If not only people shrinking but people dominating is the desire, then that exaggerated and somewhat absurd scale is justified. If you want to diminish to a degree, make a commodity out of people, that’s how to do it. You get up into the building, with thirteen or fourteen-foot ceilings, whatever they are, and an individual office one-third the size of this room, going up into the sky, is an absurdity. You come to the courtrooms and they don’t fit either. In order to get the courtrooms in they have to burst through and get them a floor and a half. Again, neither the courtrooms that Mies was there to generate, nor the offices and personal work spaces which they were there to generate, had any relation to the structural frame that everybody, as an abstract piece of engineering monumentality, is so damn reverent about. I have sat where I could see down into that building—you can get up into the Mid-Day Club at the top of the First National Bank, for example—and you will see those boxes pushed up. They are violating the so-called integrity of that frame, which is every bit as much of a rejection of “form follows function” as if they had put columns and cornices on it. The Miesian cosmetics faking iron cladding is just as dishonest as if they did it with classical pilasters. Neither is a fireproofing skin.

Blum: You say this is a very poor example of “form follows function?”

Perkins: I think it is very bad.

Blum: In your opinion, is there a good example of that?

Perkins: I'd rather die than suggest that we had done any.

Blum: Which one?

Perkins: Again, depending on what you perceive to be function, I think that my Heathcote School in Scarsdale is as good a set of forms for its purpose and as lovely a place to work as we have yet touched.

Blum: You've also said that you think it is as good, if not better, than Crow Island. Why do you think that it is a better school?

Perkins: Yes, I think it is. The setting is very important. We were not imposing forms so much as the forms are a response to the setting indoor and the setting outdoors and relating the two. One of Walter Copping's *bon mots* is "a school is a site partially roofed over." That is such a place. It's a bunch of connected cottages and colorful. The roofs shed water and generate acoustically desirable situations in the rooms. The auditorium itself is inspired by a Hopi kiva that I was in once when we were doing work for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. It got modified out of recognition. In any case, the kiva is a wonderful role model for some kinds of assembly. It's that kind of a place. I think that right down the street here is the International Minerals building [now the Brunswick building]. I think that it is almost a contradiction in terms. It is as near as we ever came to Mies. What Mies never achieved was cheerful Mies. If it's anything, first and foremost Mies, it's grim.

Blum: Some people might say that it's strong or tough.

Perkins: No, it isn't. It is forced simplicity—the cosmetics of simplicity, certainly. I don't think I know of an efficient Mies plan. There may be one, but I don't know what it is. It's certainly wasteful in an economic sense.

Blum: You were talking about the Heathcote School in Scarsdale. That dates from the mid-1950s. That was fifteen years after you had the experience of building

Crow Island. Were there things that you experienced at Crow Island that you built on or corrected at Heathcote?

Perkins: Yes. One of the greatest design talents that we ever lost was that of Al Hoover. He was one of the partners in the New York office and the designer/draftsman on Heathcote. He and I were architecturally very, very congenial.

Blum: The 1950s were a very important decade of growth, but already in the late 1940s Perkins and Will was starting to move along. The school in Cicero...

Perkins: Drexel.

Blum: The school in Barrington...

Perkins: The high school? No. We did some elementary schools. Barrington Countryside came first. Then, later, there were two elementaries.

Blum: There was Blythe Park School in Riverside.

Perkins: That school probably did more to popularize Perkins and Will with the educators. Hal Burnett was enormously important to our career. He told me, "All you have to do now is get the educators in here and it will be all right." We very carefully had a big social fête there one late afternoon—I remember it was a day about as dark as this—and we got everybody in there and fed them tea and cookies. Things took off from then on.

Blum: Was Hal Burnett the gentleman who handled your publicity?

Perkins: For a long while. That's a much too complicated story. He is very largely responsible for the status of Crow Island. First, Ken Hedrich, the photographer, friend, and politician was absolutely adored by all the editors. He made me sit on that building for almost a year while the sun went around the earth to where he could get north light on the building. I died ten

thousand deaths before we could get a picture of it. The school board journal in Milwaukee had said that they would publish it. I had to go up there and tell them that I wasn't going to send them the pictures because the photographer said it wasn't the right time. I really suffered over this, but Ken was right. Here a year went by when I wasn't feeding my family very well and I couldn't start to use our principal opus. Ken proved his point when the sun got around and the grass had gotten a little chance to grow. I'd sure like to do the same photography assignment now, come next June. Now this is a paraphrase because I don't have a photographic memory of our conversation, but Ken said something like, "We'll get you the pictures, but you get somebody to peddle them for you. Once these pictures exist, get somebody to take them to the editors and see that they see them. It will take care of itself." So it did. That was the fact that every editor worth his salt was courting Ken to look over his shoulder to see what he photographed last week. The result of Ken's photography and Hal Burnett's energy—and pardon me, but some of mine, too—was that the Crow Island School appeared on the cover of the *School Board Journal*, all three architectural magazines, all three educational magazines, and as well as many lay magazines as we could get into. It made twenty-eight national magazines and an uncounted number of newspapers.

Blum: This was right after it was constructed, in the 1940s?

Perkins: Following that, yes. Hal Burnett had the extreme promotional mind. He was very, very important to the firm. He was not as important as Ken Hedrich, but almost. Ken was something of a kingmaker and loved playing that role. He directed U. S. Gypsum to us. All things being closely in balance, he had the two finger weights with which to throw the balance and he used them. Hal Burnett stayed and got terribly big for his britches at times in telling us what we were and weren't doing right. He felt that he knew better than we did how to manage the firm. But he was important.

Blum: That publicity certainly helped you or must have played a large part in getting school commissions after the war.

Perkins: Sure it did.

Blum: In the late 1940s you were still dabbling in residential housing and there was the Racine Courts project in Chicago.

Perkins: That was a Chicago Housing Authority project. It was rowhouses and they were pretty good. That was an aftermath of my Princeton Park experience for which we were not the primary architects. Phil did some cosmetic design that still looks pretty good.

Blum: Was it Lee Cochrane's public housing experience that stood you in good stead with the Racine Courts project?

Perkins: That and several other things. As I said before, I'd had a little exposure to it myself. Before there was any Perkins and Will, I was one of the architects on what became the Ida B. Wells Homes project in Chicago. That was designed in the very early 1930s.

Blum: How were you connected to the Ida B. Wells Homes project?

Perkins: The Ida B. Wells as built was not as we had designed it. Our group was dismissed and succeeded by another group. But a great deal of what we designed for the exact same site was carried over into what they did.

Blum: Who was your group? What group were you with?

Perkins: We were the Associated Architects-South Park Gardens. It consisted of Nimmons, Carr and Wright—Clark Wright was the general administrator—McNally and Quinn, Childs and Smith, Harry K. Holsman, and one more. There were five seniors and five juniors: Olsen, Urbain, Shattuck, and Layer, and Lawrence B. Perkins.

Blum: Lawrence B. Perkins as a solo?

Perkins: Yes. Those were the ten architects and one engineer, Arthur King. He had been Nimmons, Carr and Wright's general engineer for all those years. They had the monopoly on all the Sears work in those years.

Blum: You say this consortium did a project plan that was not executed but was superceded by another?

Perkins: It was not executed in that form but a great deal of it survived with the successor architects. I don't even know who they were.

Blum: This had given you public housing experience.

Perkins: That much, yes. They didn't take me seriously as a designer but they allowed me to hire Phil Will.

Blum: At that time?

Perkins: Yes, in the 1930s and for actual money.

Blum: Was that before your formal partnership with Phil?

Perkins:: Long before. Each architect in those desperate days was allowed the privilege of including one of these draftsmen in the drafting course. We had either head draftsmen, very senior, or principal architects as our drafting force. I, as the tenth and least of the architects, was made Clark Wright's assistant. I managed the money and wrote the checks. We had about a dozen, maybe fifteen, senior architects at that level in the drafting room. It was forty-four dollars a week for a forty-hour week. The juniors got ninety cents an hour for a forty-hour week, which would be thirty-six dollars a week. That was a privilege. There was some actual hiring done to supplement that. It was probably the strongest drafting force that's ever been put together in Chicago, as far as experience, in that way. I remember we did get paid and didn't get paid. Phil and all the employees had gotten their money but I didn't, until one day the government finally paid their bills and we racked it

up. For my year and a half of work I got about seven thousand dollars. I paid off my debt to my dad. We were in a very kingly position by this time.

Blum: In the Racine Courts project was prefabrication a factor?

Perkins: Site fabrication. In those days words meant a lot to us and we made quite a play out of distinguishing site fabrication from prefabrication. Again, my speech about the prefabricated brick comes to mind. A great, great deal of what goes into any building is an assemblage of prefabricated components. That's what a building is. There was a world, and I am almost old enough to have touched it, where carpenters could make their own trim. They had all the planes and stuff with which to make chair rails and all the rest of it—I've never seen that personally.

Blum: In the construction of Clyde Lyons School in Glenview wood was used because apparently there was a shortage of steel at that time.

Perkins: That was a successor to Rugen in Glenview and was very similar in concept. Both buildings feature bilateral lighting. Bilateral lighting and natural lighting of rooms was much more important then than it is now because florescent lighting was not at all common. I've been to many an educator meeting in which questions to the floor were, "What do you feel about florescent versus incandescent?" Crow Island, as you know, is basically incandescent, direct light from a concealed source. Because we have much more commonplace air conditioning and lighting, we can be seventy to eighty feet from a window and still feel that you're not in a dark box. That was not possible, economically at least, in the 1940s. Therefore, we did every California-inspired contortion that we could think of, including the two lights on two sides at Crow Island. I myself don't think I would agonize to get two-sided light on classrooms now. If I did, it would be for aesthetic reasons, but not for lighting reasons. It was for lighting then.

Blum: The reason I mentioned the Glenview school was because wood was used. Someone said that Swedish craftsmen rubbed and polished and fondled the

wood. They thought that was a really fine, soft, sensitive use of wood.

Perkins: It was fine soft Ponderosa pine number two. I just happen to remember. I think I'm getting senile because I can remember these details much easier than I can what happened last week. Yes, we did use wood. I don't think that we, in any Miesian sense, did absurd finishing of humble materials. I think that we let them be natural and humble.

Blum: In looking at school designs that your firm did, beginning in the mid- to late-1940s, there was a shift to steel, to a more Miesian type of design. How did that happen if you were opposed to it?

Perkins: To the extent that I can answer it personally, I was too busy feeding the monster to govern its digestion.

Blum: Were you involved with the design studio?

Perkins: Not enough, no.

Blum: What would you have done had you been involved?

Perkins: As Phil says with a slightly derisive tone of voice, "Well, Larry likes his architectural shaggy." I do. I'm more comfortable with that than I would be if it were slick and polished, such as the quite lovely stuff that I can respond to and admire is what David Adler would do. I would never do slick stuff for myself or anybody that was congenial to me.

Blum: Describe what you mean. We are looking at a cut wood screen over your fireplace mantle.

Perkins: I was looking at the rather carpenter-oriented and not an overly detailed fireplace in my own living room while we speak. The decoration over the mantle is a redo of my mother's design for that same spot which she did by cutting out a piece of wallpaper similar in that color and applying it as a

silhouette on the plaster behind that. I repeated the design after the paper got brittle and started to chip away. This is done with cutting out quarter-inch plywood and making the same silhouette with that. It took me a long weekend. I care about that. Any carpenter could execute that. It's a natural way to use wood.

Blum: During the 1950s, new things happened, new things in the sense that in Keokuk, Iowa, a high school was designed as a semi-detached campus.

Perkins: Semi-detached. The feature of that building was it set crosswise of a valley. The classrooms were not isolated from the corridor or from the lockers of the corridors. First of all, the classrooms were on one side. A common word in those days was unilateral, which meant single-loaded corridors, unilaterally or bilaterally lighted. These were bilaterally lit by taking light across the corridor, over the top of the lockers, and into what would otherwise be the dark side of the classroom. That was a pioneering effort and I'm not sure how successful it was. I know that the building has been drastically altered and added to since we left it. I don't think that they did with the incursion of florescent lighting. I think that they abandoned the cross-lighting and cross-ventilating that was achieved by being able to take light and air across the corridor, through the classrooms and out the other side. That was a major feature of that building.

Blum: Was the semi-detached campus a new concept at the time?

Perkins: I don't really understand the phrase. In high school there are several building types involved. A high school is a very much more difficult building to do than an office building, for example. In an office building, you're doing one thing, usually. A high school is partly classrooms, partly athletic club, theatre, and factory, and so on. In a very small part it is an office building for the administration. There are five types of space. The normal thing is to compose them as separate elements related to each other as distinguished from trying to pump them all into a box. That's why any well-designed high school looks like a sprawling well-connected set of elements.

Blum: In that same year, 1953, you did Rockford Hospital. But Todd Wheeler, your hospital specialist, was no longer a part of the firm at that time.

Perkins: I don't remember how much Todd had to do with Rockford. Hubbard and Highland of Rockford came to us, feeling that hopefully we were architect-type architects. They were a smaller firm, compared to what we had become by that time. Hubbard said with what turned out to be absolute accuracy that he knew just about everybody in Rockford and they knew him. He and Highland were congenial and generous collaborators and thought that we could work together on this. We did. I remember that Fred Kramer worked quite hard on that job. I don't remember who all else there was, at the moment. Phil, I believe, had very considerable input in the design.

Blum: Was Todd involved?

Perkins: I don't remember, but I don't think so. He had nothing to do with bringing it in. This was far from true about most stuff later.

Blum: I had the impression that Todd left your firm to specialize in hospital design and later was a hospital consultant to Perkins and Will for many years.

Perkins: I'd have to think a moment to remember the sequence. During the war we were all taking anything we could do. I helped Coath and Goss with some munitions plants out near Dixon. Phil worked here and there. We were able through our outside earnings to keep Joe Kovar and, until he went into the navy, John Boyce employed to finish up our commitments. We never did quite close the office because we were able to bring in enough work and enough outside income to keep it going. It never formally closed. During that time, Todd went off. I think the University of Illinois wanted him to do a master plan for the West Side Health Center area. He did. One thing led to another and Dr. Andrew Ivy and he found themselves very congenial. Todd was made assistant to the head of that school. He did programming and planning and became administration assistant. For all purposes the

administration was under the medical direction of Andrew Ivy and the general operation under Todd. In the process of that he got the respect and eventually the revered respect of people in the hospital administration world. He was invited to all kinds of places, including the University of Washington, to do increasingly interesting consulting jobs.

Blum: What about his relationship with Perkins and Will?

Perkins: There was very little during the actual war. Just after the war Phil was principally instrumental in persuading Todd to come back. Goodall and Starrett—by this time it was principally Goodall—wasn't giving anything away that he could keep. He mandated that Todd should come in and participate on jobs that he could bring in. If any actual jobs resulted—John didn't believe that anybody could do anything, that was part of his stock and trade—if he actually got a job, then it would be credited as E. Todd Wheeler at Perkins and Will. That would take care of keeping the Perkins and Will name uncomplicated and take care of Todd's ego, which, for all of his downplaying, is a very considerable ego.

Blum: Then Perkins and Will did move into the hospital field with Todd Wheeler as a consultant.

Perkins: Very gradually, by way of a bunch of financially unimpressive surveys. Todd did most of the work. It didn't come bangity, bangity, bang. I'll invent a number, but I would say that it was eight or ten years after he came back before it was a formidable business. By that time Harry Anderson, David Ginsburg, who was enormously important by then, and Ed Matthei were all of the people that Todd had attracted and brought in to do hospital work. It has stuck in and lasted with all three of those people. It's their career now. Dave Ginsburg is the only one of them to go back to Columbia University at a six-figure salary. We might have been smart to compete.

Blum: In the 1950s, in addition to the hospital and high school work, you also did your first highrise building, the 1957 Lutheran Brotherhood office building in

Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Perkins: The way that came in was by a bunch of things. One of the members of the board, Lud Hauser, was superintendent of schools in Riverside. He was on that board at the Lutheran Brotherhood. We had an incredibly happy experience on that Riverside job. Everybody loved everybody before, during, and after. That led to some very enthusiastic introductions, which lead to the job. I was riding up on the same plane with Adlai Stevenson one time and he asked me, "Is that the one that looks like Lever House?" It was no time to be coy. I told him it was. This was Adlai the governor, not Adlai the senator. Well, it wasn't Wrightian, certainly. It is plain, straight Lever House. I don't think Mies would acknowledge that. It's too damn pleasant.

[Tape 5: Side 1]

Blum: Among the commissions in the 1950s, what was the most Miesian of the buildings that your firm did?

Perkins: I think probably the International Minerals building [later renamed the Brunswick campus] that's right down the street here in Skokie, just over the Evanston/Skokie line.

Blum: Over the years, as you stated, you avoided the Miesian idiom. How is it that you moved into it in 1958?

Perkins: As one of my then-partners, Brock Arms, said for that particular design I was used to getting the job rather than doing it. Some of our younger people sort of sneaked it by when I was doing something else and Phil Will was doing something else.

Blum: Who was in charge of design at that time?

Perkins: No one person. Like SOM, only much more so, there were several quite independent designers and always were. I think that's a characteristic of the

firm. The groups within the firm were autonomous little offices under the protection and, from their point of view, subject to some bossing, more about business matters than about architectural design decisions.

Blum: Did you hire architects who had been trained at IIT?

Perkins: Increasingly, yes. After all, Harry Anderson went to the top of the firm for a long, long time. He was straight IIT, but I would not say a particularly design-oriented individual.

Blum: Knowing they had been trained at IIT, I suppose you could expect that design at Perkins and Will was going to become more Miesian.

Perkins: I was threatened very vocally with this. I remember Al Hoover when he left. He was utterly non-Miesian and, as I think I commented earlier, probably the best talent we ever lost. He went out to run his own practice in California. He said, "Whether you like it or not, as time goes by, the Miesian is going to creep in on you." So it did. Just about the time when the Miesian vogue, if it was one, had just run its course, it was finally hitting us.

Blum: A few years later, in 1963, you did the United States Gypsum building in Chicago. This tall office building had some unique features. It's been called a romantic building.

Perkins: We have had all kinds of backtalk from that building. For a long time it was certainly the best-liked downtown building by just people. The people who didn't like it were architects, some of the architects. It got us the First National Bank commission. It got us all kinds of other things. One of the compliments to that building that I really cherish is that Mr. Nervi, the very famous Italian engineer/architect/artist—I don't know any category for him except that he was a perfectly wonderful human being and I met him in Rome months after this. The story about him—how it got out I don't know—was that he was taking a tour around Chicago when he was visiting years ago and the one building that he stopped for and went out and even

ran his hands over and loved, was U. S. Gypsum. He was therefore very nice to me when I was taken to see him in Rome. The plan of the building was very conscious. I think I had something to do with that—in fact, I know I did—in turning it kitty-corner. Phil Will said, “Well, Larry’s always wanted to do this and maybe this is the time.” Two plans and two renderings were carried out, with quite a high degree of finish, for a board meeting at which Tex Sheaver presided. He was then the chairman. One plan was on the forty-five-degree angle and the other was the conventional, rectangular position. The presentation had been made. The story reaches me that one of his board members and Tex Sheaver were sharing adjoining facilities in the men’s room during the later stages of this meeting. The board member asked, “Well, which one do you like?” Sheaver said, “I like the cockeyed one.” That became the decision and that’s where it was made.

Blum: Where did you get the idea to turn the building on the site?

Perkins: It derives from several things. To do it with a perfectly square plan would not have worked because the squares were inefficient. If you’ve looked at the building, you’ll know that each corner is notched out so that we have eight corners on each floor. That permits you to get more space nearer the lot line. By turning it we are protecting our light and air on all four sides. We knew that we then had a bunch of uncompromising rectangles on then three and now four of the sides of that building. We were protecting their light and air, we were protecting ours, and by being the only one in that position and the only one with as cheerful a color scheme and all...

Blum: Black and white.

Perkins: Sharp black and white. We had, for one of the times in our career, the problem of making a small building take the play away from a very much bigger one and take the attention from it. By doing this we have a jewel set in a bunch of rather neutral background buildings, which they all have become.

Blum: Do you feel in turning the building on the site that there was any violation or

contradiction of the streetscape?

Perkins: Phil Will had a letter, which I answered, from Harry Weese. The letter said that he hoped that the rumor he heard was not true and he knew that we wouldn't do anything as anti-urban as that. I still don't know what anti-urban means. I noticed that he has done something for the prison on Van Buren Street that also has other than ninety-degree angles. Maybe he's changed his mind. In any case, I wrote him a letter, the core thought of which is that in deciding these things in advance, I cited the story of the psychiatrist who said to the girl, "The solution is obvious. Now what's the problem?" This had followed a stormy session that was rich in experience for both of them. Not having heard the symptoms, I don't think he was able to predict the diagnosis. It has served us well. As huge buildings go up all around it, I fear for some practical-minded man who will want to add thirty or forty more floors on it.

Blum: Is there any truth to the story that the form of the building follows the actual form of the crystal?

Perkins: Some.

Blum: Was that in the original concept?

Perkins: The cosmetics of the top were Ray Ovresat's. I think he was thinking of rectangular crystal shapes, not those in particular. Sure, my idea was more of a literary concept than a physical one.

Blum: Did Phil Will have anything to do with that building?

Perkins: He had a lot to do with it. I had very little, except that I had plenty to do with turning it cockeyed.

Blum: Who was responsible for the black and white color scheme?

Perkins: Probably Phil Will and Ray Ovresat.

Blum: A few years after that, in 1957, Perkins and Will moved in to the international field, in Mexico. You did the National Center for Agricultural Education Research and Extension. How did it happen that you were able to garner a commission outside of the United States?

Perkins: Friends of Lee Cochran's, high in the Rockefeller Foundation hierarchy, were the sponsors of that building and they wanted Lee's firm, which had some reputation in educational buildings by this time, to do it. That led to the job. It was required that we work in association with a Mexican firm. Having been, by this time, in several dozen associations—this is something that I want to get into the record—a huge part of the growth of Perkins and Will was in being architects for other architects who otherwise couldn't get a major school job but who did have local connections. I think we touched on this briefly yesterday. This wasn't exactly the same thing. In order to do a building in Mexico, there had to be, for trade union reasons as we have here, a Mexican architect on the project. He had to have the principal credit for any publicity in Mexico. So be it. In any case, except for Bob Palmer and Lee Cochran and me, I don't at the moment remember who all else was active on that job. John Gallagher, who lives two blocks from here, went down there for a couple of years to superintend the construction. John got into the firm by way of being my son-in-law's best friend and a superb sailor.

Blum: Is sailing a hobby of yours?

Perkins: Yes.

Blum: More than a hobby?

Perkins: A phobia, practically. I would be very sorry for anybody who was reasonable about his hobby. The record will show that I am not reasonable. So anyway, John Gallagher superintended and, as a by-product, got quite good at Spanish. He could rattle at some length and discuss the shortcomings of a

carpenter or a mechanic in colloquial Spanish that they respected.

Blum: That must have been quite an asset.

Perkins: It was superb.

Blum: An association with a local firm, such as the one in Mexico you're describing, recalls to me what you said about your first commission with the Saarinens and Crow Island. You said Mr. Saarinen was willing to split fifty-fifty. Is this the way these joint ventures usually work? Whose name comes first on the letterhead?

Perkins: Not exactly. The Saarinen situation was unique and stayed so. Everything since then we made a very firm distinction between a consulting and an association relationship, even when the show was on the other foot, as it is with Bill Pederson on the 333 West Wacker building.

Blum: What type of relationship was that?

Perkins: Exactly the reverse of what we've done well over one hundred times. He made the preliminary sketches and we carried it into finished drawings, working drawings, specification, field supervision, and we did all the business management.

Blum: Was that considered a consulting job?

Perkins: That was an association. The "Gary split," which is one of the things I wanted to talk about, is a bit of local lingo that applies only in our office. What it amounted to was that we did the preliminary—I don't know what the lingo is now—and basic drawings, which was the first thirty percent of the work, according to the AIA partitioning of the fee. We handed the local architect, associate architect, or whatever his then-designation would be, that material. He would carry it forward to working drawings, specifications, and supervision. We retained, as far as it was acceptable to the local architect,

some control and we looked over his shoulder. He, in turn, when it was a good association, would take his part in the preliminaries. His wisdom, effectiveness and ego were taken care of and obviously ours was not in need of that kind of help at the moment. Our ego was in very good shape. Our sense of defending the design through construction and not having it deteriorate in little expedient ways was our privilege in his office. His privilege in ours would be to share in the design thinking. It worked very, very well in most cases. I heard myself say a long time ago that if we had to do it over again there would be one-fifth of collaboration. There was a tenth at the bottom end where if we'd known in advance, we wouldn't have touched it. Everything in between was neither good nor bad as far as improving the design or losing the design. The mid-seventy percent was a good, honest day's work.

Blum: Is this regarding all the joint ventures or associations you have had?

Perkins: Yes. I really don't know, but when I last counted, it was passing one hundred.

Blum: One hundred collaborative commissions?

Perkins: Thirty years ago it was that. It is not unlikely that now it is as much as three hundred, but I don't really know exactly.

Blum: One of the buildings that you did in such a venture was the First National Bank in association with C. F. Murphy.

Perkins: That was an out-and-out partnership. We were invited into that. Chris Wilson was the spearhead of the bank's building committee that caused us to get that job.

Blum: Is he from the bank?

Perkins: He was from the bank. We were there for personal loyalty and the U. S.

Gypsum building. We were considered to do more cheerful buildings. Mies had been offered the bank job, provided that he would change his style a little bit. Mies wasn't interested in doing anything like that; he was perfectly content with doing what he'd done over and over again. Gayle [Gaylord] Freeman wasn't, so he turned it over to the committee headed by Chris.

Blum: Did you say that SOM was also interested in the commission?

Perkins: Yes, they had done some work for the bank. In shopping around, Bob Wilmouth talked to C. F. Murphy, SOM and some prestigious out-of-town architects. They decided to have it be a Chicago firm, a decision with which Gayle Freeman was never terribly happy. Gayle Freeman was the chairman of the board. We were asked which firm we would like to associate with, Murphy or SOM. I said that I didn't know that SOM would be willing to associate with us, but I thought that Murphy was much more appropriate. "Why not SOM?" I said, "Well, frankly, their strengths, which are very great, are too much like the strengths of our firm. We're too much alike and with Murphy we could do things for each other." I sensed that the SOM thing would be competition for doing the same part of the work.

Blum: What was the complement between the Murphy firm and Perkins and Will?

Perkins: Mainly it was at the committee level. Bill Brubaker kept a steady rain of idea sketches fed into the thing. I did a few sketches myself. Our principle problem was that the Murphys insisted on using a fellow named James Ferris. Chris Wilson said about Ferris: Don't open the window because he could fly right out. Jim was not a very bright man, but he was a dedicated Miesian. He was a true believer, not very bright in his own right, but a fanatic. He kept drawing the same old building over and over again. Our job, in which we were not wholly successful, was to wear him down towards something other than a pallid repeat of the Civic Center but bigger. Carter Manny was chosen as the partner-in-charge. The actual production of it was done by a joint venture. It was not done in either of our offices. It was done in an independent office that we opened that was built up to be about seventy

people at one time. It was headed by Al Kisielius, who was one of our partners. That was how it got built. John Gallagher worked on it too.

Blum: If Jim Ferris was a Miesian and your firm avoided the Miesian type of design, how did the design evolve?

Perkins: Painfully.

Blum: How so?

Perkins: Actually wonderful Bill Brubaker kept feeding stuff in. My job was more to be disagreeable and see to it that it got considered. There were more meetings in which I proceeded to lose friends but hopefully influence people. Bill kept us supplied with a steady rain of sketches. The swoop itself, which I presented and got rationalized, was a miracle of coincidence. What you needed there was the absolute squeaking maximum on the ground floor. If you could have three ground floors, you would. In the ultimate design they just about do have three ground-related floors because of the open mezzanine and the opening down to the lower floor and the very easy visual access between all three. Having said that, then the requirements as you go up are a receding set of areas until you settle down to the office building shaft, which is the double corridor basic routine plan that settles down at ninety-four feet. The ground floor is two hundred feet and shrinks down to ninety-four and then goes on up. You could do it with steps, with a block and a tower, or three blocks going up. Bill had a scheme that I will always mourn not having built. It had very glassy ends and the towers for the elevator and the banking floor shoved through under this way that stuck out over what is now the plaza, letting the plaza run under it.

Blum: Sort of floating?

Perkins: Yes. Well, not exactly floating. We'd get it down to the ground somehow. In theory, there was even a better scheme than either of them but you couldn't do it for one reason: you had to keep the old bank running on the south two

hundred by three hundred-sixty feet until the new bank was ready to run. The transition had to be very quick over one long weekend from one building to another. The bank was hardly shut down to go from one building to another. If we could have worked with the whole site that we now have, then the right scheme would have been another U.S. Gypsum-type diagonal thing with the circulation going from corner to corner—basically like the plan of the British flag. Perhaps the rectangular tower would be going up in a four-way swoop in the middle of the property and drawing pedestrian traffic from all four corners. One thing Carter Manny very generously ascribes to me is that I prevented a symmetrical entrance in the middle of Madison Street, where nobody is, and got the entrances on the corners where everybody is. Not having done a million office buildings at the time, or yet, it was easier to challenge the accepted wisdom of that. This is no different from designing a small school; you looked at what you are trying to do and what people are trying to do in it and you use the building to, if not enhance it, at least not prevent it. That would have been perfection.

Blum: You mean the British flag configuration?

Perkins: Yes. Coincidentally, the diagonals of the Loop, if you were to take and draw them, would intersect right in the middle of that building. That is the exact theoretical center of the Loop. Pinning down that center with a U.S. Gypsum-type setting would have been great. Even I had to admit that that was a fight that we couldn't fight for successfully.

Blum: The idea of a sloping side is unusual. There was a similar design by I. M. Pei for the New York Stock Exchange project that had been published at about that time. What was the relationship between the sloping-side design of that building and the First National Bank?

Perkins: I am perfectly sure that Bill Brubaker saw it. He sees just about everything. He has a wonderful, probing mind; he's just aware of everything. As Bill himself keeps saying, the swoop is not an invention of ours, there is something called the Eiffel Tower! There are a good many other buildings

that approximate this shape in one way or another. The thing that I do have a little feeling about—the proud SOM has done the sloping-sided building twice since then in New York. They were done on sites hideously inappropriate for them simply because it was then fashionable. I have now seen one in Tokyo, seen pictures of one in Johannesburg, and I don't know where all else. They say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery but this is sincere flattery that I could do without. I feel a little bit about that. The University of Illinois has a so-called assembly hall where they play basketball and all that. It's a big dish with a cover on it. It is an absolutely wonderful building by Harrison and Abramovitz. Max Abramovitz was a University of Illinois alumnus and their pride and joy down there. We, several years before, had made that exact same design, but somewhat smaller, for Southern Illinois University. It did not go ahead for budget reasons and we did a much simpler building. I've always been relieved because I knew that even though we did it four years earlier we would have been the copycats, not they. There is no such thing as a copyright in architectural design and that's good. There wasn't a copyright in Greece when Ictinus did the Parthenon. It had been very thoroughly rehearsed for two hundred years. Even he had done it once or twice before, including once at Bassae, near Andritsaena. It is a very competent setting of the Parthenon in those hills.

Blum: Is there a feeling of competition among architects about the uniqueness of a design? You're suggesting that it's a universal vocabulary that people just dip into as they wish, as they need.

Perkins: I think that that is what happened. I suppose I am the only architect that you'll ever meet that is completely free from ego. Each of us would like to feel that God has spoken to us privately. Some of us actually believe it. Architectural ego is a very real factor.

Blum: So there is competition?

Perkins: Sure. That takes the form of deprecating, arguing, and all that.

Blum: Was there that kind of flack directed toward the First National Bank design knowing that Pei's design in New York had been published?

Perkins: I don't know; I don't think so. That came much later. Both the Gypsum building and the First National Bank instantly commanded ten for one of lay appreciation. It is only the professionals who were prissy about both of them. Within the profession they said mockingly, "I wouldn't do it that way."

Blum: In some of the sketchbooks you spoke about that Bill Brubaker produced during those meetings for design... You've just handed me a copy of a book called "Planning the First National Bank of Chicago." It is a series of sketches done by Bill Brubaker, from April 1964 through June 1966, showing the evolution of this project, the design, and how it all took shape. There were some drawings that, as we leaf through it, reminded me of the black and white color scheme of the U. S. Gypsum building. Was there ever any thought...?

Perkins: There was a thought, a confrontation but the Murphy side of the venture determined that it should not happen. We called a meeting, which was attended by Homer Livingston and all the officers of the bank, at which we were to present our points of view. Carter had secretly collected pictures of buildings and put on a very elaborate presentation of many buildings that were clad in one material rather than the two as we had done with U. S. Gypsum. We were taken so completely by surprise by the presentation that it prevailed although the bankers all went into the meeting expecting to support our two-color scheme. The presentation persuaded them that we were wrong and it went as it is. The most I could save out of it, and that wasn't enough, was my case for the two-tone scheme between the columns, which are very compression-minded and the beams that are forty-foot long. A forty-foot horizontal piece of stone couldn't even support itself and to use those spandrels to look like stone beams struck me as an absurd fake. I was willing to endure the uniform material provided that the stone joints or the paneling was such that it advertised itself as a skin rather than as a fake beam. I lost that one.

Blum: Did I understand correctly that you said that part of the reason you got the First National Bank job was because of admiration of the U. S. Gypsum building?

Perkins: Correct. Carter Manny and Stan Gladych ran this beautifully organized dog-and-pony show with big, blown-up pictures of, I think, some very ordinary buildings with which they made the one material, usually white, seem plausible. That was that; we lost.

Blum: Is this typical of what happens in joint ventures with or without confrontation?

Perkins: Yes. There was this time. We were personal friends. Carter Manny is a fine gentleman, supremely conventional in this architectural taste. The idea of pioneering or perceiving an other-than-routine relationship between need and architectural expression is just not part of his makeup. Like many people I disagree with, I still like him.

Blum: When something comes out of collaboration do you think it is it less or more dynamic?

Perkins: The result is somewhat soft-boiled compared to either of us doing it alone.

Blum: Could Perkins and Will have done it on your own?

Perkins: Oh, yes.

Blum: Could C. F. Murphy have done it on their own?

Perkins: Yes.

Blum: Then why the collaboration?

Perkins: It was believed that Murphy was more routinely equipped to do it than we were. We were younger and less proven on big buildings. On the other hand Yamasaki was younger than we were at the time he got the World Trade Center. It is still there. We knew that we could do it but the bank didn't. They weren't as sure but with the Murphys there they were sure that we could and that they could. They hoped that we would freshen them up and that they would make us more routinely competent in depth.

Blum: Whose idea was it to have a depressed plaza?

Perkins: Mine, I think. Well, that isn't fair—whether it was depressed or not, to have a plaza was all Gayle Freeman's idea. That was a personal ambition of his.

Blum: What about placing the Chagall mosaic in the plaza? What did you have to do with that?

Perkins: Not one single thing. Carter Manny showed me afterward what he alone had done. He had some cubes made in various forms. The one he wanted, and I being shown this much later would also have wanted, was an out-and-out cube in much higher color than what was done. I shall always feel that that's one of the most disappointing bits of art of all the Loop extravaganzas. I think it's anemic. The first thing that Chagall saw when Carter took it to him was the big rectangle that's there now. He liked that and chose not to like any of the others as well. If he had seen the cube first, things might have been different.

Blum: By cube do you mean...?

Perkins: A literal cubic form, rather than the long rectangular form.

Blum: Did you envision it as a five-sided piece, as it is now?

Perkins: The fifth side being the top? I had nothing to do with it... I and we had nothing to do with it.

Blum: Was the idea of a piece of outdoor sculpture in the original conception of the plaza?

Perkins: No. It was an afterthought and became possible when Brooks McCormick made a present of it to the bank and to the city.

Blum: I think that raises the whole issue of collaboration, or lack of it, between architect and artist in terms of outdoor or indoor art. Certainly in Crow Island the building was enriched with little objects of art on the outside.

[Tape 5: Side 2]

Perkins: By little do you mean the ceramics by Swann Saarinen?

Blum: Yes. Was the idea of including objects of art built into the original concept?

Perkins: Which are we talking about now? Crow Island or the bank?

Blum: With Crow Island being the earliest example of this, throughout your career was that a consideration as buildings were planned?

Perkins: Whenever it was possible, definitely yes. Phil in his AIA activities had gotten a resolution all the way to the federal government to budget one percent of the costs of the building for art, as being a routine federal consideration. This has manifested itself in the Calder and, I suppose the Picasso. I don't know that whole story, except that Bill Hartman was heavily responsible for the Picasso. Certainly Claes Oldenburg's baseball bat was a manifestation of that hope for a better future. I wonder what future generations are going to think of us for tolerating it.

Blum: Are you speaking about the concept or about the specific choice of a baseball bat as the subject for a sculpture?

Perkins: The concept is great, the baseball bat is silly, childish, and as a form, not very

good in itself.

Blum: There has been a controversy about the fresco that Irene Siegel has done for the new Hild Library that's been in the newspapers recently. People seem to take issue with what she did but not the fact that it was done.

Perkins: The idea that it was done is just a basic groping back toward civilization, which we pretty well rejected for a while until our momentary immersion into mechanistic something.

Blum: It strikes me that with your firm, for example, you design the building, do the interiors, and treat the building as a total. And yet the idea of an object of art, either outside or inside, does not seem to be part of that package in many of your commissions.

Perkins: Almost all buildings and, certainly, almost all of ours, were literally restricted budget-wise and that's where it gets lost. We believe passionately that landscaping, art, interior furnishing, and all that is just as much a part of the design as the floors, walls, and ceilings. But if you can't, you can't. The rationale is that if you have the building for one hundred years, these are things that can be added as living goes on. Certainly, the house we're sitting in has evolved and been enriched by eighty years of living in it. There are things here that weren't here originally, believe me. The basic building if it is a frame that accepts and invites enrichment, is a pretty good design and will be enriched as it reflects the people in it, sometime in the one hundred years that follow. A building is not a static thing forever. You see them in the first week but that isn't it. I will say with no attempt at false modesty that most of our buildings look better ten years after they are built. A great many of our competitor's work doesn't look like anything ten years after they're built.

Blum: You said that earlier about the weathered brick at Crow Island.

Perkins: Time has improved it enormously. As I said before, it is on that point that we beat SOM for the schools of Schenectady. They're very stark, sheer. Two

schools they built looked well but truly shabby from trying to be too slick. When the high school decision was made, that made it against them and in our favor. Art was not included in the original budget, but it's desirable if you know what you want to do. It isn't a disaster if it isn't done then, as long as it can be done later. The baseball bat came later, I think. God save it!

Blum: I know that you have been teaching a course at the University of Illinois in France that involves travelling there with a group of students.

Perkins: They're in France in the first place. They're studying there for a year. They were fourth-year and they are now third-year students. I've been doing this for eleven years now. My late wife worked out wonderful travel and history routines for some of these trips. The routine is that we would take more or less whoever wanted to go, although it's getting now so that the faculty at Versailles choose those who may go who have shown competence in sketching. We attempt to take never more than fifteen. There are about sixty there for the year. Fifteen of them at the most and ten at the least will go with us either to central France or central Italy. By the time we do this, which is usually late April—one of their vacations—they are so hungry for a little warmth and sunshine that there is no consideration of going north to northern France, England, or northern Germany. We go south, either to southern France, Italy, or, more recently, to Spain and, still more recently, to Greece for two weeks. Each day they must go out and sketch whatever pleases their fancy, all day. They may sketch that tree, or this bridge, or that castle, or that church, or that church doorway, or that detail—I don't care what—but they must sketch. They must come to our hotel room at night, at dusk, where we have some cheap wine and some equally cheap cheese and they must sit on the hot seat one at a time and show their sketches to the entire group. This includes one other faculty person and myself. We try to give them helpful criticism and they give each other criticism, which tends to be on the polite side. They know that each will be up next himself. We do this for two weeks. It is absolutely wonderful to see the increased depth of their ability to talk with a pencil or a pen, any medium that pleases them. I, personally, am incompetent to give them much help on watercolor, but if

they want to do it, God bless them.

Blum: What, in essence, do you expect to accomplish and hope to communicate to these students in two weeks?

Perkins: Some manual skill with the ability to draw, but that's a means to an end. The end is not art. This is very firmly pronounced as a non-art course. This is visual communication. The fact that it may secondarily be art inevitably happens, it inevitably is a very desirable by-product. That's not what it is about. They are to learn how to communicate to a client, a draftsman, a colleague, or, as I've said in some other thing I wrote to an admiring parent, "this is what I saw and this is what it looked like." Two things happen: one is the ability to communicate and compete with cruel success against the generations of Miesians who are proud of the fact that they can't. There is a whole generation of them, of which Jim Hammond is at the oldest end. The oldest ones are just turning sixty and the youngest ones are probably thirty-five years old. They, having lived in the context where there is only one solution that applies to every kind of building, there has never been any point in their learning to draw anything except rigidly and mechanically. Nothing else expresses what they are interested in or chose to do. Therefore, anybody who can dance around them with ten ideas while they are making an exquisite model of one idea can just cut them to pieces in front of a client. That's one. The other thing that happens is an educational value that we're seeking. To get a good Kodachrome is a good way of getting a record but it does nothing for your mind. Nothing goes through your head except maybe composing the picture. I've used this example many times because I'm too lazy to think of another: my kids who sat in front of Bourges Cathedral will never live long enough to forget that there are five doors on that church. They have that etched into their brains. Somewhere in the dogma of education it says that there is no learning without an effort and without some pain, on any subject. To see what you've seen and make it a part of your experience you can't simply drive by and look at it, you have to add effort. When you write a report about something that you have read and studied you aren't adding anything to the book. You are etching that book into your

head. Those are the two things: to translate their travel into knowledge of their own and to develop a skill that can be communicated usefully and purposefully as part of the job.

Blum: Thinking of travel in terms of your own career, the first time you were in Europe was in 1926 with your father. What was your experience like?

Perkins: I was with my father, my mother, and my sister, yes.

Blum: What was that like?

Perkins: That's a longer story than we have time for.

Blum: Why don't you describe the high spots?

Perkins: The high spots... The first foreign land that I ever saw was from the crow's nest of the S. S. Carinthia as the lights of Madeira came up over the horizon. As we got closer, in the predawn, we saw what I thought were sheep running all over the hills. As we got closer those sheep were houses, they weren't sheep at all.

Blum: Was your father busy sketching at that time?

Perkins: Dad's health was in pretty dim condition, but he was sketching. You've seen his sketches in that book there, those were all done during that trip, some in England, some in Italy. The trip consisted first of a cruise on the Carinthia to the Mediterranean. We finally got off in Naples. We spent considerable time in Florence. At that time we had arranged to meet our friends, the Lorado Tafts. We stayed at the same place with them for several weeks in Florence. We then traveled around the hill towns with them in a big car, chauffeured by Nelo Matziani. Wonderful Mr. Taft would take us in back of the church to see some sculptor friend of his, four hundred years dead, but still a friend of his. Mother and Eleanor had gone on ahead. Dad and I came by way of Milan and met them in Paris. We operated in and out of there for several weeks.

Toward the last, we went up to England for several weeks. In France, dad bought a little Citroen ten-horsepower car and we went chugging around there and we took it across to England. There we learned to drive on the left.

Blum: This was in 1926, about the time you entered Cornell.

Perkins: Yes.

Blum: Did you have a strong interest in architecture at the time?

Perkins: I developed an interest in architecture during that year because we were exposed to it. I really don't remember whether I tried to sketch or not. At that point, I got a deep prejudice, which remains with me, for loving the Gothic and rather despising the Renaissance. The Renaissance, to my dad's thinking, which I'm afraid I bought, was that it was simply a bunch of dug-up columns applied meaninglessly to a box. Quite an unfair characterization, but it's still the way I tend to see some of those great Renaissance things. I am somewhat more sensitive to some of their great interiors. The Bernini colonnade, I think, is much more moving than the church that is its setting. That prejudice and entering as a freshman at Cornell in the architectural school, I was completely unprepared to even know that there was such a thing as a nice little colonial meeting house when we were given our first problem, which was a meeting house.

Blum: Did you execute it in Gothic?

Perkins: I tried to. The result was supremely undistinguished. With the light of hindsight, I can assure you that it wasn't very good Gothic. The next problem wasn't either. We were to detail the front elevation of it at a half-inch scale and render it. I was completely unprepared during those first two years to make the drawings that I should have. I don't think I woke up to what was going on around me until pretty late in my sophomore year. At that particular time I was getting myself engaged to a gal, which, counting our engagement time, lasted quite a bit more than fifty years. I guess it got

beyond the rumor stage.

Blum: One of the things that you've spoken about off and on has been the AIA. You have talked especially about Phil Will's and your father's commitment to the AIA.

Perkins: Oh, yes.

Blum: What do you think has been the value of such an organization for you as an architect?

Perkins: I'm sure that I am profoundly indebted to them for all of their efforts in establishing the respectability of architecture in general. They took it, toward the end of my career, to where it wasn't nearly as hard to explain what an architect does as it was to explain in my dad's time. There was no real body of the profession. I am sure that it has tended to set an ambiance where the accepted fees and all that are more accepted than they would have been without it.

Blum: Do they set the standard for fees?

Perkins: They try to suggest it. I think I should tell you that when I became a fellow of the AIA, in 1953, I felt at that time that I should shift to an electric razor, and so I did. I did not feel I had the right to risk the sacred blood of a fellow of the AIA with a blade razor!

Blum: Who had sponsored you for this high honor?

Perkins: Phil. He had been president of the chapter the year before. He made it before I did. The convention that I attended so that I could be embalmed as a FAIA was in Seattle. Ralph Walker was the chairman of the committee that handed out the certificates. We met him much less happily twenty years later. The highlight of that convention was Marshall Perault, an architect of that area, who had a thirty-three-foot boat. He took us cruising in the Puget Sound and

Vancouver area.

Blum: Did you consider the AIA the establishment?

Perkins: I guess so. There were all kinds of gradations of feeling about the AIA from Phil, which was in the service of his beloved profession—he loved that—to those who felt otherwise. I remember my dad’s attitude, which was perhaps a little ungrateful. I told him that I had been seeing something of Mr. Reid, of Childs and Smith, in the AIA and various other matters. Dad said, “You didn’t see Frank Childs, did you?” I said, “No.” He said, “He’s out seeing where the clients are.” A great many people feel that the AIA is a way of architects talking to each other and maybe not much of a way of talking to the world.

Blum: I have heard criticism of the AIA, but in stronger terms that you’re describing—that the AIA has done nothing to set or uphold standards of the profession or to support members who took a position on one or another matter. For that reason, they took issue with the value of the AIA.

Perkins: I’m afraid they take themselves awfully seriously, the people who work at it and consider it an achievement in itself rather than as a means to an end. I remember when I told dad, at a time when his partner, Herrick Hammond was president, I said, “I’d like to see if I can get there someday.” Dad, with complete disinterest, said, “That’s interesting. What’s your platform? What do you want to do with the AIA? Why should you be president?” To get the presidency of anything is unworthy as compared to saying that you want to use the presidency to accomplish objectives A, B, and C. This is what my father was trying to say to me and he was absolutely right. Phil Will did indeed do some important things that were socially good for the world and for the profession from that position.

Blum: When he was president of the AIA?

Perkins: As president of the AIA.

- Blum: What substantive changes were made under his presidency?
- Perkins: Basically, the growing awareness of the breadth of the architectural and design professions, their identity with each other, all the way from jewelry to landscape design and all of the building skills in between is one job. Phil was much more interested in living for the AIA than he was for Perkins and Will. As I said to you yesterday, like all good marriages, it has strains. His AIA period was a very bitter strain on Perkins and Will, as was his very competent and effective work as a Cornell trustee. He was active for ten years and is still emeritus all his life. The cruelest thing that was ever said about it was said by Todd Wheeler. He said, "The AIA was a respectable form of escape with built-in applause." It was easier than making buildings happen.
- Blum: Do you agree with that?
- Perkins: I'm afraid I do. I am conscious of being unfair. Some things did come to the firm because of Phil's AIA associations, but not nearly enough to pay his salary.
- Blum: Is that the reason that one belongs to the AIA, to make connections so that work will come in return?
- Perkins: Many do; Phil did not.
- Blum: Do you feel that he should have used it in that way?
- Perkins: Not directly. It should have brought that result. In any case, it was not a completely expensive luxury, but it came pretty close. It came pretty close to being a twenty-year leave of absence from the firm. That strained loyalties.
- Blum: Was a membership in the Cliff Dwellers Club—I know you became a member in 1932 when you were quite young—intended to bring work to your firm?

Perkins: No. That was just a delight.

Blum: What were the circumstances of your first visit to the Cliff Dwellers?

Perkins: That was easy. Dad was not quite a charter member of the Cliff Dwellers, but he was an early member. By the time I was out of school it was necessary for me to go with dad to meetings and things that I had no business going to in my own right. His hearing was dimming, particularly when he heard a speech, but also just in normal conversation. I would sit near him with a pad of paper and pass notes to him as to what was being said so that he wouldn't miss questions from the floor or from across the table, for that matter. My real entrance into the Cliff Dwellers was to supply dad with a set of ears. That lasted as often as he went there, until he was departing, just before Pearl Harbor. December 7th 1941 was Pearl Harbor and he was gone a month before that.

Blum: How young were you when you first started accompanying him in that way?

Perkins: Back in high school. I remember going to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, one time and sitting at the table nearest the speakers' table where I could reach up and pass stuff to him.

Blum: Why did you want to become a member of the Cliff Dwellers?

Perkins: I remember talking it over with Mr. Ralph Clarkson, the painter, and all of these people were friends. I asked him, "Do you think that it would serve any purpose or would it be getting a little bit big for my britches if I suggested that I be a member to help dad with this?" He lit up like Christmas morning and said, "I think it's a great idea and I'll sponsor you." By that time I had opened my big mouth and I was taken up more than I expected to be, more than I meant to be.

Blum: And you became a member?

Perkins: He apparently was able to sell it to the membership committee, I don't know how, but at the age of thirty-two, I was pretty old by this time.

Blum: Thirty-two? You were twenty-five in 1932.

Perkins: That's pretty old.

Blum: What do you recall about the Cliff Dwellers and its members?

Perkins: Lots of things: a cat can look at a king sort of thing, where I was the cat. I, this unwashed cub, could sit at the same table with Ralph Clarkson, who was a delight; I could sit with Rudy Ingerle, the painter, whom I enjoyed—I enjoyed his painting and I enjoyed him. I remember sitting at the table with Carter Harrison; he was a lusty old buck.

Blum: Was he the mayor?

Perkins: Yes, he had been mayor. His best friend was Oscar Mayer. They told stories back and forth on each other. I remember particularly one lunch when Carter Harrison talked about having been invited by Cy deVry up to Lincoln Park to see Mama and Papa lion meet each other, before visiting hours, for the advancement of the lion population. His detailed description of it, which I'm afraid I can't immortalize, was one of the most sidesplitting, funniest lunches I have ever attended, and his graphic description of their consummation.... I've found myself eating at the same table with people that I worshipped, including, by accident, eating alone with Mr. Frederick Stock, the Friday before he disappeared from the world on the following Tuesday.

Blum; Did you ever see Louis Sullivan there?

Perkins: Yes, with my dad. I was taken over and introduced. At that time I hardly knew who I was meeting. I know more about him now than I ever did then. This was a frail man who was sitting in a chair and did not get up to

acknowledge introductions. He was that far gone. I have no personal memory of his charm or lack of it, or his ability or lack of it. Reading about him plenty, but not what I saw with my eyes, not so of Frank Wright. Mr. Sullivan was a very limited man; all I saw was just the body of a man.

Blum: Did you know the Pond brothers at the Cliff Dwellers?

Perkins: Saw, knew, had dinner with them. Mr. Irving K. Pond has been here to dinner a couple of times. I have his book on the other side of that wall there; it's called *A Strange Fellow and all that*. He and I shared a feeling about—well, I got my feeling from him—the War Between the States. He was very deprecatory about Robert E. Lee and said, “He was simply there because he was pretty,” which he was. I. K. Pond was known as the “wide Pond,” and A. B. was known as the “deep Pond.” There are a lot of rumors there. Allen Pond was believed to have been in love with Jane Addams. Nothing came of it in way of an alliance, but they were close friends to the point that they did all the Hull House work. Their work that was demolished was far more distinguished than the part of the Hull House building that was saved for Circle campus. It was chosen by very young people who didn't have the foggiest notion of what was significant about the Hull House complex. They saved the least valuable part of the whole thing. When they were younger, I. K. said that when he got out of college he was equally prepared, literally, to be either an architect or a circus acrobat. I have seen him and I have movies of him on the newsreels. On his seventy-fifth birthday he was still able to go off a springboard and do somersaults in the air.

Blum: Are you joking?

Perkins: No. This is quite real. They were big and handsome, both of them. They had handlebar mustaches and white hair. A more classic face than Jensen's but the same kind of white majesty. We indeed knew the Ponds. I remember one of the early AIA dinners under the dome of the half-ruined Fine Arts building from the Columbian Exposition, which is now the Museum of Science and Industry, which the AIA was using to try to help that thing to be

preserved. This was a cause of Mr. Lorado Taft. He had used his own money to finish one small wing of the building; it practically stripped him of his family money to do it. He wanted to show what could be there. The northeast corner pavilion of the building was finished with Mr. Taft's personal money. I don't remember the exact timing relationship, but this dinner occurred afterward. I found myself, as an early high schooler, sitting between the Pond brothers. Mr. Pond made some outrageous pun and I commented with less than the restraint I might have shown that, "At our house when we make puns that bad we don't call it wit, we call it half-wit." Mr. A. B. Pond took me and walked me around the lagoon out the South Side and told me about their time at Columbia when he rowed on the crew. I think it was that night that I got interested in making myself a rowboat-type athlete, which I never quite made. I did some, but I never got far. My son Brad got on the lightweight crew. I never did, but I loved it. Phil was very scornful; he said, "It's just a tug-o-war." Because of that and many other things, the Ponds were, I think, personal friends in my own right. I. K., at least, has been here for dinner with Midge and me. I loved and enjoyed them. That's more on the Ponds than perhaps you wanted, but this was what was wonderful and real about the Cliff Dwellers to me.

Blum: It was a forum for this kind of exchange?

Perkins: A forum implies something more formal. It was more of a marketplace for individual transactions. I don't know whether that's a good metaphor or not. That's more the scale of the relationships. It was a very personal place.

Blum: You have made a list of a few of the people whom you recalled.

Perkins: Of whom I have some varying degree of memory, yes.

Blum: There's a person you've mentioned who seems to be elusive. I've come across his name off and on in the literature, Rolfe Renouf. Was he a delineator?

Perkins: He was an architect and a very good one, and he was a delineator. He did

exquisite drawings of mechanical things. He knew enough to draw and design the interior of an engine as much as he did the mechanics of a building. When we were working on the Evanston High School I asked him to come over and work with us, which he did for a good many months. He had worked at Perkins, Chatten and Hammond at one time. This is where I first knew him. He was very sensitive and kind. I believe at one time that he was president of the Cliff Dwellers. One of the high moments of his life was when his son gave one of the concerts at the Cliff Dwellers and played a piece by Fauré. He started off, as any piano player must, with Bach and did it competently, and then he did a Beethoven sonata, and then he did a Fauré thing and it was obvious that he liked the Fauré best. Rolfe and his wife sat there and beamed and had the ultimate kind of satisfaction that only a parent can have. It tasted real good. He was quiet, precise-spoken, just a deeply nice person.

[Tape 6: Side 1]

Perkins: Rolfe was a deeply nice person. I can't really fish up an in-depth psychological study of him. Obviously I liked him and respected him.

Blum: I've come across some of his work in other architects' offices but it seems that he did not have an office of his own. He seems to be one of the many invisible architects who have not been well enough documented.

Perkins: He called himself an engineer, I think. He was a very sensitive designer. His drafting was among the best I've ever seen.

Blum: You gave a speech in 1971 at the Cliff Dwellers and the content of the talk was about a son talking to his father. Was this something that the Cliff Dwellers did often with father and son member families?

Perkins: I can't answer that. They endured that one.

Blum: What was the reason for that one? How did it come about?

Perkins: I don't know. I guess it was because they loved my father and wanted to hear about him. I don't remember where it fit into their program schedule, in their program of programs. It was just one of the things that they did. I did that at noon. They had a lot of people who got up and talked at noon.

Blum: What were some of the things that you enjoyed most about the Cliff Dwellers?

Perkins: The thing that I enjoyed most, no question, were the people. Not people in general, but the individuals who were a delight and a privilege to know. I'd come home and say, "I had a nice lunch with Mr. Taft," or, "I had a nice lunch with Tom Tallmadge today. We talked about his book," and that sort of thing. I'll finish my sentence: one of the lunches, one of the many over the years, was when I found myself sitting with Tom Tallmadge and we were talking about his book. I commented that by that time—this must have been the very late 1930s—his chapter on Louis Sullivan and the "Lost Cause," which was the title of a chapter, may have been a little early for the final funeral. Tom chuckled and said, "Yes, there's going to be a next edition. I'll have to rewrite that chapter." I have both editions upstairs and he did rewrite it. It ascribed to Louis Sullivan the prophecy of everything that we now know from Goodhue, Ralph Walker, Mies and Gropius and the others. Sullivan certainly verbalized the first stirrings of that feeling of necessity both here and abroad. I think one of the things I did in one of my speeches at the Cliff Dwellers--the essence of it was that Chicago got its modern architecture not directly from Chicago but from Germany and back to Chicago. That is how we got modern architecture. Mies and Gropius were, of course, influenced and stimulated by Sullivan mostly and Wright some. As Frank Wright said, "I give you Mies van der Rohe more than he himself may know." This is true. The real relationship there was Chicago to Germany to Chicago to get what we then called contemporary architecture.

Blum: The origin in Chicago was...

Perkins: Mies, Sullivan, Wright and a group of other people that I'm a little closer to. This all came as a sort of sub-paragraph about Tom Tallmadge. Rewriting of that chapter was certainly one of the sparks. Tom was a fun person. One night after one of the Cliff Dwellers parties we all piled up to West Madison Street and caught a little of the burlesque show at the Star and Garter. Tom was not above all that sort of thing. Then, as now, girls took their clothes off and that was a fine thing.

Blum: The old photographs hung on the stair wall of the club shows sketch classes with models. Were you ever part of the sketch classes?

Perkins: I was. A model from across the street came over and I will say that she was so flat-chested that until she took off the rest of her clothes I thought it possible that this was going to be a put-on. That's pretty flat-chested! She was a good model. Dudley [Crafts] Watson was the critic. We, in relays, were all given a block of paper, a backboard, a piece of chalk, and everybody was supposed to draw the figure. There were a few people in the Cliff Dwellers who could, indeed, draw. There were many who did, but couldn't. The Lincolnwood School fifth graders could have done better than certainly a third of them. It was an interesting evening. Earlier that evening there had been the platter with the pig brought in and carved. It was that kind of a Harvest Home Dinner with the model and the sketch class afterward. Phil Will was a member of the Cliff Dwellers at that time, so was Bill Barnes, of Barnes Printing, the organ architect who lived at the corner of Forest and Davis in Evanston, and Tom Tallmadge.

Blum: Was this an all-male event?

Perkins: Not the model, although, as I said, there was some doubt until she took off her skirt. As we left that evening, after drawing a naked lady—they all remember Phil—Phil was reminiscing and thinking about the evening as we drove home. He said, "You know, it's been a very interesting evening. I don't think I've ever seen a whole roast pig before." Phil did have that kind of a sense of humor when he had his feet planted. He watched his time and let it

go. It was remembered by Barnes, Tallmadge, and the rest for a very long time. That was one Harvest Home Dinner.

Blum: Was this an annual event?

Perkins: There were several. I don't know whether it was formalized as annual, but the Harvest Home Dinner evening is annual. Whether they do it that way... Dudley Crafts Watson gave criticism mostly as vehicles for the wisecracks that he had thought up first.

Blum: He had been a lecturer at the Art Institute for years. What was he like?

Perkins: Oh, yes. He was farmed out to propagandize the Art Institute. He was sent to give lectures all over the place. Lusty, verbal, a little on the precious side, flowing hair, black ribbon on his glasses.

Blum: Did the Cliff Dwellers give costume balls?

Perkins: I believe so.

Blum; Did you attend them?

Perkins: No. A Phil Will comment: we were dressed up in our hard-boiled shirts to go to a New Year's Eve party one time very early in our life there. We lived in the Marshall Field Garden Apartments and we were riding in a taxi on a rainy night to go to the Cliff Dwellers. Phil's comment as we were going down Wacker Drive in the glistening, rainy light of night was, "Doesn't this seem a little bit foolish to celebrate a purely arbitrary division of time?"

Blum: He had a dry sense of humor.

Perkins: Dry sense of humor. He had conventional wisdom about almost anything. Why is that a good idea? He wasn't nearly as deft as my mother about deflating things. He liked to bring people down.

Blum: On the list you made a list for your reference about people that you recalled from the Cliff Dwellers, Rudy Nedved's name is on that list. I know he was an architect, along with Paul McCurry and Vale Faro.

Perkins: They were indeed architects. Rudy Nedved had a number of distinctions. Briefly, after Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton broke up, Leonard Hamilton joined a new firm, without Fellows who wanted to play golf. He had Lawrence Wilkinson. The firm was Hamilton, Fellows, Wilkinson and Garrity. When Garrity died, Rudy Nedved joined. He worked on a number of things, including the Winnetka church. He lived in a Frank Wright house on the edge of a ravine in Highland Park.

Blum: That house is on Sheridan Road in north Glencoe, on a ravine very close to the border between Glencoe and Highland Park.

Perkins: All right, Glencoe then. He lived there and maintained it intelligently and sympathetically. He was a nice, interested guy. He was just another architect.

Blum: Vale Faro and Paul McCurry were both with Schmidt, Garden and Erikson.

Perkins: Incidentally, I was reminded of Schmidt, Garden and Erikson the night before last when I went to the opera. I was explaining to my young architect friend who was our guest that the Civic Opera building was built for Mary Garden, who had made a considerable impression on Samuel Insull. He built that building for her in her honor, as she was also head of the Chicago Opera. She held several positions pre-Ardis Kranik. Mary Garden was the sister of Hugh Garden, of Schmidt, Garden and Erikson, who didn't design the opera building, but that was the relationship. That was the Schmidt, Garden and on that they and a lot of other people—Ruth Moore's husband Ray Garbe—all of them, relate in that dynasty. I did know—I don't think I wrote it down here—about Dick Schmidt, of Schmidt, Garden and Erikson. I went home one night and told my dad that Dick Schmidt had been made building commissioner for the city of Chicago. My dad's comment was, "Well, I don't believe it's possible for them to have done better. He is bright, he is retired,

he is qualified, and he is rich.” He was. Rudy Nedved, who was with them by this time, commented to me one day in Mr. Schmidt’s twilight years that, “The only thing that keeps him alive is his money. At the moment his money is able to buy the nursing care that is postponing his departure.” I don’t remember just how he said it, but “his money is keeping him alive” was the sense of it. I’m sure that was accurate.

Blum: You are the architect/member of longest standing at the Cliff Dwellers and will be honored in the spring with a dedication. As you look back at your fifty-plus years of membership in the Cliff Dwellers, how would you describe the role it’s played in your life?

Perkins: I wish I deserved it more. I haven’t put nearly as much into the Cliff Dwellers as I’ve gotten out. I think I would have to say in simple honesty that it has been a privilege that I have enjoyed, exulted in. To be as active, as helpful, as I should have been, I’m afraid I put my energy, such as it was, into more self-serving things like my educator clients and their clubs. I attended to that much more avidly. One comment, which I don’t think was totally justified—Midge occasionally would refer to us Cliff Dwellers as “culture boys.” I have heard more good talk at that first table and some of the other tables too than I’ve ever heard at the Chicago Club. At the Yacht Club we talk about boats and that’s a very important thing for me. We’re more apt to manage the cosmos from the Cliff Dwellers than from either of the other two.

Blum: A second generation of the Committee of the Universe?

Perkins: The unstructured Committee of the Universe.

Blum: Larry, were you a member of the Chicago Architectural Club?

Perkins: No, I never was. It was never that much of a factor by the time I showed up. The depression had just about killed off all of that kind of extracurricular activity. We were all looking around for places to sell apples on street corners or do almost anything. I’m not exaggerating too much.

Blum: Was your father a member of the club?

Perkins: I'm sure he was. I have no reason to doubt that he was. He was in on everything that he approved of, and he certainly would have approved of that. I don't think that he was active as a participant in their sketch groups. I remember one instance that got me excused from Cornell to come home to attend. I referred to it when I was asking for it as a premature funeral for my father. The Chicago Architectural Club was collecting portraits of the architects at that time and my mother was asked to provide a portrait of my dad to be presented to the club. There was a big dinner there and all of the architects and friends came to say nice things about dad. The portrait was indeed presented. Later on all of those portraits were given to the Chicago Historical Society. They promptly found their way to the basement, which annoyed me some. I remember the dinner and the evening in general. In particular, I remember that Herrick Hammond, of Perkins, Chatten and Hammond, used some of Leonard Hamilton's—he was of Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton—phrases of derision about my dad. Mr. Hamilton was a savage. His disposition and cruelty really, I think, had something to do with breaking dad's health. One of his sneers was that my dad was picking flowers by the wayside rather than practicing architecture. He meant, of course, the regional plan, which dad founded, the Forest Preserve, the small parks, and all that sort of thing. Herrick Hammond, when it came his turn to make some remarks about dad, used the phrase "picking flowers by the wayside" and very graciously, with full knowledge that Leonard Hamilton was there and hearing it, said that he hoped that dad would continue to pick flowers of equal beauty by the wayside as long as he felt it was working. It was just a very nice affair. That is my principal association with the Chicago Architectural Club. My principal awareness was that, living as it did across the street from our now-cherished Glessner house, it fell on evil times and they just had to give up. They gave their assets, such as they were, to the Chicago Historical Society.

Blum: As a postscript, the Chicago Architectural Club has been revived and you

recently addressed one of their meetings. May we move on to how your profession impacted your family?

Perkins: In a short run, adversely. It meant that I was not the kind of father who played catch with my sons. I didn't take them to the zoo as often as I should have. I think that one of Midge's remarks in a moment of exasperation—I think she had her hands on her hips as she said it—was “After all, I raised those children.” There is a good deal of justification in it. I think much later, like now, for instance, they enjoy some of the benefits that went with Perkins and Will and perhaps they didn't feel that they paid too much of a personal price for being related to me.

Blum: Did you say that one of your sons is an architect?

Perkins: He is indeed. It's interesting that both of my sons started in architecture at Cornell. The college of architecture did a dedicated job. As one rather twerpy professor said to Brad, my younger son, “Because of who you are and because of the damage that you could do to architecture, if you don't care about this in the same way that I do, I'm going to do my best to get you out of here.” To a degree, he succeeded. He got Brad to transfer out of architecture, still in the upper quarter of his class, but not in design. He graduated in liberal arts. He went on to a series of very interesting jobs, one while he was getting his MBA at Stanford, after Cornell. He went to work for the Case Company. They made a study of architectural profitability throughout America. Brad was their legs, arms, and operator. He has probably interviewed and seen the inside of more architects' account books than any living man. He saw that side. All of the architects, except for two in Detroit, were extra cordial to him because of his connection. The two in Detroit were not about to let him see their books on the assumption that it would get back to me, which it didn't, except in the form of a final report. Then he worked for a construction management firm, McKee, Burger and Mansueto. He had a very happy and responsible job there. Then he had a job managing the firm of Lord Richard Llewelyn Davies, of England. He managed the American office in New York for Lord Davies for a number of

years. By this time, Harry Anderson was looking around for someone to manage the New York and Washington offices of Perkins and Will. I had lunch with Harry and I told him the person he needed was Brad. "Of course, Brad had much too good a job and we couldn't get him. Brad knows absolutely everybody; he pumps out telephone calls, forty or fifty a day. He keeps in touch with this, that and twenty-seven other things. This is the kind of mind that you need and if anybody knows who it is, Brad will know. I suggest that you have lunch with him." The next thing I knew, Harry had offered Brad the job. Brad, in the meantime, had let it be known that the Llewelyn Davies office was undergoing the strife, the retiring, and the bad health of the senior partner. He found himself with four presidencies offered to him. One of CRS's companies, one of Helmuth, Obata and Kassabaum's projects, he was practically invited to be the crown prince there, and, to my astonishment, he took the Perkins and Will job.

Blum: You are talking like a very proud father.

Perkins: There may be a resemblance. Brad is, if anything, brighter than his Phi Beta Kappa brother.

Blum: Is he still with Perkins and Will?

Perkins: He is no longer with Perkins and Will. Harry Anderson very quickly found out that Brad was a little bit too freewheeling and creative to suit him. This is an unfair, prejudiced father speaking, but Harry couldn't stand Brad's informality about handling paper clips and other bureaucratic minutiae. He sent Hans Neumann in to badger him into resigning, which he did. The proud father again speaking: Brad left and formed his own firm. Perkins and Will went from eighty down to eight while Brad went from zero to forty-five people and would have more if he had the office space for them.

Blum: It seems that your influence on your son, being an architect and the son of an architect, was pervasive, even if it wasn't in your own firm.

Perkins: Still more because it wasn't in my own firm. Brad's success is his own. I had an interesting experience one day. One of the big jobs that Perkins and Will was, in its majesty, counting on getting—I believe it was in Atlanta, at a directors meeting that I was attending—it was listed on our prospect list and I had the interesting experience of saying, "Well, I think we had better take that off the prospect list because Brad has that job."

Blum: Your son was your competitor?

Perkins: He was, he is, and he is beating the hell out of us. He has a strong and growing office in New York across the street from the New York Public Library on Fifth Avenue. He has a couple of partners, ladies, who are bringing in a lot of work, interior work. He has some stuff under construction. He has interior work. He has a forty-story building going up next to the Woolworth Tower, and all kinds of goodies of that sort. He is overwhelmingly ahead of where our firm was when I was his age. Brad is just turning forty.

Blum: When you were practicing, did you feel that you were well paid for your services?

Perkins: I don't know that I ever thought much about it. I assure you that Phil Will did. Phil, to the end of his days, never quite understood why, for doing good work, there wasn't a man waiting in the wings to give him the "A" that he had gotten so accustomed to receiving in school.

Blum: What do you mean by an "A"?

Perkins: A grade of "A" on his report card. In the first place, he should have been endowed so that he could practice architecture on houses, which he loved, and less so on building, which did not interest him as much. You asked the question about how I felt. I don't really remember how I felt, except that for any job that we could get, that we could do, that we could claw a living out of the surrounding world, that would give us enough to eat and feed our

families, we were grateful. I don't think that it ever occurred to me that just because we were perhaps talented, perhaps able, that it would be nice if we made a living comparable to lawyers, doctors, whatever. I didn't bother to think about it. That was just one of the facts of life.

Blum: Were architects paid on a scale with the other professions that you just mentioned?

Perkins: Certainly not. We were too competitive. Architecture in my lifetime was not that established as a profession. We certainly were not accepted. It was routine to have a client who would say, I don't know whether I can afford an architect on this job so maybe I'd better go to a contractor or Hemphill Builders or somebody like that and get a cookie-cutter house. Our competition was only secondarily each other, and then only for very big buildings. Schools were routinely designed by architects, but houses weren't architect-oriented.

Blum: How did the architectural profession and you personally counter that kind of attitude? Why shouldn't a homeowner use a builder instead of an architect?

Perkins: By doing everything we knew how to do to prove that we could do it better and more in the owner's interest. We failed as often as we succeeded in doing it to the owner's satisfaction. We knew we were better, and so did our aesthetically literate clients or one who believed you could add your fee in value to the job. But the practical men—you've heard me use that phrase—were pretty hard to convince. The whole value of aesthetics is not held in high regard in this country yet. The orphan profession of architecture hardly mattered as a profession in my dad's day and could be dropped out of the building world without anybody ever feeling its loss. That became less true in my day. Still, architects were independent artists and not a part of the building industry well into this century. By the time that we were ready to work in the early 1930s, money was so bitterly short that anything that could be eliminated, including a building itself—there were so few buildings—was left out. Crow Island, the job that we've talked so much about, was the first

serious building in the school field for a decade when it came time to build it. There was a great big, juicy vacuum in the building industry itself, much beyond architecture, which was considered the superficial refinement on a building, and to this day it still is.

Blum: Did the AIA ever tackle problems like this and work on them for the betterment of the profession?

Perkins: Yes, but not terribly effectively. The AIA got itself misunderstood as a sort of architects' trade union. Ethics at that time were sort of in the spirit of "I won't step on your toes and you don't step on mine. I will protect you from your client and you will protect me from mine. What happens to the client is in our self-interest." That is an unkind paraphrase of the limit of the architects' ethics. At that time, gold medallist Howard Van Doren Shaw wrote a little piece that I enjoyed—well, he didn't write it. He was at an AIA convention and asked for the floor. The debate had been going on for several days about forging a code of ethics for the profession of architecture, long before they had a business with which to be ethical, in my opinion. Howard Shaw asked for the floor and got it. He moved as follows: he said, "I move that all of the preceding work that has gone into the proposed code of ethics be rescinded in its entirety and substitute for it the following, which I will read in its entirety. Be a gentleman if you can, but for god's sake, be an architect." That was a necessary, courageous voice from without. Obviously, it got nowhere. The AIA has indeed gone timidly and slowly, perhaps in some people's opinion it advanced the acceptance of the profession of architecture. To this day we are considered far less than essential. Until you are essential, until you are saving somebody's life, or keeping him out of jail, or something where his self-interest is obvious and immediate and not to be bargained with, you can't have lawyer-like and doctor-like incomes to go with it. This is true right to this minute. Every job that we've ever gotten was fought for and the out-of-house people who worked with the clients knew this. The in-house people who worked on the job in the office didn't understand it and were resentful of how they were not appreciated. That will go on as long as there is a world, I think. I remember when we had—this was about at the close of the

war—a good deal of residential work and some other stuff. I was home one Saturday and I got a call from Mr. John Root, of Holabird and Root. He said, “We are still under wartime manpower restrictions and we can’t get help. We have just been offered a housing job out on the South Side at 123rd and somewhere, out beyond Lake Calumet. We can’t take it. Do you want it?” I practically fell through the phone and said, ‘Of course we do and we’d like to do it in association with you.’”

Blum: When did this happen?

Perkins: 1946. That was the conclusion of our business deal. Joe Burgee carried it out in a somewhat less informal and more self-serving way later.

[Tape 6: Side2]

Perkins: I went over to Phil’s house as soon as I hung up. Phil, Callie and Midge were standing out in the front yard talking about something, the landscaping on his house or something. I came bouncing up, wagging my tail and feeling very pleased about life. I told them about this. Midge said, “That’s great. That’s wonderful.” Phil said, “Now will you stop selling for a while?” Phil was never adequately paid in his own mind. I always felt that anything I wasn’t paid for was because I failed to take it myself. The world is there. Nat Owings made a million dollars. If I didn’t, it was my own fault.

Blum: I wondered whether the profession as a whole, and you as an example, felt that you were adequately reimbursed.

Perkins: If I wasn’t adequately reimbursed, I don’t know who I should go whining to.

Blum: What do you consider has been your greatest opportunity in architecture?

Perkins: That’s a little hard to say because each step on the way has been a struggle, a burst and a joy when it happened. The opportunities that came without suspense and without peril weren’t all that interesting. The expected answer,

of course, was the moment when Carleton Washburne changed his tone of voice and got interested in talking realistically about us as possible architects. Equally overwhelming, years before that, was when I, an unwashed cub, was included to be the tenth and least of a serious bunch of architects on a huge housing project, all \$7.5 million of it. It was a great moment. Another great moment was when my family offered to back me on a speculative house job. It ultimately cost \$11,000. It was in north Evanston. It was supposed to be built to show what I could do. I suppose that my even greater opportunity was my very skillful choice of parents, for which I take full credit.

Blum: Can you cite one instance as the most pivotal in your career?

Perkins: No, the whole thing has been a series of adventures. I would like to think that we were like Eero Saarinen in one major regard: I don't think that he ever had, in the Miesian sense, a fixed solution that he applied to opportunities as they came along. He did not turn them out by rule and rote. Everything Eero ever touched, and, I assume Eliel, his father, too, was an adventure in finding the essence and in enhancing it. I used to be very proud of the fact that we didn't repeat ourselves, but not for the negative reason, more for the fact that if we kept changing it would hopefully mean that we had grown in our architectural solutions. It would be an exaggeration to say that we considered every building an unmatched opportunity, but I'd like to think that it was in the direction of truth. I remember I used to enjoy telling prospective school boards a story about the cello player. He was practicing and his wife stood it for as long as a well-trained and well-disciplined wife should, but finally she said, "Dear, I notice that when you are practicing on the cello you always play one note in one rhythm and in one pitch. I notice that when other people play the cello they play different notes and different cadences and different arrangements. Why is that?" He smiled a rather Teutonic little smile and said, "My dear, that shows how much they know about cello playing and how much you know, for that matter. They are looking for the perfect note and I have found it." This, in one sentence, disposes of Mies for me. This may be a digression, but you asked what was our greatest opportunity. I don't know. We should be grateful for all the chances that we've been given to

show what we could do. I would like to think that the architecture was more important to us than making a living. I used to say and I guess I believed it—in fact, I know I did—that an architect is paid in three kinds of coin: in authorship, credit, and money, in that order. If it's in any other order, you have the wrong architect. In the sense of the first two, surely we were adequately paid from time to time in chances to do as well as we could. Another variation on the same thought: Leonard Hamilton, my dad's partner, used to say it this way, "Any client who will give you intelligent understanding can make you lose money every time and not mind it a bit."

Blum: In what way do you think that Perkins and Will, over the past fifty years, has changed the urban landscape?

Perkins: I don't think we've changed the urban landscape very much. I think we have changed the human living conditions of school children pretty well all over America. I think that we have created a more sensitive and happy environment for more people than some of our much bigger competitors. I feel that we have changed the quality of life for more people as distinguished from honestly built square feet. I think we've been honestly privileged that way. That's what being in the education field and the hospital field has meant to me. I think we have, to a large degree, whole concept of a patient-centered hospital. We've certainly done student-centered school buildings. This, I think, is one of the principal rewards that I would point to. We've all eaten regularly, sometimes at peril, but we've never been in debt although we weren't very far away from it at times. That, I really believe, was the third, rather than the first, reason for being in the architecture business. The art of architecture is certainly as strong a compulsion as the necessity of making a living. The bottom line is not the object that I think is pretty well pervasive in the profession now. I believe that of a lot of us.

Blum: For what would you like best to be remembered?

Perkins: Mostly for the people I've loved.

Blum: In architecture?

Perkins: In architecture? Even there, that's not a bad answer. The fact that I have basked in the acquaintance, or even more than that, of starting with my dad, the Pond brothers, Tom Tallmadge, and a lot of their friends, and more peripherally Mr. Goodhue, Mr. Saarinen Sr. and Jr., a lot of the people that are alive today. I would like to think that I was more of a people architect than a thing architect. Phil's responsibility and interest was more on the thing side. That was at least part of why we were partners. I would make the same distinction between Eliel and Eero Saarinen. Eliel was much the greater people architect and did vastly nicer places for people than Eero who did much more admirable projects to look at and to admire. I would say that is true, but perhaps not at the same level or the degree, of Phil and myself. The firm very quickly got to be a lot more than Phil Will and Larry Perkins. There were a lot of other wonderful minds besides Phil's turning out the stuff.

Blum: Do you think over the years that the press has treated your firm's architecture fairly?

Perkins: No, I don't think it was fair at all. I think it was very generous. That was not wholly an accident. I made it my business to meet and become friends—eventually close, personal friends—with the editors of the principal architecture and principal hospital and health magazines and books.

Blum: Did you know Howard Myers?

Perkins: I knew Howard Myers. I think, speaking of great opportunities, the fact that Ken Hedrich introduced me to Howard Myers was enormously important to our architecture in general and certainly selfishly to me in particular. Howard Myers was a titanic influence in developing the acceptance of the profession of architecture. He took *Architectural Forum* and made it a coffee table magazine that you could find in corporate offices. He developed the hero-architect. In our early days, when it was appropriate, he featured under-forty architects that he had chosen to think of as having a bright future. We were,

thanks to Ken Hedrich, one of them. For years he sort of godfathered many of us, me among them. We were taken seriously, thanks to Howard in particular, long before we had earned that. He was consciously bringing along what turned out to be a wonderful Tammany Hall, if you'll permit that slightly irreverent comparison. He created an audience for architecture. I remember once that he told me, as far ahead as he could see then, "We'll publish anything you send us, but it's up to you to edit what you send. One proviso: if you ever get so much work that we can't, then we'll take a second look." Howard Myers was enormously important to all of us. I remember one night that I was at his house for dinner in New York. I can't remember why I was so honored, but I was. We were talking about movies and I said, "I haven't been to one." He said, "Well, what's the matter with you and movies?" I said, "Take tonight, for instance, I'd rather be here than at the movies." I'd much rather be with the people to whom I had access all my life, than to go to a movie most of my life, and that night was one of those times. Howard Myers was one. Equally important in the educational world was Walter Cocking, who became an intimate personal friend. We wrote a book together. Archie Shaw did an awful lot of the work on the book. Walter saw to it that I was put in the position of being a resource at seminars for school superintendents who were trying to do self-improvement chores by going to meetings. I was put in the position of being the teacher, which is an advantage in a relationship that lasts all your life. Once you have been somebody's teacher, the relationship is never quite the same again. I remember one of the many seminars at a Fifth Avenue hotel in New York with Walter Cocking. He was editor of *School Executive*, his magazine, and *American School and University* was his yearbook. He arranged this seminar for the superintendent of schools at Schenectady, Fallsburg, White Plains, Scarsdale, and Worcester, Massachusetts. Out of that one week of seminars in that Fifth Avenue hotel, over the years at least nine major jobs have emerged. They were the basis of our eastern practice. The Linton High School in Schenectady was the crown jewel on that list, or perhaps it was the White Plains High School. All of this started from your question about whether we were treated fairly by the press. I said we were treated a great deal more than fairly. I quite consciously realized that it was publicity that we needed in

order to get acceptance for whatever work we wanted—we needed the publicity. I made it my business to make the editor’s life as easy as possible. We paid for and provided them with good photography. We wrote their stories for them when they would let us. We made their life very easy. In turn, they made ours very easy. It was a reciprocal backscratching arrangement from which we benefited. That enabled us to reach clients by the dozens that we couldn’t possibly have reached by doorbell punching.

Blum: Did you feel there was an eastern bias to the press?

Perkins: No, I don’t think so but there is in the architectural profession. When I was in school, everything that we talked about as the being part of the Prairie School was just something old guys over there were doing of no particular importance. They even shrugged off Frank Wright and Louis Sullivan as being just some local idiosyncratic types, which hits a little close to what I was trying to express about the Holsmans, even in their neighborhood. Nobody was against them, it just wasn’t that important.

Blum: You’ve spent hours now sharing your memories and recollections, I hope you won’t mind if I share one with you. This is in a letter to me from Wes Wieting, an architect who was with Perkins and Will for many years. He said, “It’s hard for me to present an accurate picture of the real Larry Perkins and the real Phil Will but I have vivid memories of some incidents that may help. When the firm started to grow in 1946 after the war, it was still operating on a very tight budget. Perkins was still wearing an overcoat that had been left at some restaurant in exchange for his. He did present somewhat of a shabby image. One day, the partners decided to buy him a new overcoat, which they did. I don’t know whether this was before he was to meet a good prospective client but that was the way the drafting room looked at it. The old overcoat never bothered him, nor did any clothes, for that matter, seem of much concern to him. Mr. Will, on the other hand, was a very careful dresser. For a while Mr. Will sported a very large Stetson. He was also very fond of bow ties and on a trip to New York one night after dinner he, Wally Smith, and I were walking down the street and window shopping, as it was. He stopped

in front of a store and said he would tell us a secret. He said, "This is where I buy all my ties." We could hardly hold ourselves in because we had often wondered where he bought those awful ties. They were usually dull, off color combinations that did not flatter him, in our opinion.

Perkins: I'm trying to remember the name of that shop, Di Tieri. It's two doors west of the Drake Hotel at 56th and Park Avenue. I'm curious as to what job Wes and Wally Smith were in New York for with Phil. We stayed at the Drake whenever we could. It is a nice place and they treated you like people, as distinguished from one of the big hotels. I think I have some ties that Phil gave me. I'll look to see if I can find them. The shop was owned by an Italian guy with some lurid clothes that he chopped up into things. I certainly didn't take my dressing all that seriously, but I wasn't as much of a rag-picker's dream as Wes would suggest, I don't think. Well, maybe I was. It certainly didn't seem important. In the same connection, I think my family, particularly my mother, hoped that Phil and I would stay in close association because Phil, as Wes Wieting's anecdote suggests, was more careful about his clothes than I. My mother was particularly approving because he wore garters and his socks didn't fall down around his ankles. She felt that that was an influence that I needed. Phil, in most of our relationship, was interested in reforming me in one way or another. He was discouraged, but he felt that he'd made some progress in making me over in his own image. I hope this is true because at least during college I was able to wear his clothes, and he mine, when it was appropriate. We were close in size. I remember Eero Saarinen was describing Perkins, Wheeler and Will in that connection. He said, "You take Perkins and cut him vertically and you have Will, cut him horizontally and you have Wheeler." At that time, we were more nearly vertically similar. I went to a style show last night and watched a number of ways in which people hung fabric on the human frame. I have never been so excruciatingly bored.

Blum: Larry, do you have a message that, if you could, you would give to the next generation of architects?

- Perkins: I would think that if I offered one, I would be a pompous ass and an idiot.
- Blum: Based on your experience, what would you say to a young architect?
- Perkins: My message would be, idealistically, that you should be like me in every regard, but that is not the message. I don't want to reform anybody. I think they will have the joy of finding their own way. I will get off this platitude. I think that anybody who believes his own publicity, some of which he wrote himself, is a pathetic figure and has a very unpleasant reality waiting for him. I am very conscious of the value of publicity. I am glad and grateful for what we've had. May God save me from the day when I inhale and take seriously a biography of myself.
- Blum: If somebody wanted to do more research on you and Perkins and Will, surely they would come to the Art Institute and find the oral history that we're recording today. They would also find in our library almost all of the material published about Perkins and Will over the years. Where else could one go to find material on you, preferably primary source material?
- Perkins: I'd like to have them get on their bicycle, go to the North Shore, and in Evanston see the Dawes School, Washington School, Chute School, Evanston High School, and the addition to Noyes School. I'd like to have them go down to Winnetka and see the library, Crow Island School, Hubbard Woods School, which my dad did and to which we've added onto. I would then like to have them go down on to Glencoe and see the West School at Dundee Road and Forest. I would like them to go to Highland Park and see the Indian Trail School. I'd like to have them go to Lake Bluff and see the library.
- Blum: Where could someone get such a list if they indeed wanted to take the tour you're suggesting?
- Perkins: I haven't finished the tour yet. It goes on and on. When we were active, I never thought of Perkins and Will as something in an office, although the office was a good club of very close friends. I think that our identity is

everywhere except in the office. I used to ask people, “You’re extremely conscious of Mies van der Rohe. Where’s his office? You’re extremely conscious of SOM, where’s their office? Do you know? Do you care? Holabird and Root is a major force here. Where’s their office? It was in an obscure building that we could see out of the window of our office. Why would you care?” As far as I am concerned, the identity that I would like for Perkins and Will is the accumulation, the total impact, of the buildings we’ve built. I imagine that such a list probably exists in the Perkins and Will office now. If it doesn’t, while I’m still alive, I’ll try to provide one.

Blum: It may be that researchers and scholars sometime in the future would like to use these materials.

Perkins: All right.

Blum: The one thing that we haven’t spoken about is architectural drawings. Are they still with the firm?

Perkins: If they’re anywhere, they’re with the firm. I don’t have them. I have an unorganized collection of trophy publicity that I would be glad to give to somebody so that my kids won’t have to throw it in the alley. Selfishly, I would like to be remembered affectionately by the people who had something to do with putting it together.

Blum: Do you mean the people who orchestrated your firm?

Perkins: Well, that’s a nice way of putting it, yeah. If I did anything professionally, I think that’s what I did. I have one trophy upstairs that I kind of care about. What we’ve accomplished, the American Association of School Administrators—that’s the school superintendents—gave me a plaque that says I have made significant contributions to American education. I’m the only architect who was ever given that award. I admit that with that one I came pretty close to inhaling. I like that. What they have said is that some of the things that we stood for and verbalized, as well as built, have affected

kids. I come from a family that's been in the service of children. My grandmother served in a settlement house, my father built school buildings and the Forest Preserve, my mother wrote children's books, my sister lectured, my wife raised some rather remarkable kids. I consider myself a natural sort of phenomena somewhere in the middle of that pattern. I neither generated it nor terminated it.

Blum: Now that you are retired and Perkins and Will has changed hands, what do you see in store for the firm's next fifty years?

Perkins: If the infusion of more than money from our new association with Dar Al Handassa is what I hope it is, Perkins and Will will go more and more into the creative engineering of space. I see us finding and hopefully deserving opportunities in the Pier Nervi tradition of engineering. The Dar Al people, the work of theirs that I have seen is thrilling and clean—major things like highways, bridges, tunnels, vast housing projects, and so forth. I think in that sense, things like the Mackinaw bridge and the Verrazano bridge are probably more beautiful than most architectural achievements. I hope that the expanded and continuing firm will reach creative heights. In sorrow, I don't see where a humanistic—whatever that word means—aura is going to be so much their image. I think the sensitive humanistic stuff probably is the province of the smaller and more personal offices. Nobody has ever, even in their wildest moments, called SOM humanistic. That doesn't mean that their stuff is not admirable, because it is. I'm afraid that if Perkins and Will remains a relatively big business then humanism is not something that management can inspire. Therefore, let them be great in the SOM sense. I probably am talking nonsense on that, because McKim, Mead and White, at the height of their dominance, was still very much dominated by humanistic individuals—McKim and Mr. White. Richardson, when he was dominant, was similar. The other greats, Saarinen and Goodhue, are much more in the direction of what I think of as the humanistic upwelling impinging on the big offices as from their same competitors. Continuing warmth and inspiration has to come from there.

Blum: Would this affiliation with Dar Al Handassa have been your choice if you were still active in the firm?

Perkins: To put it bluntly, if I had still been active and dominant in the firm we never would have incurred the debt we had to get out of. When I left, we owed nobody anything in the way of money.

Blum: Are you saying that this affiliation was a solution to a financial problem?

Perkins: Unfortunately, very greatly so, yes. It is a very happy solution. These are fine people with whom I am deeply and humanistically impressed, in spite of the fact that they are the fourth largest construction and architectural engineering firm on the planet. These are really fine-grained people. If I were suddenly put in the position that Perkins and Will found themselves in, I would welcome this solution for more than financial reasons.

Blum: Let's hope that the next fifty years for Perkins and Will will be half as good as the first fifty years.

Perkins: I hope so too, but it can't possibly be as much fun or generate as much excitement. There is no victory that's worth having unless there is peril. The fact that everything was a succeed-or-die struggle—we were hanging onto our firm by our eyelashes—made it much more interesting. I think that I should be very glad that my father's firm did not continue for me to dutifully be trained to succeed. I think history will suggest that Bradford, by son, has a much more hopeful place in our family history for not having inherited Perkins and Will.

Blum: Larry, thank you very much.

DWIGHT HEALD PERKINS

Birth: 26 March 1867, Memphis Tennessee
Death: 2 November 1941, Pasadena, California

Education: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1885-87

Selected Experience: Henry Hobson Richardson, 1887
Wheelock & Clay, 1883, 1884
Burnham & Root, 1889-1894
Private Practice, 1894-1904
Perkins & Hamilton, ca. 1904-1910
Chicago Board of Education, 1905-1910
Perkins, Fellows & Hamilton, 1911-1927
Perkins, Chatten & Hammond, 1927-1935

Honors and Awards: Fellow, American Institute of Architects, 1908

Professional and Civic Membership: American Institute of Architects, Illinois Chapter, President, 1907-1909
Chicago Architectural Club
Chicago Arts and Crafts Society
Chicago Regional Planning Association, Founder and Honorary Life President
City Club
City Planning Commission of Chicago
Cliff Dwellers Club
Committee on the Universe
Forest Preserve District Commission
Friends of Our Native Landscape
Municipal Art Commission
Municipal Science Club
Northwest Park District of Evanston, President
Prairie Club
Planning Commission of Cook County Forest Preserves
Playgrounds Committee of the Park Commission, Chairman
Regional Planning Commission of Chicago, Honorary President
Small Parks Board
Special Park Commission, Commissioner
Union League Club

**Selected
Projects:**

Joseph Bowen High School, Chicago, Illinois
Grover Cleveland Public School, Chicago, Illinois
Evanston Township High School, Evanston, Illinois
Joseph Gray School, Chicago, Illinois
Hamlin Park Field House, Chicago, Illinois
Hitchcock Hall, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois
Albert G. Lane Technical High School, Chicago Illinois
Lincoln Park Refectory (now Café Brauer), Chicago, Illinois
Lincoln Park Zoo Lion House, Chicago, Illinois
Lyman Trumbull School, Chicago, Illinois
Carl Schurz High School, Chicago, Illinois
Skokie School, Winnetka, Illinois
Steinway Hall (now demolished), Chicago, Illinois
George W. Tilton School, Chicago, Illinois

LAWRENCE BRADFORD PERKINS

Birth: 12 February 1907, Evanston, Illinois

Death: 3 December 1997, Evanston, Illinois

Education: University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, 1924-1925
Cornell University, 1926-1930
B. Arch, 1930

Work

Experience: Perkins, Chatten & Hamilton, 1931-1933
General Houses, 1933-34
Perkins & Will, 1935-1936
Perkins, Wheeler & Will, 1936-1941
Perkins & Will, 1942-1972

Teaching

Experience: University of Illinois, Chicago, 1972-1982

Honors

and Awards: Fellow, American Institute of Architects, 1953
Chicagoan of the Year, 1960
Dean of Architecture Award, American Society of Interior Designers, 1983
Distinguished Service Award, American Association of School
Administrators, 1975
Twenty-five Year Award, American Institute of Architects, 1971

Service: Adlai Stevenson Institute of International Affairs, Director
Cook County Forest Preserves
Cook County Building Codes Committee
Evanston Plan Commission, Chairman
Great Lakes Cruising Club, President
Illinois Plan Commission

Selected

Projects: Blyth Park Elementary School, Riverside, Illinois
Clyde Lyon Elementary School, Glenview, Illinois
Cornell University, Hollister Hall, Ithaca, New York
Crow Island School, Winnetka, Illinois
First National Bank (now Bank One), Chicago, Illinois
Glenbrook North High School, Northbrook, Illinois
Heathcote Elementary School, Scarsdale, New York
Keokuk High School, Keokuk, Iowa
Linton High School, Schenectady, New York
New Trier West High School, Northfield, Illinois
Rugen Elementary School, Glenview, Illinois
United States Gypsum Building (now demolished), Chicago, Illinois
Winnetka Public Library, Winnetka, Illinois

SELECTED REFERENCES

DWIGHT HEALD PERKINS

- Art Institute of Chicago. *Guide of Chicago and Midwestern Architecture*. Chicago, 1963.
- "Brick Architecture In and About Chicago." *Brickbuilder* 12 (September 1903): 178-187.
- Christy, Steve. "Wide-Awake Dreaming: Creation of Cook Country Forest Preserve District." *Open Lands Project* (newsletter). Chicago: 18 October 1982.
- "Dwight H. Perkins." *Architectural Forum* 97 (October 1952): 119-125.
- "Dwight Heald Perkins." *Brickbuilder* 24 (December 1915): 146.
- "Dwight Heald Perkins in Southern California." *Illinois Society of Architects Monthly Bulletin* 13 (May 1929): 4.
- "Grover Cleveland High School." *Brickbuilder* 20 (April 1911): 43-47.
- "Grover Cleveland School." *Western Architect* 19 (November 1913): 98.
- "Jessie Spaulding School." *Inland Architect and News Record* 50 (September 1907): 36.
- "Lincoln Park Refectory." *Brickbuilder* 19 (October 1910): 237.
- "Lion House, Lincoln Park." *Architecture* 27 (February 1913): 28-32.
- Lyman Trumbull School (illustration). *Inland Architect and News Record* 49 (January 1907).
- Minot, Addison. "The Office of Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton." *Architectural Forum* 29 (September 1918): 61-63.
- "Mr. Perkins and the Chicago Board of Education." *Brickbuilder* 19 (May 1910):128-129.
- "New Skokie School." *Architecture* 48 (August 1923): 283-285.
- Obituary. *The New York Times*, 4 November 1941, 26.
- Perkins, Dwight H. *City of Chicago: Report of the Special Park Commission*. Chicago: W. J. Hartman Company, 1904.
- Perkins, Dwight Heald. "Is Architecture a Living Art?" *Inland Architect and News Record* 29 (May 1897): 35-36.
- Perkins, Dwight H. "The School Building as a Social Center." *Brickbuilder* 24 (December 1915): 293-294.
- Perkins, Dwight H. "The School Building as a Social Center." *Brickbuilder* 24 (January 1916): 1-7.
- Perkins, Eleanor Ellis. "Perkins of Chicago." 1966, Copy of manuscript in the Burnham Library, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago.
- "Residence of Dwight H. Perkins." *Architectural Record* 18 (July 1905): 71-73.
- Steinway Hall (illustration). *Inland Architect and News Record* 29 (February 1897).

“The New Office Building of Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton.” *Architectural Record* 42
(December 1917): 559-567.

“Three New Schoolhouses, Chicago.” *Western Architect* 23 (April 1916): 32-35.

Wight, Peter B. “Public School Architecture at Chicago.” *Architectural Record* 27 (June 1910):
495-511.

Wight, Peter B. “Residences of Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton.” *Architectural Record* 43
(March 1918): 195-212.

LAWRENCE BRADFORD PERKINS

- Bourne, Russell. "Engineered for Thinking." *Architectural Forum* 100 (February 1959): 116-121.
- Bowly, Devereux, Jr. "Designs for Learning." *Chicago Sunday Sun-Times Midwest Magazine*. (30 April 1972): 40-43.
- Brubaker, Charles William. "Planning the First National Bank of Chicago." Sketchbook notes, Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, April 1964-June 1966.
- "Building Types Study #325 Schools." *Architectural Record* 134 (October 1963): 199-202.
- "Centralized Neighborhood Activities." *Progressive Architecture* 35 (March 1954): 88-93.
- Cocking, Walter D. and Perkins, Lawrence B. *Schools*. New York: Reinhold Publishing, 1949.
- "Consolidated Elementary School." *Progressive Architecture* 34 (February 1953): 78-82.
- "Elementary School: Barrington, Illinois." *Progressive Architecture* 30 (October 1949): 72-75.
- "Flexible Hexagons for Education." *Progressive Architecture* 44 (March 1963): 157-160.
- "Fortunate School." *Progressive Architecture* 48 (September 1967): 108-117.
- Hudnut, Joseph. "Crow Island Revisited." *Architectural Forum* 75 (August 1941): 79-92.
- "Innovation in Chicago." *Architectural Record* 135 (January 1964): 134-139.
- "Interlocking Apartments." *Architectural Forum* 92 (January 1950): 86.
- Litke, Ronald. "Perkins and Will: The First 50 Years." *Inland Architect* 29 (September-October 1985): 11-12, [14]-15.
- "Model for Our Low-Cost Schools." *Architectural Record* 107 (April 1950): 140-144.
- "101 New Houses." *Architectural Forum* 71 (October 1939): 242-243.
- "Park-Side School." *Architectural Forum* 91 (October 1949): 122-125.
- Perkins, Lawrence B. "Must We Live in Unlovely Cities?" *School Administrator* (Arlington Virginia), Summer 1971.
- Perkins, Lawrence B. "The Small Firm is Alive and Well, and Furthermore..." *Architectural Record* 159 (April 1976): 65-71.
- Perkins, Lawrence B. *Work Place for Learning*. New York: Reinhold Publishing, 1957.
- "Project Telstar." *Architectural Record* 133 (June 1963): 152-153.
- "Row Houses for Suburban Block." *Architectural Record* 99 (May 1946): 83.
- "Saddle Shell Roof for Theatre." *Architectural Record* 135 (March 1964): 155-158.
- "Schools Within Schools." *Progressive Architecture* 43 (June 1962): 118-121.
- "Small Office Building, New Approach." *Architectural Record* 105 (January 1949): 112-116.
- "Suburban School, Cicero, Ill." *Architectural Record* 29 (November 1948): 61-64.

“The First National Bank of Chicago.” *Architectural Record* 148 (September 1970): 137-140.

“200-Bed Hospital Studied in Actual Use.” *Architectural Record* 117 (March 1955): 197-208.

Washburne, Carleton. **“Crow Island School, Winnetka, Illinois.”** *Brick and Tile* (March 1947).

INDEX OF NAMES AND BUILDINGS

- 124th Field Artillery Armory, Chicago, Illinois 28
 309 West Jackson, Chicago, Illinois 88
 333 Wacker Drive, Chicago, Illinois 111
 814 Tower Court, Chicago, Illinois 24
- Abraham Lincoln Center, Chicago, Illinois 31
 Abramovitz, Max 116
 Addams, Jane 32, 131
 Adler, David 90, 102
 Alschuler, Alfred 89, 90
 American Institute of Architects (AIA) 36, 57, 126-28, 131, 144
 Anderson, Harry 105, 107, 141
 Arms, Brock 106
 Associated Architects-South Park Gardens 99
- Barnes, William (Bill) 135
 Barrington Countryside School, Barrington, Illinois 97
 Beatty, Willard 79
 Becket, Welton 75
 Belluschi, Pietro 75
 Bettelle, James O. 83
 Bigelow, Henry F. 25-27
 Blythe Park School, Riverside, Illinois 97
 Booz, Allen & Hamilton 79-81
 Booz, Edward 79, 81
 Bosworth, Frank H. 37, 38, 40
 Boyce, John 29, 52, 61-62, 65, 104
 Brubaker, C. William 87, 113, 114-17
 Buenger, Ted 58-59, 73
 Bullard, Edward 73
 Bunshaft, Gordon 84
 Burgee, Joseph 145
 Burnell, Edward 79, 81
 Burnett, Hal 97-98
 Burnham, Daniel H. 4, 5, 6, 12, 40
 Burnham, Leroy P. 37, 39
 Burnham, Margaret (wife of Daniel H.) 12
 Burnham, Willits 34
- Calder, Alexander 120
 Carrère & Hastings 40
 Caudill, William 83
- Century of Progress International Exposition, 1933-34, Chicago, Illinois 41, 45-46, 47, 85
 Chagall, Marc 119
 Chase, Frank 68
 Chatten, Melville C. 29
 Chicago Architectural Club 138-39
 Childs & Smith 56, 99
 Childs, Frank 127
 Christensen, John C. 17
 Chute Middle School, Evanston, Illinois 152
 City Club 10-11
 Civic Center (now Richard J. Daley Center), Chicago, Illinois 91, 95, 113,
 Civic Opera House, Chicago, Illinois 137
 Clarkson, Ralph 129-30
 Cleveland, Grover, Elementary School, Chicago, Illinois 19-20
 Cliff Dwellers Club 11, 14, 47, 128-138
 Coath & Goss 76, 104
 Cochran, Frank Lee 51, 52, 84, 99, 110
 Cocking, Walter Dewey 57, 96, 149
 Committee on the Universe 9-11
 Cook County Forest Preserve District, Cook County, Illinois 21, 22-23
 Cranbrook Academy, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan 58, 74, 77
 Cret, Paul Philippe 36, 41
 Crow Island School, Winnetka, Illinois 54, 55-77, 95, 96, 98, 101, 120, 152
- Dar Al Handassa 154-55
 Davies, Richard Llewelyn (Lord) 140-41
 Dawes Elementary School, Evanston, Illinois 152
 DeVry, Cy 130
 Dolke, Fred 71
 Donovan, William 83
 Drexel School, Cicero, Illinois 97
 Drummond, William 9
- Eames, Charles 75
 Ellerhusen, Ulric 41
 Embury, Amar 29
 Evans, Carl (house), Glencoe, Illinois 54
 Evans, John 29

- Evanston Township High School,
Evanston, Illinois 20, 133, 152
- Farnsworth, Edith (house), Plano, Illinois
93
- Faro, R. Vale 137
- Federal Center, Chicago, Illinois 91
- Fellows, William Kinne 18, 53
- Fellowship House, Chicago, Illinois 31
- Ferris, James 113, 114
- Field School, Park Ridge, Illinois 29
- Field, Marshall 6
- Fine Arts Building, World's Columbian
Exposition, 1893-94, Chicago Illinois
131
- First National Bank (now Bank One),
Chicago, Illinois 85, 95, 107, 112-20
- Fisher, Howard 42-43, 44, 45, 47-48
- Fisher, Marion (wife of Howard) 44
- Fisher, Tom and Page, Ruth (house),
Hubbard Woods, Illinois 43
- Franklin, Robert (Bob) 30
- Freeman, Gaylord (Gayle) 113, 119
- Friends of our Native Landscape 23
- Gallagher, John 110, 114
- Garbe, Raymond 137
- Garden, Hugh M. G. 137
- Garden, Mary (sister of Hugh) 137
- General Houses 42-45, 92
- Getgood, Janet Gordon 70
- Ginsburg, David 105
- Gladych, Stanislav Z. (Stan) 118
- Goodall, John 51, 81, 87-88, 89, 105
- Goodhue, Bertram 36, 41, 135, 148, 154
- Graham, Bruce 84
- Graham, Ernest 6
- Greenfield Homes, Des Plaines, Illinois 91
- Griffin, Walter Burley 6, 8, 13
- Gropius, Walter 90, 135
- Guérin, Jules 6
- Hales, Bill (house), Winnetka, Illinois 71-
72
- Hamilton, Fellows & Nedved 27, 29
- Hamilton, Fellows, Wilkinson & Garrity
137
- Hamilton, John Leonard 18, 27-28, 30, 53,
55, 137, 139, 147
- Hammond, C. Herrick 28, 29-30, 57, 127,
138
- Hammond, James W. (Jim) 30, 57, 76-77,
123
- Hammond, Robert (Bob) 57-58, 73, 76
- Harrison & Abramovitz 116
- Harrison, Carter 130
- Harrison, Wallace K. 41
- Hartmann, William (Bill) 84, 120
- Hauser, Lud 106
- Heathcote School, Scarsdale, New York
96
- Hedrich, Kenneth (Ken) 97-98, 148-49
- Higgins, Preston (Jack) 80
- Hill, Kimball 92
- Hitchcock, Annie (wife of Charles) 2
- Holabird & Root 153
- Holabird, John A. 90
- Holsman & Holsman 51, 150
- Holsman, Henry K. 80, 99
- Holsman, William 80
- Hood, Raymond 40
- Hoover, Al 97, 107
- Horace Mann School, Winnetka, Illinois
59
- Hubbard & Highland Architects 104
- Hubbard Woods School, Winnetka,
Illinois 19, 21, 55, 74, 152
- Hudnut, Joseph 66-68
- Hunt, Myron 6
- Ickes, Harold 50
- Indian Trail School, Highland Park,
Illinois 152
- Ingerle, Rudolph 130
- Insull, Samuel (Sam) 137
- International Minerals & Chemical
Corporation Headquarters, Skokie,
Illinois 96, 106
- Ittner, William B. 83
- Ivy, Andrew (Dr.) 104-5
- Jensen, Jens 9, 11, 14, 20
- Jones, Jenkin Lloyd (Jenk) 31-33
- Juster, Howard 87
- Kako, Yukio 89
- Kaufmann, Gerhardt 42
- Keck, George Fred 41
- Kimball, Tom 25-27
- King, Arthur 100

- Kinglsey, Homer H. 11
 Kingswood School Cranbrook, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan 58
 Kisielius, Albin (Al) 114
 Klauder, Charles Z. 18
 Kovar, Joe 28 104
 Kradik, Muriel 67-68
 Kramer, Fred C. 104
- Lake Bluff Public Library, Lake Bluff, Illinois 152
 Lawrie, Lee 40, 41
 Lawson YMCA, Chicago, Illinois 28
 Layman, David 40
 Lescaze, William 41
 Lincoln Park Zoo Lion House, Chicago, Illinois 18
 Lincoln School, Park Ridge, Illinois 29
 Lincolnwood School, Evanston, Illinois 19, 72
 Linton High School, Schenectady, New York 149
 Livingston, Homer 117
 Logan, Rae S. 55
 Lorenz & Williams 40
 Lutheran Brotherhood Home Office, Minneapolis, Minnesota 105
 Lyon School, Glenview, Illinois 101
- Mahony Griffin, Marion (wife of Walter Burley) 6, 8
 Manny, Carter Hugh 113, 115, 117-19
 Marshall Field & Company, Chicago, Illinois 6
 Marshall Field Garden Apartments, Chicago, Illinois 50, 136
 Martin, Clarence 26
 Matthei, Edward 105
 Mayer, Oscar 130
 McCormick, Brooks 120
 McCurry, Paul 137
 McKee, Burger & Mansueto 140
 McKim, Mead & White 36, 40, 154
 McNally & Quinn 54, 99
 McNamara, Robert and Helen (house), Winnetka, Illinois 54, 55-56
 McNamara, Robert C. 54
 Merchandise Mart, Chicago, Illinois 51, 89
 Merrill, John (Jack) 51-52, 84, 87
- Michel, Tony (house), Winnetka, Illinois 72
 Mies van der Rohe, Ludwig 42, 89-91, 95, 96, 113, 135, 146, 153
 Mittlebusher, Edward 54
 Moholy-Nagy, Laszlo 89
 Monadnock Building, Chicago, Illinois 4-5
 Murphy, C. F. Associates 112, 113, 117-19
 Myers, Howard 39, 148-49
- National Center for Agricultural Education Research Extension, Chapingo, Mexico 110
 Nedved, Rudolph 137-38
 Nervi, Pier Luigi 107
 Netsch, Walter 75, 84
 Neumann, Hans 141
 New Trier High School, Winnetka, Illinois 55
 New York Stock Exchange (project), New York City, New York 115
 Nimmons, Carr & Wright 99
 Northwest Tower, Chicago, Illinois 28
 Noyes School (now Noyes Cultural Art Center), Evanston, Illinois 152
- Oldenburg, Claes 120
 Olsen & Urbain 99
 Ovresat, Raymond 109-10
 Owings, Nathaniel 51, 84-86, 87, 145
- Pace, Frank 75
 Page, Ruth (wife of Tom Fisher) 43
 Palmer, Robert 87, 110
 Parthenon, Athens, Greece 116
 Pedersen, William 111
 Pei, Ieoh Ming 115, 117
 Perault, Marshall 126
 Perkins & Will 7, 49, 63, 69, 77, 79, 80, 81, 105, 110, 141, 147, 154-55
 Perkins, Bradford (son of Lawrence) 35, 132, 140-42
 Perkins, Chatten & Hammond 28, 29, 30, 48, 133
 Perkins, Dwight Heald (father of Lawrence) 1-36, 53-55, 74, 83, 124-25, 127, 129-30, 134, 137, 139, 148
 Perkins, Eleanor (sister of Lawrence) 54, 56, 124

Perkins, Fellows & Hamilton 18, 19, 27, 30, 55
 Perkins, Lawrence Bradford 150
 Perkins, Lucy Fitch (mother of Lawrence) 4, 34-35, 78, 102, 124, 151
 Perkins, Margery Isabella (Midge, wife of Lawrence) 10, 12, 34, 42, 43, 47, 91, 138, 140, 145
 Picasso, Pablo 120
 Pinchot, Gifford 10
 Pond, Allen Bartlit 131, 132, 148
 Pond, Irving K. 131, 148
 Pope, John Russell 36, 40
 Prairie Club 23
 Presler, Frances 67
 Princeton Park Apartments, Chicago, Illinois 51, 80
 Puffer, Noble 63
 Purcell, William G. 9

Racine Courts, Chicago, Illinois 99, 101
 Randall, Clarence 73
 Reed, Earl Howell, Jr. 5, 13
 Reid, John Lyon 83
 Renouf, Rolfe 132-33
 Richardson, Henry Hobson 154
 Robie, Frederick (house), Chicago, Illinois 8
 Rockford Hospital, Rockford, Illinois 104
 Rodgers, John Barney (Jack) 90
 Roosevelt School, Park Ridge, Illinois 29
 Roosevelt, Theodore 10
 Root, John Wellborn 4-5, 145
 Rothschild, Beatrice 59
 Rugen School, Glenview, Illinois 72, 78

Saarinen, Eero (son of Eliel) 60-62, 65, 69, 74-76, 146, 148, 151
 Saarinen, Eliel (father of Eero) 8, 36-37, 54, 55, 56-61, 63, 65-66, 69, 70, 76, 90, 146, 148, 154
 Saarinen, Lily Swann (first wife of Eero) 67, 120
 Scheidenheim, Edward L., Jr. (Porky) 47, 53
 Schmidt, Garden & Erikson 137
 Schmidt, Richard 137
 Schoen, Lee 39
 Schurz, Carl, High School, Chicago, Illinois 19-20

Schweikher, Paul 42
 Seymour, Dutton 37, 39
 Shattuck & Layer 99
 Shaw, Archie 149
 Shaw, Howard Van Doren 144
 Sheaver, Tex 108
 Shreve, Lamb & Harmon 47
 Siegel, Irene 121
 Skidmore, Louis 84
 Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) 86, 113, 116, 121, 153, 154
 Skokie School, Winnetka, Illinois 19, 21, 55
 Smart, David 77-78
 Smith, Sidney 15
 Smith, Wallace (Wally) 150
 Starbuck, Fred 30, 48
 Starrett, John (Cap) 49, 50-51, 80, 81, 87, 88, 105
 Steinway Hall, Chicago, Illinois 6-7, 9, 13
 Steuben Club Building, Chicago, Illinois 37
 Stevenson, Adlai 106
 Stock, Frederick 130
 Sullivan, Louis H. 7, 13, 14, 36, 39, 46, 94, 130-31, 134, 150

Taft, Lorado 11, 124, 131-32, 134
 Taliesin, Spring Green, Wisconsin 34-35
 Tallmadge, Thomas 6, 21, 134-35, 148
 Taylor, Deems 33
 Taylor, Graham 32
 Taylor, Leah 32
 Tilden High School, Chicago, Illinois 19-20
 Tourtelot, Edward M. (Ned) 47, 52-53
 Trumbull, Lyman, School, Chicago, Illinois 14, 20

U. S. Gypsum Building, Chicago, Illinois 98, 107-9, 113, 115, 117-18
 Utley, Frayn 17

Von Holst, Hermann 9

Wagner, Richard 33-34
 Walker, Edwin (Ted) 24
 Walker, Ned 11
 Walker, Ralph 40, 41, 126, 135
 Warfield, Hilde 59

Washburne, Carleton 54, 56-59, 63, 69, 73, 146
 Washburne, Heluize 54, 56
 Washington Elementary School, Evanston, Illinois 89, 152
 Watson, Dudley Crafts 135-36
 Weese, Harry 109
 Wells, Ida B., Homes, Chicago, Illinois 50, 99
 West School, Glencoe, Illinois 152
 Wheeler, Todd 29, 48-50, 52, 55-56, 58, 76-77, 83, 104-5, 128, 151
 Wheelock & Clay 3
 White Plains High School, White Plains, New York 149
 Whitney, Albert 11
 Wieting, Wesley (Wes) 150
 Wight, Peter B. 15, 16, 19, 23
 Wilkinson, Lawrence 137
 Will, Carol Sinclair (Callie) 34, 47, 50, 145
 Will, Phil (house), Evanston, Illinois 54
 Will, Philip, Jr. 34, 38, 41, 42, 46-50, 52-54, 56, 62, 65, 71, 80, 81, 83, 87, 88, 91, 99, 100, 102, 104, 105, 106, 108, 109-10, 120, 126-28, 132, 136, 142, 145, 148, 150-51
 Williams, Roger 40
 Williams, Stuart 40
 Willis, Benjamin 17
 Wilmarth, Mary Jane (Mrs. Henry M.) 2
 Wilmouth, Robert (Bob) 113
 Wilson, Christopher (Chris) 112, 113
 Winnetka Congregational Church, Winnetka, Illinois 29
 Winnetka Public Library, Winnetka, Illinois 152
 Wolf, Marland 82
 Woltersdorf, Arthur 90
 World's Columbian Exposition, 1893-94, Chicago, Illinois 4, 45, 46
 Wright, Catherine Tobin (Kitty, first wife of Frank) 12
 Wright, Clark 32, 99
 Wright, Frank Lloyd 1, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 23, 31-36, 39, 90, 134, 150
 Wright, Olgivanna (third wife of Frank) 90
 Yamasaki, Minoru 119
 York & Sawyer 40
 Young, George H. 38, 40
 Zeublin, Charles 9
 Zimmerman, William Carbys 17