Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Beverly Willis
BEVERLY WILLIS: A LIFE IN ARCHITECTURE

Interviews conducted by
Victor Geraci, PhD
in 2008

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Beverly Willis
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Interview #1: October 15, 2008
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Geraci: Today is Wednesday, October 15, 2008, and we are in the New York City office of Beverly Willis. This interview with Ms. Willis is being conducted by Victor Geraci, Associate Director of the University of California Berkeley's Regional Oral History Office. And the interview is part of the Beverly Willis oral history series of interviews to document the life and work of artist, architect, urbanist, lecturer, and writer Beverly Willis. Funding for these interviews comes from the Beverly Willis Architecture Foundation. Beverly Willis is a FAIA [Fellow of the American Institute of Architecture] whose design achievements, development of new technology, and philanthropic efforts have left a lasting legacy for architects, urban planners, and students of public policy. Ms. Willis has played a major role in the development of many creative and professional concepts important to American cities and American architecture.

Now we get to start. And Bev, first of all, thank you very much for the opportunity to interview you and to get to be able to do this. What I like to do in recording anyone's story of their life is to start at the beginning. I think we are all the sum accumulation of our entire lives and how we get to where we get to certain points and junctures. And so let's start off with Beverly Willis, the young girl, maybe a little bit about your mom and dad, your family, where you're from.

01-00:01:39
Willis: Good morning, Vic, it's really great to meet you and welcome you to New York and—

Geraci: Well, thank you.

01-00:01:47:00
Willis: —this lovely Indian summer day.

Geraci: I'd say it's a beautiful day.

01-00:01:50
Willis: It is gorgeous. I was born in Oklahoma, in 1928. My memory of some of my very early childhood is fairly vague. My parents were divorced when I was six, and my mother, who was a nurse, was left responsible for the care of the children. And inasmuch as it was the Depression, she felt that she couldn't really take care of us. And in the meantime, my father had disappeared [laughs] somewhere and was not paying child support. So she placed us in an orphanage. So I spent the next seven years of my life, pretty much, in various institutions and foster homes.

Geraci: Now, you had a brother, also.

01-00:02:50
Willis: Yes, I had a brother, right. And he was two-and-a-half years younger. He was about three and a half at that particular point. I was old enough to be able to deal with this probably fairly successfully, in retrospect. But it really was damaging to my brother. He was just really too young.

Geraci: To understand.

01-00:03:14
Willis: So we lived different lives. So where to go from here?

Geraci: It's somewhat impressive to me, in that many great people that, personally, I have interviewed have had a very similar story. Either single-parent families or families that really went through crisis. And did this make you a stronger person?

01-00:03:44
Willis: Oh, absolutely. I learned at a very early age to take care of myself. And I think, also dealing with institutions was something that I had to learn, starting at the age of six. So I think in more of a normal family life, children are protected from the vicissitudes of institutions. Because, in an institution, you have multiple authorities controlling multiple aspects of your life. And you have a set of very rigid rules. You have to navigate those rules, you have to try to have some sort of individuality, within a strict environment. But on the other hand, it teaches you discipline, it teaches you [laughs] to meet schedules. When I was at St. Joseph's Academy, one of my jobs, because we were working students at that time, was that I had to ring the angelus at the church. So I had to ring the angelus at six AM. in the morning, at twelve noon, at six PM. at night. And I had to be exactly on time, which really instilled in me a passion for punctuality, which I've carried with me my entire life.

Geraci: So this starts you off on this whole approach to life, you need to be disciplined; you need to be regimented. But how do you maintain independence in that type of system?

01-00:05:22
Willis: Well, I think I was born a rebel, actually. And the one memory I do have of my father was before the orphanage. He had a small company, which was called the Willis Tool Company, which provided supplies to derricks and oil rigs. And he and my mother had two homes; one in Oklahoma City, but they would also live in a shack among the derricks in the oil fields. So one of my memories is that, because I could very often outdo the boys my age, they would bet on me to climb the derrick faster than the boys [chuckles] and that sort of thing. And it was a little thing, but it gave me a lot of confidence that even before I was at the age of six, I could be a strong competitor with boys. And I had come out a winner. Little experiences like that were very reassuring to later on when I was working in a profession where women were rare.

Then the other thing that happened that was very reassuring to me was when I was six. The first place I was at was Sunbeam Home, and we went to public school. And I was elected captain of the volleyball team. I've been athletic all my life and I enjoy sports. But that was a very important moment for me. So those were two positive childhood memories I carried with me. I could build on that. I knew that I could do things, and that gave me, I think, the courage to push the envelope. And believe me, later on, if anything went wrong, I was always accused of doing it, because people would say, "She's the only one who'd have the guts to do this." So I was often blamed for things that I never did. But that was fine; I have no problem with that.

Geraci: But that comes from an early age. It's instilled that you are independent. And I can image being in an orphanage with so many kids and so many rules, that had to be a challenge. And you were old enough to really understand what was happening.

01-00:08:13
Willis: Well, and kids will be kids. You're always going to try to bend the rules or sidestep them or something like that. And then you get caught and you pay the price, and then you do it again. [laughs]

Geraci: You smile and you go back and do it again. Now, while you were in the orphanage, did your education include art or architectural type things? At an early age, did you have any interest in those pursuits?

01-00:08:46
Willis: No, I didn't, which is really very curious. I was preoccupied with this concept of freedom. I wanted to escape institutional living. That preoccupied me. About that time, I read a book called *The Girl of the Limberlost*, which was a very popular children's book. It had a major impact on me. It was about a girl who had not exactly the same family situation, but something similar. She was rejected by her mother, and her father was dead, so she had to figure out a way of getting ahead. And she had this idea of collecting butterflies and selling them, and earning her own money. And that gave her an opportunity to buy her own clothes. And then she had to deal with the children in school, who would ostracize her because she didn't have nice enough clothes or that sort of thing. That was a very inspirational book for me. And I think if you go to the bookstore, you could probably still find it today.

Geraci: Do you know who the author is?

01-00:10:20
Willis: Gene Stratton-Porter.

When I was a senior in high school, I still didn't really know what I wanted to do, and a teacher said to me, "Why don't you enroll in engineering?" Because I was good at math, I was good at science. And of course, she didn't mention that women didn't graduate from engineering.

Geraci: Now, this was a woman mentor.

01-00:11:01
Willis: Yes, this was a woman teacher in high school. So, not knowing that women didn't enroll in engineering, I arrived at Oregon State University and enrolled in engineering. And incidentally, there were two other women in engineering who went on and graduated. And they were the first women ever to graduate from Oregon State University as engineers.

Geraci: Now, what years are we talking about here?

01-00:11:38
Willis: This would've been in 1945. No, wait a minute, I'm sorry. 1949.

Geraci: Okay, so post-World War II.

01-00:11:47
Willis: Yes. I started college in 1945.

Geraci: And that's Oregon State. Why'd you choose Oregon State?

01-00:11:56
Willis: Well, because my mother was living in Portland, Oregon, and I had graduated from Franklin High School in Portland, Oregon.

Geraci: Oh, so you did get back with your mom, then.

01-00:12:07
Willis: Yes, actually, when I was around twelve, thirteen.

Geraci: Well, that makes sense then that you went there. But that is an unusual scenario, in that women were not encouraged into math and science.

01-00:12:24
Willis: Well, it's not, in a sense, so unusual, given the period of history. I really benefited, because I was a teenager during World War II. And during World War II, Uncle Sam put on a national public relations campaign to encourage women to join the workforce. You've seen the famous Rosie-the-Riveter posters, "You Can Do It." The government mandated that all women from eight to eighty would have to go to night school to learn to be an electrician, to do carpentry; to learn Morse code. In those days, you had machines that you tapped for Morse code. And we learned about semaphores, the sorts of things that you needed to learn for survival, in case we were invaded. Because for a while, the government really thought the country was going to be invaded. And in a sense, we were, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. So I learned all sorts of manual skills when I was in high school, at night school. Which meant that I had hands-on experience that most men and women simply don't get until later in life.

Geraci: So you were learning woodworking?

01-00:13:57
Willis: Well, I made radio systems. I took a crystal rock and I could wire it. I actually made my own radio, for example. And in the process, I learned wiring. And I learned to weld, I learned to rivet, I learned all sorts of skills.

Geraci: Rosie-the-Riveter skills.

01-00:14:20
Willis: Rosie the Riveter. [they laugh] It was very real in those days.

Geraci: Well, the only problem being that as the war ends, then, women are encouraged to leave the workforce.

01-00:14:33
Willis: Yes, that is, in fact, what happened. But it happened, I think, over a five-year period. It just wasn't all at once. When I was enrolled, I was one of 200 women in a class of 2,000. And in this class of 2,000, the men's ages ranged from twenty-three to fifty-five. And I was seventeen, like most of the other women, and we were head to head, competing with grown men. Experienced men, men who had learned a lot of skills through their military service.

Geraci: So that could've been a down side to the GI Bill, then, is it's bringing back older— Older students tend to be much more focused.

01-00:15:25
Willis: Yes. And so those of us that did enroll in college in those days were under intense pressure to compete with these very mature people. Socially, it was a lot of fun, because I could have a breakfast date, a luncheon date, a dinner date, seven days a week. There were few of us and a lot of them.

Geraci: A lot of them. [laughter]

01-00:15:58
Willis: And I've always enjoyed parties and having fun.

Geraci: So the odds were in your favor.

01-00:16:03
Willis: Definitely. One of the few times in my life.

Geraci: You left that program after a couple of years, though.

01-00:16:11
Willis: Yes, I did. I was bored with engineering and I didn't know what I wanted to do. And the irony, of course, was that I was scared. And I can't explain it. I have no idea of why I was scared to take an art class. I decided to take a journalism class because that was [laughs] close to art. Don't ask me why; I have absolutely no idea. But the journalism part was really very good because

I became one of the editors of the newspaper. I wrote a column called "Willy-Nilly." Got myself in a lot of trouble with the administration. You would expect that, right? [Geraci laughs] But anyway, I learned that I didn't really have the skill to be a good writer, even though I had a couple of articles published in the *Portland Oregonian* newspaper. I knew that wasn't the direction I wanted to go. And not knowing what else to do, I just simply dropped out.

~~So~~ I worked in Portland, Oregon for a short while. I went to work for a lithography company called Bushong Lithography And this was the first time in my life that I met an artist. I had never met an architect at that time. There weren't that many architects around. The artist worked in the graphics department of the printing company, and they prepared paste-ups and drawings for advertisers and people who wanted brochures and that type of thing. I was fascinated with that, and I spent all my free time in the graphics department, and I learned how that process worked. Then I decided to go to San Francisco. I didn't have much of a rationale for going to San Francisco.

Geraci: I was just going to ask, why San Francisco?

01-00:18:40
Willis: Well, Portland, at that time, was a very small, parochial city. There were very few activities within the town that attracted me at all. And I had heard these wonderful things about San Francisco, all the different activities and things going on. So I thought, well, I'll try San Francisco. It was just an arbitrary decision, actually. So I moved to San Francisco and I got a job in an advertising agency, [chuckles] doing these paste-ups.

Geraci: Past experience.

01-00:19:22
Willis: I had observed people doing that kind of work. I had never done that. But this, of course, is the sort of thing I'm willing to do—I'm willing to say, "I can do something," even though I haven't done it. And I have, usually, the ability to do it successfully, once I set my mind to it. So I said, "Oh, I can do that." So that was my first job in San Francisco. But at that point, I began to become very much aware of the fact that obviously, I didn't know very much about art. So I enrolled in night school at the San Francisco Art Institute, where I studied for a couple of years, actually. And a very interesting story, if I can digress for a moment.

Geraci: Please do.

01-00:20:23
Willis: In art school, you usually are seated on a bench. And here's your paper, and you draw like this. And months went by, and I couldn't do a thing, drawing like this. And finally, the teacher said, "Why don't you stand up, and why don't you put your paper flat on a table? Stand up, and see what happens

then." And it was like a miracle. Because doing it that way, I made these incredibly beautiful drawings. That was really exciting. And so I began to immerse myself. And I started a series of watercolors of San Francisco Bay scenes, for the most part. At that point, I lived on Telegraph Hill and had these incredible views, and I watched the incredible changes in the water from day to day, or from the gray to the sunset to the sunrise. And it was just gorgeous. You, being a Californian and a San Franciscan, know how really beautiful those views are.

I had a one-person show at an art gallery in San Francisco. And at that point, San Francisco had practically no art galleries. And so I had this show. And almost everybody commented on how Oriental my work looked. I had a couple of Chinese friends who attended, and they said how Buddhist it looked. And I had never heard of Buddhism, [chuckles] never heard of the Orient; I was a girl from Oklahoma. So I thought, this is really strange. What am I doing that causes this to happen? Because I had absolutely no idea. So that motivated me to go back to college. And I chose the University of Hawaii because in my mind, it was close to the Orient. Again, at that time in the United States, there were very few schools that had Asian philosophy or Oriental art history. And the two that were better known were both in the Midwest of the United States. No way [laughs] was I going to go back to the Midwest!

Geraci: You'd left Oklahoma, you're not going back.

01-00:23:11
Willis: I'd been there, done that. So I went to Hawaii and I enrolled in the University of Hawaii. And that whole experience transformed my life. Number one, Jean Charlot was there. And Jean Charlot, as you know, is a very famous fresco painter. And a tremendous, wonderful teacher. I apprenticed with Jean as a fresco painter. And I did two or three frescoes later on in Honolulu. Then I had an incredible teacher of Oriental art, history and philosophy, Gustav Ecke. That's Gustav, but it's E-C-K-E. And I Googled him recently, just out of curiosity, and found out that he was one of the world's foremost authorities on Chinese furniture. [laughs] Which I had no way of knowing. But he was a very exciting teacher. He was passionate about all things Buddhist and Asian. He had gone to China as a graduate student, a PhD. He was German. He said to me later, "All Germans get PhDs." I'll always remember that. [laughs] And actually, he came to Hawaii and he married the young woman who was one of the remaining princesses of the Ming Dynasty. And that was when Mao was taking over and many people were fleeing China. I think it was a marriage of convenience, but it did get her into the United States, which I think was really key.

01-00:25:26 There were two women who were auditing Jean Charlot's class, and they opened so many doors for me. One was an eighty-year-old woman, Louise Dillingham. And the Dillingham family was one of the big five that

dominated Honolulu. The other was a younger woman—she was in her fifties—Nesta Obermer, who was the daughter of an English diplomat and had grown up in the courts of Europe. And so between the two women, no matter who was who in the world, they all came through Honolulu, and they were hosted by these two women. They invited me to their parties, so I met some incredible people. But probably what was most important to me, was that I made an English friend whose husband was the naval attaché to Admiral Felix Stump, representing the British. And she was just a little bit older than I, had a couple of young children. And she took me under her wing. And from her, I received an English education. I learned [laughs] proper manners, and I learned the sophistication that goes with being a British diplomat. So this was a miraculous environment.

Geraci: This is very important, because this is one of the things that you had to engage in and became known for, is your ability to work with people that are wealthy or of these classes. So these women are literally giving you your education.

01-00:27:33
Willis: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Geraci: And to have found art at the same time, also. I find that very interesting that you said you didn't really have an interest in art, and all of a sudden you find it, and it's your passion.

01-00:27:48
Willis: Well, I think that there are a lot of people like me who struggle for a number of years, waiting to discover themselves and to discover what they're interested in and what they're passionate about. I came from an oil-field [laughs] environment, the roughest type of environment that you can imagine. They're called roughnecks for a reason! And I had never met an architect, I had never met an artist, I'd never met a writer, I'd never met anybody in any cultural field. So I just think it took me a little bit longer to find my place within the artistic culture.

Geraci: This is the reason I like to start with people's early life. So far we've covered your ability to have some discipline, your desire for independence, and then building up these social skills. These are all things that are going to be the foundation for your future career.

01-00:28:59
Willis: Well, and for a successful artist or architect, these things are very important because you have to have the courage to believe in what you believe in, and to present it. It helps to know the right people. It helps dramatically, in terms of what you can do to enhance your work and to successfully position it so that it can move ahead. As I found out so dramatically later on in my life, and particularly in architecture: the moment that you begin to do anything that brings any notice to your work, you immediately have many people who oppose that. And sometimes it's just as simple as, "Not in my backyard,

[laughs] you're not going to build that." As you go on in architecture, you face competing interests. And you've got to learn to mediate, in order to proceed.

Geraci: And I know with your interest in— especially with women in architecture, it seems that you had an advantage, then, being at least socialized in a manner that made you able to compete within that system. What about the young girls of your age? Most of them would never have been taught or socialized or brought into these types of things. They wouldn't compete with the men.

01-00:31:23
Willis: Yes. Women of my generation were taught that you acquiesced to men—a woman's role was to support the man. A wife was instrumental as a support. And this led eventually, in the 1970s, to women saying, "I need a wife." [they laugh] Only recently, perhaps in the 1990s, have women really begun to feel like they can have an independent career on their own.

I've been researching Marion Mahony recently, for example. She started with Frank Lloyd Wright in 1895. She was the first woman licensed as an architect in the United States. She was, I'm finding, the most incredible woman! She and Frank Lloyd Wright started together. She was twenty-four, he was twenty-eight. And she was with him for almost fifteen years. Architectural work was done differently in those days—you could even build a high-rise building with four drawings. All you had to do was have a plan, an elevation, a section, and some details, for a twelve-story building. And for a house, you needed about the same number of drawings. So the rendering that Marion Mahony did really was where the design happened. And so I feel that there is a lot more of Marion Mahony in Frank Lloyd Wright's work than people currently recognize.

But she married after she left Frank Lloyd Wright, and spent the rest of her life supporting a man who had nothing like her talent. But he took all the credit. And that ~~was~~ seemed fine with her, because that's the way she was raised and that was the way she was taught.

Part of the story of women in architecture has been this evolution—a societal evolution, if you will—toward permission: "Yes, you can do that. It's all right to do it by yourself. You don't have to do it to support a man." I'm sure a lot of men would like that [laughs] to still be the case. But anyway, it was part of the society of the day.

Geraci: You are different in that sense. You were not the norm for women of your age and your group.

01-00:34:26
Willis: No. That's really very true. I've had a unique background. I don't know of anybody else who's had quite the same curious background that I've had. I've often said, after I got through, psychologically, the shock of all of the challenges of my childhood—I had the best psychological preparation

[laughs] for building a career, going out on my own. Rather than the upbringing of someone who has been nurtured by their family and given ideas that have worked against their own self interests.

Geraci: Well, we're up to about 1954 now. And that's the year that you actually graduate from—

01-00:35:36
Willis: University of Hawaii.

Geraci: You received a bachelor of fine art. And okay, you've graduated; now what do you do? That's always the scary part. You get the degree, then you're expected to do something.

01-00:35:48
Willis: Well, I did work my way through school as an artist. And my two great clients were the two newspapers in Honolulu, where, when their retoucher went on two weeks vacation, I would take two weeks and fill in for them. And I was incredibly well paid for that work. I did that for both newspapers. And then I picked up other commercial art assignments. Essentially, I felt that I was already earning a living, so I didn't see any reason to get a job. I simply found a building to rent—really, a shed building—and I opened the Willis Atelier. And then I began to make calls around. But once again, these two incredible women, Louise Dillingham and Nesta Obermer, came to my rescue, and they began to send me clients. Because they knew all of the military people, they knew all the wealthy industrialists, they knew all the social people. So if someone needed work done, they would recommend me. And the other thing was, in Hawaii in those days, there were not a lot of people who were qualified or who wanted the work. It was not typically the place a person who was really ambitious went to work. The feeling in the islands was more laid-back. And I was eager to work. I was eager to get a job and do work.

Geraci: This was, as you and I have talked about, this is probably the first major period of your professional life, your artistic— As you see yourself as an artist at that time, just go off on art a little bit. Who were your heroes? Who did you pattern yourself off? Who did you borrow most from, in past art?

01-00:38:19
Willis: Well, as I said, I apprenticed with Jean Charlot.

Geraci: And that's a great task in itself.

01-00:38:26
Willis: Right. And so I think it was natural that I followed early on in his footsteps, because he also would recommend me for work. He was asked by the United Chinese Society to do their memorial in their new building, which was a ten-foot-by-fifteen-foot mural. And he was too busy to do it, so he recommended me. That was a big job.

Geraci: It's a wonderful mural, by the way.

01-00:39:07
Willis: Yes. Thank you, thank you.

Geraci: I really loved it.

01-00:39:09
Willis: And it showed three generations of Chinese. And they were very pleased. And then I worked with Jean doing a small mural for a church. He actually got a group of us together; we each did a mural in the church. So the church really became a collection of murals by contemporary artists in Hawaii. But that work wasn't enough to pay the bills. So I was willing to be involved with other things that would come along. Because, remember, I have this craft background. And when I was at the University of Hawaii, I also did all the crafts—lithography, photography, ceramics, all sorts of things. The hotels were looking for artists. For the Royal Hawaiian, for example, I did canvases that were huge—ten by fifteen feet. I did about five of them. So when they put them on the walls of the ballroom at the Royal Hawaiian, they changed the ambiance of the room. They were done on canvas. Not a fresco, but still, inspired by that sort of fresco training, where you do these large things—as I said earlier, full-sized figures came naturally to me.

And then I created a sculpture for United Airlines. Actually, I did two projects for United Airlines. One was a sculpture of a Tiki god, for their Honolulu Kalakaua Avenue ticket office. I think it's still there. And then later on, I did multi-media wood panels at the San Francisco airport in their Aloha Room.

01-00:41:53 Then two things happened. Again, both due to my mentors. I got a call from Patrick Burns, who was Fritz Burns' son—Fritz Burns was a major developer in Los Angeles. And he had teamed up with Henry Kaiser, who, in my era, was probably the most famous industrialist of the time, a man with an eighth-grade education, who had created chemical factories, aluminum factories; built Liberty ships; designed and built the Willys Jeep, which we still have with us today; and was one of the contractors on the Hoover Dam. Just an incredible person. He'd say, "I can do anything I want to do." [laughs] And then he'd do it.

So I received a call from Patrick Burns who said that his father and Henry Kaiser had purchased the Hawaiian Village Hotel—which, at that point, was just a lot of shacks, thatched-roof shacks—and he said that they wanted to move these shacks to another piece of the property, and create a dining room and a bar. So they asked me to do the design work for what became known as the Shell Bar, which later became the backdrop for the television show *Hawaii Five-O*. In this case, I made a twenty-ton, five foot by twenty foot sand casted mural [laughs] for the back bar, and I also designed the furniture, the tables, the chairs, and inserts for the countertop.

Geraci: I didn't realize you had actually done all the furniture, then, also to go with—

01-00:44:08
Willis: Yes, yes. And it was an incredibly successful venture. Henry Kaiser, who was really known for not giving anybody credit—somebody told me, anyway, for the first time in his life, he gave me credit. And he actually printed a penny postcard—penny, in those days—with the Shell Bar on it, which was widely distributed. He was eighty years old in those days. He was at the end of his career. His son had pushed him into Hawaii to get him out of the management of the aluminum plants, the chemical plants and other businesses. But he taught me a very, very valuable lesson. He asked me if I would work with him to do redo the landscaping around the Shell Bar and the dining room. And the architect who had done the basic building had hired a landscape architect to do what a landscape architect does. And the landscape architect, very intelligently, planted small plants because he knew in six months they'd be great big plants. [laughs]

But that was not Henry Kaiser's way, because Henry Kaiser wanted to have a huge smash opening. And he wanted it to look perfect for the opening. And so, not getting any results from the landscape architect, he decided that he and I were going to do this new landscaping. And I still, today, know very little about landscaping. And believe me, in those days, I knew *nothing*. I did not know the names of the plants, I knew nothing about their characteristics, I didn't understand soil, I didn't understand the whole growth process with sun and light and that sort of thing

Kaiser put a table right at the site, right there where the plants were going to be planted. Or a few feet away. He had a telephone with a long extension cord brought to the table. He had the landscape firm that provided the plants bring plants in front of us, like a parade of plants. And my job was to point out, well, that's a good color; that's a good shape of leaf; if you put that leaf and this leaf together— It was like painting a painting, for me. That was how the landscaping was done. But the thing was, with this telephone, Henry Kaiser had a rule. You don't have to know the answers; he doesn't expect you to know all the answers. But he expects you, if you don't know the answers, to know who to call to find out the answers. So if you don't know, you get on the phone and you get the person on the other line and find out what it is, and then you can continue on with the process. And that was an incredible lesson to me, because it really taught me that sometimes you really had to use different techniques for getting something done—techniques that you were not normally taught were proper. So it wasn't, in a sense, breaking the rules, but it was being innovative with the process and getting things done.

Geraci: Learning to work outside the box.

01-00:48:25
Willis: Yes. Yes, exactly.

Geraci: When a roadblock occurs, learning how to—*sswt*!—go around. You don't need to tear the roadblock down and make a big deal of it, you just need to figure out how to move in a different direction. It seems that Kaiser, then, was fascinated with you. That's a great mentor. In the business community, on the West Coast, this is one of the great industrial families.

01-00:48:52
Willis: Yes, yes. Well, he went on, at that point, to develop some very large housing projects in Hawaii. And so we sort of lost contact because I didn't have a skill that he could use in the work that he was doing at the time. But almost exactly at that time, I got a call from Admiral Stump's office, from a chap, Eugene Burdick, who is well known because he wrote the book *The Ugly American*. He co-authored the book. At that point, he was a navy captain. And they wanted an office designed. I had never done an interior before. This just was not part of my background. But they felt that I was the perfect person for the job. Go figure; I don't know. But in any case, I was hired to design his offices, his new offices, which I later discovered was budgeted under a telephone-exchange budget. But I spent a fair amount time with Admiral Stump directly.

Now, this sort of work is usually done by the Corps of Engineers, not by an independent contractor. But Admiral Stump felt, obviously, that he didn't want to work with the Corps of Engineers. And he spent a fair amount of time explaining to me that his role at that particular moment of history—and he'd had a magnificent war record—but at that moment in history, he was negotiating with the Japanese, at the end of the war. And he was bringing back the four-star generals—he was a five-star at this point—he was bringing the four-stars, the generals, the admirals, the Air Force, the Marines, back to Hawaii. And so he needed a space that he considered residential. And he probably had been at the White House, where it's residential. The President's office, the conference room—everything is like a house. It's residential. So he wanted a residential environment.

And he said, "I can't negotiate with the Japanese over a desk. I have to be sitting with them in a chair, sofa to sofa, chair to chair, so we're equal, there's no image of my being the dominant one and their being less dominant. I want to give them respect. I want them to trust me." And so he laid out his residential concept, which I basically implemented. I did the walls and the carpet, and I selected the furniture and the paint colors and accessories. And he was really very pleased. So it was through his recommendation, then, that I began to rebuild a series of officers' clubs, which became the start of my architectural career, just by happenstance. And again, at the four-star level, you can break the rules. And once again, they didn't want the Corps of Engineers to redo these clubs. And these clubs, at that point, had disintegrated. They needed substantial renovations, some additions, and interior design. So once again, with my experience to that date, I didn't consider any of this unusual. I didn't have any way of knowing that it was unusual. So when I was asked to do something, I thought, "Well, sure, I can do it." Even if I hadn't

done it before. And I just proceeded. And I was lucky that nothing happened [laughs] where I made a mistake. I mean, a bad mistake.

01-00:53:47 The army's officers' club manager would give me a one-page purchase order. And it would call for the architectural design, engineering, construction, interior design, artwork and furnishings for this club, with a bottom-line figure. That was it.

Geraci: So you were just given a bottom-line figure, basically, and said, "Do it."

01-00:54:28
Willis: Yes, and told to go out and do the job. Now, I also realized that in the military, and probably particularly in those days, they're used to working with a lot of young people because they had soldiers seventeen and eighteen years old; and they probably had officers of twenty-one. By this point, I'm about twenty-five years old, so I was probably pretty mature compared to a lot of the folk in the military.

I realized, "Well, I've got to hire an architect, because I can't do this." So I find an architect and I find an engineer. Ultimately, I find the contractor and that sort of thing. But I had ideas about how I thought this should look. And so one of the architects I hired—because I did several of these clubs; with different purchase orders, but written in the same way, pretty much—said to me, "Well, if you think you know so much about architecture, why don't you become an architect?" I thought, "Well, why not [laughs] become an architect?" I had the advantage of watching these drawings unfold, watching the specifications being written. And I said, "Well, I can do that." And so I decided to become an architect.

01-00:55:14 The other thing that I learned through this process was in the construction part of the renovation, was that most of the working people were immigrants, usually from the Philippines, Japan, China, or other Asian countries. And they had a clever way of dealing with men and women, both. I don't think this had to do with my being a woman. But if they really didn't want to do something, or they didn't want to do something in a certain way, they would simply say, "Me no speak English. Me no speak English." So if I wanted stone laid in a certain way, I would *show* them how to lay the stone.

Geraci: So this is hands-on work?

01-00:57:09
Willis: This is hands-on. I showed them how to lay the stone, and how to plaster. I learned to plaster as a fresco painter. "This is the way I want the plastering to look." I did it. "Here's an example of how you do it." And I'd do that with whatever task needed doing: painting, wiring. Whatever it was, I could show the workmen how to do that particular step of the construction. And therefore, "Me no speak English" didn't matter anymore. That was a good experience. Because later on, when I walked onto construction sites, I really knew

construction. I had learned construction very early on. Again, these are things that contemporary architects don't usually learn in school.

Geraci: This seems to be a very practical form of architecture for you. Nothing better than an architect who knows the building material, knows the technique, can really do a better design.

01-00:58:20
Willis: Exactly. Exactly. And I worked with concrete. I actually dry packed concrete panels. I knew the material, I knew how to work it, I knew what it was capable of, so I could design with it. And yes, it produces a lot better design. Or it allows you more freedom in the design. It allows you more freedom to make design decisions, knowing that it's going to work.

Geraci: Okay, we have a couple more minutes left on this particular tape before we're done here. It seems to me, then, that out of all of this, one thing I've learned in just this last part of the conversation is—it becomes crucial for you as an artist—you had exceptional patrons who helped you. Historically, artists have always depended upon their patrons.

01-00:59:19
Willis: Yes, yes.

Geraci: And you were lucky enough to have that network of patrons, who really did help kick off this career. As we get into the next tape and we finish this one, I think I'd like to pick up a little bit— You're moving away from art. And I'd like to start right there. Because you're moving from art to your career in architecture at this point. So let's stop right here on this tape and we'll take a little break and get back.

01-00:59:46
Willis: Okay, thanks, Vic.

[End Audio File 1]

Begin Audio File 2 10-15-2008.mp3

Geraci: Today is October 15, 2008. This is tape number two, Beverly Willis, Victor W. Geraci interviewer. Beverly, when we left off, we were just taking your career in that first major transition, where you're moving from being an artist, and you're starting to do more interior design and actually, making the transition to what will become your architectural career. How did you feel leaving art?

02-00:00:33
Willis: Well, I never really felt like I left art, because there's a lot of art in architecture. But part of the transition was industrial design. And this was the era of the great industrial designer—Raymond Loewy, Walter Landor. And it

was also an era in American history where almost everything *needed* to be designed. It's very hard today to imagine the environmental difference between today and the fifties— there were the Quonset huts— and I can't even describe it without going into an awful lot of detail not appropriate here. But this is why those industrial designers became so important. Things like toasters and refrigerators and automobiles—everything needed design. Or at least we thought so. Those of us in design thought so.

So there developed a lot of theories of industrial design. And also, part of the theory of industrial design was you could design anything. So that influenced me more than the little bit of interior work that I had done, because I did do a number of industrial-design things. It was the industrial design contacts that led me into actual buildings—beyond my experience with the military, which was unique.

Geraci: And I think it's important, as you mentioned, to keep in mind the context of history. Henry Luce called this the American century. From 1950, post-World War II to 2000, this is America's golden era. And there was this dependence on our industrial background, science, marketing, advertising, the new economic systems that were setting up.

02-00:03:00
Willis: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Geraci: It's exploding. It's all happening.

02-00:03:04
Willis: It was all happening then. And the sixties were an incredible period of our history, when we really discovered the need to protect our environment in a real way. This, of course, was the time that women's rights emerged as an issue, in the post-World War II era. It had been a major accomplishment in the 1890s, but was reborn again in the sixties. So many things that have permeated our society today really were recognized and developed, initially developed, in the sixties. Including computers, of course. In the fifties, for example, we did not have television, we did not have desktop computers. People didn't really know the word "computers" in the fifties. And it would be a couple of decades later before we had desktop computers, and a while before almost everyone had a television. It was black-and-white television, then it was color.

So there were lots of changes that happened during that period, all of which affected me and everybody else. For two years, from 1958 to 1960, I commuted from Honolulu to San Francisco, because I had decided to leave Honolulu. In Honolulu, there's something known as island fever. And eventually, a lot of people get island fever. The island becomes too small. You feel cut off from the world. And you might wait months to get a building sample or something that you needed to proceed with a project. So I decided

to move to San Francisco. But I had projects to finish in Honolulu. And at that time, I had an assistant, William "Bill" Aiken, who later became a full-time artist. He helped me close the office there and open the office in San Francisco.

Co-incidentally, one of my very good friends decided to move from Honolulu to San Francisco at the same time. She was really a San Franciscan. Her name was Mymy Howard, and it was her family that owned the racehorse Seabiscuit. As a matter of fact, I think one of the reasons Mymy and I became such good friends is that she was literally abandoned by her parents. She was kept in a mansion [they laugh] and raised by a butler, and she spent her time in the stables. She never saw her parents because they were off with Seabiscuit, who was her competitive sibling, if you will. Mymy had gone to school in San Francisco, she had a lot of friends in San Francisco. So I moved back to San Francisco shortly after she did. And that was an important point, because it was through Mymy that I met San Francisco society. And as an architect, you work for wealthy people, you work for big institutions like universities, or you work for the government. And that's where your clients come from. I was very fortunate, when I made the transition to San Francisco, that I met some people through Mymy who became my clients.

I also developed clientele through my industrial design work. When I came to San Francisco, I took a portfolio of work around to the various architects in San Francisco. And one of the architects recommended me to Sid Wallace. That was in 1958. And I met Sid, who turned out to be one of the really, truly creative people in business. He was unbelievably creative. And in those days, business people did not like to take chances on something that hadn't been tried and proven. Sid was unique in that he just liked to do try new things and do things differently.

Geraci: And Sid is in grocery—

02-00:08:23
Willis: Yeah, grocery. Sid Wallace. And actually, they were called Sid's Stores.

Geraci: Right, Sid's.

02-00:08:31
Willis: He established a small chain of markets. And I was hired by Sid, in 1958, to do the interiors. I was recommended by the architect that he had hired. And Sid and I really hit it off, we were of like minds. And supermarkets, such as they were in those days, were substantially smaller than they are today. But where you went to buy your food in a market, it was usually like a warehouse—no design, no color scheme. Everything seemed to be pea green in those days. I *hated* pea green. It stays in my mind, pea green paint everywhere. So Sid said, "Well, I'd like to do something different." He was installing a lot of new inventions, such as a track for your cart. You could take

your cart to the store, and then you'd put it on this track and the track would bring the basket back into the store. You don't see that [anymore], but he installed some very innovative equipment that you still see in the stores today.

I came into the store and I used very vivid colors on the walls, and introduced a different approach to the flooring, and then created lighting. I used lighting to spotlight the merchandise and darken the public areas. When you have that contrast in lighting, it's pretty dramatic. The merchandise is really spotlighted through the lighting. On the walls, I used super graphics—as I said, my industrial design experience helped—for the meat department and the other departments. And Sid would select specific places for the display of fruits, gourmet items, and liquor, and I would create a design around each display, a canopy, so that that was like a store within a store. And then the other thing, which is very big from an industrial design standpoint, was this concept of point-of-purchase, where you would take fairly low-cost items and you would put them in a place where people would stumble over them, so that maybe they would see something and pick it up, because it was a dollar or something like that. I designed those displays, too.

02-00:11:50 And the store that was most notable—I think Sid called it the number-eight store; I really don't remember exactly—got huge national attention, and was named the best supermarket of the year, and I was written up on the front page, in an article titled, "Stores for 1968." [in *Nargus Bulletin,* XLX Feb. 1963] as a leading store designer in the US. And that attracted quite a few new clients, both in the supermarket world, but in retail of all sorts. I must've ~~done~~ provided design at least a hundred retail stores.

Much of this was what I'd consider industrial design. But they were interiors. And I designed any number of liquor stores and winery sections, and eventually I came to the attention of United Vintners, and I did their master plan for their Modesto winery. And then I designed two or three other United Vintners tasting rooms, one in Healdsburg, if I remember correctly, and then a couple in the St. Helena area. So I felt very close to the wine industry. And I like wine.

Geraci: Let's go back to Sid's for a second. Did you get a chance at that point to go back and look at what chains— Piggly Wiggly and Safeway were probably the two national chains that had started back before—what? 1912, 1916? The idea of branding, the idea of bringing packaged items into a store was there, but what you're saying is, is that what Sid was doing and what you were doing then was giving this a new ambiance, really, a new feel.

02-00:14:04
Willis: Yes. Yes. It was pioneering work. It was gutsy of Sid to do this. [chuckles] And it paid off. Safeway came over, took a look. Sid wrote a book. And in that book, he mentions his conversations with the president of Safeway, who

said, "Well, you did it again, Sid." It was unusual that it received all this attention.

Geraci: I know Sid, in his interview, said that the whole idea of self-service was really huge. He mentioned that he met you through Mitchell Van Bourg?

02-00:14:56
Willis: Yes, that was the architect of the building. And the building itself was unique. It really was a lovely building, sort of a peaked-roof structure. It had a lot of glass. And it had a little bit of a residential feeling to it, which I find very attractive. I think if somebody were to do that today, they'd be very successful. Because it used wood laminated beams on the interior, with a sloped roof and a lot of glass. It had a very nice look. As I say, these buildings were not as large as they are today. Nor were they necessarily part of a big shopping complex.

Geraci: We do see some of that sort of thing now. Maybe places like Whole Foods. Trader Joe's, not so much. But when I walk into a grocery store today, I expect color. I expect these little islands of places. I expect to see murals on walls.

02-00:16:12
Willis: But when we did Sid's, that didn't exist. So this was a really pioneering effort.

Geraci: In his interview, Sid mentioned something about putting alphabetical letters on floors.

02-00:16:22
Willis: Yes, I guess that must've blown his mind. But he was open to anything, and it seemed to me like a good idea. And as a shopper, I get so frustrated trying to locate merchandise in a store. So I can more easily go to A, B, C, D than I can find a little sign someplace that says, "These are the things in this aisle." He also found somebody who manufactured an electronic directory. Too bad we don't have them today, because you could go to this electronic directory and you could see everything in the store. You could press a button and it would tell you where it was. I wish we had those in stores today, because I'm dealing with two stores right now where I shop, I can't find anything. They just renovated them.

Geraci: Oh, I see. That's what usually happens. They renovate the store and then it's as if you lose all the items.

02-00:17:20
Willis: I had them perfectly memorized before the renovation.

Geraci: And Sid also mentioned, within his interview, something about mini-marts.

02-00:17:33
Willis: I didn't know much about that. I didn't do very much with that. Though I did do a number of things for Sid besides the stores, but they were very small projects.

Geraci: I think one of the things that you have within your own literature, and it becomes very apparent in looking at this, is the idea that good design sells.

02-00:18:09
Willis: Yes, yes. Again, that was the industrial-design motto: good design sells. And it just has stayed with me my entire life. Clearly, it was a factor in all the retail stores that I designed. But I think it really applies generally. If I wanted to do something in an urban area, even a place like New York City, and it's good design— We're not selling a product, necessarily, but we're selling a way of life. We're selling an environment. And it works. It works.

Geraci: And this is true with the wine industry. As you said, you're developing wineries and wine-tasting rooms and shelf space for liquor stores. Selling wine is selling lifestyle.

02-00:19:01
Willis: Yes. Our design for United Vintners was really the first time that the wine industry invested in developing a certain look for stores and tasting rooms. And that again was a pioneering effort, where we really could take a place that used to just be a counter with some crates, and design something new. And then in Healdsburg, for United Vintners, for their plant and tasting room there, we subdivided off an entire room, and that room was designed as a total environment.

Geraci: Now, this is the early sixties.

02-00:20:00
Willis: Now, this is the early sixties.

Geraci: Because at that same time, I think it was Brookside Winery in Southern California that opened fifteen fully-designed tasting rooms. So this is later in the sixties. And then by the time you get into the seventies, we begin the movement towards every winery having its own tasting room.

02-00:20:24
Willis: Yes, right. It became pretty standard.

Geraci: But United Vintners, then, in the design you're—

02-00:20:31
Willis: They were very advanced thinkers. Of course, they were very dominant in the field at that time. I think that their vice-president in charge of marketing, Robert Rossi, really felt that they needed to do something more in marketing. And I think looking at Sid's and seeing how you could design these little

mini-environments may have given him an idea that he could do something like that, or *I* could do something like that, with a wine tasting area. But they did, really for the first time, in the Healdsburg winery, do a site plan and started planting grass and trees and flowers. They beautified that whole frontage, the front of the winery itself.

Geraci: And today, this is the norm. But it's beginning in the early sixties. And just before we get to the sixties, 1959—you're named as one of San Francisco's ten most outstanding citizens for your efforts in working in Golden Gate Park.

02-00:22:03
Willis: No, that was in 1969.

Geraci: Was it '69? Okay.

02-00:22:07
Willis: Curiously enough, in 1958—and I think this was due to the dearth of professional business women—I was named one of the three [laughs] business women of the year by the Women's Business and Professional Club. In 1969 I received an award from the San Francisco *Examiner*, the Phoebe Hearst Gold Medal for Distinguished Service to San Francisco.

Geraci: What's good about this, whether I have the dates right or wrong, is this is the next segue in your career. We have come from artist to industrial. Now we're moving into a part of your career where you're doing a lot of renovation, historic preservation.

02-00:22:56
Willis: That's correct. Yes, yes.

Geraci: So I think that would be the next place for us to move on to.

02-00:23:00
Willis: Right, right. Well, first, when I moved to San Francisco, I found an office in the old Barbary Coast. And at that point, many of the buildings were empty, because the city had cracked down on the girlie shows and whatever other activities were going on on the street. There was one family that owned quite a bit of that property there. We found this vacant building on Pacific Avenue, 525 Pacific. And Bill Aiken and I decided, "Well, why don't we just see if we can lease a whole floor, and fix it up and we sublease to other people." And we could design the environment the way we wanted it. And then I met Elmer Gavello, who owned this building and several other empty buildings in the block. He wanted to renovate one building, which we call the Campbell-Ewald Building. It was right across the street from my office. And he had a client, a possible client, Campbell-Ewald, which was a big Detroit advertising agency. They handled General Motors and probably some other car lines. General Motors was a huge account. And the headquarters for Campbell-Ewald was in Detroit. Elmer wanted me to design the San Francisco offices

for Campbell-Ewald. And then the Campbell-Ewald people locally wanted me to design the building, also.

But the headquarters in Detroit just couldn't believe this. Here was not only a woman, but a *young* woman, aiming to design their San Francisco headquarters. So they decided to fly me out to Detroit and interview me in Detroit. And I flew out and met the executives. And at that point, the head of design was a chap by the name of Bill Mitchell. Bill Mitchell was famous. He was a well known industrial designer. And we just hit it off. We really hit it off. As a matter of fact, he offered me the opportunity to design a car for myself, which he would build and test drive, and then I could buy it from him. Unfortunately, I just didn't have the money to do that. But in any case, he said, "Fine. Let her design the San Francisco headquarters." So that was a huge break, because the Campbell-Ewald Building for the Campbell-Ewald advertising agency was well known.

02-00:26:24 And then from there, just a year later, Elmer decided to renovate the building next door, which we've always called the Gavello Building. I used different techniques on both buildings. And these renovations inspired the transformation of that part of Pacific Avenue. Now, parallel to this, Jackson Street was being developed, and this became known as Jackson Square. And there was this cookware store on the same side of the street of my office, [laughs] which you know about. And I can't remember the name of it right now.

Geraci: Capricorn?

02-00:27:31
Willis: No, that was my store.

Geraci: That's yours. Chuck Williams, Williams-Sonoma?

02-00:27:34
Willis: Yes, Chuck Williams. Williams & Sonoma. And they were literally my neighbors. They were just getting started, so they weren't particularly interested in building at the time. In those days, selling cookware was not an easy thing to do. This was before fine food and wine became popular, before gourmet cookware really had a market. So they were struggling and getting started.

Geraci: Well, it seems that there's a juncture here of a couple of things going on. Number one, because of the Great Depression and World War II, and then just starting to recoup from the war, we went probably three decades without really doing any major building in America.

02-00:28:26
Willis: You know, you're right about that. And I think that's something that people don't really understand.

Geraci: It's the great hiatus.

02-00:28:32
Willis: Yes, there was a hiatus there. When the men came back from the war, they wanted homes—and this, of course, was the beginning of the suburbs—places to live in peace and raise families. They were not motivated to change the world [laughs] or to do something different. They just wanted peace. So there wasn't the motivation for people—for most people, anyway, as least as I lived through it—to start new things. And in Europe after the war—I first went to Europe in 1955, I think— I can remember walking the streets of London, and literally, it was just block after block of rubble. They had cleaned it up so it was flat, and there was just rubble, and an occasional building standing. And that just went on for block after block after block. At that point, in London, they had just managed to clear things up, start planning to build. And money was probably an issue. Because I think all of the countries in the world were economically wiped out. There wasn't much money for infrastructure or the sorts of things that you need to encourage building. It took about fifteen years, till the later fifties—well, maybe not fifteen, but at least a good ten years or so—before there started to be a renaissance of things happening.

Geraci: There's a surge to rebuild our infrastructure, to finally build again. But I think at the same time, this is a new surge in consumer America. People, as you mention, they're coming back from a war—the men are coming back from war and many women coming back from the war—and they want to lead a normal life and enjoy it.

02-00:31:05
Willis: Yes, that's well said.

Geraci: And there's a need for this leisure. Is that kind of the feeling that you—

02-00:31:11
Willis: Yes.

Geraci: You're mentioning Jackson Square, what's happened on Pacific, Union Street, what's going to happen there. The time was right for this.

02-00:31:20
Willis: The time was ripe, yes. That's well said. And I think one of the reasons that the sixties became so important historically is that things just sort of burst open, after—I want to say creativity was buried, but it wasn't buried—it was there, and I guess it was being nurtured and people were working things out. But the things really burst open in the early sixties, or even late fifties.

Geraci: Well, let's continue on with the story here. So does this lead us up to the Union Street?

02-00:32:14
Willis: Yes. It's interesting, because all this was going on almost at the same time, around 1962, '63. The Campbell-Ewald Building, the Gavello Building. After I settled into my office. And three couples who lived on Pacific Heights had looked at these deteriorating buildings on Union Street. Union Street, at this point, around Fillmore to maybe—Fillmore was sort of the top street, and then for about three blocks, there were a lot of deteriorating buildings. There were a couple of mom-and-pop stores, one cleaners. And a number of builders had bought up some of these buildings, and were building three-story walk-up apartment buildings. I guess there were a couple of antique stores. And that was about it on Union Street.

But these couples came back from trips to New York, and they realized, "Here we have a street that is next to the most prestigious residential district in San Francisco, Pacific Heights." They'd seen Madison Avenue and the Upper East Side of New York City, the prestigious residential and retail districts, and they pictured Union Street becoming another Madison Avenue, with so many potential customers right up the hill in Pacific Heights.

So they wanted to tear down three small building at 1980 Union Street and build a three-story building, combination office/retail. And at about that time, San Francisco passed a parking ordinance that said if you're going to do retail, you had to provide parking. I think it was one car for every 500 square feet of construction. Keep in mind that San Francisco, at that point, had practically no building regulations. It did not have architectural review, and it took just two weeks to get a building permit. It was an entirely different city than it became ten years later. But there was this one ordinance about parking. So when we did the designs, it became obvious to us that the site was too small to accommodate the parking needed for what the client wanted. So I suggested to them, "Let's work with the existing buildings." I had a key idea. And that idea was to jack the buildings up and put a whole new floor underneath the buildings, which would give them the square footage that they wanted and allow us to keep this wonderful Victorian set of buildings. And it also subverted the parking regulation.

We didn't have to meet that regulation, by doing it the way I suggested. And they said, "Hey, that's a good idea, let's do it." So that's what we did. We were able to get nine stores and two restaurants out of the existing buildings. It became a mini shopping complex. It was a unique thing to do. It had not, in our US history, been done exactly that way before, in terms of adaptive re-use. It received a lot of publicity, it won AIA awards. And it was a full ten years before the development of Faneuil Hall in Boston occurred. We were well ahead of the curve in terms of redevelopment of existing urban structures.

The Union Street stores were being developed at the same time that Wurster [Wurster Bernardi and Emmons] was remodeling Ghirardelli Square, and the Cannery was being remodeled at the same time. There were these three

projects, each unique, and each an example of major adaptive reuse. And once again, this happened in an era when designers and intelligent clients could have ideas and could create. And it also set the stage for Faneuil Hall happening ten years later, because the architect for Faneuil Hall was at that point working with Wurster on Ghirardelli Square.

Geraci: I didn't realize that.

02-00:37:54
Willis: Yes, he was working there. So it was something that San Francisco exported east. Easterners don't like to admit this, but it did happen. And it's provable.

Geraci: So this is the beginning of the whole idea of reuse and historic preservation as we know it today.

02-00:38:19
Willis: Yes, adaptive reuse. Yes, right.

Geraci: This is really at the heart and soul of the beginning of that.

02-00:38:23
Willis: It is. It very definitely is. I emphasize the phrase "adaptive reuse" as opposed to preservation, because preservation is sort of like redoing the Capitol Building and doing the details exactly the same way. In adaptive reuse, you have a little leeway to insert something more contemporary into the building. But the point was that what happened as a result of this work was a very, very successful money-making venture. The owners of the Union Street store paid for the construction in six months of income earned.

Geraci: That's amazing.

02-00:39:14
Willis: —off of that building. So it was the money-making aspect of it that really attracted a lot of small investors to Union Street, so that Union Street development eventually went past Fillmore, all the way to Van Ness, almost. Union Street became a regional shopping center, a destination. People came from all over the Bay Area to shop at Union Street. I helped create the Union Street Merchants Association. I served as president, and I also served as a consultant for about nine years during that critical period when Union Street was blossoming.

Geraci: And I love those old Victorians. What you're looking at here is building neighborhoods and building a sense of community. And architecturally, we start really, I think, thinking about all that much more at that point, where, what is it want our community to be? What is the identity that the people have, of who they are and what the place is geographically—

02-00:40:38
Willis: Yes. And that was the whole purpose of the Union Street Merchants Association, because we dealt with beautification, with parking, with traffic, with streetlights. In those days, there unfortunately was more crime than there should've been. And we learned that intense lighting helps minimize crime. All of these things created an ambiance in the neighborhood. So yes, I would totally agree with your observation.

Geraci: This is home now. That walking community— And to this day, cities are trying to redevelop their downtown areas, are trying to create neighborhoods.

02-00:41:33
Willis: Correct. Yes.

Geraci: And when we look at the history of cities and urban development, this is thousands of years old. It's not a new concept, but it's at least our spin on trying to make it happen in our own lives.

02-00:41:47
Willis: Well, the irony of all this is that San Francisco has a lot of turnover, in terms of people moving in and moving out. And people who came into San Francisco after 1965 thought that the development—Street, Ghirardelli, the Cannery, Jackson Square, Pacific Avenue—was always that way. They thought it was just the way San Francisco was, and that it dated back to the founding of San Francisco. They cannot really believe that this design was perhaps a fairly recent occurrence.

I was instrumental in helping save the cable cars. I had a neighbor on Telegraph Hill, a wonderful woman called Frieda Klussmann. The city council was prepared to eliminate the cable cars, because they were running the city about $350,000 in the red, which was a hell of a lot of money in those days. So they just were going to get rid of them. And Frieda Klussmann organized a group of women, including me—for the most part, they were older; I was a kid to them—and we started this campaign to save the cable cars. And at that point, the ladies in tennis shoes were born. And that was Frieda Klussmann and her peer group, women who were in their seventies or so. But if there hadn't been this intervention of this group of women, there would not be cable cars in San Francisco today. And that's the *image* of San Francisco.

Geraci: With the Rice-A-Roni sign on the back of it. [laughs]

02-00:44:00
Willis: Yes. And without the cable cars, San Francisco would be an entirely different place. It'd be like the cities in the United States that are searching for an identity, searching for something to distinguish the city from another city. And San Francisco came that close to eliminating its signature cable cars.

Geraci: And I guess as an architect or as the creative designer involved in this, how do you get about figuring out what the image is, what that identity is?

02-00:44:35
Willis: Well, in those days, we didn't think that way.

Geraci: Well, we were lucky then.

02-00:44:41
Willis: Yes. We just loved the cable cars, and we thought it was silly to get rid of them. The idea of branding came much later in design history.

Geraci: Now, as you mentioned earlier, you won two awards then for the work that was done on this Union Street. One was the American Institute of Architects San Francisco Design Award, and the governor of California's Award for Exceptional Distinction.

02-00:45:16
Willis: Yes. It was the American Institute of Architects award. And it was the one and only year that the governor gave that award. I don't know why the governor stopped. Maybe a new governor moved in or what have you. That year, it was an effort on the part of the governor to recognize good design and acknowledge how important it was for the cities of California to look distinctive. And obviously, in giving me the award, he was acknowledging the value of adaptive reuse. At that moment, there were tons of empty buildings, that were just deteriorating, and now they could be considered resources with lots of commercial potential. How do you develop that part of a city that is derelict? How do you build a new economic base for cities with aging infrastructure? What we did on Union Street was a good example of how you revitalize a whole neighborhood.

Geraci: And it also, I think, projects the entire nation into urban renewal. The Johnson administration starts block funds. San Francisco's going to go through its own redevelopment agencies, which is not an easy transition. We'll get to a project that you were involved on that. But I think 1966, then, was a pivotal year for you, in looking at everything that's happening. Pivotal, in that it's a turning point within your career. First of all, you get certified that year.

02-00:47:18
Willis: Yes, right. Now I get a chance to become a licensed architect.

Geraci: We need to talk a little bit about that. The process of getting certified was not an easy one for you.

02-00:47:30
Willis: That's right. You have to apply and get accepted by the state to take the exam. When I first applied, I was rejected. And the explanation was that while I had the qualifications in terms of, well, experience—they gave me some credit for my education, which totaled up to eight years—that was the requirement in

those days. The problem was that I hadn't worked *for* anybody. And I was arguing that I had worked *with* architects, but not *for* architects. So we were at a standstill.

I was actually considering suing the state to get the right to take the examination. Because my argument was, if I'm not capable, I'll flunk, so why should it be an issue? And I'd noticed that the big names—the architects I was familiar with as a young person—people like Frank Lloyd Wright, Bucky Fuller, Louis Sullivan—they did not go to architectural school, did not have college degrees. Well, I think Louie Sullivan had six months at MIT, six months at Beaux-Arts, but that was the extent of his architectural education. I'd known people like Henry Kaiser, who had an eighth grade education. Percentage-wise, there were not that many people who even graduated from college in those days. So the attitude about education in that era was totally different than it is now. Just night and day. And that's why I never felt the need to go back to school and get an architectural degree. It just didn't seem to make any difference. Not in the era in which I was operating, given all these major figures who hadn't bothered to get an architectural degree.

So I was puzzling over this. I knew Senator Daniel Inouye from Hawaii, before he was a senator, when we were both very young. And when he became senator, he asked me to design his house in D.C., in Chevy Chase. A Pennsylvania-Dutch style of house. And I would argue with him and say, "Dan, you've got to do something Japanese." And he would say, "Well, I'm only going to be here maybe four years, so I want to have something I can sell when I get voted out." Of course, he's still there as senator. Forty years later, or something like that. He's probably worn out his original house. But in any case, I was in his office in D.C. one day, and he said, "How are things going?" And I said, "Well, pretty good, but I'm having this trouble. I'd really like to get my license, and the State of California will not let me take the examination." And I gave him my argument. And he laughed. And I said, "Why are you laughing?" And he said, "Watch." So he gets on the telephone, and he gets the governor of California, Pat Brown, on the phone. And he says, "Hi, Pat, how are you, how are things going," et cetera. Then he says, "I have a citizen of your state [laughs] here in my office, and California isn't letting her take her examination to get an architectural license, and this is really crazy." And then he goes into the argument: "What's the concern? She'll flunk if she can't do it," et cetera. Well, three days later, I had the documents in hand. They accepted me as a person who could sit for the exam. And I'm really very proud of the fact that I passed the exam the first time I took it. And California has a very tough exam. So that's the story of how I got my license. But it's also the story of why it took me until 1966 to get there.

Geraci: So it's the state, then, that is the licensing organization. And did the state architectural association have any input into any of this?

02-00:52:47
Willis: No, no, no. It's the state licensing board, and every state has its own licensing board. And every state has total control over the licensing of its architects.

Geraci: Now, is your license only good within California? And did that license translate to other states?

02-00:53:10
Willis: Well, I would have to apply to every state that I want to practice in, to get a license. On the other hand, because I already have a license, sometimes it's just an interview, or there may be a two-hour exam. Every state has different regulations. But technically, you do have to go through the process of applying and getting a license in that state.

Geraci: We do that with lawyers, we do that with teachers. Certificates for teaching are only good per state. Well, in 1966, also, another renovation project for you that comes up is Capricorn. We mentioned that earlier in the interview. An antique shop, foodware. What took you into that direction?

02-00:54:08
Willis: One evening, I had a few drinks too many. And you know how it is when you're very relaxed and you're joking and you're laughing, and what have you, and an idea comes up: how wonderful it would be to have a store on Union Street where you could sell country furniture. Now, keep in mind that there was no market at that time for country furniture, for pine furniture. There wasn't a market for it. It was all real antiques. So why not do an antique store? And I woke up the next morning and thought, that's not a bad idea. Because my rationale was, here I am marketing myself as a person who knows how to create sales through design.

And this would give me a laboratory where I could put my money where my mouth was, and see if my design ideas in fact, really did sell merchandise. I could test what worked and what didn't. So I thought, well, this is a golden opportunity, because there were still empty buildings on Union Street, and you could readily open a store with very little money. So Bill and I proceeded. And what I've almost always done during my career is, I have a partner, a junior partner, for everything I undertake. That junior partner does all the operations. I'm only involved in the design and the marketing and the financing. Those were all things that I could do while I was practicing architecture. And so Bill was going to run the store.

Geraci: This is Bill Oakes.

02-00:56:33
Willis: Bill Oakes, right. Bill Oakes was going to run the store, and I would take care of the other things. And we each put in about $1000, and then we borrowed money from the Small Business Administration for the rest of it. The other

stuff, we did with our own labor. We found old barn wood. And barn wood was *free* in those days.[laughs]

Geraci: Not like today.

02-00:57:03
Willis: Nobody *knew* about barn wood in those days. So we were able to corner the market for barn wood and put it up on the walls. And we put sawdust on the floor—which was not-prevented by the codes then. And that was a great backdrop for the pinewood furniture. Ice boxes, different things like that. And so we found that the design really attracted a lot of people. And we would give opening events and parties and we'd get a good turnout.

But it wasn't financially moving in the way that I thought it should be. One of my clients was Joseph Koret. I had designed the interiors of his office building at 711 Mission Street. And I designed his house. I did a number of projects with Koret. And so I invited him to lunch and I told him my marketing problem. And he said, "Well, what you have to do is, you have to choose something that people know will always be there. And that's the problem with antiques or what have you. But something that would always be there, they can wait six months, can come back and find it and buy it." So we decided to go in for gourmet cookware. Well, once again, that was the beginning of the market. And we rode the market up, like Williams & Sonoma did. And that was a major turning point. And I asked the Small Business Administration for some professional advice, because they have a group of retired business people who offer that expertise to small businesses at no charge. So they sent us a chap whose family owned a firm that manufactured ball bearings. And I thought, ball bearings? What has that got to do with design and gourmet cookware?

But from him we got the most important advice anyone ever gave us. He said, "Well, what you do is date." I said, "Date? You mean like go out on a date?" [chuckles] "No, no, no. What you do is you go to a manufacturer and you say, 'I want my invoice dated ninety days later, not when I buy it.'" So you negotiate at least three months purchase plan from each manufacturer, and that gave us all the financing leeway we needed, because we could place the order, get the merchandise in, sell it, and pay for it after it was sold. This meant that we could increase our inventory dramatically, with no outlay of cash.

Geraci: Your cash-flow issues are resolved.

02-00:60:41
Willis: Totally. So from an odd source came a brilliant financial tip. With the information that we got from these two sources, the store was incredibly successful. We literally doubled our sales every year. Four years later, it was of such size and magnitude that I felt I had to make a decision—either go into retail, stay there permanently, or continue my practice—because it was just

more than I could handle. So I decided to sell the store. But I was also able to use the income from the store to buy a piece of rental property. So in a way, it became a very good financial move.

Geraci: Okay. That is so, I think, inherent in this era, that people are acting and things were moving. We talk about the American dream and the small business ability to start something and really build it into a larger concept. That's amazing. And it was happening all over. And I think your Union Street project— Look at all the businesses. It's probably—what?—a good dozen or more businesses that were all directly related to that work you had done, just right on Union Street

02-00:62:15
Willis: Yes, yes. And I did do work for some other property owners on Union Street. But essentially, on Union Street, I was able to establish a style and a method, a way to do innovative work with existing buildings.

[End Audio File 1]

Begin Audio File 3 10-15-2008.mp3

Geraci: Today is October 15th, 2008. This is tape number three, Beverly Willis interview. This is Victor Geraci. Beverly, as we left off in our last tape, we were talking about Capricorn and getting into that end of the business and everything, and how 1966 was a career changing year for you. You get your license, Capricorn starts. But also at that time, 1966, you had the only firm run by a woman in the city of San Francisco.

03-00:00:39
Willis: And that lasted for fifteen years or more.

Geraci: Fifteen years!

03-00:00:43
Willis: Amazing, yeah. That is a woman-owned firm.

Geraci: Woman-owned, right.

03-00:00:49
Willis: Yes. There may have been a woman partner during that period, with some other firm, but in terms of a woman-owned firm, at least fifteen years, maybe seventeen years.

Geraci: And there had been no woman-owned firm prior to you.

03-00:01:07
Willis: Well, Julia Morgan.

Geraci: Julia Morgan.

03-00:01:09
Willis: Yes, right.

Geraci: But that's way prior.

03-00:01:12
Willis: Yes. I think she died in the fifties, I'm not sure. But she wasn't practicing then. I don't know that much about her career, but that's my impression. But California has a distinguished history of early women architects. It's just that this particular period in San Francisco history— Well, it was a little different.

Geraci: And at that point, the firm is starting to grow. I know you start bringing in other people into the firm. Maybe we should talk a little bit about that. Who are you bringing into the firm now?

03-00:01:56
Willis: In the beginning, of course, simply two or three draftsman. I can't remember the number of people. But it became very obvious to me that I needed a person who really knew the technical aspects of putting together a set of drawings that could guide the draftspersons in the office, because I was often out of the office, working on job sites or meeting with clients. So I put the word out that I was looking for a senior architect. And a mutual friend introduced me to David Coldoff. I interviewed him and he decided to come aboard. He was looking for a change from the job that he had, and he was willing to understand that I was the designer and he was going to handle construction documents and run the office. He came aboard about 1967. After a couple of years, I offered him a partnership. And he was excellent. He was a great choice for me. As a matter of fact, I remember our mutual friend saying to me, "I finally found somebody who I think could work with you."

Geraci: Well, this is a major shift. I think that's the reason I was saying that period, 1966 then, seems there's big transitions going on for Beverly Willis at that time.

03-00:03:57
Willis: Yes, right, right. The firm was getting institutionalized, if you will. And we were on a growth path. So that continued. I can't remember right offhand when Charles Rueger actually came aboard. I think we were at 300 Broadway. When David came aboard, the office was at 197 Pixley Street, which is right at the corner of Fillmore and Pixley. And it was a great office. It had been designed by an artist, and so it was just great. It was well designed and we had an outdoor patio.

Geraci: You had a wonderful space.

03-00:04:48
Willis: Oh, yes, we had a wonderful space. And I think that one of the things that attracted Dave was the space. But we outgrew the space, and we found another space at 300 Broadway, owned by Donald Fisher—he founded Gap

stores some time later. And I've often thought, if I had known that he was going to go on to found Gap stores, [laughs] I probably would've been a little nicer to him. He was a tough landlord.

Anyway, I think that was about the time that I met Charles Rueger. Again, through a friend in the profession. And Charles Rueger, at the time, had his own office in Tacoma, Washington. It was founded by his father. And his father had, over twenty, thirty years, designed many schools in the Tacoma area, plus some other major buildings. Chuck had been on the East Coast, because he took his undergraduate degree at the University of Pennsylvania, and then he took his graduate degree at Harvard. Soon after he graduated from Harvard, his father died. So he found himself just out of college in charge of a firm, doing some pretty sophisticated buildings. He just couldn't handle it. He wasn't prepared to step into running an office with such complex buildings. So in our conversations, he said, "Well, perhaps I can bring my work into your firm. It will enlarge your portfolio, and we can work out of San Francisco." He really wanted to be in San Francisco instead of Tacoma. So he closed his office in Tacoma. He brought with him a very young draftsperson, Gary Johnson. The two men came to the firm at the same time.

Chuck came in as our vice-president of design, because he had had formal building design training at Harvard, where Dave Coldoff had had more of a land-planning background and worked with land planners in London and Toronto. To me, it was a good balance between the two men. I must confess, having read the oral histories of both David and Gary Johnson, David couldn't even remember Chuck Rueger's name, and Gary Johnson referred to Chuck Rueger as a salesperson—which he wasn't, actually, at all. And I got the feeling that there was something there that was blocking these memories, that I knew nothing about, [chuckles] and I still know nothing about. But Chuck Rueger made a very substantial contribution to the firm. He was also on the board of the San Francisco Ballet, because one of the primary funders, Lucy and Fritz Jewett, were from Tacoma, and Chuck had actually grown up with Lucy Jewett. So he had known the family from Tacoma days. And he was very helpful on the San Francisco Ballet project. We had done earlier work for the San Francisco Ballet, prior to the building that was ultimately designed and built on Franklin Street. So now we were operating with about fifteen people on the staff, more or less. These things tended to fluctuate depending on projects or jobs.

One day David and I sat down and said, "We should find some work that we can do where we are unique." And of course, this is a Henry Kaiser slogan. His slogan was: find a need and fill it. Or find a hole and fill it, because he had these concrete trucks. So it became a philosophy of business development for me to look at areas that were not competitive, where I could introduce my firm and have less of a struggle getting work. The architectural profession, even today, sort of looks down on architects who do housing work, large-scale housing, but I wasn't worried about that in those days. It was an opportunity.

It was also a point in time, once again, when suburbs were growing. And the way these large acreages of land were being developed was causing mudslides, storm-water floods, drainage problems—just a whole lot of environmental devastation—that had to be curbed in some way. So we made the decision to go after that business. Concurrently, I said, we have to have a special tool to deal with this. Because architects are taught to walk the site, get a sense of the site, and then design a building as it fits the site—which is a marvelous way of designing a building. But when you're dealing with several hundred acres or 6,000 acres, there's no way you can even *see* all the acreage. So we had to develop some way we could understand the acreage, in order to plan it, in order to know what type of building could be built there. It was also a time when developers were interested in maximizing the use of the land; instead of just doing subdivision lots, to build up density and to build condominiums and apartment buildings. And that was a good decision, because it made buildings affordable for a lot more people. The builders increased their market by offering condominiums at substantially lower prices than detached houses on lots.

03-00:12:52 I had always, for some crazy reason, been intrigued by computers. Keep in mind: in those days, an individual hardly ever saw a computer, because computers were big frame boxes, they were hidden in some room in the military or in a big corporation like IBM. They were big-box mainframes; kind of legendary—an ordinary person would never see them. During the war, I heard about computers for the first time. Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, for example, had been using them for records for employees—timesheets, that sort of thing. And I heard about a firm in Boston that was developing a program for schematic designs.

Upon investigation, I found that the key consultant, the key person who was making this happen, was a chap by the name of Eric Tiescholz, at Harvard University, where they had at that point set up ~~a~~ the Harvard computer laboratory. No longer exists. But at that point, they had a ~~s~~eparate section. So I got in touch with Eric, and he flew out to San Francisco and met with us. And he gave us a chart of things that we had to do. And he said, "I have a student that might be willing to help you. The problem is that he is getting his masters at Harvard. He's German, and he is at Harvard on a German scholarship. But I might be able to swing it, because let me tell you what he just did." Well, this student, Jochen Eigen, was very unhappy with Harvard, so he wrote a computer program that allowed him to circulate it amongst all the students and get them to identify which professors they liked and which professors they didn't like, and he had a computer crunch the numbers, and he gave every professor a rating and a critique, based on what the students thought of them. Then he distributed this around the university, in the architectural school. Needless to say, he was not very popular with the professors.

So I talked to the dean at Harvard. And the dean was more than willing to let Jochen Eigen come to San Francisco to work in my office and earn his

masters degree from working in my office. That's probably the only time in the history of Harvard that that's ever occurred. But then nobody in the United States really had the educational background that they were teaching in Germany, which was methodology, versus what we were doing in the United States, which was systems analysis. And the difference is that even though you still have to have systems analysis, you still have to be able, as Jochen used to say, to sort it out by apples and apples and oranges and oranges, et cetera. His criticism of the United States was that we just got mixed up. We would do our systems analysis, but we couldn't organize it in terms of apples and apples and oranges and oranges. So he worked for us for about two years. And during that time—maybe it was a little less than two years—he interviewed all of us to find out how we did our work. And I can tell you, I was totally, completely shocked because it was the first time I understood that the key people in the office each had a different idea of how we did our work. And it was just amazing.

Geraci: That's interesting.

03-00:17:19
Willis: I think you find that in the oral histories. Everybody probably has a different idea of what the project is like, because they just see that part of it, they don't see the whole picture. But Jochen methodically documented each and every minute step. His programs, in addition to the plotting programs that we acquired from Kansas State Geological College, we were able to merge them together in a process. This enabled us to create what we call CARLA, or Computerized Approach to Residential Land Analysis. Amazingly enough, that process allowed us to do six months' work in fifteen days

Geraci: It fulfilled the promise of computers.

03-00:18:31
Willis: Yes. Yes, it did that.

Geraci: Which was speed.

03-00:18:34
Willis: Speed, yes. And accuracy. Because if we had a thousand-acre site, we had a digitized plan—we would call it a scan plan today—in the computer. Then if we came up with a concept, we could place it on this digitized plan, and we could ask, if we do these types of buildings in this location, on this plan, what kind of drainage problems will we encounter? What sorts of geological and ecological challenges? We had a very sophisticated chart of ecological aspects of a site. We could ask, will this work? Will that work? And what will it cost? If we're going to block natural drainage, it's going to cost a lot more money in terms of storm water construction. If we put it on unstable soil, we're going to lose those buildings. So we could process, through the computer, a whole lot of different types of building footprints and locations, until we got one that really worked. And this program worked from an ecological standpoint, from

a budget standpoint, and from a marketing standpoint. Because in those days, you had a marketing plan given to you by the client that told you, in general, what your market image was. Sort of an abstracted personality profile of who the likely buyer might be.

While we didn't have any direct client input, like you would have if you were designing a home for somebody, we had this profile you designed to. We had to take all these things into consideration to get to something that we believed would really work. The advantage to the developer was not only could we do it quickly, we could also make rough changes or total changes quickly. And when we went up for approvals, if we didn't get an approval and they wanted to see another drawing, we could do that immediately. It gave the developers a lot of flexibility, and it saved them lot of money.

And word got out, because we were invited to speak at the Urban Land Institute, and at the National Association of Home Builders. We got a fair amount of press off this system. We soon had a national audience for what we were doing. And there was nothing else like it in the United States. Absolutely nothing. So those developers who believed us when we said we could do this [chuckles]—and I'm sure there were quite a few that said, aw, that's impossible—but those who believed it—well, we built a client base rather quickly within the developers who were doing large-scale land development.

Geraci: And I think one of the things maybe we need to put in the conversation right now is this is something very much needed, timing-wise for you within your firm, but also within the profession and within the American economy. This is the late sixties into the early seventies. In '66, *Silent Spring* comes out. There's a new environmental movement that has tremendous concern. We have, especially in California at that time, where you're doing this work, the loss of rural land. Californians are worried that we're losing thousands of acres of agricultural land daily, almost, it seemed like. It was just disappearing. The seventies are rough economic times. We have a recession. Inflation. So these are the historic trends that are going on. And CARLA's actually designed to help resolve some of these issues, then.

03-00:23:13
Willis: Oh, absolutely. And because we had developed a methodology for evaluating all the land characteristics with all the ecological aspects that were desired, like the flora the fauna, the drainage, et cetera, it was quite comprehensive. And then we would just check off, does this aspect of the land meet all of these criteria? Does this aspect of the land meet all these criteria? And that was part of the decision-making process we used in-house for our CARLA program, as a management tool, so to speak; it wasn't part of the computer program.

But then we had several recessions in the seventies. And the one that was sort of in the mid-seventies was particularly devastating. And we had on the

boards about seven or eight big land development programs. And maybe it was a little earlier than that, because the California act was a year after the national act. So maybe it was a little earlier, actually. Because we completed CARLA and we were using CARLA by 1972. There was a moratorium put on these developments. And we literally had no income with this moratorium in effect. It was a crisis—what to do? We decided to write our own evaluation for the government, for the state. We put together a way to evaluate whether land-planning projects met the environment criteria in the act. And we took that to the state, we took it to the city governments where we were operating, and said, "Here is a way you can evaluate." Government's slow in these things. They ultimately do a good job, but they're very slow. But we needed an immediate solution that would let us proceed, and we had to develop a prototype instead of waiting for government to do it. That really became the first step in California for what is now known as the environmental impact report.

We wrote a number of environmental impact reports. Not on our own work, but on other's work. And it didn't take the government too long to really expand it, to make it a little more sophisticated, add more engineering criteria, and things like that.

Geraci: But they used it as a prototype.

03-00:26:29
Willis: But it became the first prototype, yes.

Geraci: Interesting, because the environment impact report is done on everything now.

03-00:26:38
Willis: Yes, right.

Geraci: And on a national basis.

03-00:26:41
Willis: Yes. And [there are] companies do nothing but environmental impact reports. It's very sophisticated.

Geraci: Let's talk a little bit about here about the condominium movement. Condominiums are becoming *the* hot thing to do in the sixties and into the seventies, in trying to ease housing crisis.

03-00:27:12
Willis: Well, to make housing affordable.

Geraci: Make housing affordable. And I know in the interview that we had done with Bruce Brown, we were talking specifically about those. And he's talking about a project that— Well, I'll let you talk about it. Bruce Brown was talking about doing a project in—where was it?—Little Rock.

03-00:27:35
Willis: Little Rock, Arkansas, right.

Geraci: In Arkansas. And this is at the cusp of the condo type movement, and your involvement.

03-00:27:44
Willis: Yes. And it was one of the first condo projects in Little Rock. Starting with the Capricorn, I invested in rental apartments. I bought a building at 3977 Clay Street. It had three flats. And I condominiumized those flats. And I kept buying and selling real estate, on a fairly small scale. California real estate is incredibly expensive. It was expensive even then. And Bruce had this idea of development in Little Rock. He had grown up with the daughter of the governor, and he knew Winthrop Rockefeller and had lots of good contacts, which are always helpful, particularly if you're a foreigner in strange lands. It interested me, because in California our money wouldn't go far, but it would buy a big project in Little Rock. We could buy forty-eight units of apartments that we could condominiumize them for what I would pay for three units in San Francisco. It looked like an attractive business deal, and that motivated me to become involved. And we found out that people in Arkansas are incredibly nice. I met some of the finest, most helpful people there. It was really a pleasure. Everything went well, except there was one major problem in Little Rock: no market. I learned a very valuable lesson: it's one thing to have the money, it's one thing to have a design, it's one thing to have the contacts; but if you don't have a market, you are really in trouble. And we did get ourselves in trouble. But we came out of it with a profit because I kept trying all kinds of crazy marketing ideas like: buy a condominium and you get a free trip to the Bahamas.

Geraci: We're seeing a lot of that again.

03-00:30:45
Willis: Right. But that was innovative marketing in those days. I was coming up with every marketing idea I could possibly think of to get people to buy. And we had a construction loan that was also coming due. So if I hadn't sold everything by that time, we would've lost a lot of money. But we squeaked by. Sold everything, made a profit. And we were doing two projects almost simultaneously.

Geraci: I love to hear—not that you could've possibly lost money—but I'd love to hear the stories of— It always doesn't go exactly as planned.

03-00:31:27
Willis: [laughs] That's right! That's right!

Geraci: Sometimes, no matter our best laid plans, they just don't negotiate. One thing that Bruce Brown mentioned within his interview that I think is key to you and your personality was, there again, your social network. He mentions in his

interview, you inviting him over to just a dinner, a cocktail party type thing, and how he makes so many contacts. And there again, it's back to this—it's been kind of an underlying theme for the whole interview thus far—your ability to network.

03-00:32:05
Willis: Yes. But the profile of wealth has changed quite dramatically in the last ten years or so—things are different than when I was introduced to San Francisco society through Mymy, who was born into it. I've always, all my life, volunteered. This was something else I learned from *The Girl of the Limberlost*: you cast your bread upon the waters, and it will come back multi-fold. And I really believe that. I still believe it. So all my life, I've volunteered in organizations. And I didn't really do it, in the beginning, because of networking. Actually, in the beginning, the word networking wasn't invented yet.

Geraci: That's more of a modern construct, right.

03-00:33:15
Willis: Right. So I joined the San Francisco Ballet Auxiliary and I joined Multiple Sclerosis Auxiliary in San Francisco, because that's where my friends were. They had joined. I joined because they joined. And it was fun. I just enjoyed the meetings, I enjoyed being with my friends. It was not architecture, but it was something that was just part of life. And later on, I began to establish other organizations, one being Women's Forum. That's when I invited, for example, all of the leading women in business in San Francisco to a dinner party. And there were perhaps thirty-five women there, and Cecilia Chiang was amongst them. And we talked about forming an organization that was like the one in New York. The one in New York is called Women's Forum. We wanted to name the one in San Francisco Women's Forum West—which it was for a while, and then eventually they changed it to Northern California or something like that. But during my days, it was Women's Forum West. And so that began in that work of professional women. And I think that's really when I first heard the word network. And then I was invited to join Lambda Alpha, which, in San Francisco, is a very powerful network. Are you familiar with it?

Geraci: No. Could you expand upon that?

03-00:35:14
Willis: It was actually created in Canada. And it was called a fraternity, Lambda Alpha fraternity of real estate. And the idea was to gather everybody in real estate, from the real estate salespeople to the developers to the architects and planners and city officials—everybody who was connected to real estate development at the highest level. The San Francisco group became probably the most dynamic group, I think, in the entire country. And I had the honor of actually being the president of that group, the first woman president of the group. But that offered a tremendous networking opportunity. Simply by

going to the monthly luncheon meetings, I could meet the planning director, the banker who financed real estate, the lawyer who handled real estate deals, the other architects working on it. So that was a *wonderful* network. I had on one hand, that network, and also the professional or the women in business network. That really gave me a broad reach into professional activities in San Francisco. And then there was my volunteer work. I worked very closely with Ann Miller, who at that point, was the young grand dame of San Francisco society. Later, when her husband died, she became a nun, a Carmelite nun in Des Plaines, right outside of Chicago. But prior to that, she was very active in an organization called ARCS, Achievement Reward for College Scientists. And while that wasn't something that I was particularly interested in, that was what the older society women were participating in. And it still to this day is a very exclusive volunteer organization. Very successful. And so I actually had three different types of networks that touched on the various aspects of—

Geraci: Of your life. But this has a tremendous both personal, the social, and professional impact on you. When you're doing a job and you need somebody in a specific expertise, if you don't know someone that does that, you know someone who does.

03-00:38:27
Willis: Yes, exactly. Exactly. The telephone concept.

Geraci: It's back to your Henry Kaiser example—

03-00:38:34
Willis: The Henry Kaiser lesson.

Geraci: The example of the phone being sitting there. You may not know the answer, but you know who to call.

03-00:38:39
Willis: Call, exactly. And that's key, I think, to any endeavor.

Geraci: That's very apparent in looking into this. So this is an era of a little bit of turmoil going on, in that seventies. And we've gotten into CARLA, your network. These are ways to overcome this. I think another interview that we did for you that we should probably bring up at this time is the Lorraine Legg interview. It seems that you and Lorraine, here we have two women—and you obviously bond and network—and very powerful women within this that become within your network. Would you like to talk a little bit about Lorraine and your relationship?

03-00:39:29
Willis: I can't really remember when we first met. Or maybe it was just that I had heard about her. I invited her to my luncheon for the women, the leading women in San Francisco, and she accepted. Also, she met a woman through my luncheon, Pat Howe—that's H-O-W-E—who eventually became her

partner. And as I say, I put together this initial network. But I didn't want to be an officer, so I prevailed upon Lorraine Legg to be the president of the first group, and ultimately she accepted the offer. She had an extraordinary background because she was actually the one that invented mortgage-backed securities, which worked well until they became derivatives.

Geraci: Until it fell part, right.

03-00:41:00
Willis: Some smart business-school guys decided to introduce the concept of derivatives, and now we have toxic mortgages.

Geraci: Lorraine was with Boise Cascade.

Willis: She was an incredibly interesting woman. She made a lot of money for Boise Cascade, trading in foreign currency. [laughs] And I thought, well, that's something. How many people knew about foreign currency back in those days? Anyway, I found her a very interesting person, a brilliant woman. And we did hit it off, and my firm did two or three projects with Boise Cascade, and then I helped her with some work on her house.

Geraci: We had just finished talking about the power of this network system that's beginning. She's a perfect example of how that fits together.

03-00:42:20
Willis: That's right.

Geraci: She also speaks very highly of your house in Napa, and going up there, the events that are happening up there, and your personal friendship. As she put it, you were quite a lovely host. And she talks about something you know well: what it's like to be a woman in a man's dominated profession. And the people you're dealing with—real estate, banking, development—that's all male-dominated, and you had the tenacity and grace to succeed. How did you feel in those days? There aren't many women to talk to that are involved in this.

03-00:43:24
Willis: Well, it's interesting. During all the first years of my career, my being a woman just never came up. There was no animosity that I experienced in all of my early years. The issue started in the seventies, when there were a lot of women coming out of the universities. They couldn't get jobs in the profession, because, for the most part, they didn't hire women. They just wouldn't hire women. So the women started protesting, and that created two camps fighting each other. It was a tough time. Not a tough time for me, particularly, except that all of a sudden people around me begin to become sensitized to the fact that there was antagonism against women. And as late as 1978, Elmer Botsai, president of the American Institute of Architects—he happened to be a San Francisco architect, but he was president of the national AIA—told the press that he would never hire a woman architect. And it really

got *big* press. Headlines across one of the business pages or something like that.

Geraci: I imagine he later lived to regret that.

03-00:45:05
Willis: Yes, I'm sure he did live to regret that. And that probably was the key reason why I was elected president [chuckles] of the California Architects the next year. But back to the question, in terms of my relationship with the movement. There were a handful of very, very successful women-owned practices. And at this point, we were all maybe twenty-five years older than the women trying to enter the profession. So at the beginning, it was very difficult to understand the posture of the younger women, because we didn't come out of that environment, and it was really hard to understand it. I came to understand it a few years later. And then with the passage of the Equal Opportunity Act, I think it was, small businesses had to hire like 3% women and 20% blacks—or African Americans, as it is now—if they were going to do a government job. That 3% was devastating to me, because at this point, I had a pretty good-sized firm, and I was doing some big projects. And my male competitors could use this against me and say, hey, we're only supposed to have a woman do 3% of the project. Well, on a project of any size, that's like doing the bathrooms and the stairwells. So it's hardly equal, in that sense. For the young women coming up, it opened the door for them. For them, this was a good development. But for those of us who were established, it was pretty devastating.

So they went from not hiring any women to hiring *a* woman. And that put all the women in competition with each other. They said, okay, we'll hire two women. And that was just as bad, with the competition. And finally, that broke down. But I don't think it broke down until the eighties. Or maybe the late seventies or something. So that whole period in the seventies was really very difficult for women—as I say, for a variety of reasons. And the other thing was, in my observation—and I said this early on, and I was heavily criticized for it—but still, the women in the schools, they were getting a degree, but they weren't getting an education. And they didn't know how to present themselves, either personally or at work or what have you—at least, I found this to be true of the ones that came to me. Now, maybe I was not their first choice. Maybe their first choice was Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill hired the good ones, [chuckles] and the ones ~~I got~~ who called on me were the ones who didn't know how to present themselves. And so I, as a result, did not hire many women initially. Eventually, I wound up with as many women as men in my practice. But in those first years, I hired one woman who was just great. And she had a masters' degree in architecture, a masters' degree in structural engineering. And she could really make a contribution to the firm. I hired her in an instant, actually. But the education situation, in part, even today, has not totally changed for women.

Geraci: And these were tough times. Even within the government, in projects I'm also doing, the United States Department of Forestry, in 1976, had a consent decree, and was given five years to make 42% of its workforce women.

03-00:49:59
Willis: Wow. Forty-two percent.

Geraci: Their biggest problem is they could not find, in many cases, for specific scientific jobs, women who had the credentials to fill the position. And women that were brought in then felt that they were judged unfairly—which they were.

03-00:50:16
Willis: Yes. Correct. It was a difficult time.

Geraci: So making that transition was not an easy transition. The nuts and bolts weren't always in place.

03-00:50:25
Willis: That's right.

Geraci: Is that kind of what— you had that feeling?

03-00:50:29
Willis: That's well said. That's really well said. Particularly looking at it now, is that you can really see that things were trying to be worked out, culture was trying to change. And it was like trying to get an old Model T Ford going, with the jerky motions and cranking it up and all of that.

Geraci: Transitions and change are never easy.

03-00:50:56
Willis: Correct. Correct.

Geraci: They take time and work.

03-00:50:59
Willis: And we're going through a massive one today.

Geraci: Yes. [laughs] I would think, as far as development, this would be *really* tough times, over what's happened with the economy. And the idea of financing much of this. As you mentioned, in your day and age, financing was probably a little simpler, a little more clear-cut.

03-00:51:26
Willis: And that was the other thing: I never had problems getting loans. As a matter of fact, I wrote a chapter in a book very early on, on computer usage and financing, because I was able to find, actually, a piece of software where I could, in the early seventies, generate internal rates of return. Well, many bankers didn't even know about internal rates of return. Everybody knows

about it today. But that really allowed me to generate printouts with very sophisticated numbers in them and rates of return. So it really created trust, and it laid it out, helped the banker with the work. And so I was able to negotiate some very interesting loans. Lenders felt more comfortable because I had an insight into their world and could, in a sense, talk their language. That helped them to overlook the fact that they were dealing with a woman. It helps if you can have this exchange where your knowledge is apparent and you're meeting professional to professional, not female to male.

Geraci: Well, any young person, male or female, the typical complaint is, I've got all this energy and all this knowledge; someone has to give me a chance. And it's not that easy. And I think, also within the women's movement at the time, the seventies *was* a rough transition era. And I think like the women's movement throughout American history, not all women have agreed on the same thing.

03-00:53:36
Willis: Sure.

Geraci: Just as not all men. [Willis laughs] As we all have different political beliefs—

03-00:53:41
Willis: Oh, yes.

Geraci: —or ideologies. So there hasn't been just one consistent philosophy.

03-00:53:49
Willis: True.

Geraci: So I think this is a very good place, at around fifty-four, fifty-five minutes into this, to stop. Thank you.

[End of Interview]

Interview #2: October 16, 2008
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Geraci: Today is Thursday, October 16, 2008, and we are in the New York City office of Beverly Willis. This is interview number two with Ms. Willis, and is being conducted by Victor Geraci, Associate Director of the University of California Berkeley's Regional Oral History Office. And the interview is part of the Beverly Willis oral history series of interviews to document the life and work of artist, architect, urbanist, lecturer and writer Beverly Willis. Funding for these interviews comes from the Beverly Wills Architecture Foundation. This is tape number four.

Beverly, what I'd like to do today is pick up where we left off yesterday. I think there were a couple of things you wanted to go back and talk about first, and then we'll move on with the interview. So let's start.

04-00:00:56
Willis: Well, there was one thing that I did want to pick up on, which really went back to our conversation about St. Joseph's Academy. When I was about eight, I really fell in love with reading. Of course, this was still in the Depression. The nuns had very few books, and they kept their own private library, away from the students. So for me to read, I really had to sneak into their library and secretly borrow a couple of books. And then I'd have to find a quiet place, like a cloakroom in the corner, where I could curl up and read and nobody could find me. And then I would sneak the books back into the library and get another book. And of course, I learned a great deal through that reading. But this idea of research got implanted in my mind very early on, and it's lasted my entire life.

And of course, we've talked about the development of CARLA. We were one of the first three firms in the United States to use a computer. And that, of course, was based upon research that we both participated in and funded. And so as I got along in my career, this passion for research, and this ability to follow through, has been crucial to my success. So I just wanted to mention that it actually began very early.

Geraci: Well, it seems that you had a natural curiosity.

04-00:02:41
Willis: Yes, curiosity is key.

Geraci: What type of books were you getting from the nuns' library?

04-00:02:49
Willis: Oh, I read everything. All sorts of books. And at one point, I was asked, did you understand them? [they laugh] And I doubt it, but I got something out of every book that I read.

Geraci: I bet the nuns probably knew you were doing that.

04-00:03:07
Willis: Well, bless them if they did. They didn't stop me.

Geraci: They didn't stop you. How do you stop a child that has this natural curiosity, who wants to read? That's knowledge of the world and what's going on.

04-00:03:24
Willis: And ultimately, it's having the greater knowledge that gives you a competitive edge. So it's not only formative, I think, from a psychological and emotional and social viewpoint, but it does give you technical knowledge that is very useful.

Geraci: Now, as you're in this orphanage—this is a Catholic orphanage—are the nuns educating you? Or are they sending you to public schools?

04-00:03:54
Willis: No, no. We were educated right there.

Geraci: By the nuns.

04-00:03:58
Willis: By the nuns. And I thought that they gave me a very good education. And I think I was very fortunate that way. They were strict, and I think perhaps that's what it takes.

Geraci: I guess like anything else in the world, there are extremes. Discipline can go too far.

04-00:04:30
Willis: Doesn't mean you have to like it when you're a kid. [laughs]

Geraci: Exactly. You don't have to like it. I think this is kind of a good segue for us. You've started your own business, you have your firm now. I'm not quite sure of the date on this, but you're working on Glide Church. And we have the Don Pollard interview, in which he's talking about that. And I think that's a good example of how an architect has to translate the needs of the client. Let's talk a little bit about that project.

04-00:05:02
Willis: It was, of course, a very interesting project. The Glide Church, as Don, I think, explains in his oral history, was founded by a woman named Lizzie Glide. She was a very wise woman, and she also was a developer. She developed an office building, she developed a hotel, and she funded a church. And she kept those properties tied together, so that Glide Church had the economic advantage of income from both a hotel and from an office building. But in her will, Lizzie Glide said that the church should serve the neighborhood. Now, at that point, the neighborhood was a very nice middle-class neighborhood. But

as years went by, it really became the center of the red-light district of San Francisco. This is Jones and Ellis Street. And at that time, that was where the brothels and the drug trade were. It was a pretty rough neighborhood.

And because it was, in a sense, a business organization as well as a church, they had a business structure. And they knew they had to honor the wishes of Lizzie Glide. But how would they do it? Their ministers were not really attracting any of the neighborhood population. And the white middle class didn't want to come to that neighborhood. So the preachers—and they had several preachers, actually—were literally preaching to an empty house. When I was brought aboard, the challenge was how to attract the people in the neighborhood. I worked with Don, who was a wonderful person and collaborator, and a very innovative thinker. We became very good friends through this experience. Don and I would kick ideas around. He was the head of the building committee. And finally I said, "Look, we have to make an event. We have to create an event, so that we have to disguise that it's a church. [laughs] We have to make it like a community center or someplace where the people in the neighborhood would not be afraid to come." We needed to make it friendlier than a formal 1930s church would be. So I suggested we remove all of the visual aspects of the church—the pulpit, the communion rail, the altar—and eliminate all the barriers between the audience and the person who would be preaching. To accomplish this, we created a series of stairs that went up to a platform. It was like a theater, actually.

Geraci: More like a theater in the round?

04-00:09:16
Willis: Yes. Well, a theater with the proscenium protruding out. But there was no barrier there at all between whoever was delivering the message of God to the audience itself. And to make all this work, I introduced a cutting-edge sound system, where whatever the preacher said on the stage, the people in the audience could hear it and respond to it, so that it was a two-way conversation. And because this was in the latter part of the sixties, as I recall, or maybe the early seventies, I created a light show, a kind of psychedelic thing.

Geraci: San Francisco in the sixties.

04-00:10:15
Willis: San Francisco. We could do a psychedelic projection of color around the walls, on the walls, in the whole church, so the whole environment became colorful. And it was not static, it was always moving. I had experience with this type of thing when I was doing military clubs, particularly a club in Texas, where I was asked to design a noncommissioned officers club. And the military officer objected to that because they said the soldiers would simply destroy it, so why spend the money to fix up a noncommissioned officers club? And I argued that, in my experience, design could change behavior. And

so I was permitted to do that design. I was working with a great guy, Johnny Moran, who was running the clubs. And it was almost miraculous the way that it happened. Where in the previous club they had had fights, broken furniture, torn and dented walls and things like that, these men just changed their behavior. They came to the club, they would wear a tie, and they would be gentlemen, because the environment was a gentleman's environment. So I'd already had this experience of seeing a dramatic change in behavior in response to my redesign of an environment.

And Glide became another instance where design influenced behavior. Cecil Williams had just joined the church at the time. He was the junior minister, if you will. And the ministers used to sit on the side while somebody would preach, or they'd take turns preaching. And they wore black robes and stiff white collars. And this ability to move around fit Cecil Williams. So he started, when he was talking, preaching, to move around the stage. And the next thing you knew, he took off his black robes, [laughs] put on a colorful shirt, and just changed. But the word in the neighborhood got around. "Hey, dude, this is really cool; you really got to go over and see this." So the neighborhood people started coming in. But word got around the entire city, so there were people coming in from Pacific Heights, from all the other districts in San Francisco. So in a very, very short amount of time, instead of having one service, Cecil had to have three services a day to accommodate the crowds, because the church was jam-packed. And Cecil, of course, has become an icon in San Francisco. An unbelievable human being. And his contributions to the city have been indescribable and remarkable and wonderful. And he's managed to keep this going for twenty, thirty years. Just wonderful. But obviously, the light shows dropped off at some point after [they laugh] the sixties passed. So there have been minor changes.

We did not really change the physical church. The walls were still there. We had wanted to eliminate the cross in the beginning, but the ministers objected to that. But eventually, Cecil even removed the cross, so that the environment was very neutral and fit his message. We did paint the church, in colors that I chose. And we did work for Glide in the office building and some other minor things. But it was a wonderful experience. And of course, just meeting and getting to know Cecil was an incredible experience.

Geraci: Now, in your conversations with Cecil, were these things ideas that he had in mind? What's the conversation that's going on, where the two of you are deciding to make this kind of change?

04-00:15:00

Willis: When I first came, I was interviewed by the business managers of the church. Not Cecil, or not the ministers.

Geraci: Not the ministers.

04-00:15:07
Willis: No. And they made it quite clear to me that they needed some dramatic ideas and some dramatic change in order to fulfill their obligation to Lizzie Glide's mission and her will. They were not specific about how to do that. And at that point, Cecil was a very junior minister and had just come aboard. There were senior ministers that were also preaching at that time. So we never really had too much of a discussion with the ministers; it was more with the business people. At least as it affected me. Now, Don was chair of the building committee. I'm not sure where his instructions came from at all. But I think that he, too, was given a mandate for change. And as the head of the building committee, it was his responsibility to talk to Cecil and the other ministers and what have you. So he undoubtedly brought some of those conversations into the conversations he and I had. But essentially, I worked with Don. And his responsibility was to work more directly with the church members. He was a member of the church.

Geraci: Oh, he's a member of the church. These are dramatic changes. And even within the Catholic Church at the time, the altar's beginning to come down, the church is opening up, there's the reversal of the position of the priest so he faces the congregation. All religions are changing services— this is a common thing that's happening. They're opening up. I imagine there had to be some tension between the old traditional ministers at Glide and— With Cecil Williams, here's this young kid coming up with these ideas, and now he's packing the house. That had to be exciting.

04-00:17:32
Willis: Something happened. I'm not privy to what happened. But I do know that it didn't take very long for Cecil to become the minister. At some point, he did change the way that they had been operating traditionally. And what was the story is behind that, I don't know.

Geraci: But you provided him the platform to do that. Literally. Physically, even.

04-00:18:06
Willis: Yes. Right, right. And it just coincidentally happened that it just suited him perfectly. It was as if he was in his black robes, almost like a straightjacket. And the moment he got the feeling he could take that off and he could become himself, he became the Cecil Williams that we know today.

Geraci: That's quite a person. It's still a rougher area of town. You worked with Don on other things, also, didn't you?

04-00:18:47
Willis: Yes. Principally, the Pasadena City Hall. That was more of a consulting project, because I had gained a reputation for being able to select paint colors for a whole range of buildings—whether it was residential buildings or office buildings or, in this case, city hall. So we worked together on what would be

appropriate for the Pasadena City Hall, which is a monumental building, a very special building.

Geraci: Pasadena was going through its own change at that time. This is also the year of urban renewal. And a lot of the old wonderful downtown areas had fallen into disrepair.

04-00:19:46
Willis: Yes. And that was one of them. Don moved from San Francisco to Pasadena. And he and people that he chose to work with him were directly responsible for the revitalization of Pasadena. Because at that point in history, it was dying. And in a very short time, he turned that city around. And once again, it was being able to be very innovative, working within federal government legislation, but doing things that took a bit of creativity and dedication. And his ability to get people to agree with him. He was a marvelous communicator.

Geraci: That's a skill, in and of itself. We're starting to move into the 1970s. And you're still doing a few projects. I believe you had the hotel renovation for Joseph Koret in San Francisco..

04-00:21:11
Willis: Yes, he purchased what was then called the San Franciscan Hotel. Or is that the current name? [laughs] In any case, it was a large, large hotel on Market Street. And he asked me to do the renovation work on the hotel and redesign some of the public spaces and restaurants. I had done a number of restaurants, as part of my retail work.

Geraci: But public space becomes a forte for you. Your job was to bring people in. When we talk about location, location, location, that's great, but you still have to get people through the door. It seemed to be something that you're really developing a skill in at this point.

04-00:22:00
Willis: I was inspired by the industrial-design philosophy of how design interrelates with the human being, how design can motivate the human being or motivate them to buy a product. In my case, I tried to create design that would help people to enjoy the environment. I'd really developed a strong philosophy that there were things you could do through design that made people feel good, and want to be in the environment. And I could do that through design. It was a very important thing for me to do that. Not that I didn't want to do something that was very aesthetic and good design. And I wanted to win awards, like all other architects. But I really wanted to make the space, or even make the visual enjoyment of the building, something very special for the human being. In that sense, I was a humanist. But in contemporary terms.

Geraci: We're talking a little bit about your philosophy of architecture and art now. It seems to me that you're trying to create approachable art and architecture.

04-00:23:35
Willis: Yes, I think that's well said. I hadn't thought about the word. But in so many cases, architecture can be so intimidating. And the Glide Church is a symbol of that. It wouldn't have been intimidating for a certain class of people who were used to that very formal 1930s design. And of course at this point, we're also dealing with modernism, which was very intimidating to a lot of people. I loved it, but it was intimidating. And so it was important, to use your term, to make the building and the environment of the building approachable and welcoming.

Geraci: It's getting people inside the art.

04-00:24:34
Willis: Yes. And that's when art can really be appreciated, when you open up people's hearts and minds to art so that they can enjoy it, they can be part of it. And it's not something that *they* do or something that doesn't apply to me. And I think if we're going to recreate environments in our neighborhoods and in our cities, people have to feel that way. It can't be just, "I'm a collector and I'm collecting this piece of art, and I'm creating an icon." And that's good for that person, maybe good for that person's friends. Or in architecture, maybe it's good for the peer group. But it's not something that really relates to the community or the neighborhood, the larger neighborhood, or the city itself.

Geraci: You mentioned earlier, in yesterday's interview, at a young age you almost had a fear of art. And then once you found an entry into it, it's almost like a missionary zeal on your part, to bring other people into art.

04-00:26:01
Willis: Well, that's a very interesting observation. I had never really thought of that. But I think you could probably argue that point.

Geraci: No, please do. [laughter] Please do.

04-00:26:14
Willis: I've never really thought about how this connected. I'm an Aquarian. And Aquarians, of course, are involved with the big picture and we want to do good. So it may be the stars.

Geraci: At this time, as we get into the early seventies, your firm now is Willis and Associates. It's starting to grow. What was the firm like in these early seventies?

04-00:26:53
Willis: At that point, we were on Broadway, 300 Broadway, which was a block away from Pacific Avenue, where I started out, in the old Barbary Coast. We had negotiated a space, and it was built to our design. So that was really cool. We had our own design space. And as I mentioned a little earlier, we were also at the point of developing a practice based upon large-scale developments. In architecture, when you're establishing your own firm as a single architect, you

usually start with small remodels and small projects, and then the projects get larger and larger and larger. And as that happens, you need different types of skills, so you search for different types of staff members who have sophistication and can work on larger buildings and bigger projects. And we were beginning then to receive government work. And that was, again, competitive. Though on a large scale, once we had shown many developers our ability to do really remarkable things with CARLA, we had many new opportunities.

The other thing is that we look at the *Commerce Business Daily* paper, which all architects look at for government work, to see where we could submit a proposal, get our name on a list, get jobs. So we started to do that. And then we were lucky enough to get on some shortlists, and we were lucky enough to be awarded some work through that process. And that was a totally different type of work than we had ever done before.

Geraci: So this is an era of Beverly Willis the businesswoman. Your business is getting bigger and bigger and bigger. And especially as CARLA's coming online, and your developments are becoming extremely large.

04-00:29:44
Willis: Huge, yes.

Geraci: So did you start to miss architecture a little bit? Running a business is not an easy—

04-00:29:53
Willis: Yes, as a matter of fact, it is a tremendous challenge. And for me, it was particularly a challenge, because I'm a designer, and that's why I got into architecture: to design, not to be a businessperson. I had to balance the time that I could spend in the office, on the board, with my people, designing, and the time that I had to spend outside the office, I had to keep a very careful balance. But, frankly, I'm not the best manager in the world. And the wonderful thing about David Coldoff was that he was a great manager. And he ran the office. And the other thing that David did—which in architecture, was pretty remarkable—he had three children, and he loved his children, he wanted to spend time with them. So we started work at eight and we closed the office at five. We didn't work weekends, [laughs] we didn't work nights—unless it was an emergency, unless there was just something very unusual—because Dave wanted to get home to be with his children. So he worked very intensely and was very focused. We got a lot of work done in eight hours. And in so many architecture firms, you've got to work till midnight, you've got to work on weekends to get the work done. We found out that that's really not necessary. It's really not necessary at all. You can do an awful lot of work, if you're focused, in eight hours. The good thing for me was that it left my evenings free to meet people, to go to parties, to circulate. And I could bring in business that way, by circulating at social events. So it

worked out well, and gave me the freedom in the evenings to do business development.

Geraci: So your job is to develop the business, his job was to run the office.

04-00:32:17
Willis: Correct.

Geraci: In very simple terms. That's a good combination, then.

04-00:32:22
Willis: Well, it's a perfect combination, it really is. And he was very good at it. And I always used to laugh because I don't smoke, he didn't smoke. And every now and then, we would hire an employee who smoked. And of course, that would drive David up the wall. So he would keep pecking away with all the comments, pecking away, until that person stopped smoking. [laugh] This was long before the smoke-free laws came into effect.

Geraci: You had a smoke-free office.

04-00:32:57
Willis: We had a smoke-free office.

Geraci: [laughs] That's funny. Then in the mid-seventies, you were— in fact, if I remember right, you were the first woman chair of the Federal Construction Council for the National Academy of Science.

04-00:33:13
Willis: Yes. When I got my license, my first thought was to join the AIA and to serve on a committee. And I selected the urban design committee. But I could never get a notice of the meetings. And I made a couple of comments to that effect, and they said, "Well, we'll get your name straight. We'll get your address straight. [they laugh] You'll get the next notice. You'll get the next notice." And it never happened. So I was, again, getting frustrated about how I participated with the American Institute of Architects. And coincidentally, I got this call from Washington, D.C., from a chap called George Wright, who was the first African American ever hired by the AIA. As a staff person, he was the chair of the housing committee. And he said, "I've heard of you." And he said, "In my position, I have the right to invite one or two architects to join the committee." Because in the AIA, the local committee has to propose you to be on a national committee. And if I couldn't even get to the— [laughs]

Geraci: You couldn't get to the local committee.

04-00:34:49
Willis: So anyway, I, started commuting to Washington, D.C. to serve on the housing committee of the AIA.

And then I got a call from the executive director of the building research advisory board of the National Academy of Science. And they said, "We've heard about you, and we would like to invite you to join the building research advisory board of the National Academy of Science." And I did that for several years. And they participate in the Federal Construction Council. And they appoint a member of the building research advisory board to be on the Federal Research Council. Now, these names have changed. I think it's now the Federal Research Facility. But so I was obviously the first woman in all of these things. And so I said I'd do that, serve with the group.

Now, this group represented the heads of construction of all the government agencies, including the military and the State Department. Everyone. So here I was with this group of men who literally control all the US government construction in the world. And so I decided that I was a little out of place. Here I came from a relatively small firm in San Francisco. I obviously didn't have much of a background in some of the things they were discussing—except the computer. And that was one of the first times the government had set up a computer system, while I was on this council. And so I decided not to say anything. And at the end of each meeting, I would ask a question. And that would be my participation. So after three years, they decided to make me chairman [laughs] of the council. So I learned right then and there that there's a great advantage in not talking too much.

Geraci: But that must've been both an amazing opportunity and there had to have been some tension, in that if you're the only woman, you're serving as a role model now. You're breaking a barrier here. Did you feel any pressure?

04-00:37:50
Willis: No, I really didn't. For the most part, I have rarely had to deal with issues related to my being a woman, except with my male colleagues, when they used that to attack me. But in terms of fitting in with an all-male group, that was always very comfortable for me. And the men never really treated me any differently than they did the other men. So I just never thought in terms of being a role model or— At that time. I can look back and say, yes, you're right. [they laugh] You're right. Because it did take certain women to break barriers. But now that I've had an opportunity to research women's history in architecture, I can see that there were women back in the middle of the 1800s [laughs] that were breaking barriers, people who were whitewashed from history, people like myself, and we've never heard of them, tragically.

Geraci: It's almost as if you had lost that history.

04-00:39:22
Willis: That history was lost. And one of the things that we're doing right now with the foundation is rebuilding that history. And it's a remarkable history, now that I know what I know. But we wouldn't have been having some of these conversations about pioneers and role models if we had had that history. We

did have incredible women in the 1800s and in the first part of the twentieth century.

Geraci: Who were actually doing the ground breaking.

04-00:40:00
Willis: Yes, who were actually breaking ground.

Geraci: It's that stepladder.

04-00:40:04
Willis: But if you never hear about it, then they don't exist, yes.

Geraci: Turning to a new topic: we also did an interview with Gary Johnson, who was an employee of yours. Let's talk a little bit about when you hired Johnson. Because he comes from—

04-00:40:25
Willis: He came with Chuck Rueger.

Geraci: He came with Chuck Rueger, right.

04-00:40:27
Willis: From Tacoma. And Gary was really a superb designer. He also enjoyed, like I did, volunteering and just doing social things. Many architects don't have that desire to work on volunteer projects. When I introduced him to Ann Miller and the ARCS college science award people, they just loved him. And he loved volunteering and helping them out. And that was good for the firm, too, that he could make those connections. He was very good.

Geraci: He mentions a scenario in a competition you had with John, I believe it's Warnecke?

04-00:41:39
Willis: [different pronunciation] Warnecke, Warnecke, yes, yes. Well, one of the interesting things to me was that the attacks on me did not really start until we were dealing with major dollars. And in this case, it was the Aliamanu Valley housing project. It was, in those days, $115 million, which would be well over a billion dollars today. This was a project, 6,000 acres, for literally, a new town. It was for 11,500 people, 525 buildings. That's larger than most of the small towns in the United States. So it was a huge project. And it was in Honolulu. It was adjacent to Pearl Harbor.

The Corps had hired the largest firm in Honolulu to do the work, originally, and this firm couldn't bring it in on budget. And the Corps had a system that they could not, if it were housing, get additional money. So they had to do it within the budget. So they released the first firm and they went out to hire a second firm. In this case, unlike their usual practice, they opened it up to the entire United States. Any architectural firm in the United States was qualified

to submit their qualifications. And we were in a deep recession, so every major firm in the United States, from Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, HOK, submitted, including John Warnecke's firm. And we were chosen on the shortlist. The Corps had been very impressed with what we could do with CARLA. And once again, we were the only firm in the country that could demonstrate a technology that would solve all sorts of problems, and keep costs in line.

We had flown to Hawaii, made our final presentation on the shortlist, and were waiting to hear who actually was selected for the job. A representative of John Carl Warnecke's firm— and this guy was big—he was a football hero at Stanford; he was a roommate with President Kennedy; he knew all the generals at the Corps of Engineers, because his firm had done a lot of work in D.C., done a lot of work for the Corps of Engineers—he was enormously well connected—and this representative of his said to me that if I would joint venture with him—mind you, all of the presentations had been made—if I would joint venture with him, he could guarantee me that we would win. And I took a deep breath. [Geraci laughs] And he had a terrible reputation. He had done this with other firms in San Francisco, and he had a terrible reputation in the profession. And I said no, knowing that that would really mean that I probably wouldn't—

Geraci: You're putting the whole project at risk.

04-00:45:41

Willis: Yes. In a recession. So it was a pretty gutsy thing for me to do. What happened was he had inside information that I had won. So he could *guarantee* me that if I teamed up with him, I'd win. I'd already won. But I didn't know that; he did. But when I said no to him, he exploded. He was so furious. He found somebody in the computer industry to fly with him to Washington, D.C. He set up a luncheon with all the head generals and said, "This woman is using this man's work. And this man here is here to tell you that he's not going to allow her to use his work." Which was an absolute lie.

I got a call from somebody that I had met through the Federal Construction Council. He said, "Look, Beverly, if you have any political connections, this is the time to use them, or you're going to lose this project." Well, fortunately, I knew Senator Daniel Inouye, who at that point, was chair of the armed forces committee; Alan Cranston was a client and a friend of mine. And so I called them both. And bless their hearts, they had a representative of their office call the Corps of Engineers every day, until we got this straightened out. And finally, as a result of two senators intervening, the Corps told me that if I could prove that was my work, they would give me the job. So I had to hire an attorney. I had, of course, all of the programming books, all the equations and that sort of thing for the programming books. The attorney took all the programming material and examples to D.C. and argued it out. And finally, the Corps was convinced and they gave me the job. The other thing

that's important to this story is that while I was ranked number one, Warnecke was ranked number six. So to win the job, he would've had to knock off five other firms.

Geraci: Not just you.

04-00:48:29
Willis: Not just me. Which would've been almost impossible to do. If he had been ranked number two, I would've understood this. Because if he could've knocked me off, then he would've gotten the job. But that was not the case. And he was *so furious* that a *woman* had beaten him out of this lucrative job that he was willing to go to that length and lie in order to take the job away from me. Fortunately, he wasn't able to do that.

Geraci: Well, you had hired the two people that developed this whole project to begin with, with CARLA. And you had already used CARLA, I believe.

04-00:49:20
Willis: Oh, many times before. Oh, many times before this job. And we had a track record.

Geraci: With the Diamond Heights project?

04-00:49:27
Willis: Yes. There was no way. I didn't even know this man who he took to D.C. to tell the military that my program was his program. I never met him. But these things, in architecture, can get unpleasant sometimes.

Geraci: Well, they get unpleasant because there's a lot of money involved.

04-00:49:54
Willis: Exactly. And when there's a lot of money involved, people's personalities tend to change.

Geraci: And it seemed that that was the case. We've talked about CARLA and the way you and the staff developed the program. Talk about a couple of projects that actually made use of CARLA. The Pacific Point apartments, I believe, was your first use of CARLA.

04-00:50:21
Willis: Yes. Yes, it was.

Geraci: So let's talk a little bit about that project.

04-00:50:25
Willis: Well, that was a situation where we had never used it before. So the first time takes a little extra something happening. And you remember his name, the head of the redevelopment agency: Justin Herman. I had gotten to know Justin Herman. And I said I would really like to do a housing development as the

architect, and I'd like to have a chance to use this program that we've just developed. Well, Justin Herman was a very creative guy. And he was a wonderful man. Very personable and knowledgeable. And he said, "Okay. I'll arrange it." So he called up Alpha Land Company and said, "I am giving you, actually, two different development sites in San Francisco." And he says, "I want you to hire this firm, Willis and Associates." So in a way, it was a forced marriage [they laugh] with the developer. But it was one of these forced marriages that really worked out very well. Once again, the Pacific Heights project was a project that other developers had tried to develop. And the dilemma there was there were sections of unstable soil. And it was right on the Pacific Ocean.

Geraci: Yes, it's on the San Andreas Fault line, isn't it, also?

04-00:52:11
Willis: And it was on the San Andreas Fault line. It was right there. Had a great view of the Pacific Ocean. It was on a bluff above the beach. But it's typical in California, as you know, vulnerable to these major landslides and things of this nature. So by using CARLA, we were really able to identify the areas of stable soil, and deal with the drainage, and avert the possibility of a landslide that would take the housing down the cliff, as so often happened in California. We were able to meet the developer's criteria—the number of units and the type of units. They were condominiums. They were very attractive and sold out right away. And the developer was very happy. That led to another project with him on their other site, which was the Diamond Heights site, which was sort of an entire block, a kidney-shaped block, which was also a very, very difficult site.

Geraci: So CARLA's proving itself at this point, at least environmentally.

04-00:53:43
Willis: Oh, absolutely, yes.

Geraci: From the reading that I've done, you're doing minimal earth movement.

04-00:53:52
Willis: Well, yes, actually. The philosophy behind all this was incredibly simple. It was that less construction does less damage to the environment and costs a lot less. It just seems very simple.

Geraci: It's not a complicated concept, right. [laughter]

04-00:54:13
Willis: Right. Our work was directed towards doing less construction and doing the construction on the right type of terrain and the right type of soil.

Geraci: I think that's the part that somewhat amazed me; it's *so* simple.

04-00:54:33
Willis: Yes. Yes.

Geraci: And out of its simplicity comes this very good practice.

04-00:54:41
Willis: Right.

Geraci: Because that was the era, as we move into the fifties, sixties, even into the seventies, they'd just remove hillsides, mountains, fill in valleys. And we're living with [the consequences of] a lot of those bad practices now.

04-00:55:00
Willis: That's right. And of course, that was the motive behind passing the environmental legislation that was passed in the late sixties. It was a response to this incredible damage developers were doing to our environment. But the other thing that was always interesting to me was that there was this period when subdivisions were first being built, where there was ample flat land. And so it was really easy for a developer to come onto a piece of flat land and build housing. But the moment that they begin to look to the hillsides to build, that was a totally different story. The developers and contractors had no idea how to manage building on that kind of terrain. As you say, their solution was to make it flat. You just take the hill and move it. [laughs] You tear it down, you make it flat, and you build the houses on it.

Geraci: Without thinking of the repercussions. Mother Nature doesn't like to be fooled with.

04-00:56:17
Willis: Yes, that's right. And there are other things to consider, like all the species that need protection and all the species that need trees in order to survive. And you have to consider the climate. I learned that when I had my own vineyard. I had ten acres of vineyard. And I had two microclimates in ten acres. So I had to deal with two parts of a small vineyard differently, because of the microclimates. So there's much more here than meets the eye.

Geraci: Much more. I think we're going to stop on this tape right now; let me change tape.

[End Audio File 4]

Begin Audio File 5 10-16-2008.mp3

Geraci: Today is October 16, 2008. We're with Beverly Willis. This is tape number five, interview number two. Beverly, when we left off, we were talking about projects that you'd used with CARLA. And I think the next project we probably need to talk a little bit about here would be the Aliamanu project.

05-00:00:22
Willis: Yes.

Geraci: We'd already mentioned that a little bit in the other one.

05-00:00:25
Willis: Right, we were talking about the competition to get the job.

Geraci: The competition. This is a huge— you're developing a city. It includes schools, it includes the infrastructure of electrical power, sewer, water—

05-00:00:41
Willis: Roads.

Geraci: And it's in a crater.

05-00:00:44
Willis: A volcano crater.

Geraci: A volcano—an inactive one, of course—that had also been used as a munitions dump. So this has some special challenges.

05-00:00:56
Willis: Yes, it did. Due to the fact that the land underneath was just this collection of spent ammunition shells, the soil was very tricky and unstable. So thank God we had a tool that could deal with that. The project turned out very successfully in the end. And I would say, really, it was General Peel that who made the big difference. And what he did was, the first time—actually, the only time [laughs] in my life as a professional architect—he called me into his office one day early on, when we were just getting started, and said, "Tell me what I, General Peel, need to do to reduce the cost of this project." And my mouth dropped. That was a very unusual approach.

I had lived in Hawaii, graduated from Hawaii, worked in Hawaii—worked as an artist, at least, while the first hotels were being built—and I knew a few things about Hawaii. So I said, "Well, number one, we can save 5% off the top if we store all of our goods on the land, in the crater." Because in Hawaii, everything comes over by ship; it goes into warehouses." The warehouses add 5% to the cost of everything, and then it goes from the warehouse to the construction site. And I said, "You don't have to do that. This is private land, it's protected, nobody's going to steal anything from it. We can fence some things in. But that's a lot of money right there." And because we had already determined that we were probably going to be using a wooden truss as a less expensive approach for our two- and three-story buildings—and most of them were two- and three-story buildings—we said, "Let's set up a manufacturing site so that we can literally manufacture our trusses on the site, so they're not, in a sense, carpenter-built per building. We can just produce a lot of them right on the site, in a factory-assembly type of way." And we could do this because in Hawaii, you have this great weather. And you have rain storms, but

they come and go and they dry up fast, and it doesn't take very much to protect the equipment. So those were two key ways we could save money.

05-00:04:22 We also asked him—and this took a lot of doing, I think, on his part—to see if we could avoid flying all the way to Washington, D.C. for the reviews, because everybody at the Corps of Engineers, the top generals and their people, were involved in these reviews. So it wasn't just local, in Hawaii. I said, "If we can do the reviews in San Francisco, and if we can schedule everybody's time, the military's time, so that we can make our presentations, well, then, the military people can meet one day after the presentations; and then we reassemble the third day, and we can get instant comment, approval, disapproval." We could do whatever it might take to move the project forward, streamlining that process of review. The military review process is *very* time consuming. It can be a two-or three-month effort.

Geraci: It's like any good bureaucracy. It just swallows time.

05-00:05:29
Willis: It swallows time. And so it took a little doing for Peel to make it work, but he did it. So we got almost instant response from the military on our work, at least for our periodic reviews.

Oh, one other thing: I had learned, because we had done all these major housing projects, that builders often didn't really study the plans in detail. So if I were to do something good and creative on a detail that cut costs, chances were good that the contractor would never notice it. So I asked him whether or not we couldn't have periodic meetings with the subcontractors and the contractors in the area who were interested in bidding on this project, so we could show them what we were doing, so they would understand the plans. Now, one of the things I had done in my own office was I had hired a construction man from a major builder, who really knew how every detail had to go together to be the least expensive way. So we were developing these details, really, that I knew were less expensive than ordinary detail. Because I didn't take them out of the architect's handbook. This was the result of a very experienced construction man, and he knew how to do it the best way for a construction firm. And I wanted to make sure that subcontractors and contractors saw that, knew that, so when they bid it, they could bid at a lesser price.

05-00:07:40 The other thing, which is very much a Hawaiian problem, is that if you have a major project, there's not enough labor in Hawaii. You have to bring people from the mainland to Hawaii. And that's expensive. And then you have to find places for them to live, and that's also expensive. And there were a couple of really large major projects in Honolulu that were coming to conclusion. They had already imported all the labor, and the labor had housing. So we used that— their completion date was the completion date of our plans—so that we could put the plans out for bid; and these people could bid on it, knowing that

they had construction people right there. Most of what we did in collaboration with General Peel had nothing to do with the design or with CARLA. But at least it gave us an edge on the budget, because the original budget already had two years of inflation of costs in it. So what was for the original architect a budget, was, for me, a budget minus 10% because of inflation.

Geraci: And inflation was huge.

05-00:09:10
Willis: I actually had a lesser budget the second time around. Clearly, something had to give that would deal with the issue of cost. We did our normal planning project using CARLA. David's background with Frederick Gibberd who was one of the fathers of new town planning, came in handy, because we were able to make a whole series of subdivisions that both created a neighborhood environment. We studied a lot of things. We were very concerned about the children, and we were concerned about how the mother could look out the window above the kitchen sink and watch her children play. In this case, there were no fences between houses, it was all open. And from our standpoint, that was good. But it also meant that we had to provide playgrounds for very young children, for children that were maybe twelve years old, and then the older children, because we found, in practice, that different age groups don't mix very well and the little kids get kicked around a bit by the older kids. So there were a lot of careful calculations about factors related to the family and how the family would actually use not only the building, but the environment around the building.

Geraci: And it seems to me that these families that will be living there are families from the mainland. These are military families. And the environment that they're living in is a different environment.

05-00:11:17
Willis: It is.

Geraci: And military families have their own special needs. How do you do the research on something like that? How do you balance this out?

05-00:11:27
Willis: Well, it was a challenge, because the military feels very strongly that the floor plan has to be the same no matter where it's built. Because they feel, quite correctly, that these families make an investment in their furniture. So if they're going to move from one living room to another every three years, or one bedroom to another every three years, that they don't want the military to have to buy new furniture. So everything has to fit a template. And we could accept that. That made sense. But then our challenge was how to deal with the building and the climate, because in Hawaii, you don't have air conditioning; you use the trade winds. And so that begins to introduce a different dynamic that you have to take into consideration in the building design. So we tried to do the best we could to merge these two different cultures and styles, the

mainland type of housing development and what would be typical in Hawaii. Of course, I would've loved to do Hawaiian style design for all the buildings, but that just wasn't in the cards, given the fact that that we had these fixed floor plan ideas that were given to us.

Geraci: So trying to bring originality to very fixed criteria, before you even start. The site itself, the problems it presents means there's only so many ways that you could possibly do this and stay within budget, to be efficient. And then given the fact of what military housing is supposed to me, to come up with something that's a little bit creative is not that easy a task.

05-00:13:28
Willis: No. [laughs] It really isn't. The one charm, I think, about the whole Aliamanu Valley community is the fact that you have these walls, you have the slopes, and so you can do different levels. And then when you approach it, you can have winding driveways and things of that nature. So you have variety in the terrain. There were tunnels that were dug into the walls of the volcano crater where they stored ammunition. And those are still there. Unless somebody's done something with them that I don't know about. I hope they've closed them off.

Geraci: Closed them off, right. Especially for the kids.

05-00:14:16
Willis: I know, right.

Geraci: And what you've just said about General Peel, this is a man who knows how to do business and knows how— Give him a problem, and he'll solve it. And obviously, look at what he's done for the Texas university system.

05-00:14:44
Willis: Unbelievable.

Geraci: It's gone from one campus to nine campuses, and he's overseen all that over a twenty-year period.

05-00:14:50
Willis: Correct.

Geraci: But then on the other hand, the comment he has to make about you is, over and over and over again, "She's a businesswoman. She knows how to accomplish this task." So it seemed to me the two of you were a good working partnership.

05-00:15:06
Willis: Yes, it was a great partnership. And he also understood that we were a relatively small firm, even though we had thirty-five people. But that's small, compared to what he was used to working with. And he could understand, without even asking, that we really had to get checks rapidly, that if we had to

submit an invoice and wait six weeks to get a check, it would be a real hardship for us. And he made sure we had a check. He just would say, "You need a check today?" "Yes, sir." [laughs] Thank God.

Geraci: And for a government agency, that's not the norm.

05-00:15:52
Willis: That is *very* unusual.

Geraci: So as this project is ending up, as we get into the early eighties, then, you have a new government project coming up. And that would be the IRS prototype. I was very fascinated with the designs of—There are nine campuses, you needed nine structures. Let's talk a little bit about this model.

05-00:16:19
Willis: Once again, this was a project. Everything with the government is— You submit your qualifications, then they have a short list, and then you make another presentation, and then they select who it is that's going to do the project—which, of course, was the case here. But once again, because of our early involvement with computers, we were one of the few firms in the country that understood how the computer worked. And this was before desktop computers and things of this nature. But we understood mainframes, we understood their need for air because they really get hot, and things of this nature. So we were selected, I think, as a result of that knowledge and the experiences that we had had in working with computers. At that point in history, this was a brand new thing. Not many people, including the people at the General Services Administration, knew much about computers. General Services managed the project for the Internal Revenue Service, as they often manage things for federal agencies. And the challenge, as you've stated, was to try to build a building that could be connected to existing buildings on their nine campuses, because the IRS wanted to use the computer to process the income tax returns. And they were particularly interested in accommodating the large companies, where they deliver their income tax returns by truck. These sorts of challenges. And so when I first was introduced to these campuses, these were large areas of many buildings. And every building was like a slab. It was one story, and it was the size of a football field, and flat roof.

Geraci: More like a warehouse.

05-00:18:51
Willis: Yes, like a warehouse. It was slab. But maybe fifteen foot high. And on top, you had men with guns patrolling the parameter of the building. So the idea was, how do you do something to create some visual variety in this very austere architectural environment?

And the IRS wanted something that was totally flexible. They wanted it so that it could start at one story and go up to four. They wanted something

where the interiors could all be moved. They wanted something where the exterior walls could also be moved. So there was nothing about this building, in their minds, that couldn't be easily changed. And that became probably one of the greatest challenges that I've ever faced, to design a building that could expand in all directions. We came up with a plan, a hexagonal, for one reason: it could be twisted and placed in relationship to a variety of sites and connected, by an umbilical-cord corridor, to that building. We, of course, had hoped that it would eventually go up to four stories, because that would certainly provide some visual variety. But then how do you do that, and still maintain light and air into the building? So in the center of this hexagon, we created a very large open space. If it was only going to be one story, it would be like an outdoor plaza. But as the building grew up, then it would become roofed, and it would be an atrium.

Geraci: Still letting light in.

05-00:21:07

Willis: Yes, still letting light in. And the computers would be tucked in a place where they would have access to air, but not on the perimeter, because we had to place offices on the perimeter so people could have light and air. But when you get into the issue of just wanting to move the partitions around at will—and computers require a lot of wiring, as well as lighting requires a lot of wiring—then the question was, well, how do we deal with that? We came up with this idea of a raised floor with panels. You just pick the panels out of the floor. But then we were just able to put all the wiring into the space between the actual floor and the floor that the desks and the people sat on. Consequently, if you wanted to move this partition, you could move it, and you could move the electrical very easily. But that didn't solve the problem of the lighting. So we came up with this idea of light that was projected up to the ceiling and bounced down, in conjunction with lighting that illuminated the desktop.

Now, one of our assignments was to do laboratory testing on the readability of computer printout. Because in those days, we were still using punched holes on the edge, and so it would print out on a printer, and it was rough paper. We hired a firm who did this kind of work in a kind of lighting laboratory, and we discovered that when you have grid lights overhead, two of the lights actually diminish your ability to see, and two of the lights help you to see. Installing grid lighting over the ceiling, which was the typical practice, was not really helping people to read the printouts. So we decided to use halide lights. This was one of the very first uses of halide lights. And actually, this whole system was put into the GSA manual as a template for how to use this particular approach. We were able to eliminate the overhead lighting completely. We were able to eliminate the plugs in the wall, the duplex outlets in the wall, and use the up lights, use the task lights, use the raised floors. So we achieved total flexibility on the interior walls. And we were absolutely crushed when President Carter—and it made headlines in newspapers around the

country—vetoed the appropriation for this building. And the fear at the time was that this government automation would interfere with individual's right to privacy. Of course, it was happening anyway. But our building didn't get built, because of President Carter's veto and public fears about computers and invasion of privacy. But the IRS found a way to do it anyway.

Geraci: And today they're all electronic, basically, anyhow.

05-00:25:24
Willis: Yes, it's *purely* electronic today. Absolutely.

Geraci: Right. So it ended up happening anyway.

05-00:25:29
Willis: Anyway. So we just happened to get caught in that moment in political and technological history.

Geraci: Did the government use any of the aspects of this design?

05-00:25:38
Willis: I think they've used aspects of the design in other buildings. But the buildings we designed did not get built.

Geraci: That has to be frustrating, isn't it?

05-00:25:48
Willis: It's always frustrating.

Geraci: To go through that much. It's like you gave birth to a child and then it doesn't get to grow.

05-00:25:55
Willis: Exactly. Well, you put your heart and soul into it. Not to mention the hours and days and months that it takes. So it was disappointing, yes.

Geraci: Well, at this time, we're now in the late seventies, around '78. You helped develop, organized the first chapter in the west, for the International Women's Forum. Actually, there were chapters in—what?—twenty-two cities around the world. This Women's Forum, let's talk a little bit about that.

05-00:26:36
Willis: Yes. I mentioned earlier that I was instrumental in creating the San Francisco chapter, because I invited all the women I knew in San Francisco who were playing leading roles in business, arts, whatever. And most of them accepted my invitation. There were about thirty women. We proposed to create an organization that could tie into the one that had been formed here in New York City, called Women's Forum. At that point, it was not international. And at that point, San Francisco became the second chapter, after the New York chapter. And as you point out, over the years now, it's grown into a very large

international organization. But it's also an organization where we have women who are presidents of countries and prime ministers, as well as women who head up major corporations. So it's changed a lot since those early days, when women had not yet broken the glass ceiling and they were still struggling to move up on the management ladder.

Geraci: This provided at least the essence of a role-model system—

05-00:28:11
Willis: Oh, yes.

Geraci: —to bring more women into that group. Well, we just finished talking about the IRS prototype. And then, I think, comes another kind of heartbreaking project for you. That would be the Yerba Buena Center.

05-00:28:29
Willis: Yes.

Geraci: [laughs] These had to be some tough times for the firm.

05-00:28:34
Willis: Well, we got paid, but it would have been really be nice to have these things built. The Yerba Buena Center is twenty-four acres in downtown San Francisco. And at that time, Market Street really divided downtown into two parts. And that part was south of Market, the industrial part of San Francisco. Many buildings south of Market were deteriorating and unoccupied. I think this was the only instance of a San Francisco venture in which Justin Herman wasn't really successful. He had decided to bulldoze twenty-four acres flat.

Geraci: Start over.

05-00:29:46
Willis: And start over. And he had done that before, but had quickly built up the area, had built up the area where the old fish market was, the area of the Rockefeller development, and had accomplished some great things. But that land lay fallow for almost twenty years. And it had a bad reputation nationally, because this property had been subject to a series of lawsuits. You probably know more about this than I do, because I didn't pay a lot of attention at that time. I remember reading about this lawsuit and that lawsuit and people being displaced. And the unfortunate thing was, it did put a lot of homeless people on the street, because there were many so-called fleabag hotels that he destroyed in the process. It was not a very pretty moment in San Francisco's history.

In the meantime, I had purchased the building at 545 Mission Street for our office, since our office outgrew our office at 300 Broadway. And I was a block away, a little over a block away, from Third Street, Third and Mission, which is where this project began. And I had occasion to walk by this empty

land. Earlier on in my career, in order to develop business, I had often noticed a piece of land that I thought was suitable for development, and I would take it to a developer and I would say, "If you would like to buy this land, and if you *can* buy this land, I think it can be a very profitable project for you. But I'd like to be the architect."

I had been doing this for a while. It finally occurred to me that San Francisco had sufficiently changed, by that moment in history, that this land was really ready for development. In the meantime, I had gotten to know Wilbur Hamilton. And he hired Judy Hopkinson from Pasadena to try to develop this land. I sat down with Judy and said, "I think I can put together a development on this land. Do you think the Redevelopment Agency would be open for this?" And she said, "Sure. Absolutely. Whatever I can do to help, I'd be glad to do."

So I began, really, what amounted to a year-long search for somebody who would be interested in developing it. And everybody would say, "Oh, no, nobody wants to touch that land." But I made this contact with Olympia & York, and they were interested. So Albert Reichman flew into San Francisco from Toronto, where their law office was, and we walked around the site. He looked at it. And then he looked at me and he says, "Yeah. I think we'd like to do this." And this gave me the motivation to put it together. I contacted Willie Brown and said, "Willie, will you join our group as our attorney?" And I contacted economists and planners and other people that I thought that we needed to be on the team to make this work politically.

And so I took this plan to Judy and Wilbur. And they said, "Well, thank you very much. We're going to start the competition." Because Olympia & York was involved, it was easy to get the major developers in the United States to bid on this and to compete. At this point, it was an international competition. But we did have the advantage of having a little bit of an inside track, and we won the competition. That got us started on the design. And two things happened: as part of my condition to leading the team through the diplomatic channels of San Francisco and its current government, I asked for partnership in the development. So I became a partner. Olympia & York brought Marriott Hotel in as a partner. So it really wound up that we had the three partners: me, and Olympia & York, and Marriott. And then I asked Eb [Eberhard] Zeidler, who was an architect out of Toronto—he knew the Reichmann people—if he would join me as a joint venture architect, because he had some specific experience that was similar to what the agency was looking for. So I was wearing two hats at this time.

05-00:36:25 It took us three years to develop the schematics. We had meeting after meeting with everybody, including neighborhood groups and artists. Olympia & York and Marriott were very much willing to try to do something that San Francisco could identify with, something San Francisco really wanted, that would serve the people of San Francisco, and really take this South-of-Market

industrial area and transform it. Because once you have the iconic project, that's what happens. Everybody else then wants to invest in the periphery—which is what has happened. But unfortunately, Olympia & York became over-invested in Canary Wharf. They got involved in it in a recessionary period, and literally forced part of the firm into bankruptcy. Part of the firm survived. So they felt they had no choice, and they resigned from the project. However, they had had to put like $32 million of good faith money on the table. And that was lucky for the Redevelopment Agency, because that became the money that they used to build the public part of Yerba Buena Gardens, as it exists today. So they built a theater, they built the art facility, they built things related to the convention center with some of those funds. And I presume, some extra money, too. Anyway, it did provide the wherewithal for the city to develop the public aspects of Yerba Buena.

Geraci: So in essence, it just ended up taking longer to accomplish the initial goal.

05-00:39:01
Willis: Yes. And it started to happen when the economy came back. And then the agency decided that they would break up each part of the development and give it to a different architect. So there've been multiple structures and multiple architects. I am really pleased, because the basic concept of our plan still exists. There're changes from how we proposed that it would be done. But the concept of the great park in the center of the block between Mission and Howard, the water feature, working with the convention center and the connection with Market Street—all these features were part of our original plan and our ideas.

Geraci: So it turned out as a success, just not quite the success you had original envisioned, probably.

05-00:40:05
Willis: Well, it was successful for me in another way, because as a partner, I benefited when the Marriott Hotel did get built. When the Marriott Hotel was sold, I received my percentage of the profit on that development. So I was well rewarded for my efforts. And that part did work out.

Geraci: Which was good for the firm.

05-00:40:39
Willis: It was good for the firm; it was good for me personally, yes.

Geraci: And then I think that leads us into your next major project. And that would be the Ballet Building. I sit here in your office looking at a poster of the building, and it's a wonderful structure. We should talk a little bit about that. I think in some ways, that's kind of like a pride and joy for you?

05-00:41:08
Willis: Oh, absolutely. I started going to the ballet very shortly after I arrived in San Francisco. And at that point, there wasn't that much interest in a ballet company in San Francisco. They had, at one point something like, "Save our ballet." And the dancers were all on the street begging for money. The ballet had had a very difficult time sustaining itself in that particular era.

Michael Smuin is a creative genius. And I watched how, when he came aboard, his performance and his choreography just brought in an audience. People loved his work. They began to love going to the ballet. So all of a sudden the ballet house was filled with people. It became really exciting. And so there was obviously enough cash flow there that people were paid and dancers didn't have to beg for money in the streets of San Francisco. So Michael did an incredible job making the ballet popular.

Geraci: And it seems to me that the ballet, it's wonderful, in that the ideas for the design— And you were thinking about the dancers.

05-00:43:02
Willis: Well, yes.

Geraci: And other ballet structures in other cities, I think in a lot of the things that I've read, it's, "What warehouse can we put them in? They're just practicing." And all of a sudden now, a building dedicated for them.

05-00:43:15
Willis: Well, the San Francisco Ballet was the first building ever built in the United States exclusively for the use of a ballet company. So consequently, almost everything that we did differed from the classical approach to providing for a ballet company. It just had not been done before. I was very pleased with an article in the *Boston Globe* that said, if I can paraphrase it, that dancers didn't go to *visit* the San Francisco Ballet building, they went to *pay homage* to it. Because it was, as you suggest, a result of our spending a lot of time with the dancers, with Michael Smuin, and really understanding what they needed. And it was surprising. For example, we literally invented an overhead lighting system because the regular fluorescent lighting—which is the cheapest option, and fluorescents don't give off the heat that incandescent lighting gives off—this fluorescent lighting has a flicker effect that I, frankly, had never noticed. But for dancers, who are very sensitive to these things, it can cause them to become dizzy and fall. So finally, with our electrical engineer, we figured out a way of wiring the tubes directly together from tube to tube, rather than the typical fashion of connecting the fixtures themselves. By doing that, we were able to eliminate that flickering effect that caused dizziness.

And there were a whole lot of little things. For example, the mirrors on the wall. Typically, ballet companies just put the mirror flush against the wall. But mirrors only come in certain heights and widths. So to get an image of themselves when they do the lifts, they had to put another mirror on top,

which created this line. You really never had a full picture of how the movement looked. And so much of this stuff is so simple—we just tilted the mirror, just slightly. But a mirror at a standard height, then, was sufficiently tall enough so you could see the whole motion of the lift.

The dance floor is a very tricky thing. Because the floor that's good for women is not good for men. The men want something that they can bounce on, because they have the leaps. When the women are on their toes, they don't want that movement in the floor because it doesn't help them at all. So how to create a dance floor that men and women equally can use to do their best performance? We actually dummied up a series of dance floors in a warehouse that the ballet company had, and we had the dancers come and actually dance on these various sample floors that we had dummied up, and they voted on the best floor. Now, there's never a perfect dance floor, so the controversy of dance floor has continued on in the ballet world for some time. I don't know when it first started, but it didn't end, unfortunately, with the Ballet Building. A typical floor is about a foot thick, because we have to start with cushions, and then we have wood going in one direction, wood going in another, wood going in another, and then the final floor. So that meant that everything had to float free on the floor. And the mirrors had to be up just enough so that the floor would fit underneath them; but they couldn't be connected, so we had to have a very special detail for that.

05-00:48:19 And we tested the color of the fluorescent lights, because the various colors have different effects on various dancers and on how various dancers look. And so we, in our electrical engineer's office, dummied up something where the dancers could come by, they could look at themselves underneath different colored lamps, and then they could vote on what lamps would actually work. Probably our biggest challenge was: the dancers hated air conditioning. They did not want any air conditioning. However, they wanted a lot of glass. You and I know that the glass tends to heat up an interior. We had to come up with solutions of how we could circulate air without using air conditioning, so that the space would be comfortable for the dancers without air conditioning. And we were very pleased that that worked very well. And the dancers really appreciated that. Some of these things were surprising. You would never think about them, unless you really got deep inside of how a dancer's mind and body works.

Each floor had several studios on it. And activities would be going on in each one of the studios. And maybe in one studio there'd be jazz music; and the other studio would be classical; and the other studio, perhaps it would be pop music or whatever. So each studio had to be totally soundproofed so that the sound would not leak from one studio to another. When you do that, you have a problem of how dancers hear the same note at the same time. Because if you don't do something to the walls to make this adjustment, one dancer will hear the note a split second before the other dancer; but it's enough of a split

second to put the whole rhythm off. So we had to develop a system for killing that sound reverberation because of the way that we had to isolate sound.

We had to deal with multiple things. It was the first time in the history of dance that there was a medical facility in a dance building, like a sports medicine clinic, with sports medicine professionals, because a dancer has more bodily injuries than a football player. So we have a medical facility with four tables in it, we have a Jacuzzi, a foot bath. And then we designed a very special piece of furniture, where the dancers could put their feet up, a bench around the large circle, except that the bench was designed so the dancer could lie on it and put their feet up and let the blood circulate. So, yes, these were some responses that we gave to the dancers.

Geraci: This is something we had been talking about previous in the interview, your ability to get to the needs of the client.

05-00:52:53
Willis: Yes, yes.

Geraci: There again, the building has to be approachable. The facility has to welcome me and suit the specific needs I have. And your ability to articulate that. So it seems that this presents very special challenges for you.

05-00:53:10
Willis: Yes. I remember a magazine article about the way I work. And the title of it was "Beverly Listens."

Geraci: Good title.

05-00:53:23
Willis: Long ago I learned that listening is not a strong point of a lot of people. And maybe people are nervous, so they talk. But they're not listening. They're not hearing what people are saying. So listening is really very important. If you don't mind, I'd like to talk a little bit about the exterior of the building.

Geraci: Oh, absolutely!

05-00:53:53
Willis: Because I just received a note from Lucy Jewett. She and her husband gave a million dollars for the building. And she said in this note that the San Francisco Ballet building has really stood the test of time and that it's still a great building. And this is almost thirty years later. We were given design criteria by the City of San Francisco, the planning department. And the criteria said, while you can design a modern building, it had to be contextual with the classical buildings of the opera and city hall and the Veteran's Memorial Building. And so that was our given challenge. Another challenge was the site itself, because the site was small. And the opera house and the War Memorial Building are built on blocks. They're whole block buildings. City hall is built

on two blocks. And we had this little sliver of a site. So I had the challenge of creating a building façade on the site that had the monumentalism of huge buildings, which I believe worked extremely well.

I also wanted the Ballet Building to be seen across from Van Ness Street, across the rose garden, because I wanted the ballet building to be part of that group of buildings, because it was culturally part of that group of buildings. And this desire was the key to many defining aspects of the building. It inspired the color of the building, and the texture, which is really mandated by the city. The horizontal lines of the building match those of the classical buildings, which again, were mandated by the city. The height was mandated by the city. Obviously, it couldn't be higher. And even though it's only four stories tall, it's really ninety-six feet tall, which is equivalent to an eight-story building. And we had to use clear glass. That, again, was part of the design guidelines. But within those design guidelines, we were able to do some special things. And actually, using the classical depth of walls really allowed us to give a certain monumental strength to the building. And the entry, which was the one place that we could really do in a contemporary way, we were able to do almost like musical notes, with the curved glass on one level and the curved glass on another level on different planes. And the height of the entry gave us a great proscenium effect of a theater. And then the curved balconies, I saw very much like the balconies inside a performing hall, even though the ballet school is not a performing hall. There's no performing hall there, unfortunately. There could've been. But the politics of the ballet company, unfortunately, prevented it.

Geraci: That seems to happen so much in a lot of public projects. The politics prevent many of the really great ideas from happening.

05-00:58:20

Willis: Yes. And it was really very tragic because our original design had a theater in the ground level. And when we first budgeted it out, the budget came in around ten million dollars. And Richard LeBlond, who turned out to be a very Machiavellian administrator, said, "Oh, we can't raise that money. No, no, you have to take it out." So we did. Then we designed a building that cost $6.5 million. And then the ballet started their fundraising, and they raised over $13 million. Which Richard LeBlond, in his Machiavellian way, said, "That's the cost of the building." And the cost of the building was six and a half million. Well, certainly, you had to have furnishings and things like that, which was another million dollars. But you still had, therefore—what?—about five million left over. Richard LeBlond had run everything in the red by three million. So he took that money, paid off his debt, and put two million into an endowment. And you could've had that building. You still could've had an endowment and that building, if you'd had an honest administrator who would have not looked to the building fundraising to pay off a debt that he had, some way, somehow, hidden from most people. So to me, that's the tragedy of the

building itself. The other tragedy, I might say, is really the review that the building received.

Geraci: Can we hold that? I need to change tapes. We'll start with the review.

[End Audio File 5]

Begin Audio File 6 10-16-2008.mp3

Geraci: Today is October 16, 2008. We're in the home of Beverly Willis. This is interview number two, tape number six. Victor Geraci. Beverly, we were talking about the ballet. We were just finishing up and we had to change tapes here. We had just finished up with the idea that it didn't have a performance center, and the politics, and how that became involved.

06-00:00:35
Willis: The public was informed that the building cost thirteen million, when the building actually cost six and a half million dollars. Incidentally, that building came in on budget. And we never got credit for that because it was always referred to as the thirteen-million-dollar building, which of course, was twice what it actually cost. And that probably cost us a few clients, too.

But I want to put a couple of things on the record. I mentioned Richard LeBlond earlier. He eventually was fired. His activities were eventually discovered and he was fired. And when he was fired, he announced—I presume to everybody, but he certainly said it to me—he said, "I am going to write a book, and I'm going to get you all." As far as I can remember, those were his exact words. He did write and publish this book. I don't think my name was mentioned in it at all. He attributed the architecture to a person on the board, on the San Francisco Ballet board of directors, who happened to be an architect, Peter Bolles And I presume he wrote odd things about other people that were involved. I'm sure he also wrote terrible things about Michael Smuin; I just don't know. But it was a very vindictive thing for a man who, within the dance industry, has a lot of respect. I've often marveled at the fact that he's maintained such a level of respect, given the sorts of things that I've observed.

06-00:02:56 But the other thing that I do need to talk about was that the Ballet Building did not get a good review from Allan Temko, the architectural critic of the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Now, I have known Allan for a long time. Every step of my design for the ballet, I invited Allan into my office, and he took a look at the design as it was being developed. And as it was being developed and more developed, he would say, "Oh, this is a very good building. I like this. This is a very good building." And so you can imagine how stunned I was to read this rather scathing review of the building that he had just earlier told me that he liked so much. Obviously, that was very hurtful. But I talked to him a few years later—actually, it was about ten years later—and he said to me,

"Beverly, I really have to apologize to you. It really is a very good building." I said, "Allan, it's really great of you to say that. I really appreciate it. But would you mind writing that in the *Chronicle*?" And he said, "Oh, no, no. I can't do that." Which was a response that I still find very difficult to understand. I think in some way, it goes back to being a woman architect at a time when the culture of architecture was so ruled by a tiny handful of men that Allan would've been embarrassed by standing up and saying, this is a very good building.

Geraci: And that a woman had done it.

06-00:05:06
Willis: [laughs] Yes, that a woman had done it. So I don't think that sort of thing will ever happen again. But I have never understood why it was so difficult. And I've never really understood what happened between the time he saw the drawings and the model and said he really liked it, and he thought it was an excellent piece of design, to the point where he was writing an article that said just the opposite. I don't know. What I do suspect is, that was a period of history where postmodernism had just become popular. And of course, my building was a modern building, not a postmodern building. And I think he talked to a number of architects who said, oh, but it should've been a postmodern building. That's where we're at now; that's what's really great now. And of course, I thank God that I didn't buy into that, because a postmodern building today, on that site, would've been an atrocity. But at that particular period of history, architects were very excited about postmodern design.

Geraci: But you were also given criteria by the city that really dominated, at least for the exterior, what you could produce.

06-00:06:37
Willis: Correct. And I don't think that I could've gotten approval for a postmodern building.

Geraci: Well, let's see. You write your book. And also we probably could talk a little bit about two other projects, River Run and the Manhattan Village Academy.

06-00:07:26
Willis: Yes. Well, River Run, I purchased the land just about 1980, about the time when I was working on the San Francisco Ballet building. And Yerba Buena Gardens, because I was really working on both of them at the same time. You were mentioning that you have a farming background. Well, my family, my father's people were early pioneers, starting in the 1600s, from Virginia. And they pioneered their way across the country, which meant that they homesteaded. They would move into a frontier area, they would mark off some land, they would develop it, they would build their own house, they'd drill their own wells, plant the crops. And my father was really of the first generation of Willises that could not make their living by homesteading,

because the homesteading law was eliminated about 1900. So in a way, he was really at a loss because that was what the family did and that's what he knew.

But I have this long history of farmers in my background. I think, genetically, I felt the need to try my hand at farming—which in this case, would be growing grapes. And I was very excited to find a relatively small piece of land in the Napa Valley, eighteen acres. As you know, the zoning requirement in the Napa Valley is forty acres per house. So I worked with the University of California at Davis, and we did all the right soil tests and things of this nature. And I was amused when I was warned that there is a certain bug that will destroy the grape crops. It usually starts at the Napa River, and I was right on the Napa River. I had to choose which grape I wanted to grow. And they said, well, "Chardonnay is more susceptible to insect infestation than other white wines." I had decided on a chardonnay because it brought in a lot more money. And I learned that the difference was about two or three days, or a week, between the different types of grapes. If your vineyard was going to be destroyed, it was going to go very fast. But the interesting story about the farming was that the person I bought the land from had had geese on the property. So he had a huge flock of geese that he raised, and they had roamed this flat land where I planted vines. And it turned out that the excrement from the geese is among the best fertilizer [laughs] possible.

Geraci: So you had very fertile land.

06-00:11:13
Willis: So the land was incredibly fertile. And my vines literally grew up in two years. It was supposed to be a five-year growth climate. By the third year, I was getting a pretty good crop. And by the fifth year, the vineyard was overflowing with grapes.

Geraci: So you contracted your grapes out to wineries?

06-00:11:37
Willis: Yes, I contracted my grapes out to the Raymond Winery. The Raymond family was the oldest grape growing family in the Napa Valley. The two sons had broken off from the family and created their own winery, which literally was about a half a mile down Zinfandel Lane from my place, River Run. So I made an arrangement with them. They harvested the grapes and advised me on how to care for them. And I had a particular task. I told you about the two microclimates. And because the frost, of course, will kill the young grapes in this part of the Napa Valley, we used water to keep the grapes from freezing, because usually, it never got down to much below twenty-nine degrees or so, and water would accommodate that. So we had to have two alarm clocks in the bedroom, one for each of the microclimates. At three o'clock in the morning, the alarm clock would go off. I'd have to rush outside, turn the

sprinkler systems on. [laughs] And that was one thing I couldn't farm out. [they laugh]

Geraci: You had to do that yourself.

06-00:13:15
Willis: Had to do myself.. But it turned out to be a great investment. And I built the house for myself. I was very interested in the use of Palladian concepts in a contemporary house. And the environment that surrounded the Palladian homes was very much like my site, a hill overlooking the vineyards. It was very interesting to me to use sort of the rules of construction, rules of design from a period in the 1600s, in a contemporary way. I don't think I would have done that if I hadn't designed the San Francisco Ballet Building. In order to design the Ballet Building, I had to immerse myself in the Beaux-Arts tradition, in order to understand what I had to do with the façade to make it contextual with the rest of the buildings in Civic Center.

When I finally decided to move to New York, I sold [the farm] to Nancy and Paul Pelosi. And I hope that at some point, they'll have a chance to live there.

Geraci: Right now, they're very busy.

06-00:15:00
Willis: They're very busy, right, and have been for the last twelve, thirteen years.

Geraci: It's interesting that you designed at least the renovation in the Palladian style. Thomas Jefferson did the very same thing at Monticello and Poplar Forest, also including grapes as part of that. It's engrained within that particular style.

06-00:15:34
Willis: Well, it's an incredibly beautiful style. There are just certain designs that become eternally classic, and they're good, I think, no matter what period of history you live in. Greek sculpture is still as beautiful today as it was—[laughs] Of course.

Geraci: As you hinted at just a moment ago, eventually you move to the other coast, to New York. Why?

06-00:16:09
Willis: Well, it became clear that the Yerba Buena Gardens project was not going to go forward, and there hadn't yet been any decision made about what the next steps were. I still had some hopes of being involved in the Yerba Buena Gardens project. But what became the 1988 depression in the United States in construction really started in San Francisco in '84. And that had a lot to do with city regulations that forced businesses out of the city. So many of the major businesses went over to a project in San Ramon Valley and left city buildings empty. There was no motivation to build new buildings because we had so many empty buildings in the city. Opportunities for architectural work

began to fall off. I thought it was just a recession, until 1988, when it hit the rest of the country. My colleagues, by that point, had just begun to abandon San Francisco and go overseas. The firms of my generation that really survived and prospered thrived because of the availability of work in China and the Middle East. But I didn't feel comfortable that I could collect money overseas. I just was uncomfortable with that, and I decided not to go overseas.

And then it dawned on me, and I remembered what Frank Lloyd Wright did: he took a two-year sabbatical. Closed his office, took two years, went to Europe, and then came back and started up again. I thought, well, why don't I do that? That makes a lot of sense. Because I'd gone through enough recessions to know that you're just hitting your head against a stone wall, trying to survive. It's not a pleasant kind of life. So I decided to follow Frank Lloyd Wright's example and take a two-year sabbatical.

Instead of going to Europe, I decided to come to the East Coast and the northeast, because like a lot of people in the West Coast, I hated New York City; I thought it was the pits. But I knew nothing about the northeast. I had received an honorary doctorate degree from Mount Holyoke earlier. That was the first time I'd taken a driving trip from Manhattan up to Mount Holyoke and back. And I thought I really needed to know more about this part of the world. I called up my friend Marge Champion, the dancer, of Marge-and-Gower-Champion dance fame, who had a house in Stockbridge Massachusetts. And I said, "Look, I have taken a compass and I have drawn a fifty mile radius around Manhattan. And it's the whole world." [laughs] I said, "It covers all these cities and New Jersey and all these places on Long Island." I said, "Where should I hang my hat for a couple years?" She said, "Well, come to my house. I just divided off an apartment. Come and rent it and stay here." So that's what I did. And this gave me time to do a lot of thinking, to do some creative work with graphics. I was thinking about writing a book at that point, and I started doing some work on that.

06-00:20:38 I had something else I wanted to test. When I left San Francisco, I was really quite well known there. I could even call up information and ask for a telephone number, and give them my name, and the telephone operator would know my name. And it was eerie. And every time I was written up—and a lot of that had to do with the society columns—in the newspapers, it was always, "architect Beverly Willis." It was just always "Beverly Willis" and the word "architect" tied together. And I began to wonder whether anybody would *like* me if I wasn't this architect person. So when I went to Marge's place in Stockbridge, I rented the cheapest rental car. And Marge, of course, had furnished the place, and I didn't have to bring anything with me except my clothes. Nobody knew who Beverly Willis was, nobody knew I was an architect or what have you. I was sort of doing what they're doing in politics today; I was measuring my likeability. And after a while I learned that, even without reputation, without being an architect, I was still likeable. I felt good about that.

Geraci: It was a time for some reflection.

06-00:22:36
Willis: And it was really a great time for reflection. I got very much involved with some of the current thinking about self and identity and ego and things of that nature. I started taking yoga classes. It was really a chance to reflect. And you don't have a chance to reflect when you're doing projects all the time because you're just going from one project to another, and you've got a payroll to meet.

Geraci: It was a time for you to rejuvenate yourself, reenergize.

06-00:23:28
Willis: Yes. And believe me, it took two years. I was incredibly tired. I had no idea how tired I was until that time. But keep in mind that this was now about 1990, '88 to '90, and I had started out around '55, so that was a good thirty-five plus years of just work, constant work. And pressure and tension. And it does tire you out.

Geraci: Takes a toll.

06-00:24:12
Willis: Takes a toll, I learned that. And so it was great to have a chance to rest.

Stockbridge is a center of the arts. And they have about thirty-five performing companies operating during the summer. It's very close to Tanglewood, where the Boston Symphony plays in the summer. So it's an incredibly rich cultural environment. People came there for the summer, basically. I'd meet people who had places in New York, and they would invite me to come down for a couple of days and do something in New York. Through these invitations from people who lived in various parts of Manhattan, I began to get to know New York. And once I finally knew New York, I fell in love with it. I really did. It's like tasting chocolate for the first time, if you've never had chocolate before. But the other very curious thing about New York: in San Francisco, many of the people who found me not as likeable as I would like to be considered me aggressive—which in those days, was really a bad term—and they considered me fast, which also was not such a nice complement. But after I was in New York for a while, a couple of New Yorkers patted me on the back and said, "Beverly, you're going to do all right in New York. If you can get a little bit more aggressive, and if you can pick up the pace a little bit, you'll do all right in New York." It was a different interpretation of character traits that maybe fit better in New York. So I went back to my friends in San Francisco and I said, "For the price of a one-way plane ticket, I had a complete change of personality."

Geraci: That's great.

06-00:26:38
Willis: So it tells you the difference between San Francisco and New York.

Geraci: Any woman who really was making her name, of your generation and in those eras, automatically was labeled as aggressive. And it really wasn't that you were aggressive, it's that you were just being competitive in a man's world.

06-00:27:06
Willis: Yes. I think that had a lot to do with it. And you don't always hear what people say, so you really don't know what people are saying about you. But I did hear that there were a number of male architects who had East Coast Ivy League educations, or Berkeley educations, and had started their own practices; and they could not envision why I was more successful than they were. And this, they found very irritating. And there was always this campaign. And it really is not just because I was a woman. Architects, unfortunately, tend to do this. That was my experience in San Francisco. New York's a little bit more sophisticated. But part of how architects competed, at least in my day, was that they tried to blacken the name of the other architects in order to make themselves look better. I don't think it's a strategy that really works, but that was a great tendency. So if architects were competing against me for a job, they felt it was in their best interest to try to define me in some way to a prospective client—

Geraci: That's not flattering.

06-00:28:56
Willis: —that's not flattering, yes.

Geraci: Sounds somewhat like politics.

06-00:29:00
Willis: Very much like politics. Particularly today.

Geraci: Sounds very much like that. So I take it, then, you decide New York's your new home.

06-00:29:11
Willis: Well, the problem was, there was nothing happening. There was not a high-rise building built in the United States between 1988 and 1995. There was no work in San Francisco. There was no work in New York. There was no work anywhere in the United States. As I said, the work was all overseas. So I said to myself, look, New York has a number of architectural organizations. And they have lectures, they have debates, they have exhibits. They have a lot of intellectual activity occurring, which we don't have in San Francisco. The AIA there can't fulfill all of the different things that these various different organizations do in Manhattan. So I thought, better to talk about architecture, better to go to lectures and to do these things, than go back to San Francisco. It was sort of a default decision, because I had always intended to go back to San Francisco. I never in a million years thought that I'd wind up in New

York. But I did finally decide to sell River Run. I took that money and purchased a townhouse here in New York City, in Manhattan.

06-00:30:49 Early on, I met Wolf Von Eckardt, who was the critic for the *Washington Post*. I met Wolf at Habitat One, where I was one of two architects representing the United States at that United Nations meeting. He introduced himself to me and convinced me to help him found the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C. He had been brought into that commitment by a woman architect who had a project with GSA to evaluate the potential future uses of that building, and he felt that it should make a building museum. I had said to Wolf, "Yes, I'll work with you on this." At that particular time, the California politicians held key posts that congress, and this was important because this proposal had to go twice through congress. And the California politicians headed up the committees that were important to the passage of the legislation, so it was very helpful to have a Californian involved in this, particularly one who knew most of the California politicians.

So I started working. And I have always commuted back and forth to D.C. One time Wolf said to me, "Why don't we create an institute together?" And I just wasn't ready for it. This was a little after 1975. The building legislation passed, and the National Building Museum opened in 1980. But it stayed in my mind. And unfortunately, Wolf died an early death. By the time I was ready, he wasn't there to participate, unfortunately. He was a wonderful, wonderful man. And the industry owes him a great debt for making the museum possible. But the idea stuck in my mind. I thought, well, I should create an architectural research institute, which would allow me to really take all the knowledge that I'd gained about urban planning and put it to work. I invited a number of very prestigious architects to be on the advisory committee, and put together a board. It was a new experience for me. I wasn't quite as knowledgeable as I needed to be. I didn't have a lot of knowledge about fundraising. And there're just so many things that you have to do, that you don't do in architecture or in an architectural practice.

06-00:34: 37 Ray Cortines had taken over the operation of the New York City school district. And of course, I knew Ray from San Francisco, when he was head of ~~at~~ the San Francisco school district. He's now head of the LA school district. The whole concept of charter schools was brand new. Ray asked me if I would work with one of the founders of the concept of charter schools and develop a prototypical plan. Because small schools, where you have like a hundred students a class, are quite different from these schools where you have one thousand to four thousand students in them. And New York had a number of those schools. So I did. The charter school people and their concepts were, I thought, absolutely wonderful. And Manhattan Village Academy was one of the very first charter schools in the country. It wasn't the first. But it was the first to have a floor plan designed precisely for this particular use.

Incidentally, in New York, these schools were often located in existing high-rise buildings. That was the case here. We had our entrance off the street, and then you had to go up to the second floor and then up to the third floor. And the entire school was on literally two floors, with an entry off the ground floor. I divided each class into what I call pods, so that you would have an interior central courtyard, and then around it would you have classrooms. The classrooms could be divided into two, if you needed it, or opened up into one larger space. I put doors between classrooms. Charter schools have a very limited number of teachers. So if one's ill that day or somebody has to go out, you might want to have a teacher standing in the doorway, looking at two classrooms at one time. We had a science center in each pod. There was a very unusual flexibility within the various classrooms. There was an open quad space, you could get a hundred people in it. If you wanted to pull the whole class together, you had a space for that. And we were also able to arrange purchasing in such a way that we were able to include computers in the budget, because there was no computer budget in those days. So this was one of the very first schools that had computers in every classroom. Not on every desk, but we had about four or five computers in every classroom. It got widespread notice. And I took the architectural fee and put it into the institute, which was very helpful in getting us off and running.

Geraci: Just to get you some initial capital.

06-00:38:45
Willis: Yes. So that's how all of that worked. I was asked to do more, but at that point, I really wanted to focus on lectures. I was invited to lecture in Europe and at Oxford University. And I wrote articles, chapters for a number of books and that sort of thing. So I transferred from being a very active, hands-on builder to a more intellectual construct, where I was sharing ideas in a broad, global way. I was invited to lecture in Hong Kong and at the University of Hawaii and in Singapore. So it gave me a good global idea of what was happening, even though I wasn't practicing overseas.

Geraci: You're not practicing, but you're affecting enough people's practice—

06-00:40:00
Willis: [laughs] Yes.

Geraci: You're leaving your mark in a very different way.

06-00:40:08
Willis: It does leave a mark. And to me, it's still design. It's design of a different nature, but these ideas are design ideas.

Geraci: What about the Beverly Willis Foundation now?

06-00:40:28
Willis: Just a moment.

Geraci: Sure.

06-00:40:39
Willis: Well, I have no heirs. By this time, I had accumulated a bit of wealth. And the question was what to do with it after I passed on? I thought it would be great to create a foundation with a mission to expand the knowledge about women's contribution to architecture, because I had observed women simply being wiped out of history. And that seemed so wrong. Somebody had to start such a foundation, to counter that trend. Nothing like this existed in the United States. So I thought it would be a good use of money after I died.

But my executor said to me, "Beverly, that's too much work to ask anybody to do, so you're going to have to do it while you're still alive." So I went about doing all the legal paperwork and submitting it for approval. Usually, that takes a long time. But when 9/11 happened, there were so many nonprofits that sprang up, principally to help the city recover from the attack and the devastation caused by 9/11. And my papers were caught in that rush to get all of these papers through. To my attorney's surprise, I got an approved foundation documentation, with no changes to my mission—all of what the attorney said to me couldn't be done. He said, "You can't have such a narrow mission. You've got to have a broader mission." But anyway, we lucked out in that regard, that we are allowed to have a very narrow mission that serves the purpose of uncovering women's stories from the past.

Geraci: What types of things are you doing within that mission?

06-00:43:08
Willis: Well, we have a range of things that we're doing. Principally—keep in mind that we don't have a ton of money—we did start out with the idea of giving grants to writers who wanted to write about women. So if somebody came to us with a grant application, asking for money to help facilitate an article or a book or a film about a woman architect in the twentieth century, we would be interested in helping them fund that. And that's essentially what we do. But our board has been very active, and we've seen opportunities to do a couple of other things. One is to work with museums and have programs about women in museums. And we do this annually with the National Building Museum, where the Beverly Willis Library is located. And that's in March, for Women's History Month.

Then we were asked by the Museum of Modern Art, MoMA, if we would be interested in doing a program. This was actually last year. Keep in mind that we started about 2002, and actually were in full operation in 2004. So this was all quite new. We were really delighted, because for many years MoMA was headed for so many years by Philip Johnson, who was not kind to women; it's always had sort of an anti-female bias. So for us to have a program at MoMA was really a historic moment. And that was enormously exciting. A lot of hard work, but enormously exciting. We have been asked by the Guggenheim

Museum here in Manhattan to work with them on a program during the celebration of their fiftieth anniversary next year. I can't tell you the details of it because it still hasn't been announced. We feel that working with major museums on this subject legitimizes our concept, legitimizes our quest. We don't feel that this is a feminist thing. It's not. It's a historical investigation, correcting the record in architectural history.

Geraci: And women have been a viable part of this throughout that twentieth century.

06-00:46:31
Willis: Right. And we are undertaking another new project. Professor Diane Favro directs the research and development portion at the University of California in Los Angeles, UCLA, where they have developed a Wikipedia-type of software to collect information about women in architecture. So people can go onto our website, click on the timeline, which we call the DNA, the Dynamic National Archive, and they can enter their own information, or they can enter information they know about women. Hopefully, we can build a digital library of data about women in the twentieth century. And right now we have over a thousand names. It's growing, and we need more information.

We get the feeling that it's catching on, that people are looking at it and are saying, boy, I should put my name in there or what have you. But it takes a while sometimes for this kind of thing to get started. So we keep refining that. And we will eventually get to the point of accumulating buildings references. And that's the other thing: professors who lecture on the history of architecture tell us that they would like to lecture about women architects, but where do they send their students to read about them? They're not in history books. They're not in articles. Where does a student go read? Where are the lists of buildings, so the professors can tell the students, go look at that building that that woman has designed? There's still a lot of sheer factual work that needs to be done so that we can have a resource that teachers can use to spread the word and inform their students. And the irony is, in almost all the architecture schools across the United States, with a few exceptions, there are now more women students than male students. I'm sure that's so at Berkeley. And not to have any reference at all to women architects? Other than Zaha Hadid, who happens to be English or Iraqi.

Geraci: Or Julia Morgan.

06-00:50:05
Willis: Yes. But you'd be surprised how few people know Julia Morgan on the East Coast. So we still need to promote Julia Morgan. Fortunately, there're several books coming out about Julia Morgan, so she's developing a bit of a library all of her own.

Geraci: She's finally getting a following.

06-00:50:31
Willis: Yes. But it took the same kind of effort we are making at the foundation. Sara Boutelle, a friend of mine, spent twenty years of her life and $30,000 of her own money to put together that first book on Julia Morgan. If Sara Boutelle had not done that, nobody today would know Julia Morgan. But there was a woman who loved her work and spent the twenty remaining years of her life developing this book, taking the photographs, and finally getting it published, and then traveling the country to lecture on it. And that's why Julia Morgan is known today, because one woman stepped forward to make it possible.

Geraci: And I just happen to come from an area of the country where Julia Morgan left many buildings.

06-00:51:28
Willis: Yes, I know.

Geraci: And we do have them documented, at this point.

06-00:51:31
Willis: Yes. And they are beautiful buildings.

Geraci: Okay, as we're finishing up here—we have just a few minutes left on this tape—as we finish our interview, is there anything that you would like to add, that we may have missed covering?

06-00:51:58
Willis: Oh, I just looked at my notes, and wanted to mention something. Construction can be a dangerous job, too. I shouldn't say just construction, but designing. One of our clients did a project called Frederick Douglass Plaza. And it was, I think, between Oak and Fell Streets and Pierce. I'm not exactly sure of the exact streets. But somebody in the fifties had built three-story walk up apartments on both sides of a whole block. So there was one entire block that had been built at the same time, and had fallen in disrepair. And this developer had purchased it; negotiated a government loan, which required the fact that there would be minority construction workers on the site. In those days, the hiring hall would not cooperate. The hiring hall simply said, look, you take the next guy in line. If they happen to be black, fine; if they're not, you don't get him. So there was no way of meeting that loan requirement, unless you went out and you found black workers who, even if they were members of the union, would do what we called in those days put your union card in your shoe. And so we had had already problems. The project had, because it was in disrepair, low-income residents. Some of my staff members who were trying to measure had been greeted at the door with guns. The door would open, there would be a gun. And sometimes you just couldn't get in. It was not a friendly environment. But we did get a sufficient number of plans drawn, and the job was under construction. And I got a call in my office. And the voice said, "Look, we have a real emergency here. We have a real problem here. We've tried to find the owner. Can't find him. We've tried to find the owner's

project manager, we can't find him. We've got *you* on the telephone, so can you come down right now? We've got a real problem on our hands. Get down here as fast as you can."

I didn't know what was going on. But the voice on the other end was really scared and really nervous, so I hopped in my car and went over to the site. And there was a painter, union guy, with a shotgun pointed at a black painter on a scaffold in front of the building. And my responsibility was to keep the black painter from being shot. So I started talking to the union representative, painter or whoever. And all of a sudden I found the gun pointed at *my* stomach. And I thought, this is not why I became an architect. This is not about bias. This is not about feminism. This is about—

Geraci: Survival.

06-00:55:58
Willis: Survival, right. And I managed to talk the guy into putting the gun down, driving away; getting the black painter off the scaffolding and sending him home, thus solving the problem. Nothing ever really happened about that. But I think about it often because it's the same thing with being on a very high rise building, where you're outside on the scaffolding looking at a detail, many flights up. So there's this other aspect of being an architect, where you're dealing with the rougher parts of the construction industry, or things that really have to be done that mean that you have to have the willingness to take a risk.

Geraci: Hands on.

06-00:57:00
Willis: Hands on. Hands on. That's probably a good place to end, huh? Hands on.

Geraci: Hands on.

06-00:57:05
Willis: Hands on.

Geraci: Beverly, thank you very much. This is—

06-00:57:07
Willis: Well, thank you very much, Vic. I've enjoyed our conversation.

Geraci: This is a great opportunity.

[End of Interview]

CURRICULUM VITAE

August 2008

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PRESENT ACTIVITY

President, Beverly Willis Architecture Foundation

Architect, Urbanist, Lecturer, Writer, Artist

A Founding Trustee of National Building Museum, Washington DC

Formerly Principal of Willis and Associates, Architects

SIGNIFICANT RESEARCH

1994-PRESENT

Founded the Architecture Research Institute to create a "think/act tank" to develop and advocate urban policies to make large global cities more livable.

Research projects, papers and symposium includes:

Symposiums: Sponsored *Grand Projets - Its Lessons and Legacies*, a one day retrospective assessment of the history of the Grands Projets in France, co-sponsored with The Cultural Services of the French Embassy, and hosted by the Guggenheim Museum.

Working Neighborhoods: *Failed Policies and Fresh Directions*, a one day assessment of new directions for development of working neighborhoods, co-hosted by the Association of

Collegiate Schools or Architecture, and held in New York City and Oakland California

Towards a Sustainable City: Rebuilding Lower Manhattan, Brookes College, Oxford 2004

Towards a Sustainable City International Women's University Conference, Hanover, Germany, September 2000

Re-Examining the Courtyard Block: A Megacity Habitat for the New Working Family. Megacities 2000 Conference, Spring 2000, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China.

Spatial Speculations. Embodied Utopias – Gender, Social Change, and the Built Environment Conference, 1999, University of Chicago Gender Center, sponsored by the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies.

Megacities: Re-Examining the Sidewalk as Public Space. The Second International Symposium on Asia Pacific Architecture, Making of Public Spaces, University of Hawaii, East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii, April 1998.

Trends in the Architecture of Cities

Re-examining the Sidewalk as a Public Space

Prototypical Small School Plan

Co-founder Rebuild Downtown Our Town (R.Dot). Research Position Papers:

Neighborhoods and Housing Lower Manhattan- A Mixed income Community, New York, April 14, 2004

Arts and Culture Revitalizing Lower Manhattan Through Arts and Culture, New York, January 23, 2003

Retail Strategies for Revitalizing Lower Manhattan, New York, January 16, 2003

Design Program for the World Trade Center and Lower Manhattan, New York, October 7, 2002

Managed Streets - Street Life is Crucial to the Revitalization of Lower Manhattan, New York, June 15, 2002

Rebuilding Lower Manhattan and the World Trade Center, New York, February 19, 2002

SIGNIFICANT BUILDINGS

1990-1994

Manhattan Village Academy, 400 student high school in loft space, 43 W. 22nd St., New York City

Residence Renovation 119 East 35th Street, New York, NY.

Residence Renovation 274 Roses Grove Rd., Watermill, NY.

Residence Renovation 19 Hillside Rd., Northhampton, NY.

1980-1990

Yerba Buena Gardens, 24 acre mixed-use development of an art center, theatre, offices, retail, hotel, gardens, co- master planner and conceptual designer

San Francisco Ballet Building, San Francisco Performing Arts Center, Civic Center, San Francisco

University of California at San Francisco, Laurel Heights Master Plan, San Francisco, California

Shown and Sons Winery, Napa Valley (unbuilt), California

The Poolhouse for Mr. and Mrs. Richard Goeglein, Napa Valley, California

River Run Vineyard Residence, Napa Valley, California Yerba Buena Gardens, 24 acre mixed-use development of an art center, theatre, offices, retail, hotel, gardens, co- master planner and conceptual designer

San Francisco Ballet Building, San Francisco Performing Arts Center, Civic Center, San Francisco

University of California at San Francisco, Laurel Heights Master Plan, San Francisco, California

Shown and Sons Winery, Napa Valley (unbuilt), California

The Poolhouse for Mr. and Mrs. Richard Goeglein, Napa Valley, California

River Run Vineyard Residence, Napa Valley, California

1970-1980

Margaret S. Hayward Playground Building, City of San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department, San Francisco, California.

Vine Terrace Apartments, (now known as Nob Hill Court Condominiums), 930 Vine Street, San Francisco, California.

Veterans Administration Nursing Home at Livermore, California.

Computer Center Prototype, Internal Revenue Service (Unbuilt)

General Services Administration, Kansas City, Kansas

Green Valley, a Planned Community for 100,000 people. American

Nevada Corporation, Henderson (Development Guidelines and Town Center concept).

Aliamanu Valley Community - 525 buildings housing 11,500 people. Corps of Engineers, Honolulu, Hawaii.

1960-1970

Union Street Stores, (adaptive re-use renovation) 1980 Union Street, San Francisco, California.

Campbell-Ewald Building Restoration, (Now Dailey and Associates, Advertising), 574 Pacific Street, San Francisco, California.

5 Year Master Plan, United Vintners, Inc. winery, Madera, California.

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Koret Residence, San Francisco, California.

Huntington Hotel Lobby Renovation, San Francisco, California.

Glide Methodist Church Renovation, San Francisco, California.

DISTINCTIONS AND HONORS

Montgomery Fellowship, Dartmouth College 1992

Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts 1982

Mt. Holyoke College

Fellowship American Institute of Architects. 1980

U. S. Government Delegate to "Habitat," the 1976 United Nations

Conference on Human Settlements.

Phoebe Hearst Gold Medal Award for Distinguished Service to San Francisco. 1969

DESIGN AWARDS

American Planning Association"s Metro Chapter"s Lawrence Orton Award for Excellence in City and Regional Planning (2003) cited Rebuild Downtown Our Town, co-directed by Beverly Willis

National Association of Home Builders, Merit Award, River Run Residence, St. Helena, California. 1985

California Council of the American Institute of Architects Merit Award, Margaret S. Hayward Playground Building, San Francisco, California. 1984

Gold Nugget Grand Award, Pacific Coast Builders Conference and Builders Magazine, for Best Recreational Facility, Margaret S. Hayward Playground Building, San Francisco, California. 1983

Gold Nugget Merit Award, Pacific Coast Builders Conference and Builders Magazine, for Best Recreational Facility, Margaret S. Hayward Playground Building, San Francisco, California. 1983

AIA Award of Merit, 1976 Homes for Better Living Awards Program, Vine Terrace Apartments, San Francisco, California. 1976

Award for Exceptional Distinction for Environmental Design for work on Union Street by the Governor of California. 1967

AIA Bay Area Award for Union Street Store Development at 1980 Union Street. 1967

Significant Achievement in Beautification Citation by Buildings Magazine for the Transamerica

Title Building in Oakland, California. 1966

Merit Award in Office Renovation for the Campbell-Ewald Building, San Francisco, California by the American Institute of Building Design. 1965

DESIGN EXHIBITIONS

Women in American Architecture 1988-1990: The Exceptional One. Exhibit organized by the American Institute of Architects and the American Architectural Foundation exhibited in Washington DC and Denver, Colorado.

Cooper-Hewitt Museum, the Smithsonian Institution"s National Museum of Design, New York 1988. The Outdoor Chair.

San Francisco Museum, San Francisco 1984. Yerba Buena Gardens.

Contract Design Center, San Francisco 1987. The Outdoor Chair.

Honolulu Gallery of Art Museum, Honolulu, Hawaii 1956. Group Oil Paintings Exhibit.

Maxwell Gallery, San Francisco, 1952, one-person exhibit Watercolors

See Attached sheet for murals, commissions and art works

SERVICE

Founder and President, Beverly Willis Architecture Foundation. 2002 - Present Founder and President, Architecture Research Institute, Inc. 1995-2005

Founding Trustee of National Building Museum, Washington, D.C. 1976-Present

Chairman, Federal Construction Council, Washington, D.C. 1976-1979 (now called Federal Facility Council)

Member of Executive Committee, Building Research Advisory Board, National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D.C. 1971-1979 (now called Board on Infrastructure and Constructed Environment)

President, American Institute of Architects, California Council. 1979

Vice President, American Institute of Architects, California Council. 1978

President, Lambda Alpha Society, Golden State Chapter. 1981-1982

Board of Directors, American Institute of Architects San Francisco Chapter. 1978

EDUCATION

University of Hawaii, Bachelor of Fine Art with Honors 1954

Oregon State University, Engineering 1946-48

LICENSE

Registered Architect 1966 State of California C-4945

PERSONAL

US citizen, single, interested in viticulture, horseback riding, swimming, tennis, softball. Received single engine plane pilot's license 1946.

PERSONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS –REFERENCE TO WORK

Wright, Gwendolyn. USA - Modern Architectures in History. London: Reaction Books, 2008: 208.

Cole, Doris. Candid Reflections: Letters from Women in Architecture 1972 and 2001. Midmarch Arts Press, 2007: 101-103.

Willis, Beverly. Invisible Images: The Silent Language of Architecture. Washington D.C.: National Building Museum, 1997.

Mann, Lian Hurst. "Forest." Architecture California November 1993: 52.

Lorenz, Clare. Women in Architecture. London: Trefoil Books Ltd, 1990. 134.

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Mazzurco, Phillip. Bath Design: Concepts, Ideas, Projects. New York: Quarto Marketing Ltd., 1986.

[Project: River Run, St. Helena, California]

Beebe, Morton, et al., eds. San Francisco. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1985.

[Project: San Francisco Ballet Building and Union Street, San Francisco, California]

Armstrong, Leslie and Roger Morgan. Space for Dance. Washington, D.C.: Publishing Center for Cultural Resources, 1984.

[Project: San Francisco Ballet Building, San Francisco, California]

Woodbridge, Sally B. and John M. Woodbridge. Architecture: San Francisco: The Guide. San Francisco: 101 Productions, 1982.

[Project: Yerba Buena Center and Gardens, Nob Hill Court, Margaret Hayward Playground/Building, San Francisco Ballet Center, Koret of California, San Francisco, California]

Ryder, Sharon Lee. "Getting at the Issues." Progressive Architecture 1974: 82-87.

Spence, William P. Architecture: Design. Engineering. Drawing. Illinois: McKnight and McKnight, 1972.

[Project: Contributing Author to Chapter 15, Grocery Stores]

The Junior League of San Francisco, Inc. Here Today: San Francisco's Architectural Heritage. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1968.

[Project: Union Street, San Francisco, California]

AUTHORED

Books & Chapters

Willis, Beverly. "Towards a Sustainable City: Rebuilding Lower Manhattan," in Mike Jenks, ed. Future Forms and Design for Sustainable Cities. Oxford: Architectural Press/Elsevier, 2005.

Willis, Beverly. "Towards a Sustainable City," in Ulla Terlinden, ed. City and Gender. International Discourse on Gender, Urbanism and Architecture. Hanover, Germany: Leske + Budrich, Opladen. 2003. 191-208.

Willis, Beverly. Invisible Images: The Silent Language of Architecture. Washington D.C.: National Building Museum, 1997.

Willis, Beverly. "If It's Tuesday, It Must be Singapore," in Iris Miller and Robert A. Bosser, eds. Visions and Reflections on Utopia and Reality. Washington, D.C.: American Institute of Architects, 1991.

Willis, Beverly. "The Environmental System Decision-Making Process," in Ravinder K Jain and Bruce M.

Hutchings, eds. Environmental Impact Analysis: Emerging Issues in Planning. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1978.

Willis, Beverly, ed. The Architect and the Shelter Industry. Washington, D.C.: The American Institute of Architects, 1975. [All chapters - except 5 and 6 - authored by Beverly Willis]

Willis, Beverly and Dr. Ronald S. Graybeal. "Chapter 9: Computerized Financial Analysis," in Harry A. Golemon, ed. Financing Real Estate Development. New Jersey: Aloray, 1974.

Articles

Willis, Beverly. "Talking Points: Whom to Trust Designing the W.T.C.? Daniel Libeskind." Downtown Express 22-28 July 2003.

Willis, Beverly. "Emerging Trends in the Architecture of American Cities." Architecture California Summer 1996.

Willis, Beverly. "If It's Tuesday, It Must Be Singapore." Design + Art in Greece Annual 1994: 180.

Willis, Beverly. "Is the Master Builder Dead?" Blueprints Winter 1993.

Willis, Beverly. "Tribute Quote for Chloethiel Woodard Smith." Blueprints Spring 1993.

Willis, Beverly. "Design of the San Francisco Ballet Association Building." Theater Design &Technology Summer 1987: 10. [cover story]

Willis, Beverly. "New Settings for Dance." Update Dance/USA 4 September 1986: 12-13.

Willis, Beverly. "Council Adopts Activist Stance." Construction Management Daily Pacific Builder 15 November 1979: 1,3.

Willis, Beverly. "Impressions of Habitat." Building and Reality Record 22 November 1976: 1,5.

Willis, Beverly. "Pre-Planning: Socio-Economic Problems Facing Industry." Coal Mining and Processing June 1976.

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Willis, Beverly. “Site Selection and Planning: Today’s Planning Dilemma.” Condominium World Winter 1975.

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Willis, Beverly. “From Rags to Riches on Union Street.” San Francisco Examiner 2 June 1974.

Willis, Beverly. "The Revitalization of Union Street." Urban Land May 1974: 10-13.

Willis, Beverly. "The Architect and the Shelter Industry." American Institute of Architects 1974.

Willis, Beverly. "Exercise Care in Choosing Shopping Center Architect." Chain Store Age August 1966: 32-34.

Willis, Beverly. "What Price Sound Control?" Buildings April 1965: 110-112.

Willis, Beverly. "The Seeds of A Revolution." Western Advertising April 1963: 30.

Willis, Beverly. "Stores for 1968." Nargus Bulletin February 1963: 30-31, 96-97.

Willis, Beverly. "OSC Floriculture Student Tries Greenhouse Hobby." The Sunday Oregonian Farm Home and Garden 16 May 1948.

Papers

Willis, Beverly. Re-examining the Courtyard Block: A Megacity Family Habitat. MegaCities 2000 Conference, University of Hong Kong. February 2000.

Willis, Beverly. Spatial Speculations: Embodied Utopias. University of Chicago Gender Center, March 1999.

Willis, Beverly. MegaCities: Re-examining the Sidewalk as Public Space, The Second International Symposium on Asia Pacific Architecture: The Making of Public Spaces. University of Hawaii East-West Center, Honolulu. April 1997.

ARTICLES WITH/ABOUT BEVERLY

"The Foundation Builders." Pink March/April 2008: 113.

McCann, Hannah. "Q&A: Beverly Willis." Architect August 2007: 80.

Rogers, Pat. "Renaissance Woman Looking Ahead." The Southampton Press 13 January 2000.

"Challenging Historic 'Truths.'" Progressive Architecture June 1995: 69-70.

Haar, Sharon and Clare Weisz. "Inherited Ideologies: A Reexamination." Oculus

June 1995: 5.

Dietch, Deborah. "Muses, Furies, and Goddesses." Architecture Magazine May 1995: 15.

Thompson, Julie. "Shifting Perspectives." Update October 1993: 10.

Willis, Beverly. “Tribute Quote for Chloethiel Woodard Smith.” Blueprints Spring 1993.

“Architect Willis is Dartmouth’s Montgomery Fellow Feb 8-19.” VOX of Dartmouth 7-20 February 1993.

Davidson, Cynthia Chaplin. “Beverly Willis: One Woman’s Story.” Inland Architect January/February 1991: 48-51.

Fillip, Janice. "Architecture as an Image." Architecture June 1989: 18-25.

Barber, Jean. “Spotlight on Beverly Willis, FAIA.” Women in Architecture October 1988.

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“Conversation: Beverly A. Willis, FAIA.” Architecture California January/February 1985: 16-17.

MacKenzie, Janis. “Success by her Own Rights.” San Francisco Business August 1984: 25.

Ventura, Serena. “Beverly Willis-Search for Beauty in Architecture.” Nob Hill Gazette May 1983.

“Blueprints By the Bay.” Savvy November 1982: 47-50.

Powell, Jim. "Ways and Means: Beverly Willis Listens." Savvy November 1982: 46.

"Honorary Degrees Awarded." Mount Holyoke Alumnae Quarterly Summer 1981: 31.

“Float Judges.” 92nd Tournament of Roses Bulletin 1981.

Emrich, Ann Freeman. "Alumnae Life." Alpha Phi Quarterly Winter 1980: 17-18.

"Willis Says CCAIA's Accomplishments Mean Strong Professional Organization." Building News 16 November 1979: 1.

Marlin, William. "She Strives for 'Affable, Affordable Buildings.'" The Christian Science Monitor 20 October 1977: 27.

Bell, Joseph N. "The Architect as Visionary." Signature 12 March 1977: 37-38, 40-41, 68-69.

Rochlin, Harriet. "From High Rises to Restaurants: Seven Architects Break Ground." Ms. December 1976: 15.

Putney, Michael. "Everyone Needs a Corner of the World." The National Observer 13 November 1976: 11.

McGrath, David J. "A-E Firm Computerized Path to Large-Scale Housing." Engineering News-Record 4 November 1976: cover story.

"A Market for Marketers." Building Design and Construction 15 September 1974: 42-43.

Cano, William. "The Golden Gait: The People Who Set The Pace." After Dark 7 August 1974: 40-41.

Marlin, William. "City Shapers." The Architectural Forum April 1973: 42-43.

"The Other Minority." Building Design and Construction 13 July 1972: 43.

Ross, David. "What Makes Beverly Run?" California Living 14 February 1971.

Miller, Ruth. "The Non-Parisians Voice Their Views." San Francisco Chronicle 26 August 1970.

"How Architect Approaches Shopping Center Design." California Architecture December 1968.

"Small Firms' Future." California Architecture 3 April/May 1967: 8, 22.

"Super Markets of Future Will Makes Strong Appeal to Senses." The Packer 13 November 1965.

"San Francisco Designer Wins National Award." The Sunday Star-Bulletin & Advertiser 15 August 1965.

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Schroeder, Mildred. "Success Comes in Size 12 Package." San Francisco Examiner 14 May 1962.

Alex Haley. "People on the Way Up." The Saturday Evening Post 5 May 1962: 26.

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Waldorf, Dolores. "They're S.F. Three Women of Distinction." San Francisco Bulletin 8 October 1958.

Alainoto, Jean. "Industrial Design." Hawaii Industry 3 March 1958: 44-45.

Leeds, Claire. "BPW Clubs Award Three Achievement Certificates." No Paper Name, 1958.

"Everyone's Bent on Fun and Games." No Paper Name, 8 February No Year.

INVISIBLE IMAGES

Willis, Beverly. Invisible Images: The Silent Language of Architecture. Washington D.C.: National Building Museum, 1997.

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Willis, Beverly. "*Invisible Images* Discussion." New York Public Library. 20 May 1998.

Zellerbach, Meria. "Book Review: Sensual Structures." NobHill Gazette March 1998.

"Ballet Building Featured in New Book on Architecture." San Francisco Ballet Backstage February 1998.

Worden, Melissa. "Book Review: Invisible Images: The Silent Language of Architecture." AIArchitect February 1998.

"Lectures/Readings/Films." The Washington Times 1 January 1998.

Swift, Jonathan. "Vision: The Art of Seeing Things Invisible." National Building Museum January 1998.

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"A San Francisco Story: Background Material." BeverlyWillis.com 16 December 1997.

Brady, Darlene A. "*Invisible Images* Review." Acadia Quarterly 16.4 (1997).

Steger, Pat. "Big Crowds, Big Bids Expected at the Big Auction." San Francisco Chronicle 21 November 1997.

"Have You Ever Though About What a Creative Person Thinks About When They Design a Building or an Interior, Design a Chair, Paint a Picture, or Choreograph a Dance?" Press Release, 3 November 1997.

PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS

Willis. Beverly, et. al. “Working Neighborhoods: Failed Policies – Fresh Directions.” The Ford Foundation. New York, New York. 22 April 2005.

“Beyond Sixteen Acres: Arts and Culture in Lower Manhattan.’” Rockefeller Brothers Fund. New York, New York. 2 February 2004.

“How to Revive the Retail Sector in Lower Manhattan?: The Second of a Series of Panel Discussions about ‘The Economic Future of Downtown.’” City Council Member Alan J. Gerson, The Center for an Urban Future, Pace University’s Center for Downtown New York. Pace University. 21 January 2003.

“The Grand Travaux: Its Legacies and Lessons.” Solomon R. Guggenheim Museaum. New York, New York. 3 October 2002.

"Nature as a Source of Inspiration." Artists and Art Director’s of California Annual Meeting. 1990.

Environmental Association of San Francisco Panelist. “The Future of The Presidi." 1989.

Monterrey Design Conference Panelist. "Architecture as Nature’s Image." California Council American Institute of Architects. 1989.

Northwest Regional Conference Speaker. "Tomorrow’s Architecture." 1977.

Alaska Chapter State Convention Speaker. "The Architect’s Role in Housing." AIA Anchorage. 1970.

ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS & LECTURES

"Invisible Images." National Building Museum. 1998.

“Inherited Ideologies - Caesura Event.” University of Pennsylvania. 1995.

"Event-based Design Theory." University of New York at Buffalo. 1994.

"Event-based Design Theory." Virginia Polytechnic Institute. 1994.

“Montgomery Lecture.” Dartmouth College. 10 February 1993.

Associated Collegiate Schools of Architecture, Northeast Regional Meeting. "Shifted Perspectives." 1993.

"Mixed Messages: The Nonverbal Language of Art and Architecture." Dartmouth College. 1992.

Associated Collegiate Schools of Architecture/American Institute of Architecture Annual Meeting. "If it’s Tuesday, it must be Singapore." Special Focus Session. 1990.

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Symposium Panelist. "Visionary San Francisco." 1990.

Joint Presentation with Professor John McDermott. "Las Vegas: Myth, Reality and Hope." Associated Collegiate Schools of Architecture Annual Meeting, University of Texas at Arlington. Los Angeles. 1988.

Graduate Design Studio with John McDermott. University of Texas at Arlington. 1986.

University of Oregon School of Architecture and Allied Arts. Eugene, Oregon. 1978.

Conference on Environmental Impact Analysis. University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana Department of Architecture. Urbana, Illinois. 1977.

Stanford University School of Engineering. Stanford, California. 1977.

Continuing Education Series. Harvard University Graduate School of Design. Cambridge, Massachusetts. 1975 and 1976.

University of California, College of Architecture and Planning. Berkeley, California. 1973.

Guest Lecture Series. University of Washington, College of Architecture and Urban Planning. Seattle, Washington. 1973.

PROJECT BIBLIORAPHY & PRESS

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Individual reference under project heading listed by date.

Project # 0785

ALICE CLUB HOTEL

Russell, John. “A Theatergoer’s World.” New York Times Magazine 20 October 1991.

[Background Article]

Ambush, Bennny Sato. “Our New Theatre.” Oakland Ensemble Theatre Bulletin September 1985.

Project # 0660, 0662

ALIAMANU

“Aliamanu Dominoes.” Honolulu Star-Bulletin 19 March 1977.

“Update.” The Honolulu Advertiser 22 February 1977.

McGrath, David J. "A-E Computerized Path to Large-Scale Housing." Engineering News-Record 1976:

cover story.

"Apartments, Townhouses Designed for Families in New Combined Military Community." Multi-Housing News 1976: 44-45.

U.S. Army Support Command. “Aliamanu Family Housing.” Hawaii Press Release 20 August 1975.

“Aliamanu Army Navy Housing.” Military Sun Press 13-19 August 1975.

Horton, Lauren. “‘Coffins-in-the-Sky’ Decried.” Honolulu Advertiser 7 August 1975.

Maneki, Ray. “Aliamanu Architect’s Proud Return to Isle.” Honolulu Star- Bulletin 7 August 1975.

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“Work to Start on 2,600 Military Homes in Hawaii.” Los Angeles Times 15 June 1975.

“Aliamanu Project Near Start.” Honolulu Star-Bulletin 30 April 1975.

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"Military Community." Honolulu Star-Bulletin n.d.

Morse, Harold. "Builders Praise Quality of Quarters." No Paper Name, n.d.

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Willis. Beverly, et. al. "Working Neighborhoods: Failed Policies – Fresh Directions." The Ford Foundation. New York, New York. 22 April 2005.

"Beyond Sixteen Acres: Arts and Culture in Lower Manhattan.'" Rockefeller Brothers Fund. New York, New York. 2 February 2004.

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"The Grand Travaux: Its Legacies and Lessons." Solomon R. Guggenheim Museaum. New York, New York. 3 October 2002.

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"Vanua ni Tui: A Case Study." Architecture Research Institute Brochure n.d.

ART PROJECTS

Davidson, Cynthia Chaplin. ""Beverly Willis: One Woman's Story." Inland Architect January/February 1991: 48-51.

"Descending Dove." United Church of Christ in Honolulu Brochure April 1985.

"Party Line." No Paper Name, 1959.

"Isle Woman is Industrial Designer." No Paper Name, 1957.

Photo. Y. Ishil. "Beverly Willis and Bud Willis." No Paper Name, 1956.

"Modern Hawaiian In Style." The Saturday Honolulu Star-Bulletin 7 May 1956.

"This Sandpile to Become Hawaiian Village Mural." No Paper Name, 1955.

"Waikiki Art Work." No Paper Name, 11 June 1955.

"New UAL Ticket Office Will Open in Kaiulani." Honolulu Advertiser 12 May 1955.

Chun, Ella. "Art Composition, In Four Flats." The Hawaii Weekly 21 March 1954.

"First Nighters." Honolulu Advertiser 1953.

"Local Artists Prepare For Annual Exhibitions." Honolulu Advertiser 7 June 1953.

"Art of the Pacific in the Princess Kaiulani." Brochure n.d.

McKinney, Joan. "Hawaii Has Room For a Career to Grow." No Paper Name, n.d.

"San Francisco B.P.W. Honors Artist." No Paper Name, n.d.

Stewart, Virginia. "Charlot in Hawaii." No Paper Name, n.d.

"The Story of the Palama Settlement Music Department Mural." Brochure n.d.

Project # 075, 076

ART PROJECTS : CHAIR

Gross, John. "Fancies Flow in a Quiet Garden as Californians Experiment with Outdoor Chairs." New York Times 24 July 1988.

Gundrum, Daniel. "Utilitarian Chairs Gone Wild and Witty are Abloom in Cooper-Hewitt's Garden." New York Times 19 May 1988.

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Project # 0315
BEATTY BUILDING

"Old Building, New Look." The Modesto Bee 30 July 1965.

"The Beatty Building." The Modesto Bee n.d.

Project # 0234, 0262
CAMBELL-EWALD

MacDonald, Kenneth R. "Lighting Helps Restore Old Building." Lighting 1967: 44-45.

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"Lath-Plaster Updates San Francisco Relic for Ad Agency." Plastering Industries June 1966: 15-16.

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"Victorian Image Retained through Planned Renovation." Building Maintenance and Modernization 12 December 1965: 10-12, 42.

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"Design Skill Rehabilitates Old San Francisco Building." American Journal of Building Design 1 July 1965: 10-15.

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"Relic's Restoration." San Francisco Chronicle 31 March 1964.

"Another Big Building Dedicated." Daily Commercial News n.d.

"Renovation." Beverly Willis and Associates Brochure n.d.

Project # 0330
CAPRICORN

White, Joan. "B & W Ball is Off Again." San Francisco Examiner 8 July 1966.

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"Bev Willis." No Paper Name, n.d.

"Compatible Companions of the Vine." San Francisco Examiner n.d.

Project # 0657, 0819
CARLA – COMPUTERIZED APPROACH TO RESIDENTIAL LAND ANALYSIS

Video:

"Carla (Computerized Approach to Residential Land Analysis)." World Cottage, Southampton, NY. 29 April 2000.

Print:

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"Architect Goes Easy on Bulldozer." Washington Post 27 September 1975.

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Project # 0570, 0629
DIAMOND HEIGHTS

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Project # 0233, 0245, 0321

GAVELLO BUILDING

"All Set for Another 58 Years." Building Progress 1968: 8.

MacDonald, Ken. "Brick-‘Aged’ by Asphalt." Masonry Industry 1968: 14-16.

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Project # 0670, 0741, 0745
GREEN VALLEY

“Project Reference File: Green Valley.” The Urban Land Institute July-September 1981.

Project # 0813

GREENWHICH APARTMENTS

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ART Project # 092

HALE HUALANI SHOP

Akimoto, Jean. “The Island Firm Specializes in…Industrial Design.” Hawaii Industry March 1958.

Project # 0223

HARBOR BOTTLE SHOP

"Retailer of the Month - Harbor Bottle Shop." Patterson’s California Beverage Gazetteer 25 October 1965: 69.

Project # 0176, 0190, 0216, 0388

THE JUG SHOP

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Project # 0811

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Video:

"Beverly Willis 119 E35 St. Construction." 15 November 1993.