

Women Who Are Architects

Wilks, Barbara Ellen, FAIA, FASLA ~ Oral History Interview

Date of Interview: March 10, 2020

Interviewer: Sarah K. Filkins

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Barbara Ellen Wilks, FAIA, FASLA Interview, March 10, 2020

Background

Interviewer: Sarah K Filkins

Interviewee:

Date of Birth: 1951

Date of Interview: March 10, 2020

Place: Offices of W Architecture & Landscape Architecture LLC
374 Fulton Street
Third Floor
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Other People Present: None

Background Noise: Office in Urban Setting with Construction in Building Noise and Urban Street Noise

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audio-technica AT899 Subminiature Omnidirectional Condenser Lavalier
Microphones

Recording Medium Used: Digital 24-Bit/96 kHz Recording Resolution WAV Files

Transcriber: Sarah K Filkins

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Interview

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Sarah Filkins: This is Sarah Filkins, Interviewer, speaking with Barbara Wilks, FAIA [Fellow American Institute of Architects] and FASLA [Fellow American Society of Landscape Architects] at W Architecture and Landscape Architecture in Brooklyn, New York on Tuesday, March 10 [2020]. Good morning and thank you for agreeing to share your story with us as part of the Library of Congress Occupation Folklife Project, funded by an Archie Green Fellowship.

Barbara Wilks: Well, thank you for asking me. I'm honored to be part of it.

SF: Well, thank you. So let's start out, if you could give your full name and your year of birth. This is as a point of reference for the Library of Congress in the future.

BW: Barbara Ellen Wilks, 1951.

SF: Okay, thank you. So let's start with growing up and your first awareness of architecture and the built environment.

BK: Okay, well growing up and this will—a little bit go to why I am now in landscape. We lived next to a creek and so I spent, I would say more than fifty percent of my time easily out of doors—was constantly just fascinated by the natural environment, you know, ever-changing, and the water, I mean we had a gravel driveway. We were on a hill, the creek was actually down quite low compared to where we were. Anyway, I would spend hours turning on the hose and making streams through the gravel driveway which my parents, I think, must have decided, even though they occasionally told me to stop but I think they realized that I would just spend hours doing it so it was a good activity. So and then I went in the creek and there were all kind of animals and fossils, you know, animals from the past, the Ordovician Sea—I'm from Ohio that's—so had been all kinds of things that I learned about and I was a bit of a nerd actually as a kid. I started an Audubon club. I made dioramas of the Ordovician Sea and, you know, really was into all this stuff and so I didn't really know much about architecture to be quite honest. I mean, my father had built our house which was a sort of a Frank Lloyd Wright kind of style and it was quite nice. And you know, I liked it but I had never thought about architecture as a field until it was recommended actually by my guidance counselor because if you had asked someone—elementary school, that was my science phase—I thought I might be a geologist or something at that point. If you had asked somebody in high school what they thought I would be they would have said artist because I did all the—I painted, I was the editor of the yearbook, I did all the set design for the plays. You know, everything was about sort of painting and—so anyway, so but I also happened to be good at math and physics and all those things and so the guidance counselor said—and I knew I didn't want to go to college in art. I didn't think—somehow that didn't seem like if you were going to go to college like, I don't know—I'm kind of a practical person at the same time, so anyway they recommended architecture. So I thought, Hmm, that sounds

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interesting. But I knew nothing about it and I went off and applied to three schools, I think, and got into Cornell and it was just the start of a whole new world which I really ended up loving. I mean, you know, they started, I'll never forget, starting talking about space and I have no idea what they're talking about when I was eighteen so just—just learning how to make spaces for people to be in and the kind of dynamics of that. To me, it was a lot like what I had seen in nature in a way, with how spaces change and move from one to another. So that's a long winded answer but it was sort of by accident I guess you would say and nobody suggested landscape architecture so, you know, that's how I sort of got into the architecture field as a starting point into this.

SF: But at Cornell you must have been exposed to landscape architecture as well. Did you ever...

BW: It's so strange—the landscape school—Cornell is a very interesting institution that's part state, part private and landscape is part of the state because it's, I guess it's more in with agriculture. And then, you know, the architecture is in with art and

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planning. And I actually wanted to go there because it was in with art. So given my—what I thought—you know, my background. So the architecture, art and planning is what they actually call it. And it actually was, I think, a really good school for me because it was all about context. The planning and the Colin Rowe who was the person there then, sort of the guru. You know, it was so how things all fit together which was again, fit in with nature being more about systems and how that all works—so I actually think it was a really good school for me and I learned a lot which I sort of rejected. I mean, they were—some things I rejected immediately but nonetheless, the sort of discipline and the thinking about space and how people live in it and how we change the world through it and all that was really interesting.

SF: Were there any architects who inspired you at that point?

BW: Well, Cornell was all about Corbusier [Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, Le Corbusier], which I mean, he was pretty interesting. He changed a lot, you know, throughout his career—and not just sort of a single idea which—and yeah, I guess basically as I got more into the profession, I mean anyone that can sustain an idea through all of the things that you have to—I have respect for, because it's so hard to—to do that. I mean, they're so many constraints, so many things and to first of all, just to have an idea and then to be able to actually take it all the way through and have it be expressed is admirable. So I'm—but I probably should say that there were hardly any women at [Cornell architecture] and certainly no [women] professors—it was all men—many times—I think we had six women out of our class of sixty as a starting point. Certainly, I'm so happy that it's changed now in the profession but it was—I mean—I, I guess I'm the kind of person that doesn't need a lot of—what's the word—pats on the back, thank goodness, because you certainly didn't get them and if anything you got, you know, “You're wasting a space.” You know.

SF: Really.

BW: Oh yeah, that was still very prevalent. I mean, or nothing. You know, yeah.

SF: So there were no women, certainly no women mentors there?

BW: No, no, no.

SF: So what was your goal at that—you went to the five year program?

BW: Five year, five year undergraduate, yes, bachelors of architecture because I'd, you know, been in school all my life at that point and I couldn't imagine signing up for something that would require going to more school. So I was very happy to do the five-year bachelors although now looking back I wish I had taken more liberal arts so I'd—I sort of spent my time when I had my children, reading up on history so that I could not be behind there because I felt like I missed out a lot on that. But um—now I forget your question.

SF: Oh, it was just about—you know, mentorship and...

BW: No, no mentors. No. No and you had asked me, "What was my goal?" That's what you had said. Yeah, yeah.

SF: Oh, your goal, yes. Sorry.

BW: I don't think I had a goal other than to—I mean by the time I graduated, Diane and I—my classmate, Diane Cho, one of the few other women there—we decided to go to Baltimore together and I really wanted to go there, because—neither of us knew a thing about Baltimore—but I wanted to go there because it was giving away houses for a dollar and you could—I felt like well, I could afford that. And then I could actually do something—I mean lots of drawings—I mean for me as an artist, I mean thinking of my, you know—at the beginning the kind of process of architecture is very removed from the actual making. I mean you're making some drawings and at that point they were by hand so you know I was at least still making things by hand but they weren't—and we did a lot of models so—you got to make things

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but it wasn't—it's not the same as making a building so the idea of being able to get a house for a dollar and make it into a project was appealing. I didn't have a big overarching goal, I mean, no.

SF: But that's so interesting that you would just select Baltimore and...

BW: Yeah—out of the blue. Well, again...

SF: Thank goodness for Baltimore. I mean really because you made such a big impact.

BW: Well, I thought it was a beautiful city. I mean, again with my background of context, I mean they have so much intact fabric, you know, it's a beautiful city of mostly row houses, and mostly still there and they had really only recently demolished their downtown around the harbor but in a lot of the rest of the downtown—I mean the beautiful Mt. Vernon Square and many squares. I mean they had a sort of a history of squares so—and then of course the water being on the tail end of the Chesapeake there. So—and the hills coming down. I mean I just thought, I thought it was a beautiful city. So but, yeah, again in looking back you just kind of naively launch off as a kid and not ever realizing that that might be a place where you might spend some time. You know, I certainly didn't investigate it that hard. It was just like, oh they're giving away a house for a dollar and it's a beautiful place. Let's go (laughs). So Diane and I moved there.

SF: So did you end up getting a dollar house?

BW: Oh, that's a whole other story. No, because we were women. And this was Baltimore which I was starting to realize was quite southern, maybe not that different than other places, I mean, I don't know. But, yeah, no we got—I saw—Diane and I were applying together to get the house and we got questions like, "Well, what if one of you gets married?" or "What, you know how can we give houses to women?" Or, you know, I mean just, things that we just couldn't even—I guess I really didn't know how to answer. I mean we just probably sat there like deer in the headlights when people said these kinds of things to us so—so I ended up buying a house that was in rather poor shape. And well, I should also say, eventually they went to a—they got popular so they went to a lottery system and but then we couldn't even win one in the lottery.

SF: You weren't even eligible to...

BW: No, no they let us—they finally realized we were serious and they let us enter the—but we just weren't lucky enough to win one. So I, I finally ended up buying a house which you know was—at that point I'd worked a few years and the house was relatively inexpensive and also in bad shape and it was just what I wanted. I could still do my project. So that's what happened. It was only eleven feet wide and I don't know—fifty feet deep with the whole lot. You know it was very small. But it was close to the downtown and you know, I thought it was wonderful and I had a lot of fun doing it so, but yeah, never got—the reason we went there. You know—disappointing.

SF: But a group of you actually from Cornell went there or just you and Diane?

BW: I think it was just Diane and I. I don't remember...

SF: Oh, I thought David [Benn]...

BW: Oh he came later. They got married. He was in Ithaca and Diane actually went up there for a while and then they got married and then he came down and joined the firm.

SF: Oh, I didn't realize they were married.

BW: Yeah, yeah, yeah, so he came down then. But we started the firm and he wasn't there, I don't know, maybe for the first at least like eight years or so I mean, you know, it was a little while, I mean five at least—I'm terrible at time.

SF: So but your first job was with the City [of Baltimore]? So what an interesting introduction to...

DW: It was, and again I didn't know. I wasn't being strategic or anything as you would say now but it was actually a great introduction to learn how everything worked in Baltimore because I knew—I didn't know how anything worked being right out of school. And I had a wonderful first employer, Franz Vidor. I'll never forget him. You know, he was just the nicest guy and he said, "If you're coming here to get a house for a dollar, I'm hiring you." I mean it was just—he was just an amazing guy and it was an amazingly diverse place to work. You know, I got totally—I

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got one kind of vision of what Baltimore was like and then when I decided, okay, I've worked here, I forget, for three years or so—I should go work at a private company. Oh my goodness, it was just totally different. I mean there were—when I say diverse, [at the City of Baltimore] it was women and men and African-Americans and hispanics and you know white people like me and there were all—just all different kinds of people and this was 1974. When I went to work three years later in a private firm it was all white men. I mean it was such a shock. So and I was the first woman they had ever hired.

SF: So how about gender—were they supportive of you and...

BW: They were in their way. I mean obviously they—the way I got hired I mean is kind of a—so I had—I had a lot of energy back then so I would work in the evenings after I worked at the city, at another architecture firm, a small one—a person that just did houses and things—and then I also worked at a bar as a bartender a couple of nights. I mean just a little bit. So I was in a bar and this group came in with their jerseys on—they had just come from a ballgame and they were from, where I [later] worked, CS&D, Cochran Stephenson and Donkervoet and you know, I'm waiting on them and the one guy goes, "You're obviously—what else do you do? You know, you're not—you know what else do you do?" And I said, "Well actually, I applied to your firm. I'm an architect and I couldn't get anyone to respond to my resume." I think in Baltimore, you sort of had to know people, you know? And he—so he gave me his card

SF: So now you did.

BW: Yes, so now I did. He gave me his card. He goes, “Well call me. We’ve actually been looking to hire a woman and, you know, we’d be happy to talk to you.” So I called him and got a job there. So, but yeah, that’s what you had to do in Baltimore so that was kind of funny. But they were—they were trying. They didn’t quite know what to do with me. I remember one project I—it was a small church, they let me sort of design this or let me work on this sort of a new small church and let’s just say I didn’t like the way the design was going so I stayed up one night and did a whole new design and built a model and did some drawings and presented them the next morning (laughs). You know and they kind of flipped out (laughs). Well they were very nice about it, I mean they didn’t—they just kind of, more like patted me on the head and said, “Oh yeah, that’s very nice but, no.” (laughs) And so but, I learned a lot—I mean I knew nothing about—when I worked for the city [of Baltimore] you know, it was more—I did do one project—I met Moshe Safdie. It was really interesting because he was doing the “New Town in Town” [Coldspring Newtown] in Baltimore and so there was a city owned building that we renovated and—as part of that complex and I did environmental reviews, but it wasn’t like a lot of drafting and you know making buildings. It was all different kinds of things which was a really good experience but so there they really taught me more about how to put a building together and lots of red lines all over my drawings and you know, tried to get (unintelligible). They always said you’re very fast. I mean, I was always very fast at drawing but I had a lot to learn and so you know I—I enjoyed working there. I think they were very nice and open. I had—but it always felt a little uncomfortable, I mean given the circumstances, you know, for me.

SF: When did you take your registration exam?

BW: Well, after I’d worked there for a while then I was able to take my registration exam and passed the first time.

SF: Wow.

BW: Yeah.

SF: You are the first architect I’ve interviewed that has passed on the first time. Everybody has these stories.

BW: Well I also got physically ill taking it, because at that time it was like all week long. You know, like at the end I just—I really just lost it but I finished and I passed. And so not long after that is when I started the firm and then Diane who also had her own story, which you’ll hear from her later, joined me like three months later and

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we began Cho Wilks. It was first called Cho Wilks.

SF: So that was—that was brave at that point to start. Did you have a project that you were able to...

BW: No, well like I mentioned I had also worked at some other firms and at night, that did smaller projects. And I can't remember his name but he was very nice and would spin off some of those small projects to us. Like because of this homesteading, they actually had a lot of people that needed, I mean a relatively lot, you know that needed relatively simple plans for row houses. So there was a market for small projects so, so yeah we...

SF: Great timing then.

BW: Yeah, so that kind of small project thing is what we got started on. You know, we did lots of row houses and then somebody, I guess, introduces you to different people. There were people coming up starting to be interested in Baltimore for projects so anyway, yeah, it just kind of—it was very organic—again we didn't have a huge plan. It just seemed like there really, you know, like I said, as nice as they were [at CD&D], I didn't feel like there was a future there. I mean there are other women that became principals, I know like, Beverly, a women that they hired—I think she maybe—I'm not even sure if we overlapped. I think I may have just left but—so I'm not saying that it wasn't possible but it just didn't feel like the right thing for me. And it seemed like given this kind of—the way things seemed to be—that starting your own firm was the way to go.

SF: Right—give you a lot more opportunity?

BW: Yes, yeah, yeah.

SF: Was there a particular culture that you two wanted to create with your firm or...

BW: Ah, you know again, I mean we were just more, just doing it. I do remember at a certain point after about five years we hired a management consultant because, you know, we thought we were doing great work and nobody was appreciating it. Like our clients just didn't seem to appreciate the great work we were doing and why not? I mean not that they, you know—I mean we had good clients, and it wasn't terrible. But anyway, it was just funny. So we hired this—a woman, Carol McConaghy. She was wonderful. And she was somehow related to Roche of Roche Dinkeloo [Architects] but anyway, I don't know if she was married to him but anyway—she sort of taught us lots of things. One of which being you know, she goes, “Ok you take your car to, you know, a place. How do you know if they do a good job? Do they make you feel good? Yeah, you don't really know if they—as long as your car just doesn't break. You know, you don't know how good a job they do. You know—you know from other things.” And so we started understanding about client management which we did not understand. We just thought it was all about doing the project. So you start learning about communicating a little bit better. And yeah,

just managing their expectations and just things that seem so obvious now but when you're starting you don't really understand, so yeah, she was really good. She gave us lots of really good basic information and really since then I don't think I've heard a lot, you know, new. I mean she really covered all the basic stuff with us so that was a big help. So, I forget what your question was again. Did I answer it?

SF: Yes, yes you did. It was about the office culture. So how did you divide your responsibilities between the two of you? Did one of you tend to gravitate towards design and the other project management or you both had your own projects?

BW: Well in the end, but actually she was better at finishing and I was better at starting, maybe is sort of an early—we really worked on them together. But I would say that was—she was a little more detail oriented and I was a little more big picture. But we didn't have separate tasks at that point, you know. We both just worked on everything and did everything and as we grew and the firm matured and we had more principals and we started giving people tasks

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—different like Diane I think was human resources and I think she did more of the business. I was like strategy and marketing. Oh, no maybe Dave was human resources, that's right. So we would divide up those kind of administrative tasks.

SF: But you tended towards being the person to try to bring in the work?

BW: Yeah, well we all did, again. I mean it was more that you were in charge of organizing it or making people think about it or, you know, it wasn't that you did it all, I mean, for all those things. So we did—I think we've always had a fairly horizontal, you know, kind of structure in that firm as well as the ones I have here now—not so hierarchical or this is your job, you know. Any good idea from anywhere is always welcome. So.

SF: So as the firm evolved then, how—how many people eventually at Cho Wilks and Benn?

BW: Oh, I think we got up to like forty at one point and then—so then, you know, it started to kind of fracture into “Dave's Studio,” “Barb's Studio” as opposed to being the collaborative structure that Diane and I, I would say started with and I frankly preferred. So that was probably part of—but I mean, I think I really decided to go on to New York just because my kids grew up and I had been in Baltimore, a place that I'd never even (laughs), you know, thought that hard about coming to, to begin with. I was just ready to move on to a different place, so yeah.

SF: What were some of the projects that you had at Cho Wilks and Benn? Are there any that come to mind?

BW: I worked a lot at the Bryn Mawr School, Barbara Chase, an amazing client. Yeah, she was—I really that's some of my work I'm most proud of—the dance studio, the library. We did the administration building just when I was leaving. You know, she was—a science addition, that was great to the elementary school. The what's his name's building, I can't think of it right now but anyway, she was a wonderful client, repeat client, and very supportive and not surprising at a girl's school. And unfortunately then she also, she left just about the time, I can't remember if it was before or after—but anyway she went off to Andover, I guess, Andover or Exeter or one of those. But anyway, so Baltimore lost a really good person but I'm sure the school went on. But so those were some of my favorite projects. I mean, I also worked on Camden Yards. That was a great experience. The light rail—Central Corridor Light Rail—we were the architects among all these engineers. That was a really great experience in big systems, you know, and I think we did a good job. Work on the Gwynns Falls Greenway. We were just a sub on that one to someone else, I can't remember, but we did a little pavilion which I'm proud of. And it was a good, fun project and an important one I think for the City. It was the first part of that greenway/bike trail. Worked on Sandtown-Winchester with the Enterprise [Foundation]. We did a lot of work with Jim [James W.] Rouse at Brown's Arcade when he first started. Our offices were there after we did it and that was one of the early downtown renovations and was obviously a thrill to work with him. I mean he was an inspiring person, just worked so hard and that he wanted at that point in his life to start a whole new company to give money back. It was great. So I had a lot of really wonderful experiences. I'm sure there's a lot more that just aren't coming to mind at the moment but...

SF: So, while you were still a partner at Cho Wilks and Benn, then you decided to go to University of Pennsylvania?

BW: Oh, yes. That was during the recession.

SF: So did you actually move to Philadelphia or were you...

BW: No, no, I just commuted because I had young—I had my children around ten, ten-ish at that point. So

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yeah, it was like we really were just twiddling our thumbs and this was early nineties and I said, “You know, we always talked about taking sabbaticals, and would you mind? Maybe I'll do it because we don't need three of us sitting here twiddling our thumbs.” So they said fine and so I went off and the two years—actually I was able to do work part-time after the first couple of semesters because you know so much more as an older student. So because I was coming back anyway—I only went up to school maybe three days a week or two or three days a week depending on—so I did do some work in the office. I didn't leave really for the whole two years, maybe I left for one semester. And then, you know things started coming back but that was definitely—I mean, Ian McHarg was there, another really inspiring person, I mean, just so

passionate and strong and funny—could tell great stories but so—they always had a point, I mean, it wasn't funny. You know, he was really wonderful guy and by that time yeah, schools had changed. I mean it was much more equal in terms of the—more diverse the whole, kind of spread of people. It was interesting being—and I had to do everything on your own after being in an office where, you know, you have a lot of support and so that was also interesting and a good experience to have to do all that again.

SF: And how about transitioning to CAD [Computer-Aided Design]? When did that occur in your office or was that before or after...

BW: CAD—I learned to do ArcInfo, I guess it was called, at Penn [University of Pennsylvania] but CAD still wasn't the dominant drawing medium then—I don't remember exactly when we—but I basically never learned it—it was because at that point, you know, I mean you're the principal and you're not really doing any of the drawings any more like when Diane and I started. And if you don't really use it a lot you're not going to learn it. So I mean I did learn at Penn how to write programs. We used it more as a GIS [Geographic Information System] kind of like for sorting, for different criteria for siting things. So you'd write a program for the kind of sorting that you wanted, you know, for what you were looking for as an asset or a liability, whatever cancel out certain parts of the site. But no I never really learned CAD or how to use more than word processing basically (laughs). So I'm a bit of a Luddite. I don't have a television. I like to use the little bit of free time that I have enjoying nature or quiet or, you know, just people, being with other people and talking, just having a good time. I don't really—I mean I enjoy you know every site, it's not like I don't watch it. I know the popular culture but I—and I enjoy it but I just don't need to have it on all the time. So...

SF: So how about balancing that work/life balance, with raising children and balancing architecture?

BW: Well, that was hard. I mean I had, again I was fairly fortunate you know, that I have—was able to support myself and have some means and have good people that would work for me to take care of my kids after school. I had some neighbors, they went to a friend's house some, you know, like every Tuesday or whatever and every Wednesday, they'd do something else, you know we sort of had a schedule. But yeah it was hard to just divide your time between—you know, Diane and I used to call it “wearing different hats” and I mean that would be with your children and family as well, as marketing verses design and all the different kinds of things you have to do and how at the beginning I probably wasn't that good at switching gears. I would say now, I'm really good at it (laughs). You know, I can switch from design mode to

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marketing mode, I mean I just know—cuz it takes a different way of thinking and at first it's kind of hard—so yeah, you get better just like anything with practice. But yeah, I definitely remember it being hard and feeling torn, you know.

SF: I don't know how many children you have but...

BW: Two.

SF: Two. Either one of them interested in architecture or landscape?

BW: No, well I mean gardening. They both like gardening. One went into graphic design in college, Sarah, the oldest one, but then she ended up like starting a nonprofit. She's much more service oriented. She basically—well she had a shop where she worked with artists to do products, that was another thing she did and then that didn't work out—the recession I think kind of killed that at one point. And then—but she basically has a history of working for nonprofits. Now she's working with a music nonprofit that teaches all kinds of people music and presents musical things and just really trained to make sure people have music in their life so that seems to be her thing. And then the other, the younger one, Lucy, is a—she got her degree as an economist with a second in dance, so a dancing economist. And then she's still doing that. She is—for a while to support herself she did tutoring to take the GRE [Graduate Record Exam]. And she did that for a lot of people here in New York. She's in New York, the other one's in Portland, Maine. They're both married and then she decided to switch to real estate but she still does dancing, she had her own dance troupe for a while—now she's more doing dance in theater so she—she was in—now I have a blank—“Angels in America” on Broadway—she was one of the shadows, she held up the left wing of the angel. So you know, she does stuff like that. She was in “Sleep No More”. She's been in some pretty good things. So I'm very proud of both of them. They both have their own thing in life and yeah, that has nothing to do with architecture (laughs). But I think they may have learned perseverance (laughs). Cuz that's one thing that really important.

SF: Especially in architecture.

BW: Well, even more in dance. She's got it even worse than we do. So, yeah.

SF: So, it's so interesting reading your different projects and your constant reference to the interface between water and land. And for example, let's see in—well in—at The Edge, you describe “at water's edge the city grid and river's ecosystem converge, mingle and clash blurring the boundaries,” and then the Pier at St. Petersburg—the interaction with the water, other projects—Tide Point “pulling the site into the community”, and then I was fascinated with St. Patrick's Island. And so there seems to be this strong affinity, going back to perhaps what you talked about earlier with water and...

BW: Yeah, I think so. I think it's also—I feel like where, you know, as urban—I mostly, I deal in urban places, but it's where you can see nature the most and people are attracted to water so I think it's a good place to try to introduce people to nature. And my goal really, especially in the early projects—but I think still, it's to get people to look harder and try to understand what's

going on—because I think especially, I as a kid was lucky enough I can walk down to the creek and I can play in it and I can move it around. Nobody was like—there were no railings or, you know, I mean, all kinds of—I can experiment basically all day long and see animals and it's very hard for people to do that these days, although you can. So, so we try to make more places for people

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to be able to interact and where you can't actually interact—can't actually go down and touch the water, that you at least—there's something about the design that helps you, maybe makes you think a little bit or go, “Hmm, why is that like that?” so that, you know, you start wondering, just like if I see a fossil. Or so we sort of try to create evidence that may have been erased through the urbanization process to maybe, to provoke thought and hopefully, you know, also maybe people like to come back and, you know, think a little more—and different places you can be and see it in a different light some times of day and stuff like that. So it's—most of our parks are not heavily programmed. You know, there's kind of a trend these days for parks to have a lot of programming—different things going on in them. Ours are more about being there and just—

SF: And that's intentional?

BW: Yeah, that's intentional, yeah.

SF: Was the access to the waterfront—was that something that drew you to New York when you were trying to decide where to open your new firm?

SF: No, I think what drew me to New York was more a sense of community with more landscape architects and architects. I mean actually I tried and was successful. In Baltimore I helped start the center [Baltimore American Institute of Architects Chapter] or [Baltimore Architecture Foundation]. I was president of the chapter for a while but I think it was actually even before I was president that—cuz I had been to Philadelphia that had a strong center. I mean, again, back then we didn't have the internet so having places with books and, you know, access to different kinds of materials and talking and lectures—all that was so much more important because you couldn't just find everything like you can now on the internet. I think it's important to remember that. So anyway, I think I was more interested in finding a place where, yeah, I felt a little more at home after the kind of experiences I had. And when I came to New York, it was wonderful. People are so open to new ideas, I felt very welcomed. I, you know, didn't feel like a weirdo, that some kind of nerd weirdo or whatever (laughs). You know, not that that stopped me, like I said before but I just—I think that's more what I was looking for. I mean, there's water everywhere, you know, I didn't need to go to New York for the water, yeah.

SF: Well, that's interesting. That most people probably wouldn't say that they came to New York for community and...

BW: Well, hmm...

SF: I think probably. I don't think people would...

BW: Equate that.

SF: Yes, and I think that's really wonderful that that's what you—

BW: I definitely think—that's what it was for me.

SF: That's what brought you here. Did you know a lot of people here before you came here?

BW: No, not really. I mean there were some. You know, a lot of people from Cornell, of course this was ages ago, had come to New York but no, none of my—I didn't have any good friends here. I mean there—so I had acquaintances and I will say that, yeah, some of those people were very helpful and very nice. I mean, I think in general coming to New York was a—was more like the Franz Vidor experience. You know, it was a great experience—people were nice and welcoming, and not what you—not what New York might have the reputation as.

SF: So you hung out your shingle. Did you originally come to Brooklyn?

BW: No actually—oh, our first office was actually in Brooklyn. Just by, well our very first office—I was still in Baltimore before I moved here—I had a desk in a friend's office. They rented us a desk and I realized very quickly that that wasn't going to work. That if I really wanted to have an office here, I had to be here—that coming up, even if it was once a week just wasn't going to cut it so that's—I mean, and I, at first, I said do you guys want to have a branch? I mean I wasn't like I had to go off on my own. But they

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weren't interested, understandably and we had a fine business going where we were and they didn't have the same desires as I did so that's why I ended up just going off on my own. They were kind enough to—I took the Tide Point project up to New York with me and also strangely enough the Constellation project which is now under construction which is like the longest—twenty years later (laughs), it's finally happening. So those two projects were—especially Tide Point because I think Constellation was at that point was kind of in a stalled—but they said it's your project, if anything ever happens to it, you can take it. So yeah, Tide Point was an active project and I just brought that up here and I started—me and Andrea—the other woman that had been with me in Baltimore and her boyfriend was up here so she wanted to move up here. So, so that was good. So it was the two of us and we—our first office was in Dumbo [Brooklyn, NY] which at that time you know, we were in a building that you had to come up in a freight elevator and it was mostly artists and warehousing still—a real loft building.

SF: So how did you go about marketing yourself in this new venture?

BW: Oh, yes, so you know people, like I said, were very friendly. So some people hired—you know, you can market to architects—which we did. So we worked for other architects as their, you know, doing the landscape on their projects, and then we did go after—we were lucky enough even to win—it wasn't the first one we went after but you start—for public projects it's these RFP's [Requests For Proposals]—so you just have to figure out how to start filling out all the forms. And of course at the beginning, the projects are ones you did someplace else so you know, but then once Tide Point got built that was a big help because—and that went pretty quick because it was a developer project so at least something was up pretty quickly so we had something to start showing in terms of waterfront. And Baltimore's waterfront, you know, was sort of known as being early, good waterfront. And I think the Tide Point project showed off nicely. So anyway, we were able to get the West Harlem Piers project which started off as a plan for the forty block area all around up there. And then it went into implementation of the park itself so that was a great, you know, we were very lucky, a very great beginning to the firm.

SGF: And so your firm's evolved and now you've worked on many, many projects all over the world, so how many people do you have now and...

BW: We have about ten, and we were up to eighteen at one point. And that was when—that was right before the crash in 2008 or whatever. That was—we also were doing a lot more architecture then. We were still doing sort of mill buildings in Providence, Rhode Island and things like that—housing. We've sort of backed away from the architecture in the sort of second—as I rebuilt the firm again after that. And we still do it and we're very proud of the Tampa building - The [Tampa] River Center, that we just did so, you know, but it's more buildings in our parks. We don't go out marketing, you know, architecture.

SF: So that—that must give you an advantage too that you can—that you can do both.

BW: I think that's interesting, actually—I think it does. It's hard to explain that to people and you would think that would be an advantage in marketing but I haven't figured out how to do it, because people think of things as being in buckets. But I will say, like for instance, we took part in the competition for the St. Pete [Petersburg] pier before we got the project there. We were working in Tampa then on that project, that park and I put in a proposal to be one of the teams for the competition and we got selected as one of the teams—five teams competing. So they pay you to do a little scheme of how you'd do the project and I think because we were landscape architects—we entered as an architect because it was about

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what are you going to do to this building. We have this building at the end of the pier. Are—you had to say if you were going to renovate it or build a new building—that was—they wanted to know right from the beginning. So we said we're going to renovate it. And then the budget was

very important to them. We had reviews as we were going along. And at a certain point, I just said, “If you really are serious about the budget like you say you are, you cannot afford this project. I’ve done a lot of pier buildings and it’s very expensive and if this is all the money you have, you cannot do a nice building and make anything else, like a nice way to get there, you know.” The building’s like way out a thousand feet and between, right now, all they have is parking lots and a horrible road. I mean, like why would anybody go out there? You know, you certainly would never walk. And so with my experience, I was saying you really want to create an attraction, you know. I mean that’s not a public thing—a restaurant at the end of a pier—I mean okay, so people can go up on the roof or something but what you want is an attraction. So I said don’t do a building, do a park and I made a big lagoon. I cut away a lot of the land and cuz all they had was, you know, parks that were lawn and trees—like very boring kind of parks that had no kind of diversity. You couldn’t tell what the ecology of the area was, I mean it just looked like anywhere else except the trees were a little more exotic. So we—our proposal totally broke the rules—and we didn’t have to worry as an architect that we would be giving away the project to somebody else. We were free to say what we thought it really should be. So yeah, so we made a beautiful lagoon. We put a little folly out at the end. We still built—you know, we built the pier, you know, put something out there that you could go to, and have fun and get a view and all that but—we put the building on the land, with a cafe, and all that, that was more in the middle so, you know, it was more centrally located. We got disqualified. But it was also wonderful because they have the sunshine laws so the whole deliberation of the jury was totally public in the public space, people were allowed to be there. We were watching it upstairs on TV. So they’re getting to the point where you can tell they’re like talking about us and how we didn’t provide that. And we’re going, “But we did, but we did.” But of course, they can’t hear us. We just didn’t provide their way—like our nature museum—well the whole thing was a nature museum, you know. It didn’t fit their descriptions of how they wanted it and so they said, “Okay, we’re going to disqualify it.” And all of the sudden, the doors of the chamber—they were having it in the council chambers—broke open and this twenty-something comes running in and going, “You can’t, you can’t.” We have no idea who he is, you know, “You can’t do that. This is for our grandchildren, don’t disqualify...” And I mean, we’re going, Who is this guy? This is wonderful, you know. Like you couldn’t have planned—I mean, it was totally amazing. Nothing like that has ever happened to me before, you know, that—they wrote songs about it. I mean, we had this whole fan club. It was totally amazing. So that was very inspiring that—and it was this whole fight between—sort of a power struggle really between the older people of town that had traditionally kind of been in charge. But St. Pete was attracting a lot of younger people—I mean good, because you know, otherwise...

SF: Right, it has to go on.

BW: Right, so anyway like I said, we did get disqualified. They didn’t listen to the—it was a fireman that came—yeah—but it was a wonderful thing that I’ll never forget in terms of, you know, people do understand what you’re trying to do and it had a real impact. I mean they were—the whole community was just so involved in the whole project. I mean, and they still are, I mean it’s a very active—which you know that’s just so wonderful too—and I would say—I mean

and I love community involvement, I mean, because to me it's really—and most places are pretty involved which is why I love to do public work. You're doing stuff for them, I mean that's why you're there and, you know, you of course want to bring some ideas forward but if they don't like them then, you know, then that's the way it is.

SF: Did they then participate in saying they wanted the

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beach area, they wanted the docking for...

BW: Well, uh, well there was already a beach there, I mean well what happened, so—so the pier—the people that won, won. And that project then sort of became cast in stone. Then we were later hired to—so the pier though it started not of the town—you know, there is sort of this piece of land where we were cutting the lagoon through actually—that has parking on it, that has a street on it and then the pier kind of goes out from there, way out. So—so suddenly the city realized that if they the pier that they hired the people that designed that. And then they had their nice downtown which has like rows of shops along the water. But that all the sudden they had nothing in between and that that was going to be a big problem because, you know, there's this gap and who's going to want to walk across it, right. So they put out another RFP and that's what they hired us to do. So we became the connector piece and so this was fixed—this is fixed. And so we had to have another—a year process talking to people about what they wanted in between — so that's—that's what we did.

SF: Did you ever see that fireman again?

BW: Yes, I asked him out for coffee. I was like who are you? I wanted to know. Yes, he's since kind of gone off traveling and I still see his Instagram account and off to all these different places and stuff. But um, yeah, no it was, of course, I had to meet him (laughs). And so it was, you know—we really—I enjoy that kind of getting involved with what's going on in the community and helping it change for the better, you know. I mean, I still look back now—that project's almost finished and go, Gosh if they'd just done the lagoon—I mean how—how amazing would that have been? We have a stormwater pond—that's not the same though. The lagoon was actually going to be tidal and really brackish. Yeah, this is freshwater and—which is good too. Birds—still making a more diverse place. And yeah, we moved stuff around, we got rid of the street. It's much more pedestrian. We had a little fight with how many cars they need—with the city, you know, but at a certain point you just have to go on. So yeah, it's going to be great. It's going to open in May.

SF: Now how about the big question of climate change and how you have to deal with that in terms of educating people and reflecting it in your projects.

SF: Right, well I think it's really hard. I mean again, I just think the whole way—no matter how hard—I mean this is something I've been working on lately myself because it's not just about doing the project. It's about the maintenance also—like what happens as the project continues. And I think the—I mean there's, there's you know, there's the things about the water but I'm talking about super big picture. Landscapes change, the climate's changing—different trees, different, you know, all things are—things are going to change. If we make landscapes that are really gardens that aren't allowed to change, in other words, that you don't allow seeds to drop and other things to come in or, you know, we're not—you know, we're going to have to tear it out in fifty years and go okay, it's climate change, we have to put in something else—or twenty years or you know, whatever. I mean, so I'm thinking—my thoughts on that have evolved to the point where we need to let nature have a lot more agency—that we can't do everything—we have to let things happen and it's gonna mean that—

SF: You have to let nature be nature.

BW: Right, so that people don't like the way that looks a lot of times, you know. It's how do we manage that? How do we get people involved? How do people, you know—I think it gets back to that kind of wanting people to engage in the place and really understand it, not just think of it as the backdrop for their activities, you know, that it's a shared place with all of the other animals and plants that live there. So I just don't think—so there's going to be—that's a hard one. That's what I'm working on right now. How do we—or our thinking about it—trying to really figure that out and so I'm going to be doing some speaking

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things, the book that we're putting out is called *Dynamic Geographies*. It's looking back at our twenty years with sort of saying, Okay well this is a wonderful much-loved park but, you know, does it actually—it doesn't ever change, you know. What, what—like what are we thinking, you know? How are we—so it's being critical of what we're doing as well and saying—I mean, it's hard because of the way maintenance things are set up. You always meet with the maintenance people and this is what they do and so you have to change a lot of the thinking. It's really a different way of thinking and then when you think that way then you can say, Okay well then, yes, let's let that happen and we'll let this change a little. I mean you can still have areas—what I'm thinking trying to put forward now—is that, you know, like management—it shouldn't just be all one—even in a small park—you shouldn't think of it as all being managed the same way. But you know, this particular piece of lawn for humans can be managed a certain way but the place right next to it that's a planting bed should be managed totally differently, it's not for humans. And I've done a lot of research into why people don't like that and there's, there's—I guess there's a feeling of safety. If something looks uncared for they also think it's not safe. So how do we—flowers sort of mean that it's cared for, you know, so maybe we have to make sure that there's you know—that it's not totally nature. We can still augment it and make it seem cared for but—but that it's going to be a different aesthetic and that how do we get people to accept that? Because that's really been hard—some of the projects we've been working on—

while the lagoon they hated—I mean people would say oh, well what are, you know, once in a while. It's like they're you know, afraid of—

SF: Afraid of the wild.

BW: Yeah once it comes in and then we don't like it, you know, how do we get rid of it?

SF: It's the front lawn mentality of everything has to be...

BW: Right, they just want to control it. I mean it's very strong in all different kinds of places and, you know, we also worked so that was— St. Pete a certain kind of community. In Detroit it was a whole different kind of community. Again it was thought of as a scary thing and not kept, you know, like there because there's so much people being abandoned—they didn't like it also for that. And so, yeah, but I really just believe that if we don't let trees start growing themselves, you know, then we're going to be in big trouble. We need to let more things just grow. And more places—we need more, more trees. I keep looking around and go, Well why don't we have trees there, you know? I mean, now, when you start thinking that way you can start seeing tons—

SF: They're helping us breathe.

BW: Yes, they're helping us breathe and you can start seeing lots of places where they could be if we really valued them, you know, and let them do their own thing. Cuz also you, I mean, have a beautiful stand of trees but if you don't let any babies grow you're not going to have trees in, you know, twenty more years there unless you plant little babies that start all over again. So I mean—

SF: So when you, when you show a plan for a particular site do you show it—this is the way it will look now but then this is how it will look in twenty years if you let this happen?

BW: Oh, we—we try. I mean again, yes, I mean, we do. In fact, in a funny way sometimes people ask—the client asks for that even—because also if you're planting new things they want people to understand they're not getting what you show in the rendering with the beautiful big trees. You're going to actually get this and it will look like this, you know. So yeah, we do try to represent that but, you know, it's still, I think it's a challenge for everybody. I mean for landscape architects to really sort of re-conceptualize how we think about design—what design means if it's not just a point in time—if it's really a process kind of and we're part of it and we collaborate, you know, with other forces that are around us.

SF: So do you go back after your projects are constructed just to see how

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people—just to sit and observe how people...?

BW: O yes, yeah, yeah and it's really interesting. And to see how they're maintained. I mean, sometimes I'm more happy with how the people are using them than how the maintenance is going. Sometimes you want to just do it yourself, you know. But yeah, like we have—there was a period of—I would say really some bad maintenance at one of our parks and actually some volunteer trees actually came up, you know, which I was like, Wow, this is maybe kinda cool that this happened. But on the other hand all of the understory got trampled and so there's a lot of bad things that happened too. And so you know, it's a double edged sword. We had another project like our St. Patricks project which is all based on ecology and the water moving through and very discrete places for people, you know, carved out in that project and—but unfortunately you forget that—so the people that we designed it with left, before the project was even over, so they're not in the organization any more and so just, you know, at the tail end of construction, new people came in, they just sort of see it finished—big opening—and, you know, and they're great, it's very successful but they didn't really understand what the design was really based on. And I just came back because it was just in a magazine and I met the writer there and was walking around with him and all the sudden we see this cleared area that was right in the middle of a mature forest.

SF: I read that article, yeah.

BW: And I'm going, "Oh my God, what happened?" And you know, I suddenly realized that—because these were great people, they're trying to—you know, they did the park—they want everything to be wonderful but they just didn't have the slightest idea and they thought, Oh, this is the easy way to get there because that had been a path. We were trying to let it grow. We had done all of this planting to—but they just plowed all this construction—and then had them smooth all the land out afterward which was, oh, my God, like the wrong, total wrong thing ecologically. So actually I'm just finishing up a maintenance plan that I'm sending them that explains all the ecology and...

SF: Because at St. Patricks it's designed to actually flood, as storms come in, it's actually designed to flood and then...

BW: Well, a lot of our parks are designed to flood. People are a little afraid of that too. Like oh, we can let the water come up? It's okay? "Like what are you doing about the flood?" "Well, nothing, we're just going to let it flood." "What?" I mean, unless your park is supposed to provide flood protection which St. Patricks couldn't—it's an island in the river. I mean, you could—it had been divided from the water, the way it was before, it had been—the edge had been sort of fortified so that water didn't come through it very often but so we opened up the edges and let the water come through more. But not every project has to provide flood protection, or can, you know, provide flood protection. Sometimes it's better to just let them flood so, yeah. I mean and as long as you build them out of things—like don't use a lot of styrofoam because it'll start floating. Some people use a lot of styrofoam under paving and stuff—bad idea.

SF: Learned from experience or watching good...

BW: Luckily we didn't do it but when [Hurricane] Sandy came there were a lot of parks that their paving all popped up because of the flood and went floating away.

SF: Interesting. So where do you see yourself now in your career?

BW: Well that's what I'm trying now to decide. Actually, it's kind of the next twenty years. I've been in these twenty year segments. But I think it's about talking about what we were just talking about, trying to—I'm not sure how's the best way to do that—but being more of a speaker, being a little more—I'm kind of a private person and have never, you know, even really promoted our firm that much really as long as we have enough work. I'm not out there caring if I'm well known or anything, no, but I think I'm more interested now in telling the story of people and how we need to live differently and design things differently. So I don't know if that means, maybe I'll try a little bit of teaching. I have taught from time to time in the past—or just try to speak more, you know.

SF: Or writing—your first book *Structuring Confluence*...

BW: Yeah, the second one will be coming out this fall. This is part of it up here, hanging

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up. Yeah, I'm actually—next week the graphic designer is going to have the first version of the whole book—next week, so which I'm sure will need lots of changes, you know. We give—we give them the text and pictures but they don't use all the pictures. Did you pick the right ones? Are they in the right order? Is the right one big is the right one small, you know? So it's a lot of—the text doesn't really change but how, you know, it gets put together. So that's what we're working on and yeah, then they'll print it starting probably in June or something and then we'll get it in early fall.

SF: So this is—you've spent a lot of time on that as an education tool or more as a legacy for your firm or both?

BW: Yeah, it was really for me, I think almost—because it was a thinking process—just sort of what you were asking about. And I mean it took me a year really to figure out what I wanted to write about, you know, like what am I, what's important now, what should I be? So what, I'm looking back at twenty years, what did I learn, what are we doing, what—and so I started by looking through my projects and reflecting on them— sort of realize this thing about—that most of them are static, they're not really dynamic like a real landscape and—I mean some of them are like St. Patricks Island, you know. Yeah, I guess there are small areas within it that are static and always going to look the same—playgrounds, you know—yeah, so that's fine I mean, you know,

but the rest of it is changed, can be its own thing. So I started thinking about how—why couldn't that happen in more places. I mean, that's easier there because it's in a floodway but why can't birds just let seeds fall and they grow like they would normally anywhere. Why can't—why can't these things just happen like they would if we weren't around? So anyway that's what—so I started—yeah, it takes awhile when—then I finally made it into three essays. Yeah, starting with—and still going through our projects—what I was explaining, why the early ones, the experience and the awareness and—so and then some things that are maybe more social. Social diversity is also biodiversity, is important. I mean, a lot of this is about biodiversity. You know, there is such a depletion of birds—I mean just everything, right. I mean we just have so much left, you know, and if we don't just let it—you know we're cutting out so many things, so but there's, you know, we also need for other reasons our own of social diversity and then the biodiversity so I—those—and then the last one is more about dynamic systems and, you know, real, real wilding and making the—letting nature have agency and being part of the collaboration.

SF: So what do you see as your legacy?

BW: Ah, I don't know. I don't know, I mean I don't know—as you see, I've never really had a big plan. I just kind of go by...

SF: But it's worked. It's nice that you're open to new ideas and new adventures.

BW: I think that I listen a lot. I'm pretty—I take a lot in so, you know, I think I'm trying to be aware of what's going on and what might be a problem, what we're not doing. So yeah, I hope I can help people, younger people, but I mean I'm involved in the Beverly Willis Architectural Foundation. You know she was a—you should talk to her [Beverly Willis].

SF: Well, I know that they [Beverly Willis Architectural Foundation] did the movie and everything [on Beverly Willis]. All of this [project] will go to her foundation too. But—I so but maybe, yes. Okay.

BW: and the Design Trust [for Public Space]. I think people get fixated like even this one I'm doing in June—the guy that was in charge, he's like okay—so climate change—so what are we doing about rising seas? And I'm like, you know, it's really just not about—even though I mostly do waterfronts, you know—it's about trees and biodiversity and it's not really just about rising waterfronts. I mean, you know, that's—I mean that's

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important but it's kind of not the big problem in a way. I mean it causes us a problem but it's—and you know, it will certainly change things but if we don't let—it's really the carbon and the—you know, that's causing the heat and getting rid of that and so anyway. So it's just like putting the right frame around things. For a while, we were going to call my book “Reframing”. I had a

whole—went through a whole reframing. I wrote all—I mean, I basically threw all of that out in the end and started over with *Dynamic Geographies*. But yeah, I was thinking of calling it—you know, doing—it's a...

SF: Both of them—both titles are effective.

BW: Yeah, you have to decide how to best put things forward. And yeah, I think it could have come out of that but for some reason it was hitting a dead end and I went another way. So but yeah, that was how I sort of started thinking more about reframing and it was just too hard to—I guess somehow it was easier to reflect on my—it was easier to tie together my work with it through the way I'm doing it now and make it into a better story.

SF: Do you think it would be most effective educating architects or the general population or students?

BW: I think all of the above. I mean you really—I mean I think even landscape architects. That's what I guess I'm trying to say—here I am somebody who thinks they're doing a good job and is dealing with climate change but we're not. It's just like we really have to go, you know, see it so differently to really make a change. So I'm going to hopefully start with our own profession and then, you know, of course I mean everybody. But I think we have to start with us.

SF: Well you have such a passion for nature and it just comes through...

BW: Yeah, no it's sad, it really makes me, you know, I just go out and I think, Oh that poor tree. Doesn't anybody know seeing. And then I go to my home town and they're just dying—trees are dying everywhere. I mean if you really look, I mean it's awful. I mean they're just—uh—so—I mean and that's just a symptom and it's one I can see, you know. There's—I also, the things they talk about, about yeah, remember when your windshield was full of insects—like when I was a kid, you could barely see out of the, you know, because your car was constantly full of insects but now, never. I mean it's never a problem. You know, just—so I mean the—but I have a pretty long time to reflect back on. But, I mean now you can see the big trees all flopped over. I mean, it's not that hard so I would think people might wonder why that's happening. I mean, yes, they're old and maybe they have to die sometime but there's an awful lot of dead ones right now—I mean now—so seems like a visible thing to talk about.

SF: Well, are there any other projects or—that you'd like to talk about or stories you'd like to include?

BW: Well, let me think. That's hard always when you say that. I think we hit on most things. Nothing pops to mind. I mean I do want to—I probably haven't said enough about all the help I get from everybody in the office. You know, these things are not something you can do on your own. I mean these are always all office projects and the kinds of things we do changes with who we have. I think I said, the kind of projects we're doing has kind of changed over time. We've

also gone away from Dubai and China and, you know, things that we did before the crash. We just—that was sort of a purposeful—we just stopped doing those kind of things now. Either they're too far away—they're not as—I mean they were interesting because the kind of scale you were working at but they were—you know they're not as rewarding. You don't get the interaction of people. It's much more remote.

SF: Well,

[01:20:00]

SF: So one more question—would you change—looking back on either the architecture or landscape architecture professions—is there anything you would want to change about them?

BW: Well, besides from what I already talked about. I think architecture is—I mean they're kind of—they're doing some good stuff with the carbon neutral building, you know—I mean the way they're thinking about things but it's still—it's very isolated. It's all about their buildings. They're kind of a little too—I would kind of would say, “Listen you guys, you know...” (laughs)

SF: You mean more focused on the LEED [Leadership in Environmental and Energy Design] rating and...

BW: Yeah, well and which is all really good. I mean like within the building we're making how are we—well I guess they're looking at systems and that they're seeing where the materials come from more. I mean they're looking more at the [supply] chains that way but they're still very object focused. So I would like it if they would see things—or I think—or maybe they're not the right profession. Maybe that's fine. But I think there has—maybe it's urban design has to come back or something so that there's more of a besides—or landscape architects could just take over that kind of bigger picture thinking, you know. But I think for a while it was being done more by architects. I don't think that's what they're—they're doing some big picture thinking but it's—but it's still very much about their buildings as opposed to about how we, you know—how we live in a bigger way. So, I think that's I guess...

SF: As to what landscape architects can provide them?

BW: Yeah, I think the relationship between the two is still—kind of very different. They're both talking at very different things, maybe it's even gotten more different, if anything, you know, which is sort of odd I feel like because, as somebody whose studied both of them, there are so many relationships. I don't know. So I haven't thought a lot about that but since you asked.

SF: So let's talk about—you've received two great honors, well deserved, from a lot of hard work with being elected as a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects first and then a Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects.

BW: It's quite an honor. I'm very honored by both. So the first one was while I was in Baltimore and Harold Adams from RTKL was the one who sponsored me. I had been at that point—maybe I was just becoming the president of our local chapter. And, but I remember going down there—I had a small baby at the time—and so I flew down—maybe it was the way back—flew down and back with Harold and on the way back he had to hold her because I somehow—which never happens to me—but got airsick. It was like the only time in my whole life but he was just so, so sweet and nice and patient about that. But yeah, no it was—it felt—I think there were several mentors in Baltimore that were very nice to me, men, you know, who I'm trying to remember now—it was the one who was president right before me. His name was Mark something—I'm not very good at names, I can picture him exactly and he's the one who nominated me to be president because I'd been on a lot of the committees. And Harold Adams for some reason. Again, I never worked at RTKL, but he was nice for some reason and then Marty Milspaugh, somebody—he always was trying to get me involved in ULI [Urban Land Institute] and I said Marty—he was always trying to get me to speak but I was a little afraid of doing that so I always kind of backed away from that. But those three people and many others were very, very helpful and I guess were as close as I got to having mentors in Baltimore. Then the ASLA—how did that happen?

[01:25:00]

I don't remember who. Well, Mark Johnson was the one that—I think he was also one the also the people that write a recommendation but I don't remember how I got sponsored originally here—here in New York. Maybe because I came later. But I do remember—I think because I started as an architect it took me a long time going to landscape architecture things to actually feel like I was part of that community, not because of anything on their part, they were always very nice. But I think you know, you grow up with people and you—when I went back to landscape school I was older and so people in your generation don't remember you from school in landscape because you weren't around. So it's just a little bit of a mismatch at first but I think now, I've overcome that. I still feel part of the architects. They're still—they still accept me—so I feel very honored yes to be on both of their Fellow's list.

SF: And for both of those you had to prepare an extensive background on your projects, your speaking engagements...

BW: Yes, yes, which I still have. I still keep it updated because once you do that, you've got this huge list and so I just, every time I do something I add it to it so that I now will always have that. But yeah, no again, many people helped me do that too. I mean, none of these things take—all of these things in architecture and landscape architecture are so complicated. And it's like hardly anything you do on your own, so I'm very thankful to all the people that helped me.

SF: But what an accomplishment—in both architecture and landscape architecture. There probably aren't too many people who have...

BW: I just got a email from Susanna Drake. And she says she's joining the club. She just became—she was a Landscape Fellow first and now she's becoming an Architecture Fellow. So she did it in the reverse order so she said we need to go have a celebratory drink and find anybody else that's in the club.

SF: Well that's a nice club to be a member...

BW: There are a few.

SF: Thank you. Thank you so much for sharing your journey and...

BW: Yes, I can't wait to hear other people that you talk to. Yeah, it'll be really fascinating.

End of Interview

[01:28:04]