

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Richard Bender

REFLECTIONS

AN ARCHITECT'S JOURNEY: LIVING, TEACHING AND PRACTICE IN A
WORLD WITHOUT WALLS

Introductions by Elizabeth Douthitt Byrne,

Allan Jacobs, and John Parman

Interviews conducted in 2010 and 2011 by Suzanne B. Riess

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Dean Richard Bender



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INTRODUCTION

By Elizabeth Douthitt Byrne

For more than 40 years Richard Bender has had a vital role in the success of the College of Environmental Design (CED) and the U.C. Berkeley campus. With his background in civil engineering, architecture, construction, building technology, urban design and art, Bender has employed a holistic approach to educating designers and creating engaging and livable environments from individual houses, to museums, campuses and entire cities.

As a faculty member in the Architecture Department, he taught thousands of students from 1969-1995, even while serving two years as Department Chair (1974-76) and 12 years as Dean of CED (1976-88). After his retirement, in addition to his international urban design practice, he continued organizing ateliers or studios and directing the Urban Construction Laboratory.

In his distinguished and wide-ranging international career in teaching and practice Bender has studied or worked with and/or been associated with some of the most influential artists, designers, builders and planners of the 20th and 21st centuries, including Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer, Josep Lluís Sert, Mark Rothko, Frank Lloyd Wright, Pete Seeger, Norman Mailer, Buckminster Fuller, Renzo Piano, Daniel Libeskind, Margaret Mead, Le Corbusier, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, Saul Steinberg, I.M. Pei, Ada Louise Huxtable, Jean Nouvel, Fumihiko Maki, Reyner Banham, and many, many more. With his teaching and practice in New York, Greenland, Switzerland, France and Japan, he relishes learning and stimulating learning, bringing people together across disciplines.

He accurately describes himself as a “bee, picking up ideas here and dropping them there,” “making things come together and getting people together.” Among his many ideas from which U.C. and CED benefitted were the Center for Community Design; the Center for Environmental Design Research; Environmental Design-1 (ED-1, the required introductory freshman studio); the Campus Planning Study Group; the International Summer Studio; Urban Construction Laboratory; the Campus Design Review Board; and ILAUD, the International Laboratory of Architecture and Urban Design.

Based on the success of his design of the first ED-1 class, which used the campus itself as a tool for study (“an introduction not just to the college, but for anyone on the campus, to learn something about architecture, planning, landscape, plants, trees—learning this *from* the campus”) Bender developed the Campus Planning Study Group.

He won support, funding and participation from the Berkeley campus administration, and organized a group of graduate students to work with faculty and professionals on real projects of campus planning. Before working on plans for the campus, the Study Group tackled the history of the campus, showing the evolution of the different plans. Then, working with faculty in Art History, Journalism, and Law, as well as the local community and historic preservation groups, they researched campus buildings and landscapes and preserved twenty-five by placing them on the National Register of Historic Places. Bender viewed the campus itself as an education, and the land and the landscape as more than their functions, establishing patterns of movement, inviting collegial experience, and creating opportunities for exchange.

Bender was also involved in developing campus plans for U.C. San Diego, U.C. Santa Cruz, and the new campus at U.C. Merced. Beyond the University of California he was a founder of the highly successful non-profit BRIDGE Housing Corporation; developed the international Swords to Plowshares program that converts former military bases to community use; worked on numerous major Japanese and French housing, planning and education projects; advised the J. Paul Getty Foundation on the development of the Getty Center; helped plan the temporary New York Museum of Modern Art during renovation of their original building; and served as advisor to governments around the world on needs and opportunities for urban infrastructure.

Using these contacts and “threads” to connect people and ideas and institutions, he has also achieved wide recognition for his establishment of numerous international exchanges that enhanced the educational and design experiences of thousands of students and resulted in a better living environment for everyone.

At a ceremony in June 1990 Chancellor Chang-lin Tien awarded him the Berkeley Citation.

“Dick Bender is a remarkable combination of architect and civil engineer, who has done much for creating strong linkages for the profession with the engineering world. After service as Chair of the Department of Architecture, he spent twelve years as Dean of the College of Environmental Design—a long time by any standard and particularly by Berkeley’s. As Dean, he built and integrated the field of Building Science within Architecture, extended and defined the ‘Wurster Dream,’ led the Architecture Department to preeminent national standing, and put new life into the Department of Landscape Architecture, bringing it to a position among the few best in the country. Quite a set of accomplishments.

“And he has made signal contributions in other ways as well. Dean Bender revitalized the planning process on the Berkeley Campus. He defined, instituted and led the Design Review Board. This has worked so well that he has been called upon by several other UC campuses to institute the concept there. And

he has left his mark on so many building projects that it must truly be said of him, as for others like Frederick Law Olmsted and John Galen Howard, that the campus itself as a built environment is in significant part his monument.”

The Chancellor’s wording is an excellent summation of the accomplishments of this remarkable and dedicated educator, architect, planner, and collector and disseminator of ideas.

Elizabeth Douthitt Byrne, Librarian Emerita, UC Berkeley, Environmental Design Library

25 January 2012

THOUGHTS TO INTRODUCE RICHARD BENDER

By Allan Jacobs

Dick Bender, as Dean of the College of Environmental Design, might well have been the last of a group that were leaders and achievers at the same time as they were relaxed, dare I say laid back, in what I think of as a Berkeley tradition—intense at times but also easy going, or so it seemed. Deans and non-deans were that way: Bill Wheaton, Joe Esherick, Vernon DeMars come to mind.

Tennis and coffee were not unimportant in getting to know Dick and what was important to him; how he ticked. We played tennis early mornings. You can feel a lot across the net. Playing hard, loving the game and being out in the cool mornings as the first sun lit the Campanile. And there were countless morning coffees at Strada, with or without the adrenaline push from our sports. You get to know someone that way, and each of us did. I got to see the many sides of him. In these interviews, you will see them too.

I think of Dick as very much an urban easterner, one who came west, adapted graciously, but always with strong Atlantic coast roots that extended to Europe's urbanism via family history and his own early professional development. So, with Sue and kids, he came west with a love of cities and public places, one that started in Coney Island and Prospect Park in Brooklyn, grew with work, study and living in Manhattan and extended professional stays in Europe. In those places one travels mostly by foot or on transit. And so did he. Without cell phones, iPads, twitters, face books, and all the other distractions that seem to keep today's young people from being aware of their immediate environments, Dick experienced, looked at, noted, and came to appreciate urban places. Talking to him about cities was easy, and eventually we would spend time in many of them together—not as much as either one of us would have liked, but times nonetheless. Cities, streets, public gathering places and the things that made them come alive were what engaged us. It was where all the pieces and people of the CED came together.

Dick brought his passion of cities and urban life to his deanship at CED. The city planning folks and the socially oriented architecture folks could count on him as an ally to expanding ideas about looking at the physical world. No small matter. There was a time when the Landscape Architecture Department (now LAEP) was in trouble with the administration and Dick found a way to save it.

At student presentations, especially of city planning and urban design studio work, Dick had and still has a way that was slightly different than other colleagues, or the main stream, of looking at a problem or approach to possible solutions. He pushes

boundaries. I don't always understand where he's going but he's pushing and expanding people. I have a hunch that a good part of his consultancies around the US, in Japan, in France, and more, come from this quality. He looks to a richer view of research and creative work than is the norm.

That richer, different, view is perhaps what also drives his life partner and author, Sue. Each has a lot to do with what the other is.

Over the years I've spent a lot of nice times with Bender, learning, hypothesizing, just shooting the breeze, on and about the Campus and the College, in our international studios, with friends from all over the globe, at cafes—a particular January time in Venice comes to mind—it all came together with colleagues, with students, learning from and with other people, places and cultures. It's been fun.

Allan Jacobs, Berkeley, California

17 February 2012

THE WORLDS OF RICHARD BENDER

By John Parman

Jung says that in the first half of your life you integrate: you get it all together, educate yourself, get a family. But the second part of your life is the time to disintegrate - not to fall apart, but to develop the richness of the parts. – R. Bender

Richard Bender entered my life at the midpoint of his own. We've been writing partners more or less continuously for 40 years, so, when I first encountered him, he was 42, a professor - my professor, as it turned out - on his way to higher academic office. I wouldn't have said at the time that he was disintegrating, but in retrospect, I believe it was true. What we achieve in life often reflects a momentum that we ourselves set into motion. I won't say it was inevitable that he rose to department chair and soon after to dean of the college, but the logic was obvious. Moreover, he was a great dean.

Writing partner is probably a phrase worth explaining. For 40 years, we've sat across a table and discussed our projects. The particular benefit of such a relationship is that you always have something concrete to discuss, around which much of a discursive nature arises that gives the conversations color and spark. Seventeen years separate us, so there's a familial aspect to them that grounds them in affection. I write as a partisan.

When I met Richard Bender, he had moved three years before from New York City, where he taught at Cooper Union and was a partner in a firm that planned entire new cities in Latin America. He was also involved with the early efforts of the US government to innovate the production of housing. I also touched down on the Berkeley campus in 1969 and knew immediately that I felt at home. I'm not sure if Professor Bender was similarly smitten, but Berkeley—the university and the town—suited him.

The 1970s and 1980s were the culmination of Professor Bender's "integration." In these two remarkably productive decades, he deconstructed and undercut the pretensions of federally sponsored building research; put the College of Environmental Design on a solid footing and moved it into the top ranks internationally; and took the beautiful and endangered Berkeley campus in hand, explaining it to the blind and the deaf, and setting out a framework for its development that others embraced and carried forward.

As Confucius once noted, "the door is always there" that leads to a new situation. That door appeared late in the 1980s in the form of a visiting chair at the University of Tokyo's research campus. It came at an interesting moment, when Tokyo itself was at a high-water mark. It gave rise to a series of relationships that, while they involved some research and consulting, often came down to conversations across a table.

Through them, the *sensei*—as the Japanese call professors—became something of a sage.

Back in California, Professor Bender became the planner of choice for three other UC campuses—San Diego, Santa Cruz, and Davis. A fruitful collaboration with SOM finally fell apart over UC Merced. I was gratified to hear its campus architect tell me, "Richard Bender was right; we were wrong" about a plan that turned its back on existing town of Merced in an effort to forestall the kind of town/gown disputes that dogged UC Berkeley. As Professor Bender pointed out, they were fighting the last war. Around this time, he formed a relationship with the planners of Cergy-Pontoise, the new town outside Paris. Continuing his interest in housing, at the invitation of his friend Alan L. Stein, he joined the board of the nascent Bridge Housing Corporation, founded by his former CED colleague Don Turner. And he hung his professorial mantle at the college's urban design program, smoothing the transition to the younger generation without feathering his own nest. Given the usual tenacity of the academic old guard, this was singular.

The disintegration of Richard Bender brings me back to his guiding metaphor, "clocks and clouds," borrowed from Karl Popper. Clocks are, in a sense, the tame problems that Horst Rittel described. When Professor Bender and I studied the federal Operation Breakthrough program, run by whiz kids from NASA, what interested me most about them was their complete disdain for conventional housing and their ignorance of how it worked. Putting a man on the moon is a tame problem, as Professor Rittel noted. It's complicated, but it can be worked out and you always know where you're going. Mass housing, Rittel said, is a wicked problem. Professor Bender went a step further: housing production is about clouds, not clocks. Housing's fragmentation, which the NASA guys saw as a big defect, reflected a cloud-like nature that enabled mass customization.

"We don't know where the pieces of a cloud are or how they work," he says. "It behaves as a whole, but it has a much more organic nature, much closer to people and communities." It's interesting to me that this oral history is coming out just as "the cloud" is emerging as the focus and potential turning point of the high-tech/digital world, making many of its assumptions about "product" obsolete. Urban development's sclerotic character in the developed world, and its chaotic and ill-informed character in the developing world, reflects a preoccupation with clocklike processes and products. We can build super-tall buildings of immense sophistication, but we fail again and again to reproduce the urbanity that older forms of city-building regularly produced, because we've detached them from people and communities, creating a world that's essentially fragile - breakable - rather than robust, flexible, and malleable at the everyday level.

When Professor Bender and I talk across a table, our conversations often touch on this. If I were to speculate on his next act, I would guess that it might involve unbundling this metaphor for a new generation that's ready to hear it and able to apply it. The sage is in.

John Parman is a writer and editor. He cofounded and published the journal *Design Book Review* in the 1980s and 1990s, and recently helped found an online journal, *TraceSF*, focused on Bay Area urbanism.

21 February 2012

INTERVIEW HISTORY

As to the history of this oral history, it all began in August 2009. Elizabeth Byrne, head of the Environmental Design Library, proposed an oral history with Dean Emeritus Richard Bender. I had been doing oral histories for The Regional Oral History Office of The Bancroft Library for many years. From the start of my work for ROHO I was particularly engaged by the history of architecture and UC's College of Environmental Design, and I happily anticipated getting back into the business.

At our first meeting Dean Bender served lunch and showed me some of his archives. I saw that this oral history would be descriptive, and as far as possible visual—and the photographs prepared by Bender for inclusion in the oral history are a rich supplement! Some months passed, spent with financial negotiations, conceptual, logistical and travel issues, various cataract surgeries, a milestone birthday celebration, correspondence about the matter of official auspices of the project, and so on. Another August and Bender knew it was time to just do it!

We met the morning of August 17 at my house on The Alameda in North Berkeley, just downhill from the Bender house on Santa Barbara Road. That first interview went well and felt to both of us like a good beginning. After Bender left I did my usual check of the tape “only to discover” that most of the two hours went unrecorded “for technical reasons”. That never happened again, needless to say. And Bender, in his Preface, turns that false start into a desirable launch.

More on the mechanics of the recordings: Richard Bender has a low voice and says quite a lot in any given sentence. The microphone and cord were draped around a winsome Vietnamese water-buffalo figure on the dining table where we spread our papers and the tape-recorder. But as close as microphone and water buffalo were to Bender it was still essential that I take notes on what I was hearing—I included my notes on what might be difficult sections when I sent the tapes to the transcriber Kathleen Zvanovec.

Bender's notes, created for me, and for himself were prodigious. In the Appendices I have included a sample from the twelve pages of jottings I received from him, handwritten on a long flight to Japan, and a challenge to read. My first job was to decipher and order these clues as a backbone for my interviewing. I didn't know my subject well enough at that point to be able to anticipate that his notes would become even longer, more detailed, articulate and enriched, and eventually they were sent as much-appreciated Word documents.

“Notes” might imply a linear structure—and that the interviews do have—but I was reminded frequently by Bender of his fondness for the cloud metaphor, and grew

quickly to respect the value of going forward and backward, up, down, and around! Of arriving at the same place from different starting points. The history gathered strength and moved forward and I came to know Bender's style, the generous nature of his responses, and his instructive willingness to indulge in explanation.

“Who are you and what is it that you do?” was my overarching question in the oral histories. I knew Dean Bender as consultant added value to projects all over the world. How did that work? I ask him frequently in the interviews to be precise, and I hope the reader can begin to picture his mode, which appears frequently to involve re-phrasing, re-casting, re-thinking a problem, re-orienting. He takes lessons from many teachers, the wisdom of the East and the West. He is very thoughtful.

Scheduling the interviews, which concluded in March 2011, meant accommodating an impressive stream of travel, including mine to Japan where I had Bender's notes for favorite urban walks in Tokyo and Kyoto. Work and friendships took him to Japan, to Singapore, back to Japan, Paris, New York—apparently oblivious to the real thing that is jet lag! But he edited on airplanes, made additions, noted omissions—never totally left, being as he is always “on line” from whatever distant place, or cloud. In 2011 some health issues arose with Sue and Richard Bender that were happily resolved. The year 2012 arrived. Once again, time was seriously passing and it was time to just do it! So now, today, as daylight savings is beginning, it is with real pleasure that I send this oral history on its way, and wish the reader the joy of it!

Suzanne Riess, Interviewer-Editor

11 March 2011

PREFACE

By Richard Bender

This Oral History is the fruit of fourteen hours of tape recorded conversations with Suzanne Riess during the summer of 2010 and then again through the spring of 2011. Suzanne helped prepare me for and conducted the interviews, edited the tapes transcribed by Kathy Zvanovec, and later helped me make careful corrections and additions to the transcriptions for this publication.

Over the years, Elizabeth Byrne had been suggesting this project. I had been full of doubts, not at all sure of what such a history would be and what I would have to say. Elizabeth's introduction and my first meeting with Suzanne made it seem more attractive, but I continued to hesitate, until the idea of thinking of these interviews as "reflections" came to me. I have long been interested in reflections; the specks of ourselves we see in reverse in reflected images have always seemed more interesting than the original. Reflections invite a different reality. One sees backward as well as forward, and the images take on new dimensions with time. The accidental illuminations and shadows and the thoughts and events of the day—if one looks carefully one can see the reflection amid a rich play of things both in front and in back of you.

I have always been fascinated by how often buildings, people, clouds in the sky, when reflected in a pond or puddle seem to say more than what we receive by simply looking directly at them. I remember hearing of country women in Europe admiring and then using a pail to lift the moon's image out of a pond. There is poetry in that, a kind of creative ambiguity. And so when an accident with the tape recorder led to the first pages of the transcription being labeled Interview 2, I came to understand it as my opportunity to reimagine the beginning at the end.

Interview 2: August 23, 2010

[Tape 2: Side A]

Riess: Let's start with family. Your grandfather looms very large in your memories, your grandfather Louis Okun.

Bender: Well, my grandfather Louis came to the United States from Russia, the part that's—I'm not sure whether it's Ukraine or Belarus these days. He came with several cousins. They had had a business together as carpenter contractors building railroad stations up and down the Russian railroad system. And they came from one of many farm colonies set up near Minsk in the mid eighteen hundreds, a community called Schtzedrin which had been set up by Prince Schtzedrinov, at that time under the kind of influence that Tolstoy had about going back to the land and all that. And so it was an experimental community which was basically a farming, agricultural village, but it was sort of like a modern hippie community in the sense that it was a way for a lot of Jewish people to get out of the big city ghettos, to give up trade and business and try to start life in the open, in a new way. I've since read a little more about it, and there were other communities like that at the time. Until recent years, and even during the years at the CED [College of Environmental Design], I hadn't reflected on these environmental roots.

Riess: Yet people left these communities to come to America?

Bender: Well, they wanted to leave them and come to America and, particularly the story I heard was that my grandfather was at the point where he was considering shooting off his toe to avoid going in the tsar's army, versus making this trek. And eventually they did and it must have been quite a trek, because I've read other biographies and autobiographies and they sound almost exactly the same. I remember reading Leonard Bernstein's autobiography of his family, and it could have been the same story. They went north and then out through northern Europe. We never found exactly where they left from. Came to New York.

Normally the first job—my grandfather and his cousin's first job were in the Fulton Fish Market, which was apparently the absolute bottom, the line where you started from. Eventually they got to do carpentry work. When my grandfather put together enough money he sent for Will, the oldest son, and Will came and worked with him until they earned enough to bring the rest of the family. That must have been about 1906 or '07. My mother was about three, maybe two. I never heard very much about the trip. They got to New York and they got established in Lower Manhattan.

I've heard bits and pieces of this story. I always knew my mother worked from an early age to help support the family. But years later, when I started to teach at Cooper Union she started telling me stories about Peter

Cooper's family, his descendants. Because apparently one of her jobs in those days was to deliver newspapers to the Cooper family and some of the other families in that neighborhood, just above the Lower East Side. And she said the old man was terrific, but the next generation wouldn't pay their bills.

The other experience that came out of that that was interesting to me is when she first came to Berkeley in the sixties after we arrived here, and we walked down to Sproul Plaza, she said, "Oh, it's a strange world." She said, "When I was ten years old, twelve years old, I had to man a pushcart, the family pushcart down on the Lower East Side." (Aside from newspapers they sold anything they could to make money, and so they took turns working at the pushcart.) And so when she came to Sproul Plaza and she saw all these, what she called pushcarts, the food carts, selling all the things and she said, "Now I see, on the university campus—this is what we tried to get away from and here we are back at that!"

Riess: You say they settled in Lower Manhattan, is that the Lower East Side?

Bender: Lower East Side, actually they were at the Lower East Side and then they moved to Williamsburg.

Maybe it's a side issue, but Clare Cooper, who teaches at Berkeley, used to give the students a project that fascinated me, which was to do what she called your "Environmental Autobiography." And she urged them to try to go back to places where they lived and try to remember their experience. And I thought that would be fun, so when I went to New York once, and this was—I was probably in my sixties, maybe around sixty—I mentioned to my mother, who was then living in Manhattan, that I was going to do this and she said, "Can I come?" And so we drove around, started with the hospital where I was born, looked at some of the houses, where my grandfather had planted a fig tree in the back of our house, to a two-family house where we lived with my aunt and family. And we looked in the backyard and there was the fig tree still there.

Eventually, when I thought I was finished with what I knew she said, "Let's go to Williamsburg and see if we can find the house where I lived when we first moved from Lower Manhattan." We cruised around and we had the address and when we got there it was a parking lot for United Parcel. She was a little disappointed. I was still fascinated with this whole thing. And then she pointed over and she said, "And that's the restaurant where we used to watch all the rich people come in carriages." And it was the Peter Luger restaurant, which is now a very famous, probably was then a very famous steakhouse. She said, "We always used to watch the people and wonder what it was like inside." And I said, "Let's have lunch." That was sort of closing a circle that was great fun.

Riess: And then how *did* the family get from Williamsburg to Sheepshead Bay?

Bender: Well, my grandfather got to be a builder. And during the twenties he got to the point where he had enough capital to start, and he would build one

or two houses on spec and sell them. They were Brooklyn houses at that point; they were basically four-family houses. They were two two-family houses attached. On one side there would be downstairs and an upstairs, and the other side there would be a downstairs and an upstairs. And the last one of those that he built—they were living, the family lived in one of the apartments and then the Depression came and he never built again. But my mother was living in that apartment when she married my father. They took an apartment nearby partially because she had a big family and he had almost no family. And partially because at that point where they were, they were pretty far out in Brooklyn so you could—it was at that point a long walk to the ocean but you walk or take a trolley car.

Riess: Was this adventurous of them to have put themselves at this remove?

Bender: Well, I don't know how much of going out there was adventurous or how much it was willingness to sacrifice in one part to have something richer in another—but at that time the subways ran faster.

Riess: They ran faster when they were newer?

Bender: Yes. I went out about ten years ago, took the subway out to Coney Island to see how it was redeveloped and to visit where my old draft board was, which was—my last architectural job before I left New York was renovating the old draft board into a child care, what's it called, the children's program?

Riess: Head Start?

Bender: Head Start Program. And I wanted to see what it was, and I realized it took an hour and ten minutes. The Express used to take thirty-five minutes in those days, and they were new trains. But my father felt by commuting like that everyday we eventually lived in walking distance to the beach. There was still farmland around us when I was a kid. My brother and I would walk behind the houses across—well, first there were the truck farms that supplied fruit and vegetables, they were still there. Then as we got to be young teenagers they just started to disappear, and when I came back after the war six-story apartment buildings had started to go up.

Riess: So there was initially a little of the back-to-the land movement maybe?

Bender: Well, it wasn't back to the land, but it was the idea that you could have a garden. My mother loved planting flowers and trees. She had a cultural side that was squashed when she was younger. She took piano lessons and played very well. She was a really good student, but like so many families at that period, the girls worked to put the boys through school. So my three uncles, who were all older than my mother, two of them became engineers and the third one went into business. But Mary, my mother's older sister, and my mother basically worked.

Riess: So the family—your mother's name is Betty?

Bender: Betty [officially Rebecca]. And she had an older sister named Mary, and a brother name Charlie who worked for the Coca Cola Company all his life. And there was another uncle named Saul, who was also an engineer. I didn't know him as well because he died, probably of tuberculosis, when I was pretty young. And the oldest brother was Will, the one who'd come first, who in some ways was certainly the most ambitious, aggressive to make a life, success in this country. And he also, he was the most successful capitalist in the family, and he was also closest to a communist.

I don't know if he was a member of the party or not, but he and my aunt were very left wing. We used to argue about it—not argue with them, but we used to try to figure it out. No one ever showed me a card. But at Aunt Leah's house we would meet people like the Reverend [William Howard] Melish who was the bishop of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Brooklyn Heights. His name was always in the paper because it was a haven for "Reds." So we had the whole spectrum. My uncle Joe, Mary's husband, was a Eugene Debs type. He knew Eugene Debs from World War I; he was a draft resister then and then went into International Ladies Garment Workers union as an organizer, got into politics through the American Labor Party and eventually the Liberal Party. My grandfather lived with us, and almost every week, it seemed, the family would gather for a holiday or a meal or a birthday around my grandfather. And there were terrible arguments.

Riess: How did they get politicized? Was it from the old country, or their jobs, or what?

Bender: It was probably more the life they were living. Uncle Charlie, who worked for the Coca Cola Company, saw the corporate world positively. He was a joy in our family because he would bring Coca Cola—but he would bring more than Coca Cola. Part of his job was trying to get theatres to put the first dispensers in, and one his jobs, I remember he had a little tool that he would test the Coca Cola that they were making because they used to mix the syrup with the soda and they would try not to put in much syrup to save money, and he was doing quality control to test it. He'd have all kinds of things they'd give away to people that said Coca Cola on it. We used to get Ping Pong sets and hats and all kinds of Coca Cola stuff. Charlie and his wife Margaret had no children and they enjoyed spoiling us. Charlie also had a car from Coca Cola that he could use on weekends. He covered the logo on the door with a kind of flap. Cars were rare in our world in those days, and one of Charlie's cars had a rumble seat, a kind of a trunk that opened so two people could sit in it.

And I indirectly got into politics because I remember standing outside PS 254 where the voting was going on and handing out leaflets urging people to vote for my uncle Joe Tuvim, Mary's husband, as sheriff of Brooklyn. A most unlikely man to be sheriff, in the old sense of the word. I remember I had a big toy pistol that was a souvenir of some international exposition in Texas that said *The Law West of the Pecos*. And I had my pistol with a cowboy hat when I was handing out the leaflets. I should mention also that Joe's niece Judy Tuvim was Judy Holiday, a famous

movie star during my teen years. I have a photo of me in an awful Glen Plaid suit with her taken at my cousin Tom's wedding.

Riess: How old were you?

Bender: How old? Probably six or eight, something of that sort.

Riess: Cute, a cute kid?

Bender: Cute. Yes I was a cute kid. I was thinking about it and talking to a cousin, my oldest living cousin, Ruth [Tuvim, now Feldman] the other day, and she said, "You were a good boy." I was a good boy. In summer camp, one summer, the nickname I had was Galahad. And I was good at school and ended up being the valedictorian.

Riess: And would you tell me about your father's family.

Bender: My father's family gets a little lost in the mist because they came somewhere in the middle of the nineteenth century. I've heard forties to sixties. But I know my father's grandfather lived in Yorkville, that they came there and stayed. They became part of the German American community that was in Yorkville. My grandfather Harry must have died when I was six or seven, but I knew him well enough, and I also know him from pictures, one of which is his photograph on his chauffeur's license. He was a taxi driver at one point, and he looks like a dandy right out of those 1920s James Cagney movies with the cap and jacket. He introduced me to the word honey cart, which sounded very nice to a six year old, till I found out that he used to drive a honey cart, which was the wagon that emptied the septic tanks, the cesspools behind the buildings.

Later when I got involved in low-cost housing and started to study those places on the East Side where my mother lived, and probably where my father's family lived, I realized that those buildings, which are becoming fashionable now in the newest round of East Side living, had no toilets in them. They had outhouses in the backyard. And they didn't have running water. By 1902 some of them would have only one water tap on each floor.

Riess: And you're talking about Yorkville too?

Bender: I'm talking mostly of the Lower East Side where my mother lived. My father's family lived in Yorkville, which was higher income in those days, but even in Yorkville there were buildings like that. They weren't building the tenements that were built as slums—they didn't call them slums, but they were built to house a lot of poor people. There were versions of that in Yorkville also, which was acceptable then, but a very low level of service.

Riess: Your father's family came in the mid-nineteenth century for religious reasons?

Bender: I'm not sure. Every part of my father's family that I've had contact or heard about had almost no religious interest. My grandfather on my mother's side *was* religious and he was active in the local synagogue, but the other side was not. My grandfather had—I was never sure whether she was a sister or a cousin who became a dancer, and somewhere we have a picture of her in costume. She was in a movie with the famous movie star from the twenties, the Spanish dancer, I'll remember his name—Rudolph Valentino! I never saw her; we only saw the picture. That one uncle, or aunt, at one point lived in New Jersey and I only met them once. So, my father's side of the family pretty much was an unknown.

My father's mother came from Middle Europe somewhere, Austria, Hungary, where when we asked her where she was from she said she didn't know because when she was six years old "they took away the border." And she came in the big immigrations that came partly out of religion, and partially looking for a better life. Her actual coming was off schedule, in that the family was thinking that they would help her to go to the US when she got old enough. But she had an older cousin, I think it was, who had received permission to go but at the last minute decided to get married, so she didn't go. So Grandma Jenny decided to go, "looking for the streets that are paved with gold," as she used say.

Riess: When we first talked you mentioned Minsk and Pinsk.

Bender: Yes, that was my mother's family—they used to say they came from a little town between Minsk and Pinsk, which I always thought was a joke. And eventually I found out it was not a joke. It's jumping ahead, but at one point when Sue and I decided after living in Europe for a while that we would go to work on a project in Israel, we were on a ship from Marseilles to Haifa that stopped in Naples to pick up immigrants going to Israel, and they turned out to be from Russia. And in my, at that time, terrible Schweizerdeutsch with which I could impersonate Yiddish, I was trying to ask them where they were from, and they said, "Oh, you wouldn't know, it's a little town between Minsk and Pinsk." And it turned out they knew Schtzedrin, and they also knew that it had been pretty much wiped out, first by the Germans and then by the Russians.

Riess: What language was spoken around your grandfather's home? Were there heavy accents?

Bender: I don't think of my grandfather, my mother's father, as having an accent, but he probably had some. He was just of an age and of a type where an accent just came with him. My Uncle Will, the oldest uncle, had an accent, not a heavy accent, but you could tell he came from somewhere else. And part of that is because he—he married early, he married a cousin Leah, who also had the kind of energy and activism interest in everything from the arts to liberal causes, and they agreed that they were going to continue speaking Russian so they wouldn't lose their Russian. And they both lived into their nineties probably and they always had some trace of accent. Otherwise, no one else in the family did.

Riess: And on your father's side had they left the German behind completely?

Bender: Oh yes. My grandfather Harry was a New Yorker right out of a 1930s movie, and my grandmother Jenny, who was a great character, the story is that when she was on the boat on the way to New York in her cousin's place she got very seasick and she went to the captain and confessed that she was there illegally, thinking he would go back and put her off. When she arrived in New York, I don't know all of the details, but I know the first job she had she was fifteen or sixteen, and she ended up working in the building that's Cooper Union, on the ground floor. Peter Cooper had set it up to have shops on the ground floor generating income and life on the street to support the building. Much later, when I was involved in campus planning, I appreciated how much ahead of its time this idea was. We suggested a 1990s version of this for the UC Merced Campus, but no one in the systemwide offices, or regents, was interested in exploring it. Anyway, in one of those shops was a cigar shop where they made cigars, and she made cigars. She had a little bit of an accent but you couldn't tell what her accent was, it was somewhere between Europe and Brooklyn, or a New York accent. She came young enough to learn slang and things of that sort.

When the Depression came she and Harry, my father's father, supported themselves for a while by entertaining their friends with poker games at home in the evenings where everyone would chip in a penny—I'm not sure what it was—and they took a little out of the pot. They were living on that until my father graduated from the High School of Commerce with secretarial skills enough to get a job at sixteen and start to support the family. Later my grandmother Jenny and grandfather Harry lived with us and I remember him as a charming man. He would pick me up in the morning and we would walk to the firehouse nearby where he knew all the firemen and he'd play checkers with the firemen. And when he died my greatest regret—I didn't really understand what dying was at that point, I was young, but what I did regret is I never got the fire hat the firemen had promised me.

My grandmother Jenny was the only one in the family who really drank. She'd come home at night and she'd have a gin, and I think one of the first times Sue came home to the house with me—she was still living with my parents when I first knew Sue—we walked in and from the entrance you could see along the hall to the kitchen, and there was Grandma Jenny standing on a stool so she could get to the gin. She had just come home and was going to take a drink. Also one of her entertainments was playing poker with her lady friends. One night she came home early from the game and we said, "Why, isn't the game on?" And she said, "We called it off because Mrs. Buchholzer's son Lewis is going to the electric chair tonight." [laughter] So we were in that part of Brooklyn that overlapped some of that world of the gangsters of the thirties.

Riess: Your mother's family name was Okun, which seems like a shortened version of something else.

- Bender: Well, I don't know, because there were Okuns around, some of whom—we're not related. We have some Okun relatives who have been successful in business. But Arthur [M.] Okun, who was an economic advisor to presidents, had that name. For me it was a big family because there were so many on my mother's side, and because my grandfather lived with us. We would gather, and there were lots of arguments, discussions, politics, but this was the thirties. Hitler was coming, how much did they see, how much aware they were.
- Riess: You were wondering now how much aware they were?
- Bender: Well, you know, in the thirties the arguments were more economic. It was the Depression, it was Roosevelt. I remember the more left part of the family was saying we should not vote for Roosevelt. This would have been in the '36 election, I guess, when I was hardly aware of it. We should not vote for Roosevelt because the revolution will come faster if we vote for the Republicans.
- Riess: A real rising up of the masses.
- Bender: Yes, well, and there were things like newspapers with names like, *The Masses* we read. Whereas it was the same part of the family which started an insurance business. Uncle Will had worked for the city as an engineer in the transportation department for a while and started an insurance business on the side and finally was quite successful with it. My aunt took some of that money and started to organize children's camps in the summer.
- Riess: This is Aunt Leah?
- Bender: Aunt Leah.
- Riess: Yes.
- Bender: But there was culture there. They loved music, and art. They opened an interest in music and living with paintings and things on the wall. And of course my mother's younger sister was born in this country, and so she was growing up, and eventually I think went to Hunter College. So it was like another generation. She was more like some of the older cousins than the younger aunts.
- Riess: So culture comprises music and art and books.
- Bender: Books, lots of books. And lots of talking about what was going on in a community where that was going on.
- Riess: And I need you to tell me how your parents met and knit these families together.
- Bender: Okay, well, it comes together. They met—I used to hear two words in the house: one was Tamiment and the other was Unity House. It turned out

that they were both sort of adult camps you could say. Later they would have been, or maybe evolved into adult resorts, with an interest in ideas, politics, fashion, but it was a trend, I guess of the twenties, to set up these places reasonably close so you could go to New Jersey and be in the country.

[Tape 2: Side B]

Bender: I don't know how much organized activity they had, but lectures in the evenings and they must have had dances. You got three meals, there was country, there was hikes, there was walking and sports. I'm not sure about horses and things. I've seen family pictures like F. Scott Fitzgerald movies of young people lounging around and dressing in those styles and things of that sort.

Riess: And they were co-ed and they were meant to introduce people.

Bender: They were co-ed. They were meant to introduce people and also to be a way for them to get some culture. They weren't just about going and playing, but the lectures were something that—

Riess: Like Chautauqua?

Bender: Well, it wasn't quite Chautauqua, and I was trying to do a little research because the name was familiar and I didn't know the—and when I went to look up Tamiment it was connected with the Rand Institute. The Rand Institute probably eventually evolved into part of the New School in New York. It was down around that area, and during the winter they gave lectures and classes. Whereas the other place, which when I was trying to get the spellings right, and I looked it up on Google, there on the map when I looked up Tamiment, it looked like it was not more than five miles away. It's strange to use Google to see things from the past where I see everything in black and white—all the pictures I have here are in black and white, you know, and not just the photographs, but I see that life in black and white.

Riess: Yes.

Bender: There was Unity House, and Unity House was very similar to Tamiment except it was run, whether it was run by the American Labor Party or—

Riess: I think it was the ILGWU [International Ladies Garment Workers Union].

Bender: Yes, I should have said ILGWU, because for me they were almost indistinguishable at that point. And I used to hear names like [David] Dubinsky, who was head of the ILGWU at one point.

Riess: Yes.

Bender: And my Uncle Joe and Mary, they were really dedicated to that work. My cousin Ruth, who was the oldest daughter, married Al Feldman during the

war. He was in the air force, but when he came out he ended up working as an organizer. And they retired at sixty-five and moved to Florida and lived in an area with a lot of people from that ILGWU world.

Riess: You said there were two words in the house, Tamiment and Unity House, but your parents, was it a fine romance?

Bender: I never heard romantic stories, but we saw the pictures. My father was not a very—he was a quiet man and didn't talk about feelings very much. My mother was much more emotional, and up and down. But it had been a real romance, it must have been, for both of them to find someone quite attractive and different.

Riess: Do you look like your father? Did your father have the height that you have?

Bender: No, my father was tall, 5'11" or six feet, but my mother's father was really tall, about 6'3" and my cousins are tall. I look so much—not like my mother, but I've been mistaken for some of my cousins. Once, standing on the line for the—what are those caves in southern France, the Lascaux caves—someone came up to me and said, "Milton [Milton Okun]?" [laughter] And that's my cousin who lives in Los Angeles now. And I used to meet people when I started working in Asia who would tell me how much I looked his older brother Dan, who was an engineer who went to Cooper Union and then to Harvard and was a water supply engineer, a very famous one. He became dean of the School of Public Health at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and did consulting all through Asia. I would go to places like Tsinghua University, and the president of Tsinghua University I remember asked me if I knew Dan Okun. That's how much I look like that part of the family. My personality is more like my father's.

Riess: So you're the quieter?

Bender: Yes.

Riess: Yes, and your brother Paul?

Bender: My brother was always more emotional, up and down. He's three and half years younger. There was always a conflict because I have two older cousins who were interesting for me to be with because they would challenge—there were things we would do which challenged me. And I didn't hang out very much with my brother and his younger friends. On the other hand, he was more precocious than I was. Very young he started to do everything I did and ended up doing it better. So, that's another story when we get to the schools.

Riess: And when they married the whole family was living in Brooklyn?

Bender: Yes, during the early years of the Depression most of the family moved in with my grandfather. My father didn't want to do that, and we lived

nearby. I didn't remember the first place, but I was shown it, and then we lived in an apartment house on Ocean Avenue, near the Sheepshead Bay Station of the Coney Island Line of the BMT, not too far away, and that I do remember.

Riess: And your father's work was?

Bender: Well, he got out of school from the High School of Commerce at a time when that was, it was like a professional school for young men, with secretarial and business skills. He always talked about that, that he was a very good typist but not as good as someone in the year before who was Billy Rose, who became the big theatrical producer.

He went to work for a company called the Napier Company that made costume jewelry, good quality sterling silver pins and earrings, and so on. He went to work doing secretarial work, and he worked for the company for his whole life. He eventually became a salesman. The company had a factory in Connecticut that made things, but a sales office in New York at 389 Fifth Avenue near the Empire State Building—I passed it in a taxi last week! He became their sales manager and eventually was on the board of directors of the firm. In fact he died less than two years before he was going to retire, at a retreat of the board of directors. He wasn't feeling well at dinner and he went to his room at the hotel where he was staying and he didn't come down in the morning. He'd had some—an aneurism during the night and died.

Riess: A quiet life.

Bender: It was a quiet life, but he had quiet passions. First, because he worked on Fifth Avenue and in the jewelry business with department store people, he was an elegant dresser. He cared about—in a quiet way he dressed beautifully. He did everything carefully and with design. As time moved on through the company he, because he was a salesman, he had a better picture of what the company could be making than the designers they had in Connecticut.

And he began to design things. One of my treasures that we've kept is a sterling silver cocktail shaker. There are rip-offs of it; you see it all the time now. It was made out of silver, and it's a double-lined thing so you could rotate it and through holes you can see the recipes for various cocktails if you dial it right. And the one we all loved was a silver piggy bank in sterling silver that had a little tail. Later when I was in high school it was great to have a father in that business because I used to be able to give girlfriends earrings and things of that sort. I remember when big hoop earrings came in, I was a hero at the school.

Riess: Interesting to think of him heading from Sheepshead Bay, which you should describe a bit for us, heading to Manhattan. Such a different life, I mean it's a real kind of John Cheever story.

Bender: In a sense he invented the commute. He didn't invent it, but he was commuting from Brooklyn the way people commute now from Long Island, or from Westchester County suburbs. He would read a newspaper, he had a newspaper both ways. At one point, it began to be books, a lot of books on management, selling, things of that sort. He loved books, he loved humor, he loved telling jokes. He'd read books of humor and stories and things of that sort.

He loved the city too, and so while we lived way out in Brooklyn—and the beach was so much there—on most Sundays Paul and I were in his charge and we explored everything. We went to the Brooklyn Museum, the botanical garden next to it, these were wonders. If you took the subway there you would walk part of the way on a street called Eastern Parkway, which was a beautiful boulevard. Even more, we would travel from our end of Brooklyn on Ocean Parkway, which is—one of my friends, Allan [B.] Jacobs, a colleague at the university, is studying great streets and he had written a wonderful book called *Great Streets*—these are among the great streets. They are the great boulevards that were copied, in a sense, from Parisian boulevards when Brooklyn was being laid out.

Riess: You said Eastern Parkway, and which other?

Bender: Ocean Parkway, which runs from Coney Island to Prospect Park. It was a dream for me because it was laid out the way boulevards are with probably four lanes of traffic in the middle and then two islands and then two smaller local streets alongside. The islands had, on one side, a path that horses could travel so you could rent a horse in Prospect Park and come all the way to Coney Island, and the other side had a bicycle and walking path.

Riess: Did you do these activities?

Bender: I didn't do horseback riding, and I didn't do much bike riding, but until I was a teenager I did roller skating. And I used to be able to roller skate all the way to Prospect Park. We used to go, lots of weekends, to Prospect Park. There was a big field alongside it called the Parade Grounds where we could throw the football around, or whatever game was in season. But then you could go into the park, which was a wilderness. It was absolutely beautiful and it was the only "country" I knew until I was much older. It's a park that now is even more beautiful than ever.

Riess: It was designed by [Frederick Law] Olmsted wasn't it?

Bender: Olmsted. Yes.

Riess: And it has a very different feeling than Central Park?

Bender: Well, I think it's his best park because it is much more *park*. We would go to Central Park and up into New York—we used to call it New York—go to the city. Central Park's probably more inventive, in some of the things

he does with traffic and how they brought it back and what it is. But again, these were wonders. I was introduced to the Brooklyn Bridge and the fact that you could walk over the bridge and see this incredible—we still do it every time we go there. When my son David or Michael is in New York they invariably will send me either a postcard of the bridge, or nowadays a picture or calendar, and I do the same thing with them.

But we also went in to “The City” because people worked half a day on Saturday. My father would work through noon, and we very often would come in and meet him.

Riess: You and your mother and brother?

Bender: Mother and brother, and meet him at the office. We would have lunch in the city and often go to the theater, often go to the Broadway big movie houses that had first-run pictures, but also stage shows. Rockefeller Center Music Hall is now the only one that carries that on somewhat, but it became theater-going, walking in the streets of Manhattan, discovering.

Somewhere around eight, somewhere between six or eight I discovered Rockefeller Center and it’s a place in my heart that’s stayed since then. It amazed me from the beginning. The way it opened up the city, the kind of activity, it reeked of luxury, the materials. I still go: we went back just recently and I looked again. The gratings on the street for the drainage are made of bronze. I didn’t understand a lot of that then, but you could feel it. The way it was maintained. There’s that channel that runs in from Fifth Avenue, from St. Patrick’s down to the skating rink, and it always had flowers in it, different flowers in different seasons, all the time and it was kept—there was music from the skating rink. Just watching the skating!

Riess: It was 1936, 1938. Were there still signs of the Depression?

Bender: No. I mean, there was talk of the Depression, but I don’t have a picture of homeless people. There were people who talked about struggling, but so much was free. Up through the years we were first married in New York, the wonder of New York was how much was free, in a sense. Living there in high school we realized there were free parties all the time. We learned to look at the good art galleries and find the openings. We learned to go to some of the hotels and look at the sign in the lobby to see what receptions were there. We just needed a little bit of slightly better clothes, a good jacket I remember.

Riess: Manhattan was a big part of your life.

Bender: Manhattan was my life from very early. I loved where we lived in Brooklyn, but it was like looking through a keyhole. We would go in sometimes on Thanksgiving: the Macy Parade went down Fifth Avenue and turned into Macy’s right under the windows of my father’s office. And we would go and watch the parade, and it was just a symbol of the richness that we felt about the city. We could walk two blocks from his

office and go up the elevator to the top of the Empire State Building and see the city as a great city!

But most of all I was captured by Rockefeller Center. The buildings were different from anything else—by that point I knew the city, I had been in Times Square and in the Theatre District and other parts—but the way it opened the city up, the way it brought the color and the life, the flowers that were changed every few months. I watched the ice-skating, and it was not just people ice-skating, there was a rhythm to it. I remember there were older men who were teachers who would be dancing with older women and there was something so slow and elegant about it. The kind of ritual of the city that you began to see, and later in my life I saw it at the Four Seasons Restaurant, the lunches, and a certain kind of elegance that was not part of Coney Island. It was decades before I thought of it as “cosmopolitan,” I was just taking it all in.

Also it was on the edge technologically. Most people don’t remember that in the bowels, in the lower part of the RCA Building, there was a little museum called the Museum of Science and Industry where they had a whole bunch of those experiments that they have in places like the Exploratorium, like bouncing steel balls, and “electricity.” And I was there—it was opening up so much magic for me. And again, to go to the top—we never went to the Rainbow Room, but we would look into the Rainbow Room, the nightclub on the top, and go up to the Observation Deck and look out.

Riess It was open and free?

Bender: It wasn’t free but it wasn’t out of line. One of the things that was open and free was—a big part of that RCA Building was radio studios. At that time radio was—people would wait in line like they do now for Jon Stewart to get in to watch the radio programs broadcast.

And one of the other—coming in to the RCA Building, the amazing murals on the ceiling, and the scale of those. Later I learned the story of how the original ones by Rivera were destroyed because they were too radical for the Rockefellers, and they were replaced with a mural by [Jose Maria] Sert. When I really wanted to splurge on dates with girls later on I found there was a place in the Waldorf Astoria called the Sert Room for which Sert also did murals which were not at all like—they were much more capitalistic murals. Later I found out that Sert was the uncle of Josep Lluís Sert who had such an influence on my life—we are talking about things that turn out to be intertwined.

We also went to the Museum of Modern Art, which was brand new. That was probably me and my father, without my brother or mother, because Paul was younger, and I remember it was just the two of us. And it was an amazing experience, the museum itself, but even more to be able to sit in that garden. Later, in my teenage years when I began to work part time in Manhattan, the first paycheck I got, sixteen dollars, I used it to pay for a membership in the Museum of Modern Art.

And I remember we went to the Whitney Museum when it was in a house, a brownstone house on 8th Street. Later on when I lived in the Village I used to go there all the time, to the brownstone before the Breuer building.

Riess: What was it about the garden at the Museum of Modern Art? What made the garden so amazing for you?

Bender: To sit in the middle of the city and look up at these buildings. There's a building right behind, on the 54th Street side—it's still there and I learned a while ago it's called the Rockefeller Apartments. I used to look up and think what would it be like to live in that place. Much later Sue and I, when we were first living in Manhattan, started to look at apartments, and we saw one of those was for rent, and we went to look at it. And after we looked for a few minutes we said, "There's no kitchen!" And it turned out that they weren't built with kitchens, they were built with dumbwaiters and they would have food sent in! They're still beautiful, those apartments.

But there were so many discoveries of something like the Museum of Modern Art. And we'd go to the Metropolitan Museum and we went to the Museum of Natural History.

Riess: This is with your family, right?

Bender: It was with my family that we went to the Museum of Modern Art and Rockefeller Center and very often to Broadway plays, to Saturday matinees, or to the movies. And to Central Park to walk in the park and see the Zoo, to see—just to experience it. I really got to know Manhattan and to look at it, and also to think of it as an extension of where we lived—it was like nothing in between.

When I got my driver's license I borrowed a car—well, the first drive I took after I got my driver's license I picked up my girlfriend and we drove out to Jones Beach. But then we wanted to go to the theatre and we realized we didn't know how to drive to Manhattan because we had always taken the subway. We had no idea how to get through Brooklyn to find the Brooklyn Bridge! In a way it was like the world is today where you go from here to there with nothing in between on the Internet.

The other thing that shaped my life so much at that point, maybe because of my father's commuting and our going in so easily, what seemed so easily, somehow I connected with a bunch of boys my age who would go into the city on Saturday mornings. We'd pretty much established—it was established when I joined—you'd meet in the front of the subway station, the Sheepshead Bay Station of the Brighton Line, and if you weren't there by nine thirty they'd go off because the museums opened at ten. We'd go up to the Museum of Natural History and look at the dinosaurs and the dioramas and the jewels and everything. The planetarium was next door, one of the wonders of the world.

Riess: These boys, what an inspired bunch. Similar kinds of backgrounds?

- Bender: Yes.
- Riess: And you were all going to whatever your local school was?
- Bender: Well, they opened a new school, and so I had been going to PS 206 I think it was, and I moved to the brand-new school PS 254. But most of these boys were in those schools.
- Riess: Do you remember good teachers?
- Bender: You know there were teachers who cared.
- Riess: Did they take you on field trips?
- Bender: No. Not that I remember. But they—I liked school. I liked school till the third grade, when I had a teacher who I didn't like. It got solved. That was the year the new school opened, and I remember some of us marched from one school to the other. In the new school Miss Hogan wasn't there anymore. I remember in the sixth grade I wasn't doing well in math, and Mr. Sollit, the math teacher, called my mother in and said something's wrong, and it turned out I couldn't see the blackboard and needed glasses. It was that kind of—he was perceptive enough to do that.
- I know they wanted me to go to Brooklyn Tech High School.
- Riess: Your parents did?
- Bender: Well, the school more than they.
- Riess: So, Brooklyn Tech would be like the Bronx High School of Science, it was the fast track?
- Bender: Yes, not exactly “fast track” but more like what would be advanced placement in science and technology. Stuyvesant was the other, the third one. And I resisted that. I was getting—well, we're getting ahead maybe.
- Riess: All right, tell me about the bunch of boys, your neighborhood pals.
- Bender: Well, you know, later on people from that neighborhood showed up in the news. It's a side story, but to give you an idea—not the boys, but one of the girls. My brother became a lawyer. At one point he took some time off to be in the Solicitor General's Office in Washington—well, he did it a few times. I'm not sure which president it was but it must have been during Clinton's term. The solicitor general presents the government's cases to the Supreme Court, and so Paul was going to present a case in the opening session, and it turned out to be the opening session when Ruth Bader Ginsburg was on the bench. He invited my mother and she took the train to Washington, and she called me later and she talked about how proud she was. You know, they dress up in tails and the whole thing for this. I said, “Well, how did he do?” And she said, “Well, you know, he knew her from high school.” And I said. “How come I didn't know her in

high school?” And she said, “You didn’t hang out with the smart kids.” [laughter] Well, the other famous story was that when he called home from the end of his first year at the Harvard Law School, he said he was second in the class. She said, “Who was first?”

Riess: *That’s a mother, a bit of the push.*

Bender: Well, where there’s a pushy mother—but some got pushed in different ways. I probably got pushed away more. Thinking about this has brought out in me—I realized I was seeing peeks of something there that’s different than that track.

Riess: Peeks?

Bender: Looking through a curtain, or a keyhole, at these views of what was in Manhattan and how people were living there. There seemed a richer life than the life—you know, because I was good in math and science I was supposed to go to Brooklyn Tech and be an engineer, where you could work for the city or a big company.

And I was finding—I was becoming interested in people who are artists. I wasn’t quite sure what it was. I began to get interested—well, I was always interested in building because of my grandfather. And somehow Brooklyn Tech sounded like it was going to take so much of my time and be so rigid that I decided that I was going to stay and go to James Madison, the regular high school, where I could be on the swimming team and I could take art classes. And I’m not, I never was sure what it was but I was sure that I wanted to do that. My brother chose to go to—well, the junior high was just being invented at that point and he went to one of the first junior highs. He went on to Madison, but he went on an accelerated track. And then he went from there to Harvard and then Harvard Law School. My path was much less direct.

The other piece of going into New York was I discovered the Museum of Science and Industry, which was there at the time but it’s gone now. These were other tracks. At a certain time of the year with my friends we wouldn’t go to the museums, we went to 23rd Street where there was the Lionel Building, the company that made the electric trains. And right near it was a building with a space called the Gilbert Hall of Science. Gilbert made Erector Sets, and we used to hang out there because we were getting interested in making things, mechanical things, electrical things. I was making a transition that was wonderful for me.

I also grew up on the beach, in the season, whenever we could. When I was young, maybe six or eight years old or so, my life was about getting down to the beach and making sand castles. More than sand castles—with other kids we built whole cities, and canals. We drained the water and we challenged the ocean. We’d move closer, we made different shapes, we tried to hold or to use the water—there was nothing more exciting than to see how well it had succeeded. Sometimes the tide would come while we were there and we would watch, or sometimes we would leave something

and wake up in the morning and to be ready to rush down to see what had happened.

- Riess: Each time did you improve on your castle? Did you create greater bulwarks and so on?
- Bender: We tried. You know sometimes we would bring stones to put in, we did everything but what you were “supposed” to do. We didn’t bring pails and make—you know, you’d learn early to fill a pail up with sand and turn it over, and you take it off and you see the shape. But we learned how to decorate them by taking very wet mud and dribbling it.
- Riess: Dribble castles.
- Bender: We learned to see if we could build two separate ones, and how we could catch the water and make them connect. But we spent long days working together, building and decorating and watching the sea erase it all, and it was very special.
- Riess: So summers, this was summers?
- Bender: For the summers. And the rest of the year and later, I remember carving sailboats out of bark. Made a boat out of a wooden cheese box once, I remember, with a rubber band motor that made a motorboat. Then we started to get involved with electric trains, and we would build—we spent more time building scenery around the trains or doing inventions. We took the motors out and we would put the motors in the—I remember we made cable cars that went between the houses. Most didn’t work, the trains were broken more than they were fixed, but we learned about electricity, we learned about motors. We took the train motors and put them in our Tinker Toys. We’d combine Tinker Toys with Lincoln Logs and Erector Sets, and I don’t think I ever used the instruction book. It was always experimenting, inventing, things of that sort.
- Riess: And you were supplied with stuff, I mean your parents somehow were helping sponsor this?
- Bender: Both parents were interested to see it happening. My father especially loved the building part and the tinkering and the building. I would get a new train engine, but I particularly wanted, because you could take the engine out of the train, and we would use it to make other things. But most of all it seemed the most natural thing in the world to be doing that. And doing it not alone, but doing it in collaboration, doing it with invention, enjoying testing it.
- Riess: Were you the leader do you think?
- Bender: Not at first, but at one point I was probably the leader at this, and I know for me it’s a passion that hasn’t gone away. I think the minute we had children we made sure we were at the beach. Each of the boys was in the

ocean before they were six months old; they were in the surf before they could walk.

[Tape 3: Side A]

Bender: We were finding ways to live a life, and it began to be that the most natural thing in the world was to be doing that, to be building, to be working, to be experimenting. I mean there were failures, but there was no such thing as failure. The failures meant you had to try it another way. And eventually it was something we couldn't do; sometimes we were picking a bigger motor or something different. But there were always more tracks and more ways. But what it was about was, well, I still like the expression from dawn to dusk. You know, we'd be there as soon as you could get out in the morning, and all day long. That was heaven, to be doing that.

Riess: And the mothers were down at the beach to make sure you didn't get swept away with the tide?

Bender: Yes, the mothers were there, but there were lots of people there and so it wasn't always *your* mother. And eventually as time went on we were such fish that we were probably more capable of rescuing the mothers, you know. I was an early swimmer. My father used to, all year round, used to meet a group of friends and go to this beach club where they had handball courts and played handball. And after that, when the season was right, they would go for a swim in the ocean. There were these rock jetties. It wasn't a big swim but you go out about fifty yards around the jetty and come back, and it was like a test of adulthood. Somewhere around eight years old I could go and do that. And later years when I was a teenager, we used to swim way out in the ocean. We had one friend, Mike Priano, told us if you go out far enough there were buoys out there. And I remember two of us swam out, it must have been two miles out, the "two mile limit," and we found this line of buoys, and we went from one to the other and written on each one was "Mike Priano, King of the Sea."
[laughter]

Riess: What a fine name. You had some fine Italian friends like Mike Priano?

Bender: Yes, and Vinnie Zoino was another one.

Riess: Vinnie?

Bender: Vincent Zoino. I knew him from the beach and then we were later at the Flatbush Boys Club together, where we swam on the swimming team. Vinnie Zoino was a really good swimmer. I heard he went to Hawaii to train for the Olympics but then I lost track of him till watching the Sergeant Bilko series one day, and Sergeant Bilko was with a group of sailors once and my God there was Vinnie Zoino! [name changed to Vince Edwards, he was television's Ben Casey]

Riess: The ethnic range out there at Sheepshead Bay was what?

- Bender: There were a lot of Italians, there were a lot of Greeks, those were the main, and Jewish people. And it was a real focus on the sea, the people—there were Irish, and my friend John Reilly, his father owned a fishing boat named the *Ann Reilly* after his sister, one of what were called party boats. And sometimes we would go out early in the morning and help cut bait for the fishing parties, but they were—when the war started people would join the Coast Guard, would join the navy.
- Riess: I think you told me about diving for nickels?
- Bender: Yes. Sheepshead Bay, if you see it now it's harder to recognize because it has concrete bulkheads all around, but at that point it was a mostly eroding bay. But there were docks where the fishing boats were. And there was a wooden bridge that crossed into Manhattan Beach, which was the ocean side and which was a quite nice residential area, a low bridge. And on Sundays there were lots of people walking on the bridge because there was a restaurant, Lundy's, a famous one. And a lot of the kids would wait under the bridge and call up to people and say, "If you throw coins in, I will dive for them," and when I got old enough—maybe I wasn't old enough, because I must have slipped away some days to do that with them. And we used to, I once got a quarter, and a quarter was big at that time. And the water was clear enough in those days, but you had to be careful when you went down that you didn't disturb the bottom.
- Riess: Those sound like wonderful summers. And you started to go to summer camps.
- Bender: Yes, and again, we didn't have enough money to pay for a regular—at those times people would go to two-month "sleep away" camps. But my left-wing Aunt Leah, she decided to make her own camp, and she started a business. The farther left in my family you got, the more entrepreneurial they were, and the more successful at business. My uncle and aunt who were the most left-wing were the ones who had an Oldsmobile and drove across the country, and they started businesses and things. Anyway, it was arranged that Paul and I would go to summer camp at Aunt Leah's camp, and my mother would be the "Camp Mother," which meant she would do things—it wasn't exactly clear, but she would do things like sewing, patching, and being nice to little kids.
- Riess: Where was the camp?
- Bender: The first one was near Danbury, in Connecticut. Then she moved to, I think it was called Tunis Lake—it was on the edge of the Poconos. And somewhere in that—in some of those camps there were counselors who had just come back from the Lincoln Brigade, so we would be singing "Viva la Quinta Brigada," and Russian songs and Chinese songs. I somehow remember more spirit at the time of the war in Spain than later; maybe in some ways we were more involved, in other ways less. I don't know. It was the beginning of something important, but it wasn't exactly clear what that was.

In my teens I went to a camp called Camp Woodland. At Woodland I started to meet kids who went to the Little Red Schoolhouse. That was one of the first progressive private schools in Greenwich Village. And there were kids from Ethical Culture School there too. The Little Red Schoolhouse had a high school called Elizabeth Irwin High School. They were kids who had a fulltime dose of what I was getting at children's camp, of progressive education, of the left wing, building up to the war. Although by the time I was at Woodland it was wartime already. That was a place where if you wanted—we'd say, "There's no tennis court." "Well, go ahead and build a tennis court," was the answer, so we were building a tennis court. As the war came we were—I don't think "rented out" but we were allowed to work for local farmers to help do the haying and take care around the farm.

We put on shows and productions in which—I remember painting the scenery, and the counselor who was showing us about the painting was a man named Alex Dobkin who turned out to be an artist who was showing in the ACA Gallery which was a left wing gallery in Manhattan. And that opened a whole new group to me. I couldn't have been more than fourteen or fifteen then, but I went to—again, the kids from camp who used to go to the museums decided to go to see this gallery and we saw the paintings of Robert Gwathmey, who was the father of Charles Gwathmey, the famous architect. Bob Gwathmey at that point was painting simple and very beautiful pictures of black people working in the fields down south. And there were some other left wing painters from the twenties and thirties there, Realist painters. And the amazing thing, you could go into galleries for nothing and see this, and so we started to go to galleries.

Riess: That seems remarkable. That's not like the most obviously interesting art for teenage boys. You were interested in art *per se*, as we used to say?

Bender: Well, at that point it was becoming boys and girls. I don't think—I was less interested in art *per se* than I was in the cutting edge. I can't remember going much to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to look at the classical; I do remember going to galleries to see things I had never seen before. And also to feel you were part of something. There was some of that at MoMA because you saw things you hadn't seen before. You also saw in those days—they built a series of houses in the garden at MoMA. One of the first was by Marcel Breuer, after the war, a modern house. You couldn't see such things anywhere else that I could go. Later on, when I was at Harvard, in my first year in architecture school we wanted to see some of those modern houses we'd seen pictures of, Philip Johnson's house, the Breuer houses, and some by John Johansen, and we had to hitchhike all the way to New Canaan, Connecticut to see modern houses, despite the fact you were seeing them in magazines.

Bender: [tape interruption] Let me put one thing in. I notice I keep making notes to myself. One of my father's passions was optical illusions, and he was always collecting them and showing me, like the famous one: is it two cups or two people's faces?

Riess: Yes.

Bender: My favorite is the three cubes that are seen in a different way, as a star, the idea that there's something there that you haven't seen until you are ready to see it. So with the star or the three cubes, if I tell you it's a star you'll see the star. But once I mention that it's three cubes—you'll see the cubes and it'll be hard to see the star. And what started to fascinate me about that is that nothing changes on the page. The lines don't change, what's in front of you, but you see that there are other possibilities. And that triggered something in me early, and in lectures and writing and things I do ever since, the idea keeps coming back. We all go in saying this is a star, and how do we work with the star, and then one day someone says no it's three cubes! And from then on I think, well, what else could it be? But that idea of coming back and seeing that something was not what we thought it was.

Riess: When your father talked about this, how did he talk about it—was it more of a trick? Or was it that he had the deep thought?

Bender: He didn't talk about it philosophically. He talked about the enjoyment of the trick. He liked to do magic tricks, too. And it sort of fell more in that range.

But for me, well, I think I mentioned he gave me a book on Frank Lloyd Wright, and I fell in love with the story, I fell in love with the book. But the thing that I got out of the book that made me realize I was seeing a side of the star or the cube that I wasn't supposed to see, Frank Lloyd Wright's first big job ever, employment job—he went to work for Adler and Sullivan, and Sullivan is the dynamic designer. Everybody knows Sullivan. I read the book, and I read about Adler and I read about Sullivan, and I didn't know who I was supposed to be. I realized I was supposed to want to be Sullivan but I wanted to be Adler. Adler was the builder, the one who made it happen. Sullivan was dynamic, romantic and all of that, but I related to Dankmar Adler—that was his name, I think—who understood construction, who understood the world around it enough to get it done. Later, when I was involved with [Wallace K.] Harrison and [Max] Abramovitz, I realized—everybody wants to be the other one—

Riess: How come you didn't want to be Frank Lloyd Wright?

Bender: Oh, well I, I guess I never saw that I could be Frank Lloyd Wright. I admired Frank Lloyd Wright, but I couldn't see myself in that life. I could see myself doing what Adler was doing. When I was later working in the office of Harrison and Abramovitz, almost no one knew the Abramovitz name. There it turned out that Abramovitz was really the Sullivan, and Harrison was the Adler. But Harrison so wanted to be the Sullivan that at one point after they had success Harrison started designing the buildings and Abramovitz started doing the management, and it was terrible! [laughter] Anyway, but that optical illusion thing comes back to me.

- Riess: You told me that if somebody told you things were one way, you just assumed that it was important to investigate the other way.
- Bender: The other way, yes. There was excitement, joy, in finding the other way. And that came from the politics also, because I grew up in a world where what I was hearing around home was not what the general trend was. When we started to go to summer camp, when I compare my summer camp experience with the one Sue was having at the same time—Sue can sing her camp songs from those days, she was the leader of “The Sing” at the end of the summer. And *we* sang political songs, we sang the songs Paul Robeson sang. When we put on a program at the end of the year it was based on Paul Robeson with us all singing “I am an American” as a chorus.
- When we painted, did our arts and crafts, my friends would come home from camp with lanyards and things they’d made in leather working. And I learned how to paint scenery, dark scenery using dark colors like for battle scenes in the background as we sang about the war, and after the war building a new world and things of that sort. Alex Dobkin, the art counselor, he wasn’t teaching us about little things to make and bring home. I remember learning that white could be used in different ways than just painting something white, that it was—well, like set design and how you made impressions of things. And one art class I took at James Madison was with a teacher called Mr. Varney who showed us pointillism, and it was a miracle for me. I got so entranced with the idea that you could make a picture by that—if I’d met Chuck Close then, it would have had maybe the same kind of experience.
- Riess: Yes.
- Bender: But again, it was getting into things on another level.
- Riess: Frank Lloyd Wright, what did you know about him, as an architect? Was the Guggenheim Museum built?
- Bender: No, the Guggenheim was, I don’t even know that there were sketches in the book of the Guggenheim. There were beginning sketches in the book of what would be the Guggenheim one day. I did connect with the Guggenheim in a different way, and with Frank Lloyd Wright in a different way later. But at that point what I was looking for was I saw the Frank Lloyd Wright biography as a young man’s way into another world. He was coming from the country to Chicago and finding a way, and that was I wanted, to do something. So that’s what got me to—it just didn’t seem impossible.
- Riess: What magazines and newspapers were influencing you?
- Bender: PM. There was briefly a newspaper called PM. But I don’t remember reading magazines so much.

Riess: How did you and your friends know what was going on in Manhattan, or even the world?

Bender: People were talking about it. Not only at our family gatherings, but we would walk sometimes on a nice Sunday evening to Coney Island, on the Boardwalk—we have pictures of Coney Island as amusement rides, but on a Sunday night it would be packed with clusters of people having heated political arguments. And particularly around nine o'clock Walter Winchell had his broadcast and he would tell the latest news or scandal, and then there would be knots of people arguing on both sides—"Is he right? Is he wrong?" There were arguments about elections. Elections were much more contentious in those days, and particularly in New York where the American Labor Party could be the balance between the left and the right. So there was a lot of discussion. I don't know that my friends and I talked about politics so much, but we were looking for what was changing, what was new, how the world was changing, how to question. And finding reason to question. And more than that, finding it was possible to question,

Riess: Is that an observation you made then? It seems so self-conscious,

Bender: I don't think we knew it at the time. But I do remember in the fourth grade we were supposed to—we had an art class and we were supposed to paint the view out the window. And I started painting the grass yellow. And the teacher said, "The grass is green," and I said, "It's yellow. I see it's yellow." And I remember to this day that was the beginning of something for me. And I still have a tendency to take almost anything I'm told and the first thing I do is see what happens if you turn it upside down.

And what attracted me to modern art and then to modern architecture, and to so much of the technology, is that it's about there is another way to do it that no one understands yet. And you can be part of figuring it out. Whereas what I was being told in school is that this is the way it is and it was discovered by so and so and that's what you have to learn. I remember someone gave me a book called *Crucibles*, as I remember by Bernard Jaffe, which was the story of different chemical discoveries, and I remember reading that with such passion because these people figured it out,

But probably one of the biggest changes at that moment, and in many ways it changed my life—because I was interested in building, my father bought me *The Autobiography of Frank Lloyd Wright* for my twelfth or thirteenth birthday. And I was completely fascinated by that. And then I got other Frank Lloyd Wright books that had more pictures and I saw things that I had never seen before—I mean, if you had seen them in a movie you would have thought they were space ships, some of the Frank Lloyd Wright buildings. Eventually when I was in high school and trying to think about where I would study I wrote a letter to Frank Lloyd Wright and I asked him which architectural school was the best school. And amazingly, and I didn't realize how amazing it was then, but he wrote back and said, "Don't go to any of them. None of them are any good. Go

into civil engineering and then you'll be able to tell them what to do," Only later I discovered that's what he did. That's what Frank Lloyd Wright would do, tell you what he did, rather than--. And I did it, actually, and I made a series of decisions, I went to City College to study engineering.

Riess: Can you remember more moments like that? How smart of your parents to have known that would be important,

Bender: Well, they were good like that. When they saw what I was doing, they fed it. On the other hand, my mother was determined to have me play the piano, and that was disaster after disaster. I had lessons, and finally I didn't have lessons. So then she said I had to have some instrument, so I took trumpet lessons for a while and that was even worse. I think she gave up on me when my brother started to play the piano; he played the piano really well and more and more. It took that pressure off me.

Riess: Those neighborhood kids, did you stay in touch with them?

Bender: I lost touch with most of them, eventually. One of the most influential was a guy named Melvin Smith. He and I were probably most interested in art—now I am getting ahead, but eventually he introduced me to a couple of other teenagers, and in my last year in high school I took a share, I guess you'd say, in an apartment in Greenwich Village that four or five of us paid the rent for. It was over Peter Carbone's Village String Shop. The corner of McDougal and Bleeker.

Riess: It was a "pad"?

Bender: A place where we could stay. Or spend the day, or go in and out. I was gradually moving out of the house. There was a lot of tension—well, I should go back to that.

Riess: The peer group is so important.

Bender: Yes, but part of the peer group began to change. Somewhere, I think the summer between when I was fourteen and fifteen, I got this brilliant idea from Frank Lloyd Wright and his apprenticeship with Louis Sullivan. I had the idea that I would see if I could get a job with the architect of Rockefeller Center. And it never occurred to me that the architect of Rockefeller Center would have his office anywhere else, and I looked on the directory, and I saw Corbett, Harrison and McMurray—it later changed to Harrison and Abramowitz—but it turned out that Corbett, Harrison and McMurray were the architects for Rockefeller Center. And Harrison in particular was the connection with the Rockefellers.

At any rate I had this plan, which seemed quite reasonable to me at the time: one Saturday morning when I was going in to meet my father--for some reason my mother and brother were going somewhere else so I was going to take the subway in. I went in early, and I looked on the directory and I went up to the 51st Floor. And I went in to the receptionist and I

started to explain to her that I wanted to be an architect and that this was the most beautiful, amazing place in the world and that I wanted—“Can I be an office boy? Can I do something to work here?” She looked shocked, and she was about to tell me to go away when I heard this laugh and this man came out who I later found out was Harrison, who was walking by and heard this. He basically said, “I can’t believe this, but come in,” and I ended up being hired to come in on Saturday mornings and be an office boy. In those days Saturday mornings there’s a lot of cleaning up to do after the week. So I rolled blueprints and I helped to file and I brought coffee and I kept busy. That was it.

Riess: The chutzpah!

Bender: I don’t know whether it was chutzpah or desperation.

Riess: You were desperate to get out of—

Bender: I knew there was something else on the other side of where I was. I was starting in high school—I was really good in elementary school, I was valedictorian in my elementary school graduating class. But when I got to high school I was bored stiff and my only interest was the swimming team,

Riess: You didn’t have the love of books?

Bender: They were squashing it. I remember we were being given assignments in *Arrowsmith*, and I started to read *Arrowsmith*, my kind of book, he goes against the crowd, he tries to change—I finished the book in two days! We were assigned fifteen pages, and the teacher would ask questions about the first fifteen pages, and the next fifteen pages, and I was three books beyond, reading all his other books, and she was going on—I didn’t know by then the questions she was asking about.

Riess: Would you describe yourself, the self that could walk right up and ask for that job? Were you always tall and self-confident?

Bender: I was then pudgy, tall and pudgy on the way to getting thinner because I was beginning to swim, and entering swimming competitions. But I don’t think I was so outgoing—well, I could be strong-willed.

My mother decided that I should be bar mitzvahed and trotted me off to Hebrew school. My grandfather was president of the local shul, which was in a storefront in our neighborhood, but my mother brought me to a more elegant place on Avenue R, and signed me up for lessons. And I hated it. I used to be able to roller-skate there, and somewhere very soon I stopped going.

Riess: Had the temple been part of your life before then?

Bender: We would go on holidays. At home, because of my grandfather we celebrated downstairs with our family at my aunt’s apartment, but it was

not much a part of my world or interest, and this just had no meaning for me at all. For a while I was lucky: my cousin Milton, six years older than me, lived not far away from the temple, and I remember at one point he was ill and I used to visit him, and then I just decided not to go. I intercepted a couple of postcards, and finally—my mother thought I was going, and then the time came when she needed to make the arrangements for the bar mitzvah, because now it was getting close, and it turned out that I hadn't been going. And that was quite a flare-up. She said, "You've got to do this for your grandfather." And my grandfather said, "You don't have to do it for me; you do it if you want to do it." Eventually I got even more cynical because what I did was memorize what I had to do and I went through the ritual, but with no—I remember feeling like it finished something for me.

Riess: I am sorry, I took you back out of our chronology. Let's talk about the Harrison office now, and your plan to work there. It showed such confidence to present yourself there, I think.

Bender: But I didn't think it was so daring. What I saw was happening—I didn't realize how much the world was changing, but because of the war people were doing things they couldn't do otherwise. I had made a Victory Garden, I did that with my grandfather. I was a messenger: there were air raid wardens, and I couldn't be an air raid warden but I could be a messenger with an arm band and you rode your bike and theoretically you would deliver messages. And we put tape on the headlights of cars so there wouldn't be too much glare so the submarines wouldn't see the silhouette of the city—the lights were all dimmed. I even knitted squares in school to aid the war effort—they were called Afghans. We collected cans and flattened them. My older cousins weren't around; two of my cousins were in the army. People were doing things they hadn't done before. At any rate I asked for a job, and maybe it was because of things I read, that there were office boy jobs.

Harrison's office turned out to be the most amazing opportunity for me, although I hardly saw him. It was a big office, and at the end of the war it became Harrison and Abramowitz and Harrison became the architect for the United Nations Building. And when the international committee of advisors arrived they came to the office, and one Saturday morning I found I was bringing coffee for Oscar Niemeyer and Corbusier, and just beginning to know who they were. There was more of the excitement than in ordinary offices at that point. It was not just about the UN, but the UN was going to be a different kind of building. There were no glass buildings then.

Riess: You were there on Saturday mornings?

Bender: Yes, but it went on. As I went through high school it became one and then two afternoons a week, and in a sense when it was time for me to decide about college—

Riess: How did it work with the place in Greenwich Village?

Bender: That was the last year of high school. But because I was coming in after school, I was in the city, I would meet other people, generally a little older than I was, who were interested in the galleries, who were interested in—well, it began a period in which I hung out more and more with people who were older than I was.

The Harrison and Abramowitz Office—what made even more of a difference in changing my life was the connection with the Rockefellers. There was a deep connection between Harrison and Rockefeller. And so Nelson Rockefeller had set up something called IBEC, the International Basic Economy Corporation, which was a company that was supposed to help developing countries develop. And they were particularly interested in Venezuela and South America at the time. They were—well, the Harrison firm had spread to two floors almost, and part of one of the floors was taken over by IBEC. And there were all different people in IBEC. But I would go up with messages sometimes and then I would go up to look—because one of the IBEC projects was about how to do low-cost housing in developing countries.

They were working—again, another interest of mine was in engineering, that there were technical answers. And they were trying to develop something—the IBEC system they called it eventually—which could make houses out of concrete, using a technology that came out of World War II by accident. They had these big cranes—if a big B-29 bomber crashed on the runway you had to get it out of the way fast. So they made these giant cranes that could lift twenty-six tons of airplane. And the idea was going to be that these cranes would lift a mold—it was a mold for a house basically, interior and exterior walls, but they would be poured with concrete. The mold would be put down on a concrete slab, and they would pour concrete in the mold and strip the mold off, and off on another part of the site they were pouring flat slabs for the roof. They would pour it in one form and then put paper in between another. And then a vacuum thing on the same crane would lift them up and put them on as roofs. For me it was just an amazing picture, like a factory that was going to turn out houses. But it turned out there were a number of problems, technical problems. And at that point I was in college, at CCNY, so it was around the fifties.

Riess: You maintained the connection with the office?

Bender: All through college I worked for Harrison. By the time I was in engineering school at CCNY I was working on the UN in the field. I went to school in the daytime and I worked on the night shift at the UN site as a clerk of the works.

Riess: That's like a construction supervisor?

Bender: Well, it's the lowest level of construction supervisor. When the trucks would come with the steel, for instance, they couldn't go through the streets during regular traffic hours so they would come at night, and when

they unloaded I would show where each piece of steel would go so when they were picked up in the morning they would be in the right order.

Riess: That's a lot of responsibility.

Bender: Someone else—I didn't plan it, everything was labeled. At that point I was nineteen or twenty. You see, in high school I was working as the office boy. And then when I went to City College and was studying engineering—I guess I graduated when I was twenty-one, and I had been working those last three years.

Riess: Rockefellers in Venezuela raises some possible intimations of exploitation of the people on banana plantations—were there some cloudy issues about IBEC?

Bender: You know, all through my history I think there were cloudy issues where I didn't see the clouds! I spent a good number of years, starting with that, and then in the work that I did after that, on issues that could go either way, where you could look at them in different ways. I looked at it as clean, sanitary, fireproof, ratproof housing for poor people. You could say it another way: the workers were being exploited, but I saw it as housing for poor people. IBEC was not a profit-making company itself. I know—I was sorry I couldn't get more involved but at a later period at Harvard and MIT groups were working on a big planning project for South America. When I later worked with Wiener and Sert they worked on planning projects in developing countries that you could say were opening opportunities, or that they were exploiting. Nowadays a lot of the work that I do in my non-profit and in developing countries of affordable housing is supported by work I do for developers who donate the money to do the other work.

So I—somewhere along the way it became clear that you have to go ahead before you know all the facts, or before you get it all decided. The expression that's guided me for so long is "it's easier to take a step in the right direction than to know where you are going." But you can't figure it all out before you start. So with—I never thought twice about the IBEC things, to me it was a wonderful opportunity, and it was a way to show people how they could do something healthier and safer and better. Later on I learned that maybe it was not the best way to be making houses and we switched from the prefabrication industry to self-help kinds of things. We focused on what came to be called sites and services, and we put more of what we could put publicly into making the place right, providing for utilities and infrastructure and tools and making it possible for people to build their own houses rather than to manufacture a house for people. My whole career in low-cost housing in developing countries is all about the balance between—whether it's public housing or is that the best way to do it.

The other piece that came out of all this, and it summarizes my whole career, but also these first years—later when we lived in Switzerland, and again while I was studying at Harvard, I met Sigfried Gideon who was a

historian of technology and architecture, and he mentioned once that “architecture begins in construction and ends in town planning,” and that’s the story of my life. And I now see it in different tracks, from the basement of my grandfather’s house, working on bookshelves, up through the construction technology at MIT. My Harvard thesis was a way to build low-cost housing by taking modules and hanging them from trusses up above. In Switzerland I worked on prefabricated housing in concrete. But as it moves along, the way to solve the problem always was to go to the next level. I realized the engineer wasn’t making the decisions, the architect was, so I moved to architecture. Then I realized if I wanted to do large scale or significant projects that had to do with poor people or communities it became a planning problem, because everyone said, “Oh, that’s a good idea. But do it over there, not here.” So in teaching, as well as my professional interest, everything has moved from construction to architecture to larger, urban, more complex work.

Riess: The way you have just phrased that, would you say that helping poor people is one of your big motivations?

Bender: I never thought of it in that way, but certainly from the politics that I was exposed to when I was young and then through the war and the spirit of post-war, helping poor people, helping developing countries—more and more I have come to see it as communities rather than houses, helping raise the level of community, singing all those songs together and meaning it. And so it was how to find a way, and testing it, coming back, just like the sand castles. You leave it at the end of the day and you come back the next morning to see what the tide did.

I went back to see the first test of those IBEC houses. We designed and built ninety houses in Norfolk, Virginia. Sue’s brother, Arthur Rosenfeld, had married a woman from Norfolk, Virginia, Helene, and we’d go down there occasionally. I saw those houses forty or fifty years later, and boy they are sad. They were built to be a slum, in a way. They were built as worker’s housing, and they were safe, they were fireproof—they are still there today. But they weren’t conceived of as a community. The things that make a success are not the architecture or the construction, they are about the lives of the people, the community. Every time I see that famous movie of blowing up the building in St. Louis [Pruitt Igoe] considered as a failure of architecture, it’s a failure of something much bigger than that.

Riess: You said that when you were at the Harrison office you were bringing coffee to Corbusier. Tell me what you recall of these masters and about the United Nations building project.

Bender: Well, I don’t remember most of them. There was one day I was there when most of the committee was there. There was Sven Markelius from Sweden, and there was a Chinese man [Liang Sicheng] who looked very diminutive and apparently he hadn’t been in China much. During the war he was at a university in this country.

When I tell the story of the UN now, it comes from lots of pieces at different times, because I realized I was in the middle of things I didn't know were going when they were going on. But in the office on the days when I would be there there would occasionally be a meeting of the UN committee. So I knew about the UN project, and I was fascinated to see some of the people. By that point I knew Corbusier's name, and in the little bits I saw, he was the dynamic person. He was talking the most, he was almost like a caricature of himself. He was very dapper, very energetic and a force field. And I also remember Niemeyer, who very often sat next to him—I shouldn't say very often because it wasn't that often—but I can picture Niemeyer sitting next to Corbusier and looking very small and that he was very bundled up and that he was always cold. And I later realized his influence was there much more than you felt in the room, and that many of the things Corbusier was talking about were things that he and Niemeyer had done at different times.

But to go back, it was in the late fall of '46 that I started this, and the UN project was just beginning. I was entering my last year in high school. Some of this spills into '47. I know that Harrison, because of Rockefeller, had been in Washington in some bureau of Latin American Affairs during much of the war, and he was coming back. What I didn't know is that as the idea of the UN complex was coming together, the question was where was it going to be? And at the same time, or even before that discussion, William Zeckendorf, a very dynamic developer who played a very big part in New York in many ways, he began to assemble land during the war, maybe he even began before the war. The East Side of Manhattan between the forties and 34th Street was the abattoir district, with all the slaughterhouses. There was a pre-war project called Tudor City built there which was supposed to be very elegant, but they had to turn the back of some of the apartments away from the view because of the abattoir. But Zeckendorf understood that if he could buy enough of the land and get rid of the slaughterhouses, he had the possibility to make a fortune. He had assembled a big piece of that land, and somewhere around 1946 he understood that if he could build a platform over the original land, there was talk of a highway along the East Side that could go under it—the idea of platforms was becoming a new one—and then he could put a kind of Rockefeller Center on top of it. Rockefeller Center was very successful because of the Depression and then the war. Little had been built since.

Riess: A “kind of Rockefeller Center” meaning high-rise office buildings?

Bender: But with other things added. In Rockefeller Center's original idea it was going to have a “Radio City” and the skating rink, shops, restaurants, a concert hall and the Metropolitan Opera was supposed to be there, but because of the Depression it got taken out. So the idea was could they do one here like that? And when he got around to doing it he talked to different people but ended up deciding that he would ask Harrison because of his connection with Rockefeller Center, and maybe even more with his connection with the Rockefellers, because maybe they would invest in this. Zeckendorf was not looking so much to develop the whole thing

himself, but to make a profit on the land and then—so he asked Harrison to make some schemes.

What's interesting is it was supposed to be very secret, because once people knew what he was planning to do with the land, not only that piece of land but the land around it would go up in value. And so when he asked Harrison to do it, I think they were calling it X City, and they set it up as a secret project. I didn't know—in the office then, nobody talked about it, I'm not sure how many people knew about it. But I would occasionally be asked to make deliveries to George Dudley, who was one of Rockefeller's right-hand men at the Marguery Hotel. It turned out they had rented two apartments in the Marguery Hotel, one for the project they were working on, the project there where no one would see it, and George Dudley was living with his family in the other one, so it would be perfectly logical that he was going back and forth. And I would make these deliveries to George Dudley there, and I would see him. Sometimes I would see his wife. But George Dudley came to be someone who I could relate to, and George Dudley later became head of IBEC.

Later, as the UN planning got farther along—well, some of the people thought the UN should be like a new town, and they were looking at sites up to thirty, forty thousand acres.

Riess: And that would be the Corbusier version of it?

Bender: Well, Corbusier's original idea was that's what it should be. And there were sites like that. Once it was decided it was to be in the United States, one of the sites that was considered was San Francisco, and then the idea was that it would be the Presidio. Which again, I didn't know that at the time. Only later when I got involved with the Presidio here I realized that, because the UN had started in San Francisco. Corbusier had said we shouldn't do a Rockefeller Center, because it shouldn't be in the middle of a city. One of the ideas is that you could have taken over Rockefeller Center for it, and there was another idea on the West Side. As it got close it looked like there was a chance they were going to select a site in Philadelphia. But in the meantime, I have heard that people were talking about the fact that Corbusier was flying in a small plane around New York. It turned out later that he flew up to the Rockefeller estate, Pocantico Hills, and flew around, and his idea was to try to convince the Rockefellers to give that to the UN. And they were looking at something in Flushing Meadows—[Robert] Moses was resisting anything in the city because he wanted it to go on the World's Fair site at Flushing to revitalize that.

But as it was getting down to it, and there was more and more interest in a site outside of Philadelphia, it came together when Harrison and his group were talking to the Rockefellers about the Zeckendorf site. Somewhere it was proposed, Nelson I think proposed that his father, the Rockefellers, would buy the Zeckendorf land and give it to the UN. And within an amazingly short period of time they worked it all out. Trygve Lie was the secretary general, and he loved the idea. It was a way to be in New York

without being in New York. It was a fresh start. They'd get the land free, which was something.

Riess: It was a major power deal?

Bender: It was a major power deal, and they got permissions that they probably shouldn't have gotten.

But for me, at the first part it was going to the Marguery Hotel and making deliveries. The other deliveries that I made—Corbusier was originally only supposed to be in New York for a short time but he came early and did this thing with the plane and he started writing. He started writing a book about what the UN should be before he was even on the commission. I mean, he had been in New York in the thirties and he dreamed of doing things in the United States. He also felt, and other people felt, he was cheated out of the League of Nations project after World War I. He won the competition for the League of Nations complex and they took it away from him. And he fought for years about that.

Riess: Were all of these meetings going on in English? Did he speak English?

Bender: He spoke some English. The meetings would switch back and forth because most people spoke English, and the ones in New York were mostly in English. They had translators, because some people's English was not as good as others. And sometimes Corbusier would talk to others in French, maybe because he didn't want someone—Harrison had been his friend who originally got him into it, but he wanted to make sure Harrison didn't take charge. But Harrison was *put* in charge.

Riess: I assume there's been a good book written about the whole thing.

Bender: Well, there have been books about it, and some of it is what I have read, because I didn't understand very much at the time. But the part that I did understand that was really special for me is I was asked twice to bring things down to 8th Street in Greenwich Village, which was a street that at that point I always kept falling in love with. And that's where some of my friends and I had—well, some of them had an apartment and then I took a share in it. I was asked to deliver things to Constantino Nivola's apartment. He had a studio there where Corbusier was staying with them part of the time; he was using Tino's studio part of the time. So, I made several deliveries down there. I got to see Corbusier there and I got to meet the Nivolas who eventually played a big part in my life, our life. And it all made it seem more and more possible, and more and more exciting to have the life I was looking for. [On March 20, 2011 I donated a large oil painting Tino made while visiting us in the late 1970s to the Berkeley Art Museum. The painting hung in my office as dean from the day it was finished. RB]

But at that point, as I was also graduating from high school—well, there was one other piece going on which at first it seemed less dramatic and then became more and more. Because during the Depression Harrison had

been more than tinkering, he got interested in the ideas of industrialization and housing. And he started working on how to use highway technology and concrete, which was then a new material, for housing and to make low-cost housing. And Nelson Rockefeller—they all had offices in Rockefeller Center at this point, because they hadn't rented it all so it was easy, and Nelson had set up IBEC [International Basic Economy Corporation] basically to do work in Latin America, and housing was part of it. And so the thing is that George Dudley, who I was delivering things to at the Marguery Hotel, was also in charge of the IBEC project, and my connection with him became really important for later on.

[Tape 3: Side B]

Bender: The one other thing that got me involved in high school was once I started coming into New York often I signed up to take a painting course at the Art Students League on 57th Street—it was right near the Met, right near Carnegie Hall, across the street from the Russian Tea Room.

Riess: Right near the Carnegie Deli.

Bender: Max's Stage Delicatessen was where we went in those days. And there was the big piano store on the ground floor.

Riess: The Steinway showroom, yes.

Bender: Again, these were marvelous places that we could go to. And the Art Students League wasn't free but it wasn't very much. The painting course I signed up for was with a Japanese man called Yasuo Kuniyoshi, who I learned more about later, but he was a Japanese, he had been in this country when the war came and he stayed here. Because he was on the East Coast, he didn't get interned, and then he stayed on.

Riess: And what did he teach you?

Bender: Well, the lesson I remember most was I was in the class for a while, and it was getting to the end of the year and I was saying I was going to come back and he said, "You know, maybe you ought to try photography." [laughter] And I did. I understood what he was saying.

Riess: What was he saying?

Bender: He was saying that I wasn't much of a painter. Part of it was he was painting in a very much softer way. I, coming from my view into this whole world, Leger was actually what I had in me. I loved the strong colors and forms. Harrison loved Leger, and he got Leger to do a mural for his house. The paintings I saw that Nivola was doing or that Corbusier was suggesting for his buildings were harsher-edged than Kuniyoshi. I'll show you sometime. I took the photography class, and one of the first assignments was to take a photograph of someone you admired in doing what he does. I asked Kuniyoshi if I could take his picture. I met him in

his studio, we spoke for a while, and then he stood near an arching window frame—it's the best picture I ever took!

So I realized that the Art Students League was not—it was both too much and it was not working for me. I was then in engineering school at City College, which was not so easy for me either because it was more rational than I wanted to be.

Riess: City College was free? Was that an important part of it?

Bender: Oh, that it was free? It was important that it was free. But I think if I had gotten into another school my family would have paid.

Riess: Did you apply to other schools?

Bender: I couldn't, and it was worse even when I went to graduate school. Basically, after the war schools had—if you were from the state and a veteran, you had first priority. If you were from out of state and a veteran you got the second priority. For out-of-state things I was the lowest priority, and I was pretty low priority *in* the state.

Riess: That's interesting.

Bender: Well, it became even more of a problem for me for graduate school when I wanted architecture, and it was much harder to apply. But at this point I had reason to want to stay in New York.

Riess: Because—you mean the job?

Bender: The job, the art, the world I was finding. I had started working in the summer as a waiter to earn money, and had been again connected with Pete Seeger and some of the people around that world who were some of the same people who I was meeting at summer camp, and who went to the Little Red School House and the Friends School, and Ethical Culture. And all of this was showing me there's another way to do school; there's another way to look.

At home I was seeing images of someone who went to engineering school or who was going to become a doctor. Through this other world I met people who wanted to be a forest ranger, and who wanted to be an artist, not people who were interested in Harvard. So staying in New York at that point was interesting, and the engineering schools that I could have gone to—like Rensselaer, where Sue's brother went, was upstate New York with no urban community around it, and it was all engineers.

Riess: What about Columbia?

Bender: Well, I couldn't even apply to Columbia at that point. Columbia was complicated in another area. Right about that time there was a quota on Jewish people, and it was somewhere between then and when I could have applied to Columbia for graduate school that the rules changed, and they

couldn't ask for your race or religion. And then at another point they couldn't ask for a picture and they couldn't have a quota. I'm not sure that the graduate schools had quotas the way the undergraduates did, but that was not possible.

Riess: And NYU?

Bender: NYU had an engineering school, at that point way up in the Bronx, which again was separate from the rest of NYU. What was interesting about City College is City College at that point had—you know, with my background, it was the radical place where left-wingers went, and it had that turmoil as well as the engineering.

So I wanted to go to an engineering school, but I assumed I wanted to go to an engineering school to study structures. And it turned out that structural engineering—structures was part of civil engineering, I knew that, two of my uncles were civil engineers. But until my first year in engineering school it wasn't clear to me that civil engineering was really about cities. Pretty naïve I guess, not to see that “civil” would be about cities. And structures was one piece of it that I could major in. But we also learned about water supply and sewers: it never occurred to me to wonder how the water got up in these apartments, and what happened when it got there. We were learning about roads, and how you make curves on highways, and crowns, and paving materials, and concrete as a material, and all this. And about electricity and its distribution. It was about how you build cities—structure was just part of it.

I told you about my father and optical illusions. In this case I thought I saw “structures” in structural engineering, but I found out later I was looking at “civic engineering.” I later found there were books on civic design and people who looked at cities as design problems and engineering problems.

Riess: You didn't have a revelation that had to do with one of your professors, or a classroom experience?

Bender: No, no. Well, in one of my structures class I had a revelation and a confrontation, at the same time. We had an exam in which we were supposed to—we were given a situation of a river with the city on both sides of it, and the conditions of soil and similar data, and asked to propose a bridge, and whether it should be concrete or steel and what kind of bridge. You weren't supposed to be making all of the details, but you were supposed to show you could do a kind of conceptual design. And when I looked at the site and the city around it seemed to me that a tunnel would be a better idea. So I wrote that I thought that a tunnel would be a better idea, sketched it and noted ways in which it would be better for river traffic and the neighborhoods, which didn't get me very far with the teacher. He was nice enough to give me another chance, but he told me, “Engineers don't make that decision.” [laughter] That was what I learned then.

Later I found out that intuitively I had something that was more interesting. Working in Shanghai about twenty years ago, and considering a bridge to Pudong, we that discovered a bridge, in order to be high enough for the ships to go under, the ramps would have to go so far into the city they would disrupt traffic and destroy neighborhoods. So they built a tunnel under the river to Pudong before they built the bridge. Years later, farther from the old city enter, they built bridges.

Riess: And it was your—

Bender: No, I had nothing to do with it. But T. Y. Lin, who when I was teaching here we used to do classes together—he was teaching in Civil Engineering, and I used to talk to his classes and he used to talk to my classes, and he was always talking about bridges, and he was terrific and everybody loved his talking and got excited about what he was doing. T.Y. Lin was pushing the Shanghai bridge. I hadn't thought about it at that point, but later when I was involved in the issue I realized why the Shanghai bridge didn't get built till much later, and not in the place where he was talking about.

But City College was interesting for me because it was a chance to be in the city. I could still work part time at Harrison's, but I could do those things you can't do anywhere but in New York, and even when you're poor. I was at all the art gallery openings. I discovered—Leo Castelli hadn't quite opened his gallery yet, but Betty Parsons, ACA, the Kootz Gallery.

Riess: I don't know that name.

Bender: Well, I don't remember all of them, but they—and also they were coming and going. Betty Parsons I remember was cutting edge.

Riess: Did you put in four years at City College?

Bender: No, I had to go the first year to Brooklyn College. Because again, everything was so crowded in those first post-war years, and I was at the low end of the totem pole. So I went to Brooklyn College and took the basic math and physics, and then I went to City College for the other.

Riess: It surprises me that you put in four years of college, basically studying civil engineering. I mean you must have managed to make that work obviously, or distract yourself mightily for four years.

Bender: Well, I didn't think I did very well. As I think back, I see that I got much more out of my classes by my experiences on the UN construction site. I was surprised that in my last year I was invited to join an honorary civil engineering fraternity. So my grades must have been high up, but I have so little memory of what it was.

Riess: It sounds like college was the background for your life then, rather than the foreground.

Bender: Well, at some point it became a thing I had to do to do the next thing. And at one point I found out maybe I didn't have to because my heroes—Corbusier, Gropius, Mies didn't go to architecture school. Or what they studied was more engineering than architecture. But it was also a way to be there.

Riess: You loved the city. Beyond going to the Catskills and the Adirondaks, did you travel?

Bender: Not much. I went in the summers to places—I experienced farm life when I was at summer camp, because we used to get lent out to the local farmers to help with the harvest during the war. So I knew chickens and cows and haying, but I don't know that I had even been to Washington.

Riess: It was intense, but it was very limited.

Bender: Well, it was limited and international at the same time. I was seeing bigger things but I wasn't going there. I was beginning to itch about Europe.

Riess: Were you reading journals? Were you looking at the pictures of new architecture?

Bender: Well, there wasn't that much to see because of the Depression and the war.

Riess: You mean there wasn't that much new architecture?

Bender: I told you that when I first got to Harvard in 1951 we had to hitchhike down to New Canaan, Connecticut to see modern houses. But we read Sartre, and the existentialists, and Kierkegaard, poetry. I discovered e.e. cummings and started to write cryptic poetry without capitol letters.

Riess: You had humanities classes?

Bender: Well, at City College I didn't have much else but engineering, but it was all around. My friends were reading, my friends were doing art school or art. For the whole time I went to City College I was living in Manhattan, and Manhattan was—what I learned in my earlier years and from summer camp and the people I met at summer camp, was that there were other ways to learn than the way I was learning in school. They were learning by doing. My Little Red Schoolhouse friends learned math and geography by doing—I remember one of their projects was to go to the Fulton Fish Market, which I had only known as this hell from stories of my grandfather working there. And they were supposed to figure out where the fish came from, and how many fish there were, and how the fish got delivered, and then they made big projects of paintings and photos and displays and then they had to learn math to do it, and they had to learn geography to do it.

And I was putting that together for myself. It was like the sandcastles in one way. But it was out there to be found and explored. It was fun and you

learned from it. I wouldn't say I learned geography from seeing *South Pacific*, but I learned you could get into the second act because everyone spilled out on the street for the intermission after the first act, and when they'd come in you could go in and stand in the standing room. Just the other night I saw a Lincoln Center production on TV, and I saw the first act for the first time. But I'd seen the second act of *South Pacific* three times. I had never been to the Rainbow Room, but I had been to cocktail parties on the floor below the Rainbow Room where there were receptions that you could go to and things of that sort. And it was all learning.

- Riess: Did any of your cousins who went to war—did anyone die?
- Bender: No. One cousin who flew as a navigator, on B-29s I guess, was wounded. My cousin Dan, who was an officer and a water supply engineer, got very sick during his three years in the South Pacific, but not wounded.
- Riess: And what was your feeling about these GIs? Were they kind of heroic?
- Bender: Oh yes. They were, the war, the war was heroic.
- Riess: Do you remember when the bomb was dropped?
- Bender: Yes, I remember we were on our way home from summer camp in '39, the beginning of September, end of August, when I remember hearing about the Germans going into Poland. I was somewhere, probably still at summer camp in '44, '45, when the bomb was dropped in August. I remember Pearl Harbor; I remember it was a Sunday and I was listening, well, it wasn't Sunday morning, maybe, where I was listening, but I heard on the radio about Pearl Harbor. On Monday at school I still have a picture of talking to the other kids about how we were going to "give it to those Japs." But what was happening though is when I was a waiter in those places I met people from Harvard who were working their way through school, and I got to know them. I said, you know I could do that. I had never, never thought of that before. Then my brother was accepted to Harvard as an undergraduate and was doing well.
- Riess: Before we end, which is going to be pretty soon, you've noted 132nd Street Army Hall.
- Bender: Oh yes, I tried living there for a year. City College is above Columbia at 136th Street, I think. There used to be an outdoor arena with the name of, not Guggenheim, something like that, but the City College buildings were up there. And during the war they took over a building across the street from City College, where soldiers who were studying in short and specific programs were put up, and they called it Army Hall. And it had been apartments that got divided up, so they were thin sheetrock walls through which you could hear everything. I had a roommate there for a while who was from upstate New York, and it must have been housing for more than City College because he was studying optometry at Columbia. I remember he used to bring home a sheep's eye to study. But again, it was a very

cosmopolitan group, because people were older than I was, people on the GI Bill who were coming back to school.

Riess: Had you started out commuting or had you started out college from the Greenwich Village apartment?

Bender: No, when I started at Brooklyn College, I was still living at home and staying some days in the Greenwich Village apartment. By the end of that year I was living in the Greenwich Village apartment, and then I tried the Army Hall for a year, and it was convenient for school but not that interesting and so I went back to the Village.

But in there I had an interesting experience that shaped later life in that there was very little about architecture during this whole program. And at one point there was a lecture on architecture that was not sponsored by the Civil Engineering Department that I was in, but maybe by the Facilities Management Department. They were beginning to do new improvements, and they invited Esmond Shaw, who was the head of the Cooper Union school, to give this lecture mostly meant for the facilities staff. I went and I was fascinated, because although I had a picture of going into architecture, I didn't know anything about architecture schools. He talked about architecture, and I did, for me, an unusual thing. I'm not big at asking questions at lectures like that, but I sort of followed him out, and I walked to the subway with him. He was going back, and I got on the subway and we talked all the way down to Cooper Union. And that really got me excited about architecture school, and he said one of these things people say, "When you are ready one day, let me know." And when we got back from Europe ten years later, and I was thinking of teaching, I called him and eventually I got to teach at Cooper Union from that.

But the other piece—I don't how much I have said about the Pete Seeger connection. As I was beginning to think of graduate school I found working as a waiter in summer resorts was a way to make good money fast. I met Pete Seeger again at one of these resorts, I think the one my aunt ran which was called Schroon Crest up around Schroon Lake in the Adirondacks where he came to entertain, and where I was a waiter. We got to talking because the entertainers ate with the waiters, and he was not well known at that point. And that's where I had this conversation about how I was going to be an architect, and he had this dream of buying land and chopping down the trees and building a log cabin.

We sort of made one of these improbable deals that when he got the money, I would design the house and he would give me banjo lessons. It was not long after that, '48 maybe, they made the record "Good Night Irene" and, that was the Weavers, and on the back of it was "Tzena, Tzena, Tzena". Suddenly he had the money and he bought five acres, near Beacon, and he got in touch with me and I was just beginning in architecture. Our first project with Walter Gropius was to design a house for your own family in a development in Boston. It had absolutely nothing to do with Pete's project, and nobody at Harvard knew about log cabins. So I sent away to the Department of Agriculture, and I still have the little

book called *Log Cabin Construction*, and it told how the pioneers built log cabins, and we used that as a guide.

Riess: So you actually did this for Pete Seeger?

Bender: Well, I made the first sketches, showed him how they made a half-basement and a raised sleeping space, and I got him the book and then more and more people got involved. But the more and more people is what made it interesting, because it was like a second summer camp. Many of my friends used to go up to Beacon on the weekends, and I joined when I could, and everybody worked. They worked more after he broke his leg—Pete broke his leg once when the tree, I think when he was chopping it, fell on him. And when he couldn't work, then he could supervise, and then we all worked. [laughter] It got done a lot faster after he broke his leg, but Toshi [Aline Ota] his wife used to make dinners, and we would eat and sing and camp out. It was sandcastles all over again, but it was sandcastles again with talking about politics and talking about futures and possibilities. It was the time of Henry Wallace, it was the time of—it was another expanded time, everything seemed possible. The idea that I could manage Harvard—I didn't get into Harvard at that point, but I got to Harvard later.

Riess: It's interesting that you had said to Pete Seeger that you were going to be an architect; you didn't say that you were going to be an engineer?

Bender: Oh no, at that point, no, it was clear I was going to be an architect. But I didn't know how I was going to be an architect.

Riess: Did it make a difference to have had that conversation with Esmond Shaw?

Bender: Yes. Because it was one more path that I saw. At that point, I knew about Harvard. I had friends who wanted to go to Black Mountain, and one of them almost got there. I wanted to go to Black Mountain—that would have been—but I think by the time that I could have gone to Black Mountain it closed down. Later, I found my friend Ken Snelson had been to Black Mountain.

Riess: Ken who?

Bender: Ken Snelson. I'll talk about him later. He's a sculptor. But a lot of my young friends wanted to go to Black Mountain; it was the Bauhaus in North Carolina. And what it meant, going to Harvard to do what Black Mountain seemed to offer, it was seeming less and less possible. And my first pass it wasn't impossible but it turned out that because of IBEC I could go to MIT and do that.

Riess: Cooper Union was an architecture school, wasn't it?

Bender: It was an architecture school, but it was an undergraduate school. So I never took the test for Cooper Union, I might have gotten into the

architecture program, and they had an engineering school there but they were completely separate. But the City College Engineering School was supposed to be very good. And they were doing the kinds of things that—I wanted to do housing, and at that point it was apartment houses. That was part of the learning curve, which again I only saw at the end. And as Sigfried Giedion said, “Architecture begins in construction and ends in city planning.” And it was the path I was on before I knew I was on it, and we’ll talk more about that.

Interview 3: August 31, 2010

[Tape 4: Side A]

Riess: Maybe here you can tell me some more about your brother Paul.

Bender: Paul, well, he's my younger brother. Three and a half years younger. I was telling Sue the funny story last night of when—I was three and a half when he was born and I was prepared that my brother was coming. I had no idea really what they were talking about, but I remember coming out of the house to meet the car where my mother was arriving with my baby brother. We lived in an apartment house, and she got out and there she was holding Paul, and I was so excited. We got in the elevator to go up to—we lived on the fifth floor, and he moved, and I screamed, "It's alive!" [laughter] And maybe that was the beginning but, he was just enough younger so he felt out of some of the things that I was doing with my older cousins. Because my mother was younger than her brothers and sisters, except for one who was much younger, most of the cousins were my age or much older than Paul was.

Paul was, from the beginning, good at things and energetic and smart, and just about everything I did he did better. I was the valedictorian in elementary school, but he skipped the last two years of elementary school and went on to a junior high, came out, must have been near the top of his class in high school. I think he probably spent one year as a waiter in the same kind of resorts where I worked, but that was not for Paul. He went to Harvard, then to the Harvard Law School where he was second in his class. I told the story of my mother, when he told her, saying, "Who was first?" He was partly driven by that, I think, and certainly by wanting to do everything well. Paul married Margaret (Thomas) while in law school—I was in the army then—and they were living there when I came back to Harvard in 1956. He was on the Law Review at Harvard. He then clerked for Judge Learned Hand and they were living in Brooklyn Heights, and then for Judge Frankfurter in the Supreme Court. He hadn't gone that far when I met Sue. She had just graduated, she was at Harvard in the School of Education when it was still changing from Radcliffe to Harvard, and she knew and went out with all these lawyers. I was known as Paul Bender's brother, and her esteem went up because she was going out with Paul Bender's brother.

Paul decided not to go into law firms the way most did, he first became a professor at University of Pennsylvania. He has had several stints in Washington. He was in the Solicitor General's Office on several different levels. In the Clinton administration he was the acting solicitor general at one point when he was deputy and at one point was acting. That's the group that brings the cases to the Supreme Court for the government. What I thought was the most unusual thing he did along the way—he was the legal advisor to the National Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, I think it was during Lyndon Johnson's period. And as I recall, he would be debating or contesting Charlton Heston who was a

spokesman for groups that wanted strong anti-pornography laws. Paul's career has been about civil rights. Paul once described, unlike most of us, going to these conferences where they watched pornography all day and at night they sat on the porch and drank coffee and tea.

Riess: Did he march to a very different drummer, do you think?

Bender: No, no. I think he was more focused. For instance, I got involved with the banjo with Pete Seeger, and within a month or two I reached the plateau which I'm at or down from today. He took up the banjo and plays it really well. I took piano lessons for a while and then I stopped; he learned the piano and he plays it very well. Sue and I are interested in art and we find things here and there. He and Margaret focused: early they got interested in Indian crafts, and they are collectors. Eventually he moved from Philadelphia to become the dean of the law school at Arizona State in Tempe. He went there because of his interest in Indians and civil rights. At one point he was, I think, advisor to the Navajo Supreme Court and still works with the tribe. And they have continued collecting Indian art and artifacts. They now live in Phoenix in a house that backs on the Heard Museum, and he was on the board of that for a while.

He's partly retired but still active. Right now he's pursuing four cases in the Supreme Court. One of them is the one that's in the news a lot is about immigration. It's always civil rights. In one sense we're very different, but in the sense of issues about civil rights, civic values, where the world ought to be going, health accessibility, poor people, we just took different forms and we operate in quite different ways. You see my world has been much more scattered and intuitive. And Paul, I think he knew he wanted to be a lawyer from the beginning, but he majored in physics at Harvard with the advice that physics was good for thinking.

The story that may sum our family up in a way—I told you earlier about the day Paul was presenting one of the government's cases on the first day that Ruth Bader Ginsburg was on the Court.

Riess: Oh, yes, a lovely story.

Bender: It's one of my favorites. And it's a picture of our family in a way.

Riess: Yes. When you are together with him do you like to reminisce? Is family of great interest?

Bender: I'm not sure I want to get into what our relationship has been over the years. A little story will tell it better. John Kriken's wife Katherine's father was a ninth circuit court judge, and the ninth circuit covers all the west. For some reason we were in Phoenix visiting my brother, and the Krikens were in Phoenix visiting a judge they knew, and it turned out that everybody knew each other, and we spent an evening together. Paul and I got into what has been our way of talking for years. It seems to me, if one of us takes a position, the other then takes the opposite, a hundred and eighty degrees. I think this is part of the way you teach law. And we start

to argue, and after a while the argument shifts and suddenly I realize I'm a hundred eighty degrees on the opposite side, as we've gone around. And John Kriken said to me, "I've never seen anything quite like that." We argue and we get upset. Mostly we have not had much contact recently. It was really very nice just less than a month ago. They were driving back and forth to Ashland, to the Shakespeare Festival, and they stopped and we had a really, really nice time together.

Later on I'll talk about when we built our house on Long Island and we actually bought a larger piece of land and brought friends into it. And after it was built, Paul and Margaret and their sons John and Matthew would come and visit us, and they were interested in doing something like that. We ended up buying another twenty acres of woodland across the road and setting up another community and eventually three friends built. Paul and Margaret bought one of the lots, and they were going to build a house on it, but by then they had settled in Philadelphia and they decided they were going to go to the Poconos instead. But for those years his sons and our sons often visited—there were six kids who were all the same age in the community.

One thing that I wanted to talk a little more about is—I added some notes because I was thinking about what special times they were.

Riess: You think about it as special or lucky in some way.

Bender: Well, when I think back I realize that what I just took as normal ordinary growing up, it was taking place at a very unusual time. The years of my growing up was the country, or the world's, growing up in some ways. We all learned to live in a changing world. We not only were coming out of this Depression and then the war, but there'd been fifteen years of European influence, incoming refugees who would influence just about everything in art, in music, in culture, in the way you lived life in so many ways.

In many of the fields that I'm involved in, as the Europeans came there was also a pushing back, and suddenly European art came to the United States and you would go to MoMA and see it. And then the "New York School" started to push back, some of them were Europeans like de Kooning and people who came from Europe but there was Jackson Pollock who came from Wyoming. And for the first time, there was this kind of clashing between two different kinds of modern art. When I look back now I understand. I was beginning to understand that then. It was more than art, because art is really a reflection of how people see the world and what's going on. The New York School and de Koonings and Franz Klines and Pollock and those things were pushing against the Surrealists and the Dadaists that came out of the terrible years between the wars, and that was going on in everything. That was going on in music, it was going on in— The schools were changing in New York. When I taught a little while at Columbia in the night school, it was the Beaux Arts—the last of the Beaux Arts schools was being pushed aside.

When I arrived at Harvard, Gropius had come to take over. It was about ten years before I arrived, but the Bauhaus had pushed aside the Beaux Arts. Everything was changing. Between when I first talked to my family about maybe I'd like to be an architect, and they said you can't be an architect if you don't have the kind of social connections—the meritocracy changed all that. When I was first thinking of applying to schools, Columbia University had a quota system. But if I had applied to graduate school there it was gone by then, at that point.

Riess: Was this the moment when you realized, “I can do that?”

Bender: When I was in engineering school, and I was thinking about graduate schools, I was being told that I probably wouldn't even be able to apply to some because I wasn't a veteran and I was from out of state. But then I met these guys, who had been—Eric Solomon had gone to Roxbury Latin School and eventually became one of my roommates. Herschel Langenthal came out of Boston Latin School. They were undergraduates at Harvard, and we were all waiters together, and I realized, I can do that, yes. My family had said I could have aspired to City College or maybe Cooper Union. Columbia was really a long way off. But I saw people who were like me.

You know, by the time Paul applied it just seemed natural. But for us it—it didn't seem like a goal until I saw that. But it was part of a bigger thing that was—the country was coming out of this long period, and so many people looked at it as a bad time because they remembered better times. But we grew up in that time, and it was our time. Then when I could take a summer job and earn enough as a busboy and a waiter to pay a year's tuition, and I could start to think about applying to schools that I could never think about applying to before, you realized that there was a meritocracy taking over from an old established way. And those of us who were living that part of it weren't feeling that the Depression was a terrible time. It was life. At the end of the war everything was opening up. You suddenly saw so much opportunity. Things were opening, things were building.

Riess: And this is a very positive view of America. Did you feel good about being an American?

Bender: Yes, you know, we won the war, the UN came to New York. The country was being rebuilt, there were people coming back. Well, it was both sides for me—there were people coming to school who never would have gone to school before, so that when I got to Harvard, I was the youngest one in the class. There was one other, Donald Frothingham was my age, who had gone to Harvard as an undergraduate and came from New Canaan. But we had Gridley Barrows and Bayard Underwood. Gridley Barrows had graduated from Princeton the year I went to kindergarten. He had been in the navy. We had—Art Sweetzer had flown Lockheed P-38 Lightning fighter planes during the war.

Riess: In the spirit of chronology, we're at Harvard a little too early aren't we? You think of this period as "University Admissions and the Postwar Years" [referring to Bender's notes for Riess]. You mentioned support from the Bemis Foundation.

Bender: That was another piece that I understood when I looked back at it. Because of the work that I had done with IBEC, in the beginning, to think about industrialization—and again that fit the time. The emerging technology was going to be the answer. I mean when the war began in 1939 we were still at the end of horse and buggy era. If you look at how construction changed just from 1939—you know, we still had a cavalry at the beginning of the war. The old newsreels of the Polish and Russian and French first resistance to Hitler show armies and refugees on muddy, unpaved roads, with horses and old cars. We were still in the time of the Okies fleeing the Dust Bowl and farms that were plowed by men behind mules. The war years were a revolution in technology skills and ambitions.

When my friends at IBEC heard that I was trying to find a place where I could go to graduate school, and I was talking about MIT, where they had been sponsoring this program called Building Construction Engineering, they said, "Well, we've been in touch with them because they're interested in the IBEC project." Building construction was a major subject at MIT earlier in the century. It was fading out in its old form as the more interesting challenges were in airplanes, rockets, new technologies. (Building Construction Engineering, Course XVII, disappeared not long after I was there—Professors Walter Voss and Robert Dietz were the end of an era.) At MIT the one who was most interested in it was a man named Burnham Kelly. Burnham Kelly eventually became dean at Cornell. I think he was trained as a lawyer but he was interested both in planning and in housing. He had been named head of the Albert Farwell Bemis Foundation. Albert Farwell Bemis was someone who, in the twenties or thirties, got interested in industrialized building. Eventually he wrote a series of books about it and funded the foundation at MIT to study it.

In the meantime, in my application process I had discovered there were two interesting professors in that department. One was Walter [C.] Voss who was the senior—an older person. Turned out he had been, I think, the construction manager for Frank Lloyd Wright's Midway Gardens project in Chicago many, many years before. The other was Robert [H.] Dietz, who was widely respected as someone who knew construction and was becoming interested in construction in developing countries. And Dietz was involved with something called CINVA—

Riess: CIN—

Bender: Yes. I looked it up, it was Centro Internacional Vivienda Americana [Centro Interamericano de Vivienda y Planeamiento], a Central American housing association. If you look in Google you'll find the CINVA-ram. CINVA-ram was a little device with which people could make their own concrete blocks right at the site and out of local materials. Dietz was

interested in tools, and CINVA, which in my looking just now I couldn't find it, but somewhere I have books and some reports from them. They put out all kinds of reports about ideas and things that could be used to help people build their own houses in developed countries.

Riess: This is a wheel that keeps being reinvented.

Bender: Yes. It keeps being reinvented in different ways. For me, one of the problems is it gets reinvented without learning very much. The big thing that was happening, that we began to see in that period, was it's not about the house. It's about how a community gets built. And, this is probably getting ahead again, but it's the theme that comes through it. When you think of it, when you read about all of these new prefabrication systems and they're going to make houses and factories, or they were doing this, or the IBEC thing was making a house the way children make molds of sand on the beach, but the house turns out not to be the key to the problem. So we started to switch from what we know how to do, make a house, to what we could do to make everybody be able to build a house. We found we went in with all our technology to make a house like our houses, and then we gave it to people, but meanwhile those people didn't have jobs. At the end they lived in a house, but they didn't know any more than they did before.

But if you went in a different way, and if you could make the land available, and if you could set it up so it had what came to be called "sites and services"—"infrastructure" was not in use much in those days, but sites and services were the infrastructure for community participation. So there was healthy water there or a way to get it, if there was sanitation there and a way to get it, and electricity, and access for an ambulance or a fire engine. *And* if you could give people some sense of tenure, that the land could be theirs if they built something. And then if you could help them with the tools to build, you were building a building industry that not only made the houses, and it made them incrementally over time, you could add to them, develop them, whole families could come together. You were building a building industry, because you ended up with people who could make houses. In a way I'm getting ahead of my story, but this *is* my story. [laughter]

Some of the things like the issue of tenure turn out to be really important, if you tell people that if you put a house on this land you own it. Up until then, squatters would come and they built these shacks, and as soon as somebody wanted the land for something else, or they were getting in the way of the road to the airport or something, they would get pushed aside. But if this could be set up so that families could own it, which meant not only that you had a title, but also it was laid out so eventually there'd be streets so you'd have access and the infrastructure to become part of the city. You wouldn't have to have water supply in pipes put in originally. In some cases we would put fifty-five gallon drums scattered around, and a truck would come everyday and would put water in, and the same thing with sewage. People would bring the waste and a truck would pump it out of a septic tank. It's the reverse of what we do in most development;

before the first house is built, you must invest in all the sewers and water and roads. The house starts off burdened with debt. And so the house is already expensive before its construction begins. You can not have a house until you can afford the finished house. And the house is not built to invite you to add a room for your cousin when he comes in from the country, or as your family gets bigger. The construction method we were looking for was how to let people do that. It gives families a chance to begin at a minimum level and invest themselves in their lives.

Riess: Is this true across all cultures do you think? You've worked across so many cultures—and maybe this is too far ahead of us.

Bender: Yes. Well, maybe it's good to start it out and come back to it in different ways, I don't know, because it's true in different ways in all cultures. I remember at one point when we started doing this—I started to get involved in this originally more through Dietz and those technologies. By the time I was at Harvard, and then later at Cooper Union teaching structures, it moved through how to refine some of these systems through different kinds of structure or different kinds of materials.

Riess: Are you saying refine the technology?

Bender: To redefine what the technology was. When I worked on my thesis at Harvard, it was trying to use an aerospace technology to make houses, prefabricated pieces that would be suspended from the top by wires.

Riess: This was a going idea?

Bender: Well, the two approaches were going on at the same time, and they weren't talking to each other. I came to MIT through the IBEC connection and I left with the beginning of a new, less linear, more cloud-like direction.

[Tape 4: Side B]

Riess: I'm wondering how beholden you really felt to IBEC about all of this?

Bender: Well, you know to this day I look at the IBEC, at the drawings I did at MIT and some of the sketches I made for what they could be like, and I look at what was actually built in those days, and then later when I worked with Paul Wiener and Sert on Latin American projects, how we took it one step further. And I realized that it was a path, the idea that there were good things to be done by helping people in developing countries.

And it comes back to what I've said over and over again, that you find out it's easier to take a step in the right direction than to know where you're going. And that's true of all these prefabrication things: they see a house, and what we were finding here was, if you took the money that you could make a hundred finished houses with, you could put a thousand families on the way to homes and communities.

Riess: That was the way you were looking at it by the time you got to Harvard? Or at MIT also?

Bender: Well, the two things were happening at the same time. Just to take together the—what Dietz was working on and the CINVA people, when I got to Harvard, one of the professors in the first year I was there was Leonard Curie who had come back from a year of working with the CINVA group. And so while our first project at Harvard under Gropius was to design a house for your own family on a lot in Lexington—I think it was Lexington or Concord—which was an interesting project in one way, we were also, the other part of me was looking at how can you make a roof in a place like parts of South America or in North Africa, where there's no wood to span a roof? And so we began to look at how you could make a concrete beam that somebody could make themselves, or a group of people could, that was light enough so two or three people could lift it up in place because there's no crane and no material. And how do you make concrete blocks where there are not stones? And how do you reinforce concrete if there's no steel? Can you use vines, can you use bamboo? And so one part of me was working on these things while the other was going on.

Riess: While the other was designing a house in the suburbs?

Bender: Yes, and they were both real in a way. When I started to look around at MIT—I arrived there and I was focused on this Building Construction Engineering, Course XVII (Roman numerals is how MIT always wrote it), and I didn't see how there was any way I was ever going to get to Harvard to study. But I met—of all people, Vernon DeMars who was there, I don't know for how long, but he was teaching a studio in the architecture department. He was part of a small group that had designed an apartment building called 100 Memorial Drive. This was one of the first modern apartment buildings in the Boston area. It had an outside corridor, and it had some skip-stop floors. I went up to talk—I remember I met him in the drafting room at MIT where his studio was, and I started to say, "I'm at MIT and I want to go into architecture." And we talked awhile and he asked what I was doing, and I showed him some of the IBEC things and he said, "You know, you really ought to talk to Gropius."

Gropius and Konrad Wachsmann were really trying to get people at Harvard to be interested in new technology. Harvard still was much more, not traditional design, but traditional modern design; they were not so interested in prefabrication or different construction methods. Whereas Gropius had devoted a lot of time, beginning before he came to the US, and then *in* the US, and then with Konrad Wachsmann, in something called the General Panel [Corporation] house, which was a way to prefabricate houses. But I think what clicked for me was the beginning of seeing there's a difference between using industry to make a house or using industry to make pieces of a house. And it was the beginning of a long track. We'll talk about when I got involved with the National Commission on Urban Problems later, and my book, *A Crack in the Rearview Mirror*, starts to take this idea that manufacturing is not

manufacturing a house, but how you can put together a system that uses industry in a richer way.

Riess: MIT strikes me as a place to grapple with questions like that. Talk a little bit about MIT for you and living in the Aalto dorm [Baker House]. Was it largely a conduit to Harvard?

Bender: Well, for me it was the first opening.

Riess: Had you chosen to be in the Aalto dorm?

Bender: I knew it was just finished, actually not quite finished and they hadn't rented all the rooms in advance. I came in the middle of the year; I graduated from City College in December or January, and I went from there. I'm not sure whether that had to do with the Korean war at that point, that you couldn't be out of school for any length of time.

Riess: And you came with a very generous scholarship, so that you could do what you wanted; you didn't have to be a busboy anymore.

Bender: I didn't realize how generous it was at first, because the IBEC people were going to pay tuition, but then after I got there the Bemis Foundation, it turned out, was looking at the same things, so I was quite comfortable, yes.

Riess: This was the first time away from home in a big way?

Bender: Well you know, I had worked in the summers. Yes, I was just thinking this last week when there were so many articles about parents dropping their kids off at school. I took the train! [laughter]

Aalto was a name that I knew, and this building was very unusual and very beautiful. Again, a modern building that was not International Style. I don't know if you know the building. It's a curving brick building, and right next to it, which became another kind of landmark, Eero Saarinen had done this little chapel, where all the architects wanted to get married. These were really special little buildings. And it was a quite different life than I had, the combination of Vernon's introducing me to Gropius, and Gropius arranging that I could join the class at Harvard because he wanted somebody in there who was really anxious to do prefabrication.

Riess: You were still enrolled at MIT, but you were involved with his class, or did you just move right over to Harvard?

Bender: No, I was at MIT from January through the summer. And then I began in the second year of the Graduate School of Design. And, well, there's something looking back I really regret, that because of my experience in engineering and the prefabrication things, they gave me credit for the first year and let me start in the second year, and I saved a year. All through school there were things about saving a year. I remember—this idea of saving is always interesting. Saving a year, saving time, how do you save

time? What do you do with it? What do you miss? Later I realized it was a big mistake for me, because while I knew the technical things—I came from strength in the technical things—I hadn't really had basic design. I hadn't been asked to design things for design's sake. And I really missed something in my life that—I've tried to make up for it in different ways.

But Gropius was anxious to get me into the second year class because he saw it as a way to add a resource, of someone who could bring this kind of experience in something he was particularly interested in. I've since read—my friend Fumihiko Maki—Maki recently interviewed I.M. Pei and wrote a little booklet about I.M. Pei's experience when he came to Harvard when Gropius was just starting. And the first project required you to do an industrialized project of some sort and Pei fought it like mad, he wasn't interested in it. Finally he did a prefabricated, a traveling exhibition, to bring—this was still under Chiang Kai-shek, before the war—a propaganda exhibit that they could carry around to different cities in China. He got away from that as quickly as possible. He came back to it later.

But at that point, to have someone who had some experience in it—Harvard and MIT made some kind of a deal where you could take, and I think it still exists, you could take classes in both places. And for me it was like magic. I could use both the skills and strengths I had, and with the Bemis financial support be working on both things at the same time. And I was finding—you asked about the Aalto dorm. When I got to the Aalto dorm, I was more of a hermit. A lot of it was through the summer and spring, and I didn't know people and I was nervous.

Riess: You were nervous?

Bender: This was a strange world for me. I felt that I was over my head in so many ways. On one hand, dealing with people who were so experienced and I felt so raw, and then so many of the students were so much older than I am. Talk about being away from home! I had classmates who had been fighter pilots and they drank like mad, and most of the people were married as well as war veterans. At MIT I had not really begun to meet that many of the people.

Riess: You seem, because of your wealth of New York City experience, to be a sophisticate.

Bender: Well, even then you know—that fall when I moved into Harvard, I didn't actually live in the Gropius dorm.

Riess: The Gropius dorm?

Bender: The Architects Collaborative, the office he formed, had designed—it was called the Graduate Center. It was a group of very International Style dormitories built around a courtyard and then a commons building where there were dining facilities and things of that sort. The buildings and their siting—it was the Bauhaus come to Harvard. This brand new complex

was set between the ponderous classical law school, a simple residential neighborhood, the Divinity School, and a small, boxy building that housed one of the first computers. Along Oxford Street were some older buildings that were still being used as housing, as well as the Peabody Museum and a scattering of science buildings. I had a room in Oxford Hall as it was called, and it looked out at the Gropius buildings. And in the Commons Building where the dining room was, again it was like a dream. The eating was on the second floor, and there was a beautiful curving ramp that went up, the sort of thing I had seen in pictures.

Riess: Like the Bauhaus staircase?

Bender: Well, it's not the staircase in the Museum of Modern Art. This was a real ramp, it sloped up and scissored back for about fifty feet, and on the wall behind it was a mural by Miró. And I mean nothing like this had been built in the United States, through the Depression and the war and all of that. And you would wait on line on the ramp, along the Miró mural, and then go into this modern building with big glass walls, and there were a couple of—there was another Miró mural on a wall up there. And on the ground floor was a lounge where Anni Albers had done the fabrics and the rugs and Albers had done a fireplace, a white brick fireplace, a sculpture really, with bricks left out and put in. It was like living in the Museum of Modern Art.

And on top of that you had the experience, the first day of school, all these people coming to Harvard, and I never saw so many gray flannel suits, everybody brought a gray suit and everyone had a tie. In those days a lot of the—I think the Graduate Center was a little more lenient, but undergraduates had to have a jacket and tie to eat. You could wear shorts sometimes, but you had to have a jacket and a tie. And then suddenly everyone had a gray flannel suit, and everyone had a Phi Beta Kappa key. It was culture shock for people who come from places where *they* were the Phi Beta Kappa, and suddenly there was a *room* full of people with Phi Beta Kappa keys, and everyone thinking how's this going to work?

For me, one of the big changes was the nature of architectural schools, that it was community from the beginning, because everyone worked in a big drafting room and you were there all day and all night. The way it was set up at Harvard, both the second and third year were in one big room. So you saw people of all levels, and not only were you encouraged to walk back and forth, but whenever something was due everyone would pitch in, so the younger people would help the older people and vice versa.

I remember there were, periodically, these weekend competitions, and I wasn't doing well at all in them. In one I had a good idea, and I'm working on it and Arthur Sweetzer, who was probably the best designer in our class, he looked over my shoulder and he said, "You know, if I were you I'd move this around." And I did. On Monday morning you'd come in and you'd see who—they had a jury Sunday night and they would have the results—and I realized I won the prize. And I said "Arthur, I, you, we won the prize!" Arthur was one of the most talented in the class. He had

worked in architecture in California and flew P-38 fighter planes in the war. Later he came back to the Bay Area and worked with Ernest Kump and I'm sure he had a big influence—I can feel his hand—in Foothill College.

So I began to get it a little, understand not only that you solve the problem, but also you have to solve the problem and do *more* than that. Later when I was teaching engineering—in engineering, again, from Mario Salvadori, an engineer who taught at Columbia, he used to say, “Structure is essential and otherwise unimportant.” [“Strength is essential, but otherwise unimportant.” Attributed to Hardy Cross with a few different variations—but always about strength.] Back to Vitruvius’s “Firmness, commodity and delight.” There are things you have to have. The bathroom and the kitchen have to work, but that’s not what it’s about. How do you put that together in a way that makes it more than that?

Over the last weekend there was something in the newspaper about the—someone wrote a book about the building of the Golden Gate Bridge. And he used the expression that it’s the greatest example of structure in the landscape since the Parthenon. But if you look at the Golden Gate Bridge—there are loads of bridges, so why is that one so exciting? It’s not just that it sits at that place, but how it sits in the land, how it’s conceived in that place. When I first got interested in architecture I would draw floor plans for apartments and houses—I still see floor plans published in ads and articles in the *New York Times Magazine* every week for expensive apartments, showing the layout of bedrooms and things, but it’s not about architecture. You know, it’s a kind of room planning. It’s different, it doesn’t tell you what the spaces are like, and it doesn’t tell you what it feels like.

Riess: Well, plans never would, would they?

Bender: Well, they begin to when you can—it’s a little bit like reading music in some ways: I can’t look at notes and hear the music, but expressively drawn plans, after a while you can tell much more than the size and shape of buildings. It is true not only of rooms and building, but streets and towns. In magazines it is often a picture of the building, but rarely do you see a building in a magazine in the context of the buildings around it. And part of what was coming out for me in all of this is you’re never just building a building, but you’re building a community. And if all you do is bring workmen in to build a house for poor people and they go away, you’ve got the house but you don’t have very much else. But if you’ve organized that community so the people in the community learn to build, so they learn to know each other and work together, there’s a next higher level.

Riess: When you thought about community were you thinking about poor communities in other countries or could you see these as solutions in America, where individuality is so prized.

Bender: Well, it was easier to see it if you looked at developing countries. It took a long time for me to be able to look at parts of the United States as a developing country. I mean—we were looking at Latin America, we were looking at North Africa, later at Vietnam, and we saw it there but we didn't see it Oakland. And we didn't see it in Harlem.

Riess: When you were studying the problem, you were studying it as if it were for—

Bender: The laboratory that we used, *our* laboratory—we were working in a kind of distant laboratory, not engaging people or places. Only when you started to understand it could you begin to think, “We can do that here.” And then it turns out that again, at each step it's about more than what you thought it was going to be. One of the things I mentioned earlier was a quote that I heard, and I heard it again at Harvard from Sigfried Giedion, “Architecture begins in construction and ends in city planning.”

Riess: And what are the way stations, then, between construction and city planning?

Bender: Well, for me the simplest thing was as a boy I wanted to be an architect because I wanted to build houses. That's what I saw myself doing. By the time I got to the point of studying it, I realized that one of the interesting things going on around me was post-war apartment house construction. And, in fact, when you looked at it more, one of the issues was how to go from traditional five-story brick buildings to taller buildings? And people started using a concrete frame. So in engineering school I thought that's an engineering thing that I can focus in on. Well, it turned out that the way they were being built in New York was with a concrete slab supported by concrete beams. The thickness of the beam was about fourteen inches. At that point, the newest technology was to do a flat slab, a six-inch slab instead of the four-inch slab on top of the eight- or ten-inch beam. And the building, you see, got more apartments in the zoning envelope. In the twenty-story buildings that were emerging, at six inches a floor you could add two floors. In engineering class two floors meant 20 percent.

It doesn't sound very “soulful” as I tell it, and somewhere along there I realized that the interesting work was not in being told, “I want so many floors of this,” but how you give a life and spirit to the building. And particularly if you're interested in building for poor people at low cost. And if you're interested in how to use industry to produce a lot of them, you're talking about a lot of homes being built for a lot of poor people, and then you realize you have a planning problem, because everyone says. “Oh, it's a terrific idea to build these homes, but don't do it near me, do it over there.” In a sense that's the path—that was my path from construction to town planning. It's a path I can describe more easily now that I have passed through it.

Riess: And the College of Environmental Design here tries to embody that path, but it doesn't quite work, does it?

Bender: No, it keeps getting pulled apart. The idea has always been to put them all together, that a college could do that. The Graduate School of Design at Harvard was the first attempt to put the architects, planners and landscape architects together, to have them study and work together. At Harvard the idea was to continue the Bauhaus idea, which was to bring in artists as well. The basic year had people who were sculptors and different materials.

Part of what I was going to say—again, an accident. Aalto built the dorm because of Wurster. Wurster went east during the war because there was no work here, I guess, and eventually became the dean at MIT. He met Catherine when he was in the East, Catherine Bauer. She was then one of the key figures in the Roosevelt administration in housing. And when I was at MIT it was just after Wurster's time there. Wurster had just left, but he came back for the opening of the Aalto dorm, and Catherine continued her ties at Harvard for a while, so I would meet her, I'd take seminars.

Also at Harvard at that time, and he wrote a book with Catherine, was Martin Meyerson. Martin Meyerson was a housing expert who then went to Berkeley. He was dean of the college after Wurster, and then during the Free Speech movement, he became the chancellor at Berkeley. After that there was so much bad feeling around being an administrator during the FSM that he left Berkeley and he went to SUNY in Buffalo, where they were in the process of building a new campus. He was there for three years before the first students arrived, and then he left to be president at Penn. But again, it was interesting, when he was at SUNY Buffalo, it was during the time that I was at Cooper Union. My friends and colleagues Lew Davis—Davis, [Sam] Brody—they got the job to do the first student housing, and I was peripherally involved, one of my first consultancies, in the project as we all worked with each other at Cooper Union. Davis, Brody, their first focus was houses, then housing, where they did some of the best work in New York, much of it with Richard Ravitch of HRH Developers. The firm continues with new generations of partners. Dick Ravitch went into government and recently served as vice-governor of New York.

So I had some contact with Meyerson at that point. I had had contact with Wurster; Catherine was one of my heroes; William Wheaton, my predecessor as dean, was at Harvard, in the planning department, and he taught the housing class. And again, when I came here I didn't know he was here. He had gone from Harvard to Penn and then came here, so I had begun to find this group in a way before I knew them as a group. There was no road map.

Riess: Yes, it was that small world.

Bender: There were a couple of other things that were mind-bending in that period. One of the courses I took was with Joseph Hudnut, the dean at Harvard when I began. Joseph Hudnut had been at the University of Virginia, and then he was appointed dean at Columbia. He was more or less—he once

said his favorite architecture was Georgian architecture, and he became dean at Columbia around 1939, I guess it was. And most people don't know, but at Columbia he looked around and he said, "It's time to make the change." And he tried to convince Columbia to hire Walter Gropius to come to Columbia. Gropius was fleeing Europe; I think he was in England at that time, and he was going to Chicago where there were Moholy-Nagy and others from the Bauhaus. Hudnut proposed that Columbia invite Gropius. Columbia said no, and Hudnut quit Columbia and he was hired to be dean of the school at Harvard. He brought Gropius, and Gropius brought [Marcel] Breuer. They made the school at Harvard famous, but nobody ever heard of Hudnut. They all got along pretty well till the last years when Hudnut wanted to keep in touch with the history and roots of architecture and Gropius was not interested in teaching history and tradition. So there was some bad feeling at the end. But basically for me, Hudnut was a model of what a dean should be. I didn't think of it at that point, but he found good people.

[Tape 5: Side A]

Riess: A model dean.

Bender: Because he had a vision and he was able to enable people. Again, it's one of those things I didn't understand so much at the time but I understood later. I learned something from him and aspired to be—I wanted to be Adler instead of Sullivan. I realized I had more of a talent to be Hudnut than to be Gropius. I felt, and I still feel my strengths are more to be able to help, to work with people to make a bigger dream come true than doing it myself.

Riess: And you like to work with groups.

Bender: The work that I have evolved since is more putting a team together, or bringing to a team the ability to show them how they are a team, or how they can be a team. I also understand that I don't have the patience, again, to stay with some of these things through all of the details, but if I can get it set up and organized, set the direction and inspire ambition, that's the part I like.

Riess: Oh, okay.

Bender: When I was doing a house it was different, because you could finish a house in a year or two. I designed our house in Amagansett at our kitchen table while changing diapers and giving David his midnight bottle. But as I get more and more into the planning scale, where things take much longer, it seems to me much more my role has been to put a team in place, and to set up a structure for how it works, to start a system that trains and supports the next generation.

Riess: And that's what a dean does? .

Bender: Yes, and getting ahead again, when I decided that I would take the challenge to be the dean here in Berkeley, I decided to find out what a dean is. I looked it up in the dictionary. A dean comes from being the leader of ten monks—that's the *decan[us]*. This was hardly the head of ten monks, but it helped me understand.

The other piece that I wanted to mention about Hudnut is I took his class in which he showed these slides, the old lantern slides, three-by-five glass black and whites, but he talked about Rome, London, and Paris as they were when they were founded, how they were in the Renaissance, and how they were today. And for me it opened my eyes to Europe. In a way I had seen expressions of Europe, Corbusier's architecture, Mondrian's painting, but now I began to see some of the roots of it.

One of the fascinating experiences—you had to write a paper for the class, and I was fascinated by Haussmann and how he transformed Paris. And as I started to write the paper and went into that wonderful library and started to collect materials, I found a lot of the writing on Haussmann was done by Robert Moses; Robert Moses had studied Haussmann when he was in Yale, and he had written papers over the years. Again, I'm coming back to my—something I could put my hands on. You know, the Robert Moses I admired was the one from the early stages who built the parkways, who built swimming pools, built the bridges, did all that. And he got it done the way Haussmann did it, with forcing it, forcing it through, but he got it done.

Riess: Popes did that, too.

Bender: Yes, and the popes called on people like Michelangelo!

Anyway, another thing that was an enormous gift to me—there was a lecture one night by a man named G.E. Kidder Smith. (I was always impressed by names like that.) He was a lovely man who, after the war, did a series of books, and the one that he was talking about that night was called *Italy Builds*, in which he had traveled throughout post-war Italy and he focused—he was a photographer, he made beautiful photographs, and he looked at squares and piazzas and not only famous ones. And I got captured by the idea, again, of the public place, and I began to yearn to go to Europe. At the end of the lecture and in the book he showed a group of color pictures. Most of pictures in the book are black and white, but at the end he showed photographs of an area in the heel of Italy, Apulia, where the houses are called Trulli houses. The photographs—well, first to see those houses, again, the people built those houses themselves out of the small stones that were there. That was something I was looking for then. But they were *so* beautiful. They were painted white, white-washed, and then in the pictures he showed they dried tomatoes on the curving walls and roofs of these white buildings—with the red tomatoes, it was *so* powerful. And I knew I had to go to Europe.

I never knew exactly why I felt that. There were so many different reasons, but it's not—my family came from Europe, but it was not about

anything like that. But I felt somehow the roots of what I was looking for were there in the—what’s the name, vernacular, when people do their own building. And that’s what all building was at one point, with public spaces and with materials that came out of the ground, from the place. So there was something there that I had to find and understand more about.

The last part that was so important to me at Harvard was not about what the program was about but it was that for the first time I was living two minutes from the office, in a sense. There was no subway, I was already there. So when people started talking about Archibald MacLeish giving a class on poetry—I didn’t know Archibald MacLeish, but I started going to Archibald MacLeish readings and not only discovered this beautiful poetry, but I discovered a sophistication that I had never seen before. He would read Rimbaud and Verlaine in French. I didn’t understand a word. It was so beautiful, and then he’d translate it—he didn’t *read* a translation, it *flowed* out of him.

But also, he’d come one day in a tweed suit with a vest, and horn-rimmed glasses; another day he was wearing a dark suit and a white tie and he had silver-rimmed glasses. I don’t know why I noticed it, but I guess I had never seen a man who was a complete sophisticate. There was a style to him in everything he did, but he was not an ivory tower poet, he lived a robust life. Later I discovered the Frenchman Andre Malraux—my father, when he saw my interest in art, gave me for one of my birthdays, *The Voices of Silence*, the English translation of Malraux [published 1953]. The entire title was *The Voices of Silence: Man and His Art* and it introduced me to the idea of “a museum without walls.” Malraux, here was a guy who wrote with such understanding about art, but he fought in the Spanish War, and he was with the Chinese rebels in Shanghai. It was a picture—he and MacLeish both were of a robust life. What I’m saying is what I got from Harvard may have been as much from those things. Certainly some of it came from seeing, being with Gropius and his colleagues.

Riess: Since you’d been introduced specially to Gropius, and had a kind of added value, did you continue to be a protégé of him?

Bender: I was never a protégé. But I had more access to him than most, and he would occasionally come to show me something. I remember he would come back from Europe and he’d have seen something, and if it had anything to do with construction—he would talk to the whole group, but sometimes he would come over and show me, talk to me about it.

What had probably more influence—among the teachers I had were most of his partners in the office he set up in Cambridge, The Architects Collaborative. Norman Fletcher was one of my teachers, but his wife Jean was also teaching at Harvard and she was also a partner. Sarah and [John] “Chip” Harkness were another married couple who were a part of TAC. There were nine partners in The Architects Collaborative at that point, and two of them were these married couples. But again, it was a picture of a different life than I had grown up with—I didn’t know many people where

husband and wife worked together and had that kind of relationship together.

In my third year the main design teacher I had was Hugh Stubbins, who was a New Englander in the real sense. He was not part of The Architects Collaborative, but he was very much of the kind of clear, direct, principled people, and he was doing some of the first modern houses. (Eventually, much later, he did the Citicorp Building in New York and the first skyscraper in Yokohama, which was another scale.) His was very much the New Englander, strict, lean, not a lot of decoration. His partner, the other design critic, instructor, was Professor Walter Bogner, who came from Germany with Gropius, and he was your—picture a big energetic German with a cigar. Where Stubbins would say, “Why do you need that?” Bogner would say, “Why not add something here?” [laughter] So you were constantly between these two poles.

The other place where there was so much learning was just being part of the community there in Oxford Hall. Tom Lehrer lived in the building for a while—he was a physics student. Peter Rolland, the landscape architect, and Jules Prown, the art historian, lived down the hall, and there were chemists and physicists there. We had—one of the roommates down the hall was a music student, and someone else, I can’t remember his name but he was from New York, he played the clarinet. And the music student transcribed Mozart quartets for clarinet, block flute, guitar and banjo—I should say that it was in Zurich later that I learned to call the recorder a block flute. So being in that kind of a cultural group, again, was such a rich, rich experience.

Riess: I am curious, you had IBEC funding, did IBEC, or did businesses support research? Did Gropius get support for research and new technologies?

Bender: No, not during the time I was at Harvard, and by the time I got connected with Gropius it was really toward his last years and his focus was on practice. Konrad Wachsmann, who had worked with Gropius on the General Panel System and Gropius had brought him here originally from Germany to work with him on that, ended up going to USC—we met him there later on—and he set up a laboratory there to carry on some research. Sigfried Giedion, who would come and go, was best known for his books—he wrote *Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History*.

Riess: *Mechanization Takes Command?*

Bender: And that’s my book. [laughter] In those days it was a very precious book for me. Later when my *A Crack in the Rear View Mirror* was published it was a great treat to find it next to Giedion’s in the bookstore. Giedion’s is sort of a history of how technology changes building. He has a whole chapter on kitchens, and he has a whole chapter on the evolution of indoor plumbing. Can you picture, as they started to build the skyscrapers in Chicago, how they dealt with indoor plumbing? Up until then most buildings didn’t have it, or central heating or electric lights. Somewhere

along there one of the great insights for me that Giedion wrote about a lot in *Mechanization Takes Command*—the world was being shaped by a small set of technologies in about ten years, the elevator, the steel frame, the electric light. The electric light took away day and night, the telephone and trains and trucks took away distance. They changed the world. Later in the 1930s air conditioning took away seasons. When Rockefeller Center was built it was not air-conditioned. When I went to work for [William] Lescaze briefly, one of the attractions was Lescaze was a Swiss who came here, and before the war he designed the PSFS tower in Philadelphia, and it was the first air-conditioned skyscraper.

After the war we had the technology to do the curtain wall, but in order to use the air-conditioning efficiently, you had to keep the wall sealed, otherwise it would be too expensive, and in deep buildings the lighting made so much heat that you needed the air-conditioning. But it also meant, unlike the Rockefeller Center buildings, that buildings didn't have to have a small floor plan to allow for daylight and fresh air. At Rockefeller Center, as the number of banks of elevators decreased the floors got too deep to be day-lighted or naturally ventilated, so that's why most tall buildings stepped back. It was possible with air conditioning and florescent lights to have very big floors and very tall buildings for the very large companies that were also emerging. Large numbers of people could work on many floors and justify high land values. But other values were traded off. People worked farther from daylight and fresh air. Natural systems have been overpowered and rules and economic decisions shape the way we live and work.

Riess: There must be naturally limiting factors.

Bender: There are limits. You can only do so much before something collapses. The technology that makes the Golden Gate Bridge with those cables holding the span, you can't take that technology beyond a certain point. Eventually the cable will break from its own weight. You can build a tower up higher and higher, but the question is what you're building after a while, because with the first masonry buildings and steel—well, the masonry buildings that they built in Chicago, they got to be ten stories high, but the first floor started to be meaningless, because to bear the weight the first floor became so thick that you couldn't use it anymore. The steel frame carries the weight in another way but it too has limits. New issues set the limits and we're at one of those edges now. The end of the nineteenth century was a time of chemistry. The twentieth was a time of physics. We are now at a point where the cutting edge is becoming biology and human issues, and we haven't figured out what forms they will take, we're still building physics.

Riess: I don't know how that analogy works exactly, but I *would* say that there is a point where I wouldn't want to live in the top of that tallest building.

Bender: I'm not just talking about height. I'm talking about so far almost all of the green technologies, windmills and all that, for me still feels more like physics, and I know something different will shape the next generation.

Not a linear change, but some new conceptions of buildings and cities and how they serve people and are nourished by the land.

Riess: So environmental science is more physics?

Bender: Well, it hasn't moved as much into biology as I know it will. There's a biology of landscape, but there's a biology that's going to make a different kind of energy—make energy a different way. And that's—the whole biological metaphor that we—Biology looks at things that grow, and most of the buildings that we've been building since the end of the nineteenth century are not about buildings that grow and change. They're built there, and there's not much looking at how they behave and change.

I think what I'm saying—I think we're right at the edge of a whole new way of doing things. And information technology, it's not just about sending e-mails, and Google and Facebook and Tweets, but buildings and places will evolve as we come to understand how to use all this potential. Solar energy will take quite different forms when we learn to make buildings and cities like trees and forests—you know, when it's getting too hot they know what to do.

Riess: Oh, smart buildings.

Bender: But it's hard to have smart buildings without having smart communities. And one of the things about *big* that we're learning is that the interest is not in how high you can go, or how big you can make a building, but that you can now make a community which can do things you can't do with a building. So that if you have enough different users and enough different people in a community you can balance the energy that's used. One part of the day the school uses more and the house less and so they can share and balance the capacity of a community system. A community can take on purifying the water or recycling waste in systems that need a skilled technician to run it rather than build independent little pieces in each house. You can do it on a community scale, but you can't do it on an individual scale.

Riess: When you talk about that, it seems like the only way you can do it right is from scratch.

Bender: And the scratch is in China right now—they're building whole cities from scratch. They're starting from the old ways, but they're very quickly coming to new ways. They are beginning to look at the possibility of building whole neighborhoods that ecologically make sense, rather than building by building. And for many of our cities that seems to be where we are, a time to develop the richness that is their potential.

Riess: You've used the expression in your notes to me that the first half of life is about integration, getting it together. I wondered at what point you feel that you got it together? When did the disintegration begin, as it were?

- Bender: For me that was probably when I came to Berkeley. I'd been piling up experiences, and I found that it was a time and an opportunity both in my personal life and what Berkeley and the university offered here to start to develop the parts, to understand them.
- Riess: All right. Now today also we were going to talk about Breuer and summer jobs, and the Corbetta Corporation.
- Bender: The one thing I had to confront when I was in Cambridge and at MIT and Harvard is that I couldn't go be a waiter in the summer. On the other hand, when I went to look for a summer job the first summer, Marcel Breuer, who was a hero of mine, offered me a job in his office for \$29.50 a week.
- Riess: Oh!
- Bender: I wasn't offered a job by Philip Johnson. Actually, when Johnson interviewed me the main question he asked was what my father did, and might he be a client for a house or a factory? It was exciting to talk to him but I knew he was paying less than thirty dollars a week.
- Riess: Now wait—you're saying you had gotten the same kind of offer from Philip Johnson?
- Bender: Well, I didn't get to the point where it was an offer. But I interviewed with him and others. Those were people I would have loved to work for, but I couldn't afford it at that point. I needed to be making money, and I also was beginning to feel I had—these offices were a lot like what I had at school. Somehow I ended up at the Corbetta Construction Company. Corbetta Construction was much less genteel, less polite, much more robust and urban. Construction companies in those days, urban construction, concrete paving, city contracts—I won't say the mafia was there, but the Kennedys were in that business, the Kellys were in that business.
- Riess: An Italian-Irish mafia?
- Bender: Well, I think each of the groups sooner or later found that that's where the city gave contracts and that's where politics played out in very rough ways. My involvement was not in that, but they were doing a lot of concrete construction, which I was interested in and had some background in.
- Riess: And were they in Boston?
- Bender: No, they were in New York.
- It gave me two things: it gave me a salary over a hundred dollars a week, so I could make enough money to pay for the next year; and it also gave me a chance to moonlight in some of the offices like Breuer's. When they had a project or competition due they would ask, sometimes for volunteers, or sometimes they'd pay a little to help with the presentation

drawings. But it turned out Corbetta was bidding on the Guggenheim Museum, to do the concrete for the Guggenheim Museum. They were also working on another project that didn't involve me, but eventually it did.

They were doing the foundations for the Tappan Zee Bridge across the Hudson. The Tappan Zee Bridge was the first example of where a bridge foundation was made remotely as a concrete box. And a concrete box, if it's hollow, can float. And so rather than work in place in the water at the river's edge they made these concrete boxes, floated them into place and sank them in place to be the foundation. Corbetta developed that, and they had concrete yards in Hoboken on the Hudson so they could do it.

The reason I mention it is later—you showed me that website about Thule Air Base. It didn't mention the most interesting part of the original Thule. When the fleet came with all the ships bringing the supplies, there was no pier; this was the coast of Greenland and there was no dock to unload them. And they built this giant dock on the East Coast and they floated it up. It came with the ships, and they pulled it up and sank it, and they had the pier and unloaded from it—and that, again, was a Corbetta project.

Riess: Sank it by just filling it with water?

Bender: Just by filling it with water and anchoring. Apparently there was some of that done in the D-Day landings; that's where it was first used.

But the Guggenheim, the thing that was interesting to me is in order to estimate the concrete for the Guggenheim, they first had to figure out how they would build the forms, and second they had to figure out how to put the steel in. It turned out that Mr. Wright had shown how much steel was supposed to go in but there were no calculations. And Corbetta had people who could calculate that. They needed to do it to get the permits they would need.

[Tape 5: Side B]

Bender: They were trying to figure out where the sizes and the shapes of the steel came from, and I had been spending the summer making some of the drawings to show how the forms would work. Not with much expertise: they were experts, I was merely a draftsman more than anything.

Riess: Was there an unusual lack of guidance from the Wright office?

Bender: There was none. No calculations and little detail.

Riess: None—is that the way it works?

Bender: Well, you know, if you're making a concrete apartment house you don't need a lot of guidance. The Guggenheim was much more complex. Wright showed the shapes that he wanted, but now we're not talking about a concrete apartment house, we're talking about unusual three-dimensional forms. There was a lot of figuring out. I was not part of the difficult

figuring out, but I was someone who could speak some of that language and some of the architect language. Eventually I was sent, as if it took much sending! to Wisconsin [Taliesin]—it was going to be a week but it ended up being almost two weeks. I went to Wisconsin with a bunch of drawings, and again, it would have been too expensive to send the engineers who really could talk directly about the questions, but I would present the questions and be the middleman.

Riess: And that worked?

Bender: It worked for me, wonderfully! [laughter] They eventually found that he hadn't done calculations for the steel; he had done it instinctively. The Corbetta engineers then made a whole set of calculations based on the Taliesin drawings, and it turned out he was basically right. They had calculations you could show the building department, but it came out to be pretty much what Wright had done intuitively. And for me it meant spending two weeks at Taliesin. I had to bunk with some of the people, the apprentices—they really didn't have dorms.

Riess: This could have been a conversion experience.

Bender: Oh yes, but it wasn't. For me it was almost the opposite. I loved the product, I loved what Wright did, but again it was the opposite of what I was learning. The Taliesin Fellowship was a really top-down operation, and there were "the boys" and the family.

What's interesting, and we'll talk about it more later—in Switzerland later I became really friendly, and to this day he's one of my closest friends, with the son of Rudolf Steiger who was the head of the CERN project. Peter eventually took over the CERN project from his father, but the father had sent Peter to Arizona to work with Frank Lloyd Wright, because coming from the European world Wright was interesting to study. The other stuff they all had. It's interesting, the other partner [Werner] Moser, the one who invited me to work with Steiger and who was at Harvard when I was there, sent his son to Aalto to work, which again was out of their world.

To give you a picture, Peter went to Arizona, and it was trouble from the beginning. Peter is a really individual, strong—Sue used to say a "playboy." And he didn't take to bringing breakfast to the Wrights in bed in the morning, or to working in the kitchen, which is part of it. And after not very long Peter said he was going to quit. As he tells it, he was sitting waiting for the bus to take him back to town—this was in Arizona—and Peter plays the violin beautifully, and while he was waiting he was playing the violin and Wright heard him and he said, "If you can play the violin like that you're in the orchestra." So Peter ended up staying for not quite a year, but he stayed there and he played the violin.

Riess: What did he mean "in the orchestra?" Like metaphorically?

- Bender: Oh no, they had concerts, and if you've been to Taliesin West they had like a little theater nightclub and they had performances and things of that sort. Eventually Peter spent some time in New York where he met a doctor at a cocktail party and they talked about the violin, and the doctor ended up inviting Peter to stay at his house for six months so they could play the violin together.
- Riess: Oh, lovely.
- Bender: And then later, the year when we were living in New York, Paul Wiener who I was later working with, and the Steigers who were working on a nuclear project in CERN, were asked to do a traveling exhibition of the future of atomic energy for the UN, and Paul Wiener got the job to put the thing together, and he brought the Steigers into it. And then Peter Steiger started coming to the UN, and he'd have meetings with Dag Hammarskjöld and then go fly back to his Sunday string quartet in Zurich. Culture creeps in, in strange ways.
- Riess: You mention CERN—when I saw that in your notes I thought you had made a mistake, that you meant CIAM. I thought CERN was high-energy physics.
- Bender: CERN—CERN is the Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire. Twelve European countries that got together to do a research center in Geneva. It was built for high-energy physics, but actually the best invention that's come out of it may be the Internet. I was at CERN in 1956, at the beginning when it was focused on a cyclotron and a proton synchrotron, and now just in the last year, the new Large Hadron Collider. We will talk more about all that.
- My Harvard career ended when I realized that if I finished my thesis I was going to go to Korea, or at least go into the army. There was no way I was not going to get drafted once I finished school. My draft board was in a neighborhood in Brooklyn where most of the people volunteered at eighteen, and to those of us who were college people they had to give deferments—we were an irritant.
- Riess: An irritant?
- Bender: An irritant. It was people saying, "Why aren't these guys going?" But I had heard that if I had an essential job, then I'd get a deferment. And I read about Operation Blue Jay. I saw it first in an ad in one of the Boston newspapers, and it told about Operation Blue Jay.
- Riess: So it wasn't secret?
- Bender: Well, it was secret. That was one of the things. What it was was a construction project, and the way the ad put it—I don't remember, I wish I had saved it—it was either in a very hot place or a very cold place. You had to agree, if they wanted you, to be away for eighteen months, because it was secret. And if something happened, if you got sick or whatever, you

might have to go to a place where you couldn't come back and tell about it. You were supposed to bring the clothing you would bring if you were going to work in Maine, or if you were going to work in Florida, and they would give you anything else. I knew they were doing bases in Casablanca. I didn't know how many or what or anything—and I also knew that the New York office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill was doing something in Casablanca. Anyway, I decided to do it. It seemed better than going into the army.

Riess: It seems a little crazy, making that decision!

Bender: Well, I was pretty sure it was going to be Casablanca. [laughter] Anyway, I went to sign up in Boston. The main engineers were a Boston firm, Metcalf & Eddy, that were mainly infrastructure. But they were in collaboration with—Peter Kiewit was a big Midwestern construction company, and they formed something called the North Atlantic Constructors, I think. I went to sign the contract, and it was a good hourly wage but it was going to be a lot of money because you were guaranteed sixty hours a week and you got time and a half between forty and sixty and it turned out that you often worked seventy hours a week. So it was a chance to make money.

Riess: And no place to spend it.

Bender: And no place—oh, that's part of it. They took twenty-five dollars a week out of your salary for room and board, and you weren't allowed to have much money. You could draw small amounts of money that you could spend. I'm not sure when it all became clear. You could spend it at the Officers Club, but it was an officers club. And that was the other thing, as a civilian you would be treated like an officer rather than an enlisted man. Anyway there was a little bit of adventure in it.

Riess: Did you know anyone else who was signing up?

Bender: No. Once I got there, I met one or two people who came more from engineering and architecture rather than the construction industry, but it was mostly construction industry. And then there were people, all men, mostly people from the air force and some from the navy. But it was to be an air force base, so as time went on it went from—I'm getting ahead—it went from construction to more air force people.

But anyway, I reported in Boston—over this last weekend I was trying to think, how did I get around to these places? I remember I was already in Boston, and when I moved from MIT to Harvard, I took the bus! I went and signed up, and then I went—I'm trying to remember. I think they gave us a train ticket to go to Westover Air Force Base. And then we were taken to, it turned out, Rosemount, Minnesota—this was the first surprise—for a few weeks of indoctrination.

Riess: And was it winter when you started out?

Bender: It was the end of winter, so it was pretty cold. And so my rationale was that they were trying to fool the Russians by sending us up there, and then we were going to go to Casablanca. And even when the plane left and I was told we were on our way to Newfoundland, I said, "Oh, it must be the Great Circle Route."

I think on that trip there were just four of us. We got to Newfoundland where there were already some people, and we were told we were going to Greenland. It was not happy news, but there I had my first experience with an officers club with slot machines, and everyone was drinking and playing the slot machines. And it was there we found out what we were actually going to do. We went from there to Thule. The Thule Air Base, that was just a stopping point, and then we went to a place called Narsarsuaq. The name of the base there was called BW-1, Blue West One.

Riess: BW-1.

Bender: There was a series of bases that had been started, I guess during World War II as radio stations. There had been a landing strip in what turned out to be really dangerous—in order to get into Narsarsuaq you had to sort of fly through a fjord and land. The reason for the bases was more mostly to look at the Russians. But the one in Narsarsuaq had a particular role. At that point, fighter planes, jet planes couldn't fly from the United States to England nonstop. And so they would fly from Maine, or occasionally they'd go to Newfoundland, to the southern tip of Greenland, to Iceland, to Scotland, that was the route. And what this base was being put there for primarily was to be a stopping place. The one at Thule was like the main base, and there were bases up and down. At one point I went to one called BW-3, which turned out to be a floating ice island very close to the North Pole.

Riess: This wasn't for missile installations?

Bender: At this point it wasn't missile installations, it was more radio contact and moving planes back and forth. I don't think there were—well, I guess there were missiles at that point. You know, I never heard about missiles and we never saw anything. There may have been missile things. I know in northern Canada there were also bases, but at this point it was more about getting back and forth.

Riess: So, were you just completely bummed by being sent there?

Bender: Well, you know, it was interesting. At Thule there was this big operation. There had been a fleet of cargo ships and 3000 men with this pier and interesting prefabricated buildings, interesting for me. I saw them briefly and then we used them briefly. They made a kind of temporary building out of the materials they made refrigerators out of, and they were lightweight with big insulation panels, and at Thule they discovered these buildings could blow away because they were so light. The ground was deep permafrost, frozen six feet down. It was very difficult to make

foundations, so they had a shelf on the bottom, it came out from the bottom, on which they put big blocks of ice. And at Thule the ice never really melted, even in the summer. When we used them temporarily at Narsarsuaq it was warmer and the ice started to melt and they started to move around.

Greenland, at that point, belonged to the Danish Commonwealth and so there was some agreement that the Danes had some role in building. As far as I could see they had very little involvement at Thule, which was much more a US military headquarters, but there were some Danes there. When we went to Narsarsuaq there was a Danish man, a famous Danish man, Peter Freuchen.

Riess: Yes, I know that name.

Bender: He wrote books and he was on *The Sixty-four Thousand Dollar Question*. He was there to help us when we got to Narsarsuaq, which they used to say is in “sunny southern Greenland,” introduce us to some of the local people. There was no local community there, but it was close to a couple of the real towns, Godhavn and Jakobshavn. But you couldn’t go anywhere because there were no roads, you were surrounded with fjords and glaciers. Our job—they had laid out what the base was supposed to be like, and we had to basically check on the ground and make sure there was nothing unexpected there, that the plan would work. Also to begin to indicate, to lay out where things were.

Riess: And you knew how to do surveying

Bender: Well, that’s—my qualification in this is I was a “surveyor.” You had to do surveying in the first year of civil engineering, every civil engineer had to do it. It was also a cultural thing, it was like a summer camp where the class bonded. At one point we went to Van Cortlandt Park to learn surveying. I was not much of a surveyor in Greenland. I started out being one of the rod men, which put me with like the lowest level of construction workers. I ended up having a bigger job, because as they were beginning to check what we found against the plans. I could work with the maps and I could make and draw the adjustments.

The first weeks we were living with a Greenland Eskimo family who Peter Freuchen introduced to help us—it wasn’t survival really, but to have more than the food that was dropped there with us until the fleet came with the construction men and equipment. Again, there was this small window. We got there in March, I think, before the thaw, when the water was opening up so the ships could come in, and then they had to unload and get out, otherwise they would be frozen in for the winter. It was really a beautiful time in sunny southern Greenland there. The edge coming down to the bay was green, and there were sheep and wonderful fish, a fish called char, and beautiful birds.

Riess: And you lived in houses?

Bender: Well, at first we lived in tents. There were no local people living there, except this group who came and a few families who had built temporary houses. They would come each year and build near the water and fish. Once the ships came, the construction men lived on the ships, and then they came ashore to start assembling. The first prefabricated things were the same as the ones in Thule, which were very lightweight, but the issue was that because it was Danish, the Danish got to build some of the buildings, and they were using a prefabricated concrete system called Schokbeton, shock concrete, made in forms. Actually it was a Dutch system that the Danes used, where the concrete panels were put in the form and machines shook, vibrated, the form to make the surfaces smooth. And then it was put together like a—not an Erector Set really, but like the postwar housing projects going up all over Europe. So the permanent buildings were going to be made of that, and the barracks were made mostly with panels that arrived with window and door frames in place and a kind of pebble finish. Some of the bigger buildings, warehouses and things, were done with prefabricated columns and beams and girders and put together.

Riess: This was to be a major, permanent installation.

Bender: Oh, it was meant to be permanent.

Riess: It didn't have to do with getting through the Korean War and then disassembling it.

Bender: No, and the base at BW-8 at Sondrestrom Fjord on the Arctic Circle eventually became a commercial stop for SAS, and it had more facilities from the beginning. It never had as many people, but it was being prepared to be a civilian air base. The one at Thule was much bigger, and that was the military headquarters that supplied everything. There were about three thousand workmen who came to build it.

Riess: That's interesting. So you saw how logistics works.

Bender: Oh yes. It was fantastic—the military planned it all, like an invasion. The first barracks that went up—people were still living on the ship for a while, but we moved into some of the first barracks with some of the workmen that were coming. And it was getting to be summer, and everybody worked basically from six to six, and as it got lighter, it didn't make a difference which was day or night. From six to seven o'clock half the people were having breakfast and half were having dinner, in the same mess hall—and then for a while the people who were coming off work would go to bed in some of the same beds that the rest of us had gotten out of. Sometimes you could—usually you didn't want to know who was in the other shift! That didn't last too long, but through the whole time I was there everybody worked and ate in a twelve-hour day.

Riess: This is because of summer daylight.

Bender: Well, it continued into the winter, and when it got to be dark it was also cold. But at first the work had to be done quickly, both to get the ships unloaded and the materials stored and the basic housing built. And then the ships left before the fjord froze again. What I was involved in first was the housing. But the main event was the runway, which you weren't supposed to know, or if you did know, you weren't supposed to talk about how long it was. And the fuel tanks—I think they held forty thousand gallons and one was built every day for a month. At any rate, forty tanks in forty days.

My job was assistant to the one architect—his name was Sol Friedman—who was there to supervise the erection of these prefabricated concrete buildings, and it became interesting. Again, I'd always seen prefabrication from the academic view, but no one ever told me what happens if part A-3 on the ground floor either doesn't arrive in the package or is broken. How do you get to put B-3 up above it? I began to learn something of the problems if things fit together at first, but then as the temperature changed some of the pieces didn't fit together.

Riess: That's just what I wanted to ask, what you took out of this whole experience?

Bender: Well, I think one, I got exposed to the reality of some of these prefabricated construction systems.

One job as surveyor that I was assigned was—there was a six-hundred-foot radio tower, and it was being assembled. I hadn't thought of that as prefabrication, but all the pieces came, and it was pipes, and held up with guy wires. It sort of sat on a ball. And these Indians came from Oklahoma to assemble it.

Riess: Sat on a ball you said?

Bender: Well, yes, the ball was—there had to be ceramic insulators between the tower and its base, and the guy wires didn't go up directly, they came to an insulated connector in which the metal was made to press on a ceramic piece, so if the metal got struck by lightning it wouldn't come through to the ground. My job there was a simple surveying job. I had to make sure that the tower was vertical, which you could do with a surveying instrument. You could swivel the transit up and down, and when it wasn't vertical you'd have to signal the crew to adjust the guy wires.

Riess: It's like sculpture, though, from all sides, so how do you survey it?

Bender: Well, you had to move.

Riess: You keep moving around.

Bender: Well, actually we didn't move. We set up three transits, and *I* moved around. I was responsible, as the engineer, but I was also the

inexperienced college graduate, with this tribe of Indians who were expert at steel construction.

Riess: You said they came from Oklahoma?

Bender: They came from Oklahoma.

Riess: Just for this job?

Bender: Well, they went around to different bases. That's the way structural steel building and bridges, etc., are built, mostly by Indian steel worker teams from Northern New York State and Oklahoma. The last I heard, a lot of the New York teams live with their families in Brooklyn.

Interview 4: September 7, 2010

[Tape 6: Side A]

You were thinking about why you were drawn, why you went to Greenland?

Bender: Well, what I wanted to say is more complicated than that, because in each case, almost everything I've done—why I did it turned out to be not what came out of it. I went to Greenland to stay out of the army, to have some adventure, but I learned so much in Greenland that's become part of everything I do. It also wasn't what I thought I was going to learn. I lived above the Arctic Circle through a summer and a winter with—at various times up to three thousand construction workers.

I never would have met people like that before. I never would have *lived* with them before. I could have anticipated the drinking, the carousing, the fighting, but the lives and the dreams of these people, many of whom had come from work in the oil fields in South America and later would move on—as I might have if I hadn't gotten pulled out—to Spain to work on the next set of US bases. That was going to be the next place where bases were built, and their dreams were to keep doing that work, and then to retire. They would say, "One day I'm going to have a bar in Joliet." I don't think many of those guys ever got there. (I went once to Joliet. I thought it must be a city of bars because that was the dream of so many of these mid-western construction workers. By the time I visited it was a suburban town.) They were making a lot of money because they were away working full-time, and it was being deposited somewhere where one day they'd have this nest egg. I'm not sure how much of the dream ever came true for that many of them.

Riess: And that was an all-men's world.

Bender: It was an all-men's world, and it was a men's world with limited dreams in some way, but there was ambition and there was a pride in what they did. And there was an incredible, both pride and satisfaction. In Narsarsuaq they had to build these big fuel tanks, and they had to build forty tanks in forty days. In size, it's like building apartment houses, and they were all welded and steel. They built a runway that was ten thousand feet long, two miles! They built barracks, they had the skills to do it and they had the satisfaction of seeing it done, and nobody gave them credit—I mean, they were construction workers. They didn't have names. And even the companies—they came from companies with real names, but they were put together in something called North Atlantic Constructors, and then the next time it would be something else. North Atlantic Constructors disappeared after the Greenland work, blew away like dust.

Riess: How did you socialize with them? Would you have been obviously different to them?

Bender: Well, I was pretty different, and my role was different. I was younger than most of them, more schooled and much less experienced. Very often I was the butt of jokes. They taught me how to drink. They occasionally laughed at me because I was a “Harvard Boy,” and especially when they found I was making less money than most of them. I was making one-third what they called a cat skinner, someone who drove Caterpillar machines. But there was a gentleness also, because they wanted to hear things about what *my* life was. I remember them as storytellers. They told stories of the places they’d worked, and they told stories about work in distant places, fights, accidents, and dreams, and I related to them finally because they wanted to hear my story as well.

Riess: So did they shape your story in a way then?

Bender: Well, they opened my view in many ways. They made it clear that there was much more to what I was doing than what I was doing. Up to then almost all of the designing that I did, almost all of the work represented paper in an office, and visits to a site. But here we were living in the middle of it. You were feeling the work—there were accidents. People got hurt and you realized sometimes people got hurt because the way things were designed or planned to be built made it more dangerous.

And you realized, on another level, so much of what seemed so easy when you were planning it—we were putting up barracks that were being prefabricated in Holland for the Danish company, that were being put up in Greenland. If a piece broke, got damaged in shipping, or one didn’t come or got lost somehow you couldn’t put the building together. Whereas, if you were pouring the concrete in traditional construction, you could pour another piece. So part of what became fascinating for me is to be *in* the moment—to have to devise how you could make this piece of wall so the prefabricated structure could go on.

Riess: Were you the only one of you? Wasn’t there a cadre of people at your level?

Bender: No, there was nobody at my level. I went as a surveyor. I went with my resume with all my skills, and what they saw was I had taken surveying and civil engineering, and they needed surveyors. And as I told you, even then I was not at the thinking end of the surveying originally, I was what they called a rod man. Eventually I got to do more of the surveying, but what they realized is what I could do is site planning and working with what came out of the survey.

That first summer there were three thousand people working there. It switched and some of the workers went away and airmen came, but there were basically that many people. And there was a very small office where some engineering was done, and there was one architect, Sol Friedman. As the work changed from surveying to site adjustment I was made his assistant, and then he got hurt in an accident, his jeep skidded into a bulldozer, and he was airlifted out and I was made—it wasn’t chief

architect, I'm trying to remember the official title, project architect, I think.

What project architect was was sort of to take care of the—we weren't supposed to be designing anything, we were dealing with what had to be changed in order to make it go ahead and be built. At first I was adjusting and adding to site plans, then making adjustments to the structures, and then it turned out that when the buildings were finished they were bare concrete buildings and nobody thought much about how the dining room, mess hall would look. And so I got to make sketches for how to lay it out, to make suggestions, eventually do some interiors. One of my inventions—the ceilings were pretty low, and they used to have movies, and they'd project the movies, but you could only project to a certain size because the ceiling was too low. I designed a screen made out of bed sheet to hang down the middle of the building, so when you projected, from one side you could see the film the right way, but you saw the film through the sheet from the back side!

Riess: That works!

Bender: And it worked fine. There were times when it got to be strange, because people who—a lot of these guys would be drunk when they were watching the movie, and they'd sort of try to go through the screen or up to the screen. But I realized, as I did later, that there were so many parts of design other than the formal parts.

Riess: Let me ask—was there any color? Or was it all gray?

Bender: They were thought of as gray, but I realized that I could requisition things, and so I started doing color schemes, and paint was so cheap no one even asked, and so they sent in paint so we could paint walls. We designed some tables and chairs for recreation rooms and things of that sort.

Riess: But you never met your client, did you? In a way. Were you there when they moved in?

Bender: Well, they were moving in, but the clients originally were the workers. And then they began to be the military people. And then you're getting to what my problem was, is that more and more of the military people came and the boss changed. There'd always been a military person there, but the boss changed from Lou Litchfield, I think was his name, who was the chief engineer for North Atlantic Constructors, to a colonel whose name I block, because he was my nemesis.

As the colonel began to be more and more important, as it became more the military, he would often ask me to do things which I wasn't supposed to do because I was a civilian. He was trying to capture me to do—especially when I started to design some of the things within the buildings, he'd be asking me to do more things that were outside of the civilian contract. A lot of it I was happy to be doing, but I'd get pulled back and of course I had to do it. And then he had this idea, which he did not share

with me, he wrote to my draft board and he said, “He’s no longer essential,” basically.

Riess: Oh! Because he couldn’t control you.

Bender: Well, because he had this plan to get me back there as a soldier. Drafted and sent to Greenland.

This was not something I knew was going on. And the communication was really bad and it was winter at that point, where not that many planes went in and out, and I suddenly got a message from my draft board telling me to report. I didn’t worry too much because it was really difficult to get out of there. You needed a priority to get on the plane, and then I discovered I was at the top of the priority list. And then he told me what he had in mind, which was horror of horrors—both in the army and back in Greenland.

Anyway, I got flown very briefly through Boston, where I got paid off. I was unhappy, but also basically living a kind of John Wayne fantasy. They put me up in a good hotel in Boston, the Parker House I think. And I took hot baths and a barber came to the room and gave me a haircut, and I bought a suit. And then I had to report to Fort Dix for my basic training. And I remember hearing about—I can pinpoint the date because I was on hold for a week, I was in the army but I couldn’t start basic training because they had to wait for the next company to come along—they were coming in the normal way, and I was coming through this strange route. And the McCarthy hearings were going on, and one of the big scandals was that McCarthy had these two assistants, Roy Cohn and Private [G. David] Schine, referred to as Private Schine. And it turns out that Private Schine was the son of, I think, the family that owned the Loew’s chain of theaters or something of that sort. They had gotten him out of the army, they got him assigned to do this instead of going to Korea, and there was a scandal about getting influential people out of regular duty. They changed the rule so you could only ask for someone by what they called MOS [Military Occupation Specialty], that you couldn’t ask for someone by name.

I was halfway through basic training when I got called in one day and the major said, “What’s going on that they’re asking for you?” I said, “Well, I think they’re trying to get me to go back in Greenland.” And they said, “Well, you know, we’re not allowed to send you because they asked for you by name. But we want to know why you’re important enough that they’re doing this.” [laughter] I never found out who the poor guy was who *did* get to go to Greenland but I later saw my file, and it had a stamp on it not to leave the First Army area. They decided I must be worth something, and they didn’t want me reassigned somewhere else before they figured it out.

In basic training everyone wore these helmet liners. They looked like a helmet but they were plastic, and the officers and some of the sergeants started painting theirs, and some of them would be colors. And at one

point I said to the lieutenant—we were in Dog Company, I don't remember what they all are, but D was Dog Company—I said, "I could paint you a nice logo on there." So I painted this helmet liner, and then everybody wanted a helmet liner, so I would get pulled out of training exercises so I could be painting them.

Riess: And everyone wanted an individual one?

Bender: Well, it was established—the lieutenant, his was blue, and the sergeants could have red ones, and they'd all have the D for Dog Company on them, but that began to evolve, and then they wanted signs for their—the sergeants lived in the same barracks but they had private rooms, and so they wanted signs with their names on it, and I did them. So then with luck I'd get out of days, like I got out of the day when you had to go into the gas chamber, and you went in with the gas mask on and you had to take it off and experience the teargas and come out. I never had to do that.

Riess: Because you were on helmet and sign painting duty.

Bender: Because I was busy painting helmets.

Riess: But you must have begun to wonder where was this going?

Bender: Well, it was strange because it had turned around from Greenland, where I was this kid, and now I was one of the senior—most of them were nineteen year olds. Half of them came from upstate New York someplace in a farm area, and a lot came from Brooklyn. And then people started to get sick in basic training, which happens. And then it was interesting. Well, first of all, you had a dental inspection, and a lot of the farm people had all these teeth pulled, because they'd never had any dental care. And then later on, the strong, healthy-looking farm boys kept getting sick because they hadn't been exposed to all the things that these wiry, young city kids had, who looked like they weren't strong at all, but they were used to being exposed to everything.

I met one guy that became a friend. First of all, almost everybody in my company's name began with A or B, because they just broke us up alphabetically into this company. And one day, I was sitting underneath the targets at the rifle range, where one of the jobs was while one group was shooting, you pushed the target up and then you pulled it down and you marked where the hits were and if it was a miss you waved this red flag, which was called "Maggie's Drawers," I remember. I was sitting with this guy who was different—he was about my age. His name was Peter Benzoni, and I discovered that he was born in Italy but he became an American citizen who got drafted, and he'd been at Yale. It eventually came out he was a member of Skull and Bones. And so here we were, sitting in as close to the trenches as you'd come, bullets whizzing overhead, talking about Harvard and Yale, and then we began talking about literature. We were like two alien people moving through basic training.

Eventually, when I graduated from basic training, I got assigned to Fort Monmouth, which was not far away, in the Signal Corps, a group called Training Aids. Training Aids was a division that made all the training aids. Later on we took on projects for the Corps of Engineers at Fort Dix. The training aids varied from charts, and I did posters like, Don't Smoke in Bed or things about Be Careful How You Handle Grenades, and so on. I still have some of those posters somewhere. We also made—you see pictures of the generals at the table, with the sand table, with the topography, and they're moving tanks around. We designed those tables, and modified tanks we bought at toy stores, but some of the things we had to design.

Then it got more complicated because once it appeared—again, there were just a couple of us who were soldiers assigned to this group, which was in Asbury Park—the factory operation was in Asbury Park in an industrial building. And so a bus used to take us from Fort Monmouth every morning to go to work in Asbury Park and take us back.

Riess: The factory?

Bender: Well, it was like a factory. Today it would be a loft building. Actually they had a printing operation because they did publications, spray painting, carpentry tools.

Riess: It's making me wonder—what was this war? This is not just being shipped off to Korea. Where is this stuff going?

Bender: Well, but this was really an interesting time. The Signal Corps was changing from flags and Morse code to radio. It was the beginning of TV and before computers, but the whole issue of signaling and signals—it was expanding, and people had to be taught new skills and it was the height of the Cold War. For me it was all surreal. In basic training we had bayonet practice, and we had to charge with a bayonet at these dummies and stick them—and we were supposed to shout, "Die Chink!" This must have been at the point where the Chinese came down and took Korea. Then I arrived at Fort Monmouth which was like a technical school at Red Bank on the New Jersey Shore.

So there was this horror on one level, and on the other level—I had money because I'd been working in Greenland. I discovered that I—well, first of all, I was terrible at things like shining my shoes, and you had to pass inspection. There were these kids in basic training who were great at it, and who I realized—their ambition was to go to paratrooper school. I was hoping not to go anywhere! And so in basic training I used to be able to pay some of them to keep my boots shined and to clean my rifle. And in turn I would help them with some of the—they were studying for tests that they had to pass. So I was sort of in this funny position of the teacher's pet, because I used to get called off to do the painting things, and then I was older than they were; I was twenty-four, twenty-five, and they were only nineteen.

[Tape 7: Side A]

Bender: After the eight weeks of basic training you got your new assignment. Most of the people in my platoon went on to a second eight weeks of infantry training and then they were going to go to Korea. I got sent to Asbury Park. Not the regular center at Fort Monmouth, where they took charge of my army life, here my job was to work in the Training Aids Division of the Signals Corps doing the training aids. And that was interesting work. It was designing all kinds of big and little things, and it was also working with people who were civil service employees who had real skills, like one group of them whose work was graphic design but passion was surf casting for striped bass in Atlantic Highlands. As a side job they prepared the fish as displays—it's not taxidermy exactly.

Riess: Oh yes, mounting the fish.

Bender: Others were sign painters, and they would moonlight making the menus for coffee shops and signs for local businesses. They were a delightful group of people. One of them had a turkey farm, he lived on the turkey farm and he came in to this job at Training Aids. He was going to add turkey sheds and asked me to design the turkey sheds. I learned that you put in green lights, because turkeys eat green things, and so they could put out the corn or whatever it is and put the green light on and they ate more. The floor of the shed was like a screen, so all the droppings went through, and the biggest profit was selling the droppings as fertilizer. Clearly this was not the Graduate School of Design. I also designed lobster storage. Some of them were lobster fishermen, and their dock was rotting, and we redesigned the dock with new pens to store the lobster pots before they went out. I designed the storage for the lobster pots and also tanks for keeping the lobsters.

And a very nice man, Charles Brittain, who was a quite good book designer, was building a house in Princeton Junction, not that far, and we talked about the house. I made some sketches that he liked and ended up designing the house, which was the first real house that I built. I have pictures of it. It looks a little bit like one of the sketch problems I did at Harvard. So again, I really had this mixture of things.

Riess: You mentioned the Chaplain's Corners in your notes.

Bender: Well, the Chaplain's Corner was when I had moved to Training Aids, when it began to take another surreal turn. Each company at Fort Monmouth had a common room, and part of it was a "Chaplain's Corner." And every month they had a competition for which company had the best Chaplain's Corner. The commanding officer of our company asked if we would design the Chaplain's Corner, and we won the prize. After that the different companies that had the Chaplain's Corner would ask our colonel at Training Aids for help. So every month we would win the prize for a different Chaplain's Corner. We would make a different design that showed—they had to show some of the notices and manuals and books and have a theme. It was actually one of the nicest design jobs to have to

design different versions of this, and each company would have some theme or something that they wanted. I got to be designing things like that.

Then it started to get more interesting. After the Chaplain's Corner the colonel was beginning to look at me as a kind of—not an indentured servant but somebody who could be rented or loaned out. And each time he lent me out for a job his prestige was growing.

Riess: A little value added.

Bender: We started winning the Chaplain's Corners. Then there was the issue that every Saturday there was a parade, and after the parade the people who could go on a weekend pass would leave. Also at the parade they gave certificates or awards to retiring officers or to people who finished the classes, like the class in radio tower building. And the colonel told the commanding officer that we could make these nice diplomas. So I started designing diplomas and certificates.

Riess: These were calligraphy?

Bender: What we did finally was silkscreen part of them and then did calligraphy. I designed them and there were other people who did the calligraphy. And there was a "Trophy" made of old artillery shells, the brass casing. We would engrave them, put names on them. I designed the wooden stands they were mounted on and the cabinetmaker made them. They would be given out at the parades. Then there was the problem of how to organize the Saturday morning parade. The commanding officer wanted it to feel very military. Sometimes he would want to review the troops on foot, other times in a Jeep, driving up and down between ranks of troops. So I ended up designing the parades, an interesting planning problem. How do you bring this couple of thousand people from their barracks, assemble them, and then march them to specific places on the parade ground. They had to march out of the company, along roads, and make turns, so what's the turning radius of sixteen people broad marching around?

Riess: That's interesting, yes.

Bender: My surveying in Greenland combined with my architecture and planning. We had a crew who would lay it out, put some stakes in the ground, and use color codes. So, I was involved in the parades and the diplomas. Best of all I had convinced the major that to make really good diplomas we should put ribbons and gold trim on them, and I could get that material at the Bridal District in New York. And so I was allowed to go to New York from time to time. I had a car, because I had used some of my Greenland money to buy a car, a Brooklyn boy's dream, a white, pre-Mustang, Ford convertible with red seats.

Riess: You were close to home all of this time. How much did you get off base and go home and to New York?

Bender: I went off base a lot, a lot. It was a wonderful time for me. I had a job in New Jersey, and I went into the city. I could go home, not only by driving but sometimes on the weekend when the traffic was bad I went with one of the soldiers who was stationed there permanently, and a local guy who had a small sailboat, and we used to sail across to Brooklyn, across The Narrows, across the mouth of the New York harbor. A couple of times I went home for the weekend like that. Once it was scary because one of those big passenger liners was coming in. You wouldn't realize what a big wake those ships make for a little nineteen-foot Lightning sailboat.

In New York in the Fifties it was the height of the art world excitement. Jackson Pollock was coming on the scene, [Willem] de Kooning was emerging, and there were openings at the galleries. There was so much energy around that, so it was a wonderful time to be there and be relatively free. I officially went in one day a week, and I usually had weekends.

Riess: Did you have to appear for the parade?

Bender: Well, on the parade days, because I had done my job I could leave early in the morning once the set-up was in place before the parade started.

Riess: Now when you think back about that, it does seem like you were a bit adrift, or not? How do you feel about all of this? I guess you didn't have any choice at this point about your life.

Bender: Well, at this point I knew I was going to get out of the army, and I had my thesis to finish at Harvard, so there was a beacon of that sort. And in the meantime, part of it was surviving in this strange military world. Once I got caught. I went to New York one weekday evening because there was a gallery opening and I had started back early in the morning in order to be back in time for the muster. Every morning at 6:30 we all had to be standing outside the barracks and be counted. I got caught in one of those Jersey fogs and I got back late, and I got demoted. I had been a corporal and I went back to PFC. [laughter]

Riess: I would have thought you were essential for all this other stuff.

Bender: Well, but there were two sides. There was a lot of resentment. I was caught between being a teacher's pet where I worked, and the company commander, who was in charge of my military life, feeling there were these people who were not being real soldiers.

Riess: After the experiences in Greenland and in basic training and everything—do you in retrospect have thoughts about gays in the military?

Bender: Very little. In Greenland, there were maybe twenty people in there who were mostly engineers, but two or three accountant/bookkeepers. There was one man there, Walter, who was clearly a homosexual. And he took a lot of teasing. We shared a love of reading and exchanged books. I remember noticing the bullying, but nothing more than words that I could

see. What did make an impression is that there were no black people in Greenland until the Air Force brought in a black regiment—with a white colonel—who lived separate and were stevedores and laborers. And there were no women on the bases in the time I was in Greenland, until the first nurses arrived just before I left.

In basic training there was someone who was an acting-out homosexual, and I was never sure how much of it was acting out to get out of the army. There were at least three people in the basic training company whose aim was to get out, and they kept going to sickbay claiming they had diseases, and this guy was being overtly homosexual. But I guess I was less sensitive to those things. I had been growing up with a lot of homosexuals, particularly as I, in high school, began to know the “art crowd” within the group of people who were interested in art while I was in high school, and then those I’d meet in galleries and things of that sort. But the experience in the military was not—I had none of that.

Riess: All those men. It seems like a kind of hothouse.

Bender: Well, there was all kinds of activity going on, but I never thought of that as homosexual. Maybe it’s like in prisons and things. A lot of the energy came out in drinking and fights.

Back at Fort Monmouth the high point of my military experience was when the colonel approached one of his pals at West Point about the idea that we would design and build the floats for army in the Army-Navy Game, and I got to be the head of the design team. I worked with a guy named Frank Faragasso, a great spirit who was a wonderful cartoonist/sign painter, who was one of the civilian workers, not one of the military. We were given the theme, or themes. The floats were to be about nursery rhymes, like Simple Simon Met a Lineman, and Fe-Fi-Fo-Fum, I Smell the Blood of a Navymun. We were figuring out what they would be and how they would move, and we found we could borrow—they were called half-tracks, bigger than a jeep and smaller than a tank, that could drive around the track that bounded the field. We were going to build these painted floats out of plywood to fit over the half-track, and we had to figure out how to get to Philadelphia, and then how to get through the gates, which had a certain height.

Riess: And it was all very secret, too?

Bender: Well, it was a secret, and it went from sketches to—when it came to the part to actually making them, they were not made in our regular place, but a piece of Fort Monmouth that was set aside for a group of carpenters to come in and make these things and shape them. And my role, along with two of the civilians, was to go to Philadelphia and to assemble them before the game. Frank and I, with the help of a company of cadets, made sure they got put together and worked. Some of them were too tall to go through the gate. One of them had a head. I remember we had to hinge it so it went back, and after it got through the gate we’d pull these ropes and it went up. I was specifically told in no way to wear my uniform or in any

way indicate that I was a soldier, and certainly not as low a soldier as I was. It would have been a disaster of the cadets we were using as laborers found out that I was a PFC.

But that was the biggest turning point in my life. I was in New York, the week before the Army-Navy Game, getting some of the last supplies for the floats, because we were using paints and things that were hard to get in the local store. And I was invited to dinner by a woman, a girl, and when I arrived I thought I'll go to the dinner and then I could drive back at night.

Riess: Do we need a little back story on your social life and love life before all this?

Bender: Well, I'm not sure how much of a back story there was.

Riess: There wasn't a significant other?

Bender: Yes. There was one—there was one more significant than others.

Riess: But you were free at this point.

Bender: Yes, yes. Well, maybe I could sketch that at another point, because it goes back to someone I met as a teenager at children's camp, and who is still one of my closest friends.

Riess: Nice.

Bender: She has lived in Paris for fifty-six years now, since somewhere when I went off to Greenland and she decided to go to France to study both French and philosophy. She married a Frenchman and has lived in France ever since. She divorced—her original husband had two children who are the same age as my kids, and for a while they used to come to Long Island in the summer and stay not far from where we were, so my boys knew them. And we had other friends in common from that period who we had till just—they're dying now. Anyway, she divorced her first husband and is married now to a really wonderful guy who's a movie director/producer. And they live on the Quai de l'Horloge which is—Île de la Cité, right across the Pont Neuf facing the Paris side, not the Left Bank, on the sixth floor of a building that has had a building permit for an elevator for thirty years and it was finally installed the other day!

Riess: Okay. I do not want to distract further—you were invited to a dinner party.

Bender: And I was surprised to find that it was not an intimate dinner, but a party and there were a lot of people there. And suddenly the door opened and I saw this woman with a man, and she seemed to be saying something to him. And I thought I saw—[gestures at pushing away].

Well, it was Sue, and I later learned she was saying, "I want to meet someone new!" We met, and it was an "enchanted evening." I may have

said that during those years it used to be fun to be able to get into the musicals on Broadway. After the first act when everyone came out on the street, you could go back in the theater with them and see the second act. So I had seen the *South Pacific* second act four times and heard, “Some enchanted evening you will meet your true love.” It was my enchanted evening!

Anyway, we hit it off right away, and I remember saying, “I would love to see you on the weekend, but I have to go to the Army-Navy Game.” It was all quite surreal. And Sue said, “I have cousins in Philadelphia and I can come down.” So we agreed to meet in Philadelphia, where it sounded like her cousin ran some kind of an orphanage. She kept talking about all the children, but it turned out they just had a big and robust family.

At any rate, I went off to the Army-Navy Game, and as I say, it was the high point of my military career. Army was behind 14-0 at the end of the first half, and they came from behind, after our floats, to win 21-14. General Maxwell Taylor, who was the commanding officer of West Point, was so pleased that he gave a promotion to my commanding officer, and I in turn got what was called a meritorious promotion in the field. So I left the army as a corporal.

Riess: When did you leave the army?

Bender: I left the army a month later, just before Christmas in 1955. The army had a rule—I’m not sure how I learned about it, maybe I noticed some people were going to be discharged early, that if you were a farmer you were allowed out a few months earlier to be in time to plant the spring crops. I argued—I had to finish my thesis, and if I went back in January I could finish within the academic year. And it worked. By that time that the war was calming down, the Korean War had basically died down, although I did find when I finally got out of the army that I had a ribbon for serving in the Korean War. Actually, I was supposed to get out in January, but for the convenience of all the military people they wanted to process it before Christmas so *they* could go away, so I got out just before Christmas, and had some time in New York.

Sue and I got to know each other better. At that point Sue was teaching in New Rochelle High School. She had graduated from Radcliffe/Harvard in the Graduate School of Education and got a job teaching in New Rochelle High School. She was living with her parents in their apartment in the Bronx, and since she couldn’t drive, her father would drive her up to New Rochelle and drop her off at the school, and then drive to the train and go down to his work with his brothers in the garment district. They had a company that produced negligees, which they called brunch coats at the time. Then when I went back to Harvard I would come down weekends. Occasionally she came up. She still had a lot of friends there, and I had a certain reputation with her friends because I was Paul Bender’s brother, who at that point had just graduated, but he had been at the Law Review and was clerking for Judge Learned Hand.

- Riess: Let me pursue a question about your experience in design. You said the house that you did in Princeton Junction was your first house.
- Bender: Yes, well, that and Pete Seeger's log cabin which I can't really claim. And actually, in neither one of them did I do much of the detailing; in both cases I made what we would call schematics and didn't do very much of the detail. I'd learned a lot about myself as a designer at the Graduate School of Design, that my skill is more in putting together, adapting, reworking ideas rather than drafting or detailing designs. I'm more interested in figuring out an innovative strategy or program for a building or plan than in designing an original form.
- Riess: Do you attribute that to not having been in the basic design classes that first year?
- Bender: No, I think it may have—at various points I've thought it was a weakness, that I had a weakness of that sort. At other points, I realized that I wasn't recognizing a strength, and it goes back to my original hero, Dankmar Adler rather than Louis Sullivan, and the way of Abramovitz and Harrison. So somewhere along the line, in school, I realized that I worked better in collaboration, I worked better at bringing ideas and being part of making them work. I ended up working in teams, very often, where I brought conceptual ideas but wasn't the best person to draw them up.
- Riess: And that's a real skill, working collaboratively, using your critical faculties without offending.
- Bender: Well, it's been the skill that I've developed. Most of my work today is with architectural planning or consultant firms, with people who do a lot of what they do, specialize and do the kinds of buildings they specialize in over and over, and get much better at that than someone who is doing their first office tower or New York apartment house, but I bring an ability to see it in a different way, put it together in a different way, and often to bring a group together who didn't think they were a group, or wouldn't be a group. So in architectural school, I found that I could join two or three of my colleagues on a project.
- [Tape 7: Side B]
- Bender: Today institutions or business people come to me for one thing and get another. They tend to come because of my experience in the last thing I've done. And the last thing I've done very often suggests that they shouldn't do what they're going to do. In later years I had a slide that I loved to show that's my favorite project that came out of the campus plan for the University of California at Santa Cruz that we redid in the early nineties, and it's a picture of an oak tree which would have been a parking garage if we hadn't developed a strategy to reduce the use of cars. In many cases, what comes out of it is a suggestion to do something other than what they thought they were doing or thought they were going to do. In some cases, nobody's interested. But in most cases it has been interesting to do that.

At Harvard the thesis I did was the first time I took on a big design project that also incorporated a lot of technological things and also began to look at some of the urban issues around an architecture project. The idea was to do an apartment house using high-tech airplane manufacturing technology that could be prefabricated and suspended from a truss on top, in order to not have very much building on the ground floor, and open the view through. It was for a site in Brooklyn Heights, a row of old buildings that were going to be demolished. If you did it the right way, you could walk along the street and see the harbor through this urban design proposal. The thesis was a great hit. It was the beginning of understanding how many of the things that are great hits are exercises in ideas but maybe not the right thing to be doing.

Riess: At the time?

Bender: To this day there's hardly a year goes by that someone's not proposing a new way to either hang things from buildings or prefabricate houses, where more and more the real issue is how you make something come up from—grow out of—the place rather than make something remotely and bring it in. The problem has never been to build the house, but how the house gets built, and who builds it and how it fits the neighborhood and the people, and how it has a life afterwards. And from the concrete Schokbeton things in Greenland to my stamped-out metal pieces that made this to [Moshe] Safdie's Habitat—the fact is once they're there, they're very hard to change and they're very hard to add to. It is very hard to make something that will evolve over time.

And so my interest has become more and more not to design a picture of what something's going to be at the end, but how it's going to grow. The idea is to breath life into a place. In effect, my own work has become more like landscape architecture, where you plant something knowing what the soil is like and what the climate and the light is like, and you know that an apple tree will be different from a lemon tree, but you can't sketch what the tree is going to look like. And also, where you're interested in both how it looks at first but also where it's going to be in twenty years. And much of the planning that we were doing and being taught to do was about what it looks like. In fact, in my early days of practice you very often photographed it as quick as you could, so you got it “just right,” before people moved in! More and more, my approach to design has become about how you make something that evolves and changes, different tenants, different people.

Jumping way ahead—the house we built on Long Island was built with local contractors, where I built half of it and they built half, and it won prizes and it got published. Eventually, almost thirty years after we moved to California we decided to sell it. The woman who bought it [Anita Calero] was in love with it. We had been living three thousand miles away, and it was in bad shape at that point, and she decided to restore it. She changed it a lot, but she took it back to what it was meant to be and where it was going to go. I hadn't even known this was going on till we saw pictures in Martha Stewart's magazine. Anita, the owner, is a

photographer, and she published eight pages in Martha Stewart's magazine showing the house, evolved as it might have evolved if we'd lived there year round.

Riess: Is that possible? It had a kind of inevitability you're saying?

Bender: Well, it's not an inevitability, but you can see intentions and you can feel a spirit which you want to build onto, and you want to support it and take it your own way and take it to the next step. The projects that I've worked on that I appreciate the most have had that kind of life.

Riess: I think the idea of your thesis sounds fascinating, I can see why it was a hit, but what about that system made any sense to you?

Bender: It was the idea that you could take the technologies that were so successful in automobiles and airplanes and things of that nature and apply them to building houses. In the next decade or so that became a national idea, when HUD was started and Governor [George W.] Romney took over, who had been head of Studebaker before that. He started Operation Breakthrough, for which I was a consultant. The idea, his expression, was to "turn industry loose on the housing problem." His model was building cars—every thirty seconds they were coming off the production line.

In a way, the success of Operation Breakthrough was that we learned that the building process is much more complex, rich, than having a house come out of a factory every thirty seconds. I was coming to understand that the track I was on was not technically where I wanted to go. So while I was fascinated with all these industrial processes, the idea of making a house in a factory became less and less interesting. In the same way, I continue to be fascinated with what you can do in a factory, and I continue to be fascinated with how you make homes, but the idea that making houses in a factory was making homes became more questionable to me.

Riess: You're using these two different words: house and home.

Bender: And that became a really important thing. Home—well, I was working on housing. At one point I looked and discovered that housing—I couldn't find *housing* in dictionaries before 1900 or so. People built homes, and dwelling and living were all a part of the process. And we were turning it into a product that you made for someone else. Some of that has to be in the way we are living, but more and more it became interesting to look at how home-making, dwelling could be more of the process. We began to understand that dwelling is a verb.

The bulk of the building was the building, the stones or bricks, the roof and foundations. There was no heating, ventilation, electric, etc., and the structural engineer was the main person responsible for safety. In terms of licensing, a structural engineer could sign architectural plans for anything, because that's basically what a building was, a structure. But then as the years go on, that physical building becomes less and less of the cost, complexity and use of a building. The way we have been building, from

acquiring the land, infrastructure, finishing, permits, as well as structure, we add enormous cost and constraints on the house.

At one point, some years back, I realized that the mechanical systems, the heating, ventilating, air-conditioning, were creeping up to be equal in cost to the structural system. Now in buildings, especially laboratories, hospitals, medical, but even houses, the cost of the much more transient systems gets to be a bigger part of the building than the structural. It also changes at a different rate. In a house, for example, consider the washing machine. You get a thirty-year mortgage on the house, and it includes a washing machine that's got a five-year guarantee. And how many washing machines will you be paying off while you're still paying off the mortgage for your building? It's crazy to have that washing machine in the mortgage. Today there are many other transient features built in, wiring for a sound system, phone wires, and the wireless things that replaced the wiring. The foundation of the house will last more than a hundred years. The roof is "bonded" for twenty-five, the carpet may last for ten, and the new IT system changes every two years! Where does the utility company's ownership of the pipes, wires, end and the homeowner's begin? These things have all been changing, ad hoc, but no one is rethinking how all of this should be dealt with.

This morning there was a PBS program about students moving in at Boston College, and how the streets were lined with U-Hauls, and they said you couldn't tell what was moving in and what was trash on the streets, because the old students had left so much junk behind and the new students were bringing just as much in. I was thinking, I arrived in Boston with a suitcase, and I came by train from New York. But also, I didn't have anything and I didn't need anything.

In the same way, when I first started an office the only capital investment was—I had my slide rule, which at that point seemed like it was awfully expensive. It was twenty-two dollars because it was a fancy slide rule, a Log Log Decitrig. Eventually I bought a—not a computing machine, it was really like an adding machine, but it could do a little bit of multiplying. It looked like a typewriter and it sounded like a machine gun when it did its calculations [Marchant Calculator].

When Michael was in high school I bought him one of the first HP calculators, and suddenly this little thing that looked like a pack of cigarettes was doing square roots of giant numbers and multiplying—all of the things we learned in surveying were basically how to do the calculations, because they had so many numbers and you had to use logarithms and things, and suddenly you could do this with a little pocket calculator, but you had to invest, at that point, three hundred dollars, and that was a term's tuition for me at school.

Riess: And it implies something about the loss of your control of information?

Bender: Well, in some ways it gets better. When we—we'll talk more about building the house on Long Island, but what we did was buy twenty acres

finally, and we divided it up. Well, that sounds easy. How do you divide up twenty acres? I was a surveyor, so I knew how to do it, theoretically, but it took me a long time to get the property lines right, to figure the acreages, to have it all come out. You go around figuring all the angles and when you come back you're supposed to come back to the same point, and if you miss by just a fraction of a foot, that means there's an error in there and you have to go back. If I had had the calculator, I could have done in a day what took me probably two months of nights doing it. On the other hand, the calculator probably cost what I made in two months!

Riess: But not for long did it cost that much.

Bender: No, then it goes down and then you become dependent on it. In some ways I don't know that you lose very much by not having books of logarithms to study to do that.

I don't know where this belongs in the sequence of things, but when I came to Berkeley, one of the things I was supposed to be doing was bringing into the structure and production area of teaching the new systems approaches and systems building. The City Planning Department in the College of Environmental Design was pushing the rest of the college to eliminate the old design department, where they did things like glass blowing, and saying what we need is more people to do *systems*. Joe [Esherick] was particularly fascinated with [C. West] Churchman, who was writing about systems. And Horst Rittel was invited from Germany into the College of Environmental Design because he had another way of looking at systems.

At that point one of the—I think we're probably getting ahead of it at this point, although, well, let's just do a little more. When I came, largely through Joe's interests, because Joe had a lot of interests and he followed them with an energy and a passion that really enriched the school, there were a lot of new faculty and new ideas, and very often no one knew what to do with them once they came here.

Riess: Didn't know what to do with the people?

Bender: Or where they would go, how they would come together in the school or in building. Horst Rittel came here, a really interesting man, very smart, very thoughtful, very abstract, who was fond of posing problems. In fact, one of the things he talked about is there were such things as *wicked problems*, as he called them. A wicked problem was something everybody—I may not be doing it justice, but every generation works on them, and they're problems that you just don't solve. Between him and Churchman, and then people were coming in—one of the areas of study which [Gerald] McCue decided on was design methods. Rittel and others were looking at, and organizing all these people who were arriving in the build-up of the school, analyzing what are the systems, what works, how do you measure things?

- Riess: Say that again.
- Bender: It was trying to look at problems where things seemed stuck and solve the problems in more creative ways.
- Riess: Using what you called systems.
- Bender: By stepping back and seeing how they were parts of larger systems, using these new tools of a systems approach.
- Riess: The idea of the wicked problem—it sounds a bit Zen.
- Bender: Well, it was Zen coming from a German trained in math and physics, who again was one of those people who—well, he had higher education, some of it in philosophy, but one of the problems when he came to UC is he didn't have a degree. He'd never received his PhD, because in Germany you go with a major advisor through the PhD, and the professor who was his PhD advisor died and Rittel never went back to finish under someone else. (This is out of place here, but I keep thinking of things!) I got involved with things I had to do to try to get people appointed, when they didn't have the usual credentials.
- Riess: Yes, the dean's job.
- Bender: But he was a very stimulating guy, and at the same time—he [Rittel] was in one area, and Christopher Alexander was doing in a way the same thing in a completely different way. And Ezra Ehrenkrantz and the Building Systems group at school. Along with Building Systems Development, SCSD and even the Building Research Center at the National Bureau of Standards were nationally known for doing that.
- It all comes back to the switch from how we were building. The physical buildings, the great Gothic cathedrals down to office buildings, were almost all about the structure. The structure was most of it, no electric, little plumbing or heating or cooling. And now they are much—if you build a science building now or a hospital, you have to basically pay the cost of construction every four years just for renewing the equipment. We found decisions were made on the basis of first cost with little care or understanding of lifetime costs.
- Riess: Surely people must be anticipating that, so there are more universal jacks and so on.
- Bender: Well, everyone tries to anticipate it, but on one level, universal jacks don't work. As you've seen with your tape recorders and everything, each round has a different set of jacks. All those big office buildings in San Francisco and New York were built so the partitions could be moved easily, but it turned out it was easier to smash up concrete block and on weekends have—I don't know that they were migrant laborers, but cheap labor come in and put up new block walls than to pay for moveable partitions.

Riess: This makes me ask—during this conversation I’ve been thinking, where and when did the term *planned obsolescence* arise?

Bender: I’m not sure who invented it, maybe it was discovered. I know—again, in practice I would see that the tax law *encouraged* you to make a building that could be torn down quickly. In order to spur development, you were allowed to take a depreciation at such a high rate that theoretically the building was worth zero at the end of ten years, at one point.

Riess: Ten years?

Bender: Well, like with some kinds of buildings. I remember with hotels, the different hotels, I was confused when I was working on the Sheraton Hotel at the Prudential Center in Boston, why we were having meetings with the Hilton people as well as the Sheraton people. And it turned out they would depreciate the hotel down and then sell it to Hilton. And Hilton would then depreciate it down and sell it to the Hotel Corporation of America. You may wonder why over the years—those rules have changed now, but the hotels used to change names that way. And office buildings were doing the same thing. Someone would run an office building until they took the depreciation, and then sell it to someone who then took the depreciation out of it, and at some point you could take the building away and make a bigger one and then start the game all over again.

But all of these were lessons in how the things that we thought we knew were not what was controlling it, just as when I started more in engineering because I was interesting in housing and building, I saw that structure is not what it was about. It became clear that the architect was making the decisions, so I followed it to architecture. And then, even more, it seemed clear city planners were making the decisions. And then the planning turns out not to be necessarily the planning agency or the people who study city planning, but the developers, the bankers, the investors.

Riess: Well, that could make you cynical, couldn’t it?

Bender: Well, it can make you cynical, or it can make you at least know how to use the system. And I think the successful people doing good buildings today have mastered more than just the tools an architectural school traditionally taught. At any rate, for me it turned out that I wanted to teach in places and in ways that touched those who make and live with the decisions.

When I was teaching at Cooper Union we were right in the middle of New York, and there’s so much going on, so it was fun to bring people in to sit around the table. The classes were small and we’d have these wonderful discussions with people who would love to come and talk. One of our neighbors was Margaret Mead, who lived down the street. Buckminster Fuller came once to talk. But my favorite visitor was Dan Rose. Daniel Rose and his brothers were the partners running Rose Associates, one of

the biggest and best family builder developer companies, like Tishman—I forget some of the other names now. Dan used to love to come to talk to this group. Cooper was known as a great design school, and they were really good students, and he knew he was coming to people who would say, “Oh, a developer,” so Dan would say, “I’m going to show you a beautiful building,” and they would look at him in a strange way, and out he would take, not drawings, but a balance sheet. And he would say, “Look at that—I did this, and we got this, and now look at that balance sheet! Isn’t that beautiful?” And then he would provoke them more. At one point I think he said, “Emery Roth,” who was one of the really commercial architects for doing apartment houses, “Emery Roth is my Frank Lloyd Wright.”

Dan would trigger marvelous discussions as he would talk to the students about understanding what the federal subsidies were, what FHA would allow, what the bank will lend. They’re all part of what you have to have in you some way.

[Tape 6: Side B]

The Rose family have been very special friends, and an inspiration, and they will come up again later in the story. First there was David, an uncle who brought in their father in the twenties, and then the three brothers—Fred was the oldest, and Dan, and Elihu. They are one of the great philanthropic forces in New York. The [Hayden] Planetarium is now called the Frederick [P.] Rose Planetarium—Fred was chairman of the board of the Museum of Natural History. In the new Time Warner Building is the Rose Jazz Center, and there’s a Rose dance building in Lincoln Center. Our friends Dan and his wife Joanna are active in everything, from the *Partisan Review* and quilt collecting and preservation, to education, from elementary schools in Harlem, to Swarthmore and Yale. Dan loves to talk about the interconnection of the world and the lessons of Greek philosophers.

Bender:

[interruption in recording] The issue I want to really talk about is that developers were basically putting up a project in which before the first house was built they had invested a lot of money in the sites, in the sewers, in the water supply, in interest payments during a long permit process before the first house was made. And then in the first house they were buying refrigerators and hot water heaters and light fixtures and many other things. Each of those has a different lifespan. The foundations of the house can maybe last for five hundred years, the roof would maybe be bonded for twenty-five years, and the refrigerator would have a five-year guarantee. And then they’re all lumped together in a thirty-year mortgage. You are paying interest on that refrigerator years after it has been replaced. And meanwhile, the house is going to be changing.

And so one of the ideas was to begin to take some of that apart and look at a way to put it back in a different way. In low-income housing, in projects on the East Side of Manhattan, Stuyvesant Town or in Lower East Side, we were building almost the same apartment that we built on Sutton

Place—and the prices were different based on subsidies, or the land, or the fact that we didn't put doors on the closets of the low-income housing and fixtures were different. But the concept of the house was very much the same. On the other hand, if we gave people a choice, to move into a bigger apartment in low-income housing that wasn't quite as finished, and the possibility to finish it over time or put some of their own work into it—maybe that was a different way to do it.

At the same time, at the top of the scale, the richest people could do that. People were beginning to take over a loft, and if you were rich enough you could then custom make it. The loft may have had a mortgage on it but the interior didn't have a mortgage on it. And you weren't saddled with such long-term—at any rate, I began to see that design could be about different things than what we were drawing. I was—we were beginning to understand that there are other ways to do all of this.

Riess: Much harder.

Bender: Much more complex, much more interesting in some ways, much more interesting than to make something in a factory rather than on the site.

Riess: We were talking about your thesis.

Bender: As I was finishing the thesis I was thinking back on some of what I saw in the army: those guys working with me in the army, they were all fixing their own houses. There was no Home Depot then, but I would see—When I wrote *A Crack in the Rear View Mirror*, what I was saying was that while we are looking for the answer in the General Motors factory, it may be more in Home Depot. Everything you buy in Home Depot is manufactured in a factory and gets better and better. So maybe you don't want to manufacture the *house*, but make a home out of manufactured pieces. Somewhere along the way I began to understand that the most important housing technologies to come out of WWII were plywood, the skill-saw, and water-based paint.

Anyway, it didn't happen all at once, because as I went on I kept finding it was more interesting to take a different route than to concentrate on designing the house as an object, or the building as an object. It was a wonderful time for me because I had the years away from school to bring back experience, and I met another group of people there and we were working in a different way. I was with people finishing their master's thesis, although mine was a bachelor's thesis because they changed the name of it in the middle, but there was a master's class where Sert was then teaching more advanced people, and because I did some work for Sert I would start to hang out with them.

Riess: You did some work for Sert?

Bender: Well, when I was at school originally I was doing part-time work first for Gropius. When I came back to Harvard in 1956 I did some work for Sert, in his office—I called it moonlighting. There I met [Fumihiko] Maki, who

has become a lifelong friend, and Dolf Schnebli from Switzerland, a very special friend who died last year. We worked nights together drawing palm trees in front of a building for the US embassy in Baghdad that never got built, which was very similar to the building for the presidential palace in Havana that Sert did with Paul Lester Wiener. It was an opportunity to meet people who were coming with different ideas, fellow students who had graduated and been out in the world for a while. They came back originally to spend a year with Gropius and then Sert took it over. It was like “polishing,” a finishing school for architects. I wasn’t in that class but it was all in one building, and you’d go from room to room and get to know them.

Two other things—during that spring Sue and I decided to get married, and we pretty much decided we were going to live abroad. That spring Sert made a party for the graduating students and he invited everyone in New York to the house he’d built in Lattingtown [Harbor] Estates on Long Island, where I had seen him when I was a high school student when I used to visit my friend Barbara, who was at the Friends Academy in Locust Valley. I met Sert when he would come to see this carriage house being built, and then I had visited Sert in his office over the years.

And so Sue and I went to this formal, black-tie dinner in his carriage house on Long Island with our fellow graduates. And it—in some ways it felt like the beginning of a new world. I was wearing a rented tuxedo, I guess. And it was a very nice party, and around 11 o’clock at night we all very politely started to say good night, and suddenly the door burst open, and I just remember it as an excitement—in came a group of Sert’s old friends—Paul Wiener and Ingeborg, his wife, and Ernesto Rogers, the uncle of Richard [G.] Rogers.

Riess: Richard Rogers, the architect Rogers.

Bender: Yes. Ernesto was an architect also, and [Enrico] Peressutti, one of his partners, they were just doing a building in Milan [Torre Velasca] which everyone was looking at, and they were teaching at Princeton. And there were a few other of those, who I would now think of as the CIAM people, the Europeans who came in with a burst of life and energy. We were all so formal, and suddenly they were dancing the tango and they were drinking, and it was like a peek into another world.

And it became the world, because it even more made it clear to me that I wanted to go to Europe—probably for the wrong reasons. All of the stuff that I was interested in was in Europe, from the old cities to Corbusier, Picasso, and so we went to Europe at just the time when all of the interesting things were happening in New York. Picasso was there and we saw Klee exhibits, but the real art breakthrough was in New York at that time, in the late fifties and the early sixties in architecture. We saw the interesting buildings that Corbusier did, but what was happening in the United States in some ways was more interesting—we were not seeing how important it was.

On the other hand, I had started to discover the old, and in our Gropius days at Harvard they didn't believe in history, so you learned backwards. I learned history of architecture starting from the present and back to the thirties and twenties, and going backwards. In Europe, I began to appreciate the past. My classes at Harvard with Dean Joseph Hudnut had shown some of that, but it seemed abstract and far away. But when you began to live in and feel the richness of those old buildings and walls, and that the art that was built into those buildings and cities in a more integral way—the way cities were built and came about—it was transforming. We learned how Haussmann made a plan by opening Paris up, but we experienced how cities that had grown organically came about, and how they were different in the south when we traveled.

Riess: And this was not something anyone was talking about in your classes?

Bender: Everyone was talking about the new. What I found out later, and particularly just recently talking to Maki and Dolf Schnebli and other contemporaries of mine, they were making the same discoveries. Each of them had a different kind of fellowship and went out in the world, and they got carried away when they started to move to the south, and through the Middle East, and saw whole cities that evolved and were so in tune with nature, or North Africa, or the Greek Islands. And as you went north, you saw cities evolved in different ways, how churches changed with the light, that the windows were small in Italy and they got bigger and bigger as you went north to let the light in. And more interesting, now that I look back, we were making personal discoveries and transitions, marrying and building lives very different from those of our parents and families. Dolf died last year, but I see Maki each time I go to Japan. Now he comes here more and we talk, and as we read recent biographies we realize we were making these discoveries and we realize Corbusier and many others made these voyages of discovery. What I'm trying to say is, once again, I found something different than what I went to look for.

Anyway, Sue and I were sure we were going to go somewhere, and I was asking about a job here, a job there. It got to the point where one day I met Sue for dinner and I said, "How would you like to go to Karachi?" I was thinking of an Indian restaurant in New York—and she said, "Well, we'll have to get a lot of shots, but why not?" [laughter]

A day or so after that I met with Professor Werner Moser. Werner Moser was a Swiss architect, a professor at the ETH, and one of the founders of CIAM. He had also been one of Frank Lloyd Wright's first three apprentices at Taliesin. Moser was a visiting professor at the Graduate School of Design that year and had offered to be one of my advisors. When I spoke to him about my plan to work abroad he said, "If you want to come to Europe, you could work for my partner who is doing a nuclear research center in Geneva, he could use you for your technical background."

We had decided to get married, the wedding was in August, and after much family trauma, and some additional trauma when the *Andrea Doria*

sank on the way into New York a month before, we had a small wedding in Manhattan and the reception was on the *Andrea Doria*'s sister ship *Cristoforo Colombo* and we sailed off and left everyone on the dock.

- Riess: The family would have liked a larger and more traditional thing?
- Bender: Sue's father was dreaming about the Essex House. We found out later that after we sailed he took everybody to the Tavern on the Green. For us it was the beginning of a wonderful adventure, an exciting step into a world we did not know, a life we could build together, and a very long honeymoon!
- Riess: That is such a lovely picture of the Sert party, the people, the world bursting in. Is it just kind of a metaphor? Did you really talk to those people the night of that party?
- Bender: I knew one or two of them, and we talked to them. We were awed—in a way it was like stepping into a foreign film. And at the very least I experienced how much I wanted to be part of that world. (Back in New York last week I meet one of the students from the first classes I taught at Cooper Union. He spoke about coming to our apartment in Greenwich Village with his classmates and some of our friends. "You were like Nick and Nora Charles," he said. "It all felt so sophisticated, like the world we were looking for.")

When I went to Harvard I felt it was a great opportunity, and I found in many ways I was trying to *be* Harvard. What I was seeing that night at Sert's party was beyond that. There was more freedom in a more fully lived life than being narrowly focused at school. Most of my classmates, and almost all of Sue's colleagues, classmates, friends, at the point where we started to move out and away from things, they were moving back into what was their families—they married, they took regular jobs. While we were living in Europe we would get letters from friends who talked about their apartments, and their furniture. It was a different world for us; looking back, ours was a kind of "university without walls."

I can talk about Switzerland, to give you an idea. Not only were we, but the world was changing. When we first arrived—the Swiss took a two-hour lunch hour and worked half a day on Saturday, and since our office was less traditional than most, after a month or so I proposed that I would take a one-hour lunch hour and wouldn't work on Saturday so Sue and I could take trips. And in the short time we were in Switzerland, everyone went to a one-hour lunch hour, not just in our office. When we first came there were only restaurants, and then Migros [market] put in a cafeteria, because it was catering to people who were looking to have a faster lunch.

Our first experience when we arrived in Zurich, Rudi Steiger [Dr. Rudolph Steiger], the Steiger who was the partner we were going to work with, invited us to lunch at the Kronenhalle, which was and is *the* Zurich restaurant. We sat in this old wooden-paneled restaurant with paintings by Klee and Matisse on the walls, and we started lunch about twelve-thirty or

one, and we were there till four. In this place, this atmosphere, he was telling us his dreams and his picture of the world, and what this project for a nuclear research center meant to him. He spoke about how it was much more than the building, it was how the whole world was changing, and how the new world could be. And he was drawing on the tablecloth. Like at the party, we felt we'd stepped through a mirror to find a world we had been dreaming of.

Riess: It's so interesting that you had to go there to get that.

Bender: I might have been able to find it here. For a while I thought, maybe if it had been ten years earlier, New York would still have been more open. Now I know that one way or another you have to go, you have to get lost before you can find yourself.

Interview 5: September 14

Tape 8: Side A]

Riess: I'm struck by a phrase in your notes, "Inventing a life together." That self-consciousness—was it of the time? Or particular to you two as a couple?

Bender: Well, I'm not sure that we thought of it as "inventing" at the time. It was more discovering, maybe. But I keep coming back to it as I look back, in that so much was changing at the time. In a sense, we both of us came out of boxes, worlds that seemed very closed but also very natural, maybe more like terrariums. You would do this and you would do this and then you would do this, and this was possible and this was not possible. And suddenly we came out and found things were more possible. But also, everything was shifting, the world was changing, and so many of the things which we thought were solid were going away. Some were opportunities that were opening up and some things that were disappearing.

Riess: What's an example of something disappearing?

Bender: Well, some of the traditional ways things were being done. When I was at school and I first was looking for intern jobs during the summer, I remember I had an interview with Gordon Bunshaft at SOM, and I thought he was very special and what they were doing was very special. I walked into—I don't know what floor it was in an office building in New York, and I saw a whole floor of men in white shirts sitting at desks.

Riess: At their drafting tables?

Bender: At their drafting tables. And at the head there was a desk and someone who was a kind of clerk. A phone call came in and he looked on a seating chart, and he saw where the person was and he pushed the button to get the call to him. While I was standing there and looking, someone came and took me to talk to Gordon Bunshaft. And I said, "I don't want to work here."

Riess: It's *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* culture?

Bender: No, well—it sort of was, but even more restrictive in a way. It was a factory at a time when things were moving past factories.

Part of what I want to talk about today when we get to talk about New York is that I started out looking for an office to work in, and then I realized that was not for me. And that I wanted—I didn't put it that way then—what I wanted was a studio. I'm not an artist in the sense of a painter or a sculptor, but I'm an artist in the way I work and prosper. It is a way of working that's less linear and more dispersed and also more diverse. It's how I think of working in a studio. And again, in that SOM office, everyone was doing something and the next day they did the same thing, a different piece of it.

Riess: That *is* the factory, isn't it?

Bender: That is the factory. And in fact what still bothers me at the university [UC Berkeley] is something I wasn't able to change deep down. I was able to move to make it more flexible, the strict hours, divisions, linearity, but a lot of it's still the factory. The school system evolved from the one-room schoolhouse where all the ages, grades, subjects were together. It was less a factory than the industrial model that emerged. Lectures with five hundred people in a room, learning divided into specialties, departments, levels. Everything changed to be a factory. We used to build houses and make homes, and then housing became a product. I've talked about that. But the product involved factories. My interest was following that and trying to put that factory system to work, and I was learning that that didn't make sense for me. And one of the things I realized only when I found other people writing about it—Edward de Bono talks about lateral thinking. It's that when you come to something difficult you don't keep bumping your head on it to try to get to the other side of it but just try to see, is there another route? Is there another way to look at it? And what I was finding is that when everything is changing it's a perfect time for someone who thinks that way.

The other analogy I love to use is the optical illusion we talked about earlier. You know, you're trying to make the thing a star and suddenly you see—wow, that could be three cubes. That possibility is out there if you see it in a different way and figure out how to make the other way work. And if you ask what I'm proud of as a skill, or my creativity, it's somehow saying, "Let's see where there's another way to look at this." And that other way is always that it's in a bigger context than everyone's looking at. SOM—this is not putting down SOM, but it's about that room that had all those white shirts. I still admire SOM as a firm, and they've evolved. But if everything remains structured, and things are seen in boxes, it is very hard to ask the questions about, "Let's see." I realized I wanted to be in a place where I could ask the bigger questions.

I went to engineering school because I wanted to work on housing, and I started—I was working on the cutting edge of the new concrete construction and I said, well, I'm starting out assuming the answer's an apartment house because some architect has decided that, and I need to get closer to those decisions. And so I started to move toward more of a focus on architecture. And as I moved farther into that a larger set of planning concerns emerged, and again, I found I'm not going to be able to solve this problem if I stick with architecture, because there are issues about planning and landscape architecture, and unless I'm in a position where I can deal with all of those and understand all of those, I can't make *my* kind of contribution.

Riess: So then it's very important who you ally yourself with, and where you find your cohort to do this.

Bender: Right, right. And a lot of this was the discovery I made after we came back from Europe.

Riess: Now, back to our chronology. Why Switzerland?

Bender: I have to say, probably the biggest reason I went was because I couldn't go to Paris or Rome. In those days you couldn't get a work permit, and there was very little work going on. And Switzerland was the heart of CIAM. In some ways, it was founded in Switzerland, and there was a lot of both thinking about modern architecture, the International Style and the issues around that, and what was going on in Switzerland. Most of all I went because I had met many of the Bauhaus and CIAM people at Harvard and one of them, Werner Moser, had invited me.

Riess: Had you been reading about this?

Bender: Well, yes—CIAM was founded in the thirties, actually at a castle, [Chateau de] la Saraz, I think it's called, in Switzerland, by a group that included Walter Gropius and Corbusier. And so, in my early attraction to Corbusier and my studies with Gropius, I had read everything and knew so much about CIAM. And to me it was interesting because here was a group of architects who were looking at something bigger than architecture. They didn't talk much about buildings at CIAM meetings. They talked about town planning, and they talked about issues which had been lost for a while, maybe not talked about by anybody, because when a Pope said, "Put a road through," or Baron Haussmann was planning Paris, nobody was talking about the people who lived along the way.

The CIAM people had been accused later of being more formal, more technical or narrow than they should have been, but they talked about recreation; they talked about culture; they talked about housing for poor people; they talked about a landscape; they talked about transportation—and they talked about transportation in a richer way. Corbusier and Sert both talked about the "seven routes" or "seven levels" of travel, beginning when you walked down the hall from your apartment to the stair or elevator to the local street, to bigger and bigger streets and highways, and trying to understand that. Sert fascinated me, in the first time I heard him lecture, talking about how you build a neighborhood.

[Tape 8: Side B]

Bender: Sert talked and wrote about how there was the "radius of the family," where you hugged or embraced, and the "radius of the handshake." He talked about European people and how when they meet their friends each morning they'll always shake hands. There was the radius of, "Hello, Mr. So-and So." He called it the "radius of the nod," when you were walking in the neighborhood, you know someone well enough so you nod. He was defining the way to look at a community. He taught us to think about the distance a child could walk to nursery school, how far old people could go to the store.

For me this was much more interesting. I'd been growing up in New York with Robert Moses, with super highways, and I loved the parks and Jones Beach and all that, but I was understanding, coming from the other side of

the optical illusion, there are other ways to look at neighborhoods and cities. And so going to Europe was part of finding that.

The luck of my arriving in Zurich was that this particular office in Switzerland was busy because they had the job to do for CERN, the nuclear research group. Werner Moser—later I found out that Haefeli Moser Steiger were the Skidmore, Owings & Merrill of Switzerland at that point. They came from quality. Each was a good architect in his own way. They came from the history of the modern movement. The three of them were founders of CIAM. Moser's father had been, along with [Auguste] Perret in Paris, among the first people to use reinforced concrete in designing important churches and buildings in Europe. He was a famous professor before Moser became a professor at the ETH [Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule] in Zurich. Steiger I didn't know so well, and his great strength was he led the hospital-building part of the office, and they were the hospital experts of Switzerland. Rodolph Steiger, Dr. Steiger, had an honorary doctorate to mark his hospital work. It seemed they had designed or re-designed almost every canton hospital in Switzerland. We had four active projects in the office. Because of this work Dr. Steiger and the office were known as people comfortable with new technology and complex projects. So it seemed like a logical place for me with my background and interest.

It turned out the other advantage I brought was that I spoke English. The Steiger office was one of the few places it would have been an advantage. There had been a problem because CERN was being run, primarily, by physicists from Harwell, which is right outside of Oxford, and some Dutch scientists, and so English was their main language. There were twelve different countries in CERN at that point, which had pooled their resources to try to have a place to do nuclear research that could match what the United States was doing. They had a large site outside Geneva, just beyond Meyrin Airport. The site actually lopped over into the French side of the border.

I didn't know very much about the project or the details when Moser offered me the job. He said I'd enjoy Steiger. We really wanted to go. I did not ask much. When he told me how much money I would be making—it was going to be five hundred francs a month—I stopped off at the Swiss consulate, which was near where I was working, and I asked them whether it would be better to bring my car or to get a car in Europe. They asked me how much I would be making and said, "You wouldn't have enough money for gas." [laughter]

So we were married and we sailed to Italy, nine days with stops at Gibraltar and Naples. We spent two weeks on the Italian Riviera, Portofino, and then took the train to Zurich. And on our first day there I think we found we had a lunch appointment with Rudi Steiger. I told you about it, it was one of the great days of my life, our life. We met him at the Kronenhalle for a lunch that stretched out for hours and hours. Here this guy is telling me his dreams and saying I want you to come be part of this team. He talked about the future of atomic energy and how it was

going to change the world, and this was part of it, but also the buildings that they were putting together. He spoke about the collaboration CERN involved, between nations, between scientists from many disciplines, and how our team would include artists as well as the usual professionals.

Riess: What was it about you that elevated you in some way?

Bender: You know, at that point, coming from America, coming from Harvard, and being an engineer as well as an architect, and with recommendations from Gropius, Sert, and Moser, it was like a door opener. And I could listen and I could respond about dreams, and in this case I had Sue along, which was even—I mean, Sue wasn't talking a lot, but he could feel her spirit, our spirit. We were loving it and we were going to plunge in. We were going to be part of, we did become part of the family. We were not Americans who were coming to work for a big company—and we met Americans who did come and live the American style. We wanted just the opposite—we were coming to make Zurich part of our lives.

The office had just moved out of the main office on the Limmat in the center where the Haefeli Moser Steiger was. They'd taken over a big house near the lake that had belonged to a doctor—not bought, I guess they'd rented, and moved the office into the house. But there were about thirty people working there when I came, maybe three or four in a room, different rooms in this house, and they were from all over. They were from Sweden, from Italy, they were from all of those countries. There was Oloo, a man from Nigeria who they took because it was fun to have a man from Nigeria there.

Riess: How great.

Bender: In that conversation two different things came out that were interesting to me. One—he told me the story of how they got the job, and why they picked *them* rather than someone else. And it was a story of building the CERN cyclotron building, and the physicists had come to them and said, “We know how a cyclotron should be, and we only need you to make the shell.” And when Rudi and his son Peter looked at it, it was an enormous building, because the cyclotron had to be shielded by these great, heavy blocks of concrete with lead in them. And to move the blocks around you needed a giant gantry. So they had to lift the blocks up and pile them up to make them—so it had to be very high.

Rudi and Peter, who eventually led the project and is our lifelong friend, who is still a really close friend, they took the sketch home and they looked at it and they said, “You know, if we didn't have to lift those blocks way up in the air, we wouldn't need all that building.” And they said, “Why not put in what you have in a garage, that kind of lift in a pit, and push the blocks onto the lift and then lift them up, rather than lift each block up and put it on top.” And so they had made the bulk of the building way smaller and much easier to operate. When the physicists saw that, they said, “Wow. How come we didn't think of that!”

In a sense it's what I've looked for all my life. When you ask what I like to do, that is it. And the other thing that was interesting to me and I had not understood—I knew I was going to work on some of these buildings. I was going to work on the design of this building, but also a much bigger and more complex building, a proton synchrotron. The proton synchrotron involved a two hundred meter diameter circle of electro-magnets buried in the ground to speed the electrons around at speeds close to the speed of light. (There was also a large experiment hall at the end of it in which all the experiments were put together.) With the scientific teams we worked on the technical problems of how you make that work, how you keep the circle a perfect circle, when even the effect of the moon, as it does on the tides, could distort the circle in one way. The temperature changes distorted it in other ways.

But I found out that we were also doing the master plan for the CERN complex, which was just beginning and had the potential to grow to be something *way* beyond anything we ever dreamed that we were making. I was working on a master plan, a campus plan, for the first time.

Riess: A *physical* master plan, as if it were to be a town.

Bender: Well, more like a university campus. It started off to be a physical master plan for basically the different machines and the laboratories and administration. But I was able to engage it at the point, and with the Steigers pushing me, to look at that, to start to ask, "Don't you want a center where people meet? Where they come together?" So I got to work on the buildings for the cyclotron and the proton synchrotron, and also on the central complex of administrative and commons activities. It was also my first chance to take on landscape and ecological issues with some very talented people as colleagues and clients.

The central building that I worked on housed the administration. It also had dining facilities and meeting facilities and gardens. It became a symbol, the core, in which people and their work came together. It changed the conception from having the machines at the core to having this building as a core and represent how the people and their laboratories were going to grow out.

A couple of years ago Peter and I went to the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of CERN. At first we couldn't find the original buildings, it'd grown so, the trees and gardens had grown up. It was quite an amazing experience to see.

That office was a wonderful experience, being able to work on this. It was even more interesting because, for a big part of the time, I would fly once a week to Geneva where the project was, from Zurich, flying across country. It was only Switzerland, but it was flying—but the two cultures were so different which was, again, fascinating to see. There was the culture of the scientists and being able to talk to the scientists. And my job was basically to bring that back to the office. Although I should say at the same time that Rudi Steiger, Professor Steiger, asked Sue if she would

give him English lessons. And so Sue was teaching him and later the other son, Martin, English, and several other people in the office, English. But I was one of the main interpreters from the scientists back to the office.

But to come back to it, we stayed the first couple of days in the Hotel Platterhof near the university, over a beer hall, and one of the first days we were there we were searching the newspaper for apartments and must have been looking kind of lost, and this woman came over and she said, “You look lost. Can we help?” She turned out to be Elisabeth Kubler-Ross.

Riess: Really!

Bender: Of course she wasn’t “Elisabeth Kubler-Ross” then. She and Manny, her American husband, Manny Ross, had just graduated from medical school and they were beginning to practice. And she became a lifelong friend.

Riess: That doesn’t sound very Swiss, to just come over like this, “You look lost.”

Bender: No. We looked lost and dispirited in the beer hall under the place where we were staying. Well, he was American, and they had experience with moving and transitions, and it was an open time, and it wasn’t very Swiss.

The whole thing got very un-Swiss. A few days later in the office I saw one in the *Zurcher Zeitung*—it looked like it was right across the street, and I looked out the window and it *was* right across the street, and I started talking about this in the morning and rushed over during lunch hour and met the manager, Kurt Schwegler, and he was really interesting, he was a poet whose brother owned the building and let him live there in turn for managing it. It was a four-story apartment building. And I looked at a modern apartment, one room with a balcony that actually faced the office across the street. From the balcony you could see the lake, two blocks away. There were four rooms on our floor and a kitchen that was a fairly big space that had four hotplates for the different people, and a toilet down the hall and a bathtub and sink. It looked like heaven. He offered it to us at a pretty good rate.

I called Sue to come down and meet me after the office and look at it, and I went back to the office, and at that point I could hear a funny buzz—and in the afternoon there was a tea *pause* where the office would take a coffee break.

Riess: What did you call it?

Bender: A tea pause—pronounced *pow-zeh*. Tomi Schweitzer, who was the office manager, came up to me and he said, “Herr Bender. We should talk.” It turned out that while they had been fixing the building up to move into it during the summer, when all the windows were open, it became quite clear that most of the building we were moving into was occupied by

prostitutes. And in fact, many of the people at the office were having a great time watching through the window.

Anyway, we were captured by the thing and we moved in. It turned out it was much more complicated, in a nice way. Apparently, until recently the women all used to stand in Paradeplatz, which was a main tram station. One day the wife of one of the equivalent of a city council member was going to meet her husband there, and as she rushed to meet him, the girls thought she was new competition and they ran over to her and started hitting her with their pocketbooks to drive her away. It caused a big scandal and they changed the law so they couldn't stand there, so they all got dogs, so they could walk dogs. And we lived in this house with the women and the dogs, and they would be going up and down the stairs all the time.

Apparently the room that had been advertised was not the one we got, it was a smaller room, but when the manager saw this American couple, he thought it would be fun to have us there. He moved Trudi—I think her name was Trudi, to another room. And there was a telephone in the room, but before the number got switched over we had to agree if someone called for Trudi to say she was, "Nicht hier." We were told that she had a big family and her brothers or cousins might be calling. [laughter] One time Sue answered that Trudi was "not here," and someone said, "But what about you?" Sue said, "Oh, you wouldn't like me." And he said, "Well, I've seen you." So, that was a little eerie, but it became one end of our life. We set up a household and were cooking on Klausstrasse along with the women of the street. Then Sue began to teach English at Berlitz, and they wouldn't let her use her new married name, because Bender is such a Swiss name.

Riess: Is it?

Bender: The biggest hardware store in Zurich was F. Bender. So she changed to her maiden name of Rosenfeld to be able to teach at Berlitz. It turned out that because she couldn't speak any German, she was in demand, because that's the way Berlitz works. Everything is in the language you are teaching and there is a lot of "this is my eye," "this is my nose" in the beginning. Eventually she started her own school. She had a ten-year old, who was the son of an American family that was there on a sabbatical from Yale, and she had lots of architects coming for lessons. From the office we would be able to look out and see Sue giving her lesson to Dr. Steiger, and everyone in the office used to relax because the boss was over there.

Riess: And did you make the room charming?

Bender: Well, it was charming. It was lovely and beautiful, with high ceilings and big glass doors to the deck and lots of sunlight, and it looked into the gardens across the street. Eventually—well, during the time we were there the Hungarian revolution came, and the office took some refugees to work in the office. Later, when we heard that Sue's parents were coming to

visit, and to explain all these women living in the building, we told them we had shared the rooms on our floor with Hungarian refugees. [laughter]

The people in the office were interesting. We got to meet incredible people. Willy Walter was the chief designer and my mentor. He was a wonderful spirit and remains a very special friend. Willy had worked for a while in the US, for a year for Howard Friedman in San Francisco. He came back to Zurich because he preferred a country “where people chose one five-dollar tie rather than five one-dollar ties.” Later Willy designed the Swiss pavilion at the Osaka World’s Fair and he made a magnificent lighting design for the Bahnhofstrasse.

In Zurich we were asked to make a Thanksgiving dinner, because no one knew what stuffing was. We found a turkey in the Globus Department Store and we made it in a friend’s oven. People were still puzzled by stuffing! It was a wonderful time. We learned from living. We bought things fresh from the stores downstairs or around the corner. We ate in a different way; we lived in a different way. We had conversations. We found people who were incredibly well educated in different ways than we expected. We met people who knew the history of their city so well and in ways that no one in New York might know New York. We met people who knew Western movies better than we did. And we met people who knew English literature better than we did. In their classes they’d read Mark Twain and Faulkner and other great writers in English and French and German, and with more detail.

We were fascinated by the languages and the cultures—in particular the Swiss, which was stiff in many ways. The rules about the house were strict and you had a certain day or time when you were responsible for cleaning out the lobby, which rotated. They had a wonderful washer and dryer, energy-saving, way ahead of us at that point, and you had certain days you could use it. We got used to a way of urban living that was different—not having a refrigerator. The tram system, walking, it was more urbane than the way we lived in New York. And for the first time I understood something about the meaning of cosmopolitan, as well as urbane.

Riess: What’s the distinction you’re thinking.

Bender: Well, people were more—the cultures blended more. In New York you had all the cultures, but the people who you met on a regular basis, they’d left the culture behind more, whereas here you were working with people who were fresher in the culture. They didn’t leave their culture behind to be there. And we also saw professionals in a different way. The CIAM movement had a core of people—one of my heroes in the past had been Sigfried Giedion, and he lived there in Zurich and was part of daily life. I would see him in our local café and I could work part-time for him sometimes translating. He wrote in English, but he needed help making it “American English.” Alfred Roth, again one of the founders of the modern movement, was there. We became friendly. We could always find him at his table in the Kunsthaus café and spent hours listening to his

stories. I last saw him there, just before he died a few years ago, and again heard how he got his Mondrian painting through Swiss customs by showing the agent it was the wrapping to protect some Hodler prints.

There was a club called the Belles Arts Club that used to meet and have discussions about art and architecture. I couldn't go to most because it was so intensely in German or sometimes in French, but I'd get invited once in a while. And once they made a point of inviting me because Lewis Mumford was coming, and they were all excited because Mumford was not only coming, but he was coming from Marseilles, where he had just been to see the new Corbusier building, Unite d'Habitation, which everybody loved. And basically he said, "Yes, I saw the building. But why in the world are you so excited about it? What you've done here," and he mentioned the project called Neubuhl, which had been done just before the war, and in which the Steiger family had lived during the war, he said, "Neubuhl is the future." Neubuhl was a group of modern houses built in a very dense way in the countryside, to make community. There were public spaces and shared spaces and lower-rise, two- or three-story buildings. And he said, "That's the future." And they were half angry and half flattered.

And for me it was really interesting, because again, the Marseilles building with its tower and the idea that there'd be shops on the tenth floor and a playground on the roof seemed like the future, but it got me thinking again that the routes are not always where we think they are. I have said that we had gone to Europe with the idea that we were going to find the new—Picasso was there and Corbusier was there. And we left behind the art coming to New York, the emergence of redoing downtowns that was happening in New York. We went to Europe to see modern planning and building and we were blown away by towns that were built without planners, growing out of place and climate, the land, materials, and traditions, places of incredible beauty. We traveled north and south in Europe, north to Finland and south through the hill towns and into the heel of Italy.

We were loving seeing it and drinking it in, not asking so much what we were liking, but understanding it in some ways. It turned out that Zurich was a wonderful place for us because while it wasn't Paris, we could go after work on Friday night to Paris and come back by Monday morning. I told you how we rearranged the lunch hours at the office so the weekends were free. We could go to Milan. Rome was farther on the train, as Venice, but we found the time on long weekends and holidays.

Riess: You did this all on your five hundred francs?

Bender: Well, we started to get more money.

Riess: Because Sue was working.

Bender: Yes, and they raised my salary once I got there.

Riess: And had you savings? You had always been working.

Bender: We had some money, yes, and we also had the money that we were going to use to come back, we had that put aside, which we eventually spent.

We fell in love also with the furniture. We had never really looked at furniture before, but Zurich was a center for modern furniture. One of the things we would do almost every free day is to walk to see some of the furniture stores and the modern furniture. Wohnbedarf was our favorite. In New York all our friends and neighbors had traditional furniture. We didn't know anyone who had a house like we have now, with Mies van der Rohe chairs or even Eames chairs and Aalto things.

Riess: The Danish modern hadn't arrived?

Bender: By the time we got back there was Bonnier's on Madison Avenue with Finnish design, and Georg Jensen with many Scandinavian designers, and then Design Research came. Knoll was there with the old masters of Modern, but it was mostly moving toward office furniture.

Riess: What did you buy?

Bender: We bought Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona chairs. And that turned out to be the fare back. Not knowing how we were going to get back, we figured—and we didn't know how to get the chairs back.

[Tape 9: Side A]

Bender: Mies was designing the Barcelona chairs in Stuttgart, I think, where he was at the time. They were being designed for the pavilion in Barcelona, and they were being assembled by Wohnbedarf, this furniture company in Zurich. The leather and cushions were made in Italy, the steel frames in Germany, so the models were traveling back and forth. If you know the chair, the steel frame is welded in one piece. But in order to get them to go back and forth they made them to come apart, and the ones we bought were one of the models that were made to travel back and forth. If you look at our chairs carefully you can see the lap joints that were made so they came apart and could go in a box.

Riess: And have you had to have them re-leathered?

Bender: Oh yes. The leather seats crumbled very quickly, and when we were living in New York we continued the tradition that had supported us in Europe and we were hosts to everyone who came through. One of the people from Wohnbedarf came to New York and she stayed with us. What we used to do actually is put the Mies cushions on the floor so people could sleep in our one-room New York apartment. And she said, "This leather is terrible." The leather was defective and she sent us some new ones. And eventually in Berkeley in our sunny living room they also crumbled. By that time they were so expensive and we despaired, but Hiroko Kurata, a designer friend in Japan, found we could get them from Knoll in Tokyo,

still made in Italy. So the ones we have now we've had for twenty-five years and they're still doing well.

Riess: That's a very neat little story.

Bender: We had other really special trips—later on Rudi Steiger agreed that every three months we could take two or three weeks off and travel, so we traveled everywhere, going up to Holland where there was another center of early modern architecture and planning. We visited [Jacob B. “Jaap”] Bakema who was one of the Dutch architects who was the last leader of CIAM as it phased out. We also visited Aldo van Eyck who was a young Dutch architect who was very influential in the changes to CIAM. We visited van Eyck's Fresh Air School and stayed for two days in his home and office. We became friends with these people and we spent some wonderful days with Willem van Tijen who showed us the great Van Nelle factory designed by Johannes Brinkman. We had a rare bout of food poisoning and he took us to his weekend house to recuperate!

Riess: Do you think there was a different way you become friends with people in Europe?

Bender: Well, what we found is that there was a tradition which we picked up and carried on of people traveling, people you introduce, people taking travelers in and becoming friends and passing them on. It was a way of learning your profession. Most architecture students couldn't do the Grand Tour in the sense that it was once done, but they could do this kind of traveling if you passed friends on. And it continues now with students who I help to travel and they continue the tradition—there are generations of that going. It works for some people; it doesn't work for others.

But particularly at that time the CIAM group would—you know, there have been movements before, but it was unusual to have an international movement like that where they really made the effort to have people from all over. It began before the war and they had Russians as well as Swiss. There were no Americans in it originally, and it didn't last that long, they decided to close themselves down right about the time we came. I think the last major meeting was in Dubrovnik the year we arrived.

Riess: The way it worked was big conferences?

Bender: Well, they weren't big conferences. Everyone brought work, presented it and shared, discussed, critiqued it. Corbusier designed a standard format to bring the work on and a way to hang them in a grid—the CIAM grid—so that everything was displayed in a way that went from global to local and involved transportation and recreation and housing and work. We have one of those boxes with one of those grids that Wiener and Sert made. People would put up their work and they would spend days discussing the work between themselves. They were never big—toward the end they began to get to be big conferences and people came just to be connected with CIAM. People started to put CIAM on their stationery. That began to change CIAM, and soon after, it ended.

Somewhere, I think it was at Dubrovnik, Corbusier didn't come, and he sent a letter saying he thought it was time to disband, it was becoming something different. Gropius left, and a group led by van Eyck and Bakema from Holland and some English people carried it on for a few years. They called it Team 10, which was one of the groups within CIAM. But there's a whole literature that comes from that period. More recently there's a lot of criticism of CIAM because it's felt it was too formal, too cold, too influenced by Corbusier.

Riess: Too Swiss?

Bender: Not too Swiss. Corbusier was Swiss-born, but at that point he was very French. It was more, like so much good planning CIAM was misunderstood. These were frameworks that were meant to evolve and grow richer, drawing on place and tradition and architecture.

Riess: Was there anything about being Jewish in Switzerland that was notable? Noticeable?

Bender: It was noted. The Steigers, in particular, had been involved in helping refugees. During the war they had taken refugees and hidden them. Neubuhl, in general, the community, was known for having taken people in. There was one, I forgot his name, an older man in the office who was Jewish and he was sort of known as Jewish. He was active in a synagogue, but there was not much about them. I do remember that on our tax form there was a place for religion, and a percent went to a church.

What was more noticeable in our office was the man from Nigeria, who was a very colorful character: every day he dressed like everyone else, but if he went on vacation he'd put on a costume of robes which it turned out were not native—he had gotten them in St. Gallen, Switzerland. When Oloo went out on the road he hitchhiked, and he'd immediately get picked up and taken to the mayor or other important people in the next town and they'd introduce him, make dinner for him, and study him like a rare bird. Another friend, also Nigerian, was a doctor, and had studied in Zurich, and our friend Reni Trudinger, who was a furniture designer, was very close with him. If we'd be in a restaurant with him people would come up and they would touch his hair, or people would point and say to their children, "*negerli, negerli.*" They were not used to seeing black people there and were curious.

During the time we were in Zurich, I got to meet Corbusier again because he had a big exhibition at the Kunsthhaus and the Steigers were his hosts. Paul Wiener, the partner of Sert who I'd met earlier, came to Zurich toward the end of my stay, and came to the office with a proposition. Paul had been asked through his work with the UN in New York to do a UN exhibition on the future of atomic energy. He came to the office to ask if they would work with him on showing some of the things going on in the research. And I got to know him better at that point, and we talked about the fact that they'd try to find a job for me when I came back. Later I saw

Paul Wiener's practice as a way I wanted to live and work, because I wanted a studio, not an office, and the way of life that represents.

Riess: Where was he from?

Bender: Paul was from Vienna. He came to the US in the twenties. He used to say he was a "real Wiener." And then he was a partner of Sert, who was Spanish. Paul kept his connections with Europe, the modern movement, and he was also a founder of CIAM. In the thirties he married Alma Morgenthau, the daughter of Henry Morgenthau, the secretary of the treasury in the Roosevelt days. And at that point he was able to be influential in bringing refugees over, and Einstein was one of the people who he helped guarantee, and that's part of the connection to Einstein. There were a number of other famous German scholars, artists, violinists, who Paul helped to bring over and were connected to that German intellectual community in New York. We later discovered there was another community like that in Los Angeles, of people who were scholars, music and art people. They needed sponsors and sponsorship, and once here many continued successful and influential careers.

Riess: You noted that Corbusier was working on Chandigarh when you met him?

Bender: He was working on Chandigarh at that time, and they had a big exposition at the Kunsthalle, the big museum, of models, beautiful models that had been made in India, wooden models, carved by craftsmen of Chandigarh.

Riess: That is to me the most wonderful thing he did—that and that little chapel in Ronchamp.

Bender: Yes, well, visiting the chapel in Ronchamp was, at that point, our goal. Sue and I, the first chance we got we went to visit it. It was our pilgrimage. Ronchamp was pure poetry, a very moving experience. Being there together was—still is—a special bond. And Corbusier was our hero on so many levels. We went to Marseilles just after—it was a year or so after the Unite opened. I was impressed, not only by the building and how it set into, made a place in the land, but by the fact that the name of the bus stop was Corbusier. I went back on the fiftieth anniversary a few years ago with my friends from Marseilles. It was wonderful to see it looking even better and feel the richness of the landscaping. It had gone downhill for some years, and now it's a really popular place to live and you can rent rooms there. People have apartments that they rent out like a bed and breakfast.

But it was exciting to discover those things and to experience them and feel them, and to go up to the roof of that building in Marseilles and see the children's playground up there and to look out and see images of what a new world could be like. To see very small apartments that had space. The ceilings soared, they had balconies, they had mezzanines in a very tight space—all the things we'd never—you couldn't see such apartments in New York, and yet they were built for and occupied by working people.

I remember while Corbusier was in Zurich there was also an exhibition in the museum on the work of Max Bill. Max Bill was a really good artist and some of the things he did were really minimal, like a big painting with just a circle. And one of them had three circles. I hadn't noticed, but Corbusier looked and the title—the title was *Three Circles*, I think, and it was dated maybe, 1955-1956. Corbusier asked him, "Max, in which year did you make two circles?" [laughter] But there was also such a feeling of being in a world that was accessible. We were in that world. In New York most often we felt we were looking in on that world!

Riess: And if *you* felt that way!

Bender: One of the trips we went to Finland with an introduction from Werner Moser. We spent a day at Aalto's house, and met Aalto. His work made an enormous impression on me. He had a workroom and a big studio with a little bit of a balcony over his desk. And he would be able to go up onto the balcony to look down at the drawing. (When I was with Gropius at Harvard, Gropius would sometimes get up on the drawing table so he could look down on a student's drawing, see it more like a whole.) To be there in Finland, and feel the air—the aroma of the trees and the land was extraordinary. Not Ronchamp, but not less moving, robustly beautiful.

Toward the end of our time in Europe, I would be sent or asked if I wanted to go to conferences to talk about the office's work. One of these was a conference on hospital design, and I went to show some of the latest work on a hospital in Freiberg that the office was doing. And I met this Israeli man, Arieh Sharon, who it turned out later had been born on a kibbutz. He was in his sixties then. He had been born on a kibbutz in Israel, and the kibbutz chipped in to send him to the Bauhaus to study architecture. At that point he had one of the three big offices in Israel. I found out later—it seemed very funny—his name was Arieh, another one was Dov Carmi, and the third was Zeev Rechter. And Arieh meant *lion*, and Dov meant *bear*, and Zeev was *fox*. And it actually described the personalities of the three of them.

Sharon was a big, outgoing, easy man, and when I met him and I told him what we were doing in Europe he said, "Why don't you come to Israel? We're doing a new hospital in Beersheba and you could tell us what they do in Swiss hospitals." And we were toward the end of—well, CERN was getting to the point where it was more about working drawings and we had to start thinking about what we could do next. This seemed a way to experience another culture. And so we decided to go to Israel.

Riess: Kibbutz architecture, what is that?

Bender: Well, kibbutz turned out to be interesting not for the architecture but—as we were experiencing in so many areas we found out what was interesting was not what we thought was going to be interesting. Many of the kibbutzim used modern architecture and were adapting forms to the desert climate, but more interesting, like Neubuhl, they were designed as communities.

In 1958, the spirit of community that inspired the kibbutz was the pride of Israel, much more than the traditions they had left behind. One of the things we discovered was that with growing affluence there was a constant battle in the kibbutz to keep people active in the kibbutz. So in the early days the social rooms would have a shared radio, and people would all come together to listen. As radios got cheaper, people began to buy their own radios and listen in their rooms. And so the kibbutz got television sets very early in order to bring them back in. The kibbutz was where you lived and you worked and shared dreams and sacrifice. The community built around that, but even in those early days—Israel was evolving from a nation of pioneers to an advanced modern state.

We found there were more than just kibbutzes—there were different kinds of communities. I'm trying to remember. There was another name, *moshav*, which was a different kind of agricultural thing. In the kibbutz the fields belonged to everyone and everyone worked. In the *moshav* it was more like a colonial settlement in New England, with farmhouses. I had looked forward to seeing the forms communities without cars would take and was surprised to find that they felt more like the summer camps I remember than the early agricultural villages of Europe or the US.

When we finally found ourselves in Israel, what turned out to be interesting that I hadn't understood is Sharon had been working on a National Plan for Israel, looking at how the country could be one large regional city, in a sense, with big cities like Jerusalem and Haifa and Tel Aviv anchoring these new smaller cities and kinds of communities like kibbutz and other farming communities. He defined or described what some of them were, and they were trying to find a network to make a country that had agriculture and urban things built together.

But to go back, when we decided to go to Israel we couldn't find anything in the library in Zurich about Israel except Arthur Koestler's books, and one called *Promise and Fulfillment*, which was an early Zionist book about Palestine before it became Israel. In Tel Aviv it turned out that we were eligible to stay in a place called Beit Brodetsky. *Beit* means house, and Beit Brodetsky was defined as an Anglo-Saxon hostel for professionals. "Anglo-Saxon" turned out to be anyone who spoke English when they got there. It felt a lot like International House here in Berkeley at the beginning of the academic year.

To get to Israel we went to Marseilles on the train and we took a ship called *Aliyah*, which means, in a sense, "the return." *Aliyah* went to Haifa by way of a stop in Naples, and in Naples a whole group of people got on who were clearly refugees, coming from Poland. Using my more Schweizerdeutsch than Yiddish, I could talk to some of them and found out they *weren't* from Poland but they were Russians from exactly the area where my mother had lived between Minsk and Pinsk. I think I told you this story earlier, but I told them that my mother was from Minsk and Pinsk and they laughed, and when I mentioned the name of the town, they knew where it had been. It had been wiped out.

When we arrived in Israel we went to our Anglo-Saxon hostel, which was a modern building designed for transient professionals who they hoped would stay. And they went to something called an *ulpan*.

Riess: A what?

Bender: Ulpan. An ulpan was like a camp where you went to learn about customs, the country, Israel, the language, as the first step in being resettled.

When I got to Sharon's office, it turned out the hospital was beginning, but it was going in fits and starts. And with my interest in such things they asked me if I wanted to work on a housing project in Nazareth. I had never understood Nazareth was part of Israel. The idea of the project was to design something that the new people could build, largely build themselves. Well, it turned out even more strange. When I got to the site, that's where some of the people who'd been on the boat were coming. Some of the men, who were actually most of them academically trained, electrical engineers, the Russians hadn't let them come to Israel, but they let them go to Poland, and Poland let them come to Israel. But they had no building skills at all.

So the original idea was we were going to design something where they would do the labor. We originally thought that it was really much better to hire local laborers who could do the stonework, walls and these people could do the finishing, and particularly do things like wiring and plumbing. As the plan developed we found a better strategy, and we organized the local, Palestinian craftsmen to train the immigrants. In the process the two groups learned to know and work together. It was—when I came to California we found a similar lesson. All the prefabrication experts said you prefabricate a core with all the wiring and plumbing in it and anyone can do the lumber. But most of the Mexicans who came up to work in the fields didn't know how to do lumber, they knew how to make adobe buildings. But they did know how to do wiring and plumbing because part of field work is always adjusting the pumps and plumbing. So again, you learn that what you thought was the solution is not the solution for everyone. We found an opportunity to train the migrant workers in a year-round trade.

But the project in Nazareth is wonderful. It's beautiful. It comes down the hill, it's made out of stone that came right out of the ground, and the Polish people were eventually able to build and use the formwork for the ceiling, which involved concrete slabs with mesh in them. And we got to see it pretty much built while we were there.

The place where we were staying—we arrived at night and couldn't tell very much about where it was. I heard strange noises in the morning and looked out and there were sheep all around. When we left eight months later it was all housing, a new neighborhood. Everything was going so fast. So I worked on the hospital in Beersheba. We used to go every other week to Beersheba, and fortunately went on Thursdays when there was a camel market. The Bedouin people came into the camel market.

I worked on the master plan for the hospital and on prototype techniques for mixing native materials and construction workers with high-tech infrastructure and equipment. I left when the hospital was just beginning construction, but had a special chance to influence things like the way the nurses and the staff housing was going to be. Again, mixing experienced modern nurses and student nurses from European, Middle Eastern and Palestinian backgrounds. The Beersheba Hospital was part of Kupat Holim, a national plan, like Kaiser, really well run and with a more health-centered approach than the treatment approach I was used to in US and Swiss hospitals.

I also learned the lesson that the hospital was badly penalized by the gifts and donations from the United States. They used to talk about “Cleveland wants.” The people who were donating the money insisted that they have a rigorous kosher kitchen—that meant two kitchens. They had a whole series of things they insisted on so that the hospital would be up to the standard of Cleveland, which meant that it couldn’t serve as many people as they wanted. But we got, in some of the nurses and staff housing to be able to make more of a community as a structure rather than the barracks that were originally intended.

The other thing that happened that was really a special treat for me and a learning experience—an architect named Heinz Rau had come from Germany along with people like Erich Mendelsohn. (Mendelsohn stayed long enough to do a few beautiful buildings in Jerusalem and then he came here and taught at Berkeley for a while, and worked on Maimonides Hospital and some houses.) But Rau had the job to do a small synagogue that had its own small library [Israel Goldstein synagogue, on the Givat Ram campus of the Hebrew University in west Jerusalem]. The synagogue was conceived as a simple space, about forty feet in diameter under a dome, and the idea is you’d come in under the dome and go up a stair to a platform, and the platform didn’t quite reach the outer walls, so the light bounced off the ground and came up and softly lit the space with a light that moved and changed with the clouds and the seasons.

He needed to find an engineer who could help him because he wanted it to be a shell structure, a thin shell, and it came down to the fact that nobody knew how to do the formwork for a shell, and it was going to be incredibly expensive. Our original conversation was about my experience at Corbetta and estimating the Guggenheim. But again, it was a situation where they had loads of local Arab workers who could do a dome out of concrete block. So the shell that was originally supposed to be four inches thick was more than twelve inches thick, made out of block. The shape was not quite the same. I liked it better, and I suspect, in the end, that thick block may have helped it to stay cooler inside. But again, you learn that you can’t decide what’s the best until you have a bigger picture.

[Tape 9: Side B]

Bender: Well, you can’t really decide on whether something like prefabrication or a factory-made thing makes sense until you look at a much bigger picture

than the building site. We understood later the reason the Northern European countries, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, and to a certain extent France, went so far into prefabricated concrete housing systems after the war was that during World War II there were so many deaths of young men that the craftsmen, the workers, were wiped out. The old craftsmanship was gone. On the other hand, to rebuild their economies these countries needed to build things they could export, and if you devise a system of prefabricated housing you could do it in other countries as well as at home. Fewer people would have to learn building trades and could move to new and higher-paying industries.

The Dutch, in particular, who had been working on this—when I was in Greenland they were using Dutch precast concrete. The Dutch and the Danes made the biggest start. They were small countries, but they could export the technology, they could bring the techniques to a country and show people there how to use them. Larsen-Nielson and Jespersen were two of the most successful. The different systems worked in different ways, but they brought the technology for doing it. Concrete is a product, the bulk of which is in every country, the stones and the cement. And so really it was an international trade.

Later, when I was at Berkeley, one of the students, John Liu, who I had originally known from Cooper Union who came to Berkeley for a graduate degree asked me if I'd be interested to go to Taiwan where his father—they'd come with Chiang Kai-shek from the mainland—was the minister of construction. They were thinking of getting into adopting prefabricated housing because they realized they weren't going to go back to the mainland. Many of the top people in Taiwan, and this was in the seventies, were still living in temporary housing because they kept saying, "We're going back to the mainland." And so they [the ministry of construction] were going to adopt prefabricated housing, and they were looking at Japanese systems and Scandinavian systems and asked if I would come and give them some advice.

When I got there, what I saw was they were putting up buildings ten stories high at that point, with bamboo scaffolding. They were like ants going up and down. People worked ten hours a day, thirty days a month—they'd get a day off every month. Labor was so cheap. I said, "It doesn't make sense to be bringing in an industrialized system when you have this labor. Why not adopt the modules of the industrialized system, understand what an industrialized system will be, and keep using your labor-intensive method till these people can get more profitable jobs?" Profitable for the country. "If you understand how these buildings go together you can start by making panels, and then you can make walls—and eventually you'll do industrialized buildings as the labor force moves out of minimal labor carrying concrete on their heads up and down these ramps."

Eventually they did develop a very high-tech computer industry, and the generation of laborers got absorbed in much more productive work, and they switched to buildings that are more and more industrialized. Nowadays Taiwan is one of the most industrialized countries in the world.

Riess: That's a big impact you had.

Bender: Well, you're asking what I do. It's coming from outside and seeing things with fresh eyes, and coming to look at a bigger picture. If I'd been brought in by a construction company, I wouldn't have been able to either see the issue in this bigger way or to have the influence that I could have coming from the ministry looking at the country's problem.

Riess: When you said something like that, was there a chorus of, "Yes, we've been thinking that."

Bender: No, it was a beginning. They actually brought in some Japanese systems in the next year, and after they had the kinds of problems which anyone who knew anything about it would have said they would have had—those systems are like so many of the linear systems we have now, if one thing breaks—it's like the light rail.

But with the prefabricated systems, we learned it early. Peter Steiger, Rudi Steiger's older son who Rudi sent to the United States to study and work with Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin—both of them were really robust people, and Peter had more energy for doing than for schools, and Rudi hadn't realized that Peter was too robust for Taliesin, but he ended up going to Arizona and he loved the working part, the chance to build something with your hands.

Riess: Robust? I'm not sure what you're meaning.

Bender: Well, the two of them are big force fields and do everything with an energy. The Steigers invited me to their house on the other side of the lake from where we were living at that time, on a Sunday. Dr. Steiger was a Sunday painter, and he was painting. I see this guy sitting there with two paintbrushes, and he's doing the background, the clouds, with one hand and he's doing the landscape with the other. Mrs. Steiger was a sculptor, and the house was filled with these giant figures of sculpture. If you go to Zurich, her sculptures are still around in front of hospitals and public places. Peter, when he came back from the US he had a big Chevrolet convertible he drove—he did things fast, he did things with energy. He took over the CERN project because he was a sort of American-like doer person and they loved that he was running it.

But the prefabricated—during the time we were there together he was also trying to work on prefabricated systems. One was for Swissair. I worked with him on developing a precast concrete system called Elementbau to do storage buildings at the airport. It was a more sophisticated system than the Schokbeton we used in Greenland, and we began to develop a more elegant system of concrete panels for housing which over the years we have worked together. When I was here, Ezra had come across an English system that was supposed to be able to turn out panels faster and faster, and Peter came over to look at it and to do things. I worked with him, his brother Martin, and Buro Steiger on a whole variety of four to twenty-story buildings, mid-rise buildings that tried to increase density without

losing amenity. We did studies and found that people want apartments on the top, on the end, and how do you make a building with more tops and ends? Stepping up and stepping down, how do you do that out of an industrial "system? And how do you maximize what you can do with machinery and what you do individually?

Riess: Vernon DeMars—was it at MIT where he designed an apartment building with the elevators somehow so there were half floors?

Bender: Well, yes, the elevators were on outdoor corridors, and they skipped every other floor. The Corbusier building in Marseilles was like that, it stopped on alternate floors and there were balconies and the apartments were interlocked. Those were cutting-edge things that we tried to do.

But to come back to the original question—what I was learning in all of this is that all these tricks are interesting, but the real innovation is someplace else. And that someplace else takes you out of what's traditionally the realm of individual professions.

Riess: Individual professions being architecture or engineering.

Bender: Or business or law even. The modular house industry in California was not going anywhere at the time when I arrived here because you couldn't ship them on the roads because the law limited the width.

Riess: Good example, yes.

Bender: When Alan [L.] Stein became the secretary of business and transportation under Jerry Brown they hired Don Turner away. I had brought Don [Ian Don Turner] to Berkeley. When Don came to the CED and took over the leadership of the Center we began to look at housing systems for California. One of the first things we proposed was increasing the width of modules that you could take on the roads. And that was easier to do because when I first—I'm jumping around—but when I first came here Ezra was asked, and he brought me along as a partner, to do a study for Boeing on what Boeing could do when they canceled the SST, they thought the building industry must be an easy mark for them. They thought, those guys don't know what they're doing and we're so organized, we're so terrific, we're growing and building, we will take over the building industry.

And we looked at the fact—they were making the wings in Kansas City, and the engines were coming from Rolls Royce, and they were putting them together in Seattle. And somehow they could bring those wings on the roads, they got special permits, they changed bridges. So when it came to looking at the housing situation in California we began to look at the possibilities of modular buildings and to find a way to take twelve-foot wide modules on the road, schools could use them and a whole variety of buildings could use them. Later, when Alan hired him away and Don became director of housing and community planning in Jerry Brown's administration the rules were changing.

The other part that came out of the Boeing study was the idea of Boeing as general contractor. Boeing does what general contractors do when they do a house, except on such a different scale. They had ten or twelve ex-generals who were selling hundreds of planes to countries all over the world, but they couldn't work on the retail level and they couldn't work with all the different building codes in all the different parts of the country. What we proposed they *could* do is infrastructure, where you can sell a water supply system or a sanitation system or a better ferryboat or a light rail system and things of that sort to a town or state. And so we thought they could stay away from the houses and get into the infrastructure that supports housing and community. Boeing was really interested in that until the airplane business came back and they dropped it.

But briefly we were able to, again, show that if they could do something, if they could make a unit that would recycle sewage and clean water, which has become one of the technologies of the green movement in places from Germany to Dubai and China, you would have a powerful tool. One example we cited was Stinson Beach. At Stinson Beach you couldn't build, you couldn't get a permit because of the environmental impact of the additional sewage. But Boeing could buy large parcels in places that for nothing, and they could make it livable, buildable, by using these new technologies. You could make places buildable. You could look at the finances of a building in a different way, or building in a different way. Of course this is becoming common now for new communities and older cities. A lot of what I do is about bringing to people ideas of how to look at issues in a different way that works. Minoru Mori and Mori Building is a happy example of a developer who takes a long view and enjoys demonstrating new ideas. Fifteen years ago, in my role as GC-5 Professor at Tokyo University, we proposed this sort of recycling. The Mori Building Company used it at Roppongi Hills and reduced both their demand on the water system and the load on the sewage system.

Riess: I didn't appreciate until I went to Vietnam what technology transfer was about. Vietnam was using great technologies from other countries and I thought, eventually they'll learn how to do it themselves. But there's no reason to do it yourself if it's been developed elsewhere.

Bender: Well, but what's to learn there also is how to profit by making something that someone else will use. To some extent that's what's going on now. We're not making giant cars and sending them to China, we're making cars *in* China, and soon we're learning from China enough so those cars are going to come back here with features we've learned about in China.

At that same time, and this is getting maybe six or seven years ahead, when I was working with AID [Agency for International Development], we were saying that the opportunity to save America's environmental problems might be in South America, where there was a huge need for a better water supply and sanitation. If you could develop it for poor countries, which have a big market, eventually it would be adapted for use here. And in a sense that's what's happening in China right now. They're

doing the new technology which is going to come back to us. International people are going to China to help them do the green technologies which we will end up buying from them. And in each of these cases, what happens is there's so much focus on the product and how you make the product—the automobile industry for years tried to make the automobile a little bit better, add a stereo system, tail fins or different changes in design, a heated seat. Somewhere someone's figuring out how to make a different kind of car, or how to own or use a car in a different way. It's easier to go away, people are quicker to take an innovation when it succeeds somewhere else.

Riess: Okay. Let's end today with you telling me what Sue was doing besides the English teaching when you were in Zurich. You've mentioned her modeling for Balenciaga.

Bender: Well, one of the crazy things—we had all kinds of friends, and one of the friends was a woman Muriel whose husband Mark Clifton was a Swissair pilot. She was a model, and she was beautiful and graceful. One day she called Sue and she said she was sick and she couldn't go to the fashion show in Lausanne, and would Sue go for her? She spent the most incredible afternoon coaching Sue in how to walk and turn, and somewhere I have the pictures of Sue wearing Balenciaga.

Riess: So it was a one-night stand with the Balenciaga.

Bender: The Balenciaga was a one-night stand. But there were other times.

While we were in France we met a painter who wanted to paint Sue, and Sue was very embarrassed but finally she agreed. He said she had a Renaissance head and Picasso shoulders, I think, and he had to paint her. So we went to the studio, and he painted quite quickly quite a nice picture. And then he said, "You can have it for five hundred dollars." At first Sue was horrified. She didn't want to own a picture of herself, and besides, we didn't have five hundred dollars. And then he explained, "If you don't buy it, someone's going to come along, a rich guy from Hollywood who wants a picture of his ugly wife and I'm going to paint over it." We ended up saying sorry, but I have some pictures of it.

Riess: And what did Sue do in Israel?

Bender: Well, in Israel also she taught English.

While she was in Switzerland she began to do some sculptures. She had not done anything like that before, but we fell in love with Giacometti, and there were lots of Giacomettis in the Kunsthaus. She started to make Giacometti-like figures with plaster on wire frames, and that was the beginning of something that she went back to later when we got to New York and she was pregnant with Michael. She started to do ceramics in Greenwich House in New York. And when she came here, it was the ceramics in the Wurster Hall studio more than anything that was attractive

to her. Actually, more than the ceramics, it was the culture and spirit of the people and the studio there.

Riess: Your decision to leave Israel—was there something waiting for you in New York?

Bender: No, no, but we knew it was time. Well, we were going to do one last extravaganza.

But I do want to say more here about Sue. When you ask what Sue was doing—Sue was so much a part of all of this. She didn't work in the office, aside from teaching English to some of the people, but she was part of the spirit of the office which did a lot of things together. And she was at the heart of the friendship with all of these people, and the one who could always ask the question that nobody expected. So much of my ability to look at things from the other side is balanced or outdone by Sue's ability to come even more from the outside and ask that question, and always ask it in a way that makes you think about it, not in a way that's confrontational.

One of the weekends we were in Israel we went to—we often went to Jerusalem, but this time we went on a tour on which you could see seven different synagogues of different cultures, from Yemenites to Hasidic Jews from Poland. On this tour we met a woman from Istanbul who we became friendly with. She was actually an American, married to a man, Fritz Levi, who was European. He worked for Philips Minerals, Royal Philips then, now called Philips Global. He was based in Istanbul, and it turned out they were in the business of importing chrome ore from Turkey to the United States. Also for a while in the office in Israel there was a Jewish architect from Turkey. In Istanbul he had worked restoring the ancient fortifications where they originally stretched a chain across the Bosphorus to block the enemy ships during the Muslim and Christian wars. His name was Sammy Sisa.

Anyway, this woman from Istanbul invited us. So we said, "Well, when we leave, we'll go back through Istanbul." We had always pictured going home through Switzerland where we had left things, so on the way we went to Istanbul. We weren't going to stay with these people, we weren't going to impose, and we stayed in a pretty nice hotel, but Sue got attacked by bed bugs. So that next morning we called the woman and the next day we found ourselves living in this place on the Bosphorus, this big apartment. Among other things Fritz said, "If you ever want to go back by ship—I charter whole ships to take chrome ore back to the US and I can put you on one of the ships."

We didn't stay too long in Istanbul, we wanted to travel in Europe. And it turned out he had a friend in Frankfurt who had the business of chauffeur-driven cars, and he said if we got to Frankfurt where we had another friend, Lou Radner, who was teaching American soldiers—this man would help us. Our picture was to buy a Volkswagen and drive around, and eventually wanted to go to Finland and see Aalto. "Let me know," he

said, “and I’ll let you know when there’s a freighter.” So we bought an old VW with seats that folded back so we could sleep in it. We stayed with Lou, in the bachelor officer’s quarters in Frankfurt. We had bought some goatskin rugs in Istanbul and we spread them on the floor and slept on them. Dogs were not allowed in the BOQ but the strict German maid kept asking Lou, “Where’s the *hundli*?” She was sure we had a dog!

From there we went north and camped out a lot of the days. Eventually we got all the way up to Finland, stayed in Finland, and there we found we could go into Russia. They had just opened Russia up, and individuals rather than groups could visit for two weeks. We left the car in a town in Finland and went by train into Leningrad where I was also able to meet some CIAM people and help them reconnect. When we got back to Finland, there was a message saying that if we got to Istanbul by September, Fritz could put us on the *Fethiye*, and the crossing to Baltimore would take twenty-nine days.

Interview 6: October 5, 2010

[Tape 10: Side A]

Riess: In a note to me you list the topic “Marriage and a New World.” I think about you—in this narration you’re barely in your thirties and you’ve done so much!

Bender: Yes, and I think part of that is hitting me now, and maybe it’s a combination of being eighty and realizing that we’re dealing with Sue’s cancer, and my second son will be fifty this year—these may have been the good times. [laughter]

Riess: Well, seriously.

Bender: But mostly realizing how much was going on in that fifteen-year period, but even the ten years, or the period from when we got back to New York to when we went to California—so much was going on in my life, professional life, personal life, the world changing.

Riess: People talk about the fifties as being kind of a wonderful, gentle time compared to the sixties.

Bender: Well, in our case, my case, the fifties was such an opportunity to open up, to go to school in a way I couldn’t today—that we could get married and go off on a lark almost. And I look at it as the adventures we had, but it’s also the learning, what was soaked in just from living, exploring together, seeing other ways of being and doing, and the richness of it. The other evening we saw some corny movie about Juliet and they go back, she goes to Verona [*Letters to Juliet*—and there’s this picture, they’re driving through the Tuscan countryside and they go to Sienna, and whew, boy did it all look glorious.

It was not just the beautiful picture of Italian hill towns and countryside, but there’s a kind of rhythm that comes with being in Italy—the feeling of sitting at a friend’s house on his porch and feeling the heat and hearing the buzzing of insects and looking out and realizing that everything we’re going to have for dinner is out there, the olive trees, the vines and animals, the plants. If you have been lucky enough to have, and to have shared, days like that they will always be part of you.

Riess: Well, Italians do *live*. Their life is dedicated to the living of it. It’s different isn’t it?

Bender: Yes, and the thing—I just had a message from my friend Paolo Ceccarelli. I knew him from MIT. He eventually became the dean of the school in Venice and then Ferrara. His wife got interested in women’s issues and the family spent a quarter at Santa Cruz. Laura eventually became a senator in Italy, and then the minister of families. And Sue used to joke

that Paolo is like his name, Ceccarelli, Ceccarelli, Ceccarelli—he’s moving around, like “The Little Engine that Could.” Yet when you’re having dinner or you’re talking to him he’s completely there. You’re in a room and he’s there. It is different from what I experience here when I’m with someone in a restaurant and they look around—“Oh, who’s here?” He’s with you, and the Italians have both of those sides, which I love. Knowing how Italians are different from us, from the French, who are different from the Dutch—that was also a lesson.

But anyway, we got back to New York. And it was an excitement and it was a shock. It suddenly seemed very small in some ways and very big in other ways. We knew we wanted to be in the city and found a place on 35th Street, just between Park and Madison. We actually had—it had been the parlor of a five-story brownstone, and it had been cut in half so that the wall ran through a plate on the ceiling where you could see half of where the chandelier had been. We had one half and someone else had the other. Sue got a job teaching at New Rochelle High School, so she could walk from our apartment to Grand Central and take the train to New Rochelle.

And I started looking for a job. I had hoped that I would be able to work for Wiener and Sert.

Riess: That had been talked about.

Bender: It had been talked about, but it had gotten complicated. Sert had moved the architecture part of the office to Boston when he became dean of the Graduate School of Design, and the biggest project they had been working on was the master plan for Havana, which was commissioned by Batista, and Castro had come in, and so it was on hold in a way. But while we are talking about this, eventually, after we were no longer involved, the US was blocking visits to Cuba and the Cubans who had worked for Wiener and Sert asked us not to contact them. We followed things through the Swiss ambassador who told us that much of the plan was followed by Castro, but with changes of use. High-end neighborhoods became residential schools, for instance.

But back in New York I decided that I ought to know what a real office looked like. And one of the first people I—I’m not sure how I got the interview with him, but I went to talk to Ralph Walker. At that point he had just been picked, or right around then he was picked, as Architect of the Century by the AIA. He was the president of the national AIA. Voorhees Foley Walker was the name of the office and they did all the buildings for the telephone company and institutional buildings. He was an elegant old man with a shock of white hair and bright eyes. Anyway, I found myself talking to him and I had a lovely talk.

Riess: A job interview?

Bender: Yes. I had my portfolio, and I met this white-haired man in a wood-paneled office like you would picture from another world, and he was

suddenly telling me about his search for a job and his interview. He spoke to Richard Morris Hunt, who was one of the turn of the century great architects. He had a lovely talk with him, and at the end Hunt offered him a cup of tea and he said, “I can’t give you a job, but I know how hard it is. I’ll give you a cup of tea.” And he sort of smiled at me and he said, “Would you like a cup of tea?” which was the nicest brush-off I ever had. [laughter]

Riess: What was in your portfolio?

Bender: Well, I had my thesis project, and I had drawings from the work in Europe. I had a few things showing my interest and my work in prefabrication and low-cost housing things I’d begun with IBEC.

Riess: Walker’s firm—was that a match for you? Would that ever have been?

Bender: Oh, well they were quite interested in the CERN things. They were interested in the thesis project. Everyone was interested in the thesis project because it was interesting and it showed that I could do the kind of drawings that would be part of competition drawings and things of that sort that young architects got put to work on. And they showed I could do technical things. Even the CERN work they were really interested in because they saw the next generation of laboratories.

I did discover, as I was talking to people, that those who get a job right away are not necessarily the lucky ones, because I really had an education in that week or so. I saw maybe fifteen offices and stopped in and saw different people, and I realized how much I learned in doing that, and that people are usually so focused on getting the job that they don’t realize that they’re getting a really interesting opportunity to learn something.

Riess: That’s what they say about interviewing for a job, that you should interview the person who’s interviewing you. Probably you were able to sit back and do that after a bit.

Bender: Well, when you’re first out of school you don’t really feel so much that you have that power. But just the being there and seeing how different people approach the work, and what they do.

I think I mentioned that—we talked about that I did take the job at Pereira and Luckman, because they were doing the Prudential Center in Back Bay. It was interesting for a while because I got to see a big office like that and I got to see how they went about that. I also got a chance to work on the master planning aspects, which is the thing I was interested in, as well as all different kinds of buildings at the Prudential Center. But when they got—eventually they got the job to do Madison Square Garden on the site of Penn Station and that’s about the time that they told me that I had a future with the firm, and I realized I didn’t want that future. I didn’t want to be involved with putting something on top of what was left of Penn Station, which still was a scar, and I realized that I didn’t want to be in that kind of corporate setting.

- Riess: That was a controversial tearing down.
- Bender: Oh, the tearing down was really controversial.
- Riess: I'm wondering how much the lefty part of you determined your course. Not that—or would you never characterize yourself as a lefty?
- Bender: Oh, yes. Recently I heard Michael Krasny telling someone in an interview he was a red diaper baby. I never heard that expression before. I'm not a red diaper baby I still feel I'm an old lefty in some ways.
- Riess: But you couldn't do that kind of work, you felt?
- Bender: I realized in working on the Prudential Center, which didn't have the—or at least if it did I didn't understand so much the negative connotations that I felt with Penn Station—that that was not something I wanted to be doing.

However, I should talk about that experience with Luckman. I was working for Charles Luckman and William Pereira in Pereira Luckman, and then it became Luckman. Luckman had been the president of Lever Brothers, and one of the most successful businessmen in the world. He was trained as an architect. He came out of school in the Depression, and the only job he could get was a door-to-door salesman, and he worked at Pepsodent, I think. He worked his way up through the soap business to be the president of Lever Brothers International. But at one point he said, "It's a waste of time to put money into research. We're going to go ahead with the soap business." And they decided not to go into detergents, and Lever Brothers collapsed and he was out of a job.

And as the story goes, William Pereira, one of his architecture classmates who had moved to California and had a very successful practice, sent Luckman one of his old drawings and said, "This guy used to be a pretty good architect. How'd you like to join our firm?" So then you got this high-powered businessman and a Hollywood architect—Bill Pereira won Academy Awards as well as doing buildings and the first plan for the UC San Diego Campus.

But mostly it was because of Luckman's abilities as a salesman that they got the job to do what's now the Prudential Center in Boston. And that had been the last project I worked on with Hugh Stubbins and Walter Bogner at Harvard as a school project. In our last year all the planners, the landscape architects, and the architects all worked together on "Back Bay" and came up with a scheme. And so when I came back from Europe, and I was looking for a job, they actually came after *me*, because I had so much experience on the site and I knew something about it. I went to work there and I realized, this is a terrible place! I don't want to work in an office like this!

In some ways I was in a good position, because I was one of the few designers. But every Friday—we were in the Villard Houses, that group of

now historic houses behind St. Patrick's Cathedral that had been a mansion. At one point, years after this, The Architecture Center was in there. They just moved out, and now it's the entrance, actually, to the Helmsley Hotel. We had the offices on the ground floor that had been the residence of Cardinal Spellman.

Riess: Why was it a terrible place?

Bender: Luckman didn't believe in keeping people around when they weren't all active, so if anything slowed, they'd lay people off and then they'd hire people back. And they also believed that it was a bad influence to have people who had been fired hanging around. Luckman was ahead of his time with that! [laughter] So every Friday, at four o'clock, there was a loudspeaker system, and it would start calling people and asking them to come to the secretary who was the secretary of the man who was firing. And people would get laid off and leave. It came to the point where every Friday we would have a lunch we called "To Whom It May Concern." And we would have a farewell dinner and no one knew who was going to be fired. There was one woman who stopped coming in on Fridays till they caught on. Sometimes they'd call people two weeks later and hire them back and some people came, because they hadn't found a job. I used to travel to meetings and presentations with Luckman. I was working at one point on the new hotel at the Prudential Center, and we used to go up there for meetings. It was a Sheraton Hotel, but the land belonged to the Hotel Corporation of America. We'd go up on the Eastern Airlines Shuttle and we'd sit next to each other, and on the shuttle you got a cup of coffee, but Luckman would always get a meal. It was like magic. We weren't sitting in a special section, necessarily.

Riess: It just came?

Bender: It just came, and sometimes he'd give me some. Then on the way to the meeting he'd sort of shake his head and look at me and he'd stick some colored pencils in my jacket pocket. "You have to look like a designer," he would say. And on the way back if I got a meal I'd know that I did well. But at any rate, at one point after I'd been there for almost a year he called me in, and I thought, oh maybe this is the end. And he said, "You know, I've been thinking. You've got a future with this company. You're doing really well. I'm really pleased with you." And I said, "You know, I'm going to quit." I told him, "I don't think I can stay more than two weeks. I'm going to have to find another job."

And that's when I went to work with William Lescaze, who had a smaller office, one that felt more like a studio rather than a corporation. That didn't work for too long either, but it was beginning to be a step in the right direction.

Riess: There wasn't a way you could—as we used to say—work from within? With Pereira and Luckman?

Bender: I probably could have, but I don't have the style to change an organization like that from the inside, and I wasn't so interested in spending years doing it. I had one wonderful experience. One of the jobs I had—I was working with a few other people—the Prudential Center is on a platform, raised above what had been the Bay Railroad Yards. There's a big highway that goes underneath it now, and in order to get from the street to the plaza or the platform there was going to be a grand stairway, the main stairway. There were also places where there are escalators that go up, but the main stairway was to be a major "event," that we were designing. I was the leader of the team.

At that point, Pereira was in Los Angeles and Luckman was in New York, and we were working on the Back Bay projects in New York. And I would have to send the designs for the stair to Pereira for approval. And he kept sending them back and he was revising them, weaving in palm trees and waterfalls, and my job was to get on the phone and say, "You can't have palm trees and waterfalls in Boston. The winters are long and hard." Finally in one conversation he said, "You know. I don't want to work on that project. You go ahead with it." And within—it was not about that project—but within a month or two Pereira and Luckman split up, and Luckman carried on as Charles Luckman Associates. Pereira sold out, and he moved onto his boat, moved his practice onto his boat in San Pedro Harbor, and eventually came back with a successful practice doing what *he* did.

Riess: So that's a model.

Bender: Yes. I wasn't able to move onto the boat, but I was looking for something more like that. I wanted to be in a place where I could know more about what was going on and bring into it more than what was put in front of me. I would have made that interesting in a different way. I'm not sure it would have been palm trees, but it also wouldn't have been what the Prudential Center turned out to be.

I have to tell you one other story because it's just—at one point, when it became Charles Luckman Associates, Luckman would come flying in from all over the world, during that time when they had the job to do the Berlin Hilton, and eventually, Madison Square Garden. And Luckman had a hat designed, a cap designed—this was before baseball caps—a chauffeur's cap, so that when he flew into the airport and the rented, chauffeur-driven car was there, the chauffeur would put on the hat that said, CLA, Charles Luckman Associates, and we would go to the meeting. And part of my job was to go out to the airport with the cap. I took the subway out to the airport with the cap, because usually the car was out there, and I didn't get to ride out in the limousine. And then I would meet him and we'd give the chauffeur the cap and we would drive to the meetings. Prudential's offices were in Newark, and in one of those meetings—it was a van, I guess, at that point, because the model for the Prudential Center was in the van.

On the drive out I was showing him some of the sketches and explaining what he was going to present to the board. And when we got to the parking lot in New Jersey I said—the model was all covered—I said, “Do you want to look at the model before we go in?” And he said, “No. Don’t bother.” And so this model is standing on the big conference table at the Prudential office, covered with a velvet cloth, and he talked for about an hour. I swear there were tears in some of their eyes as he was talking, and at the moment he whipped the cover off they applauded, they were so happy! They broke out in applause. Actually as he was describing it, he was saying things that were completely wrong. He had more hotel rooms, but somehow it didn’t matter.

Another time when we were in Boston at a meeting about the hotel he was doing a similar thing. He started saying, “Well, it’s going to be the first thousand-room hotel in Boston,” and it really was going to have about six hundred rooms. I started to correct him in the meeting and he kicked me under the table. He said something else and I started—and once again. So I was quiet on the way back. He said, “Don’t ever do that again.” And that was one of the times I didn’t have a meal on the plane. It was another world. That was much more *Mad Men*—what *Mad Men* is today.

The office included a guy named Bob Jackson. I still remember his name. Bob Jackson had worked for Disney and he did wonderful watercolors, and he’d be flown out to New York when we needed a rendering to sell a project. He would start the rendering even before he left. He was famous for his backgrounds. He would put the watercolor on this big board when it was very wet, and he would start to move the board around to get the clouds and sky, and he’d block in the hotel before he’d seen any designs! And then he’d come to the New York offices and he’d work overnight so it would be ready to present the next morning. So it was pretty clear I wasn’t going to stay there, but it was a terrific lesson for me.

Riess: I hear more and more how much architects are salesmen and very articulate about what they’re doing, whether it’s true or not, that they really have to talk the talk. I had thought of them more on the side of inspiration, artists, with few words. But they’re men of *many* words, aren’t they?

Bender: Well, but they were really different. It’s more and more words, but if you look back in the history, Daniel Burnham and the people in Chicago who changed the world in the 1890s were very dramatic. I suspect Michelangelo and his generation had their own powers with popes and the Medici.

So I ended up talking to and then working for William Lescaze, who was a very different, interesting man. He’s a Swiss who came here, maybe in the late twenties or early thirties, and brought modern architecture, International Style with him as a young revolutionary. He settled in New York where he renovated a brownstone with glass block, and it was a famous building. People still walk by and see it, the first glass block house in New York. The office was in the basement and he lived upstairs. It was

just off Third Avenue in what's called Turtle Bay. And it was really interesting just to see Turtle Bay. It was a whole block of brownstones, basically, and they had a common backyard. Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn lived in one of them. Ben [Bernard Harper] Friedman, who was a writer, an expert on Jackson Pollock but then he became a novelist, and he was from the Uris family of developers, with Lescaze I designed a studio for him, a few houses down the street from the office.

Riess: Turtle Bay is where in the city?

Bender: It's right between 49th and 50th Street.

I was seeing then that you could live in the city in a really urban way, and then go—the Lescazes used to go out to Connecticut, Sharon I think, on weekends. By the time I worked for him he was getting to be a little bit crusty, past his prime. He was over the hill professionally. But he still had a spark. In the thirties he had designed the PSFS Building in Philadelphia, which is a landmark office tower. I worked on a couple of things that he had in the office, the studio for Ben Friedman and an addition to the Lescaze landmark house for Dorothy Norman. Dorothy Norman was a famous intellectual figure in New York, and Lescaze had done another modern townhouse renovation for her previously, and I got to do the renovation for that and to add a music studio onto it.

Then he asked me if I wanted to take on the lead role in a project for the Dworman brothers, who were the epitome of New York builders. They could have been cast in a movie, their language, their shape, they looked and talked right out of "Guys and Dolls." They would come in and say, "I love it," and the next day they would come in and say, "I showed it to my wife and she said there's not enough closets," and these were big New York apartment buildings. But they were going to branch out and do a tall building on Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles, and at that point there were practically no tall apartment houses. If you go on that strip of Wilshire Boulevard now, you can hardly find—it's called the Churchill [Apartments] still. They wanted to push the limit, and the limit then was you couldn't build anything higher than thirteen stories. The limit had changed because of what you could do with steel and what you could do with concrete, and about earthquakes. So it was a thirteen-story building on Wilshire Boulevard. There was a little bit of a slope, and we did a real 1930s modern building with strip windows and a blue tile strip on the end and balconies—a nice building. I go back, it's still there. It's harder to find now because it's been sort of swallowed by the next generation of towers. But as I drive or walk by I like it more than I did then.

While we were working on it, Victor Gruen's office got a job to do a similar size building across the street. We were asked to consult with them because people in Los Angeles didn't know about high-rise apartments, and Lescaze had had that experience and the Dworman brothers had that experience. So I got to be an advisor on that building. But the biggest experience when I first went out—I went out with the two brothers, and to fly to Los Angeles in those days was a big deal, and by then Michael was

on the way. One of the first things they wanted me to do was go to the building department and get everything straightened out with the building codes and permits. They said, “Don’t worry. Do whatever it takes.”

Riess: Implying?

Bender: Implying, “We’ll pay.” My first impression when I walked into the building department, I couldn’t believe it. Everyone had on a white shirt and a tie. In New York the building department looked like a zoo. In L.A. I spoke to really professional people who were interested in the design, and they told me what you had to do and they said, “It looks fine. You’ll have to get more engineering because it’s a big building for us. We’re not used to thirteen floors or concrete.” I went out in the street and I told them [Dwormans] there was no question of “overtime” or a bribe. They screamed, “You blew it, you blew it!” And I said I didn’t *have* to bribe them. I said, “It’s okay, it’s okay,” and they couldn’t believe it. [laughter] It went up, and it went up without any complications, and as far as I know people are still happy in it. In the Victor Gruen building across the street they took more of a gamble, and they actually made mostly duplex apartments so that they had balconies and two floors. It looked flashy then, sort of dated today. But again, I got to see California.

Riess: Yes, Southern California.

Bender: A really different California than later when I came here.

Riess: You mentioned Ben Friedman and Dorothy Norman, did you like working with clients, the individual?

Bender: A that point I was fascinated by people like these developers. There was another developer we worked with. Lescaze was at the point in his career where a developer would ask him to do a building, and then—it turned out—they would use the drawings and designs to sell the property, to show what buyers could do on the site, how many floors, how many square feet.

I didn’t understand that, because Francis Kleban came in—that was his name. He had a property between Park and Lexington in the forties, a big piece of the block, and he wanted to do a fifty-story office building. I only had a weekend and two days to make drawings and work the zoning out. We made these renderings and the whole thing.

Riess: And were you in on the presentation?

Bender: I was in on the presentation, and I got to know Francis Kleban who, I don’t know how he came to tell me this, but he explained at one point how he always inspected buildings under construction in a bad light, to weaken the contractor in the arguments.

Riess: Say that again.

Bender: Well, I'm trying to figure out what's the right word. He wanted to overpower the contractor, so he said you always go to inspect the brickwork at noon when the sun is high and the shadows show every defect. He was a man in his seventies probably, and he said, "If there's a freshly made partition wall in an office building, even at my age, if you lean back and you get your foot high enough and kick the wall about three feet high before it's fully set, it'll collapse." [laughter] So I was getting a real lesson in New York in this. But I also realized that was not what I wanted to do.

Riess: No.

Bender: I was able to, and I'm still trying to remember who introduced me originally, but I got a part-time teaching job at the night school at Columbia, which was another important experience. In order to get your degree at Columbia in the night school you had to go ten years at night, and then to get the degree you had to go full-time for a year.

Riess: That's an architecture degree?

Bender: An architecture degree. Those nights at Columbia everyone would be sitting on these high stools at the drafting table, after being at high stools at the drafting table at work all day, and every once in a while someone would fall asleep and fall off the stool! But again, they were really interested, and they were particularly interested coming—most of them were draftsmen in the daytime and they were hungry to talk about bigger ideas. I realized that I enjoyed and wanted to teach and I wanted to do something that had—I was understanding I wanted a different kind of practice and a different kind of life than what seemed the main stream.

Michael was born in 1960, and we realized as he was on the way that we couldn't continue living in that little apartment, so we moved to an apartment in Brooklyn Heights where we had two bedrooms.

Riess: Were you very involved with the respective families? I mean now you were back in home territory.

Bender: Well, the first couple of weeks we lived with Sue's family in the Bronx. They were very nice, but we realized it's a good thing we went away for two years. At one point Sue's father complained that I wasn't taking out the garbage and Sue for some reason, defensive, said, "My husband's so delicate. I wouldn't ask my sensitive husband to take out the garbage." And I had been taking out the garbage for years! I don't know where all that came from. But we realized, and I think you find it with your—with our children, you raise your children for something and they become different than you. They have a lot of you but they also don't want to continue being your children or become you.

But we had a close relationship with both sets of parents, and the parents knew each other, so we would do some things, family things. Both families were pretty big; my mother had brothers and sisters in the family.

Once I was back, I was working not far from my father and occasionally would have lunch with him, which was a nice experience. Once I did a small design for renovating the offices he had, the Napier Company on Fifth Avenue. He was proud of that. It made me feel good. As the children came along we were involved with the family even more.

The move to Brooklyn Heights was interesting because it put me more in touch with the left side of my family who lived in a big house in Brooklyn Heights. At one point they lived on the promenade that looks out across the river at Wall Street. But then they lived in the older part of Brooklyn Heights near the church where Reverend Melish was. In the place we were living at the foot of Brooklyn Bridge you could look up and see the office buildings in Lower Manhattan, and in almost all of the families in Concord Village the men were beginning employees in the big law firms or big business firms. They were all under terrible pressure about whether they would make it as a partner, and in the evening you could look up and see the lights in the offices, and they were all looking, the women were all looking—are the men coming home?

Riess: Like the widow's walk, looking for the mariner husbands! Well you could have been feeling that way yourself.

Bender: Yes, but I wasn't. There wasn't a test at the end. I was not trying to make partner, or feeling that my life was hanging by a thread on that decision. I was able to have different kinds of experiences. There was a culture of architecture where when someone was doing a project and needed help in the presentation people would get called in to help. And so during that time I met George Nelson for the first time, who was known—eventually he became really important in my life and our life. But he was designing the kitchen for the US Pavilion at the 1959 American National Exhibition in Moscow. It was where the Kitchen Debates took place between Khrushchev and Nixon.

Riess: Ah yes, that's right, yes.

Bender: A few of us would go over and help them with some of the drawings for that, and we went there sometimes to help with other things. But it felt much lighter, and you could do it or not do it. We were doing it because it was fun, a chance to learn. And the experience of George Nelson was a great treat.

Riess: When Michael came along then Sue wasn't working?

Riess: Well, Sue stopped working—New Rochelle had a policy, like so many places, once a pregnant woman started to “show” she couldn't teach in high school. And you couldn't come back for three months afterwards. Michael came at a perfect time. She taught in the fall and didn't teach in the spring semester. He was born in May, and she was going to go back to teaching in September, but the whole thing went very nicely. Actually, when she stopped teaching she started to go to Greenwich House in

Greenwich Village, which is a really good ceramics center, and she started learning ceramics and enjoying doing ceramics.

Riess: She just picked that up as a craft?

Bender: Yes, and again, how we both work that way is to meet someone or do something or feel an opportunity and then knowing what's right. She really felt it was right—I mean, you feel it in your hands when you touch it, you move it. She had the free spirit to not worry. Everyone was working on the wheel, and she never was interested in the wheel. She built things by hand, loved to have her hands in the clay.

Riess: She was interested in sculpture?

Bender: She was making pots. Well, it became sculpture really—actually she was making sculpture. In the house you can see some—she was making odd-shaped pieces that were nice. And then we would put some of them together with a pipe through them and make—we've got one in the living room that was done that way, a kind of totem. She made as many sculptures as pots. We still have an old—weather-beaten because it's been outside—figure of a pregnant woman that she was working on at that point. But she really felt this was something more, and also decided, or somehow we decided—Michael seemed so easy, and he was a pleasure, no trouble, very little trouble. So we said, “Well, let's have another one quicker and take care of them together.” Which has all worked out well in some ways, except when they started to move it was more complicated. Michael was walking by the time David came, eleven months apart, “Irish twins.” By that point we realized we didn't want Brooklyn, we wanted to be in New York. The distance was more than the distance—you could say you could just get on the subway—there was an invisible wall.

[End Tape 10: Side A]

[Begin Tape 10: Side B]

Riess: So then you came back into the city.

Bender: Yes. Right about the time that Michael was born Walter Bogner, who had been one of my teachers at Harvard, told me the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture was having a seminar for people who were already teaching or were interested in teaching. And it was most of a week in Saranac Lake—I think it was Saranac Lake—in the Adirondacks. It had been an old Rockefeller estate, like a camp. Bogner said I could go if I wanted, that he had a nomination or whatever. It meant leaving a very young Michael with the parents, not so easy, but Sue and I went and it was really interesting and proved to be another turning point.

I first met Jerry McCue there. I think he had just become chairman of Architecture at Berkeley. He looked like a little kid. I met Roger Montgomery who I'd known when he was at Harvard. I think he was still

at St. Louis, hadn't come to Berkeley yet. And Charles Moore was there and people like James [M.] Fitch who early understood about green environment in architecture. Fitch was more a historian than a philosopher, but way before it became popular. He eventually taught at Columbia and set up their preservation program.

Riess: What kind of a conference was it? What was the point?

Bender: It was the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture trying to think about teaching—you know, almost all the schools had moved to being about modern architecture as opposed to the Beaux Arts teaching as well as form. And yet there was not much of a sharing of experience or a looking at how teaching was done. This was a chance to bring teachers together. There were people—one of the SOM partners was there and talking about how their office worked.

Riess: They were talking about how schools can better serve architecture firms?

Bender: And that architecture was a way of life and that schools and professionals could learn from each other. For me it made teaching much more interesting, to see it in the light that you could be part, again, of a transformation that was taking place, a reinvention. And at the same time at Columbia I was both—the school was in a really bad place then. There was a lot of the Beaux Arts left. Percival Goodman, who tried to move it, was so frustrated.

Riess: Percival Goodman—the name itself has a Beaux Arts ring to it.

Bender: But Percy was a major force in moving Columbia ahead. He was a mentor to many people. Ray Lifchez, he was a big influence on Ray. He [Goodman] was a man of great spirit, and another really 1930s lefty. I was more influenced, and still am more touched in my thinking, by his brother Paul. They wrote *Communitas: [Means of Livelihood and Way of Life]* together, which was looking at different kinds of utopian futures.

Riess: Paul Goodman?

Bender: Paul Goodman and Percival Goodman. Paul Goodman wrote a book which was much more important to me. I forgot what it was called, but the subtitle was something like *Teenagers Growing up in a World where There are No Men. [Growing up Absurd]* He wrote a book on space, in which he looked at how different religions or different professions or different people use space, the difference between the traditional Jewish synagogue with the people around the pulpit, the original church in which there was a little nave where pilgrims came, but the service was focused around an altar. He looked at a psychiatrist's office—the ones where you sat and looked at the psychiatrist or you lie down on a couch.

At any rate, again I saw people from outside the field looking at the field in interesting ways. The teenage boys [referring to *Growing up Absurd*], I think it was really interesting, because more and more I was feeling the

work in the city, the buildings were what I could do, but you could look at them as the product or you could look at them as the way you could use the buildings as a tool to do more. And that eventually got me interested in a man named Jim [James P.] Morton who was the bishop at St. John the Divine near Columbia. And Jim Morton had been at, I'm trying to get clear whether it's Jim—I think he was at architecture school for a while and he was interested in doing something about that Upper Manhattan neighborhood. Eventually he began to use neighborhood kids. He brought stonemasons from Europe to train local kids to learn a trade while building the church. And out of that came some of the ideas for what became UHAB, Urban Homesteading Assistance Board.

I was talking yesterday on the phone to Fred Schwartz, who was a student here. He's practicing in New York now, and he's a man of good spirit who—he's working on the proposals for Haiti for housing. I was telling him that when I was in architecture school, William LeMessurier, the engineer of the Citicorp Building, who was one of my advisors, would quote from Hardy Cross that "structure is essential and otherwise unimportant." And I was saying to Fred that in looking at the Haiti project, that the house is essential and otherwise unimportant. Meaning you can use the house and building the house to train people to be builders; you can use the house and the group of people it takes to make the house to make a community and to begin to improve infrastructure.

This is getting off the track, but we talked actually about [Norman] Foster. One of the projects that Foster showed very briefly, and has just been published [*New York Times*, September 26, 2010], is this new town, they call it, in Abu Dhabi [Masdar].

Riess: I wanted to ask you about that.

Bender: Yes, and you know this is my problem with Foster. There are so many wonderful things in this project, but it's not a town, and they're building this from outside for people who are going to move into this very high-tech thing.

Riess: All I can think of when I look at it is the edges.

Bender: Well, it's interesting about the edges, that there's where the life is. And this is what we're coming to in a sense that I wanted to talk about. When I was living in Greenwich Village you realized you could transform the living city to the next level with the richness that was there. If Foster, or his client, had been brave enough to take on the adjacent one square mile of busy narrow streets and all the mixture of uses, and evolve that into this high-tech thing over time, that would have been a masterpiece. But this is just one more new town scheme. You know the original new town schemes outside of Paris, and in Finland and in Sweden, the technique was the high-speed train that came out from the city into the center. Now the technique is the little cars running around in tunnels underneath and solar power and all of that.

- Riess: Yes, but you know the hooker was this looks so beautiful.
- Bender: I'm sure the buildings will be beautiful. But from Corbusier's Chandigarh to Brazilia, to recent examples, cities of beautiful buildings without community fail. It's hard for me to picture that there's going to be life in Masdar. There's the whole issue of a gated community—and it's going to be built in sections of more luxury, less luxury.
- Riess: You think something like this *could* be an opportunity to practice what you're talking about.
- Bender: It could be a wonderful opportunity, yes. And I think now that the focus has shifted more to China, you can do it in China, in East Asia. You might be able to take on places in Malaysia and India where you have the population and the life and the energy and the density. So far most of the new towns have been how you go out and make a town in an empty place, not how you build on seed, on urban life.
- Riess: Why were we talking about Fred Schwartz?
- Bender: Well, I think I was saying I was beginning to understand that you had the opportunity to do more than what you're doing when you design a building. You can build a church and you can hire people to repair a church, or you can make the community better by training the young people to be craftsmen. You can build houses for people in Haiti, or you can design a process that builds community and a path to growth and change.
- Riess: When did this idea jell, would you say, for you?
- Bender: I think I was involved in it for a long time before I understood that that's what I was seeing. But it was in this period, and it also had to do with how deeply you take on what you're doing. One of the experiences I had during the time I was doing the night school at Columbia—a new dean [Charles Colbert] came who was going to help modernize it, and he had this good idea, to have a program called the Four Great Makers, and they had four big events during the year in which they were going to invite Corbusier and Gropius and Mies van der Rohe and Frank Lloyd Wright.
- Riess: Did they call them the four great makers?
- Bender: Makers, yes. Well, Frank Lloyd Wright was already dead but they were going to have an exhibition, or maybe he died right around then. Mies wouldn't come, but someone from his office and IIT came. But Gropius came and Corbusier came, and that was a wonderful story. I learned more of it later. Corbusier said he'd come if they would have an exhibition. He said he'd come and he would stay for all this and give a lecture, but he wanted the exhibition to be at the Guggenheim, and he wanted an exhibition of his paintings. It was his ambition to have his paintings at the Guggenheim and they worked that out somehow.

I remember I came in to Avery Hall the night he was going to talk at Columbia, and I went up to the drafting room and everyone was sitting at the table drafting. I said what are you doing here? They said, “Well, this assignment’s due.” And I said, “Come on!” And finally some of them—I said, “I’m going,” and only a few of them came. They said, “Well, I won’t have time to do it another time. I’m going to work.” And that was sad, and also it gave me a picture, again, of if I’m going to teach, that’s not the way I want to teach. I want to be able to have people who are able to engage in—it wasn’t against those people—they had every [reason], but I was the wrong person for that.

Riess: You say in your notes—Corbusier was inspired by Michael’s blocks?

Bender: Oh, yes, it was the other way around. Paul Wiener was Michael’s godfather, and Corbusier came for this Great Makers thing right after Michael was born. At some point Paul apparently said to Corbusier, “I have to get a present for my godchild,” and he was going to go to F.A.O. Schwartz. Corbusier said, “Did you know that they make blocks based on the Modular?” And so Paul bought this set of blocks based on the Modular for Michael. And again, you said something about connections—things come together in funny ways that keep tying back or cutting into things.

Riess: Yes, and we have to get you moving towards Amagansett.

Bender: Well, David was born a year later. In that time living in New York—I mean in Manhattan, I keep calling Manhattan New York—we had met Peter and Carol Moore through our dentist, a blind date with another young couple who lived on the next block, and we became really good friends. They lived on 36th Street and we lived on 35th Street. They had a boy and a girl who were about the same age as Michael and then David would be. We decided to rent a house with them on Long Beach Island in New Jersey for a week or two that summer, maybe it was longer. And that got us thinking about how you could live a life where you lived, you know, how a small New York apartment could be bigger, in a different way, than having a bigger apartment. We’d have a small apartment with almost no windows, and then we would go out in the country and have something else.

Two years we rented, the first year on Long Beach Island, which has a lot of mosquitoes. I remember we used to try to bribe the jeep driver of the spray truck to come up our driveway. And one year we bribed him so well that he came up—and we’d offer him a drink, so he’d come in while it was spraying—and then we realized that David, who was our little baby, was out on the porch. [laughter] So we said we can’t continue here. And another year we went to Hampton Bays, which is on the way out to East Hampton, and this became more and more interesting.

At that point I had decided to leave Lescaze and decided to go to work with Paul. It wasn’t clear whether there was a real job there or not, but there were things I could do and they were in the range of the things I was interested in. It seemed like a future that I wanted more than the other.

- Riess: You had always been in dialogue with him.
- Bender: I had been in dialogue with him. The roots of where he and Sert were were interesting to me in another way. I realized he didn't have an office, it was a studio, it was different in that way. And the people who worked in the office over the years were mostly people like I would have been in another country. Minoru Takeyama came, who eventually became one of the top Japanese architects. Carl Pruscha came from Vienna, and he eventually became the head of the Royal Academy in Vienna. And Christian Wolff came from Germany, and he became the chief planner of Munich.
- Riess: This idea of a studio and not an office, was this a European model?
- Bender: Well, it was also an American model, but Americans had been moving—after the war architecture moved from studios more and more to a corporate form. For me it was a way of thinking as much as an organizational form.
- Riess: Yes.
- Bender: One of the things that fascinated me with Luckman is when he took over Pereira and Luckman, he immediately structured the office to parallel the structure of the companies he worked with. So that when we dealt with Prudential, we knew who was on whose level, who should talk to a vice president or people of that sort. The SOM office, when I went to see it, had a whole floor full of draftsmen. I.M. Pei had started with a studio advising William Zeckendorf, the developer, but by that time Pei also had an office that was doing corporate work, and there was a floor of draftsmen and then there were places for designers, for project managers, and general office support.
- Riess: I.M. Pei. Was he sort of a phenomenon then?
- Bender: I met him early. Actually I met him at the time that he was with Zeckendorf's office, because that's when I was with Harrison in the pre-UN days, and we'd go over there sometimes. He was originally advising Zeckendorf, the developer. He came from Taiwan, from a high-level Chinese family that fled to Taiwan, and then he came to the US to school, which is another whole story. He thought he was going to go to MIT but ended up at Harvard with Gropius for the same reason that I did, in a sense. Gropius was interested in prefabrication and worked with Pei on a project to design a portable, movable, basically propaganda structure that could move to different villages.
- Riess: Oh, how interesting!
- Bender: But he was starved for an opportunity to build, and he was a really talented man, and a wonderful man. More recently, my friend both from Harvard and ever since, Fumihiko Maki, did an interview of Pei and published a little book, *I.M. Pei, Words for the Future*, in which they talk

about their experiences at Harvard during those days and what it was all like.

Pei eventually became the chairman of the advisory board at MIT. He was influential in my being invited to MIT about two years after I became dean at Berkeley. Bill Porter resigned and MIT asked me if I'd be a candidate to be dean there. And that was through Pei and that's another whole story, but I decided at that point that I, well, I finally told the president that the problem is the environment and he said, "Oh, the winters aren't that cold." [laughter] I meant the environment of the place—you walk down that long corridor, indoor corridor with all these engineers. I'd been at Berkeley too long already.

But that was really hard. I didn't realize how hard it was, but Sue says I moped for a whole year afterwards. Because it was like if you have a dream—at one point if you said what would it be like to be dean at MIT? I always said that's the top of the world, and then when you don't want to do it—it was the first of a series of introspections about "what I wanted to be when I grow up."

Riess: Okay, so with Wiener and Sert.

Bender: Well, one of the first things I worked on was—Paul was designing a house in Amagansett for Babs Simpson. "Babs" gives it away in a way. I learned about that world. Babs Simpson was one of the main editors at *Vogue*, and she was better at the part than what's her name who is now getting all that publicity, who was the model for the [*Devil Wears*] *Prada* movie.

Riess: Anna Wintour.

Bender: Anna Wintour. I keep thinking, if Anna Wintour had looked like Babs Simpson, but also, she had all of that strictness, discipline as well as eye.

It was a relatively small house on some land off Abraham's Path in Amagansett. It had basically been located when I got on the site. The idea was to push it back on the site so it looked over a wheat field. You couldn't quite see the ocean, but you could see the wheat. In the wind there was a feeling of waves. And it was a glass box, much more expensive and complicated, in some ways, than what our house was later. She was a great client and the house was simple, elegant, and very well made.

But as I started to go out to Amagansett I said, "Wow, this is terrific and it's not so far from New York," and we were thinking about doing something in the country. One of the weekends I went out with Sue and we looked at the Simpson house, which was under construction, and visited Paul and Ingeborg who rented a cottage on a horse farm near there. We went to the beach. I remember we started back at night, and it was a moonlit night. We stopped at the Georgica Beach, and Ingeborg, who I think I've not mentioned, this really dramatic woman with a German background who had been married to the son of the president of Brazil,

and was a painter—Sue and I were talking about houses we might rent, and we got to the beach in the moonlit night and suddenly Ingeborg took off her clothes and ran into the ocean, and we were captured by the whole thing and the possibility. [laughing]

And so I started, on my trips out to Amagansett, to look for a house, and Sue and I looked and we finally found a house we could afford. It was actually right near the cemetery where Jackson Pollock and many of the other artists and writers are buried. But it was an old house on a little bit of land, and we realized that's not what we wanted. But we didn't want to get into a lot of debt, and we didn't have very much money. I had the idea, and Sue loved the idea, that we would buy—we saw a beautiful piece of land, twenty acres of woodland that had oak, we called them scrub oak. The botanists don't like that, but they're little oak trees because it had been cut and farmed at one point. But it was near the Bay at Abraham's Landing, twenty acres, and we could have it for a thousand dollars an acre. When I told some of the local people they said, "You're out of your mind. Five years ago you could have gotten it for a hundred dollars an acre." But we had the idea we'd buy the twenty acres and we would make a plan to divide and share it and invite friends to come. And then we would sell off some of the land right away and we would build houses.

The plan got richer as we thought about it more. The Moores were really excited about the idea, and Peter and I talked—Peter was a really good tennis player and he loved tennis, and the only tennis courts that were available in East Hampton were behind the high school, and they were always crowded. So my idea was that we would take the twenty acres and set aside a piece of it, it turned to be about six of the acres, that would be owned commonly. And then the different owners would be around it, so each person would have one or two acres adjoining the six acre piece. And then we had the idea—if we put a tennis court on the six acres, Peter had two bachelor friends, Andre Elkin and Tom Mayer, who would be happy to join in if they could play tennis, and they might or might not build a house. We first saw the land in November, we bought it in December, did the first land division, and started out building—I started designing the house.

[End Tape 10: Side B]

[Begin Tape 11, Side A]

Bender: We decided, mostly I decided, that to go through the issue of making an official subdivision was going to be long and painful. My training in civil engineering included surveying and I divided up the land in such a way that each of the houses would meet the building code. They'd have enough frontage on the street, and each piece would back onto the common land—it was all legal as a group of houses, with the one piece that we owned jointly that didn't have a house on it, but theoretically could eventually have a house with a tennis court. With that in mind, Tom and Andre joined the Moores who were there. And so on one December morning we took title to the twenty acres and immediately sold all but

four, well, sixteen to the others. We had four, and maybe one was a little bigger and one was a little smaller, but it came out to twenty acres with this piece cut out for the tennis court. And I started designing a house—we were going to build the first two houses so we could move in by July.

Riess: What's the address in Amagansett?

Bender: It didn't have an address. I still don't know what the address is. It's at the corner of Red Dirt Road, or I think even then it was called Red Dirt Highway, even though it was a dirt road—now paved—and Old Accabonac Highway. The house is owned now by Anita Calero. Recently, it's interesting, Michael's the one most attached to the land, and he wanted to go out and take pictures of the house, so he got in touch with her and she invited him and they've become good friends and now he has a key. He doesn't stay there much because she keeps it so well he's afraid he'll mess it up, but he visits whenever he is on the East Coast. Sue and I have become friendly with her also. It is good to know that it is loved and cared for, that a flame has been passed and its life goes on. It is also a sadness, a regret to have let it go.

This is where the different careers all get mixed up, because I started designing that house at the same time I started teaching my class at Cooper Union. One of the classes I was teaching was on wood frame construction, and so I was learning wood frame construction a couple of weeks before I was teaching it, and we would take the students out. Most of the students had worked on wood construction, because two of the other Cooper Union teachers, Lew Davis and Sam Brody, who at that point were the emerging firm, Davis Brody Wisniewski, which became Davis Brody, a really top firm, who were building houses for themselves on Martha's Vineyard, the students used to go out and work on those. The students came out, not too much to work on ours because it was going so fast, but they visited the construction, and they visited other construction.

It was not easy to get it built. In a way those weekends in the woods and at the beach were a chance to repay and to replay the spirit and community I felt at Pete Seeger's house in Beacon. But when I sent the plans out to local contractors, most of them wouldn't bid on them because they had never built a flat-roofed house. And many of them had never built "from plans"—they were fishermen who built houses in the off season. And then I found Peter Blake, who was then the editor of *Architectural Forum*, one of the architecture magazines and a really good architect. He had built a house with a flat roof in Southampton from his plans with a contractor named Clark E. Smith—he called himself Clarkie Smith—who lived in Southampton. So I stopped off to meet him, liked him, and left him the plans and specifications. He called me and he said, "You've got to be joking; you know you've got penalty clauses in there and you've got all these things." He said, "I can't do things like that."

Riess: What does that mean?

Bender: Well, I wrote a contract the way the AIA says you write a contract. If you're not finished on time there's this penalty. And I'd laid out the floor tile in such a way that you could save tiles, save cutting tiles, and save money. As we went ahead I realized that no contractor was going to notice or count on my savings. They estimated how many square feet of floor tile, and how many square feet of roof. It was quite an education to be working through it with a contractor. He was learning also, and over the years we did about fifteen houses together and we both learned, and learned to make those savings and achieve the quality of detail.

Riess: Did you have a foundation? Did you dig a foundation?

Bender: Well, we designed the house both for economy and for speed. We designed the house to be on piers above the ground. It was going to be a summer house; we would close it in the winter, so we didn't need a basement. Short-term thinking maybe, but it had to be less than \$12,000 and it had to be fast. And they couldn't begin in December because the ground was frozen, so we designed it so that it would be set on a series of concrete piers, and he could be prefabricating the house in his shop in Southampton. Not prefabricating the house, but parts. The house was basically made of column and beam structure, beams every six feet on these columns, and in between them were standard six-foot sliding glass doors. He made these frames, which were like a big square, nine feet high and eighteen feet long, and he made them in the shop. As soon as the ground thawed he put in the piers, and a week later he could put cross beams on the piers, and after that brought all these frames and lined them up, and fixed them in place. The roof was made of planks, two-and-a-half-inch thick planks, tongue and groove, so it was the roof structure that held it all together.

Riess: It must have been satisfying.

Bender: Oh, it was really exciting.

Riess: Did you design the Moore's house for them too?

Bender: Well, the idea was they would build the same house—we'd flip it over.

Riess: And that's what happened?

Bender: That's what happened. Theirs—they had a little more money, so they had a wood floor and we had the cheapest tile floor. They had tile in the bathroom and we had plywood that we painted, but basically it was the same house.

And then sitting in the park with Michael and David one day, I guess when we were still in Brooklyn Heights, Sue was talking to a woman on the bench with her two little girls and Sue was saying that she'd just come back and seen the foundation of the house, and Sandra Nones said, "Gee that sounds interesting, could Leonard and I do this?" And within a very short time we ended up selling them an acre of our piece of the land. So

there were six kids, David was the youngest, Karen Nones was the oldest. I think there was just a little over two years between the youngest and the oldest, and it became a tribe. The Moores had a Land Rover that we shared, and the original idea was we were going to share a lot more, we thought we'd have a common laundry. Nobody would give anyone a mortgage without a washer and dryer. We didn't have a mortgage, we were going to pay for as much as we could and continue to finish it.

We put everything we had into the house. And again, the idea was to be free of constraints. But the Moores were going to get a mortgage, and the Nones were going to get a mortgage. Again, it was shortsighted of us in some ways, because we could have invested it all and taken a mortgage but it was a way we wanted to live. We shared equipment, tools, a sailboat, babysitting, sometimes cooking, and often barbeques on the beach. In order for the Nones to move in—they were not interested in the house that I was designing, but I arranged to adapt a Techbuilt house for them. During my prefabrication days at MIT I'd occasionally worked part time in Carl Koch's office as he was developing Techbuilt, and Techbuilt was just beginning to be a real product. And so their house didn't actually begin construction until May, and they didn't move in until August. But the community—I called it Amenity—was in place

We moved in in June. It became a *life*. It was marvelous. We lived in this—in the winter we didn't go out. In the spring and the fall we were out for three days, usually in the city for four. In the summer—we basically stayed out all summer because I was teaching, and the work that I was doing, we could do a lot of it out there because Paul was out there and I was out there. We set up a studio in a barn out there. And even if we came in, there was a train that came in on Tuesday and I could go back on Thursday night. We did that for ten years, and the kids grew up there, in a wonderful world.

It was actually the parallel world to the world we had in New York, because our nearest neighbor then, Accabonac Highway, on one side was de Kooning who was living in an old farmhouse, and not very long after that began to build his own house, which I helped him a little on, but again, he really wanted to do it himself, hands on with a local crew. Right after that the next neighbor was Jackson Pollock, who is buried in the Green River Cemetery there. Saul Steinberg was nearby, Tino Nivola was nearby, Harold Rosenberg, the critic, was nearby. The Pollock house, which is now a museum, he and Lee Krasner, his wife, were living down the way. We were in the middle of the same Cedar Tavern New York School art world.

Riess: Were they established, or were they up and coming like you all were up and coming?

Bender: Well, at that point they were more established. They were—de Kooning and Tino and Saul were all a generation older and still very active. But the collectors were there also, in the next village. Right across the street on Red Dirt Highway it became Springs, the town next to Amagansett, and

artists, collectors, dealers, they were all over East Hampton. The village of East Hampton is where the rich people were, and the collectors were there. But you didn't know who people were on the beach. Everyone was in a bathing suit, they weren't wearing all their symbols. But there was a social structure: you'd see who was on whose blanket, you'd see de Kooning on Castelli's blanket and you wondered, speculated on what was going on.

But it was even more complicated, because the boys were then at Downtown Community School with a lot of children of the lesser known but eventually major painters and sculptors, many of whom had been invited around that period to come to Berkeley because Hans Hofmann had been their teacher. Sidney Janis, the gallery owner, his children were in their class. So they met each other in school and in the summers. They went to "Boys Club" together, they met on the beach together. The boys were friendly with the children of André Emmerich, whose gallery on 57th Street was moving from pre-Colombian art to color-field painters, Helen Frankenthaler, Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland. One of the kids in the school was the daughter of LeRoi Jones, the poet. David Duchovny, who is now a famous actor on *X-Files*—he was a classmate of Michael's. So was Jenny Polshek, James Polshek's daughter.

Another piece of that extends into the teaching. One of the families we met was the Roses—I mentioned them, Dan and Joanna. Their middle children Emily and Joe were twins, the same age as Michael. We met them through David—we used to go to the beach when he was about a year and a half old, and he would go crawling off and find somebody else's blanket, and he was so energetic and attractive that they would start playing with him. We would go to fetch him and we became friends. And I told you that Dan Rose later came and talked to my classes. I told Dan at one point that I was invited to a conference set up by the Greek architect Doxiadis in Athens, where Buckminster Fuller was coming and all these famous people. I didn't see how I was going to go because it was going to be so expensive. But the minute I mentioned the conference he said, "How could I get to go?" We ended up going, and Dan hung out with Buckminster Fuller and Lady Barbara Ward, the economist, and Margaret Mead was there, and Dan became, from that point on, not only one of our best friends but our supporter. Eventually the Rose Foundation sponsored my starting the Urban Design Lab at Berkeley.

Riess: Oh, that's interesting.

Bender: And another friend from those summers, André Emmerich, because I could invite him, came out to the opening of the University Art Museum here and for a while was involved in things at the museum here. Painters like Esteban Vicente, Ray Parker and Lee Krasner had all taught at Berkeley.

Riess: And how about for Sue? Was her identification as an artist?

- Bender: Sue was doing ceramics and actually had shown things in some group shows in New York. When we came out to East Hampton—but I first have to say, in all these things, when I say *me*, it's almost always *we*. Sue was part of everything as a force and a spirit. But she became more interested in ceramics and eventually had shows in the gallery in East Hampton, the Benson Gallery. It was a thrill for me, and for Michael and David, to see her work and feel the wonderful reception it received.
- Riess: And there was a studio out there for her?
- Bender: Well, she could work at home. She didn't work too much on the ceramics at home. Toward the end of the time when we were going out there, Sue was beginning to get involved with the Amish.
- Riess: You mean before, before you all came to Berkeley?
- Bender: Well, at this point we were in Berkeley, but we used to go back every summer. After her first taste of the Amish and some short visits in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Sue started dying cloth to make collages with Amish colors by putting beets in pots and doing things in the kitchen. She did some ceramics because she didn't need a wheel and she could roll clay out and work on our big table in the woods.
- Riess: She didn't really need a studio in that sense, but she had to fire the pieces.
- Bender: Well, and one of the houses I built nearby was for Jim Crumrine, a ceramics artist who was one of Sue's teachers—but now it's all getting out of order.
- Riess: Yes, it is, and we should leave that alone.
- Riess: We were considering what your plan was with teaching and practicing in New York City.
- Bender: From the point where I decided to go to work with Paul, I decided to take Esmond Shaw's invitation to teach at Cooper Union. We also decided to build the house in Amagansett and shortly after that or all about the same time, we decided to move back into the city from Brooklyn Heights and we bought an apartment in a co-op building on Tenth Street, and in a sense we made our move.
- Riess: And it was going to be *the* move. This was it.
- Bender: Well, it was the way we wanted to live.
- Riess: Yes.
- Bender: Sue had stopped teaching after having the two children and getting engaged in the art. And at that point Amagansett was becoming part of our life and she could work on things in different ways. And so we decided that we could do it, and we never understood quite how we could have

afforded it, especially when we eventually left New York for a year and realized that by the time we got finished with all of the—well, we had to pay for a garage, had to park the car eventually on the roof of a garage on Avenue A. And we had winter clothes and summer clothes and snow tires and a private school, and it seemed to me when we left all of that behind we didn't understand how we were paying for it all, in a way. But it was a really rich life; it was learning and doing and not looking back.

Sue was asking me again the other day, "How did you get paid?" And I didn't even really remember.

Riess: I was going to ask you that too.

Bender: When I started in Cooper Union, I guess in '63, I made \$7,500 a year, which was the only sure income we had. From the office sometimes we made money and sometimes we didn't make money. These houses made some money—but now I'm getting into the office part of it. And I should explain about that.

We did a variety of jobs and with some there were fairly big fees. We did the master plan for Aspen, Colorado, again because Herbert Bayer, who was an artist, whose roots went back to Paul's days in Europe, had come to the US, and he had become the art director for the Continental Can Company, settled in Aspen, and was part of organizing the original Aspen Institute conferences. He became planning director of Aspen and asked us to do a master plan.

We did master plans for an island off Cartagena, Colombia that was sponsored by Coffee Growers Association. The man, Andres Uribe, who was head of the Coffee Growers Association eventually became the Colombian ambassador to the UN, and so we redesigned a house on Park Avenue for him. He took over a building that had belonged to Huntington Hartford when Hartford moved to that museum on Columbus Circle. We took over his 59th Street building and we renovated it to be offices for the Colombian delegation to the UN and to be the "Colombian Center" for the Coffee Growers Association, and we designed a coffee center and a gallery on the ground floor with offices above. So some brought real fees.

Riess: Did the Wiener office become more organized?

Bender: No, it was never a very organized office, it remained a studio. It worked. Interesting things went on and interesting people came through. There was a third principal, Ala Damaz. She came from a wealthy Berlin Jewish family, and they fled to Paris, and then they left Paris for the US Paul [F.] Damaz was an artist and art critic who taught at Pratt Institute in New York and wrote books and eventually he had a house not far from our house on Long Island. Ala did the interiors for things like the Colombian Center, and lobbies for Washington Square Village. Mostly she did apartments, and we used to take a lot of apartments where we could, because they were places to experiment, to mix art and architecture, and they got done quickly, because we were more often working on planning

things that could take many years or never get done. And we took houses also, because you could see a house in a year or two, whereas some of the other things had their different timescales—they were all going on at the same time.

Riess: But you were getting a decent fee?

Bender: Oh, we got good fees some things and some things we ended up—well, we did a lot of things on speculation because we wanted to do them. A lot of the reason you saw all that empty land when you looked at Amagansett on Google is that we planned a lot of that for the people who—the Potter family owned all the land across Red Dirt Road from us and all the land around us. We planned and helped put through in East Hampton rezoning, in a way, that part of it could be taken out and preserved. Some of it is in preservation now because families bought up parts and the family did it, and some, when it would be built wouldn't be built like a regular subdivision. We designed some of those houses around on the next road over, Stony Hill Road.

We did the house for—well, we always called it the Carmichael House, because Joel Carmichael was married to Elizabeth de Cuevas. Joel Carmichael was the son of a very radical British Socialist, and Joel was a Socialist and writer who wrote on Russian history and social history. Elizabeth de Cuevas's father was the Marquis de Cuevas, who owned the ballet company, one of the famous ballet companies. Her brother was one of the partners in Lazard Freres. We did a house for her near our house on Stony Hill Road, in the woods.

[End Tape 11: Side A]

[Begin Tape 11: Side B]

Bender: So yes, we were getting fees and also doing interesting work. Each of these houses were experiments in how you could build in the country in a way that didn't destroy the country, how you could use local materials, and how you could build with the topography and terrain and things of that sort.

Riess: In fact this was really the most *designing* period of your life.

Bender: Directly building, designing things, yes. At the end—when I joined Paul it was the end—he had been the design consultant for one of the Tishman brothers [Paul Tishman] on Washington Square Village, two long apartment buildings right behind Washington Square. It was originally supposed to be three, but instead of the third one NYU bought the land and had I.M. Pei design three point towers, and that still exists today. I came in at the end of it. I worked on the—the roof structure had tanks and pumps and things on it, and we made a very International Style top on it, and between the two buildings is a garden. Going back over the years and seeing the block-long green space matured, I am proud of Paul's concept and my part in it. The fifty-year-old garden feels like a lush gift to a

neighborhood that has since been over-built, Philip Johnson's heavy block of a library, and badly built by NYU. West Broadway, now called LaGuardia Place, is now one of the Village's liveliest areas where the Washington Square Village shops face the activities across the street, and then it dies when there is nothing but the setback at the Pei towers

On another level, one of the people who moved into the Washington Square Village was Saul Steinberg. And we basically, with Ala, designed his apartment because we loved doing it. He lived very near us in Amagansett and became a good friend, and eventually, my last project in East Hampton, I designed his studio. So there were big designs, small designs, there was a whole range of things. We worked on [870] Park Avenue, the [Andres] Uribe house. Uribe was ambassador and also President for the Colombian Coffee Growers Association, Cafeteros—the Uribe house was published in the *Times* and other places. The Colombian Center was also published.

Riess: When it was published in the *Times* it was under your name, Richard Bender?

Bender: Both names, yes. Paul was featured, but my name was there too, depending on which one it was. My name is on them in the building department. Our house in Amagansett was published in the *New York Times*, in the magazine, and for Sue, and really for me too, seeing the house in the *New York Times Sunday Magazine* was the Nobel Prize. And it was published in the *New York Times Book of Houses* at one point. The apartment was published, another time, in the *New York Times* in an article looking at how two different people design apartments in the same building.

Riess: Yes, good. And now to Cooper Union, the invitation to teach full-time.

Bender: Well, the invitation to Cooper Union also was an old thread that came back. We have talked about this. When I was a student at City College in engineering, Esmond Shaw, the dean of the architecture school at Cooper Union, had been invited by the campus planners, architects, to talk about architecture to the community at City College because they were going to be doing some new additions and I had a chance to talk with him afterwards on the subway.

It turned out that Cooper was in the process of accrediting their architecture program and they had to have three full-time faculty. And this is aside from Esmond Shaw, who was the dean and the chairman—he was everything, because it was all a sort of collage that he put together every year. He asked me if I wanted to be a regular faculty member, and it was just the right time and it was just the right thing. And more than just teaching, Cooper Union was a really special place.

Riess: Were you able to put together some of the ideas you'd come away with from the Association of Collegiate Schools meeting, about architecture curriculum?

Bender: Well, I don't know how much in the way of specific ideas, but I understood there were richer ways of doing things, and that things could be happening in architectural schools which were not on the curriculum

Riess: Cooper Union I think of as very practical, almost a trade school.

Bender: No, Cooper Union was more complicated than that. It was originally set up for the sons and daughters of the working people of New York. And it was set up to be practical, everyday—but the art school is one of the best art schools in the country. It turns out people who go to work for advertising agencies or who become painters, really good painters and sculptors, but it's quite free, freer in spirit and free, no tuition, open. The architecture school also—it was tied to practice, everyone practiced. To be a full-time faculty member meant you had to teach two days. The way you taught, even the visitors who taught a design class would come in one day from nine to five. And the studio, instead of meeting three afternoons a week the way it did most places, it would be all day Tuesday or all day Wednesday. We basically all had the same office, because people came and went and we just used the same desks.

I came, and Bernard [P.] Spring came, who had a research background and came from—I think he was at MIT before he came there—and Norval White, who was a designer who was writing guide books to New York architecture and had a French cultural background, and most of the program was in place. But in order to have the degree program there had to be more specific things and we were building it. One of the ideas was to sort of challenge you in your teaching. I was an engineer but I wasn't doing engineering, but I was going to teach the engineering.

Riess: One of the ideas—you mean one of Esmond Shaw's ideas?

Bender: One of Esmond Shaw's ideas was to sort of make you learn while you're doing it. And so I was given Structures to teach which I really had no—at that point I think I was a licensed engineer, but I was the only one who would let me be the engineer for my own house. [laughter] I really felt I understood what engineering was supposed to be about for an architect. Bernie Spring was asked to take on what was a beginning field at that point—it used to be heating and ventilating, but the whole world of air-conditioning, climate control environment that's grown into something, was what he was building. And Norval was supposed to be, theoretically, directing the architectural design. But again, the designers who were coming in during the day to teach—they had a bigger reputation outside than he did at that time. It was true of all of us. Our role was to make it come together.

But it was also one of the pictures that I've kept of what a school should be like. We were more like the conductors of an orchestra than the players, and when I became dean here I saw really that's—that was the role of a dean. What I could never fully accomplish at Berkeley is to have the faculty see themselves as scholars and professionals but also as the people who run a program that uses the profession and the city and

resources from the whole world now as the teaching tools, rather than as people who each have their own territory.

Riess: Yes, well New York is ideal for that.

Bender: Cooper was loose enough, the time was loose enough. So I could teach structures. We could talk about steel, and I could chip in some of my own money and the kids would, I think, chip in five dollars, and we'd hire a bus and I took them to the Bethlehem [Steel] plant for the day, and we spent a day in the steel mill where you could feel the steel being made, the heat coming out of those furnaces, you could hear the noise, you could see them rolling the steel out. And then when you start to draw, it's different.

Riess: Yes.

Bender: We would visit—everyone sees the concrete being poured, and we would go to visit concrete structures being formed. But we went to visit the foundations of big office buildings four stories down and looked at how, and felt it—we used to touch it. And in the same way in the teaching, I said gee, I can't really teach them what I'm supposed to teach them—about tension and compression and the behavior of structures lectures and equations. When I went to school we had these labs where you could actually put samples in a machine and stretch a steel bar, and you could see it thinning out in the middle until it breaks—you could feel it break. We didn't have machines like that available, but I had them build devices. I would ask, "How would you test a beam? What would you use for weights? How would you do—?" Someone would make a lever to load the beam in mid-span, but the lever broke before the beam you were testing, and then you learned something else.

When I came to Berkeley—I think one of the reasons Jerry McCue asked me to come was these things, this way of teaching, became better known through ACSA conferences and publications, and other people were doing things like it. But I came to teach Structures here because we taught it that way.

Riess: You came to teach Structures here because you taught it that way back there, is that what you are saying?

Bender: Jerry and I kept in touch after that first meeting, and through the ASCA he heard of some of the experiments, the way we were doing things. We would not ask people to build a structure that could span between two tables out of toothpicks or whatever, but we would say, "Who can use the fewest toothpicks to hold a book," which is different from building the strongest structure, but to get used to the idea of how you get the strongest structure to do what you want it to do, to hold this particular book in this particular situation.

The test we used to do in engineering school is you test it till it breaks, and then you have a safety factor. But here I was trying to give them the idea of how you understand, and even more how you feel structure, and how

you *design* structure. How can you arrange the pieces different ways to use the least material? We judged the things by talking about the forms that people made and their pluses and minuses. And it was great fun and the kids loved it. They loved it and remember it. I meet many of them today, most them retired from practice, and they still talk about it.

You know everyone was, particularly at Cooper Union, they were terrified of the math because it was an art school and there wasn't math. There was math in what we taught, but it didn't feel like math. And a lot of the things that we were taught as math then became understandable because we were looking at it in a different way. I remember the last math course I had to take in engineering school was on differential equations, which is the equations of shapes. And I struggled with it, and one day I could look at an equation and *see* a hyperbola or an ellipse, and I could say that's beautiful. The trick was to get to that point.

I remember one cold winter day the class went to look at the Chase Bank which had just been finished in lower Manhattan. Gordon Bunshaft of SOM had designed it and it was really an outstanding building for the time. One of the things it featured were the columns outside so that the floors could be completely open and flexible. We went down there on a February day, I remember, and I said, "Touch the columns." And I said, "Think about these columns—it's freezing out here in the winter, and in the summer they're really hot. And remember what the experiments we do." We would do experiments where we would actually heat something up so you could see it stretching.

Riess: Yes.

Bender: And then we talked about—I remember standing there on that February day and it was cold on one side and we walked around the other side and the sun was on it, it was warmer, and we talked about "how does this building feel, how do those columns feel?" So it was great fun and one of the great pleasures of a teaching career. In June [2010] I was in New York and asked to talk on a panel the Forum for Urban Design put on. The panel was about mega projects and they wanted me to say something about Roppongi Hills. And it turned out when I got there Daniel Libeskind was there and he had been in those classes at Cooper. I hadn't seen him in years

Well, when I walked into the lobby I was with Paul Goldberger, who was also on the panel, and my friend Dan Rose and Jordan Gruzen. At any rate, when we walked in, it was in the lobby of the new Goldman Sachs building. It was a chance for people to see the Goldman Sachs building. And Daniel Libeskind walked in and he shouted from the other side, "Professor." And he came over and he started telling everyone about those classes and he said, "The teacher of the best class is here." I was so excited.

Riess: Wow. And Richard Meier is listed at Cooper?

Bender: Richard Meier, as I remember he was one of the part-time teachers in one class. He had just designed his mother's house in New Jersey and was doing a beach house on Fire Island right about that time. It was the beginning of his career. Richard has been a friend ever since. I was on the Getty committee that picked him to design the Getty Center.

Riess: And are these from your notes also Cooper people? Gerald Kallmann and Michael McKinnell?

Bender: Well, Kallmann and McKinnell—Kallmann later left Cooper to teach at Columbia as they revised the school. He taught a sort of “Bauhaus” course of basic design. But at the time that they were both at Cooper they entered the competition for the Boston City Hall, and they made the finals, and everybody at Cooper worked on the drawings and they won the competition. Boston City Hall was one of the most influential buildings in those days

Riess: That's an amazing building.

Bender: A strange building in lots of ways. In 1990 when I first arrived at Cergy-Pontoise, the French new town where I have been working for the last twenty years, you get out of the—you take the train and come up in the plaza in the middle of this new town, and standing in front of you is the regional government headquarters for the prefecture, and it's the Boston City Hall!

Cooper was small, or better, Cooper was intimate. Everyone knew what everyone was doing, and everyone was involved—but more than that everyone was involved in—you couldn't separate what was teaching, what was marching, protesting the destruction of Penn Station, protesting the Vietnam War, protesting the zoning laws that wouldn't let you live in lofts, and eventually getting lofts made legal, getting permission so you could live in lofts, and in working on lofts and fixing them up and transforming them. And seeing how not only living was changed when people moved into lofts, but the art world was changed when the galleries started to move in and the ceilings were higher and the spaces were bigger. These people—it was the middle of the famous battles between Jane Jacobs and Robert Moses. I had grown up—Moses was my hero, he made Jones Beach, he made those parkways, and those were all good things, and Jane Jacobs was taking him on on his proposed highway across Manhattan and that changed.

That was a time when art was beginning to be corporate; corporations were buying into art and architecture. When the Chase Bank Building was finished—to have SOM do the most modern of office buildings for the Chase Bank, and have an executive floor that had the same paintings that are in the Museum of Modern Art! Corporations started to have art collections at the same time as artists started to move further away from traditional galleries and venues for their work. So you were having the art world booming in office buildings on one level, but also in these renovated parts of SoHo. SoHo was being rejuvenated. It had been textile

garment manufacturing and that was all moving out, and it was looked at as abandoned. Moses was saying tear it down and we'll make new housing projects, and we were showing you can make marvelous things in these places. You don't have to tear it all down. It is better to re-invent these places, to "evolve" a new city.

Riess: The *we* now is you and this band of brother architects?

Bender: Well, I'm talking about the whole community in a way, but part of what Cooper Union was about is that it was part of everybody's teaching. You didn't have to have a class on it one day; you didn't even have to read about—here [at Berkeley] I used to talk to my class about what I read in the paper that day. But there we'd walk by it on the way in, or most of the kids ended up living in the neighborhood and they were part of this.

One example—everybody learned the trick, you weren't allowed to do renovations in most of these old buildings, so people would take an apartment, and they would want to take a wall out. So they'd start to take the wall out and you'd carry out the pieces in shopping bags, a few at a time. So on one level you were looking at renovating old tenement buildings, and on the other level you're looking at the Chase Manhattan Bank. And the whole world was changing at that point. The Vietnam War was really affecting the school. At Cooper, and before it became a degree program even more so, an instructor would say to a student, "You know, you better take a year off and see if this is really what you want to do," or maybe say, "Get a job in an ad agency," to an artist. "See if this is really good for you." There wasn't much about failing or passing or anything, it was how you made a life out of it. When Vietnam came along, if you dropped out or you failed you went to Vietnam. So suddenly, and this was true all over I'm sure, nobody failed.

And on one level, discipline disappeared. Things became much more permissive in a bad way. There was a good intention, but it was harder to make certain judgments. On the other hand, grading was always hard. At Cooper we always struggled with grades. When I first came on as a faculty member at Cooper I got a committee assignment, and I had never known about committees. It turned out I was head of the Academic Standards Committee. So I went to the president and I said, "What does the Academic Standards Committee do?" He said, "You have to talk to Robert Gwathmey." He was the father of the architect Charles Gwathmey, and a really good painter and an inspiring teacher. He was from the South and he used to paint pictures of blacks working in the cotton fields, with strong color and deep feeling. "You have to talk to Bob Gwathmey; he only gives A's."

And so I finally get up the courage—he was a wonderful man, and I'm talking to him one day, and I said, "You know, I'm supposed to talk to you about the fact that you only give A's." And he said, "Yes, they're all great kids, aren't they?" [laughter] And the painters would decide what is a B or a B+?

- Riess: Yes, well there is that question.
- Bender: When I came here, and when I was in the conference of deans and used to have some of these conversations, I realized I was a foreigner in the world of Berkeley deans. At one point we were talking about languages and the fact that you had to have French or German to get a PhD—most of the PhDs at that point were moving into areas like computers and electronics where it would have been more helpful to speak Japanese, but they said that's too hard. And we're grading in the art school on A, B, C and people in architecture also having to give grades like that. Grade point averages are computed to hundredths of a point. I proposed at one point that we add another language, which was drawing, that drawing is a language, and it's an expressive language, and a language useful for everybody. And I had a really good ally, the vice chancellor at that time, a biologist, Rod, what was his last name. [Rod Park] He became, temporarily, the president of UC Merced for a while and he was interested in art.
- Riess: So you had an ally?
- Bender: Well, he said, "You know, biology has become a field where being able to sketch, and even chemistry now, drawing and sketching are an important way to communicate." And more and more when I talked to individual people they said well, it's really useful when you're having a conversation. But the deans would mock the idea, they'd say that's too easy.
- Riess: Let's get back to the Vietnam. I understand you to be saying that because students would do anything to avoid getting drafted they stayed in school but they didn't particularly apply themselves?
- Bender: No, some people stayed on, even when they knew it was not for them, but I'm saying that there were people who would have turned out to be better students if they could take a year off and come back. Or if, as we did sometimes, we'd get them a job in a particular architect's office or showing them there was a different path even within architecture. It was harder to do that when the alternative was Vietnam. And it's much harder to do here in Berkeley. When I came here the bigness had a lot of advantages, but I also saw what it lost in the smallness. Particularly in the undergraduate programs it can be hard for faculty to know their students. I have been broken-hearted to find a student applying to graduate school who tells me that he has never had a regular faculty member in a situation where he feels he can ask for a recommendation.

[End Tape 11: Side B]

Interview 7: October 26, 2010

[Begin Tape 12: Side A]

Bender: [talking about *New York Times* of that day] Thomas Friedman gets off on the idea of artisans, and how people have lost respect for themselves around their work. In Japan—it's changing, but if you go into a fabric shop the people who work there would know all the fabrics, and in a camera shop people would know about cameras. If you go to buy paint for your house they'd be able to talk about the different paints and things.

We went to buy a hair dryer yesterday, a ceramic hair dryer because apparently it's not as harsh a heat. We went into the drugstore and asked which hair dryer was better and everyone looked at us like we were crazy and finally they ended up saying, "Ask the pharmacist." [laughter] The pharmacist is puzzled too, and finally the girl at the cash register, she came over, she was an expert on hair dryers. So the thing is, you don't find that expertise, that artisanship, and part of what I was trying to talk about the last time, about what I was discovering in SoHo, in Greenwich Village, in that world, was a level of artisanship, the pride in what people did. Some of it was still left from before, from my teen days. We shared an apartment over Peter Carbone's Village String Shop, and Peter Carbone really knew stringed instruments. He could build a guitar; he could repair a violin, and he knew the woods. You could lose yourself in the aromas of wood in there. He didn't just buy a guitar or order it online. All the famous artists who were living in lofts in those days, they did plumbing, they did electrical work, they fixed the lofts, they strung wires—it was natural to take a place over and make it theirs. And to take part you had to get to know the hardware store people and the painters.

One of the questions you asked when we left off was about what I was doing suddenly teaching city planning at Cooper Union. My role officially was supposed to be structures and construction, and that was seen—even talking about construction as well as designing structure, was seen as a spreading out of my area. But this was a period when I was getting to see that I could less and less, and *wanted* less and less to separate design, construction and the house from the town around it, and that most of the planning that I had known and been taught and had studied was top-down planning, in which by the time you got to the house, either it was imposed or it was left for the poor people to do within this larger structure.

But some of the richest places you see also came from the bottom up. The kings laid out streets and they built the fountains and they built the public buildings, and in some cases the people filled in the neighborhoods. I realized, in a sense, that's what we were doing in Mexico and some of the other places for how to deal with squatters. The squatters would come in, and then they would get bulldozed out the next time a public figure came by because it looked so ugly, and they'd lose everything. But if we could come in and plan a street system and a way, not necessarily where water and sewage would go in right away, but where it would eventually go, where we could be sure fire engines and ambulances would be able to go,

and the energy of people and families could begin to make a city rather than perpetuating the slums.

Well, it needs, at a certain level, order and a certain level of structure to support it. And it was interesting how people could move in, and in different ways they had to improvise one way to get water or to get rid of sewage, which was very primitive. You could have trucks deliver water to fifty-five gallon fuel tanks and people would come and get it in buckets. They would empty their chamber pots, or the equivalent of that, into septic tanks and another truck would pump it out and take it away. But with electricity, they could start to string wires to the nearest power poles and steal electricity from the poles or clip into the phone lines, and as it got to be radio and TV, the new infrastructure is much more flexible. In most squatter settlements, even then, most families had electricity, radios and TV, before water pipes and toilets.

It was a big turning around for me. I was finding that all of the technology that I had grown up looking at, it all implied coming from the top down. The Rockefellers had the IBEC idea of bringing a big crane and doing—and out of it came the house, like Jell-O out of a mold. Lustron made metal house parts out of the same factories and technology that made refrigerators. But what we were seeing in SOHO and seeing in developing countries is that there was no money for anybody to do it that way, but if you could enable people, they could transform cities, increase the density, make them more exciting, livable, interesting in so many ways. In the UN and AID projects it took place in South America by telling families, if you move onto this piece and build on it, make a home, you're going to be able to keep it, it's going to be your land and it'll eventually have a street and evolve into a part of the city. We didn't use the word infrastructure much in those days, but in going into civil engineering to study structure I was also taking the first steps back to civic engineering and city planning and design. I am invited to speak at the 60th reunion of my CCNY engineering class in June and will be talking about this, and about the need to recognize the rebirth of "civic engineering."

In places like Greenwich Village, you could move into that loft building, and if you can make it a studio you can live there! And if you can make it a studio that's attractive enough, you can sell it to somebody who wants to live in a studio and you can buy the next one and do it! Well, in Mexico or in Morocco, or wherever we were doing this, we started getting complaints that these people were selling their houses. They would build these, much like the ones you saw in San Miguel [de Allende, Mexico]. They're built different ways, but they're basically concrete block and the steel bars they call *esperanza*.

Riess: *Esperanza?*

Bender: Seeing the reinforcing bars sticking out. *Esperanza*. It's the hope—you know, the next floor of the building.

But it turned out that some families were selling them, and selling them for big prices, and what's happening is that the neighborhoods were becoming enough like middle class neighborhoods so other people would buy them, and these people had learned how to build houses, they had become part of an informal building industry, so they went to squat somewhere else. And so we were in the position, as we were in Greenwich Village in a different way, and were saying—you know we've made a building industry, but waiting for government or developers you could never make a building industry that would build all those houses in South America and then go on to build the next, and the next, and the next one.

Again, people came to me at Cooper Union because some of these things were getting interesting, and to find someone in a position who had a platform, the platform of Cooper Union, who was talking about training students about self-help, owner-builders, and the importance of looking at this as a part of the building industry. In the process I got connected with a whole network of different groups starting with the UN and UNESCO, the USAID, even the World Bank.

But we found and developed a version of it here. You asked about Don Turner and Jim Morton. He actually came to me, Bishop James Morton who was the archbishop of the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine, this enormous unfinished church, in the tradition of enormous unfinished churches. And he had the idea of having local teenagers taught stonemasonry to help finish it. He came to me for advice. And then I went up to St. John the Divine, up between Columbia and CCNY—I remember some of the first students I worked with, Barry Elbasani, who eventually came here and was one of the founders of ELS, who just died, and Roland [P.] Dick was in that group. Carmi Bee was another one. He was from an Israeli background but he grew up in New York. He eventually became chairman of the architecture department at City College of New York, and he retired—my students are all retired—he retired from a very good practice doing housing and public buildings in New York City.

Riess: Students at Cooper would be more likely to be engaged with these structures issues than students—for instance if you had been teaching at Harvard or Princeton?

Bender: Yes.

Riess: Why is that? Something about the working class?

Bender: No. First of all—and it's a problem at Berkeley now. I hadn't heard the term "research university" until recently, but the great research universities looked down, still do, on that sort of thing. And so you have to find a way. We worked out all kinds of tricks to let people work with their hands or to touch things. At Cooper it was not a problem: everybody was working part-time, everyone was working both to learn and to make some money because everyone needed to make money. Second, "housing" was all around us. New York was still catching up with its housing supply.

There were many small developers working with small architects in neighborhoods.

Riess: So it's not something you brought to the program particularly?

Bender: Some of the slant came from me, although it was quite common in those days. But the way you got started—it used to be a joke—was to do your mother's house, or do a house for yourself the way Sue and I did, and students would come to help. Sometimes they were paid; sometimes they went to get to the country, the way I went to Pete Seeger as much to be part of that group and to spend a weekend working in the country and doing something they could feel good about.

As time went on and the practice and things changed, by the sixties we were shifting that kind of work more to the kind of project that you saw in Mexico. There's a difference, though, if you come from Rhode Island School of Design to spend two weeks or so, or from Berkeley to come someplace, from being able to work in your neighborhood, in a sense, to be renovating brownstones, to be taking the subway up to the Harlem neighborhood around the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine. And not many of them, none of them that I know were trying to learn to be stone masons, but to see how stone buildings are put together and be able to play some role as volunteers in that. I found ways for them to work on all kinds of things. I think I mentioned we went to places like the Bethlehem Steel mills.

But on the other hand, and I think one of the other names that appear in my notes—I'll come back to James Morton. One of the things that appears in here is a mention of Ken Snelson. Kenneth Snelson I think was from Seattle originally, but he came east to go Black Mountain College. And there, one of his teachers was Buckminster Fuller. Buckminster Fuller used to love to talk about the principle of "tensegrity," in which you have a structure of pure tension and pure compression. Fuller said it's an *idea* but you can't really build it. Ken went home, back to his room one day and he built this little structure with just string and wood and it stood up and it became "tensegrity." Ken, when he left Black Mountain, was supporting himself doing video photography for news broadcasts. He was one of the photographers who documented the marches in the South, but he was also becoming passionate about these structures. At any rate, he was beginning to use aluminum and steel and making bigger and bigger structures.

He got the job to build a tensegrity tower in the Power and Light Pavilion of the electric company, I guess, at the New York World's Fair. And he designed this structure which was sixty-feet high made just of aluminum tubes held by wires that didn't touch. And then he had two problems. The first problem was that the building department said you can't build that unless you have an engineer's drawing approving it, and nobody knew how to calculate it. Somebody told him there was this funny engineer at Cooper Union who liked structures and had the students building odd structures, and knew Buckminster Fuller. And he came by with this thing

and I said, “There is no way in the world I can calculate this, but what I *can* do is I can figure out if it falls down how many people are going to get hurt or get killed and what my insurance is.” [laughter] Nowadays we could compute it, I guess, because with computers and all you could, these are very dynamic structures.

Anyway, we got it through the building department. The problem was that the steel union wouldn’t allow non-union people on the site at the Fair, and they were going to charge a fortune because they didn’t know how to erect the thing. Ken had the idea that with a team of Cooper students we could assemble it on a dock under the Manhattan Bridge in the East River, and he’d hire a helicopter to take it to the World’s Fair and put it in place. So there was no construction. The whole thing would just be put down like a sculpture. And in the end it was the same group of students I just mentioned and Lance [J.] Brown and Michael [J.] Pittas were the two others—Michael Pittas eventually became the head of architecture at the National Endowment for the Arts. Lance Brown—I think he’s still at Princeton in the architecture department. These are all people out of projects.

Riess: A point of pride I should think, yes.

Bender: Yes, well and it was one of the great days. We put this thing together, and I’ll show you the pictures. Ken was doubly excited about doing it. He had two helicopters, so one helicopter lifted the structure up and carried it. It was a beautiful sight, and he had it fly around the Statue of Liberty, make a loop, and he was in the other helicopter filming and videoing it. It was right about the time of one of those early Italian movies, *La Dolce Vita*, the scene where there’s a helicopter carrying—you know in these parades they have on Italian holidays all the men carry the Virgin. Well, there’s a scene where a helicopter is carrying the Virgin, and this was our version of it. I have this picture of the thing up in the air. But that was typical.

Riess: You mean that sense of cooperation and can-do was typical?

Bender: To do things like that, to make things and adjust them and make the idea better. Cooper Union had a camp in New Jersey. That’s one of the great Cooper Union stories. When Peter Cooper died he thought that the school was in good shape, because his idea, which is now the hottest idea in urban planning—the ground floor would be shops, not workshops, but a butcher and a baker, whatever, and the income would support the building above. And then as an afterthought, he left the school the little cranberry farm in the country and another farm in New Jersey that they could use for outdoor things. The cranberry farm in the country turns out to be the site of the Chrysler Building; the Chrysler Building stands on Cooper Union’s land and has been supporting Cooper Union, paying rent, all these years. And for me again, that’s the urban planning that I love.

But at any rate, there was the other farm in New Jersey, which the school operated as a camp, where the students could go and we’d bring the art students and the architecture students together for weekends.

Riess: So like retreats?

Bender: Yes, like a one- or two-day retreat, usually at the beginning of the year so people would get to know each other. It was all the things you do with those things [retreats] except someone was always building a geodesic dome or a tensegrity mast or building a bridge across the river or things of that sort.

At one point during that period Norman Mailer published an article, or someone published an article about him, in the *New York Times Magazine*. He had an idea he called Lego City, because he made it with Legos, and with strings and wires. It was his idea of a city of the future with these Lego blocks representing apartment houses and office buildings supported in the air. Well, Monday morning we came in and the kids were all looking at it and laughing at it, saying how impractical it was, you couldn't do that. "See, you can get away with anything if you're an author." I said, "Well, let's ask him about it and see if he wants to come and talk about it."

A surprise and great treat, he agreed to come to the class, and it was one of the most—it was marvelous. He was really terrific, and they took him on, and he kept arguing with them. Then at the end we said, "Let's go to McSorley's and continue over a beer." It was a famous bar nearby, and he said, "I'm buying." And so there are about ten of the students, again some of the same people I've been mentioning. They were walking ahead, and as we're coming out of the room he said to me, "I really beat them didn't I?" [laughing] I said, "I guess you did." He said, "It wasn't really fair. It wasn't that I was right—I argue better." At McSorley's he was really in good spirits and he said, "You know, I want to show you the model."

He had a house in Brooklyn Heights that overlooked the harbor, the East River, and he invited them to come to the house. Sue and I went early, and we were sitting around talking with him, and when the first student came he got up and he put on a jacket, a tweed jacket. He was treating the occasion with respect. And again, they had a wonderful time. He did his writing on a platform up under the roof; there was a platform and he sat up there where he could look out over the harbor. And there was a rope ladder he could pull up after him, and he said it was a way to get away from the world and people couldn't bother him.

Riess: He had actually built a model of Lego City?

Bender: Yes, there were photographs of this, but I don't have any. Probably somewhere in the *Times* archives.

Riess: Did the students try to rebuild it?

Bender: No, but they talked about ideas similar to it and they talked about the idea that everyone concentrates on the house. And then he started asking, "Would you live there?" And he said, "Well, the view is good." He said,

‘But where would you go for a beer?’ And so it was about as good a lesson in city planning as you could have. [laughing]

Riess: That’s lovely, yes.

Bender: Well, there’s so much in here to talk about, and I was hoping we could get to the beginning of California today. One other thing which you asked about that I wanted to get clear because it’s—and I’ll come back to it later—I haven’t talked much about Don Turner.

Riess: No, and he is so much part of the BRIDGE story. I didn’t realize he came so early.

Bender: Well, the roots are here. I also wasn’t sure where it started because I think I did meet Don once or twice. He was a Harvard student in the ‘60s, before I came to California. But I met him originally through Jim Morton, the archbishop, because Don also was involved in this idea—it was partly Jim Morton’s idea but also he interested people like Ethel Kennedy and a number of other New Yorkers, that said these kids could be trained to do something more practical than building stone churches, and they could fix houses. And at that point there were many abandoned tenements, in the South Bronx in particular. They were abandoned by the landlords, not necessarily by the tenants, because the cost of bringing them up to code wasn’t worth it for the rents they would get. So the city was owning these things and they were below code. They were caught in the position that they can’t put the people out on the street but they can’t allow them to live in an unsafe thing—and they couldn’t afford to fix them.

That eventually led to UHAB, Urban Homesteading Assistance Board. The city would sell these buildings to the people who lived in them who would form a coop. They would take over the building for a very small fee and renovate the building with the help of UHAB. They would finance it at the interest rate that city municipal bonds paid. The interest rate on municipal, tax-free bonds would be about half the regular interest rate. UHAB would help to train local people to do the rehabilitation and that would also be job training for them. It was a beautiful idea. I was beginning to see this kind of beauty, like a good balance sheet or those curves in analytic geometry. We eventually found people from the unions who agreed to help with the training and with the idea. And Jim Morton, the archbishop, also got really high-level donors. By the time I got involved Don was finishing his thesis at Harvard, which looked at self-help and things of that sort, and he was spending a lot of time in New York studying and helping to create UHAB, and he became the first director of UHAB.

Riess: How does this fit with Jimmy Carter walking into the South Bronx?

Bender: The famous Carter visit is a BRIDGE landmark, because Don met him, not for BRIDGE but as the director of UHAB, and showed the President around one of the first new buildings in the reconstruction of the South Bronx. The idea was to show people both that the area could come back

and that citizens could participate. Carter's visit gave a stamp of approval to that kind of community action.

Riess: It was underway?

Bender: The first house was finished, I think, when he made the visit. And if you'd gone, the area looked like Europe after the war. There were big areas that had been desolated, but the first new buildings were appearing.

When Don came to Berkeley, one of the people he met was one of my students, Andy Reicher. Andy, like Rick Holliday, another Berkeley graduate, just got captured by Don, and when Andy graduated he went to Sacramento to work with Don in the state housing office and then to the East Coast to work for UHAB. Now he's in about his twenty-fifth year as director of UHAB in New York.

[End Tape 12: Side A]

[Begin Tape 12: Side B]

Riess: You mention Ivan Illich in connection with all this.

Bender: Yes, well, when I mention Mexico, again, the threads all get woven. One of my assignments at Cooper Union—Cooper Union originally had a big collection of costumes and hats and antiques, a design collection, but it wasn't of much interest to what was going on in the school at that point, and it was taking up a whole floor. Cooper Union needed more space in their old building. They decided to give away the collections that came from the Peter Cooper family, clothing, crafts and design; the trustees made a deal to donate the collection to the Smithsonian, and the Smithsonian used it as the basis to set up the Cooper-Hewitt Museum. The trustees made a deal to donate it to the Smithsonian, and the Smithsonian used it as the basis of the design museum on Fifth Avenue [Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum at 91st St. in what was the Andrew Carnegie Mansion]. Cooper Union made me their representative. There were only four professors in architecture at that point, and so we each had lots of tasks and opportunities.

At any rate, one of the rules was that Cooper should be represented on the board, and I got to be the one who went to these board meetings. And more interesting than the issues around the board meeting was that on the board there was a Mexican man who had graduated from Columbia and was teaching there who was a designer, Eduardo Terrazas. He did graphics and paintings and design and he was on the board, and he was a good friend of Ivan Illich. And the other person who was briefly on the board was George Nelson, and George Nelson didn't stay involved with that board too much, but he represented really the highest level of the design world. I got to know both of them, and George got interested in what Eduardo was telling us about what Ivan Illich was doing.

Ivan was famous in different ways at that point. He had been a priest in the Bronx. I think he was assigned to the Bronx because he was a troublemaker, an organizer, and the story is that he learned Spanish over the weekend before he arrived in the Bronx. I can believe it. He was brilliant. He was a dynamic personality in the Bronx. Francine du Plessix [Gray] wrote a book about him and there was a big article in the *New Yorker* about him and how once he started organizing and energizing his people the church tried to—what do you call it when they throw you out of the church? Excommunicate him. There were hearings and he had to go to the Vatican at one point, and they reassigned him to Puerto Rico for a while and he was the vice chancellor of a Catholic university in Puerto Rico, but he ended up being assigned to Cuernavaca where they had a bishop called the Red Bishop [Sergio Mendez Arceo] who introduced the guitar and Spanish to the rituals in the Church, and generally fought for a better life for the poor. Ivan settled there.

Eduardo had a weekend house in Tepotzlan near there and became devoted to Illich, and was the architect who made it Ivan's house. And Ivan started getting involved with self-help. Illich's official role there was teaching. He was teaching American graduates of seminaries about life, language and customs in Latin countries before they went off to other parts of Mexico or Brazil or Peru. The picture was of these red-headed football player types coming out of seminaries and appearing as priests in these places in South America, without any language, without anything about the culture. Ivan ran a school—it was called CIDOC [Centro Intercultural de Documentación], center for information and documentation—which gave language lessons and cultural lessons to priests. And then he expanded it to have seminars on all kinds of things and invited scholars.

I was invited to talk about my ideas about housing, at Eduardo's invitation more than Ivan's, and George Nelson was invited. Sue and I went and spent a week there in Cuernavaca, and it was marvelous. Cuernavaca is a big, rambling place and there's not so much of the old culture left, but there's a town called Tepoztlán outside of Cuernavaca where Eduardo and Ivan lived and where they had begun experiments and demonstrations of self-help. It was a town with deep roots and traditions and still had a lot of the original native feeling. Also a lot of Germans escaping Hitler came there in the 1930s and 1940s, in the way they came to Los Angeles. So that was my first involvement with Ivan. It began about ten years of involvement in CIDOC and the Tepoztlan Project.

Then when I came to Berkeley I started inviting Ivan to come here. He gave a couple of powerful lectures and at one point we invited him to stay for a quarter. It transformed some of the people, like Roslyn Lindheim, who was one of the "social factors" faculty in architecture. She just was, again, captured. And she started inviting him back and adjusting her teaching around him. But again, I'm getting ahead. Berkeley, the architecture department divided itself into areas of study, and one was—and it was the first—to have an area of the department that was devoted to

social issues, and four or five faculty, like Clare Cooper was one and Russ Ellis—that was really unusual.

Riess: In your notes Don Turner and Ivan Illich appear in the context of the various directions of the PLW office.

Bender: Oh, housing was a big part of the office, and when I came—housing on two levels or three levels probably—the reputation of the office, Wiener and Sert, Town Planning Associates, its previous name, was big projects in Latin America mostly. I came in the middle of that, in a sense. As Sert moved to Harvard and I was left, I began to take it more in my direction, mostly by developing Paul Wiener and Sert contacts through UN, so when there was a big earthquake in Agadir [Morocco] we got invited to help with the replanning, because at that point no one was thinking of building what looked like Miami Beach hotels for housing for the poor people in Agadir, as had been done all through South America up to that point, and was being done till recently in France. If you see the cités that are built for poor people on the outskirts of Paris, you think they're Miami Beach hotels till you see the ground level, that look bombed out.

So the office was beginning to move in that direction, and we were getting projects through the UN that said, "Well, we'd like you to help with the planning, but also to organize a beginning of how they would go about building their own houses, and how you draw the lines. And we did that. While traveling in Morocco, I went to several other communities to talk to people about that, and part of what we did was—we always tried to start, with any of the plans we did, we put together a team of local people who would stay behind and be the city planning department. And so I began to visit some of the other places there.

Riess: Other places in Africa?

Bender: In Morocco at that point. We never got to work in Algeria and Tunisia, which is another direction it could have gone but it didn't. The things that I had done in Israel, in Nazareth, were some beginnings for this. The office *had* been doing plans for Lima and Bogota, or for big neighborhoods, and I got involved in some things like that. We did a plan for Aspen, Colorado. Those plans take a long time to show results, so it was nice to be able to build something on the scale of houses, so we were always looking for houses to build. But even the houses took more time, so we also did apartments and interiors, and in a sense did the three of them at one point.

We would not necessarily do the interiors for the houses we were doing, but we would do interiors for people who were buying an apartment. I mentioned Ala Damaz, who is in her late eighties now and living in New York. And Paul's wife Ingeborg, who's ninety-six, she played some role in the interiors. The apartments were mostly for rich people, although the last project I did in New York before I left was for Robert Shaw, who is a psychiatrist. He was a friend in New York who from his—well, he lived on Central Park West, but he got interested in more public things, and he

ran one of the first Head Start Programs in New York, which was in Coney Island, and it turned out to be in the space that my draft board had been in—right next door to the RKO Tilyou Movie Theater and across the street from Nathan’s Hot Dogs. [laughter] I got to renovate my old draft board for the Head Start Program, and Bob eventually moved out here. He died just a year or so ago.

Riess: In your notes you refer to “finally finishing the Scull House.”

Bender: The Sculls, Bob and Ethel Scull, who were made famous in one of those short stories by Tom Wolfe, he came from a poor background, and at some point he studied design someplace. He did industrial design, didn’t do too well in that business, so somehow got into the taxi business, and he was the biggest taxi operator in New York. They called his drivers Scull’s Angels. He came to us one day and he said he had bought land on Georgica Road, a really prime spot in East Hampton, and wanted a house. It paralleled what was going on in that art world. I never thought of it this way. But the Sculls had moved from his taxi business to become one of the leading Pop Art art collectors of that period. And they were a group of people—the Sculls, and Ben Heller who inherited the company that makes that stretch fabric, Lycra, that that they use to make women’s stretch pants out of. Ben became a Jackson Pollock collector, and Rothko, when these were just emerging artists.

Riess: And emerging money?

Bender: And emerging money. It was nowhere near the Rockefellers, but even—Juan Trippe, who was the head of Pan Am, people like that owned these big houses along the oceanfront in East Hampton, and some of them had been in the family for generations.

In the same way in New York, you couldn’t get on the board of the Met or of MoMA because you didn’t have that kind of money, you couldn’t buy Picassos to donate. So group of these people captured the Jewish Museum and put it on the map. The Jewish Museum in New York at that period of the late fifties-sixties was the hotbed of emerging American art, more so than the Whitney. I’m trying to remember—there was one family that was sort of the head of the Jewish museum, Albert and Vera List. The Jewish Museum was originally conceived to be like the one here, with candelabra and glasses and Torahs, but then they had the idea to make it a modern museum, and it wasn’t particularly Jewish painters or anything, but they started putting on exhibitions and donating paintings, so suddenly, for a while, the Jewish Museum, which is up around the Guggenheim [5th Avenue at 92nd St.] was the center of that.

The reason I mention it is someone like the Sculls couldn’t buy a house on the water and make a splash, but in the center of East Hampton you could buy a pretty good-sized lot and do something, and actually there were half a dozen people there. One I’m trying to remember, he died just recently, the man who owned the press that published *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*—Barney Rosset.

Riess: The Grove Press?

Bender: Grove Press—he was part of the scene. Leo Castelli was renting a house there. I met Conrad Maccarelli who was a painter. He had a big barn-like house at one edge of Georgia Road in East Hampton. And he used to invite Fernand Leger to stay with him. In general it was rich people, but a lot of the new art patrons started to move into the center area.

Riess: And they all wanted the modern thing?

Bender: Well, now they wanted modern, and again, they could make a splash with modern. In order to make—I don't think anyone ever talked about this, but if you wanted to buy a really good old house, it was very expensive, but you could build your own modern house.

Riess: Also, it's a showcase for art—modern art in a modern house.

Bender: Well, it was all coming—the artists were already there. They were all on the beach together. The dealers were coming, the patrons were coming now.

The Sculls decided to build—he would say, well, he wanted very simple, “like a cabana,” but what he was proposing to spend was a fortune at that point. With the land and the house it was going to be over \$100,000. That doesn't sound like so much money today, but it was.

Riess: Why did they come to you?

Bender: Paul was—they certainly didn't come to me, even though what brought them designwise was what I was doing, they had seen our house and Babs Simpson's house. But Paul was this very elegant European gentleman who knew rich people and cultured people and government people. Paul and Ingeborg were a treasure of the community, both in Greenwich Village and here. The Scull house was a focus, and we got asked to do more houses.

A number of these houses were going up at the same time, and the painters were interested in them, but the painters were also building. De Kooning was a neighbor who we would meet from time to time, and then he decided to build his own house. And he wanted to design it and supervise it. His galleries went crazy. He didn't paint for three years and he was building a strange house. It's like a giant tract house—split-level, except the split-level living room was his studio, with a twenty-five feet high and fifty feet long painting wall. But I would go over to look and then he'd invite me, and I'd advise them and help them to find the right craftsmen. Or he would get in fights with the craftsmen, and sometimes I'd come and try to explain that what they were doing was not cheating him, or sometimes that they were. I did the same for Rothko, who was always renovating the little house he had on Gardner's Bay, where he eventually killed himself.

Riess: Oh.

Bender: And again, several of the collectors became our good friends—well, the Hellers, Ben Heller was one of the most influential collectors. He bought Pollock’s early work, he bought almost all of the major artists, and at that point he was beginning to donate them to museums.

One of our nicest family experiences—I took the boys to MoMA once when they were maybe seven and eight, and Ben Heller had just donated one of his big Pollocks and it was in the lobby, where they were showing their new acquisition. We walked in and David said, “That’s Woody’s picture!” (Woody Heller was their friend.) Because they’d been at the house so many times with the paintings on the wall. Actually, it was even more involved than that. I think the Hellers made a deal through Sidney Janis Gallery to donate the painting somehow. But the boys were at school with the two Janis boys, and they knew Andre Emmerich’s kids from the beach, and I eventually helped Andre Emmerich when he redesigned his gallery on 57th Street. The blue wall along the stairway in our house is what we called “Emmerich blue.” So they were not great pals, but they were real friends.

We talked some about the Roses. The Roses turned out to have a really big house just back from the beach with a butler and maids. At lunch—it was at a table like this and Joanna would sit there and Dan would sit here, and sometimes there’d be twenty people around it—they had four kids, and a very robust social life and are wonderful generous people. There was a button for a bell on the floor, and we’d be having hot dogs, but Joanna would push the button and the boys would look because you could hear the bell ring, and this butler, Worthie, would come in with a tray full of—one day hot dogs and another day lobster. It was a world in which everyone was wonderfully mixed up.

Dan and Joanna became patrons, in a way. First he helped me do some of the things at Cooper Union. Then when I came here, when I decided to start a research group, the Rose Foundation made one of the first donations to get it started. The Roses, as I have said, are exuberantly into everything. Joanna was on the board of the *Partisan Review*—I don’t think it exists anymore. She graduated from Bryn Mawr where she was the roommate of Ruth [Prawer] Jhabvala, the Indian writer. Joanna has the largest collection of American quilts.

[End Tape 12: Side B

[Begin Tape 13: Side A]

Bender: Whether in New York or in East Hampton, the Roses were always having big dinners, big parties, especially around writers. And at one of those parties, Sue sat between Dwight McDonald and E.L. Doctorow. In one of her books she describes that evening. I don’t think she mentions the names, but she says she realizes that for some people, no matter what you have you’ll never have enough. These people who were at the top of the

world in whatever they're doing, were all trying to tell the other how important they were.

But the other side of it is I sat one night next to a man I didn't recognize, and we started talking, and it turned out he was the editor, then, of the *Partisan Review*, a poet named Richard Poirier, who just died recently. He was asking me how I'm involved with the Roses, and what I did, and I started telling him about what I was thinking about and doing, and that I was writing an article to try to talk about how the future was going to be different. And as we talked about it, he said that he'd love to publish it if I'd send it to him, and I was ecstatic. I had published funny little things; I published—I'm not sure of the sequence, but a couple of things in architectural magazines. I did a thing I liked a lot in *Craft Horizons* once. But anyway, I sent him this and he called and he said, "Do you mind if I edit it?" I said, "I'm not sensitive. I know how badly I write." And he really made it beautiful, and they published it. It was called, "A Visit to a Small Planet."

Riess: What was the impact of that?

Bender: Well, it was reprinted. It would get into op-ed pages from newspapers in Louisiana and Chicago and across the country. And one of the people who saw it was Forrest Wilson. Forrest Wilson at that time was an editor of *Progressive Architecture* magazine. It was just at the same time that I was invited to be one of the jurors for the annual *Progressive Architecture* design awards, which involves going, at that point I think it was someplace in Connecticut, for three days, where we went through these hundreds of projects. I got to know Forrest Wilson there, and he had seen this article and we were talking about what I was interested in.

Forrest Wilson had a really interesting background. He came from a poor Irish family who during the Depression somehow got to the West Coast. He worked on the Golden Gate Bridge as a laborer on the foundations, and then when Orozco—was it Orozco who painted the murals in the San Francisco Art Institute, or Rivera? Yes, it was Rivera. Anyway, Forrest was one of the assistants painting the murals. During the war when he was in the Merchant Marine—at one point they landed in North Africa, in Casablanca, and he realized that they were building bases there, and carpenters were much safer and being paid much more on land than at sea, so he ended up leaving the Merchant Marine and working as a carpenter on those bases. But the bases were being designed by SOM, and through that he got into architecture and got to be an editor of *Progressive Architecture*. And he has made wonderful drawings and children's' books on architecture, structure. Forrest suggested that I turn "A Visit to a Small Planet" into a book, and eventually collaborated and brought it to publication.

Through there was another track to the publication of *A Crack in the Rear-view Mirror*. My friends at Cooper Union, and again because my interest in housing was so different, Lew Davis, who taught at Cooper Union and was one of the main partners for Davis Brody architects, Lew was

politically active and connected enough so that he was one of the members of the National Commission on Urban Problems, the Douglas Commission, that was set up to look at the implications of the 1960s urban riots and what might be done about it. And another member of that commission was Richard Ravitch, who is now the lieutenant governor of New York. Dick Ravitch was a developer with a public interest who later led and improved the New York City transit system, and he was a great client for Davis Brody doing housing. And he became a good friend. His former wife is Diane Ravitch, who writes about and fights for quality public education.

At any rate, Dick Ravitch and Lew Davis said the report should have a component that looks at the new technologies and the new possibilities, and I got commissioned to do that report. That report is what eventually became the book, *A Crack in the Rear-view Mirror*. And it came through Forrest Wilson.

Riess: The report was for the Douglas Commission?

Bender: For the Douglas Commission, and I think the original title is, “The Social and Technical Effects of Technology on Building,” or something like that. I have a copy of it and one of the original copies is in the CED Library.

Riess: Was it easy or difficult to write that?

Bender: Oh, it was easy. It was fun. I started making drawings and then found a Cooper student who was really good at making little sketches who helped me.

Riess: Nice. It has a lot of photographs, that book.

Bender: Yes. The report had no photographs, but the report had a lot of sequences of drawing. What we were trying to show is how building has been industrialized right before our eyes and we didn’t notice. Everyone was picturing factories that turn out buildings, but we had a series of drawings that showed a house with a carpenter making a window, and in the next house we showed when where the carpenter installed a manufactured window frame and then a glazier could put glass in. And the next one showed the window came with the glass. And the next one showed the window came as part of a wall, kind of like a Techbuilt house that we had done for the Nones in Amagansett. The book eventually had many photographs—during the time we were writing, many examples started to appear.

We did a whole series of things showing how industrialization was taking a different form, and it comes back to that point that I try to make over and over again: there’s a top down and a bottom up. There’s a picture of manufacturing housing as manufacturing *houses*, or you can make better tools and products for making houses. We used to call them roughly “open” and “closed” systems. A closed system was Moshe Safdie’s,

which made manufacturing housing famous, those big concrete boxes for Habitat, but it's actually a really dumb thing to do.

Whereas at the other end of the house, the open system, to start by making wall panels or prefabricated trusses and then you can choose complicated pieces from a factory and combine them with what is best done at the site. At that point, office buildings were beginning to be built that way, but people didn't think of that as prefabrication. You no longer set brick on the walls, or stone, but panels came. What we started to look at, and it led to some of the work later on, is how do you get these things made, and how do you spur the development of different kinds of tools. In the work that we did with AID and UNESCO and Nazareth and Agadir and other work in Mexico and Morocco, we looked at how unskilled people could make concrete blocks that they could make houses with. If you didn't have steel, how could you use bamboo as tension members? If you didn't have a crane to lift the piece, how could you make lightweight elements that two people could handle?

Riess: But you had to go to the third world to demonstrate it.

Bender: Well, like everything else that I did, I go to away and see it, and I realize it's happening here. You can go to Home Depot any weekend morning and see people doing it now. A great bulk of the building done in our country is off the map, doesn't show up in statistics, but it's adding rooms, it's changing the carport into a garage. The transformation of Levittowns from the dinky little things that were originally built, where the carport became the garage, and then there became another carport, and the attic became a room—and that's the way things have always been built. That whole movement with lofts, again it started very crudely.

Riess: Then you come up against controls and the cities.

Bender: I have to tell you one story. A lot of those initials that I was associated with, the Building Research Advisory Board [BRAB]—and the National Bureau of Standards [NBS] has a building research center. I was, at one point, a private consultant and a pro-bono member of a number of advisory boards. I chaired the advisory board for the Bureau of Standards Building Research, I think for five years. Then I was on the National Academy of Science [NAS] Building and Construction Board for a while and helped to establish the Building Museum and Building Research Institute in Washington. Those are all in the years when all of this interest in research and demonstrations of new tools and techniques was building up. One of the experiments that was going on while I was at Cooper Union was called the "In Cities Project." It started in the Lyndon [Johnson] Administration.

Riess: Lyndon Johnson. What about Lindsay, in New York City?

Bender: Well, Lindsay was supportive of it, that's why so many experiments were in New York, but the idea was how to improve cities. In fact, one of the New York City experiments was called "Instant Rehabilitation." The idea

was to take Lower East Side tenements, like 5th or 6th Street around Avenue A and the tenants would pack up all their things in boxes that were given to them, and on a Friday they would get moved out into a hotel, and as soon as they moved out this crane would come on the street and they would break a hole in the roof, and cut down and use the crane to take out all of the things and store them someplace. Then they would rip out all the old kitchens and bathrooms, and in many cases the old floors. In through the roof would come these boxes—packaged kitchen, bathroom units, made to stand one on the other. And so overnight you had all new kitchens and bathrooms. And there were special joists that were designed—instead of the wooden joists that span, these were lightweight steel trusses that were adjustable, so you'd put them in and you could expand them to make them fit.

And then they'd bring in the drop-in packages with flooring, and so over the weekend this big team came in and would finish the house, use the crane again to put people's things back in before they closed the roof up. Well, it took two and a half years to figure out and practice how to do it. They actually did some over the two and a half years, learning all the steps, and then they did one or two experiments that took a month and then a week, and then the famous experiment where they actually did it, with much fanfare, in one weekend.

I made my reputation at HUD on this project when—well, the project was terribly over the budget. The HUD people were trying to find corruption as the cause, and when they saw this item, “grease for the crane—\$25,000,” they showed it to me and they said, “How could the grease for the crane cost \$25,000?” and I said, “You don't understand New York. It's illegal to park a crane on the street in New York. The ‘grease for the crane’ is the money they've been giving the police so they could park the crane. It is part of doing business in New York!” [laughter] That's when I became a HUD expert.

But the Tishman people agreed to try it on the scale of a city block, and the experiment was all set up and everybody was ready, and at the last minute, there were two old people in two apartments who wouldn't move. And one of them had herself chained to a pipe. There were court cases and appeals and eventually it all collapsed and you realize—the reason I brought it up again is the problem with the big system where it just takes one little thing to derail it, versus the little system which has chaos, but the chaos goes around it and does it in a different way.

That's the evolution of the story I tell about the dogsled and the elephants. When the polar expeditions were just starting, some of the British were horrified at the thought of dealing with dogs, and they thought they could use horses, but the horses wouldn't survive, so they eventually went back to dogs. I have this drawing of an elephant pulling the dogsled, and it breaks through the ice and it doesn't go anywhere. Dogs are more agile in rough terrain, and if there is an obstacle a dogsled with twenty different dogs can go around it and not break through the ice. I talk about how if the elephant breaks a leg you are stopped. And consider all the food you need

to feed the elephant. Over the long run dogs are sustainable because they make more dogs, and a whole series of comparisons—the driver can curl up with the dogs to keep warm, and if things get really bad, the driver can eat one of the dogs. Of course it is more complicated to deal with the pack of dogs—they may fight or have different temperaments—but that is really more like a city!

Anyway, the image I use to illustrate that the way we're building cities now is like *elephants*, and the way we could be building them is *dogsleds*. The dogs are chaotic, they bark and bite and fight, they resist, but they get there, whereas the elephant sooner or later falls through the ice.

- Riess: Yes, but it seems like it's harder with cities. It might be easier with smaller and smaller units, like towns, like villages.
- Bender: One of the things that we have to look at is that cities are made up of villages. If you do an anatomical analogy, what we do now is build a city like a Frankenstein's monster. We glue arms and legs and a head together, not like a baby, that comes from many cells which develop as a whole by all the parts developing.
- Riess: So we haven't gotten any better?
- Bender: We are getting better. I talked about how I thought what happened in SoHo was a real breakthrough, because we showed you could take an old part of the city, and instead of tearing it down and putting up new buildings, and destroying the fabric and all that, you could increase the density, change the industry that was there to a new industry, change the families over time, and build, evolve, a new city in an organic way. That [Norman] Foster new town in Abu Dhabi, if you look at it, what it's going to end up being is a gated community, an elephant next to a vibrant city where people are living and working. The trick is how to evolve that Arab city piece by piece, by bigger pieces and over time, rather than do this—it's messier, but you can do it. And you can do it in a different way. You have to think about it in different ways, finance it and regulate it and own and occupy it in different ways. We have to learn to conceive, construct, and continue to evolve communities with the understanding that they have lives, a life!
- Riess: Would you like to have a conversation with Foster about that? Do you think Foster would get into that conversation?
- Bender: Oh, I think if we sat down together I'd have that conversation. I haven't had it with Foster who I don't know very well. I've had it with [Renzo] Piano. Piano thinks that way. By the way, they all came here to San Francisco together one summer as recent graduates, Foster, Piano, and [Richard] Rogers, and they worked for SOM here in San Francisco when they were doing their American visit. I know they visited—what's it called, near Santa Cruz, where there is the big power plant.
- Riess: Moss Landing.

- Bender: Moss Landing. And that's the Pompidou Center! They don't deny it, they say that that's where they got their inspiration. Piano, particularly, knows about elephants and dogs. He calls his practice community building. He's told me that he hasn't had many chances to build communities—these days he gets big monumental buildings. But of that group, Piano is working most closely to the dogsled.
- Riess: I just came from Osaka Airport, which is by Piano, a sweeping gesture across the landscape.
- Bender: I was not on the jury for that, but I was on the jury for the Saitama Arena a few years later, which came down to a short list. I was the only foreigner, and the shortlist had Piano, Rogers, Kevin Roche, Pelli, Nouvel—I'm trying to remember, there were five famous international architects, and Piano's scheme was very similar to the Kansai Airport. I was sitting there with my two translators—most of them were presenting in English and being translated for the Ja[panese]—and Piano in his beautiful English says [imitating Piano's accent], "I came here. I decided it's so flat, I decided it needed an *eeel*—"
- Riess: A what?
- Bender: It needed an *eel*. [laughter] And so I see everyone's writing and they were smiling amazingly at the idea of a hill, so I asked, did they translate that as eel? Or hill? The translator said, "No, he said eel. You could hear *eel*." And they love eels! It actually turns out Saitama is like that part of the west coast of Italy where the eels come out. At dinner that night I talked to Piano—I thought that was really funny. He didn't get the job for other reasons, but if you could go back and find all the times stories like that affected buildings, and cities! Talking with Piano that evening I was wonderfully impressed, and since have visited him in his offices in New York and Paris and we spoke more of elephants and dogsleds when he was doing the first plan for Columbia's new 125th St. campus and I was advising the Columbia Trustees.
- Riess: So where does all this come in?
- Bender: You asked about when I said things came like a big circle back to where I was as a teenager.
- Riess: Oh yes, that sense of closing the circle.
- Bender: On one level, we were living on 10th Street in this apartment building that was next to a loft building, and out of our bedroom window we could touch the next building, and right inside the next building was the offices of the IWW, the group that played such a big role in the Labor Movement one hundred years ago. And it was probably the end of the Wobblies, or maybe they're still around—I just read something recently. Every Friday night they would publish their newsletter, and when the presses went, the whole building would shake, but it was sort of a reminder of ideas and ideals I grew up with.

Riess: Did you feel you had been far away from that? Maybe because of who you were hanging out with?

Bender: Well, you know, my path took me through the Rockefellers indirectly through an office like Luckman's. In Switzerland we were able to experiment with things, but they were the equivalent of SOM. Here in Greenwich Village it felt part of a bigger, more chaotic but stimulating movement. I guess I felt like one of the dogs!

Riess: But weren't you always kind of a mole in those offices? [laughing]

Bender: Yes, but I remember once when we were in Venice and we were invited to dinner by a husband and wife who were professors but they lived in Trieste. It turned out to be May Day, and they were asking me, "Do you understand what May Day is? Here, it's a real holiday." And I was thinking, yes, there it really was a real holiday whereas May Day had disappeared here.

What I was finding through all of this is that there's a new way that's more like the old way, but the old ways—I started out this morning talking about respect for craft and the pride of being an artisan. I got that in architecture as well, and I got into architecture because I saw it as an artisan, and I found that I had to work a long way around to find that—you have to be careful not to lose your sense of being an artisan now. You find yourself getting into architecture because you would like to build sandcastles and make wooden geodesic domes, and you end up under fluorescent lights working on something halfway around the world, with collaborators who you only know through voicemail or now videoconferencing.

I had a big discussion, probably argument, with my friends at BRIDGE last week. BRIDGE is getting big and very successful, and we're going to open a branch in Los Angeles. I'm saying, "How are we going to communicate?" And they said, "Well, everybody's videoconferencing." Videoconferencing is one thing, but—it started out, I said, "How often will we get to stand on the sites and see the neighborhoods?" And they sort of looked at me in a funny way. I said, "How often do you go to the sites?" Then they were discussing this new project at MacArthur Station, and we're doing a piece, and I said, "How many people have been to MacArthur Station since this project began?" And only half of the people had. Well, we did schedule a trip, the whole BRIDGE board and some staff spent a day at MacArthur Station in Oakland.

I found this when I was working on the campus, in our meetings to decide where a new building would go. I would sit around the Council of Deans that's making this decision and I would say, "Have you ever been in that building? We're sitting here, why don't we walk over and look?" I found this—I've been on boards, whether it's Mills College, or on company boards, even when I was advising the MoMA people during the Taniguchi renovation when they were going to do the thing in Queens, that temporary museum, which I thought was a terrific idea and they hired a

good architect. And at one of the meetings—this is not the regular board, but what they call the Real Estate Committee—all these developers were talking about how terrific the project was, and I was saying, “It’s really wonderful when you come from the train. It’s the old elevated train and you come down on these structures and you walk to—” They were looking a little blank, and I said, “How many of you have been to look at it?” This was when the construction was just beginning, and only two out of four had gone out to the site.

Riess: How do you account for that?

Bender: I think we think we know more than we do. People see what they’re doing in different ways. Everybody has a different beauty, and they see a different thing. I told you about Dan Rose coming to talk to the students and saying, “I’m going to show you the most beautiful project you’ve ever seen.” And he pulled out a sheet of paper and he went down the balance sheet and he said, “Look at that. Isn’t that beautiful?”

You asked once what role I play in these things. I’m the one who goes to look at it. I’ve just been involved with this campus in Singapore, a new master plan for the campus of Nanyang Technical University. My title was—still is, I think—Special Advisor to the President and Trustees. At the first meeting where I met the board, they came to the university where they’re making a new plan. By the second meeting nobody could make it, and so they ended up having the meeting downtown. And for the next year and a half I’d occasionally see one or two of the trustees at the meetings that were at the university, but almost all the meetings were downtown. Eventually they brought the model downtown, because it was only twenty minutes and they all have chauffeurs. After almost a year the committee agreed to come to a meeting on the campus. They scheduled it at night, instead of at lunch, so we could walk when it was not so hot. We—they—saw the campus at night when all the students were out, and before the end of the week they agreed to hire a lighting designer and make plans for the campus at night!

[End Tape 13: Side A]

[Begin Tape 13: Side B]

Riess: It suggests they don’t really want to know that there are people involved.

Bender: Well, you know, when they do, it’s exciting. One of the things I was talking about at BRIDGE the other day is when we were smaller and just beginning, once or twice a year we’d all get in a bus or two and go to visit some of the projects. The staff still does that. We all get invited. I usually go and usually maybe there are one or two board members. And many of the board members will go individually, but for me it’s not work, it’s the pleasure of—it’s really marvelous to talk to someone who tells you how it’s changed his life to be able to move his family here and how much better it is than where they were, the opportunities they have and how the community supports their kids when they’re growing up.

But it's also interesting to see what it's not, and one of my big interests now is about how hard it is to make a project that doesn't have "walls," even when there are no "walls." I went to a BRIDGE project in East Palo Alto, and it was lovely, a small project set in the midst of lower-priced market rate houses all around. And apparently in the original plan for the market rate housing there was going to be a pool and a community center, but they were never built because it went over the budget.

Riess: The original plan for the market rate?

Bender: For the market rate housing. You know, private building is called market rate. The BRIDGE project has a very nice pool and some space around it, and when I was standing there I was talking to one of the tenants. He said, "Well, we have one problem. Sometimes the pool gets so crowded because all the neighbors are coming from the market rate projects."

And so I've been saying that we ought to turn that around and say what we are building here is a piece of the community, and invite the local school board to have a room here so they could do classes, and to invite the hospital to have a clinic or a place where someone who's got a broken leg can stay overnight, instead of in a hospital room, and his friends can care for him instead. It's easy to take away the visible walls, but how you get rid of the *invisible* walls is interesting. And one of the ways is by going and spending some time there and seeing what it's like to walk from the project to the BART or to a bus or to buy milk if you need milk at nine at night. The best of planning is only the first step. There are things, discovered in living. One of the great strengths of BRIDGE projects is that we, the developers, do not walk away. We build them with the understanding that we will own and operate them, so we build with the long term in mind, and in operating/managing we learn for future projects.

In most places, in order to build unsubsidized housing, which could be lower or very high price, generally the community requires the developer to build a certain amount of affordable housing. There are laws by state and sometimes by city. BRIDGE's role has been to do the affordable part for someone who doesn't want to take it on, and there's a lot of paperwork and complications, even risk, and BRIDGE has gotten good at it. And so we partner with private developers to do that.

One of the interesting things I've discovered is my new passion. At this last meeting we were talking about maybe four hundred units that we're going to do at the MacArthur Station. It was a long discussion because it's a complicated project. There are builders on the board and they are smart, sophisticated, and committed, and know much more than I do about the process. Often I don't know what they are talking about half the time, the laws, rules of financing and all the details. But at that meeting I realized that almost fifty thousand people live in our houses now, and we manage them, and we have an enormous opportunity to improve both the affordability and the lives of these people if we look at a whole bunch of things *other* than the building.

I'm not saying don't build more houses. Go and build more houses. But we have a whole unmined opportunity here. I decided that my next round of involvement will be around how to begin a series of experiments of what you can do if you're a city or a state government, a non-profit like BRIDGE, or a big developer who manages a lot of families who are living in the communities, to make their lives better as well as more affordable.

Riess: What comes to mind?

Bender: Well, some of the things like schools and libraries could serve the bigger community. I like the hospital idea, if you have a place where a nurse comes every day for a few hours. Something like this can serve the surrounding community as well. Perhaps other services can be outside the walls, part of a larger community. I like the idea of building some rooms either within the apartments or having the group able to rent some unused rooms to tourists or to visiting families.

Riess: Yes, that's very interesting.

Bender: I like the idea that we're building at a scale where we need someone to run the heating/cooling system, which means we could put in a real water recycling waste system, and so if we're building four hundred units, we could do a system for a thousand and take some of the neighborhood. If we have old people and they need to get to appointments, we have some buses, but we could take a bus system seriously, and run it with the local community to make a regular bus service.

Riess: So you want to weave it in completely—lovely.

Bender: And one of the nicest things is Susan Johnson, the woman who—she was the first employee for BRIDGE, a part-time secretary when she was seventeen or eighteen. She's now, I guess, over fifty and she's the vice president who manages the BRIDGE management. She had wanted to be a teacher, and at one point she left BRIDGE and went back to San Francisco State to study teaching. And she quit after a year. She said, "I couldn't stand sitting in the classroom anymore. I realized I'm used to a different kind of way of learning and living and doing." She and Don and Rick Holiday were the original team, and so she learned to be one of the great property managers in a way I'd like people to be able to learn more about.

Riess: I think you were talking about getting back to your roots, closing the circle, so we have to dip back again!

Bender: Well, closing the circle, when I mentioned to cultivate one's garden, it comes back to that same issue of doing things with craft, with feeling, with being there. Voltaire talks about cultivating your own garden, and I got hooked on Voltaire from the completely opposite direction. My city planning friend in France, Bertrand Warnier from Cergy-Pontoise, gave me a lovely little volume and told me to read Voltaire [*Candide*]. I read with fascination and realized that if you go down on your hands and knees

and put your hands in the garden, it's a different experience. Now, I'm not saying you have to be a farmer or a gardener—the garden is also a metaphor—but if you don't do that sometimes, if someone cleans your house and someone takes care of your garden and someone's teaching your children, we're losing something. And if we're going to have planned cities, we have to plan cities like we really care about cities, and live there, and know how each one is different and how you live, and take part in it. Too often designers are—I am—in an office building somewhere deciding this will be this neighborhood and that will be that neighborhood. “And oh, we'll put in a playground here.”

This has been building in me. And it comes back in cycles, because I get involved in something that takes me—when I was beginning to get into bureaucratic things as the office went on in New York, I was the one who was more and more having to worry about how the office was running. Paul was getting the jobs, I was administrating, and I would suddenly find I was hiring people to do what I used to like to do, what I did best.

I realized I wanted to be the one who was both talking about the big ideas and also to be on the site, have my hands in the garden. I don't have the patience or the skill to do all the detailing that well or get something through a building department, I'm better at being able to see the big picture and stay with it through the process. It was surprising to me to find that I can talk to the heads of a museum or the university or a company about big ideas and get them excited and help them steer it. I can inspire, teach, and be a coach, or a guide. But if I have to come back the next day and talk to an administrator in campus facilities, I can't handle that so well, or I don't want to handle it in that sense. I'd rather find a way to work so I can use my abilities to do the thing I do better, rather than going to the building department and arguing about whether I really need a handrail here or whether this is up to some code.

And so two things happened in a relatively short time—Paul and Ingeborg went on a trip to Europe, and while they were walking in Greece, walking up a hill, Paul dropped dead of a heart attack, and I got the call. It fell to me to call his son, and later to help Ingeborg pick up the pieces. We could have continued the office, but I understood for me it was—I didn't want to be one more guy in New York who was running an architectural office and meeting all my friends in the lobby when we were waiting to be interviewed for a project, and trying to game each other about how well we did, come out smiling. All those games, because I'd been on both sides. I'd met people who'd come from the world that I came from.

Charles Abrams was a name that—he was a small developer in New York who got interested in doing a good job. He hired Frederick [J.] Kiesler, who was one of the outstanding creative architects of the thirties and forties, to do the 8th Street Theater, just as in Switzerland Sigfried Giedion, the famous historian and writer, hired Marcel Breuer and some of his contemporaries to do a small apartment house for him. But Charles went from that, and when I met him through Paul he was an advisor to the city government. He eventually became an advisor to the UN. He worked

internationally and he wrote a book on housing and developing nations. He brought New York pragmatism to the service of the poor in the Third World. When he came back to teach at Columbia, the UN used to ask him to take delegations to show them New York, and instead of showing them Rockefeller Center, he would take them to Katz's Delicatessen and take them walking on the Lower East Side and in Greenwich Village. He was a real New Yorker in that way, and a good friend of Paul Wiener's. Abrams opened my eyes to appreciating the richness of the urban life I had come to take from granted. He taught me how important it is to observe, enjoy, and use it. I was looking for how to play that kind of role and I didn't know how to do it

Riess: Were you a bright, young thing? You were still barely thirty in all of this. How do you think you were perceived?

Bender: I was bright and I listened. And I could take it in and do it. You know, if they talked about something, the next day I'd come back with ideas about how it might look.

Riess: By drawing.

Bender: By drawing or, in the old days, cutting pictures out of magazines. Drawing or assembling or just showing them around—I'd say, "You really have this working or that working."

Riess: Please say that again.

Bender: Well, when we would talk about a house, or the Colombian Center on 59th Street, or a plan for Aspen, and later on the campus here, I would say, "Let's take a walk. This is what's wrong and this is what we need. Look at this down the street," or "Look at how people are using that." And not to try to put it in some—you asked at one point whether I'm good at writing. I tend to get more formal when I write and less persuasive than when I'm talking about something that I understand and care about. I can explain better, and I work well in relatively small groups.

For whatever reason—some of it is a funny world. I was a professor in New York. Cooper Union has a high reputation for a small place, and especially in my kind of world, so I was the Cooper Union professor who does this and that, the Cooper Union professor who's advised the federal government and who's advised the UN, and each round of it builds up. And it was all done through—in fact, just recently in looking for something on the Internet, trying to see if I could find anything on one of the last houses I did, or actually I finished it after Paul died—there were two houses in the Bahamas, one for a family named Ault, Lee Ault. Lyford Cay was the name of the area where it was in the Nassau. So I went to look it up on Google, and the name came up and it was in Paul Wiener's papers that Ingeborg had donated to the University of Oregon, it's the contents of a box. Things get spread around in funny ways.

But it was completely logical in Mexico that through Eduardo and Ivan Illich I would meet the architect [Pedro] Ramírez Vázquez, who designed the beautiful museum in the park in Mexico City, but who eventually became the minister of—the equivalent of HUD. I could introduce him to the Ford Foundation because I was advising them on urban housing and education.

Riess: Maybe you thought of yourself as operating at some other level, but it sounds like power.

Bender: It's a kind of power.

But Paul died, and then not long after that my father died, and he was not sixty-five yet. And the kids were at an age where if we were going to have an adventure, we could still do it with them. It's harder to take kids out of high school. And so we said, what if we step back and see—I was feeling that life is short and precious. I wanted to be sure I was living it where I wanted to be living it. In all those years in New York I was busy all the time, but I could walk the kids to school in the morning. If we'd stayed in New York much longer we would have had to make strange decisions about—would we buy a loft and send the kids to private school? Would we move to East 80th Street and send them to P.S. 6?

Riess: *All* those years in New York. That was not that long a period that we're talking about. But it was *intense*.

Bender: Yes, yes.

Riess: You might have wanted to get away from that degree of intensity.

Bender: Well, I was realizing I was doing more things than I could handle in different places. You asked once about Amenity One, what that name meant. It's what I named that first development in Amagansett when we built the house. It was meant to be more—amenity sounded like what we were looking for. Some of the other people who were part of it only recently saw the name when it was published in I think the Hamptons utopia book, or something like that [*Weekend Utopia: Modern Living in the Hamptons* by Alastair Gordon.] The Moores and the Nones, who were two of the original people, saw it and they said, "Where did Amenity come from?" [laughing]

About 1966 I did buy another twenty-five acres down the road and divided it up. A woman named Hannah Shapiro, who had two children and often joined our group, asked me to make a similar community. I designed a house for her on one of the lots. I designed a house for a family named Engelstein, Stanley Engelstein, on another one of the lots. It was the same idea of homes clustered around land that was owned in common. My brother bought a lot, and an architect friend named Walfredo Toscanini, the grandson of Toscanini, a friend of ours and a partner of Jim Polshek's for a while. Jenny Polshek was a classmate of Michael and David and James Polshek was a fellow parent and architect-advisor to the

Downtown Community School Board. He has had a great career, including recent renovations of Carnegie Hall and the Brooklyn Museum, the Clinton Library, and the theater at the Yerba Buena Center, next to Maki's building. Joel Grey's daughter Jennifer Grey was in their class also.

Anyway, then it was getting complicated. The town was asking for a subdivision plan with widened and paved streets, and it was harder and harder to build houses the way we were building them, set softly in the land. The local contractors were getting overloaded or over their heads with the new things as East Hampton was becoming more and more popular and expensive.

So my role with the National Commission on Urban Problems had opened my eyes. I was starting to look at cities in the way of how they could be renewed and how some of these new technologies could work. So Sue and I had the idea to step back, take a year off, and one idea was to go to Europe and to see some of these things that I had been reading about. And then the Ford Foundation came along, and they knew the work I was doing from other things and they said, "We would love it if you would go to India, to Calcutta, where our program's dead in the water. We're trying to do low-cost housing. We can use your help." They were doing things in Delhi and other places, but Calcutta was the big problem. We talked about it and it started to sound exciting. Calcutta was so exotic. The problems and the scale were so huge. Some women from the Ford Foundation would take Sue out and they would say the club life in Calcutta is great, and they were going to give us eight servants, and a Ford Falcon with a chauffeur—with curtains so you wouldn't have to see India.

Riess: These are conversations you were having before you took off for your year?

Bender: Well, this is what we were going to do for the year.

Riess: And the kids?

Bender: The kids, they would put them in private school anywhere for us and we'd go to visit them and they could come visit, or they could come with us and experience such a different world. And finally, it just sounded exotic enough, and they promised, which we should have thought more about, for five years after we came back you would get a free stool analysis [laughter]. You had to have all these shots. At any rate, on a Friday I said we would do it, we would go with the children, and take on living and working there. The next day we were walking down Fifth Avenue and Sue met her friend Hannah, and Hannah said, "What's new?" And Sue said, "We're going to India for a year." And then she burst into tears.

Anyway, we started to think about the shots more, and the children, and then some Ford people were saying a year's not enough, and I was looking more into it and realizing that the Ford people were really measuring how the city was collapsing more than they were really going

to be able to build much. So the next most exotic place was Berkeley. [laughing] Jerry [Gerald M.] McCue had asked me to come. Robert Geddes, who was then the dean at Princeton and a good friend, had invited me to come there and help them start a research center. And Harvard asked me if I'd come there for the year. But Harvard, Princeton didn't sound—we wanted something fresher.

Riess: And you were thinking only a year.

Bender: We were thinking a year and then come back to New York. We sublet our apartment to Sue's cousin who had two little girls. He was a doctor starting a practice in that neighborhood.

Riess: A year would have worked at Berkeley, Princeton, Harvard.

Bender: Yes, but Jerry was the most—he met me through these teacher seminars and was interested in the way I was trying to teach and wanted me to talk about that. He was also interested in the issues of self-help in production and using technology in that way. And he had the idea of starting an area of study that was not just teaching engineering structures but teaching the whole picture of construction and urban building. He also said we could come for one semester or two semesters.

So we decided we would go to Europe, and then California. The idea was I was going to see all these new building systems that were going up in Europe that I'd been studying for the Douglas Commission, but also we were going to show the Europe we loved to the kids while they were able to appreciate it and young enough to be flexible.

Riess: Very young.

Bender: Yes, they were seven and eight, I guess.

Riess: You could get across the sense of a place that you loved to a seven- and eight-year old?

Bender: We could live it. For example, we would arrive in a square in Italy—. David had bought a soccer ball the first day we arrived, in Germany actually, which they sell in Europe in a net bag so you can carry it. He would go out into a square and take the ball and kick it, and twenty minutes later they'd be kicking the ball around with a big gang of Italian kids. And we didn't try to home school them, but we had everybody write something each day and make a drawing. I have a photograph of Michael sitting on a window seat in a bed and breakfast we stayed at in Firenze, sketching what he called Filippo's Dome, from a children's book about Brunelleschi, young Brunelleschi. They got to eat meals in a different way, see people in a different way.

We knew people along the way, so we stopped for a while in Switzerland. We stayed longer in Switzerland. We picked up—one of the things I had done is do a little design for the Volkswagen dealer in Greenwich Village,

and he paid me in a car that I could pick up, a Volkswagen squareback at the factory in Wolfsburg. So we flew to England and looked at some of the English building systems and stayed in London for a week, where we knew some people. And we went up to Macclesfield to visit Tilly, who had lived with us as a kind of *au pair* in New York one year. And then we flew to Denmark and looked at Copenhagen and Tivoli Gardens.

Then we went to Wolfsburg and got the car and decided that before we went south we'd go to Berlin. So we drove to a station and took the train into Berlin. It was the time of the Berlin Wall and I wanted to see the East Side, and you could take a tour. And when we went through the famous Checkpoint Charlie, the boys watched the guards take these mirrors on wheels and slide them under the buses so they could see if there were people under the bus. They came away with all kinds of impressions. We rode the tram in Zurich, where the rule is children have to get up to give a seat to the old—and one day they didn't notice they were sitting in front of an older woman, when another woman rapped them on their shoulders with her umbrella and shouted "Raus." After that they always stood on the trams.

Interview 8: December 8, 2010

[Begin Tape 14: Side A]

Riess: We were talking about your New York and it made me wonder, was Jane Jacobs a friend? Did you know Jane Jacobs?

Bender: I knew Jane Jacobs but she wasn't a friend. She wasn't exactly a neighbor; she lived on Hudson Street, which seemed much farther away than it does today. But we were involved in some of the arguments about—well, it started with the Crosstown Expressway which, by the way, is being celebrated these last weeks in New York in a big show of Paul Rudolph's beautiful drawings for what it would have been. It's like a Buck Rogers beautiful scheme of this thing up in the air.

Riess: So *we* as in—with Wiener?

Bender: No, Paul was never involved in the protest parts. But we, meaning Jane Jacobs and I, met at a number of meetings. We were part of marches and committees and wrote petitions, and with Cooper students we did projects. She organized people in that part of the Village which nowadays is where Chelsea meets Tribeca, and in a way it's been gentrified in a way that she would never have conceived. All those loft buildings—there's one twenty story building, a loft building that's now all architecture offices, [Rafael] Viñoly, Fred Schwartz, Gwathmey. But that's where I knew her from mostly. I was fascinated in that time: I really appreciated what she was trying to do on one level, and I saw it as shortsighted, it was opposition rather than putting in a better alternative model. I admired Moses, in another way, but didn't think that putting the freeway across was a good idea.

The third piece of it was Lewis Mumford. Lewis Mumford in principle was more with her, but he wrote a beautiful article—he used to write the Sky Line [column] in the *New Yorker*, and he wrote a beautiful article in which he compared her scenario, as I recall, to Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald in one of those film operettas where there's an organ peddler on the corner of the street and the policeman is patting the kids on the head, romanticizing what was there. Mumford, in turn, was talking about projects like Fresh Meadows—as you take the highway toward Long Island but then you make the turn for Kennedy there's an exit just before the parkway that goes to Kennedy called Utopia Parkway. Right off Utopia was a life insurance project done about the same time as Peter Cooper and Stuyvesant Town, but in Queens, with a few six-story buildings but mostly garden city kind of things, low buildings and the backyards were common space. He wrote enthusiastically about those things. He wrote about the new towns being designed by Clarence Stein and Henry Wright, and about their experiment at Radburn in New Jersey.

Jane Jacobs was saying we should keep it like it is, it seemed. Moses wanted to tear it all down. Mumford was looking for a way in between, and that remains the issue today. In Paris there's the argument now that [Nicolas] Sarkozy, in the new Paris Grand [*Grand Paris*] projects, proposes to build towers in clusters all around, and in a sense forgetting the skyline of Paris. Other people are saying Paris, Washington, maybe one or two other cities that are low rise where you get the sweep of the landscape, one of its strengths is that it's low, but it actually has higher density in those eight-story or so buildings built to the street than the towers would have. And the issue is constantly posed like the Jacobs/Moses, this high against low, new versus old, and never—rarely taken on is how do you make the transition? How do you go step-by-step, keeping something of the old and transitioning to the new and increasing the density, keeping community and a sense of the larger landscape, without doing it in those big chunks, which end up breaking the whole pattern of the city in most cases. The argument hasn't changed; it goes on in China today now, as they get a more aware of what they're doing.

Riess: Well, the middle way is somehow never interesting.

Bender: Except if you live in it. [laughter] There's a whole new generation of people my age—I had a visit from a cousin who lived most of her life in North Carolina, although she and her husband are very cosmopolitan in other ways, and at the age of almost sixty she went back and got a PhD and she ended up getting a teaching job in Chicago. She's now living on the twentieth floor of a high rise, and he comes to visit her one weekend and she goes back the other and she's saying, "I *love* being up in a high rise and looking out at the lake and having a doorman and someone to get the packages." But she also said she can't walk to the store, and if she'd taken something in a six-story apartment a few blocks away she could come down to the store. So.

Riess: I'm interested in how Jane Jacobs stands for so much. How is it that one person comes to embody all this theory about cities?

Bender: It's the last word, embody. Somehow she came to it. She was writing for *Fortune* magazine at that time. She was basically a housewife who cared about her neighborhood, but she went one step beyond writing and started to organize people in the neighborhood. She started the movement. And like many movements, at one point the movement passed her by. She moved to Toronto, eventually, where she lives now, has lived for a long time, because she didn't want it anymore. The movement has become both a positive force and in many ways really disruptive, they stop everything, preservationists.

Riess: Landmarking.

Bender: They landmark everything, they stall, even when they know they're not going to succeed they end up penalizing and buildings cost more. In San Francisco BRIDGE was going to do a project the city had asked us to do that includes some apartments for people with AIDS, and some of the

lowest income people from public housing, on the site of a 1930s funeral home designed by a Southern California architect as if it was in Los Angeles. Actually right next to it are some of the trolley yards. It's up where—there's the Mint building right where Mission Street comes into, around Zuni restaurant there, Church Street is the name. And this building had burned down and had been rebuilt. When we went to take it down the neighbors said it's a landmark. They organized letters from all around the world. It took three years to do it and it put a large up-front cost in the project. At BRIDGE we find if we can buy an old apartment and renovate it for \$75,000, we bypass \$75,000 of costs in what it takes for the paper work. So the preservation movement has both sides to it.

- Riess: Yes, just this morning I was writing a check to save Strawberry Canyon.
- Bender: Saving Strawberry Canyon—and what they're doing with the stadium is a madness. Investing more and more in owning buildings and facilities, when money for programs is scarce. Can't stop that anymore, not even bankruptcy, they'll bankrupt the whole place.
- Riess: Okay, good. Also thank you for sending me the expanded thoughts on coming to Berkeley. Your responses as an East Coast person, the image of the Saul Steinberg *New Yorker* cover. You didn't expect to stay?
- Bender: No, we didn't expect it, and no one expected us to stay.
- Riess: You mean no one at this end?
- Bender: No, no, this end was different, people assumed of course you'll stay, look how wonderful it is. And each time they said it, it grated us a little.
- Riess: It was like a needling?
- Bender: Not a needling—it was a genuine enthusiasm. We came here—it was at first a shock. Coming up University Avenue, it was just before Christmas, maybe Christmas week. It was raining. We'd come up from Southern California. Our first experience of California really was—well, we were in Death Valley and then Santa Barbara. We went out at night and you could smell the jasmine, the sea, and then we came up and up University Avenue picturing all those movies—like California schools would be playgrounds, and then coming up University Avenue in the rain, it was like, “My God! What have we done here?” But later, after we had been here for a while, and before Gerry McCue had said anything about us staying—Tim Vreeland was at that point the chairman of architecture at UCLA, and we'd known him from the East Coast years before he was at Penn, his mother was Diana Vreeland.
- Riess: Oh!
- Bender: And his brother Freck [Frederick Dalziel] also had that voice that George Plimpton had, that comes from those prep schools, that you can hear from a mile away. A wonderful guy, Tim. He invited us to come down. It was a

real New York/California experience. The university rented a car for us, a sort of a brown, it turns out Plymouth, and put us up at Century Plaza. And it turns out they wanted me to come there.

But the New York story is we drive up to the hotel's valet parking and they take the car—we are feeling very luxurious, Hollywood—and then when we come down and they said, “What kind of car is it?” I said, “Brown.” [laughter] I didn't know cars, nobody in my world talked about cars, most people didn't have a car, we lived in the city and took the subway. And so we ended up being taken by a parking attendant through six floors of the Century Plaza parking garage looking for the brown car.

At one point on that visit Tim took us to the faculty club. I think it was February. It was still rainy and cold in San Francisco, but there were people swimming outdoors in the sun at UCLA. And then later on when Gerry asked me to stay, and we started to think about coming here, we said, “What kind of crazy people are we?” But that's part of what I was trying to say, the other side of it, that being surprised that Northern California was not the California that we pictured, the Steinberg view from New York City. Most of what I expected was the L.A. that is very suburban and colorful, and big school playgrounds and all that. In fact, the picture of L.A. is quite wrong, one-story ranch houses under the palm trees. L.A., overall, is much denser than most US cities. The Vreelands in 1969 lived in a four-story apartment house two blocks from Rodeo Drive. Many of the UCLA Architecture faculty also lived in low-rise apartments in Westwood. When I had visited L.A. in 1960, working on the Churchill Apartments on Wilshire in Westwood, it was a rare high-rise at thirteen floors, but most of the buildings around it were unremarkable and not well built four-or five-story apartment buildings.

When we were living on Tenth Street in New York—you could touch the next building out of the window. It was our family thing to gather on our big double bed and watch television sometimes. And we all looked forward to Perry Mason when it was new, in black and white. Here was Perry Mason driving around with this enormous Cadillac, and half the places he went were apartment houses, sort of dingy with these long halls. That was L.A., but we never pictured that as L.A. When we finally got to California and went down there we began to see both sides. Just in recent days there have been a series of articles pointing out again that L.A. is the densest of American cities. There are more people per square mile than in New York, than anywhere else, and that the idea that an automobile city is less dense than a foot city is not necessarily true.

The other story that I have to put in this is Barry Elbasani had been one of my students at Cooper Union. Actually, I helped him get him into Harvard by writing my best recommendation letter ever to Jaqueline Tyrwhitt and Serge Chermayeff who were running the urban design programs. He was a terrific student, and he was a real New Yorker. He worked part-time all the time he was at Cooper Union—he ended up managing a hamburger place, before McDonald's, called Prexy's, “The hamburger with a college education.” He had such an energy and such a drive but—in the letter I

wrote, “He’s a diamond in the rough. Most of the people you accept don’t need Harvard, they’re already good enough to go out in the world. Here you have a chance to polish this diamond.” Chermayeff wrote me saying that they couldn’t believe my letter, but they accepted him and he did very well.

Elbasani met Donn Logan there, and Michael Severin, and together after they finished Harvard they came out to California. They [ELS] went to Los Angeles to work for Victor Gruen’s office and moonlighted by doing competitions. They won the competition for a community center/auditorium in Binghamton, New York and then they found—well, they didn’t have a structural engineer and they didn’t have a license, and so Barry called me and I ended up signing, with the understanding they would hire T.Y. Lin who I’d recently met through the ACSA [Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture] teaching structures group.

At any rate Barry was looking for a place for us to stay for the six months. We were driving the VW squareback across the country and I’d call him every few days. I remember we were in Manhattan, Kansas with Charles [H.] Kahn who I’d also known from the ACSA. He taught at North Carolina and we both worked with [James W.] Fitzgibbon and [Buckminster] Fuller on some things and then he went to Kansas. We stopped with him for a few days, and then we were about to set out for Denver and I called Barry, and he’s telling me, “There’s a house here and it’s got this and this.” And then finally, I didn’t know, I said, “Barry. All I want is to be near Malibu.” And he tells me Malibu is four hundred miles away. [laughter]

So that’s the picture I had in mind when I wrote about the *New Yorker* cover and the picture. We knew what Berkeley stood for from the Free Speech Movement, from a lot of things, and from McCue and Charles Moore. I knew it was something interesting and special in my world. And I’d just come off the work with the Douglas Commission, and Kaiser figured into it very heavily. Kaiser, which was originally a construction company, was one of the most interesting figures in looking at who was building in an interesting way. They had developed a lot of construction ideas and—more than that—in social ideas. Insurance for everyone, and the health plan which still remains, to me, amazing. Just last week they gave a big chunk of money to Oakland to do health care through the school system because health and education go together.

Riess: When you came here—I think of Berkeley at that time as all about politics and free speech and that kind of thing, but it was also a very productive time in design? The sixties were good for architects and designers?

Bender: It was an interesting time. You could never say—over every ten-year period there’s good and bad, but California was on the upswing. When I came was part of the buildup of the school. I remember shortly after I joined the faculty I was invited to a dinner that the chancellor gave every year for the new faculty, and it turned out in University House they could

only fit in the A to H in one sitting and it took four sittings to get all the new faculty in.

Riess: That's amazing.

Bender: In the college the number was building up. There were all these young people who had been hired, mostly before I came. When I came in '69 I was thirty-nine, I was older. Younger people had come, Marc Treib, Gary Brown, who were taking over the introductory design course for undergraduates from Jesse Reichek and James Prestini, who represented my world, in some way. I knew Jesse, again from New York. He was a painter and I knew him from the Betty Parsons Gallery, the same gallery where Saul Steinberg exhibited. Jesse, before I came, had invited Saul to come out once.

Again, it gave a picture of how the school was trying to look at things in different ways. To bring Saul Steinberg out, who drove across the country very often, to talk about and show drawings of how he saw America. This is a painter teaching in an architectural school, teaching the basic design course, which was particularly rich because of Prestini, very Bauhaus, Black Mountain. Prestini had a background—at one point I read he had more sculptures in the MoMA collection than anybody else, because he made wooden bowls first, beautiful wooden bowls, and then he made steel sculptures. He had worked for Knoll, the furniture company, as an advisor and then researcher into fabrics and materials—the sofa in our house that we still have has a fabric called Prestini, or maybe the whole sofa is called Prestini. I hadn't realized that until I met him, but he was also an incredible scholar on one level, a studier not a writer, but a scholar and an artist, and he worked with his hands. And he insisted when the college was conceived that it have a woodshop so that people could work with their hands, could make something with tools. And there's been enough energy behind it so it's still there, although it's constantly threatened.

When I came here there was the shock of how Berkeley was not the California I had expected, but the school was *more* than I expected. We had glassblowing, Marvin Lipofsky was doing glassblowing. We had some of the best ceramics in the world at that time, and not long after there were shows in the San Francisco museum and around the world, not just Peter Voulkos, but the whole California ceramics world. Sue fell into that when I began to have classes and the boys were in school; she began to go to the ceramics studio and she took a class from Ron Nagle, who was a marvelous teacher. We both got to know Pete Voulkos, who is a great character—you learn more from him by being with him.

Riess: Peter Voulkos evokes a very hip scene.

Bender: Well, Ron Nagle wrote music for the Jefferson Airplane. He still does beautiful ceramics.

Riess: So, that was part of the attraction, that you were really in a good scene.

Bender: That was a big part of the attraction. Don Potts, who was a sort of sculptor, he made cars out of wooden pieces that actually had motors in them, and they could drive around. Not long after the Berkeley Art Museum opened, I think it was the official opening of the museum, one of the things in it was some of Don Potts's wooden cars. Our friend and my sometimes client from New York, André Emmerich, came out, and I think he stayed with us, and we went to the opening with him and he fell in love with the cars and he wanted them for his gallery. But then on the sides of the gallery they showed a little movie, and it showed that the car was driving around, and he said, "I can't have it, it's a car." [laughing]

I have to say more about the Berkeley museum. Sue found the ceramics here, and a more open way of teaching, and if you see her work—in New York when she studied and worked at Greenwich House it was dark, brown, gritty clays, strong and dark. Here it's suddenly white and red and gold. Ron Nagle—she describes his teaching, no lectures, and he would be shy about "telling," and say, "If you have any questions ask me." People worked and shared ideas, techniques. And if you asked him he would always be looking down at his shoes, which were very often pink or red or some funny—but he was wonderful, he treated it like everyone was being taught at the same time but individually. She met Marilyn Levine in the ceramic studio and they became good friends, Marilyn became part of our family. She went on to be a major artist with show and galleries around the world. We and Michael and David have many of her works—we live with them and treasure them.

Another great surprise was discovering the Telesis movement here, "progress intelligently planned," a group that formed in the Bay Area about the time CIAM was forming in Europe. A group of young architects, artists and planners that came together in the late 1930s as the world was collapsing between wars and depression, Telesis opened bold ideas for the region. The core of Telesis was from CED, Jack Kent, Fran Violich, Garret Eckbo, Vernon deMars, Corwin Mocine. Wurster had been an associate, as had Thomas Church and Ernest Born. They were "old timers" when we arrived—much younger than I am today, but they had bright eyes and exuded a passion that captured us. One of our pleasures when I was dean was inviting the group to dinner at our house.

[End Tape 14: Side A]

[Begin Tape 14: Side B]

Bender: The College of Environmental Design was about ten years old when I came, but the parts were older. It was formed out of—Landscape Architecture was in agriculture I think. Jack [T.J.] Kent had started a planning program which was independent on the campus. Architecture had a history going back to Maybeck and John Galen Howard and was a big group of its own. Design had grown out of a program that went back to the 1880s or '90s and it was basically home economics, where women learned household skills, but then they started to add classes in which they

were introduced to objects and fabrics, the history of design. Part of the Art Department shared space in Wurster Hall.

Riess: Had you heard about this innovative arrangement?

Bender: Well, it was one of the things that were interesting to me. At Cooper I was interested in what was in some ways like Cooper Union, artists and architects together. And I was trying to find more information about how it worked. I hadn't pictured, particularly in the art world, how much was integrated. I know when I came here, and when I was here, I thought of myself as coming to the College of Environmental Design, which was interesting for me.

Riess: Because you imagined it being somewhat like Gropius's idea?

Bender: It was more like the idea I was aspiring to or thinking of than a school of architecture. I later come across what Wurster said, that he wanted a name that no architect would like. He wanted it to be clear that it wasn't architecture. But at that time there were no such things as the College of Environmental Design. Now they're all over. For me, I pictured myself in such a place, but I hadn't realized how important the role of design was in CED, the connection to the art department and the connection to the museum, which was just built.

Riess: I didn't know that there was a great connection to the museum.

Bender: Jim Melchert from the Art Department had his office on the ground floor of Wurster Hall. Voulkos was in the school all the time. The ceramics lab—there was a sculpture studio there with its own courtyard—a ceramics courtyard on one side and the other side is sculpture.

But we also began to understand, when we talked about going to California, and even that summer when we were getting ready to go, we found so many of the artist friends we knew in East Hampton and New York had been to Berkeley. Hans Hofmann, when he was trying to get out of Germany, was looking for someone who would take him in, and I'm never sure who it was but someone in the Art Department at Berkeley invited him to teach.

And Peter Selz, who had been at the Museum of Modern Art, he came to be the first director, so he knew these people. Peter is interested in architecture. I found he had commissioned Don Olsen, my first officemate, to design his house. A whole range of people who lived around us in Springs, those artists that are in the Abstract Expressionist exhibition at MoMA [Abstract Expressionist New York, Oct. 2010-April 2011], and even more the ones you find in the recent biography of Leo Castelli, those names all read like our neighbors. The people who belonged to the club and the Cedar Tavern—I'm jumping around, but there's a photograph in the catalog from the Abstract Expressionist show of a table where the artists are sitting around and I knew more than half the people there. At first I couldn't recognize them because in those days,

even these cutting-edge artists, they all wore suits and ties. They're sitting around the table and they're wearing suits and ties!

Recently I found a picture of myself, when I first came here, and in that first seminar I taught I'm wearing a gray flannel suit with a tie—how much the world has changed in so many ways.

Riess: I'd like to hear more about the move out here for all of you.

Bender: Well, in New York the kids went to the Downtown Community School, a progressive school based on the principles of John Dewey and the Little Red School House. When we came here, at first the kids were dying to go to school, we'd had them out of school for eight months.

Riess: Did you do something like home-schooling during that time?

Bender: I had them make a drawing everyday, and they wrote, they kept journals, and we talked about what we were doing. Every day was an education.

Riess: Yes.

Bender: But, they had their experience here. Berkeley had just become integrated, the school system, again with great enthusiasm and invention. I guess we came one year after, but they took all the kids—a lot of the kids went to summer camp before the first integrated session.

Riess: You've said, "with great enthusiasm and invention?"

Bender: And invention, like the idea that before they integrated the school, during the summer they had a camp where all the children were together. We lived a five-minute walk from the Cragmont School.

Riess: You lived on Creston Road at first?

Bender: Well, at that point we lived on Creston Road, but then when we moved to where we are, right near the Cragmont School, but they went to Columbus because as part of the plan the older white kids—3rd through 6th grade—went down there and the younger black kids came up here.

Riess: As far as you were concerned was this experiment interesting and worth doing?

Bender: Well, it felt like being part of a good experience. We were learning about ourselves. It was a shock also to hear David, in particular, talk in a really negative way about black kids. We would say, "David, in New York your best friend, Aaron, was black." And he said, "No, he wasn't," and finally he said, "Well, maybe he was gray." What he was seeing was not the color, he was seeing the background: his friend in New York came from a family with the same kind of education and values that we had, while these kids in Berkeley schools were from poor backgrounds and a much different culture. David eventually made most of his friends with those

kids who had more in common with his interest in sports and doing things of that sort, while Michael found another group who were on the college, university track.

Their reaction when we—I'm getting ahead now, but when we said we were going to stay, when we talked to them about it, they weren't interested at first, they said no. "In New York, we can ride our bikes around the block without crossing a street, and there's this store and that store, and in Berkeley we can't." And they were way ahead of me. [laughing] It took me years to get to that level sophistication in urban planning; they had grown up urbane. On that trip before we came out here, when we went to Venice and we stayed in a little hotel a couple hundred yards from San Marco, we'd wake up in the morning and the boys would say, "Can we go play in the park?" And they would go out to San Marco to feed the pigeons.

When I first started to go to Japan it shocked me to see—I'd be on the train going to the university, and the doors would open and these, they looked like six-year-old kids on their way to school in their uniforms, alone. More recently we were there and we met Naomi Maki who had been a student here—her father is the architect Maki—and at that point her daughter was just beginning the next level of school and going to a new school, and they were practicing the walk from the train to the school because she'd be going alone and she was six years old.

But mostly what we were finding here was really exciting.

Riess: You have said that the reasons that you were motivated to make a change included the death of your father, and the end of the Wiener partnership.

Bender: Yes, I think Sue and I were both saying this is a time to look. And we didn't expect it was going to be—we really expected we were going to go out and look at something and come back. Again, even when we said we would stay, I don't think we thought we would stay for very long.

Riess: Were you at all in doubt that there was going to be a slot for you to occupy and add something?

Bender: Not so much, because I had felt since my teenage years that I was hanging out with people who were pushing the edges, and by whatever accident or chances we went on that way. When we went to Europe—we wanted to go to Europe after we were married to step back and see the world in a different way. But you know, we would have gone to South America or we would have gone almost anyplace where someone offered me a good job. We ended up in the middle of the CIAM movement, and I was used to being with people who were talking about what was going to happen.

Riess: You were hired to teach structures?

Bender: Well, to do two things. What had been happening here, Gerry [McCue]—there had been a succession of people in the architecture chair, Vernon

DeMars, Claude Stoller, I don't know all the names, back to William Wurster. When we came it was interesting that there were a lot of people who knew Maybeck, and some of them who even knew—John Galen Howard was still alive and the roots were really deep. When Charles Moore was chairman of architecture he started to invite people who were interesting to him, and he brought a whole group of people like Christopher Alexander, Ezra Ehrenkrantz, Spiro Kostof, Sim van der Ryn.

Later, when I became chairman in architecture and had to look at the personnel files when people were being promoted, I had this amazing experience that when you looked at the files—the period when Charles Moore was chairman, the files were thickest, but when you looked into them they'd all be apologies for this being late and that being late, and I'll do this and I'll do that. But he assembled this incredible group of people here, and it seemed they were just *here*. When McCue came in with a completely different kind of mindset the files got much neater. And an idea evolved which I think was a brilliant idea, and I certainly felt at the time it was the right idea, but after a while the wrong idea. Looking back I understand how things change, and that it was important to build up those strengths, but over time it made another problem. McCue structured everything into areas of study. So there was design, structure and production; climate, environment, mechanical things; history; practice; and social was a new focus.

Riess: So the students had to take—

Bender: They had to take one from Column A, one from Column B, etc. You had to take a certain number of the first classes in each of those. The other thing was that in traditional schools, and even Cooper was traditional in this way, the bulk of your time was spent in design studio and then you took other classes. For instance, at Cooper your class was in a room, a studio, and you had your desk, and the structures teacher taught in the studio. The history teachers lectured in a big lecture room where they could show slides, but other than that the different teachers came where you were working on your projects, and you couldn't help tying it in and putting things together. You can't do that with a big school; the whole department at Cooper had less than a hundred people in it. When I came to my first faculty meeting here there were almost as many people at the faculty meeting as the whole student and faculty body at Cooper!

Riess: Of course that was the part-time faculty thing that Wurster started, wasn't it?

Bender: Well, it was part-time faculty, but then—there were just a lot of faculty there. At one point there were, in architecture, I think fifty-something full-time positions, and some of them were split into two half-times, and I know when someone went on leave you'd get the salary back and you'd—for years we supported the department on Joe Esherick and Vernon DeMars, who would always be on half-time from their practices. Half of their salaries was eight teachers for design studios part-time. And so it was these people in practice that made the school much richer in two ways.

We also had, as the PhD program began, but even before that, graduate student teaching assistants. This was another dimension for me, another richness, and so it was a mix-up and a mixture at the same time.

Riess: I'm wondering why all of that architecture?

Bender: Well, the undergraduate program, the big program—at one point there were about six hundred undergraduates, I think there still are, maybe even more now because planning has an undergraduate major. But the idea was not to turn out professionals. It was a bachelor of arts degree with a major in architecture or landscape architecture. The idea was that there were so many paths people could take, and the profession, as it calls itself, is only one of them.

Riess: “The profession, as it calls itself,” being architecture?

Bender: Architecture and landscape architecture. Traditional firms and organizations take a narrow view. I mean, they're trying to defend against people invading their turf. They make licensing rules and—you have to work for them as a slave laborer practically for four years before you can get your license. Whereas all over the rest of the world degrees or diplomas from accredited schools basically count as a license, in most offices in the United States an architectural designer makes designs and somebody else puts it together to be buildable. It is a very narrow idea of what an architect is and the education of architects. When I worked for Pereira and Luckman, Pereira had won an academy award for set design. Architecture education can prepare you for many roles, and they are changing and evolving and being invented every day.

The most wonderful story—when I was in the dean's office we got this check for \$25,000, which was not very common, and very big in those days. It came from a meat-packing company, and I called the guy up and I said, “Look, I thank you, but why is a meat-packing company donating to us?” And he said, “Well, I graduated from Cal in architecture, and all I could do when I got out was be a draftsman. I got a job for an architect who was doing refrigerator lockers in warehouses. And after I worked there for a while I realized that I knew more about refrigerators than the boss, and it ended up some of the clients hired me to start my own office. Then after a while in dealing with the meat packers I realized I knew more about meat packing because I talked to all of them.” Well, anyway, he ended up being the head of this big meat packing company. But he thanked the school. And I thought—that's just what we had in mind. Whoever would have thought that this training takes you there?

Another one of the early students I had went to work for Armstrong Tile designing floor tiles and things, and ended up in an interior architecture division that they have in which they do designs to show what they do. I wish I remembered all the names now, but there was the man who invented Claymation [Will Vinton], the dancing raisin commercials? He got an academy award for that—he came out of the program. Amos Gitai

who recently was named a CED “Outstanding Alumni,” has won international film awards.

But in another way, at BRIDGE Housing the people from planning and architecture and landscape became project managers. They went to BRIDGE because the idea of a nonprofit, and working on affordable work communities, attracted them. And the skills they brought made them eventually become project managers. Carol Galante from the Department of City and Regional Planning worked her way up to become the head of BRIDGE and now she’s the assistant secretary of HUD for multifamily housing. So one of the attractions of the school to me was that we weren’t trying to make everybody be an architect in the traditional way and pass those exams.

For me the other part of it is that I found almost everything on the university campus is about analysis. I was shocked when I realized that the big school for undergraduates is L&S, not Arts and Science. But it’s even more than that—it’s science. The university sees itself as a “research university,” but there is a narrow “science” view of research. I had never heard of a research university before and didn’t realize till I was here that it was. This narrow view of research doesn’t embrace the arts; it evaluates all people and their work with the metrics of science.

Riess: That must have made for interesting questions about what you were teaching in CED.

Bender: In CED almost everything is about putting things together, synthesis rather than analysis. There are not many places where you’re, almost weekly, challenged to stand up in front of the group and say this is what I’m working on and this is what I’m doing, and people criticize it and you answer. And what you’re doing is taking from different fields, the five or six areas of study and much more. And those are skills that work everywhere. When the energy crisis came along we didn’t have a particularly big program in energy. The way we taught what was called mechanical engineering, heating, cooling, ventilating—we used to call it HVAC—looked at climate as well as the machinery that controls it, and natural as well as mechanical means, so that our students within no time were in demand as consultants in that area. The campus led the way nationally in terms of handicapped access: Ray Lifchez was teaching undergraduate classes where they walked around blindfolded one day and they tried to navigate Wurster and the campus in wheelchairs. Ray consulted with Ed Roberts [a severely disabled student activist]. In a few weeks the Ed Roberts Campus will open near the Ashby BART Station. It will be the nation’s leading center for issues of people who are handicapped or have special needs.

Again, I am saying that people would come out of the school and find they had many more paths than they had imagined, more paths and opportunities. A lot of people came out, and when they couldn’t find the job they wanted, or couldn’t find any job, they would—in one case two families, young families, put all their money together and they built a

house. They basically lived in it while they built it, and they sold it, and they built another house. Bob Muller, who was in one of those first classes, he and his wife Nancy used to babysit for the boys. They started building a house like that and he ended up being a developer doing two hundred houses at a time in places like—not Vallejo, Benicia.

Riess: That's very interesting, it sounds like a very empowering major, and yet I think one of the criticisms—maybe this is one of those things that changes over the years—was that people came out without knowing how to do things.

Bender: Yes, the constant battle was both internal and external. The profession asks for people who can do what they need—they look for employees. Our aim is to train the people to replace them, the people who will be the next leaders of the profession, not to make instant employees. When I was still in New York John Eberhardt, who was then head of the Building Research Institute at the Bureau of Standards, introduced me to the famous medical education report, named after the doctor who did it [Flexner Report, 1910], in which he introduced the idea that medical students would learn best in a hospital setting with real patients. That was revolutionary, but in most medical schools now, after two years, the students are working with patients in a hospital.

When later on at Cal I tried to make a nonprofit office that could do work for the public on the campus, everyone said you can't do that, registration laws say you can't trust a third year architecture student to work on a house. But you can trust a third year medical student to deal with your appendix? You know, there's something mad about that. I used to give this lecture much better when I was talking to the deans. And in fact that's coming back: the latest issue of the *Architectural Record* was saying that suddenly Michigan is being looked at as a leading school because they've started a program of integrating work. At the time when we did finally set that up, Roz Lindheim and I, together with Warren Widener, who was the mayor then, incorporated a non-profit called the Center for Environmental Change, which was a place where students and faculty could work on community projects.

[End Tape 14: Side B]

[Begin Tape 15: Side A]

Bender: Actually, at about the same time, but more effectively, when Charles Moore went to Los Angeles he opened an office in Westwood just off the campus—I forget what it was called. It was basically his office, but there were students working in it and other faculty worked there. And nobody said a word until they won the job for the new, I think it was called the Third College at UC San Diego. And then the profession started to scream “unfair competition.”

I was never really interested or much able to do fundraising, but at one point when we wanted to finish the auditorium which originally had been

left as a shell in Wurster Hall—Wurster believed that if they completed it at the time the university could assign it as one of the general lecture halls, but if they finished it themselves afterwards then it would be under the control of the college. By the time I came Wurster was in a wheelchair and he never—the price kept going up and no one could raise the money. I said, “Let’s do it ourselves.” Students made sketches and I think the first—I was probably Stanley Saitowitz’s first real client in the US when I hired him to take some of the ideas and make a real plan. Stanley was not used to making working drawings; they’re beautiful drawings, but it was like beautiful mechanical lines and ink drawings and all that. But it was the idea, and then eventually Bob Herman took it over and led the work. Students did a lot of the work. People donated: I remember the back walls and the acoustic walls were donated, the carpet was donated.

When I left, the dean’s office five years later the auditorium still didn’t have a building permit, because the codes said you had to have handicapped access to the stage, and the only way to do that—if we did a ramp it would have taken up half the space. So there’s a space we set aside for one of these elevators that you can get more easily now, but at that time it was going to be \$100,000. I made a design that I learned from Ala Damaz in our office in New York. She used to get cabinetmakers and carpenters by going to the boats when the immigrants were coming from Germany, and hiring these German cabinet makers. They worked in lofts west of Central Park that used to be used for stables. And there they had lifts for where the horses could be raised that you could pull with ropes with lots of pulleys. We showed how you could make—well, the idea first was that a handicapped person could pull the rope and that wasn’t allowed, but someone could pull the rope. The space is still there, but last I saw there’s still no elevator. Anyhow, it’s been upgraded and upgraded. The chairs are better now, the acoustics are better, they have a really good sound system. Like the best of self-help projects, no one knows the auditorium was made that way. Like communities in Mexico, it is “anonymous building.”

Riess: But it’s still not big enough.

Bender: It could be bigger certainly, but it’s also designed for crowds. The nature of the way the main floor it goes down and you can walk above along one side—there’s a passageway along the side that opens to a door in the back, so that if you come in late you see all the people on the side looking down into it.

Riess: And there’s a funny kind of carpeted seating stair-like thing in the back.

Bender: Yes, that was another thing we built. But that was originally not built for the auditorium. The idea was that was originally to be outside when we used the ground floor for seating for juries and things. It always killed me that the students are sitting in back and the teachers are sitting in front looking at the wall and commenting. The students can’t even see half the time. We made those movable panels so you could arrange cubicles for displaying the work, and then the first of those step things was made to be

out there so the students could sit in a more elevated way like a grandstand. But again, those were all built by students. By the way, the carpet on that structure is made of leftover pieces of the donated auditorium carpet.

At one point I made the offer to the campus that we would—we had put together a group of students, and included licensed electricians and plumbers and a mixture of people who were in the school at that time. We would bid on small projects on the campus to design and build them, and we would only expect to get the contract if we were less than half of the next bid. We were prepared to do it and we could have, but the campus went crazy. [laughing] They didn't know how to deal with it. Usually what comes out finally is the issue of insurance, we won't be insured, so we never were able to do that, but most of the things in Wurster Hall were done that way. There used to be a little store under the stairs that Joe Esherick and a group of students made in the shop, sort of with metal poles with glass set between.

Riess: Yes, I remember that.

Bender: That came down when the renovation came. But it's a bigger question, and maybe we'll talk about it another time, which is both—as we have these talks it's intrigued me, the idea of cycles.

Riess: Going back to the question of did your graduates know how to go out and do the work?

Bender: Well, one other example I have to tell you. I remember being at a meeting with about a half a dozen people from the San Francisco AIA, and Joe Esherick and I sitting across the table, and this guy from AIA is expounding. He says, "You have no professionals teaching." And Joe Esherick said, "What?" And it was like he was so set in that stale argument that he couldn't see Joe. The fact is we had professionals teaching, but they weren't teaching what the traditional professionals thought they should be teaching. We were teaching maybe too much about natural heating and cooling, and about handicapped issues, about some of the new tools, materials, production methods, and teaching an awareness of people and places, and we weren't teaching them to be draftsmen.

Riess: You were teaching what does the *brick* want?

Bender: Yes, what does the brick want to be? Joe used to use that expression of Louis Kahn's. Joe also liked to say, "That's a dumb building." Isn't that wonderful?

Riess: Yes I can see how that would be troubling to the profession.

Bender: And part of it's true. For many of the undergraduates who had the mindset to come out to get a job as a draftsman, going to Cal Poly would have been better for them.

Bill Beck, who had been in one of the first of the three-year graduate programs—he had been in the navy in Japan, he had married a Japanese woman, and had been working for [George] Lucas at Industrial Light and Magic for a while and then he came to school here to get an architectural degree—after he got his architectural degree, he went back to work for Lucas. I talked to him the other day. He’s more or less retired now, and he talks about when he was in the film industry and he worked for Industrial Light and Magic. *Loads* of our students worked for Lucas. Now they go to Pixar, or wherever—you can’t keep track of where they are in Silicon Valley. Bill was saying that he came to learn drafting skills to be an architect, and now nobody does that anymore. Nobody’s using it. Everyone’s using a computer.

Riess: CAD?

Bender: CAD, but it’s more than just CAD. The information revolution and the way information is available makes it a different process to put a building together. My objection, and lots of arguments in those days about CAD—CAD was mechanizing drafting. What we started to write about while I was still in New York is that the whole profession’s changing, the whole idea is changing: where building materials come from, what they are, how they come together, what their scale is, how systems are integrated is all changing. And if you’re just learning how to draw a different way—and now it’s so much more complicated. I used to be able to project it more easily because I had the beginning of a vision, now it’s way past my vision. I have no idea how the social media will make the next round of change.

Riess: You think architecture will be affected by social media?

Bender: No, I think new tools come and people find a way to use them. I think what started out as a dating service—I don’t how we’ll use it in architecture, I’m always surprised at these things, but the projects I work on—in Singapore just recently, the architect’s office was founded by Aldo Giurgola, an Italian who came to the United States, taught at Columbia until he won the competition for Canberra and they moved the office to Australia. Hal Guida, who studied with Louis Kahn at Penn was in that office, took it over, and he was the architect. The landscape architect, who was from India, had studied at Harvard, and this is in Singapore. There was a structural engineer from London, but we were dealing with the branch in Shanghai. The lighting designer, Herve Descottes, has offices in Paris and New York and last winter his work was part of the Mori Museum’s traveling exhibition of Van Cleef and Arpel.

Riess: Well, that is phenomenal that they can all speak the same language, and I don’t mean literally, I mean really professionally.

Bender: Well, and the challenge is in learning how to do that better.

Riess: Yes. It sounds so inefficient in a way to have that learning curve with everyone with a different tradition.

- Bender: Well, but they are learning to speak the same language, and what the changing technology has done is let them be on the same, literally on the same page. So now all the people in different places are looking at the same picture, and as they're talking about it and changing it, it has got the structural, the landscape, and can have costs and quantities and delivery dates and all of that together, and thinking that the new kinds of social media things will add another dimension to it.
- Riess: Yes.
- Bender: It has the frightening side that if you don't know or appreciate what it means to build a team, and all you're doing is on computers, there's a dimension that's missing. In my recent meeting with the board of BRIDGE—in twenty-five years BRIDGE evolved from three employees trying to do a building project nearby to where we operate close to fifteen to twenty thousand units with fifty thousand occupants in locations all over the state.
- Riess: And how many employees?
- Bender: There are now about four hundred. That includes maintenance workers, people who work on the projects, people who do the new projects.
- It takes a different kind of team. Each week new issues call for different skills, and an education that teaches you to learn is more valuable than today or tomorrow's skills. When I come across my old drafting tools in a closet I am flooded with memories. What I understand is that like learning knots at the Naval Academy, they were an introduction to a culture much deeper than drafting.
- Riess: How do you build the team?
- Bender: Well, it's different when you know the people in different ways. Some people can get to know other people nowadays on the computer. But there are other dimensions of meeting them in a place, looking at things together. You understand more, just like the difference between hearing speech and seeing gestures.
- Riess: Building teams—in studios people worked together, and across disciplines.
- Bender: Well, that was the idea. And when you translated it to Berkeley in those days, it was interesting. People were architects but they had a specialty, so someone like Clare Cooper was a landscape architect but she was talking about how people lived and how to get in touch with their dreams. Or Russ Ellis, when we started in places including social issues. I'm an architect who was talking about construction and structure. Ezra Ehrenkrantz was involved in changing the construction industry. We all came with special skills and interests, but we came with shared interests too. Gerry McCue made a neat grid to structure it, and it was a good start, but in time it became clear that it is much more complex, more rich.

While the “areas” was an important idea, an important move in 1969, once frozen in place it became counter-productive.

Teams got more and more complex: working with schools you have to learn about teachers and teaching and talk about the newest ways of teaching. In hospitals that was true again, it told a completely different story. And you also learned both—SCSD opened my eyes to how much the way things were financed would make a difference, and how much the state rules on contracting affected design and innovation. Right now in the project in Singapore we’re saying, “Why are you building student housing?” You can have someone build student housing in the community next door who is experienced in operating housing, where you can guarantee the people if they build it you could use your endowment somewhere else, something closer to your mission. To put something like that in the plan would never been in the first campus plans I worked on. Today’s plans involve another set of aims of integration, neighborhoods, and communities, ecology and interest rates. So not only teams, but really defining what teams are and who’s on teams and what issues to deal with.

Riess: Yes, that’s interesting. You’d need lots of retreats to learn to work that way.

Bender: You don’t learn it from books or retreats, it comes with doing. And again, that is one of the reasons why coming to the campus and looking at architecture in the context of the way the campus worked was interesting to me, because in architecture we have those retreats, we are learning these lessons, all the time. We don’t have to necessarily go away to do it, but the charettes, the working on projects together. One of my problems with Wurster Hall when I got to know it better is the problem that I notice comes up now when we deal with biotech and high-tech companies, where in one direction is the pressure to go tall so you have a smaller footprint, on the other direction there’s the interest in being horizontal so people and groups can mix and merge horizontally. And there’s not a right or wrong answer to this. But there is something closed, not transparent, about having studios on seven separate floors. It is worse now when doors are locked for security.

What I was trying to say about the cycles, that occupies me a lot now, is I understood when I came here the areas of study was fascinating to me. And then we began to give a PhD so you could really go into study in these areas. That was important, but over time I began to worry. First of all schools all over the country followed our direction—I mean you found more and more schools of environmental design, more and more PhD programs. A big part of my activities in the time I was dean, and chairman before, was going around the country to meetings and talking about what Berkeley did, trying to get research accepted as an activity, trying and eventually getting the AIA to set up a research company, trying to get the ACSA to sponsor research.

Riess: You mean meetings, not just campus meetings but going all over?

Bender: To Washington, to state legislatures. Jerry Brown, in his first incarnation, was terrific that way. He really listened, he got excited, he hired an architect to run the state housing system who was interested in doing research looking into what would happen to the people who were displaced by the new highways and how we could use the highway program to make twenty-five thousand new houses for poor people. As I looked at the areas of study here and how they were evolving, the profession was really moved forward during that period. Schools and the profession advanced by accepting the idea that there could be more expertise within the profession, and training someone not necessarily to be an expert in all these things, but to be able to ask the questions, to know how to approach consultants, which consultants, how you evaluate, how you organize a team and use a team. I also began to see as time went on what tends to happen is each of these pieces, areas, starts to be self-defining. Within the CED it was becoming harder and harder to have the different areas and departments working together. Everyone's looking over their shoulder at how it's playing with their interest group, their profession, and not only licensing or recognition, but also reputation and publication. So a big part of what the school does, and to some extent in practice, is to think about strategies for how you bring people back.

Riess: We are talking about schools and colleges within CED.

Bender: Yes, well let's talk about departments in the college. The departments tend to look to their professions, and one of the issues is how you bring them back to the CED and the other departments. But also, how to engage others with similar interests out across the campus. And that was one of the reasons for having—like when we set up the Campus Planning Study Group we could have people working on a project where people from the different departments found a way to be together, and they brought it back and shared it with others in the department.

Riess: I remember Vernon DeMars saying when they designed Wurster Hall he wanted there to be places where people would meet and talk to each other, and that of course is what they do in Silicon Valley start-ups. Does it work? I don't know where those places are. I think he felt they were going to be on the stairs.

Bender: Well, I think the most successful piece of Wurster Hall is that little staircase that goes from the second to the third floor right near where the dean's office is on the main floor where people meet. All the faculty offices, a lot of them, are on the third floor, and the department offices are on the second floor. There's an elevator over here somewhere and fire stairs, but there's a little iron stair that goes up, and it's just narrow enough so you have to recognize the one coming up. You have to step aside.

Riess: That's right, "How are you?"

Bender: And it's beautiful.

- Riess: So was that intentional?
- Bender: I like to think so. I never heard any of them talk about it that way, but I've heard DeMars talk about things like that.
- Riess: Did you actually say that the intention of the college is to make leaders, not employees?
- Bender: Yes, I think that's an issue, that people who study at the CED will be the leaders of the next generation. It remains more of an issue to me now as the school has gotten bigger. I still think it's true, that the school is training the next generation. Eventually they're going to be the senior people. Are they going to be the same as the guy who's the head of SOM or whatever office now? It's going to be a different—we used to *say* it's going to be a different world. We didn't realize how different it was going to be.
- Riess: Each generation has to make a huge leap in terms of technology—does that leave the last generation behind? Or do you think that's not such a big thing?
- Bender: It is a big thing, and it's not only technology, but we have to learn more about people, history, ecology—that's been our biggest contribution. And there're two parts to it. If you teach the technology, the answer to this system or that system, then they are more likely to be left behind than if you develop teaching them how to learn. How do you get an answer to your question? And the answer to that was really different forty years ago when I came here, than it is today. That's why I'm saying I don't know what the social media are going to do, but I know that the difference between being able to go to Google and find something out or being able to send e-mails to friends in different parts of the world and get an answer back has already changed things.

When I went to Japan and arrived there in 1989 there was a fax machine in my office. I had never heard of a fax machine before. I finally realized what it was, and then at one point I remember asking, “Can I send a drawing as well as a letter?” But I couldn't send it to Sue because there were no fax machines at the other end. Finally the copy shops started. You'd send it to the copy shop and they would call you. It started to transform architecture in a way you would never think of. Someone on the site could send a sketch back to the office and say this is what's going on in the building, and you would get an answer right away. Nowadays you can take a picture, be on a phone together with a picture, and the client can be part of the conversation, or a consultant.

My son David was at Kaiser yesterday. He had a strange rash, probably from swimming at Ocean Beach after the rain when the pollution comes through, and they said there's no appointment with a skin doctor. So his doctor took a picture of the rash and emailed it to the dermatologist to look at it. In some ways it's the tools that are changing, but there's also the information behind it. When I first saw the Berkeley campus it was so

impressive to me, this park. Later I realized it was an incredible teaching tool.

When we introduced ED-1 it was something I could teach, because I wanted to teach while I was being dean, and it was an introduction not just to the college, but for anyone on the campus, to learn something about architecture, planning, landscape, plants, trees—learning this *from* the campus. Instead of showing slides of Venice, London the way others did, I brought Sally Woodbridge in and Dan Gregory, and we showed that you could show the history of architecture, that you could walk to places or visit by BART. You could study construction by going to building sites and tracking them as you walked to class each day. You could follow developing campus issues through your years here.

Now there's another whole generation looking at all kinds of invisible things that are not on the campus. The campus without walls is a reality and it's not only invisible, it's wonderfully mysterious, and nobody knows where all the strings are and who's involved. The original idea that the nine campuses, or ten now, would be able to work together, works to some extent, but it's superseded in the sense that if you're in any field you're in touch with people all over the world in that field more directly than you might be with to guy in the next office. Just as I have a friendship and collaboration around the world that's closer than the neighbors on my street. I live in two different worlds. When I came here one of the things, two of the main ideas that fascinated me is what Ezra was working on and what Mel Webber was talking about in planning.

[End Tape 15: Side A]

[Begin Tape 15: Side B]

Bender: There was a group of people in planning at Berkeley at that point who I only vaguely understood were there. There were people I knew like Catherine Bauer Wurster, [Martin] Meyerson when he was here, but also Mel Webber, Jack Kent, people who were looking at planning in a much more liberating way. I read a paper that Mel Webber wrote with a graduate student, Shlomo Angel, who had also worked with Chris Alexander and has had a career all over the world in developing countries. I don't remember what the title was, but the subtitle that I do remember was "Careless about the Carless." It was talking about how we haven't begun to look at the alternatives to getting around between traditional linear transportation and cars, and how there might be other ways to do it. But even more, it began to question the whole pattern of the way we set up work. It was saying that if you're going to work a forty-hour week, should you make five round trips? Particularly at the time when there are more and more expensive equipment and buildings—buildings should be open twenty-four hours for work, and now they are. It was looking at computers, why should the computer be idle outside of "business hours?" Computers and access to them began to redefine the work hours and workday, and eventually redefine time and place. Suppose you came in and worked a ten-hour day and stayed at a hotel or something and worked

another ten-hour day and went home once during the week and came back? If you start looking at different patterns—look at all the hotels that have popped up in Emeryville! Now it's even more so that you don't have to come in every day. You can begin to question so many assumptions like that that lead to traffic jams, that call for more classrooms, that limit access to books and consultants and resources.

Riess: Telecommute.

Bender: Yes, but you're telecommuting from your desk when you come in. In the work that I have been doing with the Japanese, trying to look at alternatives to traditional office buildings—this began fifteen years ago—almost all of Asia was looking at the American model of the office building, but there are alternatives we don't see. There's more office space in Silicon Valley than there is in downtown San Francisco now. And we don't think of that as office space, we tend to see what we expect to see. There are different ways to use an office building. We make flexible partitions and all, but John Parman and I took a group of Japanese from the Obayashi Corporation to show them European office buildings.

The office building that made the biggest impression on us was a building that Norman Foster had designed, Stockley Park, a development, a business park right next to Heathrow. There were a lot of famous companies in it, and it looks like a traditional business park except that with the help of the English firm Arup—it had been a garbage dump, what they call a tip, and Arup twenty-five years ago found a way to clean the site, mostly naturally. There are canals where they purified the water and they planted trees. The Foster building was for British Air, a very nice building but they moved out of it because they were getting too big for it. They had about five hundred employees and they needed more space. They sold it to British Telecom, I think that's the name, and they had fifteen hundred employees in it. What they did was completely restructure the way they used it. Only a certain number of people had regular desks, people in something like accounting. But a lot of the people came and went, they formed teams for projects and sometimes based the teams in client offices, so they took a lot of spaces and made team rooms where they could work. People who went in and out a lot didn't have a permanent desk, and at that time it was revolutionary. You could come in and there was a row of computers, and you'd put your card in it and it was your computer. Now people can do that for many businesses. But by restructuring how they used the building, they had many more people using it and they used it in a more intense and interesting way.

Today in Silicon Valley and around the world companies are more apt to invest what they have in "program" rather than in "real estate" and to question many other assumptions about work and the workplaces. Universities have been way behind.

Riess: And that's what the Japanese were interested in learning?

Bender: Well, they didn't know what they were interested in learning, but as we went around to see some of these things they realized that in Europe there is a different tradition, they tend to value daylight and windows that open, and they saw other ways that people were dealing with offices. We went to Paris and saw that big areas of Paris that don't look like office buildings are very intensely used as office buildings, and to this day the Paris government doesn't see that and they keep proposing towers. They say the new towers will be more effective because they'll have double floors for all the wiring and installations—at just the time that it'll become wireless. [laughter]

Japan is trying to stay on the cutting edge, and if you look at who's in some of the newer towers, Lehman Brothers had twelve floors in the Roppongi Hills Tower, and when Lehman crashed Mori felt it was all over. It was a really big tenant to lose, but it turned out that they sold off pieces of Lehman and a Japanese company called Nomura Securities took over the twelve floors. But in buildings all through Tokyo today, not twenty-five, not thirty years ago, you'll find not only Goldman Sachs and Nomura and Deutsche Bank, but many companies that you'd never think of, smaller companies. And you see it in Singapore, you'll see it in London or Shanghai. There's another whole evolving, while plans are still being made for linear development. One of the projects I'm involved in now with the Mori Foundation is what they call the GPCI, the Global Power Cities Index. They're trying to rank cities by their attractiveness to the people and organizations that shape the world, and thinking about how and what and who to measure is fascinating!

Riess: That is so interesting. Now briefly I want to tick off some of the things that you refer to here—you mentioned Berkeley houses.

Bender: Well, when we got to Berkeley and saw the houses people lived in—on the East Coast it seemed only the richest people had such big houses, plus we didn't know the suburbs very much, but still. We realized the people who taught at the university were living in a way—not only the space that they had, but you could walk to Tilden Park, you could see the Bay. It was liberating in a way. It was a whole combination of things that were liberating.

The other fascinating experience was with the museum. During the time we were here visiting, the Berkeley Art Museum was getting ready to open and they had a pre-opening event. The whole building was empty, this concrete building with the stepped platforms around the atrium and all that, and they, probably Peter Selz, invited Anna Halprin and her dance troupe to do a performance. We went, and we brought the boys who were I think seven and eight years old. It was in the evening and everyone was standing on the ramps and platforms, looking down and across, and these dancers came in and they were black and white, and men and women, but most of all they were all naked. [laughter] And there was something about big rolls of brown paper, they were rolling themselves up in the paper. The boys' eyes were popping.

Riess: Well, yes.

Bender: Again, we lived in a different—Greenwich Village was not exactly a backwater, but there was something about the way, the exposure of it, more close to home somehow. The other thing that was so striking in those days, the Free Speech Movement had passed on and it was the spring of People’s Park and there was enormous energy. Wurster Hall became a factory. We had silkscreen equipment [Gorilla Graphics] and we were making posters and signs and stringing them up to dry, and not only making them for Berkeley, we were sending them all over the country. We were lithographing and printing and designing. And we had these enormous meetings where everyone argued, but basically everyone was on the same side. Except once I remember Sami Hasid, whose family had been immigrants, probably from Romania or Bulgaria, who went to Egypt and then came here through a PhD at Harvard and he was the one who did a lot to establish the PhD program here, he stood up and said in his quiet voice, “Let’s try not to be so angry at people.” There were tears in his eyes, he was worried, he had lived through places where the family moved from persecution, and he didn’t like the acrimony, he didn’t like the sound, even though mostly everybody was on the same side. We had meetings where people voted yes and no, or they abstained, and I remember a meeting where somebody got up and explained why he was not abstaining—he was abstaining from abstaining.

It was a great chance to meet the faculty, but it still took time. A few years later at a PhD student’s oral exam, Chris Alexander was sitting next to Don Olson. Chris started talking and Don said, “Oh, you’re Chris Alexander, we’ve never met.” They’d been here for more than ten years.

Riess: You said [William] Wheaton took you under his wing?

Bender: I never really knew why, but we came around Christmas and he invited us on New Year’s to this dinner at his home, and we found it was a habit. Wheaton was, again, like the suits.

Riess: Like the what?

Bender: Like the New York artists who still wore suits and ties in the 1960s. He had this formal New Year’s Eve dinner. His wife was I think from Philadelphia, from a family that wanted to carry those traditions on, and it was such a change from the openness we were finding—a formal dinner. At that dinner we discovered that Mike Heyman and Therese were here. I’d known them—I used to square dance with Therese at the Ethical Culture Society on Central Park West! And then other times Wheaton—you could find him on Sunday afternoons in the shop in Wurster making furniture.

Riess: So there was a social scene here that both you and Sue liked.

Bender: Sue loved the fact that if she called one of the women she met—. At that point there were more faculty wives: there used to be a list of faculty

names with the wives next to it, and then same sex names started to appear, and at one point it all got so mixed up that they don't do that anymore. But Sue would call and say, "Might we get together?" And they would say, "Come over." And she would come in and see dirty dishes in the sink and someone in a housecoat, and that was so different than the world we knew in New York. You know, you could be in Greenwich Village and doing things but there was also a more formal side behind your door.

Riess: I don't know whether Catherine Bauer Wurster is going to come again. She was so revered.

Bender: Yes, she is revered by me.

Riess: She was revered by you as a thinker?

Bender: And a doer. The first International Style show [1932] at the MoMA included a housing component that she put together. Under Roosevelt she was the head of, I don't know whether it was called FHA at that point, but it was the first time there was a component in the federal government looking at housing. She and Lewis Mumford were very close.

Riess: It is said.

Bender: I've never known how close. Mumford was someone who I knew slightly in New York. While I was here I had reasons, excuses, to talk to him.

Riess: And you talked to Catherine?

Bender: I talked to Catherine. When I was at Harvard she would come back for seminars. And when I was at MIT, just after Wurster had left to come back to Berkeley, one of the things he did as dean at MIT was invite Alvar Aalto to design one of the first postwar dorms. I stayed in that dorm that spring. And there was some kind of celebration and Wurster came back for it. Catherine then gave some talks on housing, and it was the first time I actually met her. I found there were many more of those threads here, but I also understood, as I was saying, how much I didn't understand.

One thing I didn't talk about more was teaching a graduate class in that first spring, and that first graduate class was part of trying to define the structures and production area of study. And I had never done anything like it. In fact, you asked about confidence. I remember when we were coming back from Europe before driving across the country to Berkeley. We came back by ship from Naples, nine days on the ship and I was really—I had probably twelve or fifteen subjects for the different sessions and I was working on all the notes. On the first day I was talking to the class and I realized that I was up to the eighth week! [laughter] But that was a wonderful group of people who have gone on to do really interesting things, and it showed me there was another level to teaching. I also realized that a different way of teaching was not to prepare everything, but to start to have the confidence that by opening up you

could get—well, this was a class that could really contribute, they were all mature.

Riess: When you say there was another level, what do you mean about that?

Bender: I meant that if I started a conversation they weren't all just listening. I remember one of those sessions Richard [Louis] Meier was here then, the Richard Meier who was in systems analysis. He was, I think, the first one to have an appointment in all three departments at CED, a big, imposing figure. I invited him to talk to the group one day. He was fascinating, because he was a very optimistic person about the future in every way. He used to travel to cities all over the world, and he'd walk the length of the city in one direction and walk the length in the other direction, and then he would tell you all that it was about. It was fascinating. But at one point he started talking about—someone asked him about cutting down redwood trees in the northwest. And he said, "Well, it's not a problem because for every one they cut down they plant ten." Cynthia Ripley, who I just met again recently—she's become an architect in practice who worked on the Berkeley Main Library renovation—she was a graduate student, but she could have been a high school girl looking at her, and she said, "Professor Meier, isn't there a difference between a five-hundred-year-old tree and a young tree?" [laughter] And it was just so beautiful. It's one of the things I remember.

I remember when we talked about building things and mechanical things, and David Brindle, who was from England, and already working part-time at Ezra Ehrenkrantz's Building Systems Development, he talked about how he grew up in London desperately wanting an MG, and there was no way his family was going to buy him an MG. He found you could buy a kit and over three years he built an MG in the garage. And somehow the range of experiences—David later worked for years for Anshen and Allen in hospitals and complex things of that sort. He made some of the beautiful drawings for the BSD projects at the time when BSD was having an impact on design and building.

Riess: These graduate students came from all over, these were not just a product of the undergraduate program.

Bender: Oh no, they were mostly not. Anne Vernez Moudon was a Swiss who had come as a furniture designer. She got involved in building systems. She worked after graduation with BSD and Dan Solomon and then left to work with [N. John] Habraken at MIT. Ann was interested in and wrote about how housing was an evolving process. She eventually became a professor at Seattle, started a new institute called Cascade that works on transportation and environmental issues. And she's retired—they're all retired now! [laughing] Eric Dluhosch skied out of Hungary to escape the USSR; he said he couldn't take one more switch between the Germans and the Russians and skied out. And he got interested in building systems and also became a professor at MIT. They were a wide variety and they came with wonderful ideas so that we all learned. And for me it was a different kind of experience. I had really good students at Cooper Union,

but here they were at a different level. It was a wonderful experience for me and it has been a pleasure to be in touch with them over the years.

Riess: You don't have any Asians among this group. Or I should say Japanese or Chinese students. I don't know who they mostly were.

Bender: There were not very many Asian or Asian American students. At one point later on, maybe it was after I went China when it first opened up in 1979-1980, I came back from Tsinghua University and I walked on the campus and I said wow. At that point there were more Asian Americans, particularly undergrads, and now there are many more. We still, for a long time, particularly in architecture, had relatively few students with Chinese, Japanese, backgrounds. Now "Asian" has become more complicated. We never used to think of Indian people or people from Dubai or Saudi Arabia as Asian. It is interesting, sometimes troubling, to see far fewer East Asians, or women, in practice compared to what you see on the campus. There were not so many women in the CED, and now there are more than half women in Wurster Hall. When I was in school there were two women in the first year, out of thirty. Now 50 percent is not unusual. When you look at practice just in recent years you're beginning to see more women, but you don't see that many at the top levels.

Earlier you were asking about preparation for my lectures, I never had had the experience of giving a lecture to two hundred people, which I suddenly found myself doing in the architecture department. There had been variations on how to teach the introduction to structures to architects. People from engineering had done it. Dan Solomon had done a good job as an assignment when he was an assistant professor. But I was really inventing that in those weeks, trying to think how to do that, and trying to do it in front of two hundred people with teaching assistants that I'd never had before. I realized the whole pleasure of working with the teaching assistants, graduate students, doing things using their ideas and giving them a chance to try different ways to work, trying to invent ways that you could have people do some design in a lecture class of two hundred people.

Interview 9: December 15, 2010

[Begin Tape 16: Side A]

Riess: I gather that when you came to Berkeley to teach no one on the East Coast had any real picture of Bay Region architecture. When did that get turned around, or does it linger still?

Bender: I'm not sure it has changed much. People on the East Coast know some famous, mostly recent buildings here, and Southern California postwar houses and communities, but they have little sense of the Bay Region architecture, communities, or traditions.

In my case, I knew of Wurster and his houses but I don't think I had ever heard of Maybeck, and I was excited to learn about him. On one level to hear he grew up near McDougal and Bleeker in New York, and in a family that came from Germany in the same "wave" as my father's family. More interesting it was a family of wood and cabinet workers, and despite a Beaux Arts education, his first house, for himself and young bride, was built as an experiment in new materials and construction methods for minimal starter housing. He was hands-on with materials and construction methods all his life and, late in his life, he designed campuses and was working on grand plans for San Francisco when he died. From construction to town planning! He taught architecture at UC before there was a department or school and, in many ways, anticipated the CED.

But your question about how much people on the East Coast knew about California, or what we knew, the other piece I realize I understood was I had known the Hallidie Building in San Francisco, but I never heard of Willis Polk, who designed it, and I wasn't really even sure where it was. During the years I was office boy in the Harrison office and they were designing the UN, Corbusier had talked about glass walls, but no one had never seen a glass wall. Auguste Perret, who did a lot of concrete buildings and was a teacher for Corbusier and Gropius and others, did some buildings in Paris around 1900 with glass walls. But here was this building which turned out to be in San Francisco, and I always was admiring that building, I found out later it was Willis Polk, I ran into his name again. You know he did things like the city hall in San Francisco. He did the chancellor's house here on the campus. I learned so much in those first days, months we were here, of what California really was.

Riess: People now might introduce someone to Berkeley by driving them around and pointing out all the brown shingle houses, and then maybe point out some Wurster—did anyone take you around?

Bender: I guess they did a little bit. We tended not to look at the brown shingle things. We looked at the modern things. We looked at the Maybeck church, which really blew me away, because again way back then he used materials and techniques which we thought were incredibly modern. The

more I learned about Maybeck, the more I realized he's where the school comes from.

I was looking up John Muir—Muir and Maybeck are the beginning of the College of Environmental Design, way before the College of Environmental Design was thought about. Muir's way of thinking is one of the roots. The CED, eventually, when you look at what it is, it engenders in physical form the kinds of things Muir and Maybeck represented.

Riess: How does the Muir part work?

Bender: Well, ecological things, looking at the grander scale, worrying about the larger place and systems, looking at the forces of the land rather than overpowering the land. We've come to a point where we were so proud of overpowering the land, overpowering distance, moving the water, and he made us aware to the beauty and the power also, the energy. You couldn't keep doing it without eventual damage. John Muir once wrote, "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe." Maybeck, in another way, was coming out of his buildings certainly. Even though he used new materials he ended up feeling very close to the land, close to the climate. I was fascinated when I learned that an early Maybeck, the first house he built for his wife and himself, he did it by stretching canvas between wires and rubbing wet cement on it.

Riess: What are called the Sack Houses?

Bender: Yes, well now the Sack Houses have become another whole thing. What Maybeck was trying was closer to lightweight tension structures. But the idea that he was doing it all through his life, as so many architects I admire, spend most of their life looking for a way to develop materials to help people make their own house or improve their own house.

Riess: Joe [Esherick] would admire that, and many people you would admire would admire that, but that must represent a kind of aberration to many architects.

Bender: Well, it became clear what a big aberration it was when the Postmodern period came [1970s], and in some ways the Postmodernists were trying to do what the Bay Area style had been doing all the time. In a sense they were trying to take the simple boxes and put hats on them, bows on them. Whereas the Bay Area had a richness during that whole period that came out of the land, out of the materials, out of the climate. It was not so much postmodern architecture, for me it was exciting to see people living in modern houses everyday. McCue had built that house right near where Pete Walker's stood—Pete's mother was living in it at that time. There was a particular clarity about McCue's houses. They are very much like McCue, strong, direct, thoughtful. Pete Walker's house [2902 Buena Vista Way] was more engaging the land and it was on many different levels. And right above that is that castle [Hume Cloister, 2900 Buena Vista

Way], and Mike Severin bought it at one point, the S of ELS. So that's another thing that impressed me so much with Berkeley.

Riess: Who were the other modern architects here you would have responded to? Wurster?

Bender: Well, Wurster was one of the first, was what I really knew about this area. I knew his houses and I loved those houses, and again it was not—he was doing those houses at the time when my world, the breakthrough architects, my heroes, were doing boxes and glass things of that sort. Wurster's work was really quite organic.

Riess: That Wurster/ Thomas Church, living with immediate access to the land.

Bender: Well, even Garrett Eckbo, I'd met him when he was still at the Graduate School of Design I guess, and he taught there for a while. I knew his books, but they were about California gardens. Most of the PA [*Progressive Architecture*] *Pencil Points* houses that were done as demonstrations of the future after the war, I forget the right name [Case Study Houses, sponsored by *Arts and Architecture Magazine*] but there are about ten sample houses, most all done in the Los Angeles area. And they were all sort of what you think of as a Southern California house. Indoor, outdoor, one floor, with a different relationship to the garden than what we were used to. Those people were here, I thought I knew the work, but I saw what they were doing now in a new way.

When we went to look for a house here, when we decided we were going to stay, I sort of ruled out the brown shingles because they looked dark and we came for the sun. We made the decision to be where we are on this side of town and higher on the hill, where we still live, captured by the big view, the land and trees, its un-urbane setting was a big contrast with our urbane nature. It's become more of a problem as I get older and I think about how I'm getting around. I didn't want to be in "Queens"; I told Sue that College Avenue looked like Queens to me. [laughter] And in many ways I see why it would be much nicer to live where you could walk up and down College Avenue where there are lots of shops and people.

We looked at Pete Walker's house. It was for sale, I liked it, but I realized I couldn't live in someone else's modern house, especially one that was as specific as Pete's, so many levels, so much spelled out. I shared an office in those first days in Wurster Hall with Don Olson, and he was doing "Harvard GSD" modern houses. He lives in one right below us here [San Diego Road], and I started to see some of those. And when we started looking for houses I asked him if any of his houses were for sale: we would have moved into that kind of a glass box. Finally we chose to move into a Spanish style house that was almost—if you could close your eyes and see it differently, it was like the house we built for ourselves on Long Island, except it was completely different in other ways. It was much bigger, and although the style is Spanish, it's basically all glass that opens onto a deck on one side, and it has a dark floor—the floor of ours on Long Island was the cheapest black tile, this was Spanish tile. Ours had the

structural roof, and this living room has a wooden roof almost exactly like it. But this was a Spanish style house with white walls, dark floor, wooden ceiling, a big glass wall that looked out, and a deck that you could go right out on, and it was almost the way we lived in our little Amagansett house.

Riess: I hadn't realized that about your house.

Bender: Well, I didn't until we got there. We started looking at houses in late May when we knew we were going to stay, and before we left for the summer we made bids on a few of them. And then at the end of the summer we heard that this house was available, and on the plane flying back I remember Sue and I were talking and she said it had no closets, and I said it had only two bedrooms. We didn't remember which house it was, or we had pieces of the different houses in mind. But I pictured that living room ceiling and the floor—I never would have designed a wall of arched glass like that, but I remembered that big deck, and it was the way I saw living coming out here. We changed what had been a playroom to be our bedroom because it was right on the deck.

Riess: Being in a new architectural environment here, didn't you want to get back into architecture? Didn't all this architecture inspire the architect in you?

Bender: I started designing a house and we started looking at lots. I probably was still doing it a little after we got here. I drew ideas for three houses on different sites. But by the time we got here I realized—

Riess: Got here for good you mean?

Bender: Well, we didn't know how for good it was, but we were in a house we had bought, which for us was good. I had never lived in a place more than four or five years my whole life, and had no expectations.

I realized before I built something here I had to know the climate better. I had to know not just where the sun comes up and goes down, but the light is so important. And so it was one reason we put it off. Also, I may be too single-minded, but to start to build a house while I was trying to build a life and a world here. Even more so I realized there was another little piece. By the end, before we left Long Island I was realizing houses were driving me crazy on one level. To be putting all that energy into the foibles, personal things of one or two people—I realize that for me apartment houses, communities, were more interesting than single houses.

But more than that, something else changed. In the East in those last years I was looking at new things and discovering things, and the National Commission project, the Douglas Commission, and some of the other work I was doing in Washington—we were beginning to point out to the country, and more important to architects, that there was a richer field there than we saw. I grew up thinking of houses and house plans and thinking that was what architects did, design houses like what we were used to seeing. I began to understand that there was much more to

architecture, and that excited my imagination. But as we are talking here, this comes somewhere in between when I was in New York and when I came to California, so I don't know where it'll fit, but one of the things that attracted me to come out was the SCSD school system. School Component System Design. It was proposed by Ezra Ehrenkrantz who was on the faculty here. He was an assistant professor working with support from the Ford Foundation's Education Facilities Lab, and I was an occasional advisor to the EFL while I was at Cooper Union in New York. And when I first saw it I knew it was just the sort of thing I was interested in, a new way to do prefabrication, except it was much more than prefabrication.

It came out of the fact that with the post-war population boom suddenly California needed so many middle schools, and building them traditionally would have taken a long time and been very expensive. And they would have been the same-old schools. So the idea was to study with teachers and education experts, local people, and help them decide what they wanted a school to be before you started, and then to see if we could bring innovation to both the process and the product. I was on the outside then. Eventually I got involved with Ezra Ehrenkrantz at UC and at BSD [Building Systems Development] in how you could make a new school in a new way. And one of the things that came out of it was a series of performance specifications, how the building could serve the new forms of education. "Performance specification" was common in other industries but new to the construction industry, and to the "client" local school districts and state governments.

At that point a school was still fixed desks and the teacher up front. And this was going on into high schools, and education ideas had been changing through the thirties and the forties, but nothing was built, and nothing much had changed about schools. So the idea was to say how we liked to have a school, and how would it change, and then how could we make it in different ways, and could you invite innovation?

California—with the SCSD, the California schools came to government and eventually to the Ford Foundation saying, "We have this problem. We have to build hundreds of schools, and we have to do it in a more efficient way. We have to do it in a way that's about the future, not the past. And instead of doing them by separate school districts, if we look at it all together, we may come out with a more interesting product." They made the case to the Ford Foundation, and with the Ford Foundation we made the case to the federal government and the California State government that what California does will shape the country, because California was the model then.

So performance specifications were put together. Among the new areas of performance were things like how do you change classrooms quickly, how could two or more two classrooms be combined. They looked at lighting. No one had looked much at lighting before, certainly not how lighting was affected if you combined two classrooms. What kind of moveable partitions would be needed? They looked at the possibility of air-

conditioning, because so many of the schools in California were run through really difficult warm climates. We looked at things like floor coverings. One of the things that came out of the studies was that everyone was using vinyl tile for the floors because it was cheap and it lasted.

Riess: Easy to clean.

Bender: Well, it turned out that if you take the cost of the vinyl floor over the year with all the cleaning and polishing, it's more expensive than carpet. After I saw the study I began to notice the maintenance people coming through Wurster Hall each evening pushing big buffing machines. Things like that came out in the studies. The teachers in the lower grades were saying, "Maybe we could have carpet on the floor." And we found you could rip the carpet out every other year and put new carpet in and it was cheaper than that guy coming around every night with the waxing machines and things of that sort. Later, as sustainability became more of a concern, carpet manufacturers developed material that could be recycled. Eventually companies were formed which rented and recycled carpet, changing a first cost to an operating cost.

Part of the idea was, wait a minute—you're coming from outside, and the local architects are going to be out of it and the AIA would disapprove and who would guarantee participation of the local communities? People were afraid these were going to be strange buildings, so the idea was that this wasn't going to deal so much with the form or finish, the look of each building, but improve the systems inside the building. It came down to *asking* industry to make proposals for a structural system that had requirements of having a sixty-foot span so you could move partitions around without any columns. And a ceiling system that had lights that were modern lights. In some cases it was moving toward fluorescent from traditional incandescent, but the lights would work even when you moved the partitions around.

Riess: The people who were asking the questions—was it SCSD? Or was it the school administrators?

Bender: That was a role of the Ford Foundation's EFL. Some of it came from schools, from educators, who had been wanting, for a while, a new school building, a different kind of school building, but they didn't know who to talk to or how to talk to them. Some of it came from the architectural world that was looking at how to make new schools. And then it started to come from some of the new entities—the Department of Education, state education groups.

Riess: And there was money to spend.

Bender: There was money to spend because the number of schools that had to be built was enormous, and so there was an understanding that if we could do it *better* we could maybe do it cheaper and with lower operating costs they would be more valuable in the future. A major difference was that money

could be spent on research, and research that could never have been done one school at a time. And one of the reasons it took place here is largely that Ezra Ehrenkrantz, who was a contemporary of mine—he grew up in New Jersey and went to MIT at the time I was there and at Harvard—he got interested in some of the same things, building technology. With a Fulbright he went to England and studied how the English were building post-war schools, and they had developed something called CLASP—I don't remember what it stands for. [Consortium of Local Authorities Special Programme] One of our old BSD colleagues, Andrew Rabeneck, instead of retiring he went back to London to get a PhD. He's writing the history of all of this, the history of system building and how the whole way we build things began to change at that point.

As SCSD developed, the idea was the local architect would be chosen, he would be given these four new systems to use: structure, partitions, lighting, and HVAC, in which most of the expensive and tedious detailing of the interior work was reduced to almost nothing. (This is coming back to the original—what started me off on this.) They would give the architect the same fee, even though the amount of working drawings would be less, and that would give him more time to focus on the quality of the exterior, the site planning, how it fit into the community, and inside would be this more standardized school which would be an improved tool for education.

Well, it jumps to the other end—the architects didn't know how to do that. They had such a tradition of getting the conceptual design done quickly because they had to spend so much time on the blueprints and working drawings. And suddenly the architects found they were making a lot of money, but the buildings did not look so special. On the other hand, the school worked better. But what came out of it was really interesting. For instance, there was a big competition for who would make this steel structure, the system to span the sixty feet, with the bays and all of that, and who would make the ceiling and the air-conditioning and ventilating system.

The Inland Steel Company, which was a dying middle-sized steel company at that point, came up with this terrific system of long-span joists which turned out to be useful not only for these new open schools, but for warehouses and all kinds of construction. For a while it revolutionized the way industrial buildings were made. The most revolutionary was the ceiling system with an air-conditioning unit that sat on the roof, and then distributed treated air from the roof through the same system that provided the lights.

And a company called Lennox that was almost unknown in air-conditioning then made the roof unit and eventually became the biggest provider of air-conditioning things, and again, mostly for industrial buildings.

Riess:

It's very interesting about how it all happens simultaneously.

Bender: A lot of it happened at just that time, because there were all the things that were delayed because of the Depression and the war, and then the time it took to get people back to doing things. And one of the things they got back to doing was producing children, which hit the schools later, and by the time I came to Berkeley, it hit the colleges that were open, and Berkeley was expanding—all the universities. One of the systems this SCSD group did—Building Systems Development was the name of the office here—they were working on a system like this for UC dormitories, student housing, and that was coming at a time when suddenly the university decided it would need sixty thousand new beds. With BSD they started to look at student housing the same way, but somewhere along the line it lost steam because other things changed, which is also interesting. I think it was the Free Speech Movement that took the university's demand for student housing away. Students stopped wanting to live in student housing. In any event, all of this was becoming a more interesting area for me. It was changing the way I looked at my own work as well as my teaching. To be able to start to look at industry and shape their perception of how they can play a more interesting role in building fascinated me. The possibilities were stimulating. Operation Breakthrough was Governor Romney, and he'd been the president of Studebaker, he was the governor of Michigan, he became the head of HUD. His idea was to "turn industry loose on the housing problem."

Everyone's picture of industry and housing was like Studebaker, houses coming off assembly lines. I was one of a number of people who worked to form this idea of Operation Breakthrough saying there are going to be nine sites around the country. We were asking for people to come up with ideas of how to build demonstrations of new ways of building houses on them. And people would go and look at them, and if a builder wanted to use that system he would collaborate with the industry and the US would make it easy to go through. But everyone pictured that we were making mobile homes or manufacturing houses that you were going to buy. What came out of it were hundreds of little inventions. And in a sense, people generally said it was a failure.

Riess: In *Design on the Edge* Roger Montgomery refers to you as an "alumnus of the massive but unsuccessful federal Operation Breakthrough project," coming to Berkeley to bring applied technology research. What about that? And would you say that Operation Breakthrough's failures showed you and Don Turner and so on what needed to be happening at BRIDGE?

Bender: I was involved with the idea before I came to California, and in the years after. Eventually, with John Parman and a grant from the NSF, I did a study of some aspects of Operation Breakthrough. Our conclusion was that it was a great success. The problem was very few people in the architecture/building industry understood what it was and what research was. When Breakthrough didn't find a magic bullet to industrialize building, when houses did not come rolling out of a factory, they thought it was a failure. But Breakthrough broke through to paths to industrialize building, new ways to understand what an industrialized housing industry would look like. It also helped us understand why many of the over and

over proposed paths, ideas, failed, constrained by things outside the building industry. My *Progressive Architecture* article [1970] “General Contractor as General Motors” tried to explain that. In another way, a parallel path, BRIDGE did not get stuck in the “hardware” parts of building homes and communities but worked at opening the political, social, financial constraints and leaving the hardware to be selected out of the emerging technologies that Breakthrough help to “seed.” I think Roger understood that—we talked about it often.

The point I’m making in all this is that I got excited by those bigger ideas, I didn’t have the energy or the focus for a house. The picture of the houses that I wanted to build or the way I’d like to work on housing is more to make it possible to people to take over the framework, and to be able to adjust it to themselves. We were building apartment houses that said if you—under the FHA, if you have a boy and a girl you had to have a separate bedroom for each. But it didn’t say anything about if you have your grandmother living with you and you don’t have a husband. And how do you make public housing? Those were the issues that tended to be more than the house.

- Riess: They’re very interesting issues. Do you think of your house as Sue’s house? Is the house a woman’s, essentially?
- Bender: No, the house was our life in the sense that it was a thing we took on together. It began when we were first married and living in Europe. We had this one room that we transformed with things we bought and did. We would go to furniture stores, we would look at buildings and building things the way we went to museums and galleries, and all our lives when we look at the house, when we look at the museums and things of that sort, we’re talking to each other in a way that cuts across everything.
- Riess: Lovely. So it doesn’t mean it’s a compromise?
- Bender: No, it’s a collaboration. We probably each compromise on something, and we certainly compromise certain kinds of comfort for the pleasure we get in living in a world that we just get pleasure out of being in and looking at.
- Riess: You’re talking literally about living in the bedroom that would have been the playroom.
- Bender: Yes, we don’t have the right closets, we don’t have the right lights, but I love the way I can light the living room and we love the way that the table was made in the kitchen, in the contractor’s workshop, while we were making a kitchen for a client, with legs that the plumber made for us. Now we’re getting to be a little bit slaves to it. We’re at the point in our lives where we look at how much longer I can climb up on ladder and change a light bulb.
- Riess: Oh, well, get a handyman.

- Bender: But again, getting a handyman is different than calling Charlie the super. And getting someone to help with the driving is different than being able to get a taxi. And so you catch me in the middle of a life crisis. Suddenly my urbanity is catching up with me, and I'm not sure how we're going to deal with it. In just the last days I've been saying I can't picture that I'm going to be living in that house ten years from now. Although I love the house and maybe we'll find a way, but again, beginning to look at things differently. How we will deal with the problems of the house is maybe to get together with the neighbors and hire a doorman.
- Riess: The Beacon Hill model?
- Bender: I didn't know there was a Beacon Hill model. There was sort of a model of it when I worked for Lescaze in New York. His office was on this part of the Turtle Bay where all of the houses had a shared backyard. I never knew how much they shared, but one of the things that attracted me when I came here was looking at how there were people here who were looking at all the parts. They had taken, in developing the college and the Department of Architecture, they developed these different areas which were never looked at much before: social things, the structure, the production, information technologies, and they were all in separate areas which was, for where we were at the time, was very special. Because all of those things were being developed and pushed forward, and we were educating the profession and schools as much as the people here. Almost every school in the country changed in those years based on the College of Environmental Design.
- Riess: How did people learn about that CED model?
- Bender: Through the fact that we are a big school, and so many of the people went out and taught. In Gropius's day a lot of students went out and taught as well as practiced and they influenced the next generation of schools; the GSD changed the way schools were operating after Gropius's time. The CED had another kind of influence. The new PhD programs sent people to teach at every major university. In the 1960s Berkeley was changing the way schools looked at what they were going to be.
- In the teaching in those first years I enjoyed the possibility to have classes with enough time and enough credits or whatever attached to them so we could take on a broader picture than just designing a building. We were designing buildings, the process they were built with, we were looking at how you would look ahead of time at how—what performance do you want for the school, and meeting with teachers to talk about it? Doing government office buildings for the GSA, we were able to look at what is generic about these buildings and what can we put into them so that in Philadelphia, or Richmond, California, where one of them is, the local people will be able to adapt them to the place and they'll be able to adapt and change over time. With Roz Lindheim we looked at hospitals and at what building design could do to support children or seniors. With Ray Lifchez we tried to understand the issues of people with special needs, maternity wards as well as wheelchairs.

Riess: This was in a design class or in a lecture class?

Bender: The way the school was basically set up when I came is that most professors taught a large undergraduate lecture class. I taught the introduction to structures and construction. The class had a certain number of teaching assistants, some of whom were your graduate students, and others. Then you usually also taught a seminar, and you taught a design class in which you could take some of the themes of your field and develop them in designs.

We looked a lot at housing systems—I was bothered by terms like housing systems, pre-fabricated housing, housing projects. So another thing that we talked about, and for me it was really important, was the difference between making homes and making houses. Housing is a noun; homemaking, dwelling is a verb. We were trying, even at the scale of a multifamily, multi-story community, to change it from housing to dwelling, from housing project to community and to how people could change and adapt what they were doing in their own time, how people could “dwell” as part of a community. If someone else came, whatever, how the building could be more responsible, accepting, alive. And what was exciting is that we had people both around Berkeley, and around the world that were interested.

[End Tape 16: Side A]

[Begin Tape 16: Side B]

Bender: The mechanics of it was: the undergraduate course was ED-1, an introduction to environmental design, and my structure and production was 120, and then the 280s were 281, 2, 3, 4. I think that’s the way it went, each with its own focus. That was really a way where you not only taught a design studio, but the other people in that area would be participating in it. So originally Ezra and I spent a lot of time together, and then eventually Sam Davis came in.

Sam Davis is an interesting aside. The year we first came and decided to stay here—we were going to go back to New York to close things down and come back. We decided to stay for the graduation—this was 1969—and the graduation speech, the undergraduate speaker was Sam Davis, who gave the most rabble-rousing talk for revolution and we have to make schools better, and he went off to Yale for graduate school. [laughing] But when he came back he was involved with what we were doing. Eventually he wrote a book on housing in which I did an essay, Clare Cooper did an essay—again it was what we were trying to talk about at Berkeley. How you could look at different parts of the environment in new and richer ways.

One of the interests in coming here was [Christopher] Alexander who I knew through Chermayeff. They did a book together, about neighborhood housing and how it could be more—*Community and Privacy*, was the name. And Sandy Hirshen and Sim van der Ryn were working at that time

with migrant farm workers in the Central Valley on housing. Chris did a project in Peru with people from the CED. Ezra Ehrenkrantz had been working on SCSD and other systems at BSD. I came both from my experience in New York with the UHAB building cooperatives, buildings that had been abandoned, and what I brought from my National Commission work, how to put together the tools so that people could redo their own buildings.

Riess: And Roger Montgomery was in housing.

Bender: Roger was one of the reasons I came to Berkeley, and Roger was doing that in city planning as well as architecture. And there were people in each of the departments—Clare Cooper was in landscape and Roger was in both planning and architecture. We found quickly that we had a community of people in the professions and in government here in the Bay Area, the HUD people, foundations.

I'm getting ahead of the first year, but in those first years when we had the idea of learning by doing, Roz Lindheim, who was in the social area, most of her research at that point was looking at medically related places. Not high-tech hospitals, but how the rooms where children stayed in hospitals and mothers stayed, and the birthing rooms, how those places could be made more effective and more human. Roz and I, and Warren Widener, who was then mayor of Berkeley—I got the chancellor to introduce me to Richard Buxbaum, a law professor who helped to set up a nonprofit company called Center for Community Change, a nonprofit that would find ways for students to work in the community, and more than that, to work with teenagers in the community and also professionals in the community on doing some of these things.

Riess: How were you getting feedback from your housing clients, that is if you think of people living in housing as clients.

Bender: Well, that was one of the issues, of how you talk to the people who are going to live in your houses, because you don't know who they're going to be.

Riess: And they're not going to be your ideal person probably, most of the time.

Bender: That was one of the reasons for working in local communities. We were in the neighborhoods, they were at our studios. Another of the ways you can do that is by looking at how the house can change, or how the school can change, or even how the community can change. It was a whole series of concerns, with people like Horst Rittel and [Jean-Pierre] Protzen working in an area called "design methods," and some of the PhD students like Joe Ouye—McCue, through his office, hired me and Joe to do a study for them of how their office could do research and communicate it to the office, to clients, the public. MBT was doing things like the Richmond Chevron Building at that time, and they later did buildings for IBM and other buildings for some of the first biotech companies in Silicon Valley. But we were looking at a new research approach for housing.

- Riess: How the office could do research? What do you mean?
- Bender: How they could learn more about laboratories, how they could learn what they were doing in the labs, what they needed to have. One of the things Clare talked about in her teaching was post-occupancy evaluation, going back and looking at your designs five years later and seeing what happened. We talked about that, and I was one of many people who set up the Environmental Design Research Association, EDRA, in those years.
- I did some work with SOM to take on the issue of—by the time you’re doing your next building, half the people who worked on the last one are gone. Later, with my Japanese associates, I found they worked for the same client over and over for years. But here very often the client doesn’t come back to the same architect; they have another competition. If the client does come back, chances are the people they worked with have moved on. So how does an office continue its institutional memory?
- I was really interested in Eichler at the time, Eichler Housing. I never got to know the senior Eichler very well, but I got to know Ned, his son. Eichler, for me, was one of the most advanced builders. He’d found a way to build something that fit the climate and a California way of living. It used simple materials, you could change it, you could adapt it. (It turned out you couldn’t change it as much as was physically possible because the people in those communities were so nervous someone would ruin the look they loved that they soon had design rules where you couldn’t even paint your street door a different color until the neighborhood agreed.) But for me these were really exciting things, and for the students at that time they were a breakthrough.
- Riess: Something you’ve said that is very interesting is that idea that in this country we don’t go on living in any one house, and our children don’t live in the house they grew up in. So there’s a short life expectancy for the “old family house.”
- Bender: Well, the house has a long life expectancy, even quite ordinary construction. It’s the people who change. We looked at the Levittown houses when we began. They were perfect for a GI and his wife expecting a baby, and they hoped to have a car, so it had a carport. It was a minimum house with an attic that you could expand into a room. The carport could become a garage and you could have—and I still go back sometimes to watch how some of those have evolved. That was just what we were doing in Mexico, where you’d start with a concrete box and then they would add this, and they would add that, and they would add that. And they end up beautiful. When you go to the Greek Islands, or to southern Italy, or wherever you go to admire magnificent towns, that’s how they evolved.
- Riess: But here we don’t have that commitment to a long future in the same house.

Bender: But if we look we see—as the family changes they begin adapting the house to a point. At some point with the world we’ve had, whether it’s the original parents or now grandparents, and they want to retire—these little things become worth more than their pension and they sell and go live in Florida or whatever. But I don’t know that that’s going to continue. One of the problems is as we move more and more out to the suburbs, or back to the city, no one’s attached to a town or place. More and more everyone has everything of their own. They don’t share or take part in community, or “the community.”

Riess: When you talked about working out problems in school design, I’m surprised that there weren’t some of these systems or a lot of this thinking going on in Scandinavia or Holland or all of those places we think of as advanced.

Bender: Oh, there were, we were part of a world movement. That’s one reason why my time with the National Commission on Urban Problems was interesting, because my charge was to find out about these things. That’s the study that led to the book, *A Crack in the Rear-View Mirror*.

Riess: And school systems, that was part of a world movement?

Bender: In Europe, Denmark and Holland in particular, there were innovations in construction. But the real innovations were in their social services. That’s why we went to Europe in 1968 and why traveling with the family added a dimension. In Holland and Denmark, and then Switzerland, we visited new communities that integrated schools, medical facilities, senior residential. We talked with people in places where school children help out in senior housing and seniors participated in schools. And that’s part of what I saw as my opportunity here—I felt that excitement about looking at things that way. There were people here who had the same interests, CED was a focus, and there was more space. And by space I don’t mean land. I may have mentioned that in New York, in my last years, I was made a member of Mayor [John] Lindsay’s task force on housing, and he shook my hand and I never saw him again. When I came here and Mayor [Joseph] Alioto heard that someone from the National Commission was working with Ezra Ehrenkrantz, we started meeting with him. And during those first months, before I was even deciding whether I was going to come, I met Alioto four times in his office. He was really interested in issues around housing in New York and in Europe. People were interested here, and it was growing, it was new, it was opening up.

What I’ve come to understand more now is that there are times when that happens, there are cycles. At Berkeley in some ways it had been a separation—what architecture was was dissected and people were looking at different parts. Before I came, the PhD program was in process, there were almost no PhDs in architecture except for history. And when we were in Zurich and I had thought—I asked if I could get a PhD at the ETH [Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule], because the GI bill would have paid for it, they laughed at me and they said, “Did Picasso get a PhD in anything?” [laughter] But the idea of a PhD—and this is a theme that goes

through—once you have a PhD and you're researching in social factors or information or design, what do you research and how?

And what I saw when I came here were people who were trying to understand behavior, they were trying to understand what's the latest in structure, in environmental control systems. At the CED it was research in architecture in the fullest sense, from construction to cities, with growing concern about people and environment, how the parts worked and what the concerns were, what its history was. And I saw an opportunity to do research *through* architecture, to begin to find out about community and housing and new building ways in real projects and places. The PhD poses problems and possibilities. Their focus means new knowledge, but often it's hard to cross that line back from the part to the whole. Again, the modern research university tends to encourage and reward specialization more than synthesize activity that crosses traditional lines.

Riess: You're referring to your bemusement that it was Letters and Science rather than Arts and Science.

Bender: Well, it was bemusement at first and then I realized it's a really powerful thing. When I came here I didn't have any idea of people being judged for merit increases or promotions. Wurster could pick someone because he thought he was a good architect, and he could have him teach structures and a design class. But nowadays you need a PhD even to teach design. More and more teachers have PhDs, and almost all PhDs have specialized in narrower and narrower fields. So you have a PhD teaching assistant in structures who is specializing in concrete shells, and he may be less useful over the course than a graduate student who's an architect who is looking at all the structure's possibilities.

Riess: Yes, I see that.

Bender: For me the biggest problem I had—it was exciting to have students at the PhD level, but I think it's been destroying the school's strength as a school of design, and we haven't found a way to turn it around yet. In physics or in chemistry or whatever you do research in a lab and someone's got a grant and that supports your study; those PhD students have financial support, and I have no argument with how they're doing it. In architecture there was no tradition of grants, and so all the PhD students were being given jobs as teaching assistants, and so in this undergraduate course with a hundred, two hundred people in social factors or structures or history—even if it's history you've got someone who has spent the last five years on some aspect of the domes of Brunelleschi dealing with the whole history of architecture. Or in structures you have someone who's looking at some aspect of prefabrication, or whatever. They know more and more about smaller and smaller increments and grow less and less in touch with synthesis. The PhD students in many cases are not good teaching assistants. They're bright and they're smart and all that, but they really know from a specific point of view.

The other part of it is that the university now wants more and more evidence, about more and more things. In particular they count papers and publications. Part of what we did—I talked in my notes here about how we established, well, first at the school we established *Places* as a journal, so people could publish. But even before, when I found myself—I’m already chairman of architecture and going to ACSA meetings, I found myself the one, or one of the few who were talking about research as important and trying to encourage research in the schools. And so ACSA, Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, started to publish a journal, the *ACSA Journal*. But soon the main purpose of the journal was so people had a place to publish. And now more and more the students and faculty are writing, at the expense of design: they have to publish.

Peter Bosselmann, who took over the Simulation Laboratory at Berkeley and over the years was doing wonderful work, his appointment is spread over the three departments and he is evaluated separately in each of them, whereas the lab was clearly one of the inventions that was very special and its strength is that it encompasses all of the fields, while not seen as being in any one of them. The idea had started with Kevin Lynch at MIT, and Don Appleyard brought it here, and Peter eventually took it over. I have always seen it as a valuable tool. After I got to Japan I brought Peter over as quick as I could and he became the GC-5 visiting chair after me, and now there are labs all over Japan based on it. There’s a lab he developed in Italy. For me, what I saw in the school, and never was sure I was the right person to do it but I had the dream I guess, was that the school had a chance to plant seeds all over the world and to bring citizens into informed dialogue about issues in communities.

- Riess: Are you saying that when you comply with Letters and Science-type requirements, that amazingness and creativity is somehow lost along the way?
- Bender: I’m saying it’s a cycle. As people got interested in it, it opened up the fact that this is part of architecture and this is part of planning, or even in the College of Environmental Design—
- Riess: By “this” you mean what?
- Bender: That looking at how people live in a building or a community—and in Ray Lifchez’s case looking at the issues of handicapped people and how they get around in wheelchairs, or blind people, having the students in a beginning design course go around in wheelchairs or a blindfold—is a much more exciting introduction to creativity than helping students to draw a house or an apartment that looks like something you saw in a magazine that won a prize.
- Riess: Oh absolutely, yes. But the fact that you had to write papers or approach it scientifically, it doesn’t seem necessarily a problem.
- Bender: One of the most interesting writing projects was with John Parman, guest editing the May 1979 issue of the *ACSA’s Journal of Architectural*

Education. The issue was called “Search/Research” and grew out of the frustration that in dealing with campus reviewers, promotion committees, as well as national organizations ranging from the NSF, the Corps of Engineers, and the Center for Building Research, to HUD, HEW and the AIR, there was very little understanding of the rich variety of forms and styles research in architecture can take.

In the introduction I wrote, “This issue grew out of many years of involvement in research in environmental design, more conferences than I can remember, and the growing suspicion that we are missing opportunities by treating research like other categories of research, like spec writing or production.” Our goal for the issue was to make a case for the acceptance and encouragement of a wide variety of styles of research in our field. We started with a quote from Albert Einstein: “I come to the conclusion that the gift of fantasy has meant more to me than my talent for absorbing positive knowledge,” and spanned to Corbusier’s observation that the only way we will be sure to get to the heart of the matter is in “...the poetry which is in the heart of man.”

We were reacting to our experience of expectations of research as hypothesis testing in the classic sense of the term, involving measurement and quantification. We started first with the idea of style, how people do something, pointing out that styles differ, and that different problems require different styles of research. We also started with the idea that developing hypotheses is a separate activity from research, but it is also the creative process that pushes research forward. In the end research is good because hypotheses are good, not because measurement is precise or the laboratory a model of good scientific taste. A particular course of strain was the attempt to quantify attributes that basically are unquantifiable. We were coming from the experience that environmental problems, because they overlap so many disciplines, seem sometimes to demand alternatives to classical research. As Corbusier also said: “The technological viewpoint is not the adversary of the spirit, but...one of its acute forms.” Instead of always looking for new tools for our problems, we might find problems for our tools.

The essays ranged from Francis Ventre, then the head of environmental design research at the Center for Building Technology; John Habraken, chairman of Architecture at MIT; Denise Scott Brown, on her work with Robert Venturi and *Learning from Los Vegas*; to the work of Lars Lerup and Clare Cooper Marcus here at the CED. And it was great fun to use my photo of Einstein and Corbusier at Princeton on the cover, discussing LeModulor.

Part of what I did with Roger, one of the most interesting things of the undergraduate program setup, was an internship program. We started to put students into offices. The way we did it, we interviewed the firms, we didn’t put students just anywhere. The students who worked in those firms would come back once a week, sometimes once every other week, and gather in a seminar and talk about their experiences in the different firms. We talked with them about the experiences; we asked people who

mentored them to come in, visit the classes. They loved it. Howard Friedman was a great help in creating the internship program and ran it for years. It helped many students to find their way into the profession and brought many professionals to teach in formal and informal ways.

Again, it was my—I'm terrible at fundraising, and fundraising was not a big deal, I mean it wasn't so necessary when I started here. But what I tried to do is to engage people in the program. Instead of raising \$10,000 to hire someone to be a visiting professor, we found that we had lots of local people who'd love to teach, and sometimes they got paid, sometimes they didn't get paid, but more and more trying to bring them in in one form or another.

Riess: I should think you would have really run afoul of the university. I mean if they got paid. If they didn't get paid I guess—well.

Bender: Well, it's easy to hire lecturers. The other strange part of the university system—there's two parts. When Esherick became chairman in architecture and I was dean, he came to me the end of the first year and he said, "This is crazy. All my life I've run an office so at the end of the year I have a surplus, and now I'm working for the state and I have to run it so I've spent everything by June 30th," because of the budgeting thing.

At the time when Esherick was the chairman of architecture and I was dean and Roger was associate dean, the department got back all of my salary to hire teachers, and half of Joe's salary and half of Roger's salary, and I think Vernon was not quite retired. With my salary the department could hire six or eight people to teach design studios.

Riess: Why was the department getting that money back?

Bender: Well, because I was not teaching. I got paid to be dean. That came from a different fund and my teaching salary came back to the department. And there were salaries that come from sabbaticals. If Joe was on half-time, as he was most of his career, half his salary came back to the department. And as the faculties were building up over this time, the whole university was building, so we had lots of resources. Raising money in the ordinary way wasn't that crucial. Also, you didn't need a special endowed chair to invite good people to come because coming to Berkeley was the reward. Eventually, how expensive it was to come to Berkeley started to be a problem. We could hire people from Boston to come with no problem because it was a lateral move, but if you try to get someone from a smaller place where houses are much less expensive it is more difficult to attract established people.

One piece that is important to mention in terms of that first housing class, or that first structure and production class, and you asked about people from all over the world—Ezra had had a Fulbright in England and a lot of his ideas came back from that, and we had a flow of English people coming to visit, teaching part-time, just coming to be here, to see, and some would work in his office. I had admired the work of a Dutch

architect named John Habraken and I invited him to come here for a month and we had a wonderful class all designed around his ideas and talking about how things were done in Holland. It was the basis of our work and research into frameworks. And I remember trying to make the cost of his travel less expensive. I think Don Lyndon was chair at MIT then and I called and I said, “Can you take him for a week?” And he did it as a favor. Eventually Habraken joined the MIT faculty and for a while was chairman.

[End Tape 16: Side B]

[Begin Tape 17: Side A]

Riess: When earlier you were talking about Joe Esherick, you said he had an interesting background?

Bender: I didn't really know Joe or much about him until I came to Berkeley. Esherick was a name I had heard, but the Esherick I knew was Wharton Esherick who was his uncle. My interest in self-help led me to looking at people who built their own houses. Wharton Esherick was quite well known, but he was known as a craftsman. Around then there was [Bernard] Rudofsky's book called *Architecture without Architects*, and I was particularly interested in examples like that. Wharton Esherick, who built a house like a piece of furniture, was interesting to me. And that was the time of the hippie craftsmen here who were doing that. I eventually I wrote some articles about that, things that people in the East didn't know very much. The other—I had met Charles Moore at that original teachers' seminar when I was first thinking of teaching, and I followed Moore because he's a really interesting man, and I knew Joe was one of his mentors. I didn't really know about Sea Ranch until I got here. People in the East didn't know about Sea Ranch. It was just being finished around that time. It was all new, only the first buildings were there. Forty years ago, more than forty years ago, I remember when we first went up there there was basically that original complex.

Riess: I would have thought it would have been published a lot.

Bender: Well, it was being published, but it had not had much attention then; it gets more attention, more and more and more. And again, it was published as architecture, it wasn't published as—you could say environmental design, in a sense Larry Halprin's contribution, the whole idea of taking that land and rethinking the way you set houses in the land along the sea.

There's a piece in there that I discovered in Wurster Hall that blew me away when I found it. In Wurster Hall on the south end in that wing there's an enormous room—it's two stories high—which was set up for experiments, and no one knew what experiments. But when I came the last remnants of Moore's research were in there. When they were doing Sea Ranch Moore started studying traditional houses in California and he

started studying the sea coast and winds. He actually made models and built a little wind tunnel and he experimented with it, roofs, eaves, sun and shading. I'm not sure who worked with him, but there were little pieces of it that were still there in the end. And I got so excited to see that, and that he did it, because here's someone who even at that point was one of the people who was looked at as the future of design. And the fact that he did that kind of research was reassuring. He published—somewhere in the library we have some of those research reports that I thought were simple, direct, useful, and beautiful.

Also there was a man named Gert Shirle—he was German, and he had studied with Frei Otto, who was the great experimenter in lightweight tension structures who eventually built the Munich Olympic stadiums. Shirle used that room to build and to test these structures. At one point we got a grant from a company called Birdair and built and studied air structures.

Later, when no one was using this room, and the 1970s energy crisis came, Arthur [H.] Rosenfeld, who was a physics professor, came to me and wanted to talk about using the space. He was interested in energy and LBL had no place to do experiments. Art Rosenfeld had a big reputation in high energy physics, but he was ahead of his time in seeing opportunity for LBL in the issues of energy and buildings. LBL had places, but it was all labs filled with grant projects and things, and it was mostly atomic and nuclear stuff. He wasn't sure exactly what they would be doing, but I fought for it, clear that research in energy issues had a great future, and a link to LBL would boost our ability and credibility. I had an argument from Esherick, who was chairman of architecture at that point and hesitated to give up space, but later he joined in enthusiastically to collaborate with Rosenfeld and the LBL that they could use that space and they would take part in some of our classes and we would join some of their research. For me it was wonderful. Eventually we brought Ed Arens, who I had met when I was on the advisory board of the National Building Research Center at the Bureau of Standards, who worked with wind tunnels. We built a wind tunnel, and later we built an artificial sky for sun simulation. We began to use them together with the environmental simulation lab. By the time I left the dean's office we had a nationally respected building science laboratory.

Riess: That was the first overt energy studies? How did it influence the school?

Bender: Well, it was a really big leap. We went from—I think we had no regular person on the faculty when I came who was even teaching traditional air-conditioning, heating, ventilating. We would bring in a visitor here or there. I remember Gary [R.] Brown was teaching the introductory undergraduate class, and it ended up being a really good class because he was not a mechanical systems person but he began to talk about issues of buildings and environment. And when the first PhD students who wanted to study that area came we had to patch together a group of people they could work with. And so when I saw this, for me it was a wonderful opening.

Rosenfeld was a—we used to argue all the time because he saw everything as so rational, and it was so logical to do this that of course it's going to happen. The world of building and construction is not rational; there are too many emotional and institutional forces. And I would be in the terrible position of saying it's not going to happen, because you just don't change building departments or institutional habits. But in the end we had a really good collaboration. People got more and more involved in it. They went up to the LBL to work, people from the LBL came down, people came from across the country to work there and it was a whole new energy in that way.

So coming back to arguments with the profession, as the school moved more into looking at things like energy and the social factors, the profession started to say you are not training architects—and we would have these arguments.

Riess: “The profession?”

Bender: The AIA, for example. They would come as a delegation. That was different from accreditation. They would complain that the students are coming to them and they're not good employees. They're talking about things that they're not doing, and they're not doing things.

Riess: The students are entering the architectural offices?

Bender: They're looking for jobs and they're getting jobs, and then they're finding that they don't know this, they don't know that.

Riess: Aha. This is a crisis!

Bender: Well, it's a continuing crisis. And at any rate my reaction was generally more overt than I usually am, but I said, “Look, we're not training employees for you, we're training your replacements.”

Riess: Your expression last time was, “We're training leaders, not employees.”

Bender: Well, maybe I said leaders then, but I also said replacements. Because I meant they're the ones who are going to be leading the profession in the next round. I was already in trouble because I questioned the licensing exam when I first came here as being—the whole licensing process was more to entrench the profession as it was than to protect the public. And particularly the idea that they had to do three years of apprenticeship for an architect, where they were forced to take lower salaries and sort of apprentice to be what architecture was in the past. To be getting ready for the future of the profession they were told they had to learn how to be draftsmen. With our new direction we could tell them that their new employees would teach *them* about energy, environment, issues—and soon laws—of handicapped and special needs. In time students also brought the first use of computers in design.

We've talked about the medical profession and the changes it made after the Flexner Report—there are important things to be learned while doing.

Riess: So, did they budge?

Bender: Well, they didn't move quickly, they still hold back. We each play our role.

Having Joe Esherick as a partner in all of this—I can't say too much about the positive role Joe had in opening the CED up to these new ideas. Joe loved Horst Rittel, and he loved all of these new things that challenged him and the school. Joe was one of the reasons I'm here, I'm sure, because if it was just McCue it wouldn't have been enough.

Joe was interested in what I was doing and we used to fight, we disagreed on things. But when I talked to him about the fact that I thought that the students weren't getting a real drawing class—they had been getting a traditional drawing class where you learn how to do shades and shadows but that had faded away—Joe suggested he and I do a drawing class together. And the drawing class he suggested was to get each student a notebook and have them make a drawing every day and in two weeks we'll look at them, and at four weeks we'll look at them—just draw every day, keep drawing, draw everything, and we'll look at them and talk about them some time. We never sat them down and taught drawing, we just said draw, look and draw, and watch how you learn it. Joe loved that sort of experiment.

We were trying to make a store for students—it was both part of my plan for the campus being more dispersed rather than everything centralized in Sproul Placa, but also part that it would be nice to have a store that students could operate and have access to at night and on weekends during charettes, and profit from. First we set it up in one of the rooms downstairs.

Riess: A store to sell paper and pencils and stuff?

Bender: And stuff like that, mostly things that would support their work. And then we decided—Joe wanted to build one with the students. He took a group of students and they worked in the shop here. They build a series of metal posts that were set in under the staircase in the ground floor lobby, and they detailed glass panels, and they made this lovely little shop. It functioned for years, until—like the lounge at Ramona, it was not kept up and then disappeared during the renovations. But Joe loved to do things like that, and that was part of what I was interested in. The store and the auditorium and the conversion of Ramona's, these are I realize more and more, some of the most significant things for me in the time I was there. They embodied all of the things from campus planning down to having students work, and also looking into ways to introduce finance into everyday issues of sustainability.

Riess: The drawing class, did it work? Or did they goof off?

Bender: They learned to draw when they lost their fear of it. They drew more and more as their sketchbooks showed they were getting better. It was one of the advantages of Joe being involved. People didn't goof off with Joe, who had a presence that—people loved him, people could be frightened of him, but a student wouldn't take a class if he wasn't ready to do what Joe talked about. Mostly they were excited to be with someone like him. He's a romantic, he'd be talking about sailing one minute and something in the land the next minute, but you realized you were with a real architect who was much more than building buildings everyday. As I say, we disagreed on a lot of things, and for me it was particularly hard because he was like my father, he was my father's age almost. I found myself in a situation with Joe—it was both harder and easier because he was really so special.

As chairman, and then later as dean, I'd find some of the older faculty coming in to ask my advice to, or I'd have to assign them something they'd have to do. I realized that all of my life I had profited from and enjoyed mentors, and suddenly people were wanting something—I was used to students, but people my age or older were wanting something from me. I hoped—I wanted more from them and they were relying on me. And certainly first I was the new “clerk,” they expected me to sign the papers before they could go on leave or get a merit increase or something of that sort. I had to do class assignments. I had to talk to some of the senior faculty about why no one was signing up for their classes.

Riess: The new clerk?

Bender: I was young and new and they didn't take me seriously, they thought I would be there to sign the papers and keep the place running for them, a kind of clerk. It was a bit of a shock to them when they realized I had ideas and priorities and strong backing from Bowker, Heyman, and most of the older and established professors in city and regional planning.

Riess: But didn't what I think of as your extraordinary background, your East Coast origins, give you a powerful authority.

Bender: I think I have a way of sort of floating along and not paying much attention, not focusing on—I'm not that introspective. Sometimes I realize I'm like Mr. Magoo, the near-sighted cartoon character—Sue has a better word for it that I'm forgetting. But there are things that I don't see or choose not to see. I think there was some—there was unhappiness about me when I became chair and even more so when I became dean. And it ranged from the fact that I wasn't senior enough, known enough, not in the tradition of the school. Certainly there was something about being from New York, Jewish. People who had been Wurster's protégés felt there should be a continuation of what they felt was the school's culture.

When I think back—why I was asked to be a dean in some ways was *because* of that. Heyman and Bowker and Wheaton, who looked more and more at architecture as having trouble coming from an older world into a newer world, saw me as being interested in going in a new direction. Just as I never thought of teaching here in the first place, I never thought about

being chairman, and it was a little bit of a shock after not very long, maybe two years, when McCue agreed to go to Harvard as chairman of the architecture department there—I felt a little lost.

Riess: You mean lost here at Berkeley?

Bender: He was a friend, he was colleague, we shared a lot of interests. But he launched me and helped to introduce me, so I really felt—.

Riess: You really felt what?

Bender: I was here. I was really excited about being [here]. Dick Peters took over as chairman after Gerry left, and Dick Peters was very devoted to the school and conscientious, and he was a Wurster protégé. But he couldn't do the job in the sense you have to make a lot of decisions. Dick has a generous spirit but you have to say yes and no to people, and he was really feeling overloaded. The chairman of architecture here is an enormous job. Under McCue it ran beautifully because McCue is a really good manager, and he's also intelligent in many ways. One of the things he did, and I never exactly understood how he did it, but some of it came out of his professional office—he paid to have Roz Koo, the woman who was the office manager for his office, MBT [McCue, Boone, Tomsick] be the administrative assistant in architecture. Roz Koo was a wonderful manager, a wonderful woman, and the place ran really well.

Riess: And there hadn't been such a role before?

Bender: No, everything was getting bigger and more complex. It didn't, couldn't, operate as a sort of club anymore. But Roz was a real manager. She left with McCue, and Peters came in and he had to put together something and that was really difficult. No one's ever really done well.

Riess: “No one's ever really done well?”

Bender: Well, in the early days [Claude] Stoller was there for a while, Vernon [DeMars] was there for a while, Charles Moore was there for a while. They all came in for a year or two at a time when department chair in architecture was a simpler role. Now it's an enormous job. It's such a big department, and there are so many people who have to be evaluated, cheered for, coached, promoted, not just in the sense of their being promoted but you had to promote them so they get promoted. You had to make arguments, schedule, problem-solve, and even in the olden days when there was more staff it was always understaffed. That's why I'm saying McCue was smart enough and able enough to bring Roz with him, who could do that. Eventually Dick Peters got Norma Taylor to come in who was very good, but after two years he got sick. A lot of people got sick. McCue even got sick for a while and was out for months. He had some—what do you call that where you turn yellow.

Riess: Jaundice.

Bender: Jaundice. Peters got some disease. Howard [A.] Friedman died in the office; he had a heart attack after a faculty meeting after only a couple years. I was the only one who survived it, but I was only there for two years or so, less than two years. On the other hand I had Norma Taylor then—I came in and she was terrific and eventually she moved to be my administrative assistant when I was dean. And then when Joe became chairman she got to know Joe.

I know you know the famous story. Joe came to me one day and he said, “I can’t come to the meeting on Friday.” And I said, “Well, we’ll work around you. What are you doing?” He said, “We’re getting married.” And he and Norma went off to be married in City Hall or somewhere. They actually came back over the weekend, there was an architecture class review. They came back, and I remember Joe had on a light summer suit, and it was their honeymoon. So here I am with Joe, who is theoretically working for me—I’m the dean and he’s the chairman—and he is a kind of father figure, and his wife is my assistant. It was very odd. [laughing]

Riess: I think that could be difficult.

Bender: Well, it was difficult, but not bad.

I helped encourage Wheaton to bring Allan Jacobs here. This was before I was dean, when I was chairman in architecture and associate dean. Allan came into planning. And Appleyard had come just about the time I came I guess, but I found myself at one point, as dean, at meetings where I had Joe Esherick, Allan Jacobs, and Don Appleyard as the department chair, and they were all more major figures than I was—and I basically thrive on that.

Riess: You’re saying, “I basically thrive on it.” You’re saying this is good for you?

Bender: Yes, I thrive on chances to interact with people who are smarter and stronger than I am. It’s like tennis, or squash, you want to play with better players, it raises your game. I find if I look at who a lot of my close friends have been over the years—do you know about the Enneagram?

Riess: Yes.

Bender: The Enneagram can help explain. It’s the ancient Sufi wisdom. Everyone is one of nine types, and this means more than a personality type, it’s a way of being. Most people feel Number 8’s are hard to get along with.

Riess: You’re a Number 8?

Bender: No, I’m a Number 9 I discovered, but Number 8’s are very explosive characters. Roger Montgomery was the ultimate Number 8. Allan Jacobs is a Number 8. They can be calm and caring one day and screaming another. My friend John Eberhardt who I worked with in Washington for so many years is a Number 8. Roger was typical—he would walk in the

office one day and he was my best friend, and we shared so much back into the past, and the next day he'd walk in and he was a completely different person. He would be angry, he would be pounding the desk. It surprises me but somehow I get along with people like that.

Riess: Okay, so what is a Number 9?

Bender: Well, a Number 9 is reflexive, a counterpuncher.

Riess: Counterpuncher?

Bender: Well, in boxing it would be called a counterpuncher, he plays off the other one's moves, uses some of the energy they bring. Maybe judo is more the analogy. I need something to stimulate me and then I take it and I go after it; if I hear an idea it triggers something and I go after it.

Roger was a real educator. He and I were always talking about the undergraduate program, and it had been gradually been given better shape, but Roger would come in with so many ideas and so many complaints that I said, "Roger, you ought to take it over. I'll do everything I can to help." And he did a wonderful job. He could be upsetting. I'd hear him yelling at a student, saying, "Only a damn fool would come to Berkeley if you're not aggressive." He was talking to this kid about how at Berkeley you really have to go out and look for and fight for classes. He could make me uncomfortable. But he had both sides. Roger really cared and he gave a lot to students and he gave a lot to make the undergraduate program a real Berkeley education. At any rate I got a lot from Roger, and it always seemed the difficult times and the difficult parts were worth it, as with other friends who can be explosive and make me uncomfortable in some ways. But where having a friendship or a relationship means something, I can get something out of it.

Riess: I think it sounds terribly hard. Who needs *that* sort of hard? But I hear what you're saying. You are not someone who would go home and brood over it

Bender: No. In a way Alexander and Rittel and Protzen, and people like Churchman and others outside the CED, for me were the best part of the place. Joe's strength, as Moore's before him, was enjoying the interplay more than trying to decide the right and wrong. That was my attraction to the CED and what I enjoyed in the dean's office.

During the time I was dean Chris Alexander was constantly suing. He sued the department of architecture, he sued individuals, and *he* was being sued by somebody.

Riess: [reading from a review of *Design on the Edge*] "No book about architecture at Cal is complete without some space dedicated to the most controversial character in Wurster Hall, Christopher Alexander, the primary author of *A Pattern Language*. He inspired committed devotees and adversaries, and there are three essays that serve as a testament to his

significance. Every graduate of the school that I have ever met holds a strong opinion about Alexander. He was an academic who didn't give an inch." Anyway, what was all this suing about?

Bender: Well, as I said, Alexander was one of the attractions of the place to me. I'd pictured working with him. I'd met him once or twice. The work that he did with Chermayeff, who was one of my mentors, was very interesting. There were things in the first book—he wrote *A City is Not a Tree*. He's a very smart man and also incredibly difficult, so that what he was really doing is—there were areas of study, but his area was really Chris Alexander. And he wanted to be able to select himself which faculty members would be appointed to work with him. And he wanted to make the rules; he wanted them to work *for* him basically. He expected that if the faculty is making a search and he said he wanted a person, they would say sure.

[End Tape 17: Side A]

[Begin Tape 17: Side B]

Bender: He had people who became his devotees. Peter Bosselmann came from UCLA to work with him and Peter detached himself and eventually made his own career. Other people—Shlomo Angel, who was a really brilliant guy, worked with Chris for a long time and wrote some of the first books with him and was able to move away. But in many cases Chris wanted people to be his assistants. There were people who had trouble getting promoted in the university because all their work was for Chris, and in meaning to support them he would write a letter of recommendation that made it sound like this person was the best secretary or assistant he'd ever had. He didn't know how to write a letter that gave them the kind of credit they needed and deserved. He and we were sued at one point, if I remember it correctly, because his name would appear in the catalog as going to teach a course and he would decide at the last minute that he would not. There was a time someone came from far away because he was supposed to be there, and he wasn't. This was a matter of "truth in advertising"—there were lots of suits.

Riess: And essentially the responsibility would be the department's, not his?

Bender: Yes, well someone gave him the leave along the way or made the agreement. But Chris always asked for more and very often didn't ask for an answer. And occasionally when he was reversed he would get really mad. He used to call me at midnight and one o'clock in the morning to tell me what he told me at eleven o'clock. At one point he sued the department, and me. Once in talking to him I called it the Rodney Dangerfield suit, and fortunately he never really understood, he said, "Who's Rodney Dangerfield?" You know, he's the comedian who uses the line, "I don't get no respect." He didn't get it. One day—I'm in the office and I hear Sheila Dickie and someone else in the office, and they were laughing and I said, "What's the joke?" And she said, "You're not going to believe it." And they showed me a legal complaint that had just

come which said that I screamed at him with such force that his back went out. We all laughed—I don't scream. And I went home and I told the story to Sue and she said, "He heard you."

One of my disappointments was that I never did work with Chris. When I first came here, he had moved his center off campus. I used to go to the talks there and the lectures. I was really interested in what he was doing and I—it's always been a sadness to me that I couldn't find a way to work with him. He is one personality I couldn't handle. I was not alone—and people really made an effort to work with him, but part of his ways seemed to be to have that kind of negative result. When I think about my arguments with Roger it was completely different, we were arguing, disagreeing but listening. This was like a wall. Some of the people who worked with Chris moved on and had good careers, a lot of them did. But some were really angry, and we had suits from students who said that he wouldn't sign off on their thesis until they finished work on an outside project that they were doing for him.

Riess: Well, it sounds very distracting. I take it this is as dean you're talking about? As chairman were you able to do what you thought of as your work?

Bender: When I decided to be chairman I understood that part of my commitment to Berkeley would be to take that on. I could see that the job would help me to do things that I was interested in. I could start to make things come together and get people together. I could start to be a conductor, rather than one of the musicians. I had learned a little bit, but I learned much more while I was chairman about how it could be useful for me to get to know the people on another level.

Riess: Useful?

Bender: Well, like I could become friends, I could know what they were doing better.

Riess: But useful, it sounds like forwarding some agenda?

Bender: Well, it could also help me make my experience richer and the school work better when I understood who and what they were. Very often what they were doing I didn't know about. And I had all sorts of—Spiro Kostof was someone who on one level could be off-putting, possibly another Number 8. He was so eloquent, and he had a magisterial style of having a dinner, or having a dinner with you, or describing dinners. But one day he came in to the office and he said, "Dick, I need a Dago-dazzler." And I said, "What's a Dago-dazzler?" He said, "Well, I'm going off for the summer and when I travel in Italy I like to have a certificate, a letter from the school with some seals and signatures on it. And I really got enthusiastic about that, remembering when I was in the army that was one of the things I used to do was make these diplomas. So Spiro and I we got together, and I brought my architect and engineering seals and stamps and we incised the seals into the paper and got sealing wax and ribbons and

we made this hilarious thing, right out of a Saul Steinberg image. I always enjoyed that picture of him taking this around to the gatekeeper of some out-of-the-way church in Umbria. Anyway, it started a nice friendship with him.

But it also reminds me that I felt that there was a sort of a club within a club of old-timers, and I was an outsider. I know there was some sense that after—Wurster was the model of an old patrician, and not a New York Jew from CCNY. I don't know, it was never overt, but I would feel, hear things from other people. On the other hand, over the years Spiro and I had interesting things we did together. I got him involved with some of my projects. At one point I was on SOM's advisory committee and I brought Spiro in as one of the jurors for their student scholarships.

Riess: What would he have contributed? Spiro was incredibly bright and a sharp critic.

Bender: They had meetings sometimes and talked about where they were going. I did this for EDAW at one point and I'd been involved with Gensler in different ways over the years, where someone from outside can respond to what they're doing and what they're thinking and bring something new. Spiro brought all kinds of things. For me one of the most interesting things during my time in the school, his time, was to watch his evolution. Spiro was trained as an art historian, and moved into architecture, and evolved to be a really interesting architectural, environmental thinker. He wrote a book on Esherick and his practice. And his last books were moving more and more into town planning. I mean there is the sadness of his death on all different levels, but one is that we didn't find where he was going. The great teacher of history in architectural schools was Vince Scully. Spiro came out of that world and Spiro was building a richer context, much more what Berkeley was about.

One of the interesting things I came to realize is that when I came it was really toward the end of years of buildup in the department, college, and campus, and I came at one of the highest ranks—the fact that I came as a full professor, I didn't understand at the time how big an honor it was. Most of the faculty had come as assistant professors. In the years I was chairman and then dean, Berkeley was consistently rated at the top of US schools. The core of the faculty, most of the stars, had come to Berkeley very young. The school supported and nurtured them. They interacted with each other. I was—I *am* proud to have played a role.

Riess: The fact that you came as a full professor was McCue's doing?

Bender: McCue must have had a lot to do with that. Actually many years later, after he retired, Vernon DeMars told me he had been a member of the secret campus-wide ad-hoc committee that had evaluated and recommended my appointment. Even better, he told me he was proud of it!

Riess: McCue was on the inside of the club within a club?

Bender: No, McCue was very much his own person. He'd been there a long time but he was not part of the Sea Ranch people. Esherick was a mentor for me, as well as an admirer of Wurster, but not—I never quite knew, it was mostly feelings. They had a continuing friendship that's of a different sort, McCue was reshaping the department, they had a feeling of roots beyond Berkeley.

Riess: Well, this is becoming less clear to me who the inner circle is.

Bender: Well no, they weren't necessarily the inner circle, they were an old circle. Don Lyndon, Charles Moore, the people from the Sea Ranch, Turnbull, Dick Peters, they had a particular, ongoing friendship with people who worked on the Sea Ranch, were at Princeton.

Riess: And these would be what you're calling the Wurster tribe?

Bender: They were very much the Wurster tribe—tribe's not the right word, but family maybe, it felt almost like family. It was about Wurster. As long as "Bill" was there, that is, as long as Wurster was dean, they saw themselves as part of the CED, but when Meyerson took over as dean and then Wheaton followed, both of them nationally famous housing experts coming from a city planning background, the Wurster protégés went back to seeing themselves as part of architecture. I am afraid I annoyed Dick Peters by constantly pointing out, reminding people, the building is the William and Catherine Bauer Wurster Hall, and pointing out that Catherine was someone very special in the world of environmental design before and separate from Wurster. My route came that way and Catherine was one of my heroes. They adored Catherine, but I think they adored Catherine as Wurster's wife. Rarely can I remember them talking about Catherine's work. But I am getting into things that are more vague, more impressions than things we ever talked about.

As Sue will say, there are things I don't see. We can be with a couple and I don't know that someone is Jewish or homosexual, or if two people have a relationship, or whatever. I think I told you that I had noticed something that's really interesting in a shifting world, that when I came here, when the architecture faculty published a list of names and addresses every year maybe three quarters listed a traditional spouse. If you look today, they stopped putting a spouse in, and that's not about homosexual, it's just the whole world changed about relationships. At one point there was a rule that if someone was on the faculty you couldn't hire a spouse to be in the same department, and that's gone away. Now we have a new dean at the CED, Jennifer Wolch, whose husband came with her to be, in a sense, the senior person in city planning.

So it's a different world. I left when I did, made a point of going away and then stepping back, and I look back with concern. It's not critical of the school or CED per se, but it's maybe critical of the way the world is changing universities. Universities keep trying to be what they were before the world changed so much. I sat on a committee that oversaw the Hitchcock Lectures, a campus lecture series; I sat on that committee for

three years and we picked different scientists to come each year, but I had read that years before the Hitchcock committee invited Lewis Mumford, and it was one of the most booming positive things that ever happened to that institution. Wheeler Hall spilled over. And Mumford came out on the steps to talk to a huge and enthusiastic crowd. I felt like a hunter on that committee. I sat until I knew each member of the committee and I knew all the rules and then I nominated Ada Louise Huxtable. And they said, “She’s not a scientist,” but I pointed back, and there was one or two people on the committee who knew, who remembered the Mumford lecture, and so we invited Ada Louise Huxtable. At that point I’d known her through the Getty, but I knew her at the Wiener’s when she was just beginning to write. I invited her because I was trying to get people who were role models. Her talks—she gave two talks.

Riess: Role models—do you mean for the department?

Bender: For women, but also for the broad view of what environmental design can be, for how it is part of a public life. But yes, for women, because women were—little by little there were more women coming for the faculty, but there weren’t that many women who came and saw it as a place for them, and having Ada Louise there served all those aims. And another time when I could do it myself I invited Gae Aulenti, before she was known to the college and the community. She was the unseen woman among the men who made postwar Italian design. Being out here, that’s how she got this job [architect for the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco] eventually.

Riess: Really?

Bender: Because she was here. It was wonderful. We hired a fancy translator because she needed that, but he was getting lost in the architectural terms. Finally he gave up, it looked like a disaster, and Dorothee Imbert, Marc Treib’s girlfriend at the time and a recent graduate—she was a professor at Harvard, now at Washington University in St. Louis—she was not Italian but she spoke Italian, and she got up and translated and it was beautiful, and you could feel a bond building between her and Gae as they went on. When the lecture was over this crowd of women came down to her. She has kind of a full—she looks like a mother figure, she was already a grandmother then, but she talks like Mussolini, tough, and they—something happened that really, I thought, was an important moment. There were women who found a reaffirmation.

We went to lunch the next day in Sausalito with some of the women who were on the committee for the lecture and—Sue and I dreamed of renting a house in a hill town in Italy to work on Sue’s book, and Gae had shown these pictures of a beautiful hill town, and she said, “That’s where my summer house is. You could come and stay there,” which we did eventually. We found out that between Gae Aulenti and the director of La Scala they had bought an entire little town in the hills between Gubbio and Perugia and taken what had been twelve houses, renovated, replaced, combined half of them along one side of the ridge into a composition of rooms and courtyards stepping up and down following the terrain, and the

same on the other side. I had pictured this hill town where I was going to have coffee with all the men in the square while Sue was writing, and we ended being up being the only ones in this isolated place for nearly a month, finishing the book and working on the illustrations.

But in other ways I was able—we invited Robert Venturi's wife and partner Denise Scott Brown, and that was a problem, everyone said why aren't we inviting Venturi? I wanted Denise Scott Brown because she has her own voice. She was a force in the office and had just done a great article for the research issue of the *ACSA Journal* that I talked about, and nobody knew that. What I found, first as chairman and then as dean, was that I had the chance to play out some of my agendas, some more easily than others.

In that direction, one of the things, while I was chairman—Bill Wheaton had asked me to fill in for him because he was getting sick; he had been taking short leaves for illness and it turned out that he had leukemia. He also appointed me associate dean for research, but he didn't know what he wanted out of that—or perhaps he knew what he wanted but we didn't know how to do it. I filled in for him for much of that year. It was interesting and not so hard, much of the work was about dealing with architecture and I could approve my own suggestions. Then, I'm sure at Wheaton's suggestion—at that point we didn't have such complicated searches—Bowker, and Mike Heyman, who was half time in city planning and also vice chancellor at that point, asked me to be dean. My first feeling was I don't want to take on that, I'm getting too far from my professional work. Then, "Well, maybe for a few years." It was a chance to take the CED closer to my idea of what it could be.

In the process I called Sert, who I think may still have been dean at Harvard, but he was *my* dean, and someone who I'd known a long time. He said two things which were marvelous. He said, "First of all, if you do it you can't stay for three years or four years, it'll take more than five years to begin to do something, and if you don't want to do something there's no point in taking it on." The other thing he said was, "Dick, for me to become dean would be an honor—for you it's going to be a job." I was crushed for a moment, but then he said, "I'm not putting you down as a person. For a European being dean is a reward, for an American it's a job, and you'll take it as a job." He was right, and for me it was both. Certainly it was an honor, and I appreciated how much came from, and with, the honor part, but it was a job.

Riess: For Sert it was more the honor.

Bender: Yes, he worked at it, but he could take it on in a more imperial way. When César Pelli became dean at Yale he didn't stay for more than a couple of years—and Charles Moore became dean at Yale I think at one point. They took the honor but they really didn't want to take on the job. Bob Stern is someone I've always felt uncomfortable about, but he has taken on the job as well as the honor and is doing a great job for Yale.

Riess: Well, and maybe they didn't have your agenda. I mean I would assume at that point they had their own firms and they were doing a lot of work, but you had an agenda that had to do with education and real world-changing stuff.

Bender: Yes, I wouldn't put it so grandly, but I understood when I took on the teaching I was taking on something that I going to take on, and so a private practice became much less of a focus. Later when I returned to practice it became quite different, it took different forms, it became advisor, it became convincer and consultant—and even more a teacher.

One of the first things I took on was designing ED-1, and Roger helped me put it together. It was a way for me to look at the college and then to introduce the CED to the campus. I taught it and then Roger taught it. Later I had another mind-changing experience after one of the regents meetings where I had presented some of the ideas of the Campus Planning Study Group. Bill Coblenz, a regent, came up to me and he said, "Well professor, do you realize you changed the world more in that hour than you're going to do in all your time in teaching?" He was saying it in a good-natured way, but I understood what he said. The regents are very influential people. We teach on so many levels.

The next year I talked to the deans in engineering, in business, in law, and I started a seminar with about three students each from five schools, top graduate students, about fifteen students and we talked for a semester about issues in design and planning and how they were going to be the clients of the future, and these are useful things to know. I did it several times and enjoyed shifting the mix—students from public health, public policy. It was wonderful, and I did it on and off during the time I was dean.

Riess: Chancellor Bowker and Mike Heyman, it sounds like they promoted you?

Bender: I didn't know Bowker very well, but I found out later that we had known each other indirectly because in New York he lived right under the famous painter, Mark Rothko. His apartment was underneath Rothko's, and Rothko had been our neighbor in East Hampton and I had given him advice on his studio at different points. Bowker lived in New York before he came here, as Heyman did. I don't think those were the connections, I think Heyman promoted it. Heyman and Wheaton were close and I think he wanted to support the direction that Wheaton saw in me.

But when I came to talk to them I decided I wanted something first. Because I wasn't having a practice I wanted to be able to have a practice in the school, and they agreed to fund what became the Campus Planning Study Group. I also said that I wanted the college to have its own research group. There had been two research groups set up way back. One was the IURD, Institute of Urban and Regional Development, and the other was the Center for Building Technology I think it was called. The idea was that one would deal with the built environment, and the other one more with planning and governmental issues.

Over the years it had become the IURD, the physical part disappeared, Mel Webber was running it. They were not doing building research. I wanted to have that piece reestablished and I pointed to the big room and the fact that I had an agenda for reinventing what research was about, research *through* design, not *for* design, and research as part of practice, not research *for* practice. And they agreed to support this. Getting that piece of IURD amputated and transplanted turned out to be difficult, but finally George Maslach, who was a provost at that time and had been previously dean of Engineering, helped me do it. He was a really tough guy, but I learned that I could get things from him by saying, "You're so good at this, George, show me how you would do it." He had come from Engineering, he was another acting-out Number 8 and we became good friends. I pointed out that because he came from Engineering he would appreciate how I admired T.Y. Lin, who was one of the few left in engineering who did their research through practice. T. Y. Lin operated more like an architecture professor than most of the CE [College of Engineering] faculty did at that time.

[End Tape 17: Side B]

Interview 10: February 2, 2011

[Tape 18: Side A]

Riess: With all you were doing, did you find time to put your thoughts into writing?

Bender: I never think of myself as a writer and I never wrote big lumps. *A Crack in the Rear-view Mirror* became a book mostly because Forrest Wilson took the trouble to tape-record things or to put my papers together for me. I wrote because I was trying to explain to a lot of people what we were doing and why we were doing it. For people on the campus, the whole idea of campus planning was misunderstood, and most of the changes that had been going on before I came and continued in the College of Environmental Design were not really understood. And so I was constantly writing things to explain, as well as talking about things. A big part of my role during these periods was being an advocate, to open up people's ideas to new views. From the late '70s I wrote more and more articles, papers, and with John Parman—since his days as a student John has had the art of drawing me out in conversations that became writing.

Riess: Why were the campus planning ideas so challenging?

Bender: Almost everyone on the campus, and a good part of the faculty, were trained in a world before there was a College of Environmental Design. So even though they joined the College of Environmental Design, and many of them had been there for years—they were city planners or landscape architects or architects—and in the work that they had been doing, there had been fewer and fewer opportunities that brought people together across disciplines, and so there was a tendency to go back to your own field and not to see the richness of what was happening, or the possibility that was happening in the cross-boundary workings of the school and outside the school.

Riess: I would think that historically there would have been a much bigger vision of planning, big city planning.

Bender: Well, but a lot of it was big architecture. There was an increasing change from a top-down world to a world with participation on a much broader level—the industrial revolution distributed power and people in a different way, made changes in the world that made people see the world for the first time. Even when some of the first architecture schools began in the late nineteenth century a good number of people around the world never got much past the town where they lived, or the village they lived in. Trains were an amazing change, and stations became the great symbols of urbanity and the new world. But people's visions opened up.

In the building fields, whether it's cities or buildings, the complexity got richer. Architecture was mostly structure, from the pyramids to the Greek temples. It was form, decorated, it was controlling the environment and

the way the buildings were put up, the materials they were put up with were visible to everyone.

Riess: When you look at something like the Maybeck or the John Galen Howard plan for the campus it's really all about architecture in a setting?

Bender: Well, the John Galen Howard plan is a good example that way. Basically it's a Beaux Arts plan that comes from the way kings and popes did things of that sort. It leveled the land: where you couldn't build on one flat plane it built a series of steps, but it treated the land as if it was flat. It brought buildings in that had no relationship to the local materials or climate or anything else of that sort. Maybeck, whose work and planning for the campus was organic, was pushed aside. The concept of making the campus plan and having a grand campus largely came from Maybeck, but when it came to doing it, although he helped put the competition together it began to reflect the dreams and ambitions of the regents, and they went to the Beaux Arts.

I may have mentioned that the two senators, Hearst and Stanford, when they traveled back and forth to the East they had to change trains in Chicago because at that time the trains didn't run through. And that was the time of the Chicago World's Fair, when they built this temporary White City, which was a Roman city. It was a reflection of the nation's imperial ambition. Louis Sullivan refers to the setting sun they mistook for dawn. And California too was thinking of its greatness and thinking of building the Athens of the West, and did it all in classical terms.

Maybeck, respecting the natural influence on the campus, crept in at the edges. When we came to work on the plan and began to understand the history of it, one of the things we realized is that the Beaux Arts pieces were set down between the two branches of the creeks where they wouldn't be bothered by nature. And Maybeck was given the nature, what was left over, where he started on the Men's Faculty Club, and where the log cabin for the senior students was built, and eventually the Women's Faculty Club. On the other side of the campus, the architecture school and what became Naval Architecture, they were part of the other branch of the creek, which eventually got buried. This group of buildings reflected the natural forms and forces that define and embrace the classical core.

Part of what came out of our studies was to be able to tell people, simply, what the campus was about. Everyone came and they thought they knew the campus, they knew how to get from here to there.

Riess: When you became dean you saw this as a teachable moment?

Bender: Yes, and I was interested in teaching the faculty, all of the campus faculty. They would not only enjoy a richer understanding, they would be the clients for future buildings. My way of teaching has always been to give people a view of what's possible and give them the opportunity to use it. And I did that on the faculty level. I spent a lot of time doing it on the campus level. I have mentioned the council on deans. Both Bowker and

Heyman, and Tien after him, used to have the Council of Deans that met quite regularly, and they never talked about planning. If someone wanted a building they said they needed the building and,” We think we’re going to put it on—there’s a lot of grass behind such and such a building,” or “there’s a parking lot here.” And everyone would say, “Sure, go ahead, as long as you don’t interfere with my building.”

And so there was a lot of work, first having a clear conception, and sharing it with formal and informal teaching. Eventually, in Bowker’s last years, and then Heyman continued it, I would give a lecture to the deans once a year at those meetings on the campus and the campus plan. And we changed it—we started to talk about the goals of the campus in terms of its physical development, how it would integrate with the land and the city, but also what the targets of opportunity might be, what we wanted every project to be able to contribute to, like recapturing the landscape from parking lots.

Riess: So everything was to correct?

Bender: Well, to define a new vision, or not really a new vision so much as to show there is a vision. In ED-1 we taught students about it, and how to see and communicate the ideas, and one of the questions we asked on the final exam was, “If you’re showing your grandfather around the campus and you’re explaining what the idea of the plan was, what would you say?” Or your kid brother, or something like that. And so a big part of what we were doing was trying to make people understand that—not as restrictions but as possibilities, and saying you have a possibility to accomplish things you never thought of. You are building on a long history and adding to something that will continue to grow and change.

Riess: You had philosophers or engineers maybe on the Council of Deans—do you think most people are pretty blind to their environment?

Bender: I don’t think people are blind, but they see different things depending on where they are and what they’re doing. It depends on how much “ownership” you feel. You’ll find people who will pick up a newspaper or something that’s spilled on the floor in front of their house, but they won’t do it on the campus. Not just the campus, office buildings, public buildings—some will and some won’t. People see paths. If you ask about a place, they know how they get from here to here, and they very often don’t know what’s off the path. Somehow they never think about what is in the building they pass. When I used to ask the deans—in places they’d be talking about an addition to a building—I asked them, “How many of you have ever been in that building or walked near there?” Half of them had never been there before. Yet they felt they were able to vote on what should happen there.

It was interesting when we lived in Switzerland, and during the time I lived in Europe, people much more were brought up on—there were traditions that people were brought up on. In Zurich, when we lived there, if you were going to build something as simple as a house, but even a big

building, you had to put up poles to show the volume of it. And it had to be up there for a year so people could walk by and see it and comment. Here, we didn't notice those things: if a building was going up here, a building was going up there, as long as it wasn't affecting you, you didn't notice. That's changed in recent years. Now everyone comes out against anything new.

Riess: You started having these meetings—once you were doing that you become in a way more like a sort of administrative division of the university rather than academic.

Bender: It was crossing the line, I realize that. I also realized that it was important to do it. The line, the wall between faculty and staff was hurting both. Faculty was not given a chance to contribute expertise, and staff was not recognized for theirs.

But the way the planning started was interesting. To some extent it started way back, knowing some of the history of the campus, particularly relatively recent history—the Depression stopped building for about ten years, then the war came and again there was no building for almost twenty years. Temporary buildings went up, things changed, and people forgot the world that was there before, the ideas, the principles of planning and traditions. And by the time the campus did start to build it was a different world. Cars were already much more a factor, the population was getting more national, and then came Sputnik, and suddenly the campus was building for science and technology at a furious rate. And in the process they hadn't had the chance to go back and rethink how this was all going to happen at this rate. What was pictured, all of the traditions were based on the slower rate of development that had been happening almost a hundred years before that.

And so it was going on that way, and like so many things that are happening on and off campus today, one day they casually started to knock down, or were preparing to take down the Naval Architecture Building, that early twentieth century wooden building, and there was an uprising. People were saying, "Enough with these new buildings. They are ugly, they don't fit the campus. Here is something beautiful that's small and wooden and it has some history." A preservation movement had been building. There were protests, a quick move to put the building on the National Register as now always happens when people wake up, and Bowker called me in and he said, "Well, you've been talking about doing something on the campus—what are we going to do about this?" I had just been putting the Campus Planning Study Group together, and we took one very quick look and made a few proposals and suggested—well, first of all what we found was fascinating.

This was right after the Free Speech Movement. The building that was going to replace the Naval Architecture Building was the Bechtel Center, given by the Bechtel family for engineering, and it was going to have a library and lounges and things of that sort, and they wanted it to be on the edge of the campus, on the street. The reason they wanted it on the edge of

the campus is they didn't want regents and visitors to have to come on to the campus in the sixties, they wanted the donors and special guests to be able to drive to the door and go right in. So that was our first interesting discovery in looking at how campus history is made.

At any rate, we looked at the area and we made a proposal that by leaving the Naval Architecture building we start to develop that area where there's the old John Galen Howard architecture building, the Ark, that was being converted to journalism, and that entry, and on the other side of it the chancellor's house. This could be part of the history of the campus and we could preserve the building and the landscape as an entryway. And there was a square between the really ugly—I'm blocking on it now, the name of the mathematics building?

Riess: Oh, Evans Hall.

Bender: Evans Hall, and some of the new engineering buildings. The Skidmore building for civil engineering Davis Hall, which is—somebody should do a study sometime of how some of the best architects in the country did their worst building on the Berkeley campus. That Skidmore building's not nice. Evans Hall was done by Gardner Dailey, who like Wurster was one of the great house architects of that period, and it is bad.

Riess: Somebody probably won't do that study. Is there a quick answer to that?

Bender: At the time I came I discovered that there were more lawsuits against architects and builders, mostly architects, between the regents and the University of California than all of the rest the lawsuits involving architects going on. The building program was very big in the late sixties and early seventies because suddenly we were building three new campuses, lots of new science building, and housing and everything. But also the way it was all managed was very bad. It was still people from the thirties who were managing seventies construction.

Riess: Was it the selection process for these architects?

Bender: It wasn't only the architects but it was the contractors who they had to deal with, and the growing, patched-together statewide university office, and the question of what was the campus role versus the state role. And it was about inexperienced supervision, a really deadly situation.

Riess: You would think doing a campus building in a way would be like doing a chapel—an exquisite opportunity.

Bender: Well, but what I discovered then is that it had changed in a sense, because science and technology were taking over. They were looking at the buildings more like technical buildings, like production buildings. It was a big shift for the equipment to cost more than the structure—the clients, faculty, valued the equipment more. And the logic was turned upside down. The structure, which will stay for generations, was skimmed on in order to buy equipment, which will be obsolete in a few years. It also

began to change for other reasons. The buildings became less transparent from the ground. People walking by had no sense of who or what was in them. Some of them, they were beginning to be restricted—you couldn't go in because something was going on; either it was dangerous or something secret was going on. The porousness and the transparency, the openness of the campus was giving way. People had lost track of the landscape as something valuable.

One of the dilemmas I had when I first moved into the dean's office in Wurster Hall is it's set up so when you look out the window you should have a view of the Bay and the Golden Gate Bridge—Wurster helped to plan that with Esherick and DeMars and Olsen—but what you see now is Barrows Hall, blocking the view, and somehow Wurster let it happen. No one on campus was looking at such things. What I discovered also is the basic scheme that Wurster and—Wurster as advisor to the campus worked with the long-time head of facilities, Louis DeMonte. They were both near the end of their careers, but they basically made all of the decisions. They had very little input from faculty, staff, or students about campuswide issues.

This was the era of urban development in cities, and urban renewal. The planners of that era basically began to oversee a transition of the campus, from the composition that had evolved from Maybeck to John Galen Howard into something more like a post-war urban downtown. They were right to say there should be more tall buildings. But they didn't pay much attention to the last plan that was done in the thirties that said yes, there should be more tall buildings, but they should be around the perimeter, to define the edges, the seam with the city, and to preserve open spaces.

One of the plans called for almost, not a wall, but a series of tall—Tolman Hall was an example of one of those buildings that's seven or so stories high, with an archway where you walk under it and come into the lawns and landscape around where the chancellor's house is. It's part of what we now call the Life Science Precinct, up from Oxford along Hearst and below Euclid. The idea was that the campus would eventually put its density there and keep the vision of a university in a park. On the other hand what they were doing was filling in the blanks more like a checkerboard, more like an urban renewal plan.

Riess: What about area formed by Evans and the edge of campus?

Bender: There was a lawn that was not used very much, but it was a place where students could spill out—there was a height difference because of Hearst Avenue, so you didn't spill out onto the street—it was an open space between a group of buildings that were the core of the Science and Engineering Precinct. We made a proposal that the Bechtel Library could go on that site and be underground basically. The roof would be developed—there would be a café on the roof, a central gathering place for the precinct, with gardens and sitting areas. And there were to be student libraries, auditoria, and meeting rooms underground. It came to be one of the aspects of what was coming out of the campus plan we were

proposing, this vision of the campus as a *series* of neighborhoods, each with its own theme and clustered around a core of local and campus-wide facilities. In our plan each neighborhood would have a center and they would start to have themes. That theme was science and engineering, and it would have this community center, café and garden. And it happened.

Riess: The Campus Planning Study Group—who were the people?

Bender: I got out of order, but that's okay.

I think I mentioned before that one of my conditions—I didn't have many conditions—for taking the job as dean was that I could set up some way that we could have a practice going on in the college, a place where students could be working with faculty and professionals on real projects. This would be limited to campus and campus planning to begin with, and then it could get to be bigger and more diverse and we could make it work financially. One idea might be to have a study group work on some of these campus issues that no one else could work on. Systemwide administration was taking away local resources from the individual campuses; there was no more campus architect position, they were pulling it all back into systemwide to control it more. I thought that I would hire students and ask faculty to help and we would—well, it wasn't that clear what we would do. When the Bechtel thing came along it was a way to jump into it, and so we called it the Campus Planning Study Group.

There was a seminar room on the ninth floor of Wurster where from the elevator lobby just outside you could look out over the whole campus. There was also a room on the tenth floor, a beautiful conference room with a deck up there that you can also see out. But it was not allowed for general use, it was off limits to classes in general, and for a long time it was off limits because it wasn't safe seismically. But the ninth floor studio was in the midst of where students coming in and out of design studio would see what was happening, and the tenth floor was perfect for client meetings, reviews, and presentations. Because there was such an issue around the preservation of the Naval Architecture Building it seemed to me it was a time to start to put some roots into it.

Riess: Put some roots into it?

Bender: Into our study. Instead of immediately saying how should we arrange the campus we decided to go back and look at the history of the campus. I put together the first working group and it included Sally Woodbridge, who at that point was coming back for a PhD, or at any rate was taking some classes. Dan Gregory was a student—he did a PhD in history and preservation and he later became an editor of *Sunset* magazine. Jack [T.] Sidener was an architect who'd worked with Esherick and DeMars a little bit on Wurster Hall and also on Sproul Plaza. Jack had come back for a PhD in landscape architecture. He was a brilliant guy who eventually threatened almost everybody he worked with and he kept moving on from one good office to another. He worked for Larry Halprin for a while and made important contributions; he worked for Esherick for a while, and

DeMars; he had some really good ideas and graphic skills. So there was a good core and it got the Campus Planning Study Group off to a strong start.

So we decided to do a history. We did a history of Berkeley's campus planning, showed all the different plans and how they evolved, and we decided that we didn't want to fight the battle of preservation ad hoc, that is, each time something happened another thing would be proposed for preservation on the National Register of Historic Places. I had the idea to look at all the buildings on the campus and put a group of them, the ones that we really cared for, on the National Register and cite them for preservation. And then we would identify another group of buildings, saying these buildings are really bad. Not that they're ugly necessarily, although some of them were ugly too, but that they encroached on what was meant to be one of the great open spaces, or that they blocked views. Evans was on the top of that list and Barrows was on the top of the list. They're both still there. We haven't gotten to taking down buildings. But in the middle were buildings which we said—these are buildings which we are going to keep. And if we say we're going to take one of these buildings down, it's not that we're knocking everything down—this is a building which you said can go. And it was really interesting. By then we had decided to do a similar study of the campus landscape, open and special places, art and objects, and add those recommendations. We also recommended putting some “districts” on the Register, the Beaux Arts core, the Faculty Club and Faculty Glade, as examples. It was interesting as a concept, and it was well done. Sally and Dan worked on it, Jack contributed to the ideas and made some of the drawings, I did a lot of the political work.

Riess: I'd like to hear about the political work because it seems to me that as soon as anybody, regents, deans, anybody got wind of this they'd say, “Let's get a handle on Bender. Who does he think he is?”

Bender: Well, Bowker loved it. He'd really been burned by and caught by the Naval Architecture thing. And—well, it's a nice story. One of the things I said I wanted as part of this is that he and I would walk the campus together once a month if we could, or preferably we'd have lunch together at the Faculty Club. This way he would get to see the campus better and we would talk about it together, and people on the faculty would see that I talked to him all the time, so they would take me more seriously. And he loved the idea. On one walk he said, “Tell me, Dick, am I wrong, but are the trees worth more than all the buildings on this campus?” He was a really urban guy, but he loved that part of the campus. So he was interested in doing it.

The regents got very upset when we proposed to make these buildings landmarks. At first they actually refused to go along with it. Later they refused to agree to list that lovely little building down Bancroft, the wooden building that was originally a little church with a circular window. The architect's name was [A.C.] Schweinfurth. It turned out that they had just put a lot of money into renovating it and they were afraid

there would be a problem because it wasn't there originally, it was moved there.

[End Tape 18: Side A]

[Begin Tape 18: Side B]

Bender: The regents were concerned because in their business and professional roles they'd had experience with having buildings restricted in terms of how they could be changed or developed. And on the other side the preservationists really—UC had such a bad reputation that some of them didn't even want to talk to me. A lot of Sally's help was introductions and I started to meet with the local Berkeley preservation group, then with the state preservation group.

Riess: Why wouldn't they want to talk with you?

Bender: Because they assumed that we were just trying to co-opt them. They'd had had so many bad experiences of being told we really want to preserve something. They were serious people who really care. I don't remember all of the names but one who was particularly influential and helpful too, once it started to move in a good direction, was Susan Cerny, whose husband [Joe] was a provost or whatever he was at that point—she had a real interest. And once she felt this was real she got behind it. Chris Adams, who was very active in this systemwide planning organization, also was interested in preservation. So I started meeting with the local preservation people and we began making presentations. We brought people from state and national preservation agencies. I was invited to talk about preservation at the National Building Museum, and in Sacramento.

I was getting excited about it because I understood that the training I'd had included nothing about preservation. I had been involved in protests, but I did not know much about history and the opportunities in preservation. At UC and other schools I knew we had almost no history of really looking at the land and looking at the place and looking at existing buildings and their history. Since then I've become more and more involved in it, more aware. I know that there's no—you used to be told the site is an empty lot, but it's never an empty lot, there's always something there, there was always something there, there is history. In a recent project I'm doing in Japan [Murayama], where they said it's an empty lot, four hundred acres, formerly a Nissan factory, we went back and we found it was a village in the 1930s. We found a river in a pipe. You could trace the history, and the land was rich. Places speak, they have voices that speak to you if you listen.

The Campus Planning Study Group had people from all of the departments in the CED, but we reached out to more people. We reached out to people on the campus. Professor Loren Partridge was a historian who wrote a book about John Galen Howard and the Berkeley Campus. David Littlejohn was in Journalism at that point, and he was very interested in preservation and the campus. We realized we were building a

strong support group. We had at some point as many as fifteen people working part-time, and they changed all the time and they would bring friends in. I remember Jack Sidener brought in a young Japanese student who he said was really talented. His name was Naomichi Kurata, and Naomichi is now a leading urban designer and the dean of the architecture school at Kogakuin University. He has an office and he works in collaboration with us.

Riess: Were these people being paid? Was there money for doing this?

Bender: There was some money for paying people. One of the things that I had was a budget from the Chancellor's Office. I raised more money, I got some of the—not so much money but some of the architecture offices would contribute people, or people would come in and volunteer time. We got some gifts from outside. We got more money once the preservation people realized what we were doing. And they publicized us when eventually we put twenty-five buildings on the campus on the National Register of Historic Places. The Register also included a couple of rooms—the room where plutonium was discovered is on there. We included the landscape, which was an innovation. In other words, we didn't just have the Faculty Club, but we had the Faculty Club and the Faculty Glade.

Riess: Did you measure a perimeter?

Bender: We did a survey of all the buildings, but we also did a survey of the landscape. We looked at both individual trees that had meaning, but also at plantings that had history and meanings, and spaces that had meanings. And we identified them all as a part of the history, and we tried to put together how you could build to reinforce these, bring them back, respect them when you build, and actually use them sometimes as an inspiration for a new building, or to give some theme to a building. We didn't use dimensions or plot lines, we intentionally proposed fuzzy edges, and we made evocative rather than technical drawings.

Riess: Is this the kind of preservation where nothing can be changed? You couldn't gut the interior and leave the exterior?

Bender: Not usually. In many cases like the [Hearst Memorial] Mining Building the interior—well there were loads of problems with the Mining Building because it had big seismic problems. But it was restored eventually, inside and out, [as well as] seismically. It gets more complicated when you have a conflict, with handicapped access law and your preservation law and the fire law all conflicting. But the intention is strong and the powers to preserve are strong.

You asked about the political aspect. Political for me was bringing everyone in as informed participants, collaborators rather than stuck in a position. One of the satisfactions I get now when I look back today, the campus does this automatically. Or perhaps it is because some of our original participants are now playing at a senior level. For example, one of

the people who were active in the study group during the later years, Emily Marthinsen, eventually went to work for the campus facilities office and planning. She's now a vice chancellor in charge of planning. And she's more able and interested in this area than I am. Jack Sidener has been planning campuses in Hawaii and Hong Kong. There's been a whole host—we had different kinds of opportunities and problems. One of the other things that I am proud of is that we really did a lot to make Wurster Hall and the whole process accessible to handicapped people. As a result Mary Jane Hiserman, a woman in a wheelchair, got through the architecture program and graduated. We used to have the graduation in Wurster Courtyard, and there were steps up to the platform, and I had a ramp built so she could come up the ramp directly rather than come up in the elevator in the back. The other side of the story is she went to work for the campus facilities office enforcing the handicapped rules, and one of the first things she started to do is to object to some of the plans we were making because some of the paths were too steep.

For me it was almost a revelation because I'd never thought of myself as being—I was interested in looking at old buildings, but I hadn't been interested in preservation. In a sense I was more interested in understanding continuity and seeing everything you do with a past and a future rather than as a snapshot. There's a magazine called *Preservation* and I wrote an article for them called "I Am a Preservationist," or something like that. I wake up one day and find I'm a preservationist all of a sudden; I hadn't thought about it and then I realize how important it is.

Riess: It has to be much more than nostalgia.

Bender: Well, and I began to understand how the campus worked, how campuses work and can work. I had worked on the CERN campus in Geneva. That was really a little building complex at the time, but the core has held as it grew. In building a campus, and in the continuing life of a campus, you have the most wonderful laboratory for what the College of Environmental Design is about. You have this really complex set of functions—living, nursery school, access issues, high tech, art, eating, recreation—it's a little city.

By the time I found myself here I realized this was really an opportunity to develop research into cities and buildings and how they come together. And as we began to look at it, it had all the issues of a neighborhood. We eventually came to see that if it was treated as one 30,000-student, 50,000-people lump, in a sense it would lose the sense of community—lose a sense of taking part, participation. You might have a meeting where people participated, but it wouldn't be a neighborhood.

We saw that the campus basically was a series of neighborhoods and it could be conceived and evolved in that way. As we looked back we realized that in some ways it had been thought of that way, at times, and at other times nobody thought of it. We began to work with a conception of the campus as a community that had a series of precincts. Each one of them had a theme but each one was quite different. The buildings, the

landscape—some of the things that went on in them were different, but it was also a way in each of them to make cross connections between the disciplines within the school as well as with the buildings in the neighborhood. Wurster Hall stands between art on one side, the music building and the art school. The old Julia Morgan women’s gym was about dance, and the other side was the professions, law. And so we put the café [Ramona] there; we evolved what had been an exhibition space into the café. Now you went through and on one side you had business—medicine had been there originally but now business was there, law was there. And those were all disciplines that came together in some way in environmental design.

Riess: Did you engage all the deans in this thinking?

Bender: Yes, we talked about it more and more, and we also talked about the fact that, even then, there were limited resources, and everybody wanted to build a lecture hall. And when we looked at it we could focus on one or two in the area: the law school would have one, and we would build a different one in Wurster, which could be used by others. And we had the café. We looked at things that other buildings could give, share. And through the whole campus we started to look that way.

Riess: You were the Campus Planning Study Group, but in fact there was a campus planning office, wasn’t there? What were they doing vis-à-vis you?

Bender: The campus planning office was not so active. In those days they had withdrawn most of that to the statewide, and so the campus planning office basically had the job to put the program together if somebody wanted a building.

Bill Liscomb, who was a Harvard-educated architect—he’d been on the Berkeley faculty, and he had an office with Rai [Y.] Okamoto at one point, and Okamoto and Liscomb did important urban programs in New York and San Francisco—Bill was brought in during the time that we were there to be the campus architect. But it was a different sort of position. There used to be a campus architect, but that was usually a professional, or a professional office that was hired. The last one at Berkeley was Donn Emmons, of Wurster, Bernardi & Emmons. And then that system was dropped and there was the Facilities Planning Office, which dealt more with the numbers, the statistics, how you put a program together to get it built, and supervising the construction. But they were not involved in long-range planning. Eventually what we defined is that what we were doing was working with them, making “a plan for a plan.” We were making the basis for a plan and a way to start to look at strategies and how things would go on. After I retired the campus went back to the older pattern. They have built up staff and they hire and manage a group of planners and architects.

Riess: Your precincts concept, did that grow out of the group?

Bender:

The precincts were something that engaged me early. I'm not sure where the name came from but it's not a new idea. At one time someone suggested we call them wards, because cities have wards. I never liked wards, it felt tainted by old politics. We were thinking—trying to look at how a city would have different neighborhoods, and there'd be a downtown, and it would relate to the areas around it and all. With that in mind, we were eventually given the charge—we asked for the charge to first begin to look at what were appropriate places for buildings and what they might be like in terms of mass and quality to fit in, to make spaces into places, and at the same time to start to look at proposals that normally would have come up to the chancellor's office from one of the departments or colleges and be processed without talking to anybody with a campus view.

What we were trying to do is convert it into a process where everyone would have some input, but also where everyone would understand that there were other people, other players, and traditions, rules, opportunities, and constraints. Mike Heyman introduced the idea to me of "targets of opportunity." That if you had a whole bunch of targets of opportunity, when you were doing any project or anything you wanted to do, you said, "Gee, if we would add this to it or do this we could make that happen, strengthen the idea. This would give us a chance to expand this glade, this would give us a chance to have a plaza between buildings, this would be a way we could enhance a view," and things of that sort. And so we started to lay those out. The first CPSG publication was the Campus Historic Survey. The second was an urban design study for the Berkeley Campus, "A Plan for a Plan." We made a whole series of booklets and sketches for the development office to use to go out and try to raise money.

One of my pleasures during that period is then-chancellor Mike Heyman and I used to go out on the road. He would invite me to come when he was talking to different alumni groups, fiftieth reunions, twenty-fifth reunions, city and county reunions—we went all over the state. I would give my little lecture about the campus, reminding them how beautiful it was, and talking about both preservation and future plans, and then after that Mike would ask for money. Mike once said, "You know, we're like an organ grinder with a monkey." He said, "You're the organ grinder and I'm the monkey going around with the tin cup." The other professor who was with us on a lot of those trips was Marian [C.] Diamond. She would give her talk on the brain. We made quite a funny team. I traveled with my slide projector, and she had her brain in a hat box.

It was wonderful from the planning point of view because we met these people and we realized how much the campus had meant to them. The memories of it were much more of the campus than—most students didn't have offices or departmental buildings they related to, they went to one class, they went to another, they lived in a dorm or an apartment, but the campus itself, the places had memories for them. We were able to build support for a lot of the things that we were doing because people were responding to that. So when we were beginning to restore the Central Glade or the Campanile walk—we still haven't done anywhere near what

might be because most of the money has to come from the adjacent buildings. But the campus has begun to be able to raise money for landscape improvements now, and that is in the context of the campus, as well as a new or renovated building.

Over the years we made a whole series of these studies. We made precinct studies looking at what was there, what might be, and if you were going to add, how you might add it. And then we made building studies, specific building studies. They very often got warped or enhanced, depending on how you looked at it. For instance, the area between Wurster Hall, when you look toward the Bay, with the art department on one side and the music department, and a green field where the Maybeck building [Hearst] was supposed to expand with a beautiful dome with dancing under it, we have beautiful drawings in the archive of that. One of the first projects we did was an addition to the music building. At that point it was going to be basically underground because it was going to be practice studios. But we showed it with a pergola that went across to connect music and art and frame the field beyond, and there's land that steps down and you could have outdoor concerts there. Eventually it became a music library that sits in there. It is not nearly as transparent through the ground floor as I would have liked, but you can see how an idea evolved.

Riess: Who would have done the drawings? Before you found an architect you would have drawn what you thought for this pergola.

Bender: Yes, well all the students were drawing. During that period we had many classes that took design projects we had framed, and students took some of these projects on as their thesis projects, and we had—it was an ideal office. It was like an office in the sense that we had grown-ups, the students were on the edge of professional practice themselves, and faculty. In the early years Claude Stoller worked a lot with the students. Don Lyndon later spent a lot of time. We had people from outside. John Woodbridge, who had been one of the major partners of SOM, and led the planning of Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, when he retired he came back and he worked with us for a while. Robin Chang worked on several projects. Marvin Buchanan, who worked for Moore and Lyndon, and eventually he and Lyndon were together in a practice, Marvin made a big contribution; he worked on a number of the projects with students.

Riess: But in the case of what's now the music library, did you get an outside firm? How did that work?

Bender: What we did was present the idea. In that case Bonnie Wade, one of the professors in music, she saw the possibilities early. She was a tiger for years to raise money for the music building [Jean Gray Hargrove Music Library]. She jumped on the opportunity this presented immediately. She heard of it through Jack Sidener, and he started work on it. She gave us way more square footages and specifics than we needed. So the first set of urban design studies we did featured that part of the arts precinct with a proposal of how the addition could add to, rather than take up, the space. She used the proposal to raise money to get it up on the list of projects that

the campus would support. It took years, but eventually she got it built. It was not what we had designed at all, it was designed by Mack Scogin Merrill Elam, an Atlanta firm, but it accomplished the ideas that we had that you could add to it keeping the old building; you could start to frame the precinct. Music could frame the transition from the new urban campus to the informal creekside buildings and landscape. We did that for many of the buildings on the campus, it worked.

At that point Rod Park had become vice chancellor. He came from biology and he also had a real interest in the arts. He was also a supporter of the museum. During the time that Mike was chancellor and Rod was vice chancellor they were a terrific team; the museum and the landscape got a lot of support from the campus. But then Rod was given the job to help bring biology together. At that time on the campus there was no biology department, there were all these different biology and life science groups spread all around, and there were conflicts about space and how you work with people, and everybody wanted their own animal facility, and they were getting in trouble with the laws about that because they were keeping animals in places where they shouldn't be. At any rate Rod Park led major revision of the biological sciences on the campus.

Riess: Called biosciences?

Bender: Well, they called it life sciences—there was a building called the Life Sciences Building, which was from 1930. I remember that the LSB was the largest science building on a university campus when it was built. Alumni at a 50th reunion told me they called it the “life-size” building. It was designed by George Kelham and renovated by Michael Goodman, who was the oldest member of the architecture faculty the year I arrived.

But then there was that whole set of buildings in the northeast quadrant of the campus which is continuing to develop with new buildings as the Life Science Precinct. It's at Oxford and Hearst, back in there. At one point Bill Valentine and HOK had the job to do a new building in there. The CPSG made a study that proposed that rather than putting it in one building it could be a complex. There were things for the postdocs—a lot of laboratories that needed a much more controlled environment, and there were things that were more for undergraduates, and open, and we proposed putting in two buildings. One would be like a student building that would have a precinct restaurant and lecture halls and some galleries, and the other more closed one next to it. We made only the roughest sketches, then HOK made a building, which—they tried to pick up some of the campus look, it has some red tile roofs on it. It's not a great building, it's a good building. It fits in there and it works well.

Riess: There is the notable flight of stairs.

Bender: Those stairs that come up from Oxford Street. Yes, because underneath there is the animal facility, which the campus wanted to hide, and parking. One of the CPSG studies, led by Don Lyndon and me, was called “Town and Gown, Where the City meets the Campus.” It proposed, among many

ideas which were used, one that was not—a bridge over Oxford Street to a building with campus housing. There was a chance to look at that whole seam between town and gown, and the CPSG took it on, suggesting possibilities for both the city and the university and the connections to BART and the infant “arts district,” pointing out that the site that now has that ugly apartment house and the site of the complex under construction could have connected with the Life Science Precinct on a pedestrian bridge.

We made some of the first proposals for the addition to the Harmon Gym, which was also very complicated. In order to make it work it had to have gym functions, some of which are not state functions, and have parking in it which is also different from campus funding, so it’s like a sandwich. But again, we would lay out an idea for the principals, and then it would be given competitively to an architectural firm. In this case it was ELS. The “L” is Donn Logan who was a CED architecture professor. The one other thing in that area that I did that was important to me and to Bowker and then Mike Heyman is to make sure that some of these ideas could get carried through. We organized a campus design review board, and the process by which things came to the board, and what the board would do. I set up and chaired the design review board for years. It continues to this point.

Riess: So where did the design review board enter the story? Once you’ve got the architect, then the architect’s plan goes to the campus design review board?

Bender: We tried to do more than that. We tried to have the design review board study the precinct plans that we were doing and make comments. And that also gave them an opportunity to look at the building in a campus context and they can suggest move this, change that, before it became an architectural commission. We wanted a group that would look at a building more from the point of view of what does it do to the campus than to interfere with the faculty program and selected architect’s design. They were not charged, although they could sometimes make suggestions about how a building worked inside, or ideas about the design; they talked about design of the building, but much more from the point of view of how it fit in the campus.

Riess: So this was another group that you had to educate?

Bender: Yes. We introduced them to the plans. We also co-opted them in that they all got involved at some point or another in coming in to join the Campus Planning Study Group. Sometimes we didn’t have room enough for the meetings—we could go into professional offices, either faculty offices or people on the design review board. And as board members rotated in and out we were introducing more and more of the professions and the campus to the thrust of the campus plan.

[End Tape 18: Side B]

[Begin Tape 19: Side A]

Bender: The last piece of that was I realized I was once again teaching, in a new and interesting way. I may have mentioned this great revelation: the regents were my next target! The regents meetings, when they talked about buildings, they were usually talking about pieces. They were often out of context and they always seemed out of time. They were running over the budget, it was late, someone wanted money for a building that didn't have it.

My revelation—I tried it on Mike Heyman and he loved the idea—I gave this presentation of the campus and what the CPSG was doing at a regents meeting. An hour was set aside. I showed it from the roots and the land, how it came up and how many beautiful places there are here. But I also talked about education, and I talked about how the buildings and the land are more than the buildings and land, they're part of education. I quoted from John Galen Howard and said something about how the tracks we lay down will influence the lives of people who study here. I talked about how the four years that someone spends on this campus is going to shape the picture of how they'll see the world, and how they *can* see the world. I talked about how these people, our students, are going to be leaders in their communities, whether they are heads of companies or on the local school board, or whatever. The campus is an education, and I talked about how the land and the landscape do more than their functions, they establish patterns of movement, they invite collegial experience and create opportunities for exchange.

I spoke to them about when I went back to MIT, when they wanted me to move there, and I walked in that big corridor which felt like going on the subway shuttle when you went from the BMT to the IRT under Times Square. And I said Berkeley had the opportunity to offer richer attractions, and the other campuses also had them. I spoke about how Berkeley was originally laid out with the library in the middle and the idea that no one would be more than a five-minute walk from the library. Location meant a lot to faculty, because how close to the Faculty Club and who you met on the way is all a part of education. I also talked about how the quality of the campus environment reflected the true ambitions of the university. If you have an architecture school and an art school and you build shoddy buildings, what does it say about your intention?

Riess: You had a lovely opportunity to do the *vision* thing, and you do it well.

Bender: I loved it! Well, it's what I'd begun to do. In a way it changed my career, because a lot of the work that I've done since then involves helping people see a vision that they didn't see when they came into it, and helping them to see it and talk about it in a way that helps them argue for it or explain it.

Riess: There's an advantage of scale when you think about the university.

Bender: Yes, and among the things that we've done in the college that are really interesting—one of the things I was able to set up also is on the fourth floor of Wurster Hall, which is the first floor that's all drafting rooms. We broke off a piece to have an office for the people who worked on urban design—despite their base in different departments, to have their offices next to each other, and to have a studio for urban design next to it. And so Allan Jacobs was writing *Great Streets*, his books about great streets, working in the midst of students and colleagues. Peter Bosselmann covered a wall with diagrams of major metropolitan landscapes around the world.

Riess: You've mentioned Wheaton bringing Allan Jacobs. I'd like to know more about how he fit in.

Bender: Jake's arrival at the CED made an enormous to the college and to me. He arrived after a very successful time as director of San Francisco's Department of City Planning and brought his enormous energy and personality to all three departments. For DCRP he brought "the city"—the physical city as well as both the day to day issues of streets and neighborhoods and the ideas and dreams of "the big picture." He brought the idea of urban design as an academic field as well as an emerging field of practice that has exploded, often with CED graduates all over the world. Jake re-cast the teaching and research methods that grew out of a love of cities and urban life. His Walking Classes took groups of students, and eventually also faculty and visitors from all over the world, walking through, seeing, smelling, "reading" what was there, pacing off the width of sidewalks, talking to the people on the street, in the shops and restaurants and bars. He told, and then published, wonderful stories of the city. He drew people in, shared, and brought a love and vitality that has made city, civic, urban life and design a life as well as a profession. Every new academic year started with a long walk through San Francisco and ended in a robust meal in a favorite restaurant. It became a wonderful tradition.

Over the years this energy and spirit moved out across the world. With our Italian friend Paolo Ceccarelli we began to invite Berkeley students to join Paolo's Venice and then Ferrara students in summer workshops abroad. From the first, where faculty and students from all three CED departments worked in a space on top of Palladio's Palazzo, we lived, worked and explored cities together. Eventually Professor Shigeru Satoh joined us with students from Waseda University and the workshops moved and continue in different cities and towns in Europe and Asia. Today there is a network of over 500 people keeping in touch from more and more responsible positions all over the world. Peter Bosselmann continues the tradition at Berkeley; Takashi Ariga, one of our former students, leads the Waseda group; and we have new partners in China, Germany and Brazil.

Jake and I have a freindship that was nurtered over morning coffee at the Caffee Strada and warmed in cafes and terraces in Assis and Venice, in Aix and the Luberon, Tokyo, Yokohama, and Valencia Street in the Mission. We began to play tennis doubles on the courts above the parking

structure near Wurster Hall. Jack Kent and Sue originally made up the foursome and when Sue dropped out we continued with other planners and urban designers. And when Jack could no longer make the early morning game Jake and I kept at it in singles long after we should have. One of my fondest memories is of a cold winter morning. Jake was facing me, with his back to the hills, and the first sun lit up the steam rising from the soaking wet sweatband wrapped around his bald head.

In my most enjoyable years in the Dean's office Jake was Chairman of City and Regional Planning, Donald Appleyard led Landscape and Joe Esherick was Chairman of Architecture. Strong and opinionated professionals took each other on with their passion about what the CED should be. I didn't need polls to tell me that the CED was the top school.

Riess: Would you say more about urban design as a discipline, a degree?

Bender: Well, it started in the sixties. The college put together a program where you could do a joint degree in architecture and landscape architecture, or landscape architecture and city planning, or any combination—get a master's degree in three years instead of two, which was called urban design. Later, just more or less as I was retiring, we established a Master of Urban Design [MUD] program, which was a separate program for people who had some professional degree and experience who wanted to come back to school for a year and study that. One of both the strengths and the problems of the program—the Master of Urban Design is not a department. It drew strength from the mixture but it also slipped through the cracks here in a way.

Riess: I've derailed this by asking really how urban design fits in.

Bender: But you opened something that I wanted to talk about. There are a number of things which didn't fit any regular categories. One is that I came to Berkeley, without knowing very much about academic life and academic bureaucracy, and even less about Cal. I first began to understand about the dean's office when Wheaton was sick and he had me appointed associate dean. One of the things he asked me to do was look at research issues, and when I became dean I realized that was an interesting thing to me. I would be able to appoint an associate dean, to be able to switch some of the money, to give someone time to work on my priorities.

So, in the urban design area, I asked Donald Appleyard to be associate dean to start to bring together the urban design issues, which were scattered in the college, not very visible or understood. He was someone who everybody liked. He'd been working on the [Environmental] Simulation Laboratory, which was a really big enterprise that built large-scale models that you could photograph and reproduce. More than that the lab included people and issues that cut across the college. He had come from Kevin Lynch's world at MIT where they had toyed with the idea. He had an appointment both in landscape and planning, and this gave him the chance to put some of that together. He helped to make Allan Jacobs more effective by bringing Jake into an active role in landscape architecture.

Riess: I can't imagine Allan Jacobs not being effective.

Bender: Well, but he didn't have as big a scope as he should have. The architects had little contact with him and he was just beginning to be integrated in landscape. When I became dean I made Jake chairman of city planning. He was new to academia, or at least he hadn't been teaching at Berkeley before he came here. He became one of the most powerful forces in the college and a leader in building urban design.

Over the years I used that position as dean in different ways. When Don Turner came I made him the associate dean for research, with the idea of introducing his passion and ability to work with and in communities. In research, in teaching, and in his work outside the university he showed how issues like self-help and affordable housing could be subjects for the CED and opportunities for research.

I made Henry [J.] Lagorio, at one point, associate dean. Henry was interested in earthquake issues and had very good connections at the National Science Foundation. The respect and influence he had at NSF made us visible and built paths of involvement at NSF. Eventually he went on a series of leaves to work at the National Science Foundation, and eventually became director of seismic research there.

Each one of those appointments gave me a chance to strengthen the school without having to go through the usual politics of appointing someone. It also gave each of them time and energy to devote to issues they cared about. They were all people who were attractive and people respected them. They made the idea of a college more real.

The most powerful and the most invisible on a chart like that is there were clearly problems both with the undergraduate program, just what it was, and with how social issues, human issues, got integrated into the program. I was determined, and the faculty supported the idea, that we make more clear that the undergraduate program is a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in architecture or landscape architecture—there was not one in planning—and that we wanted to put more of culture and humanity into it and not make it a pre-architecture program, or try to imitate what San Luis Obispo and other Cal Poly schools were doing.

I asked a succession of people to look at what turned out to be a combination, both the undergraduate program and the social factors area of study, which was spread through the three departments, but not really getting integrated into the undergraduate program. Russ Ellis was the first one who took that over, and he gave it energy from his personality and warmth as well as his ideas about what the program could be. Russ was so successful that he was eventually “stolen” and moved on to the campus level, and then the systemwide level, dealing with undergraduate life and education. Then Ray Lifchez took it over, and Ray has a rich and deep background in the arts literature and poetry, as well as architecture and planning. He has always had a particular interest in—well, there are better words for it I guess, but handicapped access issues, issues of people with

special needs. In one of the undergraduate courses, Architecture 101, where they were beginning to design buildings, he introduced an increasing focus on people, how they were touched and supported by spaces and places, and how we all have special needs. Ray, bringing his interest in special needs, began teaching wonderfully humane and imaginative classes in which you looked at things from the point view of people in a wheelchair, or people who were blind, and onto those issues we all have that are special needs.

Riess: Was this informed by the Center for Independent Living [CIL]?

Bender: Well, the center had a lot to do with it. Ray worked with the Center for Independent Living from the beginning. In fact he called me the other night to say how excited he was about the new Ed Roberts Campus opening. We're going to go tour it together. Ray had a lot to do with its evolution, and CIL was a resource for our program. That connection, it made the students—it's really an attractive way for students to begin to grasp things.

Also so many people had an interest in affordable housing in neighborhoods for poor people, how to make the city richer with mixed use. Each of the people who led the undergraduate program valued this concern, and it turned out the program was a place where you could start to introduce these issues and understandings. And again, the double way of teaching was that because the undergraduate classes tended to be big lecture classes, they needed teaching assistants, so graduate students would be hired as the teaching assistants, and in a sense students got very special seminars, a very personal education and experience. This was true in all the specialties, the areas of the program, but particularly with Ray a whole generation of people grew up with a special interest and deep commitment to the issues of people with special needs and the idea that *everybody* had special needs.

Riess: So let's place this in time.

Bender: Well, it must have begun in the seventies. I think Russ was the first one who I asked to take it over, and then Ray Lifchez was next. Each in their own way brought life and warmth to the large numbers of undergraduate students who can so easily become lost at Berkeley.

Riess: Did this evolve out of the Free Speech Movement?

Bender: Well, certainly the Free Speech Movement gave it an extra dimension. I think many people struggled with how you brought these parts of yourself into a world where as you start to have a professional education you get narrowed down, and what we were trying to do is keep people open and reading things they wouldn't have read otherwise, looking at things that they wouldn't have looked at otherwise. The last person to take over that undergraduate deanship was Roger Montgomery. Roger also brought care and high standards to the program. He spent more of his energy at that point making the program clear and stronger. The pieces had always been

there and the spirit had been injected and Roger carried it through. Roger also had a long interest in housing that he brought to his teaching and advising which was—it was a way I was getting the things I wanted to happen to happen.

Maybe the last thing in this—it came out of the campus planning. Somewhere along the way I realized that when I was talking to the deans about environmental design along with campus planning, and talking to the alumni about it, talking to the alumni community about it, it was an opportunity for a really interesting course. And so that is when we created ED-1, in which I proposed to use the campus to teach a course about environmental design to undergraduates, not only in the college but undergraduates on the campus who wanted to take it as a liberal arts class. Roger liked the idea and worked with me to put it together, and we brought Russell Beatty in from landscape architecture. Russ was a very popular teacher and he really knew the campus from the landscape point of view.

And so we put this course together in which I taught it, and then Roger took it over afterwards. I loved the idea that the dean and the undergraduate dean were teaching the introduction to the field. We all took part in it and we eventually used it as a way to introduce the faculty of the college. Jack Kent would talk about the open space movement, Dan Solomon would talk about the low-cost housing he was doing at that point for BRIDGE—and engage students in critiques of their dorms! The other part of it is in all of the history that we brought in, all the examples, the idea was to use the campus as the textbook and the model. The idea was not to show the usual slides of Greece and Rome and things that way. Sally Woodbridge gave a series of lectures on San Francisco architecture in which she showed some of the big hotels like the St Francis and the Fairmont as illustrations of classical forms—showed their roots in European architecture.

We looked at the Bay Area tradition through some of the buildings here, and the students all had projects to go out and look at things on the campus. We tried to develop a way of teaching large lectures with more intimacy and feedback. We were so behind the technology we have today, but you could process slides in a few hours finally, and so we would take work that students had done in their discussion sections and we would project it in the lectures showing all of the—there were as many as four hundred students at one point, and half of them from outside the college, and we would be able to show them what students in the other sections were doing and have some of them talk about it. They got a bigger picture than they would have just in the small groups.

Riess: Did they have to draw?

Bender: They all had to draw. Great drawing was not what it was about, it was about how you could put an idea down, but they had help in drawing. We would make an exhibition each week of drawings and models that they

were building, and we didn't pick the best drawings, we picked the ones that expressed ideas.

Riess: That's good.

Bender: It's easy to tell it—of course it had lots of bumps in it. Now you can do those things much more easily, but it's also harder to get people to look—now the computer both gives you a lot of information and it narrows down.

Riess: And you had to convince the students that they're going to learn something, get something out of this, that there was something in it for them to take this class. What was in it for them?

Bender: Well, one of the things we did was introduce them to the campus, the place where they would live and work for four years, and to issues that would be argued in those years. We also exposed them to people who made interesting careers in environmental design that were not traditional careers. The undergraduate degree was supposed to be an arts degree and open more careers, and we were trying to tell people you're going to be more influential, sometimes, by what you do on the school board or when your company's making a new office.

Riess: Ramona's. Let's get that story told in this context.

Bender: Well, Ramona's turned out to be a chance to cut across a number of the things that I was interested in. One was to make a more social place within the school and to have it a richer thing than a place where you had lunch. The second was to have it a place where people from the other schools around would meet and people would exchange across fields and disciplines, both in and out of the college. Remember we had art, music, law, business, all crossing there. And another was to show that the school, both students and faculty, could be taken seriously as designing things and building things, and that we could do it in front of everybody. And we could do another thing which was interesting to me—we could ask one of the younger faculty to do a project, someone who was having trouble getting work and starting a practice. So in the case of Ramona's we asked Richard Fernau to do that, and he and Laura Hartman—I was talking to Laura the other night, and that was one of their first real jobs and they had a chance to show their work.

But one of the things that was interesting about it, to me, is that we couldn't just do it. In order to make it work I had to go to propose the idea to the campus food services and ask them to pay for it. And by great luck the man who was in charge at that point was a man named Steve Barclay, and he got the idea right away. I guess I'd met him because he was involved with the student housing that Bill Turnbull did, the housing that spans Hearst and is on Gayley Road. I spent a lot of time with the Campus Planning Study Group and on the campus arguing for that project, which is a real Berkeley project rather than—if you compare that with the dormitories that were built after World War II.

Steve saw the opportunity to change the little bits of food service that were scattered around the campus into a series of dining areas of character. And so he agreed to pay for doing it as an experiment, to work with Richard and Laura to make it happen, and that once the food service got onto a running basis that there would be some income stream, sort of rent, that would come back to the school.

Riess: Boy, you're good!

Bender: Well, I managed. But somewhere along the line somebody lost track of it, and Jennifer [Wolch, CED dean] is trying to look at what happened, where the income went, where the food quality went, and why the gallery function disappeared. Steve Barclay made such a hit on the campus because he did Ramona's. Then he took over the one at Bechtel, and the one in the life sciences building that HOK designed. He took over "food service" and they began to be real places for the character of the campus. Ramona's was a place for collegiality.

Riess: Even though the food has universality.

Bender: Well, there's been a struggle, and actually Jennifer—I gave a talk last week bringing people up to date on Ramona's history—Jennifer's now brought in organic food people and chefs and with a more enlightened campus food service they're studying the idea of revitalizing Ramona's now and teaching something about diet. She is taking ideas about organic, sustainable food seriously. She has the same kind of spirit, although with different ideas—she's trying to do in that way. Part of Ramona's was that we had students working on some of the construction, and then the maintenance and operation.

Another part of it that was interesting to me is it used to close at five o'clock, and students are famous for being there all night. Food service couldn't afford it, it didn't want to keep it open all night, and so the program was that the kitchen could be closed off. I think you can still see where there was a gate that closed the kitchen, and that the sitting part would be a gallery that had rotating exhibitions and could be open at night. There would be music, and there was a cart that had coffee-making things and all, and the students could operate it afterwards, and did for years. I think that also faded away over the years. But we had an interesting program of exhibitions.

Riess: Yes, I remember.

Bender: Tony Dubovsky and Marc Treib curated shows there. The idea was to show we could be a community that did more than take classes. We were living what we talked about. Marc was a dynamic force in those days. Aside from bringing a new energy, often with Tony Dubovsky, to the beginning ED class and designing great posters for the college lecture series, he brought a sense of quality to many of the college publications.

Riess: And Tony Dubovsky?

Bender: Tony Dubovsky is one of the really interesting spirits in the school. He came here as part of the original, what was called the Design Department. He's an artist, a wonderful painter, and he's also interested in poetry, he's interested in spirit. He came to me with an idea that I thought was terrific. This was to take place in the auditorium in Wurster, one of the first public uses of the auditorium. Tony had the idea for a series called Poets and Builders, in which we would have poets give lectures at the noon hour, and we would then ask students to do assignments or respond in seminars. We had prizewinning poets who came, and outstanding local people. It continues in a different form—when Ray Lifchez's wife Judith Stronoff died he endowed the wonderful poetry series that meets in the Morrison Library.

Riess: But the imaginative aspect of having a built response to the poetry is something else.

Bender: Well, it wasn't always built, it could be talking about environments, it could be talking—Tony again, when Design closed he became one of the few people in Visual Design I think the new program was called, the program that continued—he for years taught the introductory course in environmental design. He taught drawing, not as a traditional here's how you draw a tree, here's how you draw a house, but he asked people to do things like make drawings and maybe models and write something, tell a story, about one of their ancestors. Drawing out of their heads and telling a story is basic to what we do.

[End Tape 19: Side A]

[Begin Tape 19: Side B]

Riess: Please finish that idea the architects have to draw out of their heads. How do you do that?

Bender: Traditionally architects have been taught to draw by looking at buildings and learning how to draw a building. They learned “shades and shadows” and “projections.” But what you want to know how to do is draw an idea, use drawing to express something you're thinking. If you start to ask people to draw by drawing something they feel something about, or they want to describe maybe that they haven't seen yet, it's a more—. Anyway, if I look back at things that happened or that I could have played some part in that made me really proud, Tony's teaching in that—right now he's teaching classes and he's added music and they play folk music, mostly folk music and adding to the drawing and the histories and it's beautiful. They show their work at the end of the year with the drawings and people singing songs and playing music and reading poetry. It's the Bauhaus that I dreamed about. [laughing] People who take these classes never forget the experience.

The other side of it, to finish with campus planning, is that it's really heartbreaking, after all of the work and dreams, how with whatever's going on now, so much is closed down. The major building projects that

are going on—like the stadium, it was done completely outside of all process, out of all logic. We're reinforcing the old stadium on top of an earthquake fault. We're building a privileged building for a few athletes by tearing down a grove. We're building it in such a way that students are not even going to be allowed into part of it because—at one point someone explained it—if someone saw that one of the football players was having his leg worked on the other team might have a hint of how to prepare for the game. I mean the whole thing is sad to me.

Riess: Yes, it is.

Bender: There are good people in the campus planning office, which has become stronger, there's a landscape architect who has been doing good things. He's kept the landscape up and he's got the right scale. For a long time a lot of what was being done missed the scale of the campus, it was approached like a little garden, backyard garden. Emily [Marthinsen, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Physical and Environmental Planning Capital Projects] has really good instincts, but the budget's crushing it, it's sort of lost. Campus planning is managed under Capitol Projects. It has to be about raised and raising money, but it seems to me it's escaped from being close to the student life and teaching and stewardship mission of the campus.

During the period we were working on the Central Glade for instance, Phil Enquist, who was then John Kriken's assistant at SOM, really ran that project, but they had a small contract, basically through the Campus Planning Study Group, that helped Phil make a beautiful study of the whole series of glades from the Greek Theater down to the circle, and how they can be restored, reinvented and revitalized.

Riess: Can we say something about how outside firms get in? Is it good for the university? Does Phil Enquist not expect to be fully paid but he comes as a pro bono? How does all that work with the big time architects who are doing a little bit of work on campus?

Bender: Usually when they're doing work they have a real contract. SOM had a contract through a part of the firm that most people don't think about. They have a good graphics department, and the campus wayfinding is crazy. It's difficult on all campuses because there are no streets, there are no street addresses. Phil was particularly interested in that because we had been working together on other campuses; later in the nineties, he and I worked together at San Diego and then at Santa Cruz in particular, and wayfinding is a big issue.

Riess: This is more than just signage?

Bender: Yes, it's a question of how you find your way, and it's got to be more than signage. It can be the way the streets go, how you see things, how different patterns of paving and color and planting and lighting go. So they were hired by the campus at one point, and between the campus and the city of Berkeley they came up with a series of standards to try to

coordinate signs to parking, signs to various locations—a graphics program. At that point they had a small contract that brought Phil onto the campus and he wanted to work on the Campanile Way and the Central Glade as a way to clarify “place” on the campus. It’s part of the way architects, at least my kind of architects, work. Phil left SOM here and went—well, he left for a while when we working on Santa Cruz together. He was at EDAW briefly, but then he went to SOM in Chicago where he’s head of urban design now, and he volunteers to help the mayor of Chicago. He started designing schoolyards and parks pro-bono, and then they were hired to do the park along the whole waterfront of Lake Michigan. I know in Phil’s case it’s his love of doing it. It balances the things he’s doing in China and Dubai. He had some of the same feeling about campuses that I had, and when we worked together in San Diego and Santa Cruz it was one of the joys of my life to be able to work with someone like Phil who has such a feeling of land and place and is a really wonderful designer of natural life in cities.

Riess: That’s a telling comment about balancing what the firm is doing.

Bender: Well, balancing your own life maybe. John Kriken has volunteered over the years to come in and teach classes, and now he has retired from SOM and has a more formal appointment.

Riess: That started with Wurster? Wurster brought practicing architects in and you continued to do that.

Bender: Yes, and one of the problems—it’s also one of the possibilities—while I was dean, one of the main jobs I had was to explain to the campus that that’s the way we do things, so we could appoint people that didn’t make sense to the Academic Senate. I had to constantly explain how we could appoint people who not only didn’t have PhDs, some of them didn’t have—Horst Rittel only had a high school degree. Peter Steiger, who came a few times, I don’t think he had an architecture degree, but he later became dean of the school in Darmstadt. Horst was known all over the world, but it was hard to explain why we were appointing people like that. And it was also sometimes hard to make an appointment for someone like John: it wasn’t clear who they were and what they were doing.

[interruption in recording]

Riess: You refer to Jung’s analogy in this paper about the Campus Planning Study Group. What’s Jung’s analogy?

Bender: I was referring to the essay, “Marriage as a Psychological Relationship” [C.G. Jung, 1925]. What really struck me—he seemed to say that the first half of life is about integration, in which you put a life together, you go to school, and you make a family. But in a rich life the second part is about dis-integration, and that captured me: it’s not falling apart, it’s really dis-integration, un-integration, developing the richness of the parts.

That really struck me at the time I was working on the planning of the campus, because it seemed to me not only that I was middle-aged, but that the campus was middle-aged in the sense it had built up this wonderful campus and now it was moving on beyond the linear track, which we focus on, adding more and more. There were new parts coming, and old parts changing, and the issue was how to build these into a new kind of whole. The dis-integration hit me as another way to talk about network solutions, as I started to look at a campus that's gone beyond its boundaries and is a campus "without walls" and has not only branches in Richmond and Emeryville, but all over the world in a sense, through computers and the internet. Communities in general are becoming dis-integrated that way. San Francisco's becoming a regional city, a regional landscape you might say. I'm getting too far afield, but I can picture in this new regional landscape the equivalent of Golden Gate Park might be the Delta region going all the way up to Sacramento in a new kind of urban setting.

Anyway, talking about the campus, in some of these talks I used to talk about the fact that the campus was middle-aged and we're looking at the next round in these ways. For me it was a really interesting analogy. I was struck even more one day when I was going out to give one of the talks from a hotel in Southern California. I looked in the mirror and I said, "Yes, I am getting middle-aged." I, and the campus, have to take on a re-integration.

Riess: What about the importance of publications in these times?

Bender: The group that Nezar [AlSaiyyad] is leading now, IASTE, they publish a journal and they have international conferences, and they have come to play an important role in the world of vernacular building and traditional environments. I was able to get them the seed money to start. In a similar way, when Don Lyndon had the idea to start a journal, *Places*, I was able to get them started and arrange for space and play a role in its planning. *Places*, a journal about environmental design issues, has become an important resource and a chance for CED students to participate. John Parman, who has worked closely with me for years, with Richard Ingersoll, who was a student then, put together a publication called the *Design Book Review*, which may have had as many as twenty-five issues before it finally went out of business. It was a forum for the review and dissemination of ideas and a model of quality publication in our field. They were all things that it was fun to be able to help start, and to give some of them a little money to get going. *Poets and Builders* was something like that. A student newspaper, "Concrete," was the brainchild of two undergrads, David Trachtenberg was one of them. It had a lively run, including criticism of me. It disappeared, but keeps coming back in new incarnations.

Riess: You've described so much that you achieved. What was a typical day for you? How did you keep some balance? Were you working on weekends? Were you accessible to your family? Were you crazy?

Bender: Well, I certainly can say I was busy, mostly enjoying the days. Crazy? I guess so. A lot of the times—in some ways I was more balanced than I am now because there was something about having a schedule that you have to fit parts into and things are scheduled in advance. Now my time is so much more free but it also seems more hectic. Freedom takes a lot of time and energy. It was an interesting time. It was while I was dean that Sue wrote *Plain and Simple*, and that's a whole story.

Riess: We'll talk about that.

Bender: The boys were growing up. They both went to Berkeley High and then to San Diego. Michael—I kept thinking he'd come back to Berkeley after a couple of years at UC San Diego. He started out to study biology, but with film as something to make his life richer. And then he had a chance to work in some laboratories down there and began to work on some genetic research. He was working on things—he once said, “If I'd done this ten years earlier I would have gotten the Nobel Prize for it, but now I'm basically cleaning glassware.”

Eventually he decided—he always said he didn't want to go to medical school, and he ended up going to medical school. And that's a nice story. When he was applying to medical school—you have to write this essay about why you're doing it, and he wrote about when he was a lifeguard. All these years we'd been going back to Long Island, and Michael was a lifeguard and then David became a lifeguard. Michael wrote in the essay that he wants to be a doctor the way he was a lifeguard, because a lifeguard maybe only saves one or two, makes only one or two rescues in a year, but if you're a good lifeguard you get to know the people on the beach, you know who to watch, you know their abilities and habits. And you also take some of your time on the beach teaching children how to swim, and old people how to get in and out of the waves. He said that's the kind of doctor he wanted to be. He was accepted in Seattle where he wanted to do a program that had family medicine and community medicine. And he then began to do research and did medical school as an MD/PhD.

School was not David's love. He rowed as stroke on the Berkeley High School crew, and he played ice hockey, but the ocean, eventually surfing, became his passion. As soon as he graduated he left for Hawaii. Later he found a way to work, travel, and surf in Australia and New Zealand. He spent a few years at San Diego State but decided that was not for him. I will get back to more about both of them later.

Riess: And your influence earlier—were you the kind of father who talked about what you had done that day, at dinner?

Bender: I talked about what I done that day, and we had visitors coming and staying. Peter Steiger, when he came to teach the first time his marriage had just broken up and we thought he would stay for two of the ten weeks and then go to the Faculty Club—and he stayed for the whole time. Eduardo Terrazas came from Mexico and he stayed for weeks at a time.

People came in and out. The boys would—they tell me now that they picture me with my yellow pad writing notes, even when I was in the country at the house in Amagansett, in the summers in Amagansett. I had set it up so we took time in the summer, and I never took the eleven-month appointment that I could have as chairman or dean. I basically took two months off so we could go to Long Island. When the boys were older Sue and I took short sabbaticals—three months to Venice, four months to the American Academy in Rome.

Riess: You and Sue were consciously watching for you not to get too obsessed with work maybe?

Bender: Yes. At one point I realized—I was swimming usually at the Hearst Gym, but I realized wherever I went people would come up and ask me questions, ask for favors. I'd be in the shower at the pool and someone would want to talk about his promotion or something of that sort. And so I joined the Claremont, and I used to swim there, where there were mostly psychiatrists, it seemed to me, in those days. That turned out to be a very good political move because everyone thought I was having lunch with someone else and they were all worried about what was going on. Also I worked a lot at home.

Riess: Yes, but it sounds like you liked to keep your fingers in all the pies, and you had created many pies.

Bender: Yes, and they spilled over. Sue was a hero during those early years of our marriage. I'd never been particularly sociable, and she would like to have people to dinner. But now suddenly I was—after a lecture very often I would invite people back to the house, and Sue's an early bird, but it would be ten o'clock at night and we'd have a bunch of people coming in. And we started this idea that I wanted to carry through on Bill Wheaton's tradition, and we expanded it and we made a party for all the faculty and staff, so there could easily be more than a hundred people coming every year in September. I remember one of the first ones. David came down in his pajamas and he said, "There's a lady in my bed." We had been making a punch that my father taught me which I realized was really an Old Fashioned. We were putting way more whiskey in it, and sugar, and people were getting drunk and talking to each other who hadn't talked to each other for years.

And the boys were involved—Michael in particular was always building things. While I was teaching structures I was looking for structures that the students could practice with, and Michael and his friend Gary came and built a geodesic dome that was about sixteen feet in diameter out of a toy kit and dowels. So my graduate students learned how to build a geodesic dome from two seventh graders. [laughter] They were involved in lots of ways and they knew what was going on in some ways.

Riess: How accessible were you? When you sat in your office was the door open? Were your secretaries welcoming? Did you answer your own phone?

Bender: Sheila Dickie was wonderful, a great spirit, and we became really good friends. She was there when I came to the Dean's Office, and she was there when I left. I may have mentioned she had come from the chancellor's office where she shared a room with Chancellor Bowker's machine that signed the letters. Actually, as time went on I realized that she was interested and able to do much more, and she began to build the alumni relations structure for the college. I never could get her the position that it called for, but right as I was leaving Roger finally was able to put her in charge of the expanding alumni efforts, and she's wonderful. The door was usually open, but if it was closed we had a signal, and she would warn me that I should put my tie on if certain visitors came. I think sometimes it was more for Sheila than for me that I would keep that up. I know that I couldn't, or wouldn't, have stayed so long without Sheila—her great wisdom, good spirit, good humor, and the ability to make everyone who came through the doors feel "seen."

The boys were involved and they knew what I was doing in funny ways. I think somewhere in these notes I wrote about Don Turner. We had taken time off and I taught at Harvard for a semester, and that's when, among other things, I really got involved with Don Turner. Then that summer we went to Amagansett, and the boys were astounded when Don Turner came driving up in I think it was a Thunderbird, with surfboards in the back, and for once they said there's a colleague of mine they could talk to. Another time—J.B. Jackson, the first time he came to our house for dinner he was completely the opposite of what was expected. J.B. was such an elegant man. He spoke like a traditional scholar from Harvard, and he'd been through Harvard, but he also lived half the year at that point in a little community outside of Santa Fe. At any rate, he came to the house, a sixty-five year old man in a leather jacket and leather suit on a Harley Davidson motorcycle.

Riess: Now he was an interesting person, please talk about him.

Bender: Oh, I came to love him—and again I had such great opportunities to know people. Sue and I went—maybe it started while I was dean, but afterwards we continued till he died—we'd go to Santa Fe to visit him. He would always say you had to come in the afternoon because he's working in the morning. I pictured him writing, going over galleys, but he was working with his hands! At one point he was working with his neighbors, many of whom were Mexican American families, where he sort of helped out around the house. He shoveled snow, and I remember once he came in and he'd been shoveling snow off his neighbor's driveway because the men were working. And at another time he worked in a garage. Then he'd come home in the afternoon and he was writing these books about places, the ordinary places that make the landscape so rich. He told us about making parties for his neighbors, and there was a community of Sikhs nearby and he hired them to keep order. But it was wonderful to know a man with such a poetic and rich side, and who enriched a part of me that was looking more for the richness that there was in ordinary communities. After visiting with him, as we would drive through some of the native Indian communities and I would see them in some ways less

romantically—what at first looked like quaint houses, I realized how poor they were, the walls of the houses where they lived were so thin, so fragile.

Talking about the boys, I think it was David on one of our first trips through that area—and we were romantic about the Indians—we went into some Indian communities and I was talking about how poor they were, but how beautiful some of the adobe buildings were. And David said, “There’s something strange. These people are so poor, but look at the bicycles the boys have.” I forgot the name of it, a very trendy expensive bicycle where you could do “wheelies,” and David recognized those bicycles, he said, “Those kids have high-end bicycles.” He was always helping me see things I would otherwise have missed.

It may seem a big jump from talking about family and David’s helping me see things I would otherwise have missed, but I want to say something about Elizabeth Byrne, who has also opened my eyes to many things, and played an enormous role in making the dream of a College of Environmental Design a reality. I met Elizabeth in the early stages of the search for a new head of the CED Library. I was immediately taken with her as a person and as someone who could lead the library out of years of neglect and disorganization. Given all the problems in the library she was wary, and right to be wary, but I used every tool, pulled every string I could to bring her to the CED. When I look back, her coming is surely one of the best things that happened in those years. And it turned out that my vision was opened. The CED Library is more than a library, it is the place, perhaps the only place, where all the diverse threads, specialties, areas, departments come together. It is where ideas and information come together, and with Elizabeth’s wisdom and good spirit, where people come together.

[End Tape 19, Side B]

Interview 11: February 9, 2011

[Begin Tape 20: Side A]

Bender: Moving from the East Coast to the West Coast was a shock in some ways, and it wasn't in other ways. When I first came here I realized that everybody, at the school in particular, and most of the people who I knew, had come from the East Coast. You had the feeling that everyone was looking over their shoulder to see how what they were doing was playing back east. They were doing things at the University of California in the Bay Area, et cetera, and things were being looked at, evaluated, judged there, but they were really looking to see how it was playing on the East Coast. In other words, you could get a good commission here or you could get an award or a prize, but if it wasn't mentioned in the newspapers on the East Coast—well,

Riess: And it wasn't for the most part.

Bender: It wasn't for the most part, and it still isn't that much. It's changed a lot now since everyone is much more bicoastal and everyone knows what's happening much more. But there's still a lot of—also, there are different Californias. If I had gone to Los Angeles it would have been completely different than here.

In my case, I've had the experience, or the habit, of learning a lot of things backwards. When I was at Harvard in architectural school Gropius didn't believe in history, so the history we learned—and this was the 1950s—we learned about the forties and the thirties, and then we learned about the Bauhaus in the twenties, and over time I worked my way back to Egypt. At Harvard there was a class that Dean Hudnut gave where I was a teaching assistant, slide-helper with those big lantern slides in black and white, three by four and a quarter, like the size of postcards, in which he talked about Rome, London, and Paris as they were originally two thousand years ago or whatever, and the Renaissance, and now. But basically I learned all my history backwards, just as it was only after I was here ten or fifteen years and got into campus planning that I started to learn more about John Galen Howard and Julia Morgan, and I still do it backwards.

Riess: This East Coast/West Coast thing, when Tom Wolfe wrote *From Bauhaus to Our House* there was no mention of anything west of whatever, Fallingwater maybe. So this does set up some kind of defensive posture?

Bender: When I first came here it wasn't defensive because I was interested in learning something. One of the reasons I came out here is because in some of the areas I was interested in, production of housing for poor people, and some of the things related to that, in some ways the West Coast was ahead. I learned from the faculty, again backwards from some of the older people who I admired. Vernon DeMars, Garrett Eckbo, when they got out of school and there were no jobs they went to work for the government

during the Depression and they built the famous migrant camp down near Bakersfield, the one that's described in *The Grapes of Wrath*.

On the other hand, I had begun to understand with the National Commission on Urban Problems that some of the most interesting things were being done here by Kaiser. I thought of Kaiser as a shipbuilder, as we learned in the war, but later found that Kaiser became a construction company, or they had a construction company. It was one of the major companies back in the sixties and they were doing a lot of experiments in prefabrication. But I also learned that in getting the dams and things built that Kaiser built in the WPA times, the medical program came out of it—the idea of medical care coming with a job, and education, came out of it. It prepared me, in other ways, for going to Japan later because the big Japanese companies that I was interested in resembled Kaiser in both the way they were both vertically and horizontally organized, and that they did research into what they were doing, not simply to build the building.

So my interests have always been more global. I know that sounds ambitious. They haven't been that focused on place.

Riess: That's true. With the Rockefeller work you were thinking Latin America.

Bender: When I worked with Paul Wiener and José Sert I was working all around. And all through my life career it's been more that, but there's another thing I noticed just recently. I'm really personally troubled now, both as I get older and my house gets older, and things start to go wrong. When I first came here I did all the repairs. We arrived without a bed and I made the bed the first day, and things like that, and I don't do that so well anymore.

Riess: You built the bed?

Bender: Yes, well our beds have always been made out of four by eight sheets of plywood that I build a platform for. Our tables, the dining room table we have is plywood covered with Formica that sits on four legs the plumber helped me make out of pipes. I did all the repairs and things, but also right up until we left the East Coast I was designing houses, not a lot of houses but I discovered looking back recently it was probably twenty or twenty-five houses at least. And then there was always a house going on and there were a lot of interiors being done, so my hand was in, not just building but in order to build, and particularly build houses, you have to have an anchor in place. I'm not just talking about the topography but the building—which side the sun is on, and how high and low it goes, and what's in the lumberyard, where do you get parts? The builders are usually rooted in a place.

Riess: You're talking as builder not architect, right?

Bender: Well, the architect, in order to be a good architect, has to know what the builders can do in at least the kind of work I did. So one of the pleasures when I was doing houses on the East Coast is I began to work with the

builders before the working drawings were finished. I knew their capabilities, I knew where they could be stretched or where I'd have to bring in something else. But I'd also—I'd meet them in the morning at a coffee shop or in the lumberyard, and I was much more tied to the land by doing that work.

Now when I talk to people about how to arrange thirty acres in Tokyo, where the museum will go and the problems of having it on the fiftieth floor versus underground, I don't get to meet that many of the neighbors. I work with architects who come from different parts of the world to work on each project with different skills. On one level I'm tied in in the world wide net, and on another level I have much less sense of what's on the ground, who the people are. I'm less influenced by it. I don't—it's harder to feel it.

We'll talk more later about the project I'm doing in Japan with a religious group, where we're doing a relatively low-tech planting of a forest on an old factory site. I go out to the land with them, we drive out in a van and I talk to the Buddhist people, and when we get there we talk to the neighbors. While it's being transformed they're using some of the land, so they have a fair and a farmer's market. When I go to the project in Shanghai that Mr. Mori built, the Shanghai World Financial Center, I'm in the most crowded city in the world and I only know a few people, and they are the Hyatt people from Chicago, so it's surreal in many ways. I don't know if I've talked about it but I've written something about it.

- Riess: This is not a common complaint of architects, I'll bet. But in this case you're *not* an architect?
- Bender: More and more I think of myself as an architect. As architects become, call themselves, interior architects and urban designers and green architects, I understand more and more they are architects. And the more we specialize the less we're architects in a sense, and it was one of the ideas of the school. Although the idea of changing the name to environmental design was an attempt to free up the parochial, to take down the walls from the parochialism, in other ways the original name was a pretty good name because *architect* has connotations in lots of—"he was the architect of our foreign policy." It implies strategic thinking, conception, making something happen and doing it with art, artfully. And for me that's the bigger term, and we do all these different things, and we're better at one than the other.
- Riess: The successful architect Bob Swatt said yesterday at a lecture that he would really rather be a landscape architect. I'm not sure what he meant by that.
- Bender: Well, one of the things that I used to do, and I used to have to push the landscape architects at Berkeley to think about it this way—and the profession in general. For a while I was advisor to the big EDAA firm, which started with E for Eckbo and is now part of a still bigger firm, AECOM, a company of big companies, but I went to some of their board

meetings and I said, “Something’s strange. A project starts, it’s a university or a company headquarters on a hundred acres, and they call in the architect, and the architect hires a landscape architect as a subcontractor. How come you don’t start with the landscape architect? And shouldn’t the architect be the subcontractor?” And most of the landscape architects didn’t even want to think that way. Some of the best ones *did* in a sense, when Olmsted, who invented the profession as we know it now, conceived things on that big level and buildings came into the park. But the way it would work—I see it now, even when you have something like a campus and you’ve gone to all the trouble to make a plan and do all the thinking, and then you hire a famous architect to do a building and he says, “Well, you know, we really ought to move it over here and change this,” and people very quickly let go, but very often they let go of what someone else did because they don’t understand it.

Riess: And so it would be the landscape design that would be let go?

Bender: The landscape architecture goes. You can see it on the campus here. Things which were meant to be just were left, and no one remembered that there was a reason for that—it was not “empty,” it was a place. So it’s one of the reasons also why in the planning that I’ve done I try to build a constituency that understands what the idea is and build into it a way that it’s passed on. That doesn’t mean that it won’t change, but so the people understand there are bigger principles here. Some of what you were asking about, the social versus the architectural part, is sort of where we’re talking about with the Getty.

Riess: Good, and now let’s do talk about the Getty Center.

You had decided to take a sabbatical?

Bender: Yes, well it was clear to me that as many sabbaticals as I could take was a good idea for me, and especially once I got involved as dean I realized if I took it on and it’s filling all my time it wouldn’t be good for me, it wouldn’t be good for Sue and the boys, and it wouldn’t be good for the job if I didn’t step back. In both cases it was a wise decision, being able to take a few months every year, rather than working through the summer.

Riess: This is the problem of micromanaging?

Bender: No, it’s the problem of getting a bigger perspective. And also being able to—sometimes it’s easier to try out things, whether it’s ideas or projects, the farther you go from home.

Riess: Ah.

Bender: I had learned from the construction workers when I was in Greenland: they used to say, “A construction expert is a construction man more than a hundred miles from home.” I joke today that these days I have to go more than a hundred miles—I have to go halfway around the world to be an

expert. But if you go far enough away you can be an expert—for while anyway. You bring something fresh and you get something fresh back.

Riess: It also suggests something stifling about the rules that you operate under close to home.

Bender: Well, but I find it in my life altogether. The day-to-day things get you. I sit down to do something and I see the lightbulb's out, and I fix the lightbulb and then it's—I've never been able to compartmentalize so well. So going away makes it easier for me to clear the slate. And these trips always had lots of different levels. They were a way to be sure that Sue and I, or Sue and I and the boys at other times, had real time together, and also real time in a different way. And this brings up something else, that relates to the Getty project.

I've had so many people who were different kinds of mentors to me, but Holly [William H.] Whyte, he wrote things about corporate life after the war, but eventually he got interested in urban places and he did this wonderful study of the Seagram [Building] plaza. He set up movie cameras across the street on the roof of the New York Racket Club, and he photographed over a long period of time people's activities on the plaza of the Seagram Building. He looked at how groups formed and parted, how people greeted each other and said hello, and he looked at things like that all through the city to try to understand how people behave in cities. One of the principles he came out with he called triangulation. He said you communicate with someone one way if you talk to them directly, but while you're on the plaza and there's a guy doing three-card monte, or selling scarves, or an acrobat, and the two of you are looking at the third person, you have a conversation on another level. This runs into the Getty theme that I'm talking about in another way, and also this business of travel.

The way it played out in the Getty is as we were looking at buildings together, when we were choosing the architect, and later when with the architect we would look at buildings we admired together, we had the best conversations when we talked about it in a place looking at a third thing rather than when we talked to each other. We could dislike the place we were in or we could like the place, we could be talking about a painting and end up with a building. But if there was that triangulation, it takes on another dimension.

And in travel, going away for a week with your family can have different levels of success. If what you're doing is simply going away and you're playing your same game, no—but if you're triangulating in a sense, if there's something we're all looking at, or if we're looking at it in a different way, if I'm looking at it in a different way because the kids are there, I see it in a different way. When we were younger and went with the boys to Europe I was dying to see all those plazas and piazzas that I'd first seen in [G.E.] Kidder-Smith's *Italy Builds* that I've mentioned. I'd seen them in all of these photographs, and it was completely different to go with Michael and David.

David, in particular, had almost no interest in most of the things we were looking at. But both boys were charmed by the idea that I was interested in looking at slums. [laughing] But they would come to these piazzas, and David in particular would see the kids sometimes, ragamuffin kids, kicking a football around. I told you earlier about David in the Italian piazzas kicking around the football: that meant we saw the piazza in a different way, he saw the trip in a different way, we saw him in a different way. It was wonderful when David, who was mostly hanging back when we went to see some of the historic sites, when he'd go into the piazza—he was seven years old then, maybe six, and he had long straight hair and when he ran it was long enough so it flowed. And the Italian men sitting on the bench with us watching him would call him *capo de leone*, the lion's head, and we saw him in a different way.

Sue and I went to Venice on a short sabbatical in 1983. Sue had joked, before I knew her, to some of her friends that she'd marry the first man who'd take her to Venice on her honeymoon, and it had been my dream to go to Venice. We didn't go to Venice on our honeymoon, but we went soon after when we were living in Europe. Then after I'd been here for a while and I was beginning to think about the idea of international programs, and we'd been to the American Academy in Rome for a while on one of these triangulations of a different sort—I wanted to live in Venice. I wanted to know what it was like to live in a place where you could walk all the time and experience that kind of urbane life. So at that point I had met Signor Vattani, the Italian consul in San Francisco.

Riess: What's the name?

Bender: Vattani. Aldo Rossi was here for a visit. Some people in the Italian community had the idea—this is getting roundabout, but Rossi had designed a floating theater in Venice, the Teatro del Mondo, for the Biennale in 1979. And then it was not going to be used anymore and some of the San Francisco Italian community had the idea that they would buy it and use it here and move it around the Bay. They went to the Getty family—this has nothing to do with the work I did with the Getty—Gordon Getty, to see if he'd be interested in helping to finance it.

Anyway, I find myself at one point in an apartment somewhere in San Francisco and it looked like a scene out of "The Sopranos," with the Italian community leaders talking to Aldo Rossi, who was looking very prim sitting there listening, about this idea and how they're going to raise the money. And I remember they were stretching and their cuff links were popping out, and they were calling him *dottore*. And he kept saying, "Well, if you want a theater why don't you ask me to design a theater? This is not a good idea." At some point they left the room, and the people whose house it was had gone off to make dinner, and there were three of us left, me and Rossi and a sort of shaggy-looking man in a tweed jacket who could have been a professor. I knew Rossi a little and we started to talk, and I said, "We know why we're here, why are you here?" He said, "I'm Gordon Getty and they want money." [laughing] But it all comes back—it was the house of Vattani, the Italian consul.

After that he was interested in the school. He helped us bring Aldo Rossi to give a lecture. He helped us bring other Italian people. My old friend Ceccarelli came, Paolo Ceccarelli, who I'd known briefly from MIT, but he was then the head of the school in Venice, which is a very good school of architecture and planning. A small one by Italian standards, only about seven thousand students; the one in Rome had twenty-two thousand students.

Riess: A lot of architects.

Bender: Well, that's all changing, but the idea is we would get to see Venice, we would get to experience that kind of a world, and with Paolo we would start to build an exchange program that led to these traveling studios that are still going on. Through Vattani—like all Italian families, his wife had a sister who was a real estate agent and she found us an apartment. And when we arrived in Venice and went to our apartment near the Rialto Bridge, the phone was ringing, and it was Bill Lacy saying that the Getty Trust was going to build this complex in Los Angeles and would I be willing to be on their advisory board, and particularly in the early stages help with the site selection and with the architect selection. I'm immediately feeling crushed, I'm just arriving for three months in Venice, and he said, "No, it's not going to start for another few months." Well, first he said, "We'll pay for you to fly back for the meetings," but then it turned out it was farther off.

Riess: Bill Lacy was a friend?

Bender: Bill Lacy I'd known a little. I knew him from Texas where there was a big architectural firm there that he was involved in and he went from there to—he became head of the architectural part of the National Endowment for the Arts. I met him periodically because I was on their advisory board and also got a couple of grants to do some studies.

Riess: Sounds like a good advisory board to be on.

Bender: Well, the advisory board was terrific. The architecture one was smaller, but a couple of meetings I got to go to the main NEA board, and they had people—Gregory Peck was on it, and people of that sort.

[End Tape 20: Side A]

[Begin Tape 20: Side B]

Bender: Bill Lacy mentioned that Ada Louise Huxtable was going to be involved. He described in general what the project was—I knew the Getty from the Malibu building, which at that point was treated like a joke. And then people got confused when pop art, postmodernism started to come over and they didn't know what to do. And now it's been renovated and it has a different kind of respect. I knew about the Getty collection. I knew about the Gettys, especially from things here, but the idea that they would—I mean he [J. Paul Getty] was known as the richest man in the world, and he

had an art collection and he was going to build something in Los Angeles. It sounded like it would be fun to be part of that. I didn't learn who the other people would be, and I have trouble remembering the names of some of them. At any rate, the first meeting was in Los Angeles.

Riess: So you finished your three months in Venice?

Bender: Yes, this was after the three months.

Well before the Getty, four years earlier, we spent some months at the American Academy in Rome. Alternate ways to practice, teach, and combine them both in forms of public service have been one of my goals ever since I began to teach, but I had never thought of the American Academy in Rome as a pathway. But in the summer of 1979 I was surprised to hear, from both George Nelson and then Bill Lacy, who had just become president of Cooper Union, and later chaired the architect search committee for the Getty, that they had nominated me for a residency at the Academy.

At that point I had been at Berkeley for about ten years and was looking nervously at turning fifty. Spending my birthday in 2000-plus-year-old Rome seemed more reassuring than in California. More than that, George had introduced me to Pier Paolo Pasolini's work, and I'd read *Ragazzzi di Vita*, his stories of life in the ruins of the old tenements and neighborhoods. In my 1968 visit to Rome I had found the ad hoc squatters and builders around the borders of the city more interesting than the "Industrial Housing Systems" I had visited to follow up on my Douglas Commission study. I remembered learning of ancient Rome's *insulae*, urban apartment houses of six, seven, and more floors, in Dean Hudnut's lectures at the GSD, and thinking about how similar they were to Lower Eastside tenements in New York. Reading Pasolini illuminated a 2000-year-old tradition of owner-builders, self-help. *Bassifondi* were continuing in the *buorgattas* and other emerging forms of squatter settlements. It's not that I wouldn't relish spending time with Rome's classical treasures, but living in Rome, really *living there*, was more of a dream.

My idea was much more prosaic than the proposals I had seen when I served on one of the Rome Prize juries, but Sophie Consalves, the Academy director then, loved it, and the months at the Academy enriched it in unexpected ways. Morley Baer was photographing the ancient Roman water systems. Cleve Gray was painting with the colors that remain required for walls in the old city. The time there allowed me to build friendships and collaborations that were the basis for the International Summer Studio with Paolo Ceccarelli in Venice and Ferrara, for student and faculty exchanges with those institutions, and the ongoing Swords to Plowshares program in which student worked on projects in Italy, and now other countries.

Recently I received messages from Adele Chatfield Taylor, now the president of the Academy, and Ersela Krips and Stephen Mueller who are finishing their year as Rome Prize winners. Adele, who with her husband

did one of the first loft conversions in the years our group at Cooper Union was working on opening SOHO to artist in residence lofts, wrote to “introduce” Krips and Mueller and their work. And a day later they wrote that to tell me that in their studies they kept running into people I had begun relationships with back then, and they were finding that I had been the last to check out many of the books they went to in the Academy’s library, and finding other materials I had donated to the library when I left.

Mueller wrote that they were working with the idea that “...we’ve moved away from a tradition of architect-as-master-builder, and it’s becoming difficult to sustain the current paradigm of architect-as-coordinator-of-specialists. The more we can support innovative models of practice, the better chance the profession has to evolve and respond to changing global conditions.” I don’t think I could say it better.

Riess: I’m glad we have that part of the story. Now, when you were in Venice in 1983 were you starting to think about the new Getty?

Bender: Well, in a different way. I actually thought *Italy* more than Venice, because from the beginning I thought of two—over the years we’d been to Italy different times, and two places really stuck in my mind as far as art. One is the Uffizi Gallery for the way it’s laid out, so that you come out and see the city and go back into the galleries, and there’s something about the scale of it and the natural light. And the other was Bernard Berenson’s house Villa I Tatti on a hillside outside of Florence—and this was going to be on a hillside outside of Los Angeles. But it started—I find that with almost anything I’m doing, if I’ve got it in my mind then everything I do I see it. If I’m working on a project and I’m reading a novel, or reading the newspaper, somehow it figures. So yes, it was on my mind.

I had no idea what this was going to be like. At the first meeting we met in Century City in an office building where the Getty Trust had their executive offices. I met Harold [M.] Williams for the first time. I’d known about him but I never made the connection. He had been second in command to Norton Simon, who was a regent here and also an art collector. He eventually built the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena. So Harold had had experience in art and cultural things, in business. Harold later became the head of the SEC in Washington and then he became the dean of the business school at UCLA. And from that position he was picked to be president of the Getty Trust. There’s a board of directors and he was the president. And his assistant, a really wonderful woman, Nancy Englander, had come from the National Endowment for the Arts. She and Bill Lacy were good friends and they were the core of this. Bill Lacy’s gone on to make a career of doing this kind of thing. He’s been the chairman of the Pritzker Prize awards for years.

Riess: So “this kind of thing” would be envisioning *what* the museum would be, or what?

Bender: Helping institutions or companies put together topflight projects. What I learned from him that was really interesting and was really helpful to me on my work on the campus—he was doing more than helping them pick the architect or make the program, he was bringing the board up to speed on what was going on in the world, which turned out to be a terrific thing, because in the Getty project what we were going to do is first get a panel of people we were considering, and then visit a lot of the things they had done, and then recommend three people to the board and take the board around to see their work. Now it's become standard; it was not so standard then.

It certainly wasn't standard to do it the way the Getty was proposing to do it, which I didn't understand right away. I can jump ahead to that. The first meeting was in Los Angeles and I flew down, and was it still PSA [Pacific Southwest Airlines] then? I think it probably cost twenty-five dollars round trip. I went down on the shuttle, and I actually stayed at the hotel where I used to stay, near Westwood. I'll jump ahead and then come back, but the second meeting we were going to meet in Dallas to see the new museum there, which was just opening. Ed Barnes had designed the museum. The director, Jack Lane, had been at San Francisco first, and he led the San Francisco MOMA board through selecting Mario Botta and the building process, and then he went to Dallas.

We were going to meet at this hotel and so I made my reservations, and then I realized this was not the kind of hotel where I usually stayed—it was a really fancy hotel called the Rosewood Mansion on Turtle Creek. And I realized—I took the airport limousine, and everyone else was arriving in not just taxis, but a couple of the people had drivers take them from the airport, and I realized everyone was flying first class. [laughing] I was in economy. This began to be a different picture of the world. And then I realized we were going to be traveling around the country looking at all these buildings in a Gulfstream, a private jet. At one point we had three different sessions of flying for a week around different places on this jet with a crew on board who would ask what we wanted for lunch or dinner, and when we were looking at the museum go out, get it, and cook it.

Riess: You knew that your way would be paid, but you're saying that the style hadn't been clear to you?

Bender: I knew a lot of rich people who had been clients and friends, and we did a lot of things with them. We would go back to our eight hundred and fifty square foot house in East Hampton from someone's big house with servants, but when we were doing things we did it together. But suddenly I was realizing it was a different feeling to go first class. It didn't seem to make much sense, but then I got used to it! [laughing]

Riess: Did you feel that you represented a kind of *other*? Was that to be your point of view?

Bender: Well, my point of view was—it was partially the socio-community environment, but also much more talking from an architectural point of view about some of the things beyond the first look, what the implications of things were about, materials. There the triangulation was really interesting, because while we were looking around I'd be able to take someone aside and say, "Look at this."

One story—when it got down to a short list, not *the* short list, I think there were seven firms, and one of them was Venturi, Scott Brown & Associates and they had done an arts building at the Oberlin campus that we went to see. We then flew to New Jersey, and on a Sunday morning we went to see a new library they had done at Princeton. Venturi met us there with William [G.] Bowen, I think was his name, president of Princeton. He came out on this snowy morning to support the Princeton grad—here was the Princeton tradition of people really sticking together. I saw where the Princeton people always have a Princeton network to draw on, and in the nicest way. It's a lot like English schools, where people you met at school at Eton or whatever become your lifetime friends.

At that meeting Venturi talked about how important materials were to him, and he showed the wood paneling on the bookcases in the library. Then the president of Princeton spoke in glowing terms about how they appreciated that Venturi built quality into this building that was just going to last forever. Then he said, "Well, it's Sunday morning and I really have to go. I'll leave you for the rest of the tour." And he pushed back this library chair that he was sitting in, and it made the biggest deepest scratch in the floor. I was sitting next to John Walsh—John was to be the director of the new Getty Museum. One of the things we had been talking about was materials, and we looked at that together: that was the ultimate triangulation, where they talked about the materials but when you looked at the materials it didn't make that much sense.

The other piece in there which is also interesting is when we put the list together it was—and Ada Louise was particularly interested in this—it was the fact that it was a partnership, Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, his wife. Although we invited the firm, we'd write the letter to her, but he would come to the meetings and she didn't come to any of the meetings.

Going back to the original meeting, the group included John Walsh who was—at that first meeting in Los Angeles he came late, maybe a day late, because his father had just died. He was just arriving around then to take this job at the Getty. He had previously been the director, I guess, of the Fine Arts Museum in Boston and he was the client for I.M. Pei in doing an addition. Clearly one of the reasons the Getty chose him is he is a great expert in Dutch painting and there was a piece of that in the Getty collection, but he'd done a really good job of putting the Boston museum addition together. I don't think they understood how much they were getting. He is one of the brightest, in every sense, one of the most sensitive people to all sorts of things, and he was an incredibly good client. He understood not just the art and how it should be, he knew how

buildings were put together, he knew about how people came to museums to do that.

Riess: While Harold Williams was the president, you're saying Walsh was the director of the museum.

Bender: The first thing I got to understand was that the Getty is not just one lump. There's the Getty Trust, and the Getty Trust operates a number of things. The project in Los Angeles was going to be a cluster of buildings and uses. One was the Getty Museum, and the second was the Getty Research Institute. A man named Kurt Foster, an architect and scholar from Switzerland, was to be the director of that and he was on the committee also. The third major component of it, and there was nobody representing them at the time because it was just being put together as a place, was the Getty Conservation Institute. The Getty operates projects all over the world where they're digging things, Pompei for example, they do research into conservation, art works, buildings, antiquities, etc., as well as doing the conservation that museums do on their collections. And at first it wasn't clear whether the administrative offices were going to be there also and they—well, there were still questions. And there were going to be lots of visiting scholars. Should there be housing for them? Questions about what the extent of the whole thing was to be.

Riess: Your group was dealing with all that, or was it an in-house thing?

Bender: You know, it's often true that people think they know what they want, and then when an architect starts asking questions they realize they have a lot more thinking to do. But I came in toward the end of the sorting.

While I have it in mind, the other two people who were on the committee who really meant a lot to me—one was Reyner Banham. Reyner Banham was an English architect, writer and scholar. I'm not even sure he was an architect, but he's written and taught in architecture schools. He wrote a wonderful book on Los Angeles. He was a mentor for Archigram and people like that who were at the cutting edge of English architecture in the fifties and sixties. And the other was Anne d'Harnoncourt. She was the director of the Philadelphia Art Museum, and her father Rene had been, I think the director of MoMA at one point, or the president of MoMA. But these were all really interesting, bright, lively people and to do anything with them was an education for everybody. And everybody took to looking forward to it.

Riess: I'm even more impressed to know *you* by association. You must have been quite excited.

Bender: I was having the time of my life! The first thing I learned—here's the richest institution in the world. They had to spend—I'm trying to remember how many hundreds of million dollars, because the charitable trust law says you have to spend 3 percent of your endowment a year. And suddenly it was not easy. Then the question came up when they were going to build in Los Angeles, would the work be safe? There are

earthquakes, there are fires—should they build in Los Angeles? There was a group who said maybe we should get land in New Mexico or someplace, where they could protect the work more.

Riess: Simultaneous with looking for an architect you were trying to figure out the program?

Bender: The program can be a factor in choosing an architect, just as the choice can influence the program. Like a cloud more than a clock, to use one of my favorite images!

We were looking for the architect. And they had decided to build it on top of this hill behind UCLA. But the minute you make a decision like that everyone comes out of the walls saying why it's wrong and what's dangerous. Of course the biggest group that came out was the Brentwood Neighborhood Association. I was used to dealing on the Berkeley campus with neighborhood associations that I thought were pretty wild, but there were I don't know how many, probably hundreds of meetings with neighborhood associations here. They didn't want it. On one side they were worried that it would make too much traffic on the freeway, the other side they were afraid that people would be looking down from the hill into their backyards. At one of the Brentwood Neighborhood Association meetings the spokesman for the neighborhood association was Eddie Fisher, so it was not your everyday neighborhood association. They brought enormous pressure about how high the building could be, how big it could be, where on the site it could be, how many cars could come. Eventually it got to be about lights, lighting: you couldn't have outdoor lighting above a certain level because there would be glare. And color, the minute they heard Richard Meier might be the architect they didn't want white.

Riess: Were they looking at models?

Bender: This was even before. It was worse before because they didn't know what it was going to be and they didn't want it. I mean, it was an empty hill. Actually it turned out it had belonged to Northrop [Grumman], the aircraft manufacturers, and they used it for something, but by the time I saw it it was basically—there was one little shack there. Quite an amazing hill that looked down on the freeway on one side, and the ocean and the city and everything, 360-degrees—a marvelous post-industrial view for a museum with a collection that cut off before the 20th century.

My question from the beginning—the minute there were questions, I said it would be worth looking—there is a site down below between UCLA and Westwood that belongs to the Veterans Administration, a big piece of land, and if you put it down there it would be so much more accessible and people could use it and it would give a tremendous spark to make a much more vital Los Angeles neighborhood. But it was pretty clear that the trustees wanted an acropolis, and it was going to be up there. The original picture felt to me much more like it was an acropolis that you were going to look up at. I think they all began to discover, as it went on,

it was going to be a place you can look out from. I don't know that the Greeks used the Acropolis that way, but you can really look out from an acropolis, and nobody had ever seen Los Angeles that way before, where the public can go up and *see* the city, see it in its relationship to the ocean, the mountains, the neighborhoods, its whole extent.

It began to be clear to me also that they really didn't have much of a collection for this museum. What you see now, a big part of it was not part of the collection then, and it's much better. Getty was not such a good collector and here they were building this wonderful museum. John Walsh, during these years, was selling some things and buying some things and the collection started to get better. They also made—there was the decision of what happens to the old and the new, and it was an early decision to change Malibu into a classical museum and make this—their charge was everything up to the twentieth century, so it was not supposed to have contemporary things. And even during the construction it began to change because John was working.

It may be coming across, I fell in love with him the first time I saw him. I wished I could talk like him, I wished I could dress like him, I wished I knew what he knew. Since then we've become really good friends, the family and all. In his very quiet way he was working on so many—he could charm everyone he worked with but he also could do wonderful things in the art world that no one expected. Two things were going on that I had no idea of. One was John was quietly buying photographic collections, and so the Getty that had a few photographs suddenly had the best photographic collection anywhere by the time the museum opened.

The other thing, we would be flying around on this jet, and the back of the jet—the interior was a little bit like the finished basement we had built in the house in Brooklyn when my parents renovated a row house and in the basement we made an upholstered bench that wrapped around a corner. Harold would sit in the back of the plane on this bench-like thing and he'd be on the phone on the plane, which was already amazing to me, and I had no idea what he was talking about. One day, somewhere in Texas, as we were getting off the plane people were holding newspapers and handing them to us, and the headline was how—well, basically Harold had been the medium between the two branches of the Getty family, and one wanted to sell Getty Oil and cash in, and the other wanted to hold it. But the trust had 10 or 20 percent of the stock, and Harold had arranged the sale while we were on the plane, that's what he was negotiating, so that when we got off the plane the Getty endowment was twice what it was when we got on the plane!

But none of that really took away—it didn't mean you could do anything you wanted, because there were these restrictions from the city on one level, and the neighborhood association. After Richard Meier was chosen they said they didn't want a white building, it would be too glary. They accepted the travertine stone, but if you look closely, the “white” panels are not the “white white” that Richard likes, the color was softened. And the neighborhood association wanted to limit the traffic—it was next to

Interstate 405 and the Getty had to build all of the connections. The whole scheme was basically it was going to be on the top of the hill. But is everyone going to drive all the way up to the top of the hill and then have a big parking garage there?

The Getty agreed to build a big parking structure at the bottom, because there was a limit in what they'd be allowed to build on the top, even though they had over nine hundred acres. They had to have deep basements so the building wouldn't come up out of the ground so high. The idea then was that they would have parking at the bottom and a monorail go up to the top. I said, "What, are you crazy? The minute one car breaks, you can't get up to the top. So you're going to have to have a fleet of buses to take people up when the monorail breaks down. Why not just do buses and invent a better bus?" But the monorail was the hot new idea, and it had been done at Disney, and so they decided that they would have a monorail. From the beginning it seemed crazy to me, because if you have a monorail you have to have a road next to it where you can run buses for when the monorail is broken.

Riess: What would you have done?

Bender: I would have just built the buses in the first place. They had a chance to build a new kind of bus and I thought it was an opportunity to solve the electric bus question. To be able to make electric buses that would go up and down the hill would have needed research, because electric buses still have trouble going up steep hills. The Getty could have solved that problem for the world instead of making a monorail or a light rail that didn't solve any real problem.

Riess: I don't understand how these things were decided.

Bender: The program was pretty much set by the time we came on. It changed some where there were things that were unclear—whether the offices would be part of it or not, the extent of the conservation institute, which got bigger as it was being planned. The issue I mentioned of whether there would be any residential facilities for visiting scholars—it was decided not to have that. It turned out most people didn't want to be up there all alone at night, they'd rather be in the city, which made sense to me.

So the first thing that went out was a call for qualifications. We made a list of about fifty international firms. We invited them basically to make a box with images and text and not to try to design anything, just to show some of their qualifications and what they would say. It was fascinating to see what came back and what didn't come back. Charles Gwathmey, who at that point would have seemed like a potential finalist, wrote thanking the committee and saying he did not want to be considered. He was not ready and would hope for an opportunity like this one day when he felt he could take it on.

[Begin Tape 21: Side A]

Bender: What everyone decided very quickly was it was too bad that Louis Kahn and the Mexican architect [Luis] Barragán had both died, because we would have picked them right then. I think everyone sort of had the feeling—as we saw more and more buildings, Kahn was clearly a master, the Kimbell Museum in Fort Worth is beautiful. And Barragán, the way he used light and worked with the land and landscape and with the climate and setting of Southern California, he would have been a natural.

We ended up going from fifty to fifteen, and from the fifteen decided to pick—it was really Harold and the Getty people, depending on how much they were investing in all this and the time involved, we were going to visit the work of seven of the architects.

Riess: This little group—did you have more people help you go through the boxes?

Bender: Well, we had help going through the boxes and doing research about getting more information. And in the process we thought about what buildings we wanted to look at, whether there were things in there that we wanted to look at even though we weren't really going to consider the architect. And in other cases where we were considering the architect, what should we look at, and what should we look at to know more about museums. We were beginning the work that was going to continue after this committee in a different way. The role of the committee was to present three names to the trustees, and then the trustees were going to go through a process like this and visit them and make the selection. So starting to put all of the material together for these trips was a big job.

We settled on this group of architects. The ones that were interviewed finally included two unusual firms in one way. One was a really solid Los Angeles firm that built hotels and things of that sort, Welton Beckett. And the other was Batey and Mack. [Andrew] Batey and [Mark] Mack were two young architects who had done a couple of houses and small buildings and not much else, but a couple of them were for art collectors. Mark Mack, eventually I helped to get him appointed at Berkeley to teach for a while and then he left and is at UCLA. The partnership broke up. Andrew Batey went to lead the CCAC—what it was called then. He took over the architecture program and got it accredited and more or less disappeared. It was pretty clear the Getty wasn't going to give the job to them, but it was actually terrific for Batey and Mack in that out of it they got to do the temporary space the Getty Institute and offices were to occupy during the ten or more years when things were going to be built. So they got some work through it, and then for lots of reasons they went in different directions. Andrew, as far as I know he's building houses again and lives somewhere in Marin County.

I.M. Pei's office was there because Harry [Henry] Cobb had done a very nice museum in Maine. The Giurgola office was there partly because they'd won the competition for the Canberra capital and had done some

galleries. I'm trying to remember—aside from Richard Meier, James Sterling, Maki, and Venturi—that's probably who the group was, I have to look back and see.

We set off to look at them, and it was fascinating to see these buildings. It was fascinating to see them, all known for how they were published originally in pictures and to be able to talk to the clients years later. Aside from the experience I had with the Princeton president and his chair, we went to visit the addition to the art center that Venturi did at Oberlin. We went to Atlanta to see the High Museum, which had only recently been finished by Richard Meier. It was very dramatic, one of the first buildings of that scale he'd done. They'd also had a tragedy. The trustees had been on some kind of a trip and had an airplane crash, and almost all of the trustees were killed, and they were starting all over again. So this quite beautiful museum had just recently been completed, a strange museum in some ways, a powerful atrium that struck you when you came in. We met with the trustees, who were ecstatic about the museum. They said it's the best place to have a party in Atlanta, and every convention that comes there uses it for a party—you could feel that. You also felt the beginning of what was going on with museums, because that's the name of the game now. Richard Meier had actually lent them some Frank Stellas, and one or two other paintings that he owned. They were the best part of the collection at that time.

But we also went to see a building in the middle of the country in an area where a group of religious pioneers founded a sort of ideal city [New Harmony, Indiana]. Richard built this building [Athenaeum], basically a viewing platform, a quite beautiful sculptural form in the meadow, to look out at what's left of the community that's been restored—with a surprising and poetic little chapel added by Philip Johnson.

It was for me sort of surreal. We flew into Portland, Maine, arrived about eight o'clock at night. It was winter, and we drove from the airport. We were going to look at the museum [Portland Museum of Art] that Harry Cobb had done, a museum that had a lot of Winslow Homer. Cobb was there to meet us, a lovely man and it's a lovely museum. But I must say, the thing I remember most is they had three, at least three limousines to take us from the airport, a ten-minute ride, to the hotel where we would be staying. There was a fully stocked bar in the limousine, with a television set. [laughter] Well, by the time we got settled in I was getting ready to go to sleep, at around eleven o'clock at night, and there was a knock on the door and it was Nancy Englander saying she and Harold were going to L.L. Bean, which is open twenty-four hours, and did I want to come? So at midnight we're standing in L.L. Bean buying plaid shirts, with this Gulfstream waiting to take us the next morning to Oberlin, I think.

The other piece of the interviewing that was really both a spectacular experience and a lesson for me is we visited several of James Stirling's buildings. He had done a new museum at Harvard and he had done one in Washington. John Walsh and I were particularly interested in James Stirling. He was as modern as anyone but he wasn't cubist, modernist in

that sense, and it wasn't postmodern—there was a vibrancy. Also there was a new Richard Meier building in Frankfurt, the Museum of Arts and Crafts, which seemed like the epitome of what Richard was doing—and the curator was a very strong woman who knew just what she wanted.

So one morning I got a call from John asking if I wanted to go to Germany for a few days, and he arranged the tickets and we flew first class. The Gulfstream was one thing, but this was first class from Los Angeles to Frankfurt. John had a rented car waiting when we arrived in Frankfurt—I'd never thought that you might rent a Porsche! Well, the Frankfurt part was right there, and the museum is very interesting, because the woman who ran it had really strong ideas about how you viewed these things, but she also wanted you to view them so you could look up beyond the cases and see the city behind it as the ultimate craft. A lot of people criticized the museum because sometimes you're looking with the light in your eyes. She was really happy that he had done what she wanted and he'd done it creatively.

And then we went to Stuttgart. We stopped overnight in Heidelberg, which was a new experience for me, a grand old university town, and then we spent the day in Stuttgart at Stirling's museum. John and I both loved it. I realized, for me, it was what I would have loved the Getty to have been able to be. It's built on a hillside in Stuttgart with, not the freeway going by that there is in California at the Getty, but a major street at the bottom and then the city. It went up the hill with a residential neighborhood behind it, and you could walk down through the museum through plazas that are intertwined. And inside, among other things, when you walked into the lobby he used a plastic flooring that was an iridescent green and a yellow that was so loud but that somehow made sense. I remember we came back and we tried to describe the color to Harold, who had had the experience of Stirling coming to these meetings carrying an attaché case, one of those plastic molded attaché cases that would be a vermilion color or something, and wearing red socks. Harold said, "You mean he uses color like his socks?" [laughter] But the trustees were interested enough and the group was interested enough so they were one of the three finalists. It was Stirling and [Fumihiko] Maki and Richard Meier.

And so we went to Japan at one point and spent ten days looking at Maki's buildings, which was double fun for me because Maki was a friend from school, an old friend. And again—such a variety of things. One was a small gallery in Kagoshima, way in the south, at a honeymoon hotel where the owner had built this gallery to start the honeymoon couples off with culture. But he also had a wonderful idea of helping them to plant a grove: the honeymoon couple would go through a ceremony where they planted a tree and then they would come back every year or every five years to visit that tree. [laughing] And we visited the guest house that Maki had designed for the YKK zipper company.

Riess:

YKK, why do I know that?

Bender: The company turned out to be much more than zippers. They ended up doing the weather-stripping sealing around curtain walls, so it's a very big company, and eventually Maki did a research center. But this was a guest house that we were visiting, where while the building was being built he sent his chef to Paris, he sent his wine people to France. As we were leaving—we visited in the morning, and he said, "Would you stay for a little lunch?" And we had a five-course lunch, the best French meal I could imagine, with these wonderful wines. Then we went off to see Toyota.

Riess: What did you look at in New York?

Bender: Well, we didn't look at—everyone knew the Metropolitan. One of the things I discovered in this is that at that time everyone in the museum world came from the Metropolitan. When we went to see the Kimbell Museum in Fort Worth, Ted Pillsbury, who was the son of the Pillsbury family I guess, one of the really good art museum directors, had trained at the Metropolitan. John Walsh trained at the Metropolitan, and Anne d'Harnoncourt, during the period when Thomas Hoving was there. That was the seed for top-notch management of art museums.

We didn't go as a group, but we all looked at the Frick, which was one of the things we were interested in for the—because this was one of the big arguments, that the Getty collection included a lot of French Renaissance furniture and furnishings. I love the Frick, the spaces and the collection.

Riess: The Getty building you really cared about was the museum building, and the rest was just going to be handled by whoever got the job?

Bender: No, we looked at libraries, we looked at some university buildings, but we mostly looked at museums. Everyone had a body of work, so the museums were sort of the key.

Personally the trip to Japan—we stayed in Kyoto a couple of nights because some of the Maki things were around there, and we stayed at the famous ryokan, Tawaraya. Sue came with us on that trip. She stayed at the ryokan, and then she decided that she was going to stay one more evening—we were going on, and then we were going to go home, I think it was that trip. She asked Maki if he could find a place for her to stay at a monastery, and he found a monastery in Kyoto where Sue stayed for a week. She tells wonderful stories of being all alone in this monastery—it was a big site but there were only a few people there and they didn't speak English. She went off on day trips and visits to ceramics villages and artists. But the story she tells is there's a knock on the door and these two Japanese men are there. First she was worried there was something wrong.

Riess: They gestured for her to come?

Bender: Yes, and so she went with them into the kitchen where there were about five or six men, and they were asking her if she liked jazz, and they were playing jazz. At any rate, also on that trip—I think it was that trip where

we spent the day with John Walsh. I guess the rest of the people went back. Sue was going to stay on at the monastery, but John stayed on a day and introduced us to the Philosopher's Walk, and we spent the day doing that together. And again, it's triangulation: I learned so many different things that had nothing to do with what I expected.

Riess: In your notes you have something about lost opportunities. I'm not sure what that refers to. Maybe you've already dealt with it?

Bender: Oh, Yes. Well, it's related to the school. I was really impressed with Reyner Banham. He became a good friend. We went to visit him in England after that, and he kept coming back to the US. At that point at Berkeley we had, I think, the strongest history faculty of any school in the country. Spiro Kostoff, Norma Evenson, we had younger people beginning to come. I realized that Reyner Banham would like to come. He had been at Buffalo for a while and wrote an interesting book about American industrial architecture, silos and industrial buildings. He had also written his great book about L.A. I proposed to invite him to Berkeley. I did invite him, he gave talks, he's a great storyteller, he knows everything, he has a wonderful energy. The students and faculty loved him. So did people in art and history.

It turned out Spiro was horrified. Spiro didn't want that kind of history, it wasn't rigorous or real history to him. Banham was more interested in contemporary things and contemporary life issues, and perhaps Spiro didn't want competition. There was a big internal argument, but it was hard at that point without Spiro and Norma wanting—they saw him not as supporting them but being competition. He ended up—at that point I was beginning to work at Santa Cruz on the master plan, and I introduced him to the people at Santa Cruz. They hired him and he spent the last few years before he died, he was down there, and he started organizing a group to study the history of the campus there and the history of Santa Cruz, which is interesting. Most of those redwood trees were originally cut down as firewood to make the fuel for the cement in those plants right near, the limestone mines—you pass the cement plant on the highway—to rebuild San Francisco after the earthquake.

Riess: There wasn't an architecture school there.

Bender: No, it was a general course in the Art History department. And then he got very sick, and it was clear he was going to die. Even though, the minute he got sick he went to a UC hospital, and the university was really trying to take care of him, it was clear that in the long run he'd be better off going back to England. When Philip Johnson heard that he was going back he asked him to stop in New York, and he made a dinner for him at the Four Seasons and invited all the architects, and he went back to England and he died not longer after. It's another side of Philip Johnson.

Riess: Was Philip Johnson in the running here?

- Bender: No. The firm submitted something for the Getty but it was never really serious, for all kinds of reasons. One, we were looking at age also, because this was going to be a long project.
- Riess: So you were doing this—you'd come back from Venice but you were doing this how, on weekends? I mean what kind of permission did you give yourself to keep dashing around in first class Gulfstreams?
- Bender: Some nice things about being the dean. [laughter]
- Riess: I mean wasn't there huge envy?
- Bender: Yes, there was a lot of envy, a lot of envy. I think it was almost—it was nicer to think of it as envy but I think it was different, it was, "Why him?" I think part of what I dealt with the whole time I was dean, and still have it to some extent, is people not understanding why people ask me to do things, not them. And it's not that I do what they do better, it's I do something that they don't do. Recently I read something about deference that touched me, another dimension to the word, and that is the ability to listen, to hear what someone is saying and to reflect some of it back, from the classroom to the Getty board to the Japanese developers.
- Riess: Well, that's what we're trying to get at here.
- Bender: Well, and that's why the last piece I wanted to talk about with the Getty was that I realized as we were moving farther along and Richard was—you hire, after all the search, a world-class architect because you like what he's doing, and you find you're in a situation where the local community doesn't want a white building from someone who's known for white, and doesn't want a metal panel building from someone whose known for metal panels and glass. And Richard finds himself doing a stone building on top of a hill, without the ability to control all the landscape as he wanted.
- Then the argument was about whether the galleries would be white. John was sure from the beginning that the galleries couldn't all be white because, remember, this is not a contemporary collection, and some of them had to be rooms with part of the—some of them had these rooms of Renaissance furniture and furnishings. So in John's mind there were always going to be some colored walls. Richard hoped to convince, and kept showing—there were beautiful models built of the lighting. You could actually crawl into them and test the lighting. But the issue of whether the walls would be colored or white—Richard lost that. They brought in Thierry Despont, an interior architect mostly from New York. There was this battle. Richard wanted white and he wasn't going to move from that. Despont had all kinds of color ideas and fabric ideas and he moved toward Richard. But, well, Richard had sensed that he wasn't moving at all. So it was a big disappointment for him.
- Riess: Was the committee still involved?

Bender: Well, it changed to be a design review committee. I had less to do with it but I was observing. And at that point Richard would call me sometimes because through the final stages I had been someone who could explain. I could be an advocate for the three finalists, or make points that the trustees weren't seeing—translate “architect” into other languages, which is a big part of what I was doing in here, what I do well.

Riess: Was it taking the arguments to the trustees, or helping the trustees see it?

Bender: Helping the trustees see what was meant to be, and translating in a sense.

And then there was a famous argument about the garden, which basically Richard also lost. That was more complicated, because one of the original ideas we had was it would stand on this hillside in that climate which was like Italy, and there was a wonderful older landscaper in San Diego that I'd come across when we were doing the planning there who was making proposals for planting olive trees on the side of the hill. The idea was that it would be a natural landscape that came up to this very hard paved area, and then it would run up to the courtyards, and then it would be a paved area with blocks of planting and it would run down to the natural landscape. In time the trustees, John Walsh, and Harold Williams, had the idea that part of the landscape could be thought of as an art commission, and so they brought Robert Irwin in to do that garden. For me, whether you liked the garden or not, you lost that sense of the natural landscaping.

[End Tape 21: Side A]

[Begin Tape 21: Side B]

Riess: You were saying there was a power struggle, and the trustees were tired of Richard?

Bender: Well, tired may not be the right word, but neither is fed up. They got tired of him finally because he wouldn't let go, and in that way they got tired of him. The biggest story was Ada Louise said at one point this is Richard's chance to move to a new level. He was at the top of the profession in one way, but doing more or less the same kind of thing on a bigger and bigger scale. This was giving him a chance to do something which was both more urban, a public place in a different way, a different scale, and we thought Richard would do it, could do it. And to some extent he did. But what I understood later and I think you can see—what Richard couldn't really do is take on the community aspect, the people aspect. So the place where the Getty people probably rubbed most with Richard was he wanted to do the office interiors and the cafeterias. And by the time it was moving toward construction the staff didn't want a Richard Meier interior. He would be horrified to come in and see people had things hanging on their desks and putting things around. So the deeper conflict came when he was losing a lot of the interiors because the Getty people didn't want to live with them.

He was designing things for people who were coming to visit, and here was one of the great public places and he had the opportunity to make on this acropolis a great meeting place, a great looking-out place. To a certain extent it happened: the way you go in and out of the museum with views all the time is I think quite successful. The feeling of being on the plaza, the feeling of the people is much less than it could have been. I think the Getty as it operates now, even in its remote place, has a real influence on the culture of Los Angeles, as well as the world. But it misses the opportunity to be an urbane—I shouldn't quite say that—a community experience, a public sharing of a place where people have that triangulation experience. It tends to be more that you go and you look at the gallery, or a performance in the auditorium—the study center is only partially open to the people.

Riess: So is this because it's on a hill or because of the architecture?

Bender: Well, I think for me it was the opportunity to look at how you could do it on a hill. The hill became a problem to be overcome rather than an opportunity. So, in the landscaping and the land use there was a chance to use the hill, to open it up. But finally it was used to make an artwork on top of the hill—you know, everyone admires the Greek villages on the islands or Italian hill towns. Finally, the constraints, they were beyond the architect and finally beyond the Getty, to have it come tumbling down the hill, to have it joined, to have it any number of things that it could have been. It didn't happen that way.

The film *The Concert of Wills: Making the Getty Center* shows some of those arguments. It certainly shows that Richard lost the battle of the landscape. People love Robert Irwin's gardens. In the end Nancy—I shouldn't say in the end, somewhere along in the process, Nancy and Harold married and they commissioned Richard Meier to build their house in Santa Barbara, where they live today on a ranch with a quite beautiful house, and they love Richard Meier's architecture on that level. Harold has had an office in the Getty study center and I have visited him there and had lunch with him. It certainly works on that level; the people in the study center are happy with it. The place where it missed is where it could have gone beyond being a building on top of a hill, to be a model of how an urban place can be on a hill and be part of Los Angeles, of how the complex could have been a public cultural place beyond what's inside the walls.

Riess: The Getty is so much about architecture. I don't know whether that's good, bad, or indifferent, but it's my first response, that I'm in architecture. Do you know what I mean? Materials, architecturally defined spaces, pieces of travertine.

Bender: Well, I think it's a building of first impressions, not a living building. And it loses its power over time, some of the spectacular parts of the first impression. Maybe you could look at it as the last museum of the twentieth century. Gehry's [Guggenheim Bilbao] museum opened right about that time, which may be the first museum of the twenty-first

century. I'm not sure of that, I may still be stuck on form, even though I talk about a museum "without walls", but there was a change. The Gehry museum came out of an industrial milieu that it embraced rather than being aloof from it. The Gehry museum, you know they rush around a lot to try to keep the titanium shiny, but it doesn't matter. What the Getty needs is to let the stone get more sun, or wear, or patina on it, and so far they're trying to keep it pristine.

I think that's one of the problems of so called modern architecture, that it's conceived to be new and there's not a lot of expectation or preparation for aging. One of the questions I asked through the whole Getty process is why are we building it all at once? Well, they made it very clear it wasn't *we* who were building it, it was *they* who were building it, and they were building it all at once. But my sense is its biggest problem is it's finished. They built themselves into a box legally where I don't know how it's going to get added onto, or why it would be added onto, whereas if they started more with a museum and a study center and added the other pieces, stayed in Santa Monica longer and moved the offices piece by piece, added the conservation things over time, rather than as a lump, and let it evolve more like a city.

Riess: Is that something you brought to the discussion?

Bender: Well, it was something that we brought up early, and for a number of reasons it was about having it all in place. Some of it was—the day the complex opened with the grand party and dinners and all is when Harold stepped down and Barry Munitz took over. At that dinner some of the new directors of the trust were announced and the old ones were dying or leaving. For me it felt—it turned out to be an end rather than a beginning.

They've also had legal issues that came up, so that it doesn't feel like there has been a continuity that's building on it. They jumped then to Malibu and redid Malibu quite well. I think they made it a much more living place than it was before. I think they'll come back to refocus on the hill. I think it's going to be there a long time. Not everything is appreciated or reaches its ripeness right away. I think there's enough of a structure in there so it can eventually become a richer building. Just the way that the Louis Kahn buildings, both the Salk Center and the Kimbell in Fort Worth, had enormous battles about adding onto, and finally they have the [Renzo] Piano addition in Fort Worth, which I think makes it better in some ways, it certainly doesn't make it worse. The addition to the Salk Center I think definitely makes it a better building. David Reinhart, who did the addition, worked with Kahn originally. I think adding on, keeping it living, makes them better buildings, and so I think when the Getty goes on, when someone first chops into one of those walls to open it or add something to it, or take something out of it, it'll start to have a different kind of life.

For me it was a fascinating but not very difficult decision—as the role of our committee was ending and they were moving toward the construction, Harold asked if I would be interested in the job that Steve [Stephen D.]

Rountree has now to be in charge of the construction process. It was fascinating for me for a while, but I realized I didn't want to do that. I think Steve, who came—he was very young when he took it on and he really grew. He handled it well, he's now the continuity.

Riess: You would have been in the middle of every battle. That doesn't sound like a hard decision, and besides which, you couldn't have done that and been dean.

Bender: Oh no, no, no.

Riess: You were not loving being dean it sounds like.

Bender: No, I was enjoying being dean because it also gave me—you asked about being away doing those things and I realized that—well, we started this session talking about New York and California, and I don't think of myself as someone who came to Berkeley and brought New York, or brought the East Coast. There are plenty of people who are coming and have done that. But in another way the school was more introverted, although everyone went out from it. The view of most of the programs, the view of where things were going, was looking back rather looking forward. Wurster was a powerful figure, and what he started was being supported. But I don't know—if Wurster came a generation later he would have been doing something else.

I think the school has been blocked both by the bureaucracy of the whole system and the changing economics, but also by vision. I was able to bring back ideas and introduce the school to things that I've seen and done. I went to the American Academy, for me, but since then there's been a regular train of people going to the American Academy. Don Lyndon went, Allan Jacobs went, more recently Walter Hood has been there. Jim Melchert went as director for five years. Berkeley is on the American Academy list now the way many of the eastern schools that are closer are. People go to the Getty now in different ways, most often through the study center, and the Getty's influence has been seen. But on the campus, in the same way, because of my wandering through the business school and the law school and some of those things—the programs are more integrated now. Not as much as they might be or could be. I don't think it's a rationalization to say that my outside interests during this period were not just for my personal interests, but they brought new things to the school.

Riess: When you were in the Gulfstreams with the Getty people, were they interested in what it was that you actually did? I mean did they ask you about the future of architecture and about environmental design?

Bender: Yes. Well, we talked a lot about it. We weren't all people who flew around in Gulfstreams before. There are people who fly around in Gulfstreams more now maybe, but I think for all of us it was an amazing thing. I can say it's changed the building on the campus, because from my

first experiences back then, when it was time to build a new building I managed to get the clients out to see things.

When Rod Park, who was the vice chancellor then, was reorganizing the life sciences organizationally into a whole and also making a physical concentration in one precinct there, when those buildings were all being considered, the faculty made a program that had very little imagination in it. For the first life sciences building I took them around. We went to Stanford to look at the hospitals and labs. I took them to Seattle to look at the Hutchinson, we went out to eastern Washington to look at research centers there. I took them to an architect's office, one of the architects, NBBJ, that was being considered for the project in Seattle in one of those old buildings near Pioneer Square where they had carved an atrium into the building and made a roof deck and a greenhouse where the staff could gather. And the faculty people looked at me and said, "Could we do something like that?" Each of the faculty had a picture of a building like where they did their PhD. The guy who studied in Pittsburgh saw high-rise buildings with elevators and so on.

I realized that you make changes right off, and we expect change to come from the top down. But the change more often comes from opening people's eyes. And very often, opening people's eyes is not something mystical but something right before their eyes that they never thought they could do, or touch, or be, or whatever. It's my way of teaching. And for me it's the story of what I've seen in my work and my life. Everything has been laid out as if it's either a straight line or it's from the top down, but the way things work best is when it comes from the ground up. And that's got to do with building, but when you make a building and put people in it, it has a different kind of life than when you make a building with people and invite people to be a part of it. The more you energize—architects' offices are very often more interesting places than the buildings they build. The more you can turn students loose in a school to use the space, rather than telling them *how* to use the space, the more successful you are.

Now these places, universities, are becoming more and more research centers, and everyone comes with a picture of a research center that's an old picture. One of the biggest problems we have, and the Getty illustrates it in one way and Gehry's building does in another way, is they are conceived from the outside, and it's not clear what the life is going to be from the inside. Gehry's building, everyone goes to see Gehry's building and no one remembers what's in it, and there's not much in it: the building in Bilbao is about being in the building in Bilbao. For a museum in a community like that, to be building something that specific without—it will evolve in some way, but the problem with so many institutions is that it seems about leaders figuring out how it should be. The idea *should* be how you make, how you introduce people to a vision that they can play a role in.

If you come to the Berkeley campus and walk through it today you see it in one way. If you understand the structure of it, that it's a core of

buildings built between those two creeks that expand out and touches the city with things which are more involved with everyday life as opposed to the more traditional libraries and things of that sort in the core, as you walk through it you see it in a different way. And also if you've got anything to do with it you make your decisions in a different way with that understanding. When you make a project like the Getty, and make it in stone boxes, you're precluding or making much more difficult the next step. And then when you treat the stone boxes with such reverence, you're delaying the time until it can have its next step.

Riess: That's interesting, the idea of the next step. Music, you play it and that changes it, but art, where it's housed might change it.

Bender: Or how it's shown. I talked earlier about my father buying me Malraux's book about museums when I was a teenager. The subtitle was *A Museum Without Walls*, and what Malraux was beginning to look at is how photography and seeing things, seeing the pieces, could change how you see the whole. When I was involved with the Getty and we were visiting conservation and research places, I remember going to the lab at the Getty where they were cleaning paintings, and you could see in the computer, you could blow it up and see the pieces, hands and fingers and rings, you could feel the artist's hand, you could see those pieces as art.

When the Pompidou Center opened there's one floor that has the modern paintings on it, and after a while they changed this piece and changed that, and now all of these museums—MoMA changes the collection from time to time because each curator tells a story in a different way. At the Pompidou one of the curators decided to arrange the paintings by color, and there was a room in which the different Picassos and Braques, the brownish ones, were in another room and so the paintings had a different kind of life. You don't come back and repaint it, although de Kooning did. De Kooning, every time he could get his hands on one of his old paintings he started to rework it.

Riess: Please say more about why you didn't want Steve Rountree's job.

Bender: Well, one of my first actions would have been to bring in Steve, or someone like him, to do what I'm not good at. I think I would have done the job with a different focus. When they spoke to me about it I didn't think very much. My first thought is it would be the most interesting laboratory of building construction that you could have. You could use it not only to build a building but to experiment. Now, they did that in a way, there are all kinds of experiments in there but they're invisible. And so it could have been looked at as one of the great teaching experiences of the way buildings get built.

Riess: And you would bring students to it.

Bender: Well, I would bring students, but everyone's a student. And part of what the problem of the university is, is how to separate what you're teaching the student-student and the rest of the world. Because the student-student

is the rest of the world in a way, and I think one of the problems—you know we say well, that's too difficult. You can't talk about physics with people unless you've learned all this. But people are becoming fascinated with issues of the brain that are coming out now and with issues around physics and string theory and things of that sort. And one of the interesting things is to take away the primacy of the expert, and the monopoly, and to ask the expert to engage more in relating what he's doing to an outer world and to learn from it in the process. I think the university with the physicists here and the biologists there, you know it's changing, not because the university is deciding, it's because it's being *decided*.

It comes from things that are happening outside. If you're working in any of these fields now you have to cross over the boundary. You can't work on a campus without being part of the network that gets bigger and more involved all over the world. The university hasn't figured out how to enable that in this new way, and that's the real challenge at this point. John Parman and I are beginning to look at a paper, which may or may not get written, which we're calling "Cities and Universities." John calls it that, while I've been calling it "A University Without Walls." While universities are trying to do things themselves, build more housing, build another library, it's being taken away from them. The world outside is providing housing and community. The library is changing form completely because of the way the world is changing.

The world is changing, and Cal and the UC system need to open their vision to what universities can become. Once UC and other traditional universities lose their fixation on keeping things as they were in an era of falling revenues, once they get a glimpse of where the university might go if people dreamed and schemed hard enough, wonderful things will happen!

[End Tape 21: Side B]

Interview 12: March 3, 2011

[Begin Tape 22: Side A]

Bender: BRIDGE in a sense is a prototype, or maybe example of how things that I really cared about through my whole career come together in a form like what I'd like them to be.

We talked about how my first interest in architecture came from seeing a house being built, making a house, and then I got into engineering, and architecture as a way to get deeper into designing and building. But through it all the thread has been—I mentioned Siegfried Giedion who said, "Architecture begins in construction and ends in town planning." In a sense each thing I've done in my career has been like that. I start with something like a detail or a construction method, which leads to an architectural issue, which can't be solved without considering the next scale. Prefabrication can't be done without starting to consider the architecture and the life of the building, and you can't do the building, in a sense, until you deal with the community, which gets to be a planning problem. They're really all one problem put together, and some of the biggest problems that come up is that people take the pieces apart and start to consider them separately.

One of the attractions of the College of Environmental Design, when I came here, and the reason that I decided to stay and even to take on the deanship, was the opportunity to start to look at these issues without the boundaries between them. I remember talking to someone one time and holding up my hand and saying it's like your hand where you have these separate fingers but you also have the space between the fingers. All the schools, all over, have always separated engineering and then architecture, and then if they have landscape and larger scale regional planning, we have the feeling it's all getting touched on. But you understand that there are issues of people and their lives that contribute to things. There's the whole economic system that shapes things. The space between the fingers is as important as the fingers.

Riess: Was this a kind of holistic thinking that was part of the seventies would you say?

Bender: Well, I think the cycle of going from construction to architecture to planning, and then it comes back to another detail and goes around again, I think looking holistically and then stepping back and doing pieces repeats over and over again, getting richer with each cycle. There are different times when suddenly it becomes a fad to look at structural forms, or then some economic program comes in or there's a devastation and someone's rushing to build relief housing and suddenly people start the cycle all over again.

But the thing about BRIDGE Housing, as summing it up for me, is what started out as if it could be one more study has ended up taking on all the different aspects of architecture, planning, landscape architecture, but also

all the community aspects of dealing with issues of people and their lives, how to make housing affordable for people who are locked out of quality for one reason or another. But on still another level you realize how much—at some point you have to design programs, whether it's a nonprofit or whether it's government programs or financing programs or something of that sort. And each time, wherever you start, you get entangled with the others as you start to do the job better.

Riess: Let's get an idea of where the idea came from. I have read that BRIDGE was formed from an anonymous grant. Was it formed in response to previous discussions, or how did that all work?

Bender: The anonymous donor and the grant is part of the wonderful mystique behind BRIDGE, and in a sense one of the things that's been special in the twenty-five years or so that's it's been there, is that aside from what it does, which other people do in different forms, there's been the sense that it's special because of the way it started. What happened was an anonymous donor, whose name was not known till the twenty-fifth anniversary—it's just the last couple years we found out, we used to speculate on who it was—this anonymous donor was Bill [William M.] Brinton, Sr., who had had some involvement in local government in the Bay Area and was concerned about the fact that there wasn't a good supply of housing for lower income working people, and he made this generous and imaginative grant to the San Francisco Foundation to do something about housing. He didn't say anything about how. The San Francisco Foundation didn't quite know what to do and they made an interesting move, they asked Alan [L.] Stein.

Riess: He's a finance person?

Bender: Well, he comes out of a business school background. He was at Goldman Sachs in New York and then was sent out, or came out, to open the Goldman Sachs office here. He and his wife Ruth came out here about the same time we did, he to start the Goldman Sachs office and Sue and I to visit the school, and then decided to stay. We didn't know, I didn't know him then, although it turned out we did know each other, that we'd both been waiters and busboys in the Catskill and Adirondack Mountains many years ago. And he played basketball at Columbia at the time that I was swimming in competitions there. So I was a waiter and a lifeguard, and he was a waiter and they did basketball exhibitions and things of that sort.

Riess: And Brinton must have been part of what's called the Bay Area Council?

Bender: I don't think—it may have even been before the Bay Area Council.

Riess: In the BRIDGE history online they say the Bay Area Council and its business members were voicing concern that high housing costs were undermining the regions workforce and the economy.

Bender: Well, that certainly was true. I'm not clear about the Bay Area Council at that date. I couldn't find the paper that had more of his background when

it was released. It was released officially at a meeting that the Bay Area Council organized and where they gave a prize to BRIDGE for its accomplishments over the years. And that was the time, before that the son of this man, Bill [William W.] Brinton, Jr., had been contacted through the San Francisco Foundation and there was some connection that only a few people knew. Many of us thought we knew who the donor might be. When his father died they opened up the file, so we knew who it was, and nobody I know had guessed correctly.

The San Francisco Foundation came to Alan because with his—not because of his Goldman Sachs background, but because he actually retired from Goldman Sachs at a very young age and he was looking for other things to do and started to get involved in a number of public activities. He was on the board of the museum in San Francisco [SFMOMA] and the theater group [ACT], and he was a very effective member of loads of boards. He also, when he had some free time after he'd retired from Goldman Sachs, he was interested in some issues of housing and planning and I said, "Well, why don't you come and take Bill Wheaton's class?" Bill Wheaton was my predecessor as dean. He also gave the first course in housing at Harvard, and I took that in 1951. After he retired as dean he taught the introductory course at Berkeley. So Alan came, he took Bill Wheaton's course and he took also an introductory design course from Lars Lerup, who was a very innovative, energetic young faculty member who has since gone on to be the dean at Rice.

Not long after that Jerry Brown came to office in California as governor, and he was looking for someone to be secretary of the business and transportation office [Business, Transportation, and Housing Agency]. With his interest in business and foundations and housing, Jerry Brown, who was not used to appointing Republicans, asked Alan if he would head that department, not just housing and community planning—the state architect is in the department and most of transportation was there. Alan took it as an interesting problem and he went there.

Riess: Alan got interested, he took classes, but how did it get—

Bender: Well, I know, this is sort of a preview. So the San Francisco Foundation calls Alan up and tells him they have a—it was about between \$800,000 and \$900,000—grant to do something about affordable housing, and would he be interested in leading a committee to figure out what to do with it? Fortunately for me, Alan called me. It was the summertime, and Alan and Ruth used to rent a place in Martha's Vineyard, and Sue and I were in Amagansett at our house and we were very proud of ourselves for biking more and more. He called and he said, "I'd like to talk more about this thing." I said, "Sounds terrific to me." And Sue and I decided we would go to Martha's Vineyard by bicycle.

Riess: To Martha's Vineyard by bicycle?

Bender: To Martha's Vineyard from East Hampton. We ended up actually riding our bikes to Montauk. There are no ferries or anything, but a fisherman

friend took us to Block Island. We rode the bikes across Block Island, which takes about three minutes, and took the ferry from Block Island to Newport where we had planned to spend the night, but it was the time of the America's Cup and there was no hotel room in sight. So we went on for a while until it was getting dark. Finally we found a motel where we stayed overnight. And the next morning we bicycled to New Bedford, where you get the ferry to Martha's Vineyard, and then to their house. At that point the fact that their house was seventeen miles away at the other end didn't matter. It was flat.

Riess: So fabulous.

Bender: Somewhere along the way we were driving alongside of a freeway, and it was a long upward slope and Sue said, "You said it was flat. You said you'd driven it many times and it's flat." And I said, "Yes, I've driven it many times, and it's flat when you're in the car."

Anyway, we spent a few days talking about this donation and organizing a committee. Alan had a group of people from finance, from real estate, and between us we knew foundations and government and university people, but mostly Alan's group of people was put together.

Riess: West Coast people?

Bender: All West Coast people, and all local Bay Area.

Riess: But your first real talk about it was in Martha's Vineyard?

Bender: Yes. But that's the way the world seemed to work. Well, the last part of the story is when it was time to go back to Long Island Sue had said, "I don't want to ride back." And we ended up chartering a small plane to fly us back to the East Hampton Airport. We got out on a Friday evening and unloaded our bikes, just as the Learjets were coming in with the weekend celebrities, and I thought that was sort of a nice way to start the enterprise.

But in the next year this committee was put together, and it included people from the Bank of America, from Bay Area Council, Dean Macris, who was then the city planner of San Francisco, was on the committee. There were a few academics. Ken Rosen, who is the head of the housing center at the business school, a professor, was on it. There was someone from one of the unions, carpenters union maybe, or an official. It included Gerson Bakar, a public spirited developer; Preston Butcher of Lincoln Properties; Tony Frank, then chairman of First National Bank—he later became the US Postmaster General; Kent Colwell of Transamerica; Clark Wallace, past president of the National Association of Home Builders; Susanne Wilson, a supervisor in Santa Clara County; and Sunne Wright McPeak, a Contra Costa County supervisor. Altogether about fifteen people.

Riess: They didn't need to be talked into it? They all knew it was something that needed to happen?

- Bender: Well, they all came from someplace that would have had an interest. People at the Bay Area Council were very interested because one of the issues for local communities is affordable housing for employees.
- Riess: Exactly, yes.
- Bender: People from the union were interested because there are issues around—. But they were all people who had some connection to housing, and as they started to put the group together it sounded interesting for everyone to be there. It was a most unusual group, and from the beginning it had such a good spirit. Everyone was trying to make something happen. But for me it was interesting to be on a do-good group that decided very early that they wanted to *do* something, not make a report.
- Riess: Ah! That's right, because you could have just made a report or you could start to build houses. Is that what you mean?
- Bender: I don't think anyone started off saying we could build houses. But as we started to meet, and because of who the people were—there was one other former HUD person who was hired to run the meetings and to do the organization. But as it went on, some of the people who were developers, like Gerson Bakar was one of the original people, said, "But why don't we build houses?" We looked around and there were nonprofits, but they were relatively small. We looked at who was on the committee and at the San Francisco Foundation with this—\$800,000 looked a lot bigger in those days but it was still clear we would have to do some fund-raising.
- So the decision was to set up an organization to start to build affordable housing, and one of the first questions that came up was who was going to run it? Nobody on the committee was the person who had the time to do it. And for me it was interesting: these were businessmen who were used to setting things up and doing business mostly. So it very quickly was decided that we would make an organization. We started thinking about who could be the leader of the organization. Alan Stein had brought Don Turner from Berkeley, where I had invited him, to be the head of housing and community planning in the state government, and he became our hope. He was leaving the governor's office.
- Riess: He became your hope?
- Bender: Yes, you couldn't have designed or specified someone more perfect. Those of us who knew him, on top of everything he knew and what he'd done, he had the most amazing spirit. He'd infuse people with good energy, make difficult tasks feel do-able.
- Don said that he was interested in it, but he would only come if he could bring Rick Holliday as vice president. Don was to be called president; I don't think we had thought of a vice president. But he wanted to bring Rick Holliday who he had met at Cal. When Don went to Sacramento, Rick Holliday, when he graduated, went to work for Mercy—I think it was Mercy Housing, one of the nonprofits in Hayward, starting with

Meals on Wheels but getting involved with housing. At any rate we hired Don Turner and Rick Holliday as the president and vice president. Rick Holliday looked like he was right out of high school, and in fact when he went to interview with one of the people who was from Texas, from one of the big financial companies, Preston Butcher, a very Texan sort of guy, Rick says when he came in the office Preston said, “Come in Sonny.” And it was all like that, and no one quite knowing what we were doing but thinking we could do it.

Riess: You refer to Mercy Housing, nonprofit housing, what is that and why was this clearly going to be so different?

Bender: Mercy Housing, I think, has its base in some church organizations. I think it was seen as a more—the idea with BRIDGE was to come not with the kind of always eked-out backing that most nonprofits have, but coming with enough to really invest in innovation and in quality projects and to make it what would be a demonstration for how people could operate at a higher level.

There was one other piece in the background that was interesting. The thing that had brought Don Turner and Alan Stein together, when they were both working together in Sacramento, one of the issues that came up was building the new freeway, it’s called Century Freeway, in Los Angeles, which was the transportation part of Alan’s domain. In order to build the freeway they had to move a lot of houses and people. And so the two different wings of that domain came together, and Don Turner enthusiastically pushed the idea that this was an opportunity, not just to get rid of, buy off the people in a way, but to start the state building quality housing to accommodate the people who were being moved. And that program is one of the most successful in the country of using the problem of moving people to make room for the freeway into the opportunity to start to build new housing.

Riess: I think of relocations often being disastrous.

Bender: Well, and they’ve been disastrous—that’s why slum clearance had such a bad reputation. This idea now becomes a usual thing. More recently in San Francisco, where some of the freeways that were taken down, and the ramps of the freeways, it freed up space, and the city is looking at when that strip is turned into a road to make on, not Odessa Boulevard—

Riess: Around Octavia?

Bender: Octavia Boulevard. Alan Jacobs was asked to consult on what kind of a boulevard it would be, and the city had the idea that you would build housing alongside. And there’s a program now to build infill affordable housing along that, and a similar initiative along the route of the Third Street Light Rail. One of the issues that came up very early is how do you make housing affordable? And it was clear very early that you don’t make housing affordable because you have some great idea of prefabrication or bringing in houses to the site or you get a better contractor. The cost of the

building is a small part of the whole thing and there is little left to squeeze. So one of the opportunities was to learn to use government programs better and to use some of the government programs on top of—there were different government programs. But also have a better knowledge of what the financial industry was investing in and how you could do that. Very quickly the government programs started to disappear, and so one of the things that BRIDGE has done over the years, which is a real innovation, is each time one of the government programs disappeared, figuring out how to use something else to do housing. Either how to use a new government program or, in more and more cases, to go into the project on a more complicated basis.

One example is that the idea of tax credits started to appear, and the government would give tax credits to companies, and that would come to a fund that would help support affordable housing—but now the tax credits are disappearing. But another idea was that so many of the local communities have rules that you have to provide a certain amount of affordable housing when you build new housing. Many of the builders didn't want to, or couldn't take on the burden of how you find the people who qualify, how you make sure they qualify, and be able to manage the part of the project that was the affordable housing and take it off the hands of the commercial developer. What it basically said is if you build 20 percent of what you build as affordable you can make it up on the market rate. So in a sense, in the price of the new market rate housing is the subsidy for the affordable. And so as time went on BRIDGE started by joining with for-profit builders and handling the nonprofit side of it.

- Riess: Who actually made decisions? Who found the government subsidy programs?
- Bender: Well, part of what the committee had done and supported during the first year was research to put some facts and figures together and start to build an organization.
- Riess: Could they go to agencies anywhere in the country and find a model for this—or was it really unique?
- Bender: Well, it turned out it was more unique than we realized at the time, because once—because there was the \$800,000, there was enough money to start to build houses and start to learn from the first ones, and also, to start to have a reputation. (I'm coming back to the question of was there anyone else.) The other thing that we decided early is that it was important to *manage* these, not to simply build them and turn them over. To avoid the properties decaying, but more to provide a better quality of life for the people who are coming—these are mostly families, these are people who are working and whose working income is below the medians, above public housing but lower than the general level of housing—we were going to manage them as well.
- Riess: Was that a requirement for residence that they be in that income slot?

Bender: Well, if you're going to qualify for any of the things that have some government program you have to see that everyone qualifies, that they have all the right incomes and jobs and whatever. And then, as it turns out, figure out how you pick the hundred out of a thousand who apply.

Riess: Yes.

Bender: The first employee that they hired—Don and Rick started asking around for secretarial help and Susan Johnson came and took a part-time job as secretary.

[End Tape 22: Side A]

[Begin Tape 22: Side B]

Bender: Actually she was the staff as we got started. Susan Johnson now is the vice president in charge of all of the management and operations with probably three hundred people working on these projects.

Riess: I see it requires so much to make this work and so many specialized people.

Bender: Yes, it took a lot of work to make it start; it took an enormous amount from individual people on the board, each of whom had different expertise. Some were contractors, some came from mortgage loan departments from some of the banks that were giving mortgages. Some were government officials: we had Sunne McPeak who went from supervisor to state senator from the area around Concord and also Susanne Wilson who eventually became the state senator who represented the area around Santa Clara and San Jose. Contractors like Dennis O'Brien became active board members, and Angelo J. Siracusa, president of the Bay Area Council.

Riess: These people were putting a lot of volunteer time in. They weren't giving more money, though, to make it work?

Bender: The directors never were asked to give money. Now we make donations for different things. But the idea was to get something started that didn't depend on individual contributions. No one really donates money to BRIDGE. The city or the local community is happy to have a partner doing the housing and having a reputation for doing well and running it well, because they have to meet certain goals. The contractors who need to do some affordable housing have the same needs. The federal government has a need to have this happening because the government programs are all disappearing, and so rather quickly the big foundations, like the Ford Foundation in particular, got interested. Soon big corporations like Chevron were donating. And a lot of this had to do with Don's energy and the sort of spirit that it started with—you know, "can do."

- Riess: The San Francisco Foundation, once they made their donation they signed off?
- Bender: Yes, the money was in a fund that we could use. The San Francisco Foundation helped a lot: Robert Fisher, the director, was on a campaign committee and we had our meetings in their conference room. They gave some secretarial help to start. But we didn't—I think the first houses were under construction three years after the donation. Very quickly after that—people like the Ford Foundation were an example—part of the job in the early years would be pointing out both to the government and the Ford Foundation together that this is an interesting model. Eventually the Ford Foundation gave a big grant, which again was basically seed money to get projects going. The Ford Foundation has used BRIDGE as an example in their work in other regions. Often grants are extended. The projects eventually pay back some of the money.
- Riess: I wondered.
- Bender: BRIDGE will need its own oral history soon; I'm afraid I'm not the best person to answer many of these questions. But BRIDGE basically operates on a basis where it earns a little money every year that stays in the system, but no one is taking out profit. And part of what we're doing is managing these units, which are now—the last I heard there are over fifteen thousand units and close to fifty thousand people living in BRIDGE housing units.
- Riess: Your description in *Places* of what BRIDGE was likely to be like—ideas like having income-producing units in some of the buildings and having childcare and clinics and all of that, was that talked about from the very get-go?
- Bender: It was talked about from the very get-go, and that paper I wrote was part of the direction while it was all being set up. It talked about the opportunity of having education, having some health things in there, of sharing with the community around it, both contributing, taking from it—I got it out and we distributed it to everyone again recently because we haven't done *all* of that, and the board keeps changing, but we've come quite a way over the years. In the past year there has been a new interest in issues of education and health care.
- Riess: What would you say is most missing, that you haven't been able to make happen?
- Bender: One thing is while many of the projects, most of the projects, by the time they're finished have good relationships to the neighborhoods around them, they still feel like a "project" in the neighborhood in most cases. And there's a next level of opportunity for sharing things, like a more sophisticated heating-cooling system that was big enough to be efficient, and maybe a non-fossil fuel kind of system.
- Riess: And that would be for that whole neighborhood?

- Bender: That would only make sense if you took not only the BRIDGE units, but some of the neighborhood units and combined it. And then you could pay for the staff to run those things efficiently.
- We've started to give classes for people in the projects, and occasionally someone from outside can join, but we still don't have the resources.
- Riess: What kind of classes?
- Bender: Well, we have after-school classes for children to do their homework, with coaching and things of that sort. We have programs in a whole range of adult education things, English as a Second Language is one, but a lot of them have to do with home ownership. It turned out that one of the original fears was that people would get this good deal and they would stay there for ever. But what happens in many of the families, particularly recent immigrant families, is they want to buy a house and they want to be able to bring relatives together, and this is giving them a start. So one of the more popular classes is about mortgages and house ownership. Through BRIDGE itself, through people who use BRIDGE as a focus, we begin to do community college kind of things, but also to give people in the BRIDGE projects scholarships to go to school, to advanced school. Alan and Ruth Stein made a donation about ten years ago to start the Stein Scholarships, where we give people every year the chance to go onto community college, to state colleges.
- Riess: This is the meaning of BRIDGE, that it's supposed to be a transitional—or what's the word that's most appropriate? Temporary, a step up, but it's not supposed to be where you're born and die?
- Bender: It's meant to be like a living community. So many of the low income federal or state projects tend to isolate a group, and there's not life coming in or going out very much. People don't have that much chance to improve themselves enough and move out. One of the things BRIDGE does is very often end up hiring people, so a lot of the BRIDGE staff, people who work at projects, are people who may have been residents at one point and then eventually went to work. Part of it—the way BRIDGE is set up is so almost everyone who comes to work for BRIDGE uses it as a training to go on. One of the major things has been the connection to Berkeley, and students coming as interns, then they get jobs, then they become project managers, then they go off and start their own firm. Two or three of the nonprofits that compete with BRIDGE now were founded by BRIDGE people who left.
- Riess: Actually, when was it named? How was it named?
- Bender: It was named very early. I'm not sure exactly how, but it came from Bay Regional Development and BRIDGE came out of it.
- Riess: Oh, it's an acronym?
- Bender: Well, it's not really an acronym. It started with *Bay and Regional*.

The piece I'm skipping over that's really important is that when the Ford Foundation, in particular, came with their help, one of their ideas was to make BRIDGE a visible model for other communities, and so from the early days Ford Foundation would either ask us to make presentations for people from other places or would arrange for people to come and visit and see. In one way or another a lot of organizations learned from BRIDGE. I don't think any learned that directly. And in the studies—we made studies later to find out why it doesn't happen or it didn't happen that way in other places. One of the biggest reasons was the connection with the university, because of the flow of people coming out of school wanting to do that kind of work. This is a first step, an opportunity. A beginning architect can go to work in an architect's office, but a beginning developer for low-cost housing has to have a place to learn their skills.

Riess: And then when they went on they probably all thought they could do it better.

Bender: Well, and some do, in some ways do—or at least they're more focused. One of the original BRIDGE board members—I forget his name, but he became head of the Chinatown Housing Corporation and they do what they do better for them. But more recently as BRIDGE has expanded—well, at one point someone who knew BRIDGE, who'd been in the Bay Area and was then head of the Irvine Corporation, came saying Irvine legally has to produce about three or four hundred housing units and would be interested in having us come down there. After that project we've done a couple more, and now we have done a group of projects in Southern California, and more recently are looking at starting an office in Los Angeles. So it's spreading by regeneration. One of the people who went down to Southern California originally with the first projects stayed to form his own company. Another one came back and is a consultant here. Many people have passed through in other ways. The ultimate passing through, rising, or using BRIDGE in that way is Carol Galante, who came out of the Department of City Planning at Berkeley and went to work with BRIDGE. She eventually became—I think she was the vice president when Don Turner died. I don't know if I mentioned that before, but Don was killed in that plane crash.

Riess: Yes.

Bender: She became president of BRIDGE, and right after Obama became president she was invited to become the assistant secretary of HUD for multi-family housing. And many of the things that we saw as roadblocks or opportunities—now she's at the other end trying to open them up and change them.

What I was going to mention is yesterday I got an e-mail from Cynthia [A.] Parker who is now the president—she replaced Carol—which says that last week BRIDGE was awarded an \$18 million allocation from the US Treasury Department's Community Development Financial Institutions Fund. It's supposed to be used—the quote was “to finance catalytic mixed-use developments in vulnerable communities and

transform transitional neighborhoods and developments that include community facilities, retail space, offices, as well as housing.”

- Riess: Well, that’s just what you’ve been doing.
- Bender: For me, I know this is not a description of BRIDGE so much, but it’s the image of what I always wanted to have happen. The idea that it’s tied to the school, loosely as it is, is a backup for what I believed in at the school. That there are places where you see the real world, get exposed to the real world, you can go to work there, you can come back and do something else, but everybody in the city planning department at Berkeley knows BRIDGE very well, and it’s one of the things they study as they go out with the idea of working in, usually in government, because many of them go into planning agencies and things of that sort. On the other hand, people in the community now can point to BRIDGE when someone says oh, someone’s going to build low-cost housing in your neighborhood and the neighbors say they don’t want a housing project. They can come and visit; we can show places where side by side they’ve improved the neighborhood. They’re not scary; these are real families, good citizens.
- Riess: When you talk about a project, is there more or less a pattern of how they look and what you think is the maximum number of units, a kind of a lump that is dropped in here and there, or is it very different?
- Bender: It’s very different. If you go along the Embarcadero, right about where the Bay Bridge comes across, there’s a BRIDGE project called Steamboat Point Apartments, which is a mixed-age group, there’s some seniors in it, there are families in it. Right next to it is a for-profit project that has mostly young professionals in it, and right after that is something Street, the drug rehab.
- Riess: Delancey.
- Bender: Delancey Street Foundation. The three are right alongside one another. You can see they’re different, but you wouldn’t say oh, that’s the low-income housing there.
- Riess: The one I’ve seen close up and walked through is the one at Mandela Parkway. That part of West Oakland has a lot of similar-looking projects, and I wouldn’t know where one development left off and the next began, and whether that’s good, bad or indifferent. You wouldn’t—you wouldn’t know.
- Bender: No, and sometimes you can’t tell, because there is no difference. One of the things I’ve never been very happy about is most of these projects are not architectural gems. They’re much more built to fit in the neighborhood, to fit what the community expects, to look like other projects. They are meant to be good places to live, part of the community and the city, not “projects
- Riess: Yes.

- Bender: The other things that's happened is that very often there are, within this one complex, people at quite different levels of income that are coming with subsidies from different government programs for elderly, for low income, for handicapped, for HIV—I don't even know them all. And sometimes they're part of the market rate project where you can't see one piece from the other. Because they're maintained by BRIDGE—the other part that you very often get the sense of in low-income projects is of their not being maintained. I think they're almost overly managed by BRIDGE in that—
- Riess: They never look gritty.
- Bender: Yes, I think they could use a little patina sometimes, but also it's part of keeping the spirit in the whole community. That everyone's pitching in to do it, and once you start to let something get messy, then it breaks down.
- Riess: One thing that comes with the package is community organizing.
- Bender: They tend to have community associations. They tend to be linked in other ways.

One of the things we discovered earlier is so many of the people who qualify for programs are senior citizens, and senior citizens have issues of medical care and things of that sort. Early in the game Gerson Bakar, a developer and one of the original board members, came to the group and he said, "This is going to be a conflict of interest for me. I'm building something called The Regent." The Regent is an upscale retirement home in San Mateo not too far from the airport, and the idea was to build this with medical facilities for treatment, and if BRIDGE collaborated in the building of it, in the managing of the medical part, then in turn BRIDGE senior residents could use some of the medical facilities. In addition, the transfer fees—whenever one of the apartments is sold there's a transfer fee, and the transfer fee comes to BRIDGE for their participation. In doing The Regent, Gerson Bakar left the board. Peter Palmisano, who put The Regent project together, later became one of the most energetic BRIDGE board members. So I'm saying that all kinds of—my mother would have said rinky-dink—mechanisms are put together to make it work.

I think what I was coming back to was the innovations come from places that you don't—when you think of innovations in housing you think of a roof shape or some extraordinary thing with landscape. But the innovations are very often innovations in financing, innovations in participation, innovations in where these projects are willing to go or able to go. And for me, that's the real sense of designing on a broader level, that someone's designing how this thing is going to get financed with all these different mechanisms, and the mechanisms get more and more rare as things tighten up now.

You mentioned going to see the Mandela Parkway project, Mandela Gateway. Rick Holliday's Pacific Cannery Lofts is a few blocks away and next to BRIDGE's Ironhorse [at Central Station] project. Mandela

Gateway faces West Oakland BART, at the end of Mandela Boulevard. One of the things about the Mandela project is it has got shops on the ground floor, and it's right across from the BART station, but at first we had a hell of a time renting the shops out. The community wanted to operate their own shop.

Riess: What does that mean?

Bender: Well, the community around it saw suddenly someone's coming in and building new houses, and it turned out they not only had small businesses, which we were careful to try to support, but there were people growing vegetables in the backyard and selling them. If you drive through that part of West Oakland you see them. One of the ideas was to have a farmers' market in there, which we really tried and it didn't make sense, but we found ways of getting some of the ideas that the larger community around there wanted.

Riess: You're saying *we*, and I'm wondering *who*? These things come up at board meetings?

Bender: Well, it has come to the point where they come up at board meetings because the staff is out looking all the time. This grant that just came from the Treasury Department—Cynthia names the ten people who worked with her over the year it took to put it together. What tends to happen now is the staff members go to community meetings, they know the community, the project, and the real estate world, and the community has come to know the BRIDGE people. So both we're looking at opportunities when they come up, and governments and companies are coming to us with opportunities.

Riess: Your people are out there and they can see where housing is needed. The business model is interesting.

Bender: It's working like a business. When Don Turner came, one of the things he insisted on, he always wore a suit—a jacket and a tie—and Rick began to do that. The idea is when they came to a meeting, when the nonprofit group came to a meeting, that they would look like business people and they would talk like business people. They would come right in and they would know all the things that you have to know if you're really going to build a project. Not say, "We're good people bringing you good ideas." The company is known for being well managed and coming to places prepared, and often with new ideas that the business community is interested in as well. This "professionalism with a heart" continues now that Rick Holliday has replaced Alan Stein as chairman of the board.

Riess: You use the expression *the company*—it's a company?

Bender: It is a company. Don was wise to start us thinking of BRIDGE as a company. To me the whole thing was a shock in a way. When I first came I thought we would be going to do this for a month or two.

Riess: Get it launched.

Bender: But once it started to be launched it became interesting on another level, and then as it goes on and I go to some of these meetings and realize how much money we're talking about—we have over a billion dollars worth of assets we're managing now and there's about twenty people all together on the board really involved but not running it. They come with ideas, they're there if there's a problem with something going on in the state government that's holding it up, you know someone you talk to who knows who to talk to or something. Clark Wallace has been both the local developer all the way up through the National Association of Home Builders. He's one of the original founders. But some are contractors, some are developers, and the board has changed. At the beginning there were more public officials; we still have one or two people who are in government. Sunne McPeak, who was the state senator from Concord area, she became the director of the Bay Area Council, and then she went to Sacramento to take the job that Alan Stein had originally. So we have branches. Carol [Galante] is in Washington now at HUD. So that's the way the company operates.

One of the things that's been important to me is that it's not just a board meeting around the table, there's a lot of looking at figures and things, and what's fascinating is these are people who are really—the projects committee includes former mortgage officers, contractors, developers, and they go through these really complex projects and they put in a lot of time and it's all volunteer. The staff has come to know all these things, but there's a board that's not just a board that's for show—the board is active.

Riess: What about plumbing and heating contractors? Do they lobby you? What do you have to watch out for there?

Bender: Well, the design goes through architectural firms, and construction through contractors. There is a group, for instance, of the project managers and staff in BRIDGE who are particularly interested in the environmental issues. They have a green committee, and they meet for their own interests, but also they are looking at ways to improve the environmental issues for projects. There are some who work more in the financial part, some in the management part, but in a sense most of the people who have been working there any length of time are able, and occasionally do go on and work in the private sector.

[End Tape 22: Side B]

[Begin Tape 23: Side A]

Riess: The BRIDGE projects are individual building projects, and so you're not able to get the efficiencies that I thought interested you in mass production.

Bender: Well, no, not entirely. BRIDGE and the housing market—BRIDGE is too small, big as it is, and the housing market is too big to be able to swing it

so easily the way you can in some areas by supporting a new toilet, or an electric car, or something of that sort. But in the management of the projects—now there are projects that have been in operation more than twenty years now, so BRIDGE is a storehouse of information about how materials behave. There are areas where we suggest on each project that certain fabrics, finishes, equipment be used because we've had good experience with them, and also because repairs and parts are better if more than one—if one project doesn't have a spare part another project will have it. So it's managed for efficiency in that way. The kind of innovations of the scale that could change the construction industry, we tend to receive them rather than to use them, that is they get developed by the building community and they come through us.

Riess: So you're not innovating them?

Bender: There are not many places where we're innovating in terms of—well, what *is* an apartment? That is blocked in by what a bank will mortgage, by local, state and federal codes. One thing that we haven't been able to do yet is to build something that's not as finished as a normal market-rate house would be, and to let the tenants finish it over time, or build something where the residents finish it over time, as a way to invest themselves in ownership.

Riess: That article I sent you—the architect in Chile who was building the skeleton and then people move in to finish it.

Bender: Well, in developing countries there are self-help developments, people add on to their house, they make the changes, and even in the suburban neighborhoods people do that. But when you get into higher density urban housing it becomes more and more difficult to find ways to do it. In some ways the UHAB [Urban Homesteading Assistance Board] in New York City, which is a predecessor—Don Turner and I were involved in that before we came here, and that's more than thirty years old. Andy Reicher, who runs it now, was a student at Berkeley who through Don and BRIDGE went to UHAB. It was originally set up to help the tenants in buildings that were abandoned by their owners who didn't want to pay to fix them up to code. In the UHAB model residents take the buildings over, fix them and run them. But they have been more able to have tenants working on the buildings themselves. That's one area where we haven't been as successful as I'd like.

Riess: Who interviews the residents for BRIDGE? How do you put together a mix, and have they figured out what a desirable mix is in any complex of let's say, a hundred apartments?

Bender: The interviewing, the whole business of qualifying people, is done by BRIDGE through Susan's organization, Susan Johnson. The mix of individual projects is very often determined by the mix of where the grants come from, or the neighborhood, or sometimes even the general shape of the project suggests that small units for seniors with less parking make more sense here than something else.

But what I was going to say just before the tape ended before, last Wednesday a group of, maybe half of the directors along with some of the staff met in West Oakland to look at the Ironhorse project, one of our most recent projects. It's the one that's right up against Rick Holliday's Pacific Cannery project. We pretty often take trips like that to visit the projects together, to talk about them and see them. We saw Ironhorse, which is for families with children with play spaces and all of that. We went past the Mandela project and some other projects there.

But the last project we looked at was in South Oakland on International Boulevard, which was in a complex called St. Joseph's—I'm not sure what it was called—St. Joseph's Orphanage originally. It was over a hundred years old, a red brick kind of building with a walled compound. It once was a place where orphans, homeless children lived, and the nuns who took care of them lived there. There was a chapel. Eventually it became a retirement home for nuns, but the land has on it some small buildings. It was Dickensian, a central laundry building with a tunnel connecting it where some of the people who lived there worked in the laundry, probably some of the children worked in the laundry. There's a building that's still called the poultry shed, I haven't found out all the history of that, but at various times there were the mixed uses of things like doing the laundry, and this backs up on one side to where the freeway is now but was an industrial area before that. So it's a typical Victorian complex which was abandoned by the church about thirty years ago.

For a while someone took it over and fixed up some of the spaces and rented it out as offices. BRIDGE is in the middle of renovating it now as a senior residence, in which I think there are altogether a hundred and fifty or so units in the old building. There'll be more in some of the other buildings. No two are alike, and almost all of them have some piece of the old building in them. One of the units has a living room where on the wall there's a confessional booth, beautifully carved, all wooden, with the seat in the center for the priest with screens on both sides and seats on either side.

Riess: How architect-y and fun, that somebody's thinking about that.

Bender: Well, a lot of thinking, because one of the things that made this one possible is a historic preservation grant. BRIDGE got more money for the renovation by meeting the standards of the preservation laws, which put certain boundaries or constraints on what could be done, but also gave some of the money that made the package available and made it able to go through zoning.

Riess: When you say International Boulevard I think prostitution. Do you have a missionary arm to BRIDGE that identifies places where housing might make all the difference and might change the whole complexion of the community?

Bender: So far there are not many cases where we've gone into an area to change it specifically, but the idea is always to change the area. If you go from

where Mandela [Gateway Apartments] is on Seventh Street, back to Sixteenth Street where Ironhorse is, and the Central Station and the Cannery, and now a group of for-profit houses from the Pulte national company—there's going to be close to a thousand new homes in there, not all developed by BRIDGE, but through BRIDGE. BRIDGE was the stability, the catalyst to be able to put one group of houses there, to be able to hold the Central Station itself until it could be restored, which can—well, it's part of the framework on which the whole thing is being put together.

Riess: You do need schools. You need a lot of infrastructure to make all that work don't you?

Bender: Well, some of it will be in the BRIDGE project, some of it will be in other projects, but part of it is that the neighborhood was approached early enough and invited in enthusiastically enough so that rather than looking at it as an invader, more and more they're looking at it as a neighborhood. Some of the people started to fix up houses, and with help from Rick Holliday and BRIDGE they got help in getting loans, and one of the reasons they could get a loan is because these old house are now part of this group of new projects and open spaces.

One of the high points of our tour with the directors the other day is we stopped to see the historic Oakland Central Station which was abandoned and in terrible shape when we took it over. It still, from the outside, has graffiti, but if you go into the Central Station in the next weeks, it's like going into another world. HBO is filming—I don't know whether it's a series or just a one-time thing on Hemingway's years in Spain with oh, I keep forgetting her name. She's married to Keith Urban now.

Riess: Nicole Kidman?

Bender: Nicole Kidman is starring in it as his wife, Martha Gellhorn.

And so HBO is taking it over, and helped us to fix the roof so it's waterproof and some other improvements. You walk in, and it's supposed to be the entrance to a grand hotel in Barcelona in the 1920s: there are marble stairs, really going to nowhere, and they're building a giant bar in the middle of this grand space. Don used to say, "Whatever it takes." It's sort of a slogan at BRIDGE now—whatever it takes. If it takes building a set for an HBO movie to get the roof on the building, or whatever. And the spirit at BRIDGE that I love is that there's always a way to do one more thing and everyone is looking out for how to do it.

Riess: Well, why not! If they got \$18 million in this administration does that mean it struggled under the Republican administrations?

Bender: It certainly struggled under Republican administration, but the struggle is not too much different now because there's less money. But some of these are programs that were set up and nobody even knows they're there in some ways. They're running all of these years and they've been doing

different things and each—the tax credits are meant to help corporations as well as going to support affordable housing. Part of how the BRIDGE projects get financed is how you keep up with all of these or find them or figure which are appropriate or convince someone that this building is enough of a monument to get enough support so it's worth having the problem, or things of that sort.

But I guess from the moment that I came to Berkeley, and in a sense brought my New York office to become the Center for Building Research at Berkeley, that's now the Center for Environmental Design Research, this idea of having functioning projects going up where the school helped to start them, they're a laboratory to watch people from the building world come in, give feedback or input and you can go and see it, has been a big part of it.

The fact that the areas of collaboration have changed—historically the architecture school at Berkeley was next to the engineering school—as in schools all over the world, architecture and engineering are traditionally together. When it moved to where it is now, one of the ideas was—I love to show people, it sits in between the professional schools on one side, business and law and when the hospital was there, it was not a medical school but medicine—and on the other side is art and music. And actually the women's gym, the Julia Morgan/Maybeck gym [Hearst Gym], one of the main functions of that space behind it was dance. And if you look at Wurster Hall you'll see there's a passageway from one side to the other where you can go underneath through the building and come out. When I organized the building of Ramona's Café and the terrace outside that Richard Fernau and Laura Hartman designed, the idea was people from art and music and architecture and optometry and business and law would meet there.

[Interruption in recording]

The point about BRIDGE that moves me so, and the pleasure I get of having been part of it is that what seemed like a dream came about in the last twenty-five years. This organization was not only put together, it has the links to the university, the links to the community, it's a functioning ongoing entity that has a life of its own. It started a tradition of having people come from the university through a real practice and out in a new way that's my Beaux Arts tradition retranslated back and forth.

And it's become, in a sense, pieces of what was in my head, but more and more what I'm dreaming about, a university “without walls”. We've talked about ongoing themes, but “*without walls*” goes back to when I was in my teens. My father, because I was interested in art he gave me Andre Malraux's book, *The Voices of Silence*. In it he uses the expression “a museum without walls,” and he was talking about the fact that in the late forties you could see art in different ways because of photography. You could see things that you didn't visit; you could blow it up and see details; you could see it in another context. In a sense, whether you're

talking about art and museums or universities or whatever, the world's becoming more and more "without walls" in that sense.

The interesting things in the universities that I work with now in planning is not so much where the buildings go, but even asking do they belong here? Would we be better off without a building? Are there other ways? I can be talking to a group of trustees who are imagining a building with someone's name on it here, and I've just come from talking to a professor in Singapore who just got off the phone or computer with a colleague in Stuttgart and they're plotting a project in London. The world has become really interconnected, but the images we have are the old, so on a lot of the campus planning things I do I'm dealing with people whose image is to build something that looks like Harvard or Berkeley, when what's happening inside is completely different. We are just beginning to understand how different—classes, courses, the whole nature of universities will change. It's exciting to think, to dream of what it can be. To some extent we don't want to wipe out the old, and the trick is how to use those old campuses with all they mean, the emotions that you feel, the nature that's preserved, the history that's there. How do you use them in this new world where your colleague is not the guy in the next office, but he's someone in London who you're going to see next week at a conference in Tokyo?

Or students. I came back from Japan the other day and I walked into Café Strada and there was John Liu sitting with Jennifer Wolch. John was one of my students at Cooper Union. He came from Taiwan, he studied at Cooper Union and went off to Penn State, but then came to Berkeley to finish his PhD. His father had been high in the Chiang Kai-shek government, and they escaped Mao and came to Taiwan, and Mr. Liu was the construction minister there. John asked me, in the '70s, if I would go to Taiwan and consult with his father about prefabricated housing systems for the Taiwanese government. John has since moved back to Taiwan—his children went to school here and grew up and have careers—John went back to Taiwan and became a professor at the National University and is about to retire. He has a very active urban research group and was talking to Jennifer about exchanges between the mainland and Taiwan and Berkeley. We sat down and talked together about how we've had this connection with Taiwan for the last thirty years. And that was eventually my bridge to Japan.

When I first left the dean's office I wasn't sure exactly what I was going to do, but I knew I wanted to be involved in a new way in practice, and I also knew that there were things happening that I was out of touch with. It's important to keep challenging and being challenged. And the way you tend to change is in cycles in which you take something apart and then you put it back together, you take it apart and you put it back together again. Someone's always fighting it and someone's always pushing, and unless you recognize that that's good—I left the office basically at a point where I thought the college had to do something different, and I didn't have the time and the energy to put in the years, the next round, and they wouldn't have wanted me do that. But I thought it was time to open up

programs that were becoming too inward-looking, self-referential. I thought then, and I think now that design programs have become more engaged with themselves than with a changing world outside.

At a ceremony in Chancellor Chang-lin Tien's office in June 1990 Chancellor Tien gave me a reproduction of the Phoebe Apperson Hearst Medal which was given to each of the five jurors in the international competition for the design of the campus that Phoebe Hearst sponsored in 1899. This followed my receiving the Berkeley Citation at the June 1990 CED Commencement. Here is the wording:

“Dick Bender is a remarkable combination of architect and civil engineer, who has done much for creating strong linkages for the profession with the engineering world. After service as Chair of the Department of Architecture, he spent twelve years as Dean of the College of Environmental Design—a long time by any standard and particularly by Berkeley's. As Dean, he built and integrated the field of Building Science within Architecture, extended and defined the ‘Wurster Dream,’ led the Architecture Department to preeminent national standing, and put new life into the Department of Landscape Architecture, bringing it to a position among the few best in the country. Quite a set of accomplishments.

“And he has made signal contributions in other ways as well. Dean Bender revitalized the planning process on the Berkeley Campus. He defined, instituted and led the Design Review Board. This has worked so well that he has been called upon by several other UC campuses to institute the concept there. And he has left his mark on so many building projects that it must truly be said of him, as for others like Frederick Law Olmsted and John Galen Howard, that the campus itself as a built environment is in significant part his monument. Congratulations, Dick!” For me that was a nice moment.

So I used a year of sabbatical first to get in touch with the past, and then come to the future. First I went back to Europe. (I'd been to Europe before; we had lived there when we were first married. Sue and I had stayed for several months at the American Academy in Rome at one point, and in Venice we stayed again for several months and my sabbatical project was organizing a collaboration with the architecture school there, a collaboration which still goes on today.) But I wanted to revisit Europe, I continue to feel there is much to learn there, and then my idea was that I would go to Japan, because at the end of the eighties everyone was reading about Japanese military tactics in business schools, talking about the success of Japanese companies.

In Europe I visited a group of old friends. They were old friends in the sense that we had known each other for many years, and they were old, I thought at that time—they too were about sixty. I asked them, “What are you thinking about? How are you looking at thinking about the next years? Do you think of new things, or are you doing the things you do in different ways? In different places?” I was clearly searching. Were they?

Mostly not, mostly they were going from day to day. But it started new conversations that I've cherished these last twenty years.

And then I came back for a while because I'd been working on the new plan for UC San Diego, and I moved to San Diego for a quarter and rented an apartment in Solana Beach and taught in the art department at UCSD. The impetus for the plan at San Diego came from the artists on the faculty, particularly the Harrisons, Newton and Helen [Mayer] Harrison who did performance art. When the university started to make an addition to the library in the center of the campus they began to cut eucalyptus trees in the central grove, and over the weekend students of the Harrisons came out and put a white cross where each tree had been cut. And so when the students and the people came back on Monday morning there was this field of white crosses, and it was a shock and a trigger to campus-wide demonstrations saying we have to stop the building until we know what we're doing. Over the years the students had become more and more aware of the environment and determined to have a choice, while the administration had become more closed, bureaucratic managers of a science research enterprise.

And then thanks to Newton, at some point Richard [C.] Atkinson, who was the chancellor down there before he became president of the university, he said, "Well, what do you want?" and the Harrisons asked him to invite me down. He had met me at regents meetings. As an opening to a dialogue on campus he said okay, go ahead and make a plan. As we started, I asked SOM to work with me on it, so actually I had the contract with UCSD and hired John Kriken and SOM as the subcontractor on that. Eventually Atkinson became more and more involved, and then excited. I knew we were doing something right when the plane from San Francisco was late for a meeting and I came in to find Atkinson standing in front of his senior staff, his "Dean's Council," and he was explaining the plan to them with a kind of pride.

Riess: Did the students remain involved?

Bender: The art department was very involved. There was a great group of students involved, and they had—I'm trying to remember—David Antin was a poet, doing talk poems, and his wife, Eleanor Antin, taught dance. Allan Kaprow, who'd done some of the first happenings, was really active, and they were really a big part of it. As we went on, over time faculty from economics to engineering got involved and we had huge campus meetings. In the end San Diego decided they wanted to have an architectural school, and I helped them put on a conference to introduce architecture to the campus community. We invited Maki, and Richard Rogers came. The San Diego architecture community just never had visitors like that, the way they would come naturally to UCLA or Berkeley.

This is just a side issue, but at one of the dinners at that conference I got to know Jonas Salk—he was interested in architecture and the school. He enjoyed talking with Sue, and he invited her to see the sunset from his

office at the Salk Center, and that was the afternoon she heard her mother had died. She decided to keep the appointment because of the “spiritual” feeling of the site and the building, and when he heard that, he said. “Why don’t you just sit for a while?” I mean it is a side issue, but it’s saying there was a spirit in Salk that was looking to do more.

Riess: Kahn’s architecture at the Salk Institute—does beautiful architecture make for more beautiful architecture, like on the campus?

Bender: Well, it makes people take it more seriously. And certainly Salk then became an advocate. As part of the plan I set up a design review committee, and among other things I got David Rinehart and then Bill Turnbull to be on that committee. David was one of the two architects, young architects, who came with Kahn out from school, and he stayed to have an office there. And eventually he got the job to do the addition to the Salk Institute.

[End Tape 23: Side A]

[Begin Tape 23: Side B]

Riess: You were teaching at UC San Diego. What were you teaching?

Bender: I gave a seminar to graduate art students and we had a ball. I asked them to do something in the environment around the campus, and we talked about art as “without walls”—again that the whole place was a museum.

Riess: Did they build their projects? Or was it on paper?

Bender: Well, different projects came out differently. At UCSD they have something called the Stewart Foundation that brings outdoor art projects to the campus. Over time it has become a museum with a curator. While each student made or proposed a project that engaged the campus, each also worked with the curator to suggest a site for an artist the Stewart Foundation hoped to invite.

Riess: And what did Sue do during that period?

Bender: Well, at first she was not so anxious to come down to San Diego. She came down to stay for a week while I was teaching, and then for the Architecture and the Community conference. She was working on her first book, *Plain and Simple*, then. Later she got more involved when she chose Sandra Dijkstra as an agent. Sandy’s office is in Del Mar, right next to the campus, and we sometimes came on the plane together and I would go to a campus meeting while she visited Sandy.

Riess: Now how did you move on to Japan at this point?

Bender: I’d been asking people about what I should see, how I should do it. I wanted to visit the research laboratories of these big Japanese companies. I heard that the construction companies all had great research centers,

each of which was as large as the Bureau of Standards Center, where I had been consulting. I had no idea then of exactly what they were doing, and I knew Japan was expensive, and I didn't know my way around—so how was I going to do this? And then somebody told me that there was a Japanese construction attaché in the embassy in Washington, and so after a meeting of one of my many Washington committees or commissions, I can't remember which, I sat down with this Japanese man and he said, "Oh, you know you should meet—" and he gave me a list. I went to New York and I met the Takenaka people who had offices in the Seagram building, and the Taisei people. I started to meet the construction companies in New York, and then visited Obayashi and Kajima in Los Angeles, and they were all very nice.

It still wasn't quite clear how I was going to do it, but I realized if I got there I'd be able to go and visit these places. And then one day I got a phone call in this high chirpy voice, which he thought I should recognize, and it was Shigeru Itoh, the chairman of the Urban Engineering Department at Tokyo University, and as I found later a real force in Japan on multiple levels, other than just city planning. He'd been at MIT when I was a student there and I'd met him once, which I really didn't remember. But he said, "Richard, we're setting up a chair in urban design and construction, and we hear you might be able to come for three months." I was lucky. They wanted someone from a position and place like dean of [CED] Berkeley to give this new chair prestige, and most of the deans couldn't go for three months. I didn't know if they had asked others before me but I said, "Absolutely." So it turned out that Itoh had put these companies together and they called themselves the GC-5—it was the GC-5 Chair in Urban Construction.

Riess: What does that mean?

Bender: GC is for General Contractors. They were also, I found later, called the Big Five. They're the five biggest construction companies in Japan—Shimizu, Kajima, Obayashi, Takenaka, Taisei. The way I remember is with "SKOTT."

Not long after Professor Itoh told me I was appointed as the first GC-5 Chair I had a phone call from Fumio Hasegawa asking if we could meet. He was finishing a few years at MIT where Shimizu had sent him to have a base while studying and reporting back on the US Building industry. He said he would be in LA for a few days and wanted to take me to dinner, introduce himself and tell me more about the GC-5 Chair, and RCAST, Tokyo University and living in Tokyo. I was at UC San Diego then and came up on the train to meet him. He is a bundle of energy, quick, always ahead of things, on to the next thing. He insisted on taking me to an Italian restaurant—he wanted to try and explained that he was a student of Italian cuisine. His book, a collection of chapters, each by a different expert, a form of writing I later found he had mastered, *Built by Japan* had just come out. We didn't see too much of each other at RCAST, he was settling back at Shimizu and a year later Shimizu asked him to set up what he described as a kind of advanced think tank to explore new directions

for the company. About five years later he left Shimizu for a similar role for a Japanese IT company and has made a series of jumps over the years. The last time we had one of our Italian dinners (this one artfully prepared by him at his home) he was president of a small business/technical college beyond the Yamanote Line in Tokyo. [*Built by Japan* was one of many admiring studies of the Japanese building industry published around 1989, and to this day, at the French Ministry des Ponts et Chaussee, Elizabeth Campagnac Ascher tracks the activities of the Japanese construction industry.]

Well, the school year in Japan begins on April 1. So when I was negotiating going to San Diego, it turns out that because they're on the quarter system I could do a quarter there and then I would come to Japan, and they were insisting that I be there on the second of April because that was the formal announcement of the chair at the beginning of the new school year. In the meantime, as it became more real I knew I was going to need an apartment. Professor Itoh picked one of his graduate students, Toshio Oyama, and told him he was to find an apartment and fix it up—Toshio has become a dear friend and he's now one of the senior managers at Shimizu Company.

Well, it turned out that he couldn't find an apartment, except his family had taken over his grandfather's home in a district called Mejiro. They bought a small house for his grandfather on the Izu Peninsula, which is a sort of vacation place not far from Tokyo, and they knocked down the [grandfather's] house in Mejiro and built an eight-unit condominium in which his parents lived in one unit and they managed the other apartments. There was one empty apartment left—they had sold six of them—and I was going to stay in this new apartment.

I hadn't even thought about telephoning back and forth at that point, and there was no—I only discovered fax when I got to Japan, let alone e-mail and all. But somehow or other, writing letters back and forth, Toshio asked me about furniture and things of that sort and I told him to talk to my friend Takeyama, Minoru Takeyama, who'd worked for us in New York and who was one of the top architects in Japan at that point. Minoru helped them pick out furniture, and so I came out ahead.

But the issue was I had to be there April 1, and when I arrived for the ceremony—I didn't realize how unusual it was, but because it was the beginning of this chair, and they donated money for five years to bring a series of visiting professors, and the whole idea of sponsored chairs was new, so the presidents of the companies were all at the reception. I was still lost, but I met these gentlemen and they were all shaking my hand and we were all toasting and saying "kampai!" I was their professor, their "sensei."

Riess: I hope you had a good black suit!

Bender: Well, I don't remember what I had on, probably a blazer. I realized also—at the time almost nobody had a beard in Japan except a few professors,

and they did wear black suits. The dress was much more formal than it is now.

So there was a series of parties where I'd meet these people who were all very nice. At some point I said, "What am I supposed to do?" And they said, "You're the professor, you tell us what you want to do." So I said I wanted to visit all the companies, study their building industry, and talk about research—they had no picture of me teaching a class. And then I don't know how it came to me but I said, "Since you are all interested in urban issues, suppose I give you, the five presidents, a seminar in what's happening in the world in urban design?" It was sort of an instinctive thing to say it would be interesting to talk to you, and I can find out more from you in some ways.

They thought it was a good idea, and they said they were going to bring—each one brought an assistant who was not the top person, but maybe a younger person who had just recently come back from overseas. The companies all paid for some of their young people, after four or five years, to be able to go to an American school or an English school. The first time I went in the conference room at the university I had set up some slides to show them, and after ten minutes I realized this is not going to work, and I said, "This is not going to work". These men were all over sixty, heads of big companies and not used to presentations about something that was not a project. "What we should do is go out and visit places." And so the second one we had at Makuhari—at that point the Makuhari New Town was just beginning its construction, and it's on Tokyo Bay, halfway between Narita Airport and Tokyo, a cluster of office buildings and hotels and a convention center designed by Maki. It's now a new town. They eventually built more than ten thousand housing units plus these offices. At that point a lot of the construction was going on, and one finished building was the Prince Hotel, which was a tower, about a forty-five-story tower.

Riess: What was the name of the hotel?

Bender: Prince, part of the chain, and it was designed by Kenzo Tange. And so the second meeting we met on the roof restaurant/bar of the Prince Hotel, and we talked about Makuhari as a plan, what was being done and what it could be. They were mostly planning to put up International Style towers and slabs for the housing. We talked about how the same densities could be achieved in groups of mid-rise courtyard buildings with shops on the street fronts, a model similar to Paris.

Riess: Did these five companies work together as a consortium?

Bender: Well, most of the time they worked alone. But they would also join together in different combinations for larger projects

Riess: So they were not in competition?

Bender: They're both in competition, but it's a sort of Japanese competition where they're in competition every time and each time there are winners and losers. They were at the point where they knew when to work with each other. They were business competitors who had a lot of common interests. In fact, all the senior group had been to Tokyo University. Professor Itoh got his people, classmates and students he knew from Tokyo University who are now high up in companies, to make the donation.

Riess: I see. So they were going to build slabs and—?

Bender: Well, we talked about—from looking down on it, there were some interesting buildings. Maki was building a convention center at that point and we talked about how it might influence Makuhari's core and what opportunities there were because the community was on the edge of the water and offered the opportunity to do something different. Then I said, "Well, maybe we'll take a walk and see how different things look from the ground as opposed to plans and models and from the tops of buildings." And then the president of Takenaka, who was close to sixty-five or seventy at that point, said, "Why don't you walk with the younger people? We older people will sit here and talk and you'll come back." And it set a precedent. I realized later that what they were talking about in the bar would be more than the lessons I was giving—they could talk about collaborations and strategies and maybe bidding, things you could probably go to jail for here. Imagine the heads of Bechtel and four of the other large construction companies in the US holding monthly meetings like that!

Riess: Price-fixing.

Bender: This may have been more like team building. But there was no question that something like that went on to some extent. Part of it was what they were supposed to be doing, because these big contracts would get broken up, and one would do the foundations and another would do the superstructure and another the roads leading to it. More, it may have been about how they would share certain projects or areas or work.

But what was interesting is that the younger people had never had this sort of chance to meet and talk together. And so I was walking around Makuhari and later other places in Japan and around the world with the younger people and talking, and they were happy to have this chance, but they were also interested to meet each other. It developed into something beautiful, a very warm community. In time these guys are all moved up in the company. Now most are top managers and even board members. But from the beginning it was clear they loved this exchange, and I was loving it, so we did a few of those in Japan. And then it was time for—well, first it was time for me to go home and they said, "You know, if you want we can extend the chair from three to six months," and so I stayed six months that first time.

Sue came over for a while and visited. At that point we were doing the sketches for *Plain and Simple* via fax. I found a fax machine in my office

at RCAST [Research Center for Applied Science and Technology, based at the Komaba campus of Tokyo University], the office they gave me, and I said, “What is this?” I had no idea what a fax was. But eventually I’d send the fax to Kinko’s here in Berkeley and they’d call Sue up and say there was a message. It was like half pony express and half the future. John Parman visited while I was in Tokyo. He slept on a futon on the floor of my apartment’s “tatami room,” and he and I began to plan how we could bring this model, these people, into a new research group at the CED. Others came to visit me at RCAST and stayed at the apartment—Japanese, others from all over. It was a beginning.

When the six months was over we decided that I would set up an annual study trip for the GC-5 group. For a while it became twice a year.

Riess: What did they feel they needed, a sort of refresher?

Bender: I think part of it is that they were all enjoying the fact of getting together and talking, and I don’t think it was only the business issues, or whatever, but to have an occasion when they could talk about common interests, some of which was business, but they had all gone to school about the same time, and were at the same point in life. And this was an opportunity to mix, share ideas, and build support groups.

Riess: Interesting that they needed this other venue.

Bender: I think I was giving them an interesting way to see the world. The focus was urban construction, but they saw art, heard music, etc. These were people who had been cut off from travel and broad experience during the war and the early years of reconstruction. What I did know is they were incredibly nice to me and enjoying this and introducing *me* to things, and I could start to reflect back to them my first impressions. As I visited their research centers I kept asking, “Why are you all doing the same research? Can’t you combine them? Aren’t there ways to share some research and also move into new areas?” They still do that, but they also now talk and collaborate much more. More important, they have added research into urban, environmental and social issues that these “engineering” companies had not seen as being in their field.

Riess: Were you struck by Japanese architecture?

Bender: Of course I knew the cutting edge Japanese architecture from visits, reading, and seeing visiting professional’s slide shows. And I knew very little of traditional Japanese architecture. From the beginning what I was struck most by was hotel rooms. I would stay in these relatively tiny hotel rooms, but you realized everything was there. Everything’s where it should be and everything’s so well designed with a care for all the details. And a lot of day-to-day architecture was beginning to swing to a higher level. There were Tange’s buildings, but at that point most of Tange’s new buildings were very big projects and there was not that much influence from outside. But in those next years we began to—well, Maki had been working for a long time, but not major buildings. His neighborhood called

Hillside Terrace was one of the most beautiful examples of putting a group of buildings together in a denser way than what's around it, but beautifully comfortable with the street and the landscape. But in the early 1990s mostly they were doing big office buildings and hotels. Not what you would see in the magazines, but a cut above what these buildings would be in most US or European cities. [Tadao] Ando at that time was doing small shops and an occasional house. But interesting new work was beginning to appear, and at any rate they were beginning to look at groups of buildings to make urban places.

And so the first tour we did after I got back is they flew to San Francisco and I met them and they spent four days here. I took them to architectural offices, we walked around, we visited city planning committees, they always had theaters booked and restaurants booked. And then we went to New York, and as the plane was landing, the first thing I discovered was the senior people had no luggage. These guys were walking around and getting on the plane with no luggage, nothing in their hands. Later I realized they had behind them the assistants carrying all the luggage. And then wherever we'd go, if it was raining we'd go out the door and umbrellas would appear. We flew into New York, and Mr. Kobayakawa, who was the general manager of Takenaka, he asked me, "Would you like to see *Cats* tonight?" At this point I had no idea whether he was going to take me up some alley! But he had tickets for the theater, for the biggest hit on Broadway, and we all went to see *Cats*. When we came out it was raining, and I remember the umbrellas appeared and suddenly there were black cars, and there were Japanese chauffeurs and we drove to a place in the Sixties that looked like a brownstone that was—no lights outside it and it turned out to be a Japanese club where we had dinner, and there was a piece of Japan! And I began to understand their world. [laughing]

Riess: Wow, I bet you did!

Bender: So we did that. In New York they were interested in office buildings. But they were interested also in MoMA: museums and cultural buildings were an emerging field in Japan. And then in the next years we went to Europe. We went to London, and at that time Canary Wharf was just beginning construction.

Riess: You had a lot of connections yourself.

Bender: It worked both ways. In New York I introduced them to some of the MoMA board who were developers, and to New York. Developers like the Roses, Zeckendorfs, Tishmans—people they had worked with but never had the chance to talk quietly with.

Riess: Canary Wharf, how did you set that visit up?

Bender: Well, through Skidmore, who was working on—eventually Pelli did the main building, but at that point Skidmore was in charge of the project.

Riess: Did you call someone who would set it all up *for* you?

Bender: Again, there's a strange series of circumstances. Well, first—since my years at Berkeley I worked closely with John Parman on many things. While he was at school, and for a while afterwards, I was able to give him a job. He was a research assistant. He entered the PhD program, like so many people did in the late seventies, early eighties, because the economy was bad. John would be the best PhD candidate you could have if you keep him focused on one thing. So he worked for Joe Esherick's office and then later for Skidmore, and now Gensler as editor, writer, gadabout. He is one of the most widely read people I know, from the classics to obscure Russian writers, to the design world. He knows everything that's going on, and everybody, and eventually in each of these offices the partners realized that if they want to know what's happening in the office they ask John, because he's interviewing everyone who wants to get written up in the newsletter or press release. And he's very intelligent and very—he puts things together.

So John was helping me put study tours together from here. We got help through one of the Skidmore partners in London and through good friends in London, Frank [Francis Cuthbert] Duffy of DEGW, who was then doing groundbreaking work on new office design. Frank was also president of the Royal Institute of British Architects and arranged a reception at the RIBA headquarters. In Frankfurt, Hans Hollein, a Pritzker Prize winner who had studied at Berkeley, showed his new museum. And the Japanese who were coming, they had connections to see things. We went to see the beginnings of [Cesar] Pelli's tower at Canary Wharf, and I'm showing our Japanese group and suddenly the heads of the British construction company all came out and they started bowing. I said, "Wow, this is a lot—I'm not used to this in London!" Well, they weren't bowing to me, they were bowing to Mr. Nakajima behind me, head of the design group at Kajima! It turned out that Kajima had a 20 percent interest in the building. [laughter]

In Frankfurt we were looking at the new Frankfurt tower that Helmut Jahn did. There again they came running up to Mr. Nakajima. Through a friendship with Norman Foster we visited his office in London, and on a later trip the Commerce Bank in Frankfurt and, in construction, the Reichstag in Berlin.

Riess: So it's not that these Japanese gentlemen hadn't been out of their country.

Bender: They had all traveled and worked abroad, but visiting with someone who draws you into conversation is different. It's the triangulation thing I've talked about. They and me in the building—so they listen to what I'm saying, but they're seeing something different that they're saying to each other, and it's being triggered by the building—but in another place it could be something quite different.

Riess: How did you figure out—here's a trivial thing—how did you figure out how much to charge them for this service which sounds like nothing but fun?

Bender: Well, that's the epitome of the Japanese story. Professor Itoh, when he heard that the GC-5 people proposed this, he said, "That's a great idea. We'll have a lunch, and I'm going to ask each company for \$25,000 and to donate it to the school." I had no idea really: at that point it sounded like enough money to me to do the first trip and get the center started. We had lunch at the new Ark Hills Club and I could follow what must be going on about \$25,000, and I hear questioning, from Mr. Kobayakawa mostly, and Professor Itoh says something like a joke, and suddenly they all say, "Okay, okay." Apparently when they questioned the price, what Itoh said was, "There's no problem. If you want to give less money we'll call it the GC-6 and we'll invite Kumagai. [laughter] And the *last* thing they wanted was to have to be diluted. So they donated the \$25,000 and the GC-5 remained "5." Kumagai Gumi was the next one at that point, and they had a lot of overseas work, almost all overseas work. Kumagai collapsed later, when the bubble burst.

Riess: The money came to the College of Environmental Design.

Bender: Yes. It was a beginning.

During the time in Tokyo I had been told to go to Yokohama to see the planning office there, which was very interesting, very advanced thinking in planning the port area. And there was a young man there who was assigned to be my translator named Gregory Howell, who it turned out was a Berkeley graduate, not in anything to do with architecture, but he was learning Japanese and he had a dream to have a travel agency. In the process of talking to him Sue and I mentioned that we wanted to make a trip to see the gassho-zukuri houses, those big thatched-roof houses in Shirakawa. Gregory laid out a trip for us, and I said, "You know, if you ever really have a travel business, let me know." And when these GC-5 trips started to come through I contacted him, and it turned out that he had gone to work for Japan Travel here. So he arranged the first trip and later he did most of the others. Gregory made an interesting business out of specialized travel, focusing on art and architecture and leading trustees of MoMA, Guggenheim, etc.

Riess: The money is donated to the school directly, or does it come through you?

Bender: Well, I learned a strategy for being on the receiving side of donations. They donated the money to the University, to the regents, for my use in research, and I think there was a 3 percent charge for handling it. I paid the expenses of having CEDR staff handle payments and reports. But there was no overhead as there would have been if I had a grant or a contract—the University of California at that point was taking close to 40 percent or more.

[End Tape 23: Side B]

[Begin Tape 24: Side A]

- Bender: I think more and more people are living in a world “without walls” without noticing it. You watch movies from all over the world, and places are familiar that you’ve never been to. Sue has a cousin who is married to a man who does lighting for movies, and he was filming a movie with I think Tom Cruise in China, in a little village. And people came up with iPhones and talked about the most modern music and about the movie stars—they knew the movie stars.
- Riess: The media world.
- Bender: We’re affected by it. Look at pictures of demonstrations from Tehran and Baghdad—look at the clothes they’re wearing. I remember when the bombing was going on in Bosnia, and they would show pictures of Bosnians—there were what looked like American cars, and there were people wearing what looked like American clothes.
- Riess: I guess the difference is whether one is conscious of this, or whether it just blurs over.
- Bender: Well, and that’s a big difference about how conscious you are, and that’s part of what’s been interesting to me to try to be more conscious.
- Riess: Yes.
- Bender: For me in some ways one of the most interesting things I’ve talked about in Japan is to plead with the students and young professors to look at Japan. When I come they want me to talk about what’s going on in San Francisco and Europe and things, and I’m saying you need to look—when I came to Tokyo I was blown away by the richness of the city, and I began to understand that so much of the richness came out of a combination of culture and habit and climate, but also things like what kind of trees grow there, for how much of a span their lumber could make for the width of a building.
- Riess: Sue was a companion on your Japanese trips? She enjoyed that?
- Bender: Yes. You know, she has great people skills—“people arts” really, it is her nature to enjoy people and new experiences—and she uses them all the time. She’s always searching. And what she’s searching for is things that are spiritual, that enrich you by touching you inside. And some of that’s with people, some of it has been in things like working with clay or even—she was painting for a while, getting in touch with the feeling of it. When go to Japan together each of us is learning from the other one’s interests. When I first was at RCAST, not very far from where my office was at RCAST was Issey Miyake’s studio. I was there for that first three or four weeks, and I don’t think I ever heard of Issey Miyake. One of Sue’s early visits we went to see the first Issey Miyake shop, and I realized there’s a whole world in clothing and fashion, another dimension of architecture. And so now I’m more likely to look at shops like that than at galleries, and much of what I see there is more and more interesting because it’s anchored to life somehow more. Much as fashion can be

arbitrary it also has to eventually hang on somebody, move with someone and interact with place, climate, tradition, situation. Those shops also are a whole performance work. And again, they bring all the aspects of architecture and art together.

I'm jumping around a little, but one of the great pleasures in that way—when the Benesse Center opened in Naoshima, the first little museum and guest house there, Mr. [Soichiro] Fukutake invited [Tadao] Ando, the architect, to produce the opening ceremony as an art work. Ando invited Issey Miyake, and there was a fashion show along with the artwork, with original Japanese music, and it all naturally came together in the building and spilling across the island. Issey Miyake is exploring new materials and how you can cut materials in a way to save, to use and express the material. He reinvented the whole process, how the things are made as well as how they fit and how they can change in time, as opposed to being static. And I think a lot of young designers in architecture are looking much more at things like that than were before. I think you don't have to be looking at mud houses in native communities to learn about self-help and local input. I'm fascinated by the number of small designers who open shops now and design things and make things.

Riess: Tell me more about RCAST. The Research Center for Advanced Science and Technology?

Bender: RCAST. When I arrived the base for it was not at the main campus for Tokyo University, which is on the Hongo side, it was at Komaba, on the other side of the city, where they have a freshman campus. Next to it was a research campus built in the 1920s, which was for study particularly in aeronautical engineering. When I first saw the buildings I couldn't believe it, they looked as if they were designed by Berlage and some of the Dutch architects of that early modern period, and they were done with that influence—a group of brick buildings, a little campus. In one of the brick buildings made by craftsmen was a huge wooden wind tunnel that filled the whole building, which it turned out was used to test Zeros and other Japanese fighter planes. That building was a hulk when we were there but it's a historic monument now. A beautifully made group of buildings, a campus, and that was my base.

The team working in the same piece of RCAST was led by Professor [Osamu] Koide. He was the assistant professor under Professor Itoh who was behind it all. At Tokyo University, city planning was called urban engineering, and one of their main interests was response to earthquakes and other disasters. They were looking at how people could find shelter while response teams arrived, escape routes and refuge areas and things of that nature, making maps of Tokyo, seeing where these routes could be and how they could become part of the daily life of the city. I was not particularly supposed to be involved in it, but I got quite involved in it because when I looked at the maps I realized if you were trying to introduce a park system into a major city, they wouldn't even talk to you, because how would you acquire all that land, who would be displaced, how much would it cost? But in Tokyo the plan was going to be to clear

areas where you could get to the safe zones along the riverfront. In case of an earthquake, in case of a great fire, when the streets are all blocked and things of that sort, people would need a clear and familiar path from home. And so the whole idea of response configured as a network of open space was fascinating to me.

Riess: What were you really supposed to be doing in your chair?

Bender: Well, it turned out that nobody knew. I wanted to see and understand the Japanese manufactured housing industry. I visited companies, factories, building sites and model home sales offices. It was a surprise to see families sitting down with a salesman and discussing testing, pricing options, much like an auto dealership in the US. Later we talked about new directions in energy and resource conservation, and Professor Itoh has brought me in as an advisor to Sekisui, one of the larger companies.

Also I decided I would try to bring some of the people from the different research centers together to talk to me about what they were doing. As I said, it turned out that most of the GC-5 people never talked to each other, and it turned out they were doing the same research in many cases, working on similar projects. My visit was like a honeybee, picking up ideas in one place and dropping traces at the next. That was the basis for the group that formed around me and which has continued to expand its work and exchange ideas. Which now is even more interesting because some of those original people have just reached the level where they've become members of the board of directors of their companies, and Professor Itoh and some of the other academics are advisors to the prime minister, national and local governments, as well as companies and some emerging non-profits.

I realized what Professor Itoh understood: he's a very sophisticated man and very smart and energetic and influential, but he realized that the bigger companies were going to have a hard time moving themselves into some of the new ideas that had to do with planning and looking at cities in different ways. They sent people to the US and England and Germany to study, but they weren't going to listen to them unless they had some stamp of approval. So Professor Itoh played that role in some cases, and he'd go around and say what these people are talking about—you should listen to them. But my role became very clearly that I would go to some of these meetings where the ideas were presented to the senior people, and then I would talk about what they meant and why I thought they were good ideas, or how I thought they made sense or could be adapted to make sense. Pretty quickly I became a "stamp of approval."

Riess: That's interesting, yes.

Bender: And I find that's still true. I was back there last month for the fifth anniversary of the opening of the Mori Museum, because I helped Minoru Mori and the Mori people, the Mori Memorial Foundation, put the idea of the museum together, helped them persuade people that the idea of the museum and cultural center on the top of a fifty-five story building made

sense. And helped to open the way to their borrowing some of the MoMA collection for some early exhibitions. I have become an advisor, and when they had these meetings with the heads of the MoMA and the Pompidou Center and the Tate and other international advisors they'd invite—they include me on that level in terms of advice, and I've understood that if I use it well it's influential. As you saw from what I wrote for Kajima [Notes for a Presentation to the Design Division, Kajima Corporation, Tokyo, March 31, 2000] I did things like that eventually for all of the five companies. And when Mr. Nakajima, the head of the Kajima design group, retired, he became head of the Kajima Foundation and commissioned several studies related to non-profits and cultural institutions as “engines” of urban vitality.

Riess: So it must have been quite similar for all of the five companies?

Bender: Well, the general advice was, but there were—one of the pieces of advice that Obayashi was most interested in was looking at the changing nature of work and the workplace. The idea of a new office that replaces the traditional office where everybody has a chair and a desk, even if they're never there, something I've thought about since I first decided not to work that summer for SOM where I saw this room full of guys with ties and white shirts sitting at desks. Now when you go to offices you find they tend to work in team rooms, or work remotely, with “hot” desks shared by people who come and go—you find work done in many different ways. One of the trips I took with the Obayashi people we looked at a building that Norman Foster had designed for British Air, and they moved out because there wasn't enough room. British Telecom moved in and they had four times as many people based there but not working there every day. The people who had to be there all the time had regular desks, other people had temporary desks. This doesn't sound so unusual today, but twenty years ago it was just emerging and very exciting to my GC-5 friends.

At one point the Obayashi people commissioned me to put together a report on that, and we made study trips—I wanted them to see European offices because all their models were US offices. I'd gone once with the heads of the five companies to One Worldwide Plaza designed by David Childs of SOM on 49th Street. We went up to the offices of one of the big American law firms, and the guide was showing the Japanese around and talking about the partners' offices. One of the Obayashi people took me aside and asked, “What's a partner?” And what we saw was empty offices with beautiful views. The more people spent time there, the farther they were from the view. The empty offices were the people who were out to lunch until three and then were traveling all the time. The other thing they saw is file cabinets; the most expensive real estate at the law firm on the fortieth floor in Manhattan was filled with file cabinets. Each time we'd travel together, when someone would be triggered by something like that, then we would do a study.

Obayashi also asked me to give them advice on the competition for a building in Sapporo called the White Dome. It was going to be a sports

facility in which you could switch it from—you could play baseball inside, you could play basketball or hockey inside, and American—no, that one didn't have American football. And one of the issues was how you could play baseball on grass inside. They didn't want to have an opening roof because it's very far north and the weather's really bad. I was part of the team that designed the solution: the grass was planted in a metal container that sat in a shallow pan in water, and if you pumped the water up you could float the grass outside. It would be outside and they could practice baseball on it while there was ice-skating inside. [laughter]

Riess: Why have you linked Obayashi and Jean Nouvel in your notes?

Bender: I ended up doing probably more for Obayashi than most of the others. One reason is because Takenaka has a really good architect group; they have made buildings and good architecture their core and have a very good team. But Obayashi took to hiring well-known architects for signature buildings. At that time they had almost a thousand architects, but when it came to a special building, in this case a building for Dentsu—Dentsu is an advertising company and public relations firm. There's a firm in London like that that where the brothers are—one of them is an art collector.

Riess: Saatchi & Saatchi.

Bender: But anyway, at Obayashi's suggestion they hired Jean Nouvel to do a Dentsu building at Shiodome, a new development on Tokyo Bay. Working on the Dentsu Project with Obayashi, I went to meet Jean Nouvel in Paris. After the meeting I said, "I really like your office." I remember Nouvel was upset, and with force he said, "This is a workshop, not an office." Later I understood he was telling me something important, something I had never really said to myself.

Dentsu was important to me in several ways. When I first came to Tokyo Dentsu had set up something called the Dentsu Institute for Human Studies, and they were interested in city planning from the point of view of an advertising agency, how people experience the city, what their images and expectations are. Some young GC-5 guys and I were part of three years of seminars and studies about the future of cities sponsored by Dentsu.

But anyway, what I am saying is I ended up doing all kinds of projects with the five companies, and I decided that I would try to adopt the model of the Japanese professors of having a laboratory and having students work on projects. When I came back to Berkeley there were two or three years more before I officially retired from teaching, but I set up what was called the Urban Construction Lab in I think it was '92, or '93, or something like that. [John Parman says it was started in 1989, dating from the visit to Tokyo.] I set it up within the Center for Environmental Design Research, which I had established before. For me it was a model of how different professors could use it, but they hadn't been using it that way. And so I decided that whatever money was donated originally by the

Japanese, I would ask them if instead of paying me they would donate it to the university and I would use that money to hire students and to do the projects. And so the Urban Construction Laboratory was formed. After that some American clients, or friends really, the Rose Associates, who I've advised for many years, one of the big family real estate companies in New York, made one of the first donations. And one of my friends, Robert Menschel, who was a Goldman Sachs partner as well as a board member of MoMA.

Riess: The back of the *UCL News* lists the sponsoring companies.

Bender: I think if it has the Horace Goldsmith Foundation at the end of the list, then it's probably pretty much the list of all the Japanese and American sponsors.

In Japan, companies beyond the GC-5, at one point I met—well, the Konoike Company in Osaka. Mr. Kazusue Konoike, the young Konoike, had graduated in civil engineering from Berkeley, and I met him and I ended up doing some projects for them. One of the clients I met who was part of my finding my own kind of practice was Mr. Fukutake. I think I may have talked about that at some point, when I was invited to Okayama to talk about the possibilities for their downtown. They invited me to bring some people and talk about new ideas, and I invited Allan Jacobs and Phil Enquist, and we spent the day in a symposium run by the Rotary Club.

At the end of the day Fukutake took me aside and he said, "If you don't have to go back to Tokyo tonight, I want to show you something." Jake went back, and Phil and I went with him to Naoshima, and he showed us the island and he talked about his dreams. And the next morning at breakfast, out of the blue it seemed, he asked if I'd do the plan. I learned much more about him later: he's very quick, impetuous, and goes off in different directions and I may have mentioned it, when I expected to see him in my recent meeting at the Mori Museum, because he's on the advisory board also, I heard he wasn't coming because he's moved to New Zealand and established citizenship there for tax reasons. [laughter] But his was the spirit behind taking this island in the Inland Sea and making it a cultural center, an art center.

Riess: Yes, tell a little bit about him.

Bender: Mr. [Soichiro] Fukutake was the son of Mr. [Tetsuhiko] Fukutake, the elder Fukutake. I'm not sure that he founded it, but he is a very wealthy and influential man who founded a publishing company that publishes the textbooks for the juku. Juku are cram schools for school children, which is such a big industry in Japan. Mr. Fukutake, Sr. was interested in art. He collected—he actually bought Monets from Monet, and we discovered later they came with handwritten instructions on how they should be shown.

Riess: Naoshima? Is there some precedent for these culture islands, or however they would be characterized?

Bender: Well, in recent years, as here, a lot of rich collectors are building museums. Fukutake had a bigger idea. I don't think he understood how far he'd go with it, but he was going to try to make Naoshima, an island not far from their head office in Okayama, a cultural center. And what we talked about that first night that was so exciting—we talked about design being design, not only painting and sculptures but also everything from graphics to fashion to outdoor events and installations. But also, since the people on the island were being impoverished because the rice farming wasn't paying, and fishing wasn't paying, why didn't we do aquaculture and design new fish, and new ways of producing fish, and do seeds and develop seeds. But also in art, not simply show the traditional art forms but invent new art forms. And in that little booklet with the report [*UCL News* Spring 2004] we illustrated ideas for how that could be. The CED Library also have a copy of the main plan document in 18" x 30" format with color graphics and English and Japanese text. We even have a picture of a pasture with some sheep in it! The idea was mixing design in all kinds of things, and making it take new forms.

Riess: And he was willing to put all the money behind making this happen?

Bender: Well, he was, and there was a lot of money. Then the bubble burst and there wasn't so much money; the father died and the younger [Soichiro] Fukutake was in full control. He's someone who would be late for meetings because he was flying his lightweight—you know, one of those planes that runs with a lawnmower motor, that makes a lot of noise, out over the inland sea. But he was buying sculpture. He invited [David] Hockney to stay for a month, and he painted something and left it for the museum that was going to be built. And then he would be off, and suddenly he wasn't interested in European things but Asian things.

He was taken by this idea, and one of the ideas that we developed is that there are some small villages on the island—it's a very small island—but that some of the old houses would be preserved for craftsmen and as residences for visiting artists, and that some of them could be restored in a partnership between architects and artists. And so that partnership has done, at this point maybe about a dozen houses. Ando did one with James Turrell. Now Naoshima is becoming a tourist center. The first building was Benesse House—well, the name changed, we'd always talked about Naoshima, which is the name of the island. In all the financial changes of the mid-nineties he had the idea—he started calling it Benesse, a name he invented, the island, but he had the idea to take the company public and call it the Benesse Corporation.

Riess: So Benesse is just a name?

Bender: It's a name he invented. It sort of sounds—it could probably have been a perfume or a soap, but it sort of sounds like good—[From Benesse Website: "*Benesse* was coined by combining the Latin terms *bene* (well or right) and *esse* (to be or to live)."]

The original building has a museum and fifteen guest rooms, so it's like a bed and breakfast with galleries, on a very Ando scale, the kind of building Ando does best, intimate and responding to the land and the place. It's a really fine building. Right behind it there's a hill, and the second Benesse building went on top of the hill, maybe a hundred and fifty feet higher, and that's a circle with a pool in the center and there's a track so you go up and down, a version of a Swiss cog railway. And the third building is where he sort of exploded out of his original—

Riess: You mean Ando exploded?

Bender: Well, Fukutake, as a client. He decided that the third building would be bigger than the first two combined. It contains individual galleries for three artists—[James] Turrell, Monet—for the Monets—and Walter De Maria, and that Ando would do three galleries in collaboration with the artists. In the Monet case, with the instructions from Monet. That complex [Chichu Art Museum]—it was decided to put it underground with a grass roof over most of it, and it has those three components in it and that opened about five or six years ago. The Monets are installed as you see if you go to the room with the Monets in the renovated Orangerie in Paris: it's a white room, and they're set into the wall.

Riess: So your students, how were they connected? In what way?

Bender: Well, some of them came on a visit to Naoshima. The project was the way most of mine are, way out of scale for what I can do. And so I had asked Phil Enquist to work with me. At that point Phil had just left SOM to be head of urban design for EDAW, and so he started working on it with me with EDAW, and then he was hired back to be head of urban design in Chicago for SOM. So he finished it with the Chicago office, but it was basically Phil and me and a group of students who came and went, some of them Japanese so we have Japanese translations.

For part of the project and the restoration of the old villages we brought in Professor Hidenobu Jinnai. He's a Japanese who got his PhD in architectural history, I guess, from the University of Venice, and when I'd taken the Japanese to Venice on that GC-5 trip and we met Paolo Ceccarelli, who had been the dean at the school in Venice and was one of our collaborators here at Berkeley—he brought Jinnai along, and Jinnai's become a really, really good friend. He teaches at Hosei University, where he now runs the equivalent of a National Science Foundation center for issues of cities on the water—that is, modeled on our NSF. Jinnai did a study of the villages and wrote a series of guidelines for how they could be restored and developed and how to respect the antiquities.

Riess: Students who work on the UCL projects come from all the CED disciplines?

Bender: Yes. I basically invite people to join. All people who are working who—more or less it's been that since I don't have that close—people who have been working with some of the faculty. None of the regular faculty was

working on Naoshima. Well, John Kriken now is more regular faculty and John had a peripheral role, but it was mainly Phil Enquist. But students recommend other students, and I hear about students, people come when they hear about it. Over the years we have had students from all over.

We haven't talked about France yet, but from France we brought a group of students to Luberon to work on a project. And Berkeley people have been in Hanoi, and they've been in Ho Chi Minh City, and Shanghai, and several projects in Japan, and now they're going to go to Singapore.

Riess: And they're funded for their travel?

Bender: Well, I should be clear—there are two different aspects of it. There are individual projects that we've done. And at one point because the student workshops that Allan Jacobs and I had started—and then with Paolo Ceccarelli and then with Shigeru Satoh from Waseda University—were so successful we decided that the Urban Construction Lab would take an interest in some similar projects and sponsor them, and we put a number of those together. We bring one or two faculty, and somewhere up to around eight students usually, along with students from usually Italy and Waseda [University]. Lately it has been more places and Professor Peter Bosselmann has taken on the leadership role at CED. We meet someplace where a community has some military or industrial project that they want to convert to peacetime uses. I call these UCL projects Swords to Plowshares, and Robert Menschel has been one of the main contributors. He and his brother Richard run the Horace Goldsmith Foundation, and they have been sponsors. They recently changed the name of the group that supports us to the Vital Projects Fund.

Riess: Vital Projects?

Bender: Vital Projects. Bob Menschel—we knew him from New York days. He went to the Bronx High School of Science, and then to Syracuse, and the Harvard Business School, and is a retired Goldman Sachs partner. He collects photographs, and he was on the board of MoMA—he became president of MoMA for a few years, and then chairman of the board till recently. He has brought me in to give me a chance to observe and to give advice to them at different times, and he's been one of our supporters.

Riess: That's such an interesting evolution. Had you and Allan Jacobs been talking about all this before?

Bender: Allan and I had talked about the idea for a while, and then—Paolo Ceccarelli had been head of the school in Venice, and that's the time, 1983, when Sue and I went for four months to Venice on a sabbatical, and part of it was to be with Paolo and to understand how these huge Italian schools of architecture work. Later Paolo was invited by the Italian government to start a new school in Ferrara, which would be the first Italian school that would meet European standards in terms of student ratios and programs. And so Paolo came to Berkeley—he'd been to the United States. Paolo's wife Laura is interested in quilts actually, and she

taught in women's studies at Santa Cruz at one point. She later became a senator in Italy and minister of the department that oversees issues of families. During Paolo's visit to Berkeley we talked about a collaboration with the new Ferrara program—it would be good for UC and a resource for the Ferrara program in its start-up years. Alan Jacobs and I led the group to the first international summer studio in Vicenza. We worked in a space on top of the Palladio building. A few years later, in Comacchio on the Adriatic coast, Professor Shigeru Satou of Waseda joined the session with his students.

Riess: Back to Swords to Plowshares. It sounds like it was really a good thing to be doing?

Bender: For me it was a way to take on urban planning in a way that looked at issues where local communities very often can't prepare. A military base gets turned over and suddenly the developers are coming in with lots of ideas and talking. What this would give us a chance to do is to have a series of ideas and to educate the local community in what some of the possibilities were before that happened.

Riess: You would identify bases, or places that were going to be decommissioned?

Bender: We started doing that. Some of the places that we went to with Allan and Ceccarelli together had that military aspect to them, but then we found some that were not, and that we did separately from that group. In some cases we hooked onto a French group that was doing student studios and went to help them with places where there were military installations.

Riess: This expression *doing studios*—for the non-architect that's a little vague. What's this?

Bender: Well, architects work in school and then in practice in a studio or workshop as a group, a group of people, very often on collaborative projects, sometimes taking the same project on from different directions. The teachers critique the work of each student, very often with the other students listening in and exchanging, so our idea was to take this role to a place that would introduce students to different places, and also to people from a different background, and to take on projects with enough time to do some thinking about it, but not enough time to get involved in details, to deal with it conceptually.

Riess: How does your work at Fort Mason fit into this?

Bender: Well, Fort Mason was the first studio the UCL did right here. I was a member of the founding board of the Fort Mason Center. When the Fort Mason Center was looking for ideas about how to use the site, we volunteered to make a whole series of ideas for the site, landscaping, building uses, and for how to treat the paving, presented it to them, and they used it to raise money and eventually it was the basis for a competition to select an architect.

[End Tape 24: Side A]

[Begin Tape 24: Side B]

- Riess: The Japanese connection, let's make sure we've got it all.
- Bender: Well, twenty years turns out to be a long time. Things evolved without much planning, and what started as a three-month visit turned into a kind of institution. The organization that was put together for research has moved into doing a series of bigger projects. We've come to the point where the first round of buildings has been finished and we have a chance to see how some of the ideas have worked. Makuhari has been built. Roppongi Hills has been open for almost seven years now. Naoshima started as a piece of one island, and now there are two more islands; it started as a museum and ended up having a global outreach—it is a global tourist destination. Some of the studios host visiting artists, while others produce materials for students who are taking art classes in small places in Japan where there are no regular teachers or programs. Most of all, a community has come together around the people and the ideas that brought us together. I visit less these days, but the work and the community of interest and friendship continues to expand.
- Riess: When you talk about doing something in the heart of Tokyo, or even on an island, your people have the power to get permissions and get through the process of making such bold architecture?
- Bender: It is not so much “my people.” All of the participants are working through their offices or universities or agencies. I raised the beacon that drew them in and started the discussion. Now each of us takes what we learned back to the work we do. Again, I came at the right time. I arrived in Tokyo when Mr. Mori's father, Taikichiro Mori, was just finishing Ark Hills. Ark Hills was the first project in Tokyo to take on a larger and a bigger set of civic and cultural goals and do a complex of buildings conceived as a community.
- Riess: This permissions thing, did they have to destroy buildings?
- Bender: They destroyed buildings. In that case they destroyed almost everything on the site, although a temple was restored and the garden of a large house was restored and expanded. It's an area not far from the American embassy, which took down another batch of things, and IBM has something there. The area was also opened up for an elevated highway. It was a dense neighborhood of buildings that were unsafe and unhealthy. There are old buildings of higher quality around it, but for this one they took everything down. Today we might say too much was destroyed. Perhaps more sophistication then would have helped, but it was another time. The Moris have continued to have an interest in culture as part of these things: Suntory Hall, the main concert hall in Tokyo is part of Ark Hills.

Ark Hills took the Japanese by surprise: nothing like it had been done, and it came in an area where nobody was particularly interested in what was there, they had just put the highway through. When Minoru, the son, decided to do a project less than a kilometer away down the street at Roppongi Hills, by then it was more complicated, it was a much bigger project, thirty acres in the heart of Tokyo. The seed of it was Asahi TV broadcasting—publishing too, but mostly broadcasting. They had facilities in this area where there was also an old estate with a beautiful garden, and a lot of little houses in a neighborhood that had more small houses around it. The big highway was on one side of it. Behind it was a quite high-level neighborhood, good-quality houses, and by the time you're at the next subway station you're at the center of Hiroo, an expat community.

Roppongi was always known as an entertainment area, but it was more bars and nightclubs and things. The Moris were moving into that area from the old project with the idea of bringing culture with it and turning the area into a cultural area. So Roppongi Hills was conceived as having—well, in Ark Hills I helped to establish the Ark Toshijuku, which was like a night school in which urban planning and some business courses and computers were the main subjects. It started in the fourth basement—we used to call it B4. So that school was there, and there was a gallery there with some of Mori's Corbusier collection in it. Music and art works were beginning to spill out onto the plaza.

But the new building was going to be the hub of a new cultural district. The idea was to have a museum, have shopping, hotel, offices, the school, the Academy Hills School. The garden would be a public garden, an outdoor “arena” that would host concerts, exhibits and events. They were already beginning to acquire the land when I got there. Part of it was a swap with Asahi, that they would throw their land into it and they'd eventually get a building out of it. The Moris started buying up the land, and it took—compared with the United Nations building, and Zeckendorf managed that in about a year and a half, it took twenty years, I think, to move in, and four of them were construction, the rest of it was assembling the land. People, including some of our colleagues—Professor Satoh from Waseda—led some of the neighbors in protest. Residents were bought out or relocated, and some chose to move into the new residences.

Riess: That's what I wondered about.

Bender: In the end, because the building was between a residential neighborhood and the Tokyo Tower where the television broadcasting is—Mr. Mori pays for cable television for forty thousand families I think, who fall into the “shadow” of the signal. I don't know when that will go away.

We got involved in the early stages looking at it. They had hired [Fumihiko] Maki to do the television building, Kohn Pedersen and Fox to do the main tower, Mori Tower, Jerde Partnership to do the shopping, Terrance Conran to do apartments, someone else to do the Grand Hyatt Hotel, several others, including Yoji Sasaki, to do the landscaping. But even by that date they had no planner—and in other big urban projects

there was no tradition of bringing in an urban designer. I got Peter Bosselmann invited to be one of the GC-5 visiting professors, and while he was there he introduced the Environmental Simulation techniques from our lab at the school here. and we invited the Mori people to visit the lab in Berkeley and soon after, Professor Itoh and Mori Building Company began to build a simulation lab. Peter and his simulation group there, which has now gone way ahead in terms of what they're doing, started looking at the whole site doing video simulations that moved through the public spaces on and off the site. In the process it was getting to be the time when computers were replacing video simulations and in 1993 we did some of the first combined classes between Berkeley and Tokyo with the Ark Toshijuku students there, and Taisei Company joined in and paid for some of it, in looking at the site plans and alternatives. There was a lot of, "Can you hear me?" and, "I don't see the plan," and sometimes we backed it up with the telephone, but it was a start into this new dimension of communication.

We looked at issues, and again with Professor Jinnai who I'd worked with in Naoshima, we looked at the old maps of Edo and saw that there had been a street running through the site that had been lost. The original idea was to put most of the project on a platform above the level of the street, and we talked about and showed how it could move down so on three of the sides it came down to the ground and could join the neighborhood around it, that the old street could curve through the project and become Keyaki-zaka Dori, a busy shopping street. We proposed guidelines, like the shops along the street would have several floors of housing and offices over them, as well as having housing and offices in the towers. And a lot of it got done, eventually. It was not all we—or Minoru Mori and Mori Building Company—wanted, but it was a real step ahead, an example of integrating a neighborhood, making it a "cell" of the city rather than just a group of buildings.

- Riess: The architectural firms that were involved, like Maki and Kohn Pedersen, how did you work with their people?
- Bender: Well, we were basically working with different designers who were doing their own buildings, and then the Mori Company was going to knit them together and we were helping Mori in the coordination. We worked with and became friendly with Minoru and Yoshiko Mori and the wonderful Yuko Serazawa, the Mori's special advisor and "ambassador."
- Riess: You didn't want from them a kind of vision? You were doing that part?
- Bender: Well, the urban vision was Minoru Mori's dream. It developed early in terms of how the land and infrastructure could be dealt with commercially. The buildings were already forming when we got there, and so we were really working on how to do the spaces between, in and around them and across the streets into the adjoining community. Later Ark Toshijuku was going to move to the top of the building to be part of the Mori Cultural Center, and the name of the school changed to Academy Hills, and the program became richer. Mr. Fukutake agreed to be on the

board of advisors for the Mori Art Museum, and the young Mr. Obayashi, who is an art collector, I got to be one of the advisors on the board of the museum. I helped select the first director, David Elliott—I went back last week to celebrate one of the anniversaries of the Mori Art Museum’s opening.

My influence was more advising the Moris, trying to get them to not push the envelope too much sometimes, and to push the envelope more in other ways. Mr. Mori is committed to high-rise buildings and to living in high-rise buildings and an image of a green city, a vertical green city. He also loves New York. I went with him and Mrs. Mori—we walked around Rockefeller Center, which he loves, and that was a model. I remember showing him plans I had sketched years ago when I was in Harrison’s office, that if you continue that street between the skating rink and the RCA Building to the north—the Esso Building used to be there—there’s a lobby that comes out on 52nd Street and the 21 Club is across the street, and if you took that out you’re at the front of the Museum of Modern Art. And the Rockefellers were involved with the Museum of Modern Art, although they never were able to make that connection fully, but the Moris loved the idea.

The Moris loved the 21 Club, so part of the cultural center at Roppongi Hills is—it’s nothing like the 21 Club, but it’s a club, the Roppongi Hills Club. There’s a museum, there’s a library, there’s a study center on the top five floors that they opened as the Mori Cultural Center. As we talked about it in the celebrations last month, Mrs. Mori talked about when you looked up in Tokyo, on the top of the tallest building, instead of corporate offices you would see the lights shining in a cultural center. And the idea was to keep it open twenty-four hours a day. Part of the center is open twenty-four hours a day, so the top glows, and what you’re seeing is the library and the study center and the club and the museum. One of the things the Mori people talk about is why—we’ve talked about the tower, the cultural center, but the top is a beacon and a gateway to Japan for tourists. And more and more when they come to Tokyo they go up there, and they see the 360-degree view from the 51st floor.

Working through that, and being part of it enough to observe it, and now to go back and be there, walk through it at all hours of the day and night—I am living out a dream. At this meeting last week we had Nick Serota, the director of the Tate, as well as the director from the Pompidou, and Glenn Lowry from MoMA, and from the National Museum in Berlin—it was something we had projected early in the planning in the mid-1990s for one of our *UCL News* articles about Roppongi Hills. Robin Chiang made a sketch of the Mori tower with a satellite in the sky and wireless connections coming down to the Louvre, the MoMA and the Guggenheim. We made a similar drawing first for Naoshima. With Naoshima we talked about “small footprint/global impact”—that motto of Naoshima, and we did that satellite image reaching out. The clear image that you have is always more a metaphor, but you realize that those things happen in a much richer way, the interconnections. In the case of Naoshima it’s made Japan’s Inland Sea an art center: other islands are

developing, there are now ferryboats that take you across the Inland Sea to where Noguchi's studio was and where Noguchi's quarry was.

With the success of Roppongi Hills, Mitsui [Fudosan] bought up an old Japanese civil defense base a couple of blocks away from where Roppongi Hills is, and Mitsui built a version of Roppongi Hills with SOM and Nikken Sekkei, a big Japanese firm. It's called Tokyo Midtown. The main structure is a lot like Rockefeller Center with low wings and a tower around a courtyard. It also has a big park in the back. The park has an elegant little museum commissioned by Issey Miyaki and designed by Ando. With Minoru Mori's vision taking form, the government decided to build what they call a national gallery nearby, the National Arts Center. It's one of the last things Kicho Kurokawa did before he died. It's a great space frame structure in which there are some powerful spaces, lots of different galleries. So Roppongi has become a cultural center now. People said it would be a big blow to Roppongi Hills when Midtown opened, but it was not a particularly big blow, and within a while it made the area more of an attraction. Roppongi has become known as an art center; people talk about the "Roppongi Triangle."

Mori once asked me to visit the Dia Museum, the one in Beacon [New York], to look at the Louise Bourgeois spider, which—at this point, everyone's got those spiders. There's one along the Embarcadero, that little one. But we went to look at the big one. It turned out there were three of them: one of them was in the Dia Beacon, one was reserved and it was to be in the atrium at the Tate Modern Museum, and one was still in the warehouse in Paris. And we bought a spider! A big spider! In Mori's Roppongi Hills project, one of the ways you arrive is to come by subway; you come underground to the station, then you come up this long escalator to the plaza in front of the office building. And you come up underneath this spider. And I don't know if you've seen the spiders, but underneath the spider there's a little net and there is a cluster of eggs. It turns out that the spider in Japan represents wisdom and fertility: the egg part is part of the fertility in them, and the wisdom.

Riess: How is that embodied?

Bender: Spiders sit quietly and wait. But it's pretty spectacular to come up and see this thing on the plaza.

Over the years I worked with Mr. Mori on several papers, and I have written others as part of studies he or the Mori Building Company or the Mori Memorial Foundation sponsored. One of the most interesting is a paper called *An Urban New Deal Policy for Tokyo*. In 2000 Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi asked Mr. Mori to be one of seven people to suggest ideas for Japan's future. Mori was to report on the building industry. He chose to suggest a parallel to Roosevelt's New Deal—Mr. Mori was an admirer of Franklin Roosevelt—and knowing my interest he asked me to contribute to the writing.

The Mori Memorial Foundation was set up about fifteen years ago, and more recently they have been rethinking what to do with it, what to focus on. One of the topics that it's taking on is urban futures, again "the New Deal." Studies suggested that infrastructure for future cities would include more support for culture, health, and other social issues. The Mori Foundation is beginning to explore how the many cultural institutions in Tokyo can be the triggers of future growth. And as you've seen from this, one of the things that I'm deeply committed to is that cultural facilities can be the trigger for an urban development in a much richer way than the more traditional office buildings. If you put an office building in, then you get a restaurant and you get some shops. But if you start with a university, universities have all the pieces of a city. A university has museums, it has recreation, and it has libraries, people living there, and people who are studying, people who are working. If you put that into an area where it links with the neighborhood around it. In the case of California, each of the campuses, Berkeley, UCLA, they were put out there somewhere that felt far away and they brought development around it. In the case of NYU they took a moribund old industrial area in a part of the city that seemed to be left behind, and NYU has grown to be a really good university and brought a kind of life and energy to Greenwich Village.

Riess: And uses existing buildings.

Bender: It uses existing buildings. It uses Washington Square Park as a campus.

Riess: So "Tokyo as a college town?"

Bender: Is one of the foundation's projects. Professor Itoh and Mr. Mori asked me to give a talk—it's five years ago now—which I called "Tokyo as a College Town." But it was really a history of the town-gown relationship in American universities from Harvard, where the first president got the use of the farm and the students had to work the farm, to the land grant schools, to Silicon Valley. We looked through all that. And meanwhile they've done a study and there are over four hundred colleges and universities in Tokyo, over half a million students. It is a city of college towns, neighborhoods energized by colleges, and we're starting to look at some of them. If you look at the development of an area from the university as a focus rather than, "Oh, here's an empty lot and here's a building we can replace," new possibilities emerge. The foundation has now commissioned a first group of studies around Waseda and Meiji and one or two smaller universities. The main campus of Tokyo University is very much like Berkeley, in that it opens onto a street that's like Telegraph Avenue. [laughs] Somehow it has taken my whole career to really discover the "Bologna" that is the ideal merging of city and university.

Riess: You've used an image of lines connecting—those lines are like clouds?

Bender: For many years now I've used a cloud image as a metaphor, a way to look at how things are changing. Years ago I came across Karl Popper, who used the analogy of clocks and clouds, and how a clock is a mechanism

which is predictable. Clocks are elegant and useful, but linear. Once you set the clock you know where it's going to be in the future. A cloud is a different sort of mechanism—yet we tend not to think of clouds as mechanisms, we don't know where the pieces of a cloud are or how they work. If you look at different kinds of clouds they can be like a school of fish, or a flock of birds, in their behavior somehow. The school or flock behaves as a whole, but it has a much more organic nature, much closer to people and communities. If you toss a pebble in the pond the fish scatter, no one can predict what any fish does. Perhaps it is like quantum mechanics compared to the more clocklike image of electrons orbiting a nucleus. For years now I've been talking about clocks and clouds, how we have been thinking about and building cities as clocks when they are more and more like clouds.

But all of this—it's the small and the big, the larger picture of infrastructure in which smaller pieces are operating. I've talked about Jung's essay in which he says that the first half of your life you integrate, you get it all together, educate, get a family. But the second part of your life is time to dis-integrate, not fall apart but to develop the richness of the parts. These are all the pieces that I have floating around, that I've been trying to make more coherent. But in a sense they're all built into the idea that these places, institutions, communities have built to a certain point since the industrial revolution, and they've become like clocks, and now it's time for them to turn into clouds. There's a place for a cloud, and there's also a place for a clock. For Berkeley, my picture is that the original campus gets preserved as a symbol, a metaphor, and a memory, and it continues to do what it does so well. But the new university, the future university is more cloudlike. The original campus is a place where you stop to get in touch with its roots, where you remind yourself of what a university is about.

At Harvard the freshman all live in the Yard, then they go off to the houses. When the School for the Deaf [Clark Kerr Campus] was taken over, it was one of my ideas that the freshmen would be there, bond and build friendships, and then they would move out, take the next steps into a broader and more specialized world. At Nanyang Technical University in Singapore now we're looking at the idea that rather than build residences to accommodate most of their 30,000 plus students on their Garden Campus and in the process overbuild the garden, we'll make the Garden Campus a symbol and a remembrance of the beginnings, and what the land was like, what the place was like—and they'll move out into a cloud. My analogies get mixed.

Riess: Before we finish today, you gave me a copy of *A Dean's Response to a Critic*, where you responded to Allan Temko's attack on the CED [*SF Chronicle*, June 18, 1979] Why was it important for you to go public in this?

Bender: It was the way he did it. Temko was famous for criticizing everybody. He was brilliant, and also the kind of lively speaker people love hearing because they trash things and people elegantly. And for one of the

commencements the student group said, “Why don’t we invite Allan Temko?” It was when Joe Esherick was chair. We were sitting at the commencement, and Joe Esherick was there, Roger [Montgomery] was there, faculty and students. But mostly it was families, and Temko understood it was a commencement, it was about the students and the parents, and the talk shouldn’t be more than fifteen minutes—there was the hot sun, people were waiting to see their kids get a diploma. For so many of them this was a first for all the family, a precious moment. He started talking, and criticizing and really trashing the school. He said there were no professionals; he was standing right in front of Joe Esherick and saying there were no professionals on the faculty!

It was funny for a while, and then it was starting to get long, and longer, and he wouldn’t—at one point he said, “Well, I don’t have too much more to say,” and they broke into applause and he went on, Finally he stopped, and he left people with a bad feeling. And he made me mad. I don’t often get that kind of mad, and also frustrated. On the Monday after the graduation he had basically written his speech in a column in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. I called the *Chronicle* and I talked to one of the editors and they said, “Well, we don’t publish responses to opinions.” And Nan, what was her name [Nan Peletz], she was a student at the school then, a really good, bright student I had come to know well. She was engaged to Will Hearst, Patty Hearst’s brother. I had been invited once down to the Hearst Castle to learn more about Julia Morgan, and I knew her and some of the family.

So after I called the editor and he told me they didn’t publish responses to opinions, I asked Will, and he said, “Why don’t you call my uncle in Chicago.” I could never have done it, but Sheila Dickie, my secretary—more than my secretary, she has enormous skill and wisdom and this wonderful British accent—she got him on the line. He said, “What’s this about?” He listened to my story and said, “Call him [the editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle*] back in half an hour.” I called back in half an hour and he said, “All right. Can you get me so many words by Friday?” And that’s how it got published. I realized afterwards—I always thought it was the best thing I wrote! [laughing] I liked some of the analogies. I don’t even remember the words now, but remember I liked some of the analogies about people.

Riess: Did it turn to have been a good thing to do? Did anyone pick up on it?

Bender: Oh, “A Dean’s Response to a Critic” ended up being in newspapers all over the country. [*SF Chronicle* June 23, 1979]

[End Tape 24: Side B]

Interview 13 : March 16, 2011

[Begin Tape 25 : Side A]

Riess: Alain Charre writing in *CityLab* said that when you were a foreign visiting professor in Tokyo in 1976 you “summoned up the largest number of cultural agents in urban construction.” What does that mean? And is that interesting?

Bender: Yes, and that’s flattering, and at the heart of what I’m going to talk about with the Japanese part of these interviews. What he’s talking about is the fact that out of this accidental chair and the programs I was inventing for myself really, I brought all these young people together and now—well, they have dozens of professors and people in all these companies who got interested—some were interested in urban design but couldn’t pursue it because no senior people put their stamp of approval on it, and my coming and talking about it made a difference. Some of the GC-5 people—what they called *the young people* began to meet regularly while I was there, and now every time I come they have a party. When I’m not there they play golf; they have meetings together.

Riess: So this term *cultural agents*?

Bender: That was his term. And it’s a very nice term.

Riess: Another thing he writes, apropos Japan or Asia: “Because on the one hand he keeps utopia at a safe distance, although without rejecting it, and on the other hand he is free of the Japanese myth, unlike an entire generation who saw in Japan the image of the future, or like Rem Koolhaas, the expression of chaos, Richard Bender is predisposed to maintain a natural relationship with Japan.”

Bender: Yes. Well, I think I came at a time when all the world was looking at the Japanese as the answer to everybody’s question or problems. One of the reasons I wanted to go to Japan was to see how these big companies worked. The five big companies, the five general contractors that support the GC-5 Chair in Urban Design and Construction—each of them was about the size of Bechtel. And each of them, I discovered, was maintaining a research facility that was roughly the size of the Building Research Center at the National Bureau of Standards in Gaithersburg [Maryland] outside of Washington. So I was curious to see that. It was the time when everyone was reading these Japanese books on the art of war and things of that sort for business strategy. I was interested by companies that were vertically organized and also horizontally organized. Basically each of these companies had an involvement in the building process that began with development and finance and ran through design and construction management to the operation and management of buildings and places through their lifetime.

What really struck me on in the mid to late nineties while I was on the jury for the Saitama Arena competition—Saitama is like a new town, except it's one of the centers of a new town with two million people. In the towns I'd been dealing with, in France for example, they were worried they were getting too big when they had 250,000, and they were building a new center. During the jury I was in the hotel, on the twentieth floor of the hotel in Saitama, when the Kobe earthquake came. And this is as far from Kobe as Boston is from Washington. I was in the bathtub in the morning getting ready to go out, and it shook enough so all of the water came sloshing out of the bathtub. [laughing] But in the next days one of my Obayashi GC-5 friends, Hideo Obitsu, said that he was going down for the company to Kobe—this would have been about ten days after the earthquake—and was I interested to come with him?

So I went to Kobe, and what I learned is that the day after the earthquake Obayashi and all the other companies, but Obayashi was doing more in this case because they're based in Osaka and had done a lot of buildings there, moved into Kobe and started to work on stabilization and then the repair of buildings for clients who were their long-time clients. They didn't just do a building and go away. If they worked for Toyota, they did all the Toyota buildings. And it was not just for big companies. They maintain that relationship in ways that are richly Japanese. In fact, at one point I asked how they organized all this and I was shown the contract for a large building complex. Here in the United States the contract documents would fill the room, and they were in one book for this thing, a pretty thick book but one book.

What I came to understand is that so much of building in Japan was a deeper contract. If the price was coming out too high, on the next project there'd be an adjustment. But there would be a next project, and the client knew that Obayashi knew how they do things, how they wanted things. They learned from each project and brought that knowledge to the next. That didn't mean that they didn't change every time, but they knew that Obayashi was going to be doing repairs if something broke or if a roof leaked, and Obayashi knew that they had to please a client that they had long relationships with.

These companies, the oldest of them of the five that I worked with, Takenaka, was founded in Edo times. The original Takenakas were carpenters. And they prize those traditions. The youngest of the five was probably Shimizu, but they also went back a hundred and fifty, two hundred years, with traditions that grew out of carpentry when buildings were mostly carpentry and there were not a lot of other system.

Riess: So what do you think they're doing right now in Japan [after the earthquake and tsunami on March 11, 2011]? I think I read that that group of big five companies, the value of *their* stock has gone up.

Bender: I'm sure that it has, and they—well, in the years before this March 11th they suffered a big blow. It's been on the horizon for years, but in the last election when the Liberal Democrats were finally thrown out on the

national level, thrown out with it was the idea that the way you stimulate the economy is by giving big government construction contracts. And while the buildings part of those companies these days, the building of buildings as opposed to road, tunnels, bridges, varies, it is significant. At Takenaka buildings are a majority, but at the others it's 10 or 15 percent. So they're doing roads and tunnels and bridges, and every little village has paving and highways going as a way to stimulate the economy. When these projects are cut back it is a big blow, especially to the large GC-5 companies. The earthquake was a disaster, but it will mean a lot more work for construction companies.

In recent years I've watched—and these are one of the things I've seen evolving that's interesting to me, because they've been stepping from this big model in so many ways. And one of the things, the infrastructure that they do now, has parted in two ways: it's less focused on hard infrastructure in the sense of roads and buildings, tunnels, and more on schools, recreation, and museums. Every town seems to have a new museum and new cultural center. Gyms are big. In recent years new opportunities are seen in security systems, energy efficiency and most of all, in the environment. A big part of what I point out to them is that their history has been in civil engineering infrastructure, and now environmental infrastructure is the new civil engineering.

- Riess: You are giving me a global background, and we have to get more personal. Is this a result of their contact with you? Where do you fit into this account?
- Bender: I think I'm like a cork floating on the water. [laughing]
- Riess: You've written "The Role of Construction Companies in a World Without Walls" [2000]. Was this your thinking when you arrived on the scene? Or is this what you learned?
- Bender: No, much more really where I was when I left. For a period of close to ten years I, working with John Parman, wrote the Kajima people what we called a "Research Letter" four times a year, in which we looked around the world at what would be interesting for them to look at. Sometimes they would ask us a question and then we would look up things like what's the future of senior housing and assisted living? What I learned is how much more forward-looking they are in their timescale for planning. It's so much bigger. I had come from the University of California, where they do a long-range plan for the campus that is really looking only five years ahead, and they change it maybe every three years. Companies are afraid to do long-range planning because the stockholders are watching them, the quarterly reports. While in Japan the GC-5 companies have these big research centers looking at long-term issues. I wasn't surprised to find they were way ahead on base isolation systems that put the building sort of on a roller that allows it to move rather than stress. And because of the success of Takenaka's Tokyo Dome, they were looking at lightweight structures to span sports facilities and things of that sort. But I found studies going on in color, in what colors are more supportive of

hospital situations, for instance. And on robots that can tile the walls of tall buildings.

Riess: So when you first went there you were learning from Japan.

Bender: I was learning from Japan the whole way. What I was able to do was to reflect back to them my impressions. I learned that “reflecting” was very important to me. And these groups of young people who I used to meet with very informally, we would visit places and talk about issues.

Riess: As you described, these were the lower/middle people in the companies.

Bender: Yeah, the younger people were mostly back from having studied abroad, and they had been picked for that with the idea that they’d come back and spend their life in the company. So the company invested in them, the company invested in research, the company invested in sending—I went along with Mr. Obitsu, an MIT graduate, when he went back to look at how the buildings did after the earthquake and to start—well, the office there was already starting on the rebuilding.

So on the one hand I found the advantage of these big firms that are forward-looking and have a long timeframe. On the other hand, I found they’re also very inflexible. Like big organizations everywhere, it was hard for them to move. The final presentation I made to Kajima was summing up something I’d been saying to them and suggesting they look at, which is that they really think of themselves as general contractors rather than builders. And as general contractors they’re more like Boeing than they are like Kaufman & Broad, or companies that build individual buildings. And instead of maintaining twelve thousand employees, I saw, whether they realized it or not, that they were shrinking to a model more of a core staff that organized local talent, local companies, and managed them. So rather than running this big company that was doing all this work, like the elephant pulling the sled, they’d been moving to managing work that’s done by many small contractors. Mr. Yamaki [Shigeru Yamaki, Taisei Corp.], in fact, when he came to Berkeley, came to study “management of design.” That was a new concept. He was disappointed how little he found of that in the engineering school or at CED. But at that point people in this country were just beginning to see that instead of paying a draftsman in the US, I can have plans done in Mexico, where being a draftsman is considered a good job, and people really study for it, as opposed to the United States, where you become a draftsman when you can’t make it as a design architect, because our education is turned upside down.

Riess: I can see how this would be a new way of looking at things for the Japanese.

Bender: A lot of it came together for me, and what you’re talking about is at the end.

- Riess: The Kajima speech is at the end of the twenty years. So maybe that's the segue into the beginning of the twenty years. And when we talked last time we kind of leapt into the middle of it.
- Bender: Well, I'm trying to remember how much we talked about.
- Riess: You were recognizing how the future was in Asia, reaching out to Asia and specifically China in 1979 to 1980, People to People delegation. I don't think I know anything about this.
- Bender: Well, that's where I thought I would start, because the influence of Japan and Asia started before I even thought about going to Japan or Asia.
- When I came to California, I felt I was going away from the East Coast. I was surprised to find almost everybody in the school here had studied on the East Coast or at some point came from the East Coast in some way. The East Coast models were Europe, in a way, for another generation. But people looked back to the East Coast.
- Riess: You mean faculty.
- Bender: Faculty, and also professionals. And when you did something you always were looking over your shoulder to see how was it playing in Cambridge or New York? For me, the great amount of traveling back and forth to the East Coast was because in many of the things I was interested in, the power was in Washington or in New York, the financial power, the government power. And even things like the AIA or the Association of Schools of Architecture, they were all back there.
- The connection with Asia was interesting. We all knew Frank Lloyd Wright had brought something back, and the Greene & Greene brothers were influenced by Asia. I kept finding traces in gardens and things of an Asian influence. But the more I was here, the more I was fascinated both in learning and in the possibilities of being on what eventually we thought of as the Pacific Rim. Because for me, first it was looking at Japan. Under Mao, China was sort of out of reach at that point. And Japan was having this big boom. Later I realized that I'd grown up, in a sense, with a close connection to Latin America through the IBEC and the Rockefellers and Paul Wiener and José Sert, and they're on the Pacific Rim also. And so when the revolution in Chile came, I was quick to see if we could take some of the faculty from the universities who were escaping. I don't know if I mentioned this.
- Riess: No.
- Bender: It doesn't take me away from talking about the Pacific Rim, but it starts with Chile. It's a picture of bureaucracy at its worst. The dean of the school of architecture in Santiago was named Kuznetsoff. He was from a third or fourth generation Chilean family that had come from somewhere in Eastern Europe. He fled Chile and he stayed at Berkeley for almost twenty years as a lecturer, and he was a good teacher and people really

liked him. At that point we were having—it was one of the first rounds of affirmative action. We had to put together a list of all the faculty and identify people, and one of the ways we were asked to do it was by Spanish surname. Somehow I ended up having to put Kuznetsoff under the Spanish surname category in order to meet this, and then realized that you don't think about it. There are so many—in Mexico there are so many Irish names in architecture. And all through South America. The whole of the Americas has had this influx, and we've paid so little attention to that. So through Kuznetsoff we started to get Chilean students. In a group of eight that's working right now on this workshop outside of Osaka, in Tachikawa, there are two people from Chile who've come to Berkeley to school—we've had a long line.

What I'm getting at is as I was here more and more, I got more interested in Asia, and I saw it as an opportunity. I started looking for ways to find out more, to connect more. There were students coming and things of that sort, but not much. One of the opportunities came after Mao, when China began to open up and we were beginning to make connections with them, and I got a message from a group called People to People, which had been founded in the Eisenhower administration. Mamie Eisenhower had been the honorary president. It was to encourage contact between nations, but people to people, by sending groups of doctors to talk to doctors, or dentists or teachers. It was to make connections. When I got the invitation it was to put together a group of architects and planners to visit China for three weeks, and basically they were going to make all the arrangements. We were going to pay. Each person had to pay a few thousand dollars and their own airfare.

Riess: *They being Washington was going to make the arrangements? Or China.*

Bender: No, China. Washington made the connection, but the Chinese planned the trip. What they did, basically, is arrange tours that you couldn't do otherwise, meet people and see things you couldn't get to otherwise. It was an opportunity for us, and aside from our advice, it was good for them. At that time China was trying to get people to come. They needed the hard currency and they needed to open. And People to People said to me, "If you can put fifteen people together, you and your wife can go free." And you all can bring spouses. I started asking around—George [T.] Rockrise was one of the names I'd known. He was one of the first people in HUD as well as an architect here.

Riess: So it wasn't necessarily Berkeley faculty?

Bender: No, it was not about faculty, although most of the professionals I asked had taught here at one time or another. I had asked some faculty but they couldn't or wouldn't take the time. There was a guy from Turner Construction in New York, and there was Stan Smith, the head of DMJM in Los Angeles, Daniel Mann Johnson & Mendenhall—that firm is gone now. Derek Parker from Anshen and Allen was there, and Darryl Roberson of STUDIOS. Jackie Wagner was a developer of small local projects in Berkeley. I thought she might be interesting to the Chinese and

it turned out this was right—wherever we went Chinese people and officials took her aside to talk about small entrepreneurship and how people could build small houses and apartments. Also some people came from the AIA headquarters in Washington.

I put a funny request in, because I had met—so many people here in the Bay Area had come from Europe through China, through Harbin, like Boris Bresler, who was in civil engineering who I liked and brought into our program a lot. And [W. Michael] Blumenthal, a UC graduate who was the secretary of the treasury under Carter. So I said I'd like to go not just to famous cities, that I wondered what Harbin was like. It was up close to Russia, another dimension. Anyway, we went to Beijing, we went to Harbin, then we went by train, which was a big trip in those days, to see Wuxi, Suzhou, Shanghai—those were the main stops.

It was eye-opening. I could see the manufacturing processes they were using, for housing in particular, and see them from the factory to finished and occupied. In every place we would meet with the planners and officials and they all would ask our advice and they said, “You all know so much.” And these professionals, that's all they needed, and everyone was giving advice as if the project was in California or New York. I remember in one case they were looking at a housing plan of slab buildings lined up, with windows on the north and south, and one of the people was saying, “Well, you know, if you arrange them in a rectangle and make a space there,” and one of the Chinese said quietly, “But then wouldn't some people not get as much sun as other people? We have a rule that everybody has to get at least six hours of sun every day.” In another case, they were suggesting that they could spread the factory out, rather than go vertical, and this official said, “We're not experienced at this. We build factories vertically because if we spread out and everybody spreads out, we will all have to travel farther and it'll take more time.”

One of the most interesting lessons came from the institute that designed most of Beijing's housing. Their approach was like the auto industry. Not the manufacturing, but they had about five models and would build thousands each year. They carefully monitored performance, and the next year's model would be adjusted. Every five years they would retool with major changes.

Riess: There must have been many aha moments on both sides.

Bender: Yeah, and I think we all had the aha moments about different things. Some of the people immediately saw opportunities.

Riess: You mean business opportunities.

Bender: Business opportunities. Darryl Roberson was the one who was then head of a firm that was the equivalent of Gensler and doing interiors then—now he heads STUDIOS. In fact, while we were in Shanghai he suddenly had to leave the group because they were in the process of selling the firm, but he and others immediately started to come back to try to work in China. In

the planning I was able to get us taken off the regular tour they had planned and we spent the day at Tsinghua University. And I met professor Liang Yong Wu, who it turned out had studied at Cranbrook, and I later found out that he and—oh, what's his name, he was the chief partner of SOM here in San Francisco, Chuck Bassett. Chuck Bassett had known him from Cranbrook, and we immediately started talking about maybe we could have an exchange someday. Visiting Tsinghua we began to understand the operation of “institutes” at Chinese universities. These were major professional offices and no major building was done without their participation. In the schools students and faculty work on major projects.

[Tape 25: Side B

Bender: The biggest shock of the trip, wherever we went, everybody dressed the same. They all had black bicycles. The bicycle parking at Tsinghua University took up this enormous space, and they were all the same black bikes. [laughter] They all looked alike. I never could figure out how people found their bikes. I saw for the first time a bicycle parking structure with a circular ramp. So on all different levels it was stimulating. Memories pushed me to have more of that kind of exchange. Ray Lifchez was interested in China and the idea of exchange and he actually went to teach for a semester there. I invited several of the Tsinghua professors to come to Berkeley, and some stayed for up to a year. I went back in '87—this first trip was around 1980—I went back in '87 and I spent a month in Tsinghua and I spent two weeks in Tongji developing relationships and things.

Riess: Tongji?

Bender: Tongji University is the equivalent of Tsinghua in the south, in Shanghai. The two of them are the two major universities, particularly in the areas of architecture and planning. Shanghai and Beijing were a big contrast even then. But for me, and my fascination with Venice, Suzhou, Wuxi and the simple water cities with their gardens and river traffic were a revelation. With all the poverty and ruin of post-Mao China, these were rich, robust cosmopolitan cities. And then on the way out we went from Shanghai to Hong Kong for a day before coming back, and the difference at that point was such an amazing shock. China was really just coming out of the Mao period and there was so much that was harsh and minimal. And suddenly Hong Kong was a picture of how it could be. When I look back—now Shanghai has passed Hong Kong, but the whole of Asia has been going that way, from bicycles to motorcycles to cars to traffic jams, and buildings going up, all so fast, all fascinating and with a lot of energy.

At that early point I was determined that the school should have more involvement, and I was interested in Asia.

Riess: Everything getting bigger. That's what they wanted, that's what the Americans were there to support and instruct about, but could you already feel a kind of nostalgia for the hutongs and the lost China?

Bender: I felt a nostalgia for the hutongs the way I feel a nostalgia for Greenwich Village as I see it getting chewed up, but I also saw something else that was disturbing and fascinating. Shanghai, in particular, was developed by the colonial powers, and there was the French Concession and the English Concession. And what I began to see then—and over the years still see—the new developments, these big new developments developed like the old European concessions. They're not French or German, but they're inward-looking, basically gated communities, disconnected islands designed often for foreigners.

Already in the first trip, but by '87 you were seeing these clusters of—again, these urban areas were big and flat and suddenly the cluster would come out and there'd be hotels and office buildings, always a trade center of some sort. But when you approached them from the city there was generally a highway or big road approaching them, around them, so many lanes you didn't feel comfortable crossing, and there were not things looking out on the street. Everything was focused inward, and there's still a lot of that. So in a sense they were carrying a tradition forward, the wrong tradition, without, I think, understanding very much of the long Chinese history of cities. It was still the same foreign concession and it seemed double the area a new Chinese density would use. I saw that if they didn't increase density and continued to spread, they were going to smother themselves.

And those compounds were again a trigger—the issue of “without walls” came up again. The whole issue of walls keeps coming up for me. When I see the walls, but also when they are invisible—now I'm much more clear about invisible walls, and invisible walls are often as powerful. When you drive from here to Oakland you go through a place where there's no wall, but suddenly that's quite a different neighborhood. And you find people saying, “Well, I wouldn't want to walk there.”

Riess: So interesting, that sign in a grassy strip along the lower end of Shattuck that says HERE and THERE.

Bender: I used to make sketches of a monument based on Gertrude Stein's, “There's no there there,” that would be like a gateway that says Here and There. And then I noticed that sign—it's on Shattuck, I guess, near Ashby.

But when I got back, I thought that for the school's interest, more than rushing into getting high-rise buildings and big urban things, there were enormous problems of community-building, raising the levels of infrastructure of water and waste and access and health and all of that, so I started to talk to the AID people I knew from my old self-help work, and one of the programs they asked us to run for them was a program to train people from East Asia in housing. What they wanted was for us to take groups of people who were like bank managers or educators or government people involved with housing and running housing and “open their horizons” and “build skills.” Peggy Woodring, who is an architect who had her own practice, taught here part-time, had some experience and was interested in it. She took it on to run. And for five years we ran that

program. I would guess there were a couple of hundred people who came through. AID officials liked it and sent some of their people to work in it and used it as a model.

At one point AID began to be pressed—on the one hand they were sometimes accused of being spies, on the other hand Congress began to cut back on foreign aid and AID started to shrink and eventually to disintegrate. In the early 1980s they said that they couldn't really run as much of a program as they could afford to run or would like to run if they had to bring people to Berkeley. They were looking to have a main base in Southeast Asia and they had looked around at where it might be and settled on Thailand. And they asked me to go and do an independent survey of the places that they were considering. One was Chulalongkorn University, which is the big national university in Bangkok. And an Asian school of engineering and science, the Asian Institute of Technology, AIT, at Klong Luang, Pathumthani, near Bangkok, which is very well known, was another place we visited. We went north to Chiang Mai, near the border with Burma, and that seemed to offer opportunities to observe the enormous devastation of forests, as well as the sites where people fleeing China, Burma, Laos, etc., were being settled.

- Riess: They were getting in touch with you because of your dean thing? Or because of your earlier AID thing? What made you to go-to-guy here?
- Bender: I think a few things. With a lot of these things the title of dean at Berkeley gave any report that I made a cachet. I just looked last night, and the university put on their website—everyone makes fun of college ratings and things of that sort, but some group in England rated universities by their reputation, and Berkeley was fourth in the world. And so it was on the UC website. Certainly in Asia, Berkeley, Harvard, MIT, Stanford are the names. So anything that mentions a Berkeley professor or a Berkeley dean carries more weight.
- Riess: But were there any other people up there in Wurster Hall who might have carried the ball?
- Bender: There were fewer there then than there are now. I took my role in terms of research and new areas of interest, and my background, to use the position, to introduce faculty and students and help them to take on those areas of interest.
- Riess: So in fact, you were the one who was most interested in doing this.
- Bender: Well, there were people in the department—Sandy Hirshen till he left. Sim Van der Ryn at one point. They were active and successful in places close to home. And it was with a core like that, some of the people in landscape architecture—Bob Twiss, [Donald] Appleyard when he was there, Tom [Thomas G.] Dickert, who came to Mexico with me.

I mentioned that when I was at Cooper Union I met George Nelson who was on the board that dealt with the Smithsonian, and Eduardo Terrazas, a

Mexican designer who had studied at Columbia. George Nelson was interested in Illich, and also the crafts that people were making with modern waste materials, and he and Sue and I started going down to Tepoztlán outside of Cuernavaca to these one-week seminars to which I brought a group of people from Berkeley, Twiss and Appleyard, the people I mentioned and some others. And Illich and Eduardo got Pedro Ramirez Vascas involved, the architect of the Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City, and at that point Mexico's equivalent of the secretary of HUD and he was interested in self-help. We organized a week-long seminar in Tepoztlán with the faculty I just mentioned, and a group of Mexicans. We talked about things like "barefoot architects" and how to support them, and we helped them put together books, graphic manuals that you could give people to show them how to make and reinforce adobe blocks, how to make a cooking stove out of old tin cans, how to make alternatives for water supply and sanitation, how to make alternatives for roofs.

Another one of these—AID had a conference for all of the Southeast Asian things in Sri Lanka and I was invited to come and talk about our program and meet the people. So I decided to come back through Europe and visit Jim Melchert, who was then the director of the American Academy in Rome. On the way I also stopped in Dhahran to meet Paul Gabriel, who was an Egyptian, who got a PhD in landscape and became the head of the architecture program at the [King Fahd] University of Petroleum and Minerals in [Dhahran] Saudi Arabia. Paul asked me if I could stop there on the way back and do an evaluation of their program as an outsider for his university. And there I met Nezar [AlSayyad], an amazing young man who was anxious to come to the United States. Nezar's now a professor in city planning and architecture and runs the Center for Middle Eastern Studies here. With Jean-Paul Bourdier at CED they organized and now run an international organization to study vernacular buildings. Nezar's book about Cairo is about to come out, rushed a little to get it out. [*Cairo: Histories of a City*, 2011] He is also president of IASTE, the International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments, founded with seed money from the CED Dean's Office and based in the CEDR. A big part of what I was doing in those years—it was not a planned campaign so much, there weren't that many people who were interested, but each one got other people interested, and they brought visitors who came back and said this is a place to do that. I wasn't surprised when the master of urban design program was being set up in the first years that most of the students who were applying were coming from overseas.

At any rate—all of that was coming together. I was getting more impatient with the restriction of the campus, or at least my role and where I might fit in the long run. I was interested in the idea of "without walls", and the Getty experience had helped me think about it more that way. I was on the board of the museum here and felt, again, it was the business of getting out from the assigned place and taking advantage of resources in different ways. Communications were just beginning to change perspectives to make that more likely. I had glimpses of what a future might be. I

remember—maybe I mentioned—one assignment at Cooper Union was to do a study of some Corbusier buildings. Three of the students, instead of going to the library, went over at Christmas, flew to France and went to visit Corbusier buildings and came back with a slide show. It blew us all away in the early 1960s: you didn't just fly to Europe, you went by ship, you planned. The next twenty years blew that premise wide open. The world was changing very fast, and I felt the university was not.

I was beginning to do campus planning. The UC Merced experience started way back then, in about '89 just as I was working in San Diego at that time. The regents said then that eventually the university would need three new campuses and they started out to decide where they would be. The target population was already in kindergarten. But as they grew up the university kept getting cut back. Finally it was going to be one campus in the Central Valley. And as early as—it must have been around 1990, they were deciding on whether it was going to be Merced, Fresno, and one other place. I was in collaboration with SOM to propose to do the planning, and they told us we were chosen and there was going to be a press conference on Friday. And then on that Friday they called it off because they were postponing it because of money. But what was killing me, again about long-range planning—they said they needed three new campuses for the children who were in kindergarten. This was not abstract planning. There were enough children in kindergarten so if they continued to take the top 8 percent that they take, or 10 percent, they would need three new campuses by—before now. And it collapsed. Eventually Merced came, the process started all over, and again we were picked to do the Merced campus.

Riess: So as a private practitioner you were consulting to SOM?

Bender: Well, during the years that I was in the dean's office I did very little of that. I did some advising and consulting, but toward the end I was beginning to realize I wanted to do that more than what I could do in an academic setting.

It was time to leave. I saw that staying close to the CED and the UC system was nice in many ways because there's a richness of people and it can be comfortable. But while Cal sits in the middle of Silicon Valley and has so many bright people on its faculty, the administration at Cal, and most big universities, have been missing in action when it comes to dealing with its situation and the opportunities that are out there. I wanted to be able to work outside that system. Another case of "without walls". That's when I began to think about leaving and I had this idea I could take a year. I was going to be sixty and I wanted to look back at—I called it my roots—my thinking roots, my cultural roots, in Europe. I'd go to Europe, and then I would go to Japan—that looked like the future. I thought maybe I could go for a few weeks. Then I would figure out what I was going to do. And so I did it.

At that point Sue's first book *Plain and Simple* was getting to be a real book. And that's where—one of the questions you asked was about how

we had a family life or how that worked. Through all of this—well, Sue was the leader of the B-team on the famous trip to China: the B bus was the spouses, but she made the division go away and she was very much a part of that adventure. When we did the exploration in Thailand she came. Her spirit, her way of being with people, made me and the study more successful. Through the years at UC she had an enormous presence—people knew Sue and enjoyed her spirit. She has a wisdom about people, and insight, and an instinct about what is important and a way to open my eyes and ideas.

While I was working on the plan at San Diego, this transition period was sort of a special moment. I flew down for one of the presentations with John Kriken and Phil Enquist and Sue flew on the same plane with us to meet Sandra Dijkstra, the woman who she decided was going to be her agent, who lived in Del Mar. We went down on the plane together and we went to the Hertz lot and had two rental cars. Sue drove off—the first time she ever rented a car herself—drove off to meet her agent, and we went to a meeting with the chancellor and UCSD staff to plan a conference that included Maki and Richard Rodgers. Later Sue came to San Diego for the conference. I think I told you that when I was living down there she met Jonas Salk and she and he became friends. We've always had that kind of connection: she's been involved in my work and I've been involved in her work. When she was doing ceramics I joked that I wished she'd taken up cloisonné, because I was constantly carrying around these big heavy ceramics. [laughter] She had taken some painting lessons, pear-drawing lessons, actually, and painting from Robert Kuliche, who was also teaching cloisonné.

Riess: Pear-drawing lessons?

Bender: Well, Sue always wanted to be able to draw a pear. And as you may have seen in the studio in our house, she/we tried all kinds of things to get it more three dimensional, to get shades and shadows, and she still—she must have taken Art 1 in the Art Department here with ten different teachers over the years. Someone said she could get a PhD in Drawing 1.

Riess: Now that we're talking about Sue, when did she get her master's in social work?

Bender: When she was an undergraduate she started at the University of Connecticut and switched to Simmons College. At Simmons College she was studying social work, and she was—actually at one point as her practical experience she was working on a team giving shock treatments at a mental hospital in Boston. And she decided that she didn't think she wanted to do that. So at Radcliffe she entered a master's program in the School of Education, but she actually studied history with [Arthur] Schlesinger, [Jr.] and [Edwin O.] Reischauer and [John K.] Fairbank, who are the great Chinese and Japanese experts. When I met her in my last days in the Army, she was teaching history in New Rochelle High School. When we were married, and had lived abroad for two years and then came back to New York, she went back to teaching in New Rochelle High

School. She stopped teaching as the boys were born and growing up. I think I've spoken about her art and exhibitions in New York. With Michael and David growing up in Berkeley she was looking to get reconnected again. So she thought she would go to the School for Social Work, a two-year program where you had some experience working in clinical situations, and she thought she might do some—you could get a license with that to do therapy. When she came out and started doing therapy she realized that the one-to-one medium was not so interesting for her.

In the early 1980s, she with her friend Edith Kasin had the idea to form a group for women in which they would talk about issues and take on issues, and it was called Choice. The original Choice group was a really interesting group of women. One of them was Lindsey Shere, the pastry chef at Chez Panisse—Chez Panisse was just starting. At one point they called themselves the Women Warriors, and my son David asked once why she was hanging around with worriers. [laughter] And once they were doing an exercise in which each one would lie on the floor and someone would trace their outline and they put them up on the wall, and they were talking about their self-image. And my friend Dolf Schnebli, who was a very ironic Swiss, head of the ETH in Zurich, was coming for a visit. He came down the stairs and saw all these women with their pictures up. We endured twenty years of his ironic remarks about the Women Warriors.

Riess: Sue's writing came after Choice.

Bender: It came after Choice, which came alongside the ceramics. The ceramics were also a way into the women's groups—working in therapy she would very often do clay things with people, and the women's groups did that also.

The other overlap in our interests was that at the time that Sue was being fascinated by the Amish and the simple life, I was in Japan discovering the Buddhists and Buddhist temples. And Sue—I think one of the reasons I stayed on after the first months of the chair in Japan was that Sue was interested in coming back. We made lots of trips. We went to see gardens and houses and temples. Eventually she read from and talked to women's groups in Japan about *Plain and Simple*, the Amish and the quilts.

Riess: So you might characterize this as an interest in the simple life, a retreat from something—but Berkeley, in a way, is a simple life place.

Bender: Not always so simple. Sue's second book, *Everyday Sacred*, is about coming back to Berkeley and trying to live what she learned with the Amish. I think one of the biggest things, when you ask about Japan or you ask about Berkeley or whatever—there are parallels in architecture. You sent me the *New Yorker* piece about Jim Stirling. Jim Stirling in a way, and Gehry, were beginning, at that point, to be the opposite end of Mies and the International Style. Growing up with “less is more,” the idea of a simple directness—and there was also an understanding that simple

directness could be banal—but this was also about how you lived with the simple, with crafts, with helping people make their own houses or change their own houses, and on the other hand, dealt with the scale of modern life, urban life, and balancing those two. I feel that this play between Sue and me, between Mies's "less is more" and the Amish "plain and simple," between industrial technology and "self-help," and the play between local and global, place and non-place, has been the energy and spirit field of our years together.

I came to Berkeley with a growing interest in "without walls." I began to focus here. Reading and then talking with Mel [Melvin M.] Webber helped even more. The fact that we live in different worlds at the same time—you have a place and a non-place life. I have one kind of relationship with people on my block, but I have closer relationships to people in Switzerland and Asia than I do with the people who live two houses away from me. Being in touch with, being part of a place, is what makes non-place work.

Interview 14: March 21, 2011

[Tape 26: Side A]

Bender: When you're in the middle of something you don't always know what the story is. As I began interviews for this oral history I realized that I hold a picture of my growing up, the years of school, marrying, family, and living abroad and things of that sort—it's pretty much my story. And when I was sixty and I was deciding to leave the dean's office and to leave the university, it was the end of a cycle. I had no idea of what would be next.

Going back to old memories and places, and looking back with Einstein and Heisenberg in mind, I wonder how much I have changed as a witness, or how much the world has changed. I suspect I/we have changed more than the landscape. I do notice that when I was younger and with so much ahead I felt no need to plan. And now, when the future is shorter and more uncertain, planning-thinking seems to take over. Life seems to be reduced to details that loom large. Perhaps for architects, and certainly planners, this is important to understand. Looking back over more than eighty years it seems our schools, professions, institutions, are also at the end of an era where small details loom large, when the life ahead calls for open minds and big ideas.

It is important to say that with all the power and possibility of the new technology and its global villages we are becoming less present in our work, less touched by material and place—the idiosyncrasy of work and places disappears when we are not present. It's the challenge and opportunity of a life that is both local and global.

When I got to Japan, I realized that the Japanese look at life in twenty-year cycles. And when you're sixty, the symbolism around it is that you're being reborn and you start life over, or you have a chance to start life over. And in fact, the Japanese society is set up that way. The big companies and the national university all, for a long time, have had sixty as a retirement age. But it's also quite common that people from the university when they retire take a consulting job in government or a big company. And people in government and the big companies retire and they take a teaching job. And so people start again, but generally in a gentler way. Like several of my Japanese friends who had high positions in the construction companies, when he retired Takashi Nakajima took over the Kajima Foundation and Shinji Mukasa took over the Obayashi Foundation. And then they sort of fade away from there.

We talked about how when I was sixty I took that sabbatical year, went back to Europe. I keep saying *back, I went back*—it's not as if I came from Europe—and then went to Asia, so looking back and looking forward.

Riess: Did you continue east? Or did you come back and then go west to Japan?

Bender: I went to Europe and then came back—I went to Europe in the fall, and I came back and at the beginning of the new year I went to San Diego, and I was teaching there for that quarter.

Riess: That's right. Yes.

Bender: I didn't understand then why the Japanese were saying I had to be in Japan on the first of April, but the fiscal year in Japan starts in April, and so every company has their new employees come and the university starts. Fortunately it was a quarter system at San Diego, so I finished in time.

Riess: You were talking about the sense of renewal, and the twenty-year cycle.

Bender: Yes, and I used that year as a chance to go around and see old friends. It's fascinating to see people you knew as a student and now they're big professors or heads of governments or companies. Some had talked about plans for what they were going to do next, and others were determined not to let the years get in the way of what they were doing. But talking with them grounded me in a way and it actually brought most of them closer in the years since then.

This last year when I was eighty I did a similar thing. It was more dramatic in some ways, because during the year two of my closest faraway friends—I have these friends who are as close as can be on one level but they're far away—died. And in both cases I saw them just before they died—in one case François Ascher [professor at the French National University] after a short illness. In the other case Dolf Schnebli—I was sure he was going to die young ever since he was forty. Dolf drank and he ate too much and smoked too much—and he lived to be eighty-five. Both of them lived fully, enjoying life and work. Each was an inspiration as well as a friend.

I've referred several times to an essay of Jung's in which he said that you spend the first half of your life integrating, and the second half dis-integrating. The dis-integrating was interesting to me because of the idea that you develop the richness of the parts. I had read that at the time when I was at Berkeley and getting involved in the campus planning, and it was very influential to me.

Riess: It's a kind of permission.

Bender: Well, it's permission—and it's recognition that there are things of value that need to be buffed, in a sense.

Riess: That need to be what?

Bender: To be buffed. Sue, when she was writing *Plain and Simple*, talked to many different people, and a woman we both admire, Ruth Nivola—Ruth, who was a really admirable person in the way she lived her life, was explaining to Sue one day that the things in your house lose their life if you don't touch them. You have to go around and touch—it's not cleaning

them so much, but you have to touch them, use them. I always thought that was—Sue says it more beautifully in the book, because it really touched her, the idea that you use things that you care about.

And so the second half of life for the university is to take what's there seriously and to use it to make it better, to keep it well tended and polished. I also found that I—although I was involved in New York in the sixties, I guess, in trying to stop the destruction of Penn Station, in general I never was particularly interested in preservation. But when I got to Berkeley and was looking at the campus as a campus, I saw how important it was not to take what was there lightly, but to look really carefully at what should go away, what shouldn't go away, and how you could build on things that were there rather than dismiss them.

At any rate, coming back to being eighty and talking to people, I understand, in some ways, the opportunity, if you're still around, to take some of the things that you've touched and worked on in a way, and to make sure they're integrated, reintegrated, kept up, done well, that the pieces continue to develop, and that they're felt as part of a whole, not a lump.

- Riess: You know, some people would counter with a philosophy of letting go.
- Bender: Yes, and there's letting go in that also, because clearly I haven't—I'm not interested in all the pieces. But the ones that mean something, I want to make sure that I'm still in touch with them.
- Riess: I think this is maybe a little too abstract. What are you talking about, the pieces that mean something?
- Bender: Well, I've realized for one thing that in getting it all together, and in many of the things I've been doing, I've been letting go some of the things that enriched my life. That comes back in some ways to this business of Berkeley being a way to continue the Bauhaus, my own sense that the Bauhaus was a real influence on me—and yet the Bauhaus is passé in so many ways—and understanding what it was about the Bauhaus that was so important to me, and what I'm missing now of that. In taking on the global and abstract I have lost touch with too many of the things I used to make and do. Too often I do my thinking from an artificial space, a place of words—the telephone, email, video-conferences, a place of meetings and schedules, waiting and airports, a place where the voices of my clients reach my ears as a muffled echo. I miss working on those sand castles at the beach.

When I came to Berkeley, one of the things that was most interesting to me in those first months when we were visiting is that the basic design course in the College of Environmental Design was being taught on one hand by people like Jesse Reichel, a painter, and James Prestini who was a sculptor who had also done furniture and woodworking. And one of the projects that they were doing were being done with people who were connected with the design department and the art department and Ron

Nagle—then he was a young ceramics person but he was also writing music for the Jefferson Airplane, and Don Potts was doing sculpture. Along with Marc Treib and Gary [R.] Brown and some of the younger faculty, one of the projects they gave the students to do was to design a miniature golf course in the courtyard of Wurster Hall, which meant building things and laying them out and inventing sculptures and putting it all together. Somehow it's what I still look for!

Riess: But that time was short relatively, you're saying now.

Bender: Well, I think it goes in cycles. I discovered it with the school. People get interested in coming together, and then they begin to get a reputation, and their reputation takes them back to the professions. I don't hear so much about Serra and Rosenquist and Jasper Johns doing things with musicians anymore. Younger people are doing it. Again, it's cycles that come back. And one of the things that have become clear to me is that things just come back over and over again. Schools integrate it, then they go out of favor and then they come back. For me a pleasure of recent years has been beginning to draw more. I've even dusted off my banjo and test the memory in my fingers.

Riess: So you end up having to change the narrative, change the story when you see that the story isn't accurate anymore?

Bender: Well, it's not about being accurate, but that it's not linear. And for a long time I've seen it as cycles, that you came back to the same thing but you were in a different place. I grew up with people who lived in row houses, and then eventually I found they were called townhouses. And the trolley car is called light rail. [laughing] And they *are* different, but in a way they've been reinvented. Recently we were looking at movies from the 1920s and 1930s, and when you look at women's fashions, the quality and care—this was during the Depression—that went into the design and the materials, it was really special. And now I think we're coming back through another cycle—it's different, the designers who are doing it now are doing it, but they're produced in different ways. Now the designers are making their own things again. Prefabrication keeps coming back, and each time someone says it failed, but it turns out that it just moved to another level and it's taken a different form than what everyone expected.

Riess: You say, writing in 2004, "One of the principal goals of the UCL [Urban Construction Laboratory] since its formation in 1989 has been to reenergize the Bauhaus." But you say Bauhaus-CED model. But now you're saying you think that that was more your insistent take on CED, but it really *wasn't* a Bauhaus CED. They were very separate?

Bender: No, I think it was the end of one round, in a sense that what the Bauhaus people brought to the United States, and Gropius in particular brought to Harvard, was really influential here. The Telesis movement here in the Bay Area was a parallel at that time. Bill Wurster had been at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard during the war, and was dean at MIT. And Catherine—neither of them were Bauhaus people so much, but

they were there during the time when the GSD was revolutionizing the way architecture and planning were taught. Martin Meyerson was from that period. Prestini brought a strong feeling of that by way of Chicago and the Mies world. And it *was* the idea to put it together to bring all the different people into one building—when I came there was jewelry making, there was glassblowing, but alas, by the time I was appointed they were already taking some of that apart. But we had weavers and we had woodworkers and glassblowers mixing with architects and city planners. At Cooper Union we had some of that. We had a common first year in which painters studied architecture and architects studied painting. And we talked more about two- and three-dimensional design rather than painting and sculpture and architecture.

Toward that point, the school was getting more and more famous, in a way. During the period that I was dean it was consistently being rated the top school in the country, and at the same time, it was becoming more and more academic and specialized—the PhD had been introduced, there were more and more PhDs. So as it was moving on, the natural course it was taking, people would write research papers to be published and they were building less and less. And I’ve talked about how I tried to have as many building projects in the school as possible, and I tried to get the school involved in things that one had to go outside to do. Somewhere, toward the end of my years as dean, it became clear that bringing people together in one building or one campus was no longer the way. The Bauhaus was an answer to that “clock-like” time and these days call for a “cloud” and it is the flow of communication and information that is the key. And so I went away and then came back to try to find a place for myself in this more cloud-like world, to carry what I was interested in forward, the UCL [Urban Construction Lab]—it had the C in it as “Construction” rather than design, partially because it evolved from the GC-5 chair.

Riess: Had you been brooding over this when you were in San Diego and Tokyo and back in Europe? Had you seen anything like this in your travels?

Bender: Like the UCL? No, except—well first, I saw in Japan more clearly than when we lived in Switzerland, the idea to give a professor an office and some assistance and say, “Do your practice in the university.” This almost disappeared in this country. Reinventing it turns out to be very difficult in a field like architecture in a research university like UC. We talked earlier about what I learned from the Flexner Report and the analogies to medical education and practice. With so much of the thinking we were doing—the Bureau of Standards sounds very technical, but at that point, forty years ago, it was really looking at the future of the building industry and the issues of people in buildings. The Building Research Advisory Board was being invented, the [National] Building Museum was being invented. A whole group of new organizations were being invented to work on the issues of social and technical building planning and design. And I started to ask why couldn’t the students be working on real projects? Charles Moore tried to do it at UCLA—I shouldn’t say try, he did it, but it got crushed way back because the first time they got a real project to work on the AIA, the architects, complained that it wasn’t fair.

And so we each settled on different ways of doing it. I found the Campus Planning Study Group was a beginning, then the Center for Community Design with Roslyn Lindheim and Warren Widener, was an attempt to build another community. BRIDGE eventually was a bigger version of it. When I came to Japan and saw that again, I said this is a model that I could do when I come back. I had set up what's now the Center for Environmental Design Research. And I said I could put myself there and I can do some of these things there—I'd also learned enough about how the university works so I saw that I can get people to make donations. And I can run my thing.

One thing that somehow was so key for me—when I went to Japan I thought I was going to study the companies, the research, but I realized I was basically studying Professor Itoh, Shigeru Itoh. I thought it was the Japanese model that was so unique, and I realized eventually *he's* the one who's really unique. He brought an energy that broke out of the classroom and the university. Shigeru Itoh was advising the prime minister, the governor, big companies and ministries. And he was also doing research, basing it on issues in the community. He was doing studies of how to make Tokyo more safe in fires and earthquakes, and he got involved in building real buildings to demonstrate ideas for how it would be done. The research that was going on in RCAST when I got there, the most interesting was post-disaster reaction—how do you get through the streets after an earthquake? How do people get away? How do the rescue workers get in?

Riess: You mentioned the study tours—it was a great entrée.

Bender: And the introductions. And in the other way, everyone was anxious to meet them. It was also interesting for me to realize that I had a power that I didn't know I had or that I didn't think so much of. So when they came to New York I said, "We'll visit the Museum of Modern Art." And a couple of them said, "Oh, we've been to the Museum of Modern Art." But they came to the Museum of Modern Art and René d'Harnoncourt, the director of the Museum of Modern Art, greeted them. He invited them for a drink in the lounge; he gave them a talk about the museum. He was interested in the connection. When I took them to France—well, France was a big problem. I'm trying to remember his name, the man who was at that point—the job that Andre Malraux had as the culture minister at one point—he said, "I don't meet Japanese." And I said, "What do you have against Japanese?" He said, "I don't have anything against Japanese, but the way the world is set up, the people I meet who are at my level, when they're important enough for me to have to meet them, they're all heads of things. And the heads of Japanese companies are old, and most of the time they've just gotten off the plane and they're seventy years old. And then I begin talking and I see they're all nodding off. I don't meet Japanese." And so he introduced us to people who showed them around.

Riess: Was that characterization really unfair?

Bender: No! [laughter] You realize that after a while very often in a meeting with Japan that the boss is dozing.

[Begin Tape 26: Side B]

Bender: I went with them to the Louvre when the new structure was far enough into construction so they were actually hanging some of the galleries. Someone from I.M. Pei's office showed them around and the director of the Louvre came. So it was interesting to me—I always had a group of young students along to help.

Riess: Students from here or from there?

Bender: From Berkeley. They helped prepare and came along on the trips. They prepared background materials, explored places to go and people to meet.

Riess: Was it perhaps with translations? Did you have Japanese students?

Bender: We had translators, but again—that was one of the funniest stories. At one of these meetings I had an undergraduate who was from Japan who was going to translate. And early in the first meetings I realized it wasn't working very well. And Takashi Ariga, who had been recommended to us by Professor Satoh at Waseda as a PhD student, had just arrived, and he couldn't start because he hadn't passed the TOEFL exam so he had to spend a year improving his English. But actually in speaking he was a much better translator than what we had because Takashi understood what we were talking about, what we meant, more than just the words, so I asked him to take over. Takashi got his PhD and is now a professor at Waseda University. Again, the documents don't always tell you what reality does. [laughing] So yes, we had students who were translators, students who were helping, and students who were herding. I remember when we first went to Europe there was a worry people would get strung out and stragglers could be lost in crowds or building sites. This was the early nineties when we didn't have things like iPods and iPhones.

Riess: Ways to stay in touch.

Bender: Because Obayashi was working with them Sony mocked up something that was a little bit bigger than a credit card with an earphone that everybody could carry. And when someone was speaking or translating to the group, walking around, they could all hear. There was nothing like it on the market, but a few years later it became a product. It wasn't that Sony invented it just for that, but they were far enough along so that they could supply things. It was part of the Japanese system that the construction companies worked with the companies like Sony and the automobile companies, and they were much more up to date on new inventions.

Riess: I'm sure they were all avid photographers, and that slows things down.

- Bender: They were photographers, they were sketchers. The sketchers didn't sketch on the way, but I would go out in the morning sometimes just to get a moment of quiet. (Actually, I realized why when the kids were growing up Sue would wake up early in the morning and go sit outside.) I'd walk along and I would meet some of our people. Mr. Nakajima from Kajima—he'd have on a beret and he'd have his watercolor set. And eventually we had a sketching group on trips.
- Riess: A beret! I don't think that the Japanese ever get out of black suits. Were they always in that uniform?
- Bender: Well, very much then. Remember, there are big changes in these twenty years. You almost never—maybe once in a while a professor would have a beard and wear something other than the black suit, and they were pretty ratty black suits most of them. But over these last twenty years they wear other color suits, they wear better-cut clothing and some are clearly more stylish.
- Riess: I can imagine how they would have seen you as a really excellent person to follow down the street.
- Bender: A lot of unexpected things happened that way. Someone would say I know someone or something. And so we heard that when we got to Venice we were going to have a translator, and it turned out that someone from Obayashi had quit the firm because he wanted to be an opera singer, and he went to study in Milan and he'd been in Milan for five years and he was going to be our translator. And I remember we were going to the Arsenale, with Giorgio Bellavitis, the Venetian architect who was historically preserving the project. Giorgio was wonderful, and this translator started to talk, and his voice came out, and Giorgio was saying, "Bellissimo!" [laughter] He couldn't get enough of this guy's voice!
- Riess: That's nice.
- Bender: The other thing that we saw which was so touching is the translator's wife came along to the dinner we had one night, and she was—you really didn't see very many stylish Japanese wives in those days, and she was wearing stylish Italian clothes. Their family lived in Yokohama, and when she talked about going back she was in tears. She said that when she went back she would be back in a family system that was traditional. We found a lot of that with the Japanese students who'd lived here for a while, and it was hard, harder for the women to go back. Nowadays the women are likely to be the principals rather than the wives. They're both doing something.
- What I'm saying is, I guess I never quite gave up finding the Bauhaus, or the opportunity for what I call the Bauhaus of bringing these things together. When we did some planning for Fort Mason when it was being organized I had a Bauhaus model, and there are all kinds of arts groups and theater groups in there, and performance. But most of all, when Soichiro Fukutake talked to me about making a plan for Naoshima, when

he talked about his ideas it seemed—well, we call it in the report, and I think maybe in the newsletters, *A Twenty-first Century Bauhaus*, because we had the idea, again, to bring people together on this island from all different backgrounds, disciplines, and to think of designing everything—I think I mentioned designing seeds, doing aquaculture to replace the fishing. And the metal smelting process that was on the island was going to be closed down because it was polluting, and the original idea was to make studios. And then we said, maybe they're not the usual artists' studios, maybe they're studios where we produce videos and movies—more and more artists were beginning to work in those mediums—and also broadcast what's happening here and make it a place that—again, we mentioned the global impact with a small footprint. Remember this was in 1990, there was no internet, fax was the newest technology. The idea was way ahead of the time, but Fukutake loved the idea and ran with it.

Riess: When you talk about having an idea—how do *you* step back? You are the authority figure, and there are these students from everywhere and the Japanese—how do you move into the background—I assume that you need to.

Bender: We spend a lot of time together during these ateliers/workshops talking about the project, the issues, the place, and ideas to try out. I usually suggest some thing or things to try, with sketches, metaphors, examples, and then ask them to start to draw, reflecting back the idea or ideas. From there it becomes a kind of “dance,” seeing what the first schemes show and going through a series of cycles.

And I think the way I've been able to do it is by making time. Most of what I do involves intense travel or meetings or design sessions with weeks in between. My morning coffee at the Strada with the *New York Times* is stepping back. During travel there are favorite cafes and the *International Herald Tribune* in most places. Here, or away, I can almost always find time and a place to swim, my form of meditation.

Riess: And when you were working with students in the ateliers?

Bender: Well, usually they're given the opportunity to work on a project that sounds interesting, and the whole context is out of the usual for them. They're usually working in a different place with different people, a group of students from Berkeley working with students from another country. When we were doing the work at Fort Mason they were working in a warehouse there and we had some art students from CCAC at that point. Starting at Fort Mason and through most of the studios since, people from the community are encouraged to come by and visit the work and take place in critiques.

Riess: Are you, or were you always present?

Bender: No. But there were always other faculty who were interested and active. Alan Jacobs was a force field in all of the international studios. Peter Bosselmann plays that role now.

Another thing I learned as a dean on different levels—somewhere along the line someone showed me the quote from Saul Bellow in his novel *The Dean's December*, where he says the reason that faculty infighting is so vicious is because the stakes are so low.

Riess: So low?

Bender: So low. [laughter] I realized early that within the university context very little money could get people to do things. I saw people putting in an enormous amount of energy to get a grant of \$5,000 or \$10,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts. I'd sit on these panels in Washington and see that—it takes an enormous amount of energy to do these applications—and also realizing in one sense that it's good, the grants connect people, generate a lot of good thinking, but I also realized when I came back, if I could say to people—if you'd be interested to take this on, I could give you \$5,000 to work on it, to pay some students, or to pay for materials or for things of that sort. Or if someone came to me as Nezar did with Jean-Paul Bourdier when they wanted to do a series of meetings and organize IASTE to study vernacular architecture. With not much more than \$5,000, they launched it, and now it's in operation twenty years and they have international conferences every year and put out important papers.

In a way Naoshima was the most interesting of these design projects. And in fact, the students who were working on it at Berkeley—we brought someone in from music and we found someone interested in fashion to be working on it just to give it that spirit. Later we made a book that showed ideas and the plan. We explored economic and social ideas—we explained that people on the island were impoverished because there was no fishing anymore, and growing rice no longer paid, so we would make new jobs. And we went with the Japanese, with Fukutake, to show them Sundance—we were hearing from Robert Redford how the performances were supporting the teaching, you know, they'd make money from the performances and festivals. And it turned out that that never worked. But the t-shirts, the shop—tourists would come and they'd buy souvenirs and anything that said Sundance on it they would buy. And this was, again, at the time when Internet sales had not begun, when it was still mail order, like L.L. Bean catalogs. But at Naoshima, Benesse immediately saw the opportunity to have international shopping for art-related things. [laughing] And so sometimes not knowing is better I think, because what we were doing is putting these ideas out to someone who was loving to take ideas and run with them.

Riess: Mr. Fukutake made it work.

Bender: And then he went *way* beyond us.

Riess: Does it feel like Japan when you're there? Or does it feel like an international construct?

Bender: Well, it depends on—Japan doesn't feel like Japan anymore, but Naoshima always feels like Japan. If you go into the art villages it's like being in a part of Tokyo that you don't see anymore, with the little streets and many people. But on Naoshima whenever you look you are entranced by the views across the Inland Sea. There are very special colors in the sky and water—deep purples that I've seen only in Southeast Asia—and there are the haunting volcanic forms of the scattered islands. The three big gallery buildings are set within a landscaped setting on the side of a hill; they're more like resort hotel feeling. Originally the idea was that a lot of the people who stayed overnight would stay in the campgrounds. Mr. Fukutake had the idea of having yurts, and so there were about a dozen big yurts where groups could stay or you could have meetings. But then he saw high-tech tents in Germany, and there were also a group of high-tech tents. Ando designed the shower rooms! You can see that in the original plans, but that was all wiped away when they built the first of the *hotel* hotels. Today you can stay in a traditional ryokan, in Benesse House, fifteen elegant rooms above Ando's first galleries, or in a modern hotel with an international chef.

But there are two things that I wanted to talk about that sum up either where I am or what's the end of the line—maybe both. First, I know I've mentioned Bertrand Warnier. Early in my Japanese stays, several of the younger generation of Japanese people interested in urban design wanted to put on an international conference to show Japan what they were doing, and also to introduce new ideas. They were able to convince [Fumihiko] Maki to be the chairman. The way it works in Japan is the young people do all the work—they're much better at it than here—and Maki or whomever, in this case Maki, gave a really good keynote speech. In a way it was the arrival of urban design in Japan.

I had brought Peter Bosselmann over to start a simulation lab there. And a lot of people from Berkeley came to participate. John Kriken went, and Allan Jacobs was there and quite a few other people from the Bay Area. We were in this big hotel in Yokohama that had just been finished, and it was in the middle of nowhere because the way Japanese cities financed large new development was to have a fair, an international exposition, which would attract attention and would be a reason to extend the subway, install infrastructure and mark the area as a place. In this case MM21, as it is called, started with this large, sail-shaped hotel on the harbor. So in the morning everyone was eating breakfast in the hotel, and the Berkeley people were all talking to each other, and I noticed this man who was coming to all of the meetings, and he looked interesting, and he wasn't talking to anyone. And I started talking to him and realized he was French. And I said, "Why don't you sit with us?" And by the end of the week he'd become a friend, and it turned out that Bertrand Warnier was one of the people behind the idea of the French new towns. At the end of the war when it was clear that Paris was going to grow, and when the first—that tower in Montmartre went up that everyone finds so ugly—there was a strong reaction: No tall buildings in Paris!

But Paris was growing, if not up then out. There were several ideas. One was just to infill Paris and accept the new buildings. One was like build a “second Paris” right alongside it. And the third was to do a series of new towns around Paris. At that period it was a popular idea, new towns—Vällingby in Sweden, and Tapiola in Finland. They were to be satellites, self-contained communities based on the idea that a train would come out through the suburban ring and across the countryside to the center of a new town. There’d very often be a platform that you could walk on over the track level, and then that became the town center. The French came to adopt that model, and the idea was to build five towns outside of Paris. They’d begun in the sixties, so by 1990 they had some form, 150,000 to 200,000 population, some interesting architecture, and some very interesting planning ideas. Bertrand went from being one of the people who conceived the idea and chose the site to being the chief planner of Cergy-Pontoise, which was the most developed of the towns.

Bertrand has a really fertile mind and a kind of low-key drive that’s engaging. And he began to feel as the town was developing that it and the planning was beginning to lack an energy. They had people on the staff who all came from good schools, but working on the government projects in a government setting, and working out of the center of Paris—he felt they were going stale and had the idea to have a studio, atelier, and invite students to work on some of the projects for new development in the town alongside the professionals. At the point where I met him they’d had three or four of these “ateliers d’ete” and he invited me to come to the next one and to give a talk. I don’t know if I mentioned it. I said yes I’d come. I asked if it would be all right if I brought Phil Enquist who was working with me then, and Phil was interested.

Riess: He was working with you then on campus planning?

Bender: Campus planning—well, originally it was San Diego and then he worked on Davis—and Naoshima, he was a big influence on Naoshima.

The topic was “Problems of the *Dalle*.” So I go to the dictionary, I look up *dalle* in French, and it’s *slab*. And so I write this paper on the problems of the slab, because in Japan I’d been arguing at Makuhari against building these slab buildings, the long high-rise buildings, and to turn them to point towers and lower buildings so they didn’t make such a wall. And I sent the draft to Bertrand and he very politely writes back, “It’s a very nice paper, but by *slab* we mean the slabs that form the decks of the structure that’s over the station below.” So that was my introduction to the ateliers. But then we gave these talks and Bertrand said he’d really love it if we’d have more connection because—well, first of all we were really interested and excited, and most of the participants at that point were from other European countries and we brought a different perspective and learned more of theirs.

The original idea of the new towns—they thought if they were bigger than about 150,000 they would be *too* big, people would be uncomfortable. At this point they were getting close to 200,000 and it was clear they weren’t

big enough. And the problem with most of the early new towns was that they had not yet reached the point that one felt the life and the continuity of a real town. They had the seeds to become bigger, to grow or change, but some of the first decisions made it difficult for the center to evolve. At Cergy they took over a big enough area so there were some old villages that became neighborhoods of the new town. There was a new research center in Cergy, and a series of new centers. One was a port on the Oise, one a market center and one clustered eight-story apartment block—much the Paris model—at the station, thirty minutes from central Paris. There was a highway, and a little over 1500 meters away across the A-14 was the town of Pontoise, on the hill. Pontoise had been the capital of France at one point during the Thirty Years' War where the English came right up to the edge of the wall of Pontoise.

Riess: So he wanted to have you start having ateliers.

Bender: No, I was interested in having ateliers. Bertrand was interested in having Berkeley participants. Beginning at that conference I introduced him to Japanese people who were also interested, and Taiwanese people, professors who would bring some students. And then he said, "One of the things I want from you, and particularly from Phil," he said, "we have this situation, we have the center of Cergy which has the regional government center and the city hall, a group of universities and cultural facilities around a campus, and the train station underneath. And 1500 meters away is Pontoise old town, where there's an older train line, but eventually we'd like to have another RER line come through there. And it would be terrific if we could connect the two stations. I see in the United States you're doing these light rail and monorails lines to connect"—Phil had worked on something like that with SOM in Texas. So they said, "How would you like to come for a month and work on that project? The town of Pontoise has just built five houses, a row of houses along the little creek at the foot of the hill and right near a little gallery which they were going to give to artists to use for different lengths of time." He said, "You can each have a house and you can bring some people to work with you." We said we'd bring some people, and he'd bring some people, and then some of the people from the atelier were interested.

Riess: The government was paying? The French government?

Bender: Pontoise gave the houses. The ateliers were being sponsored partially by the railroad system, because all the new towns had railroads. Eventually when the ateliers started to move out of France and go to Asia, Ho Chi Minh City, Saigon, Shanghai, they were sponsored by the National Railroads who wanted to sell high-speed trains [TGV] in China and Vietnam.

Anyway, the idea was we were supposed to design a way to have this light rail connected, and the more we looked at it it looked like a dumb idea. But Phil and I kept walking back and forth, and the walking back and forth was really hard because you had to cross the N-15 highway and then there was this stretch with a high wall around it, which was an old

caserne, a military base. It was closed. And so the idea was we were supposed to run the monorail on one side and come back on the other side. One day Phil and I were walking and Phil said, "Give me a boost." So I helped him get up high enough so we could look over this—it was a stone and brick wall. He said, "You know, there are big trees in there, and some old stone barracks." So then we got permission to go inside. It was called Bossut, Caserne Bossut. We ended up working with four Berkeley students, an intern from Suzhou, China, and two French professionals making a proposal, making a big drawing, that the military base be turned over to the two towns, that we bridge the highway and use a new bridge, the allées of trees, the big parade grounds and all as a pedestrian boulevard to connect the center of Cergy with the railroad station in Pontoise. The monorail could run over it, but we recommended a system of electric busses that could share the path with pedestrians. We also showed how some of the caserne buildings could become used for incubator space for industry.

Cergy is a college town, in the sense that the way the government's trying to get the new towns started was to move things out of Paris, and they moved several branches of the university and started new ones in Cergy. There's a very good business school that has a branch out there, Essec. And there was going to be a technical school. And we said the technical school will go here and you've got all these caserne buildings, some large enough to ride cavalry horses in, which can be incubator space.

At first the incubator space turned out to be a disaster. All the professors in the technical schools seemed to be Marxists, and the last thing they wanted to do was entrepreneurial things! [laughter] But eventually a movie group moved in, and other groups moved in, and now it's working, they have backed into incubator space. Very often things work but not the way you thought it was going to work.

Riess: This isn't where the immigrant populations are rioting, is it?

Bender: No—well, the interesting thing about these new towns is that the riots are in the space between the new towns and Paris. There's a zone in which the cités, large housing projects were put. But the cités, they're only housing. When you see them, they look like Miami Beach hotels, and you think they're kind of nice, but they're terrible places because there's no opportunity. They're generally far from transportation, they have no shops or facilities. To get in to shop you have to go long ways to big shopping centers. Later we got to take that on. When these riots started to happen it was interesting. They were not happening in the new towns. The new towns had social services, schools, jobs, and there were immigrants who had their own markets where you could walk to markets, they could make jobs. One of my pleasures is to walk through the market at Cergy St. Christopher and see women from Central Africa in bright print dresses holding long French baguettes and speaking French with fish sellers from Saigon.

Bender: You ask what we do. Part of the charge to us is, “Tell us something we wouldn’t think of.” Well, it came out pretty quick—one of the reasons people had stopped trying to build on the caserne was because the military was not willing to give it up. And in the time we were actually living there for that month we got to go beyond what usually happens when you come in and out, because we got to talk to people in Pontoise. And we realized it was getting to the point where all the officers, in particular the age group from Algeria and before, are beginning to retire. And so we suggested that the new town and the military make a swap, where the new town would get the rights to put this through in return for building retirement housing for military officers. And you can easily walk from that housing to both stations and town centers.

I could have never made it happen, but the bureaucracies were into it by, again, accidents of French government. The former mayor of Pontoise was in the Ministry of Culture—Pissaro was from Pontoise, and he and Cezanne painted together there—you know, in France you can have two jobs. Like you’re a mayor and you can be in the national government. And Mr. [Alain] Richard, who was the mayor of Cergy-Pontoise, was in the defense ministry. It took twelve years to get that all worked out, and it’s still not all there but it’s under way.

So as I said we brought four students from here, and we met one student from China who was an intern at Cergy-Pontoise. Two years later he was the chief planner of Suzhou when he went back to China. And Philippe Jonathan and—who was the other, Michel Jaouen. Two of the professionals who worked with the atelier, Philippe in particular, have become regular collaborators. After he graduated from school in France Philippe went to China and did a study of the Winter Palace outside of Beijing. And it turned out that one of my landscape architecture students here, Christophe [Giro] who was French, went back to France and was teaching landscape at Versailles. He’s since become the head of the school in Zurich [ETH] in landscape architecture. Philippe and Christophe worked with Phil and with me on a plan to make the Cergy to Pontoise bridge into a garden.

Riess: Very impressive generative quality that all of this has.

Bender: Well, they are people who have stepped out of the mainstream to do something.

Riess: So would you say it’s self-selecting?

Bender: A lot of it’s self-selecting. Some people wouldn’t take that kind of work because they’re trying to get an office started or they’re trying to get tenure, and to some people it’s an excitement.

Riess: Another question, I have read a lot of the *UCL News* and it’s often: Bender hosts this, Bender goes there.

Bender: Most of the actual *UCL News* was written and edited from pieces put together from scraps—someone went there, someone visited here—but John Parman did a lot of the editing. Usually each issue will have a major article on some subject. And it was evolving. The earlier ones we had no idea what it would become. But then eventually we gathered some of them together in groups, and we republished them, with a focus, like infrastructure, or housing. You will see the names of many participants, Berkeley students and faculty, visitors, and people we worked with abroad. John did a lot of that writing. And David Moffat, he was in one of the seminars I taught when I came back to teach after Japan, and he's worked with me on and off since then. David has done a lot of the writing for IASTE. He eventually became one of the editors of *Places* magazine. *UCL News* was partially to show that we were doing things when we wanted to do another one, in some sense to give something back to some of the people who were supporting the work. Eventually some of the foundations said you know, you really don't have to send the things.

Some of the foundations—from originally giving me money to work on projects and train students, they have begun to ask about other things they are doing. And I occasionally have a chance to take them to some of these places. Especially Naoshima, because first Naoshima was pretty much unknown. Some of the people who were supporting it are involved with the Museum of Modern Art. When I suggested that they add Naoshima onto a tour that the trustees were taking, and they sort of agreed, they came back and said, "Wow!" Since then they've done three or four trustee tours. Greg Howell, the student I had originally met in Yokohama at that conference who wanted to know about Japan and he was working as an intern in a planning office in Yokohama, the one who told us that he wanted to be a travel agent, he ended up organizing the GC-5 trips. And then he made a career, *has* a career in taking trustees of museums, universities, foundations and others on these tours.

Riess: There is a mention of an edge cities tour. What was this idea?

Bender: There was a book that came out called *Edge Cities* [*Edge City: Life on the New Frontier* by Joel Garreau], and it was speculating that if you go around big cities—it looked at Washington in particular, where two big freeways cross, and one place in particular where the high-tech businesses or government offices went, Tyson's Corner. And it was talking about how that's the way the future cities are going to develop. And so a group of the junior GC-5 asked to look at some of these places. We visited cities in California and the East Coast. I think the concept was oversimplified.

There's a human analogy that makes it more understandable. The human body works with veins and arteries, and a lot of planning has been focused on the arteries, but the veins and arteries don't get to your cells. All the planning has been—you put a train out to a suburb, or you put a freeway out, but how do you get to your house? The capillaries are missing. And so the idea that you have to put everything near the train is an idea which has gotten more popular now, but the question becomes more and more about how you move around locally, the last mile. And in particular, these

arteries, lines, generate a star shape, like from Reston [Virginia] and Columbia [Maryland], the original new towns around Washington, the idea you'd come into the center and come back out. But what's evolving and sort of where I want to go with the end of this is to start to look at a regional city, a regional metropolis, and more or less we're thinking of it as a regional *landscape*, in which there's a much more complex arrangement than here's a city, there's the train, and here's a greenbelt and here—either edge cities or suburbs. Instead there's a kind of dance between the open spaces and the built-up spaces and the green spaces—more like a network or cloud than a clock.

Two other things I wanted to say about the ateliers—one is that they parallel UCL in that they've been putting on ateliers on a regular basis, and we interchange and go to both, and we piggyback on them and we've worked collaboratively. And now Peter Bosselmann has taken over what Allan Jacobs and I started, so the school is doing a whole series of things that are separate from the UCL and they're all connected. We have people—there are over a thousand graduates of the ateliers, close to four hundred from the UCL and urban design program at Berkeley. But we're now all in touch all over the world. They're more in touch with each other, and when there's a project or when someone is going on vacation, it is the university “without walls”.

- Riess: It is indeed. And gosh, I hope you are celebrated for all of this!
- Bender: Wherever I go we have a party! [laughing] And actually I have been celebrated in Japan. In July 2004 the City Planning Institute of Japan gave me a medal and a certificate “...with appreciation of my outstanding contribution to fraternal academic international exchange with the city planners of Japan.” There was a lovely ceremony at International House in Tokyo.
- Riess: And in your hometown—Berkeley?
- Bender: Not so much here. As the construction workers used to say, “A construction expert's a construction man more than a hundred miles from home.”
- Riess: Ah! About the edge cities tour, it said the underlying theme of the tour was to see California as a way of life—West Coast lifestyle—fitness, outdoors.
- Bender: Well, one of the things that we sold—*we* in this case is very much John Parman—in trying to get more support from the Japanese, is that if you wanted to know where things were going, look at California. California is where the US was going.
- Riess: Yes, they used to say that.
- Bender: We used to say that. [laughter] It was true for a long time. And now we have trouble doing that.

Riess: Okay—I read also in *UCL News* of Bender advising Clinton, Gore, Robert Reich on needs and opportunities for urban infrastructure.

Bender: The Clinton people were beginning to ask, in the campaigns originally, 1992, what would they want HUD to be like? When HUD was originally set up it was led and staffed by recognized experts with a wide range of social, finance, technical expertise. Many people, some from UC, dreamed of that “Secretary” position, and I knew at least a dozen East Coast people who would have jumped at that. Very quickly it became the ethnic position. [Andrew] Cuomo had it more recently, and it’s becoming less that, and more professional.

But in those early Clinton days there was a lot of talking about what HUD could do, and because of the involvement I had over the years—and some of it was still from the National Commission breakthrough when some friends who knew Daniel Moynihan and Robert Reich when he became the labor secretary, I think, that I was put on a list of people to be invited, consulted, as the HUD was being organized. I ended up giving advice to advisors. That’s happened again when the World Trade Center—when the re-planning began I was asked to be an advisor again, not so much through my academic world but through my friends who had risen in companies like Goldman Sachs. John Whitehead, who was chairman of the Lower Manhattan Planning Commission, had been head of Goldman Sachs—he was someone I *didn’t* design a house for. He liked the Scull’s house in East Hampton, and he asked me to design a house at one point as we were leaving for California and I didn’t want to do it. Again, with the Ground Zero studies and the LMPC meetings I soon realized that it was all wrong and would not want to be involved with the direction they were taking. Some of the people I know at MoMA are people I knew from early days in New York and they became successful in business. They had art collections and then they became members of the board. And in the case of Robert Menschel, he became president and then chairman of the board of MoMA.

Riess: You consulted to MoMA—about PS1?

Bender: Well, not PS1 but the building that was the Temporary MoMA in Queens during the time when MoMA was rebuilding the 53rd Street building. Two of my friends, Bob Menschel and Jerry Speyer, were on the board, and they were on what for a while was called the Real Estate Committee. They were working on issues like what are you going to do with all the art work while you’re building the building. And also, should they buy a warehouse? Put the art works in a warehouse? And they asked me to join them on some of these talks, and we talked about creating a satellite facility that could show work, store some of it, and make the library available during construction, and that eventually was done. We also talked about buying a warehouse that didn’t only have to be a warehouse, and there’s a warehouse in The Bronx that they use that also has facilities for the neighborhood in it.

Here's an interesting story. When they started to get the bids for the new MoMA, Jerry Speyer—Tishman Speyer is one of the biggest developers and Jerry is a very nice man, but no building developer can see a bid like the bid that came in for the glass—the back wall of the building is etched glass, and Taniguchi wanted it done by a Japanese company that does it beautifully, and Jerry said, “Well, I can get that for less.” So I would give my little speech about how important it is to really have the real materials. And I don't think you can see it very well, but I think they used the Japanese glass only to a certain height. [laughter] Then it goes out. They really wanted to do it right. If you look at the railings in MoMA, they're glass sheets, and if you try and think what it takes to get them lined up like that perfectly—there's about eight different adjustments in that forward, back, in, and out, in order to make it just right. And so there's a lot of very expensive elegant detailing.

There were also disappointments for me in the MoMA project. One of the themes which we talked about and which everybody loved and has never really happened, is the ground floor that goes from 53rd to 54th was going to be like an indoor street. So it was supposed to have more art in it and be more gallery than it is, but the crowds have been so amazing that they need it for tickets and crowd control and it has more of a feeling of a long lobby than—a lot of things didn't come out as well as I would have liked.

Riess: You were on the Mills Board of Trustees. Anything to be said about that?

Bender: I did that for five years. Howard [A.] Friedman asked me if I would do it. He was interested in it. Warren Hellman—he's one of the big San Francisco financiers who plays the banjo—he was going to take it on eventually, he was going to be chairman eventually, but in the meantime I agreed to come on the board and help them through the process of making and starting to implement a new campus plan. It was interesting to learn something of the history of this women's school, and also a little sad to note its transition from being part of the dance and arts climate, with the students active in growing food and participating in cooking and serving meals, and caring for the grounds in a collegiate environment—from that to air-conditioning and outside contractors and a sense of the students and faculty as consumers. We did get them to look more carefully at the land and set some goals for preserving it. Many of the older grads appreciated that. But I decided to leave when I felt the administration was mostly involved in a few new buildings.

Riess: Thank you for indulging those questions. And you told me how you were involved at Fort Mason.

Bender: Yes. And later we worked on the piece of what has become the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, GGNRA, on the Marin side, also an art center, and I was on that board for a while.

Riess: Oh, at Fort Cronkhite? Headlands Center for the Arts?

Bender: Yes, Headlands was almost an extension of Fort Mason, the same board of directors. And then for a while I was involved with the Presidio.

Riess: Much of that is characterized as re-visioning military facilities?

Bender: Within the UCL we were doing so much of that, taking military bases in particular and converting them to community and cultural uses. And it was a bigger opportunity than we realized, and it was becoming bigger as more of the bases—Alameda Naval Air Station was being released. But all over the world—at Cergy-Pontoise the Caserne Bossut was a military base. One of the first international studios we did with Allan Jacobs and Paolo Ceccarelli in Vicenza, it turned out that the area was ringed with US airbases. And so we set up the Swords to Ploughshares program as a way to tell people that they could come to us for help in making these conversions. And over the years it turned out some of the Japanese projects we've worked on, even Shinnyo-en, were out in that part where there were American military bases or Japanese military bases that were turned back.

Riess: So you have to bring in a different kind of expertise in these cases that has more to do with bureaucracies and governments?

Bender: What we tend to work on is a big idea that a local group can use to get a project going. We're not proposing to make a plan to be implemented, we're making a "plan for a plan" in a sense, a strategy and the materials to discuss it in the community and build support for design and implementation. In the south of France Michel Jaouen and Philippe [Jonathan], the people I worked with at Cergy-Pontoise, asked me to come to the Luberon to help organize a competition to get ideas for revising a French nuclear missile base that was being closed because the local people didn't like the idea of it, didn't want it. And once it closed they realized their economy collapsed because they lost two thousand middle-income families of the technical people who had worked there. They gave the community a French Foreign Legion post instead. [laughter] One year at the Bastille Day Parade I sat on the reviewing stand next to the Foreign Legion colonel. I took a lot of teasing from our students. And so that was a conversion of a missile base eventually into a regional park, and we proposed a branch of the national university that does things like art and food. That area of Provence is known for its food, and there are many cooking schools. But this is becoming an agriculture program which was to teach the local farmers, including winemakers, how to produce food for the modern economy, and the issues of transportation, packaging, and the many issues of the "organic" world.

But what I was saying is it's an arc. The latest thing that we're working on—this summer the atelier will be looking at adding on to La Défense, fifty years after its conception. A few years ago we looked at how to turn the Charles de Gaulle Airport, and the old airport where Lindbergh landed, Le Bourget, into a new town. Over sixty thousand people work there already, and more and more business and industry is moving to airports. Rather than commuting, a range of housing for all incomes will

bring a full range of services. With much of the infrastructure in place for the airport it will become a kind of “New Town in Town.” And for 2012 the atelier will begin to look at a new scale, for us, the Paris metropolitan landscape. We call it “The City in Search of a New Structure.”

Riess: So there’s no end to your involvement.

Bender: In this case it’s Bertrand Warnier and his atelier people who are in charge. I’m on their committee of patronage [*comité de parrainage*]. What we’re doing for this is putting together a group to advise them in putting together the atelier and a series of conferences before and after.

Riess: [Looking at letterhead] Your name is first in the alphabet—you’re way up there!

Bender: I profit from a name that begins with a “B.” [laughter] In his letter Bernard says I’m one of the godfathers of the atelier. I’m proud of that and pleased to see how many years of many small steps with many people can add up to so much.

Riess: You wrote a paper in 1995 for the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. It was called “A University Without Walls (Fact or Fancy).” Was that was a big think-piece that made a difference?

Bender: Like so much of what I write, it was not a big thing, more like an “op-ed” piece. It didn’t make that much of a difference. They got more letters than they expected—people responded, most people loved the idea. I got invited to talk about it by officers and trustees at a number of universities. Those conversations have much more influence. I remember Regent William Coblentz’s words very well and have come to understand the potential of evocative words to people in a position to make things happen.

[Begin Tape 27: Side B]

Bender: I’ve mentioned various campus things that I’ve done with SOM. In 1990 we won the job to design the UC Merced campus, and the state canceled it. Between when they told us we had the job and the press conference to announce it, they cut the budget. And so it didn’t begin in 1990, it began in 1999, and they had another search—and we had to win it again.

Riess: Was it *we* as you and SOM?

Bender: John Kriken was in charge. I was one of a team of consultants. Peter Walker was another. The Arup firm were the engineers. I was excited because I thought it was a real opportunity to do some of the things I had been working toward. The problem was that the site that had been chosen—maybe I’ve said this before, but the regents pick sites for campuses as they would for a summer house. And so they picked this beautiful land. It looked out toward Yosemite and the hills and all, but it was ten miles from the center of Merced, which is where there’s a train

and a highway. Merced was a beautiful valley town in the sense that it's a gridwork with big trees, but the economy had failed and almost all the buildings were empty. My original thought was, wouldn't it be great if we could put it in the town, not ten miles out—we have the trees, we have access, and many sites to build a new image of a university, gradually, incrementally.

Riess: What an interesting idea! John Kriken—was there some agreement about that?

Bender: Kriken was interested and willing to go along with making the case, he liked the idea of campus streets in an urban grid, but at that point he wanted the job more. I wanted to make the argument, but it was meeting resistance from the state planners from the beginning. “One piece of land is easy to assemble, but how are you going to do this?” “How would it happen over time?” And so they ruled it out pretty early. Kriken's interest, and Arup—I worked with them on that—was to say don't put it on the site you picked: this place way back on the site was a high point, and you could look out in every direction, but it also meant runoff would pollute the site in every direction. And one of the issues—by moving it closer to town, there was a little bit of a lake there. There were some drainage canals. You could move it by the lake and it would be much closer to the city and it would take this lake into account and we could build that into the planning and use it in different ways. It could even be useful for cooling in the hot summer. We eventually got them to do that. John was very good at making the case. He also made a strong case for laying out a tree-lined urban grid. The idea was developing very well, but it became clear that the regents wanted a traditional campus. They needed three thousand acres, they said. And most of it would be in reserve. But they—eventually it would be thirty thousand students and they wanted it to look like UCLA or Berkeley.

And the EIR was a long way from approval, the site had many issues, and I said it was an opportunity. There were two other pieces of land that might be used. One was not in the center of town, it was across the tracks, which I knew they wouldn't take. But there was one, not far from the campus, that had been approved for a large housing development. I said we could start there and build what would eventually be the research center, because most of the university campuses have first built the campus and then they build the research center. But if we build the research center *first*, we can put it on this land, it'll be jobs, plus closer to the city, and with more time the campus can later move to the main site and have an active research center in place. Maybe the campus could take a “without walls” form, and people could live and activities could develop in and revitalize a whole group of valley towns and this beautiful site would be the core, the heart, a spiritual and symbolic place. Maybe the freshmen would live there for a year, there would be conferences there, the main library would be there, things like that, and we would preserve the land and use it for ecological research and things of that sort.

Well, it became more and more clear—the committees they were appointing were all retired faculty, and poor John went to a meeting where he presented some of the first ideas and they said, “Where’s the Campanile?” John was trying to use southwestern patterns of building for the climate, courtyards with collegial gardens, and streets that anticipated incremental growth and change. The best idea of the university’s was to organize this group called CITRIS—Center for Information Technology Research in the Interest of Society. And the idea was that when you were bringing faculty, it’s very hard to get a good economist or a chemist or biologist if he’s the only one. But if you start with a research center where they’re all working together, there’s a core to begin with and then you build out. And one of the ideas, even with the street idea, was the center of it was going to have the CITRIS and a new kind of library, student center.

But then—at that point, again, the date was getting closer and they couldn’t begin because of the EIR, so they decided to buy the golf course next door, which was already polluted, and also a little bit nearer the center and easier to get to, and to start there and then eventually build back. That’s when I said I didn’t want to be involved anymore; I left the project at that point. But that’s what they did, basically, and the first buildings there are actually on what had been an adjoining private golf course. It’s still not clear to me how they’re going—they have these very substantial buildings in a cluster without much thought of how they could expand around a quad that’s green grass in that stark climate. Student housing is off on the road entering it, but it’s low-density one- and two-story, three-story, wood-frame developer California housing.

But two things have happened which I take pleasure in. Nobody wanted to go teach there, so a big part of the faculty are international faculty, and for them to come to Merced is terrific, and then they move on. And the other thing is, as they came closer to opening and they didn’t have the buildings, they decided to start the first two years in Fresno and Delano and the other big city, farther north, Modesto. They started in the community colleges, and they had to give the courses there for the first two years, and this was my idea all along, to spread the campus up and down. They were backed into it.

When we had worked at Davis on the medical school, we found that Davis *was* the medical school for the whole Central Valley, and it’s spread out that way—all the elements of a “university without walls.” I had a picture that UC Merced could have been a university connected by a spine of innovative transportation. The first UC Merced buildings are “green”—they had a rule from the state that they had to use 20 percent less energy than a regular building, which is easy now. But just by moving it five miles or so closer we saved more energy than they’ll ever achieve in LEED ratings. All the auto commuting is going to use an *enormous* amount of energy, so if they put it in the town or near the town, they could help to revitalize the town, the railroad traffic back and forth, and bus traffic back and forth. I visit Merced from time to time and it makes me sad. It could have been the first 21st Century campus; instead it is the last 20th Century campus.

- Riess: I'm glad you've talked about this. Your ideas seem so correct and obvious, and it helps describe what you do and how.
- Bender: And what the big systems have trouble doing. The site criteria for the locations were taken from the site criteria in 1960 when they did the last three campuses. There was so much that it could have taken beyond there.
- And I did begin to realize, who do you get on these committees? People who ran a math department or were on advisory committees, but even then—John and I went to a meeting about the EIR once, and we looked around the room and they were all lawyers. John, who's better at this than I am, figured out that they were being paid more in this meeting than we were getting as a fee for the project! [laughing] I think for John it was a mixed feeling. And SOM—it was good they got one of the first buildings, and they did a good job. Actually early in the project I had brought in Richard Fernau, because he had a lot of interest and experience in vernacular building. And Richard and I were driving around photographing farmhouses and barns. The university hasn't reflected anything of that sort, but Richard joined SOM in the design for the library.
- Riess: Now somehow this must loop right on to Murayama, because you manage to make everything connect.
- Bender: Well, yes, at least afterwards! One of the things that Berkeley's been doing for about fifteen years now, Don Lyndon brought the idea, was to have Mayors Conferences. For a while he got the National Endowment for the Arts to fund them. The idea is to invite a group of mayors, and to discuss—to have some of them present the issues in their towns, and to have a group of other mayors and a group of experts comment. We ran some of these at the school and they were really interesting. Students can sit in on it, students play a role in the planning and in the workshops. Some of our foreign students who saw it got interested, and particularly Professor Satoh, Shigeru Satoh from Waseda, who came—I invited him to spend a year in my office here at Berkeley as a visiting scholar studying how planning is done in the Bay Area. Satoh's now the president of the Japan Institute of Architects. He's just finishing his term, and he was supposed to be, with Peter Bosselmann, at this studio that's right now taking place in southern Japan, except that he's now leading the planning for rebuilding after the disasters of March 11th.
- But Satoh went back and he decided to have Mayors Conferences in Waseda University. Being Japan, instead of being thirty people at the Faculty Club, they have maybe two hundred people in a big lecture room and lectures instead of workshops. He asked me to give a talk at one of the Mayors Conferences and I was talking about my interest in trying to look at the city as regional landscape. I mentioned the fact when I first came to Japan one of the groups I found there that was sponsored by the Dentsu Institute was looking at long-range plans for Tokyo. Professor Itoh was in charge, and most of the young people who went on these trips with the companies were involved. And they talked about the “sausage” plan: they said, “Tokyo is like a pizza. The cheese and the tomatoes are spread all

over this whole circle. But in reality, if you look at Tokyo it's more like a sausage pizza. You find 'lumps' where the Yamanote Line runs around and you have Shinjuku, Shibuya, these concentrations." So we talked about what would happen if you could take out some of the cheese and open it up.

At the Mayors Conference I said that one of the things I was hearing, both at this conference and recently, is that the population of Japan for the first time is going down, not up. And a lot of the buildings which were the basis for Japan's economy booming are old buildings that were not so well built. They were built quickly in the recovery and they're being abandoned or reused. And the fashion seems to be all over to convert them into artists' studios or lofts, whatever you can do that follows along that line. I said, "Wouldn't it be interesting in a city like Tokyo, with the population going down, if you started to make a plan to take them out of circulation and start to turn the cities back to the land, to the landscape, to recapture these places."

Riess: Tear them down?

Bender: Well, maybe more creatively to find ways to gradually take them out in some pattern, or look for places where you would do that that would follow some natural pattern in the land, or transportation. In that talk I made a simple proposal—as these old industrial sites become available, instead of rebuilding on them, "Reverse the vector, and un-develop them." Why not mark a pattern of sites that can be un-developed, back to the natural state the land was in before the recent booms. These sites can evolve into large natural places woven into the metropolitan landscape. At the end of the talk, and before I could talk to my old friend Kei Minohara, these two young people came up and said, "We'd be interested to talk to you more. We're from a Buddhist group called Shinnyo-en and we've just bought the old Nissan factory in Tachikawa. Eventually we would like to build a temple, but we're trying to think of what to do with it until we can afford to do that. In fact we thought of asking Mr. Minohara to help us." So within an hour we were talking about it, and we went out that weekend to look at the land. Minohara and I had talked—I think it was his idea originally to use the word *poleved* for the idea.

Riess: I didn't understand that.

Bender: Poleved is develop spelled backwards. [laughter] In the paper that's from a first talk that I gave to the Shinnyo-en people we'd talked about poleved and changing the vector. The vector is now always more, more, piling up, more and more. But let's turn the vector around and look at places to turn *back*.

Actually even before we went out to Tachikawa I started looking at the history of the site. And the Mori Library helped me. It's a long history, and people have lived on that land in more or less the same way for two thousand years. We got aerial photographs, and in the 1930s there was a little farm village at that site. In the thirties the Japanese built an air base,

and in the late forties it became an American air base, and the Americans sold it to Nissan to make a factory. Nissan, when it turned it over to Shinnyo-en, cleared it completely, the way you see they do here, to take all the toxic things out, they leveled it. Anyway, I had been looking at these aerial photographs and I saw—they were taken in the winter and the surface was all yellow and dried—I said, “If you look at it closely, it looks like there’s a green tinge, meandering across the site. I bet there was a stream there once and they must have put it in a pipe.” Immediately they sent somebody out and they found old maps and there had been a stream there and they had put it in a pipe along the west side of the site.

Then the Shinnyo-en people were talking about how they didn’t have the budget for the temple right now, but they were planning a long-range plan to use it eventually. And so more or less at the same moment Minohara and I said, “Why not plant a forest?” I was thinking of the way Japanese are so good at making forests. “In thirty to fifty years you’ll start to have a forest and you’ll also start to have the money to build. And then you can put the temple into the forest.” That was the précis of the idea. But the idea was, in a sense, to turn it upside down, to turn the land back. The local community was really unhappy. You sent me a copy of an early *Japan Times*, which was saying they wanted to fill it up with factories to get more taxes. When I asked at a meeting with the local community, “Do you really want factories?” the people who lived near it said, “Well, maybe apartment houses. We need the taxes.”

Riess: What is Shinnyo-en?

Bender: It is what the Japanese call a “new religion.” Japan has had a history of many variations of Buddhism—not always Buddhism, but “of” Buddhism, growing out of, often “reforming” Buddhism. Shinnyo-en was founded by Shinjo Ito and his wife Tomoji. Shinjo had designed aircraft, fighter planes, until the mid-1930s when he decided to step back from that, and after some searching ended up founding Shinnyo-en, which tries to “break down the barriers between the heart of Buddhism and the people.” He and Tomoji felt that Buddhism has become too removed. The idea is to make the religion more transparent, to have it more open. When I heard that I said, “This sounds perfect.” So once again I found myself part of a Japanese community group in a meeting that Minohara organized in explaining what we were going to have happen.

I was saying this was meant to be like a dance between the community and Shinnyo-en, that the community would have access to this green place, in a community that has almost no green spaces, and that eventually there’d be cultural things in it. And I thought that the Shinnyo-en would gain from having better contact with the people. Many of the people in that town are involved in the—farther down near where the railroad station is where they have their headquarters and executive offices and all of that. The talk was a great hit. I showed them a whole bunch of photographs of different places. I remember one of them was Olmsted’s “necklace” of parks in Boston, and the idea that he was asked to do flood control and he ended up proposing to do that with a necklace of parks and

lakes connected, in the same way that we'll be trying to do here. And so they started, and it's not so easy to build a forest. They've spent two years doing drilling and soil tests, locating the bed of the old stream and designing a planting program.

Riess: It looks like you're standing under some major trees in one of these pictures.

Bender: Yes, there are a few big trees there. This was from a magazine, *Sakota* [August 2007] not an architectural magazine, it is a popular lifestyle magazine where they showed it, and these are some of the existing trees. There are not that many trees, but this was meant to give a feeling of what it would be like. There's another picture somewhere of me and Minohara walking on a path.

Anyway, it's on the way. It has its stops and goes.

Riess: How does this group have enough money to make any of this happen?

Bender: They have two million members all over the world. And that is not one of the richest of the new religions—that I.M. Pei museum outside of Kyoto that you didn't get to, the Miho Museum, was designed to house the collection of art of the Shumei family which founded a Buddhist organization with property in Shiga Prefecture, and in Colorado. There's one on the Izu Peninsula, the Atami Museum—I call it the Escalator Demonstration Museum. It's on a big slope and has so many escalators and marble and a big art collection.

There's one of these groups, Omoto that got into a lot of trouble during the war, because they were for uniting people all over the world and globalism and they were anti-war. They have a compound still, not far from Kyoto, in which the signs are in Esperanto. In their church service the altars are filled with fruit and food and flowers and at the end the audience comes up and eats the fruit. Bishop Morton from the Cathedral of St. John the Divine is part of that group's international network. You see photographs of big Jim Morton and Indian people in saris in a collection that shows the ties the group had with people of openness and good spirit around the world.

For me, this project with Minohara and Shinnyo-en is a great opportunity to look at taking the land back, beginning to look at a whole *region* as a basis for planning, rather than doing it piecemeal, and trying to recognize the land that was there. Alternately, Murayama may be a glimpse of where cities might go if people dreamed hard enough. These earthquakes and tsunamis remind us again that nature is powerful, and that it has a way to have its way over time. "Architecture begins in construction and ends in town planning." There are so many lessons, and I hope I am still learning.

The End of the Interviews

Richard Bender Biographical Information

Richard Bender is an Architect and Engineer with extensive experience in Urban Design and Planning. He is Professor of Architecture and Dean Emeritus of the College of Environmental Design at the University of California at Berkeley.

Before coming to California, in 1969, Dean Bender taught at The Cooper Union and Columbia University in New York. At Berkeley, he was Chairman of the Department of Architecture from 1973-1976 and Dean of the College of Environmental Design from 1976-1990. Over the years, he has been a Visiting Professor of Architecture at the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, MIT, the Swiss Federal Technical University, and the Istituto Universitario Architettura in Venice. He was named a Fellow in Architecture at the American Academy in Rome in 1980 and in 1989, he was appointed to the "GC-5" Visiting Chair in Urban Design and Planning at the University of Tokyo. He continues in that position today.

Dean Bender did his undergraduate work in Civil Engineering at the City University of New York (B.C.E., 1951). He went on to do graduate work in Building Construction Engineering at MIT, and in Architecture at the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, where he studied and worked with Walter Gropius, and then Jose Luis Sert.

He interrupted his studies to work with the North Atlantic Construction Company at the Greenland Air Bases, and then for service in the U.S. Army (where he designed the 'floats' for the Army in the 1955 Army-Navy Game). He returned to Cambridge, where he received the Bachelor of Architecture degree from Harvard Graduate School of Design in 1956.

In 1956, he married Sue Rosenfeld. Now known as Sue Bender, an artist and writer, she wrote "Plain and Simple—A Woman's Voyage to the Amish", which became a *New York Times* best seller in 1990. They lived and worked in Europe for two years before returning to New York, where their sons Michael and David were born in 1960 and 1961. They lived on East Tenth Street and Amagansett until the family moved to California in 1969.

In professional practice as a partner in Town Planning Associates (with Paul Lester Wiener), and then as a consultant to architecture firms, institutions, and United States and other governments, Dean Bender has been involved in the planning of large-scale campus and urban development projects in North and South America, Europe, the Middle East, and in Asia. His institutional work in this period included campus planning and the design of buildings for: the

CERN nuclear research campus in Geneva, Switzerland (with Buro Steiger); the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Israel; and a new community on the island of Cartagena, Colombia.

More recently, as principal of his own consulting firm and director of the Campus Planning Study Group in the College of Environmental Design at Berkeley, Dean Bender has consulted extensively on campus planning, urban design, and architectural projects, including: the University of California campuses at Berkeley, San Diego, Santa Cruz, Davis, and Merced.

Outside of the U.S.A., Dean Bender has advised the University of Tokyo in the re-planning of the Hongo campus (with Prof. Shigeru Itoh), Waseda University in Tokyo (with Prof. Shigeru Satoh); in 1992, he led the Master planning for the Benesse International Center for the Arts on the Island of Naoshima in Japan's Inland Sea. Since 1993, Dean Bender has been a Director and member of the planning team for "Academy Hills", a new "In Town University", and the Mori Center for the Arts in the Roppongi Hills development in Tokyo.

Since 1994, he has been Professor at the Universite Europeene de Maitrise D'Oeuvre Urbaine in Cergy-Pontoise, France, and consultant on the planning of a new town center and technical campus in the "New Town" of Cergy-Pontoise, outside of Paris, France. In 2009, he began to advise the Trustees of Singapore's Nanyang Technical University on the re-planning of their campus.

In 1983, Dean Bender began an advisory role to the Getty Trust: first, on site selection, planning and architecture selection of the Getty Center in the Brentwood area of Los Angeles, and later—through 1995—on strategic planning for the Getty's "next generation."

In San Francisco, Dean Bender has been involved in the "Downtown Plan" for San Francisco—as the organizer and first chair of the City Planning Commission's Architectural Review Panel, and as advisor to the Museum of Modern Art. He has also served as a member of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission's Design Review Board.

Dean Bender is a Founding Director of the non-profit BRIDGE Housing Corporation. He has been a Trustee of Mills College in Oakland (1992-97), where he was Chairman of the Trustees Campus Planning Committee. Over the years, Dean Bender has been an advisor to the U.S. National Endowment for the Arts, and a member of the Building Research Advisory Board and the Commission on Engineering and Technical Systems of the National Academy of Sciences.

Dean Bender has written and contributed to a number of books and publications and has written a number of articles on campus and community planning, urban

and building technology, urban infrastructure, and housing. As a practitioner, he has won awards for his campus, residential and community planning projects. He has taught and lectured on campus and community planning in the U.S., Europe and Asia. He delivered major addresses to the 1994 and 1996 Annual Meetings of the Society for Campus and University Planning (SCUP), and has been invited to present "Keynote" addresses at International Urban Design Conferences in Europe, Asia, and the U.S.A.

Richard Bender - Publications

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"Systems Building," *Encyclopedia of Building Technology*, Prentice Hall, 1986

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Selected Publications

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“Affordable Housing, Liveable Communities,” *PLACES*, MIT Press, Vol. 2, No. 1, May 1985.

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“Incremental Infrastructure,” Proceedings of the MIT Symposium on Strategies for A.I.D. Programs in Selected Areas of Science and Technology: Vol. 2: Housing, Transportation and Water Resources, ed. J.P. Ruina, April 1974.

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“Master Plan for the Island of Tierra Bomba”, Cartagena, Colombia, (with Paul Lester Wiener: Town Planning Associates) 1965

“Master Plan for Aspen Colorado”. 1964 (with Paul Lester Wiener: Town Planning Associates)

U.C. Berkeley Publications –***Urban Construction Laboratory (UCL)***

The Urban Construction Laboratory published “The UCL News” from 1990 through 2005 when 3 summary Newsletters were adapted and updated. These are:

Naoshima: A Museum Without Walls
Roppongi Hills: A City Within a City

Swords to Plowshares: 20 years of Projects

Systems of Structure

In early 1970's, the Department of Architecture published 2 volumes of 'Systems of Structure' which was used in introductory classes in the CED, then adapted for use by Berkeley High, and a number of public and private elementary schools in the Bay Area. Robin Chiang made a delightful set of illustrations and Marc Treib designed the covers.

"Systems of Structure - Lectures and Notes" 1971

"Systems of Structure - Experiments and Demonstrations" (with Robin Chiang) 1972

revised January 2012

Campus Planning Study Group Publications:

Between 1978 and 1991, The Campus Planning Study Group published more than 40 studies. They began with studies of "Campus Historic Resources" and a series of "Urban Design Studies for the Berkeley Campus. Over the years they cover campus precincts, buildings, open spaces and landscape. Among them are:

The Central Glade, 1991

Student Services, Guidelines for siting, massing and landscaping

Telegraph/Euclid Connection: A Pedestrian Pathway through the Central Campus, 1986

Urban Design Brief for Chemistry Unit III, 1985

Proposed Guidelines for University Development in the Southside, 1985

Davis Hall Addition Studies, 1985

Kroeber Hall Study, 1985

The Piedmont Edge, 1985

Student Services Facilities, 1984

The Northeast Precinct, 1983

The Southeast Precinct, 1983

The Southwest Precinct, 1983

Urban Design Studies for the Berkeley Campus, Part III, 1982

Life Science Building (revision), 1982

Sites for New Buildings, 1982

North Campus Housing Sites, 1981

Little Grizzly Peak Project, 1981

Precincts of the Campus: Southwest, 1981

Life Sciences Building, 1980

California Memorial Stadium, 1980

West Face of Campus, East Edge of Town, 1980
Urban Design Studies for the Berkeley Campus, Part II, 1979

Cory Hall Addition, 1979

Donner Labs, 1979

Founders' Rock Area, 1979

Intramural Sports Facility, 1979

Center for East Asian Studies, 1978

Morrison-Hertz Addition, 1978

Urban Design Studies for the Berkeley Campus, Part I, 1978

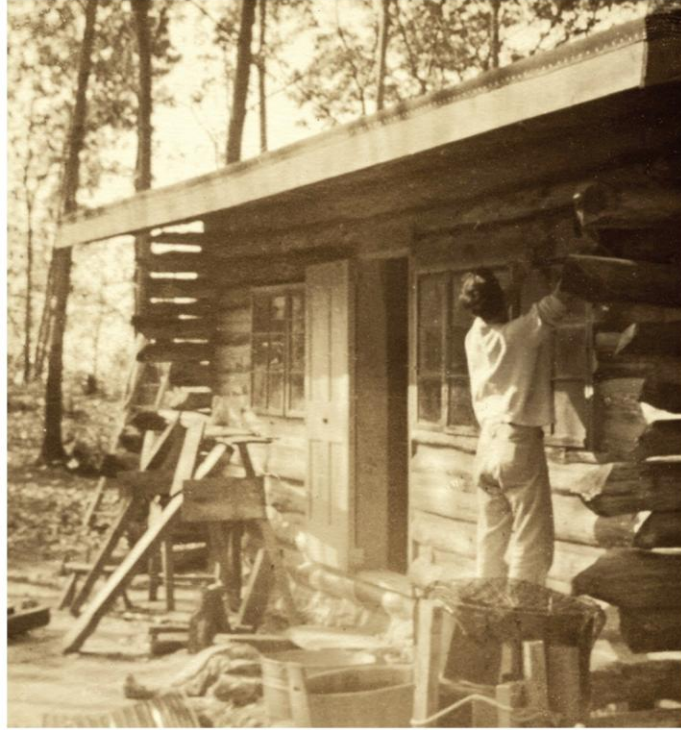
Campus Historic Resources Survey, 1978



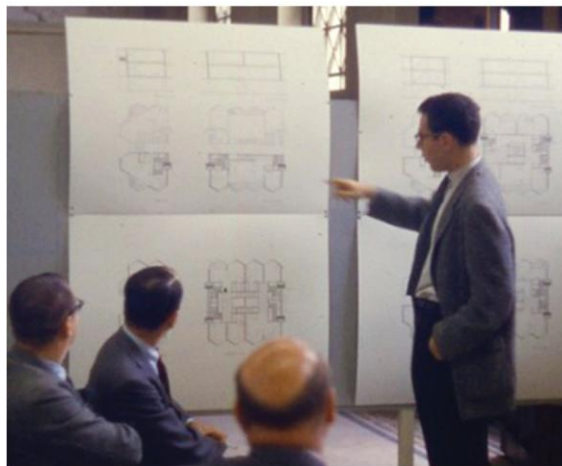
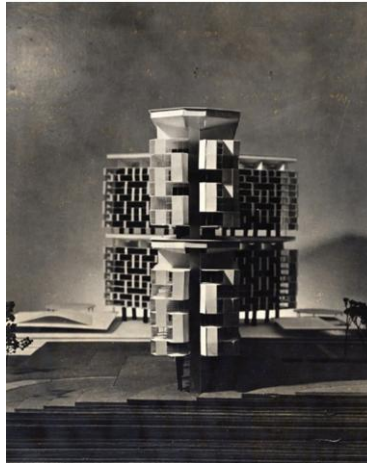
Richard at home, 1937

Richard at the Civil Engineering 'Camp' CCNY, 1949

View from the Coney Island Draft Board RB redesigned for a Head Start Program in 1967



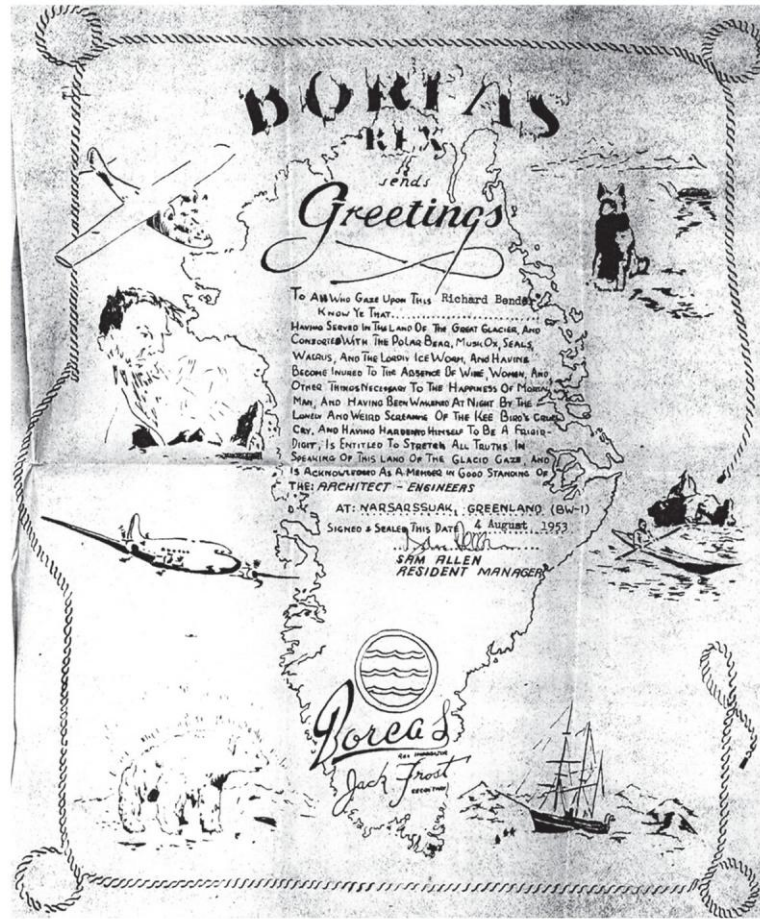
Pete Seeger House, Beacon, NY, 1951
Banjo



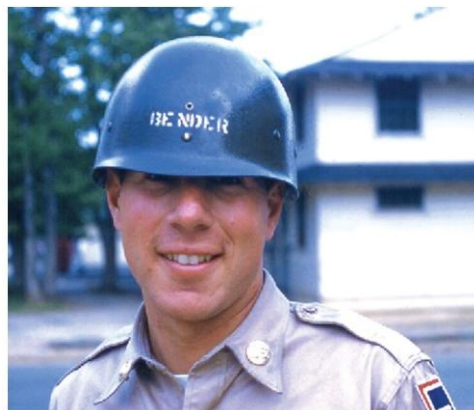
The IBEC System-Test Project in Norfolk, Virginia, 1950
Thesis Project, Harvard Graduate School of Design, 1956
RB presenting his thesis to Professors William LeMessurier & Walter Bogner, 1956



Le Corbusier and Einstein at Princeton
Ingeborg and Paul Lester Wiener
Paul Lester Wiener, Le Corbusier and Jose Luis Sert at Town Planning Associates, 1948



"Membership Certificate" – Architect-Engineers, Narsarssuak, Greenland
 Muskegon Indian steel fabricators on the Radio Tower, Narsarssuak
 Schokbeton building system, under construction, Narsarssuak



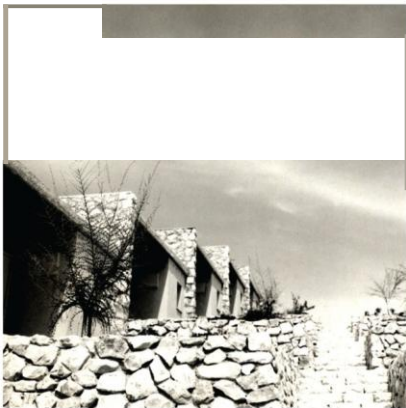
The 'Floats' for the Army-Navy Game, 1955

RB at the Army-Navy Game

RB at Fort Dix, 1954



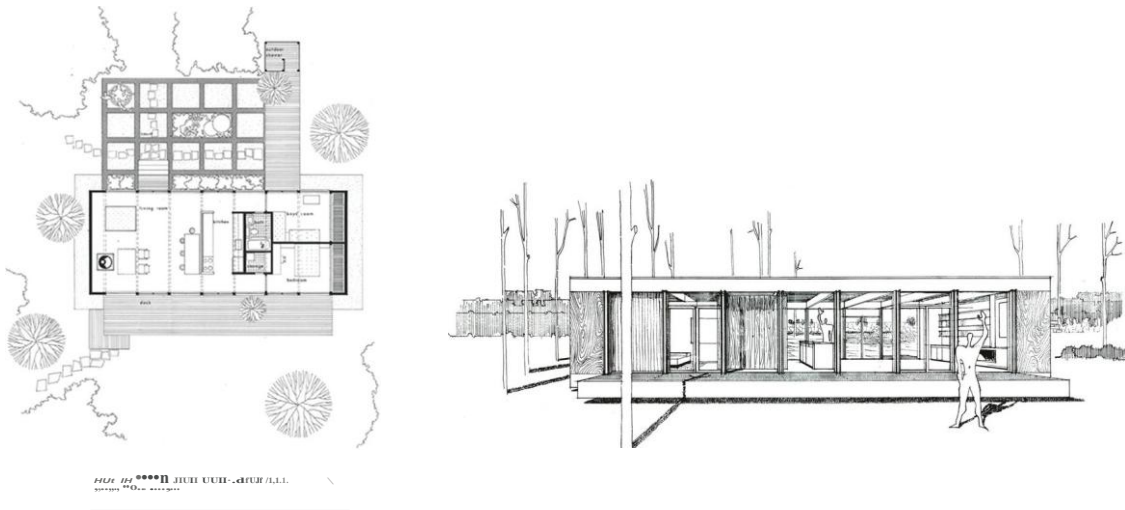
Marriage, August 9, 1956
Sue and Richard on Klausstrasse balcony, Zurich, 1956
At Ronchamp - Chapel of Notre Dame du Haut, 1957



CERN, Synchrocyclotron and Proton Synchrotron
CERN Campus, sketch, Buro Steiger, Peter Steiger and Dr. R Steiger, 1956
Shikun Vatikim, Housing, Office of Ariel Sharon, Israel, 1957
Synagogue, Givat Ram Campus, Hebrew University, Studio of Heinz Rau, 1957



Ken Snelson's 'Structure' on the way to the New York Worlds' Fair,
1964
The Colombian Center, Federacion National de Cafeteros de Colombia, New York,
1966
The Churchill Apartments, Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, with William Lescaze,
1969

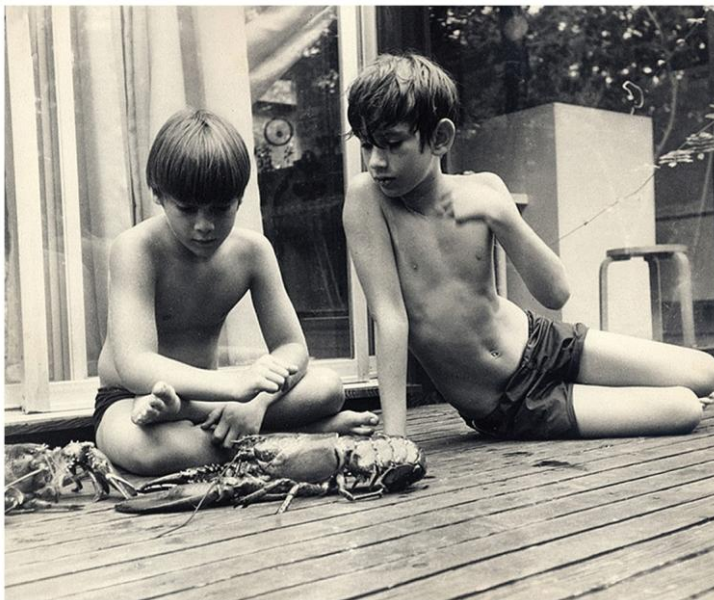


The 'Budget Beach House' - Bender House, Amagansett, NY - 1962
Plan-Sketch

The more colorful carpet is here!
Kaufman Carpet has deep-dyed "Fair Lady" by Crown Tuft.
 See the beautiful color difference in "Fair Lady" by Crown Tuft—100% Caprolan® nylon pile. Caprolan takes color in a very special way . . . deep, deep down for 14 deep-dyed colors. And Fair Lady has deep-down texture, too, in the rich, random pattern sheared and loop pile. Caprolan resists matting, fuzzing, and pilling. Shuns spills, spots, and stains, so it's easier to clean. Come and see colorful Crown Tuft carpet at Kaufman Carpet, 7 W. 47th St., Manhattan, and branches in Brooklyn, Rego Park, Bronx (2), Staten Island, Jamaica, Hempstead, Westbury, Valley Stream, Huntington, Yonkers, White Plains, Stamford, Conn., Newark, N. J., Springfield, N. J., Little Falls, N. J., Linden, N. J., and Paramus, N. J.
 *Completely installed with famous Rubber-Aire cushion padding and Kaufman's superior tackless installation. AS FEATURED ON THE JOHANNES WATERS HBO TV COLOR SPECIAL, MAY 10.

\$8.99
 PER SQ. YD. INSTALLED

Happy it's Caprolan, the more colorful nylon by



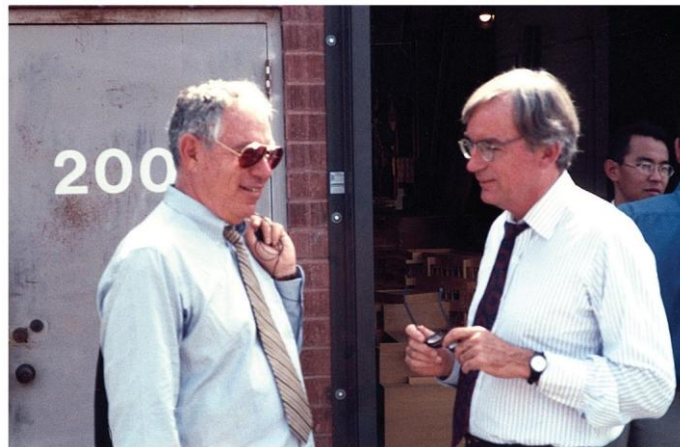
Sue Bender / Ceramics
 August 3 – August 13

THE BENSON GALLERY
 BRIDGEHAMPTON, LDNGISLANO
 NEW YORK 11932

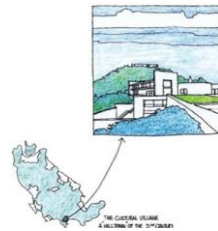
Sue, David and Michael, at home in a NY Times carpet advertisement
 Michael, David and lobsters on the deck, Amagansett
 Poster for Sue's exhibition at the Benson Gallery, Watermill



Dean Richard Bender and Chancellor I. Michael Heyman
In the Dean's Office - College of Environmental Design



In Martha's Vineyard to meet Alan Stein for talks that led to BRIDGE, 1983
In Italy during Residency at The American Academy in Rome, 1980
With Director John Walsh of the Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 1989



THE CENTRAL VILLAGE
A VILLAGE IN THE 30°ZONARY

llc= CulturalVill. c
llc-p=S<Housewithllc-p-coreofCultur-Village Soton
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View of Entry

Japan The Mori Art Center and Mori Art Museum, Roppongi Hills, Tokyo
The Shinryo-en site at Murayama, Japan- as published in Satokoto Magazine
From the Master Plan for Naoshima Island and Art Site Naoshima in Japan's Inland Sea



At a ceremony in June 1993 Chancellor Chang-lin Tien awarded Richard the Berkeley Citation.

“Dick Bender is a remarkable combination of architect and civil engineer, who has done much for creating strong linkages for the profession with the engineering world. After service as Chair of the Department of Architecture, he spent twelve years as Dean of the College of Environmental Design -- a long time by any standard and particularly by Berkeley's. As Dean, he built and integrated the field of Building Science within Architecture, extended and defined the "Wurster Dream", led the Architecture Department to pre-eminent national standing, and put new life into the Department of Landscape Architecture, bringing it to a position among the few best in the country. Quite a set of accomplishments:

And he has made signal contributions in other ways as well. Dean Bender revitalized the planning process on the Berkeley Campus. He defined, instituted and led the Design Review Board. This has worked so well that he has been called upon by several other UC campuses to institute the concept there. And he has left his mark on so many building projects that it must truly be said of him, as for others like Frederick Law Olmstead and John Galen Howard, that the campus itself as a built environment is in significant part his monument.”

Receiving the ‘Berkeley Citation’ 1993



Sue & Richard at Home