

























Evolution of a Metropolitan Skyline

A.C. Martin

Interviewed by Marlene L. Laskey

Completed under the auspices  
of the  
Oral History Program  
University of California  
Los Angeles

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## INTRODUCTION

Albert Carey Martin, Jr., (born Los Angeles, August 3, 1913) is a partner in A. C. Martin and Associates, one of the most influential architectural firms in Southern California. The A. C. Martin firm was founded in 1906 by Martin's father, A. C. Martin, Sr., an architectural engineer from Illinois who came to California in 1904. The senior Martin invented and patented a technique in steel-reinforced concrete construction which was particularly useful in the construction of offices and commercial structures. His most famous work is Los Angeles City Hall (1927), designed in collaboration with John C. Austin and John Parkinson. Other well-known buildings by A. C. Martin, Sr., are the Ventura County Courthouse (1911), the Million Dollar Theatre, on Broadway Street in downtown Los Angeles, in which he employed the world's first cantilevered reinforced concrete balcony (1917), St. Vincent de Paul's Church on Figueroa Street and Adams Boulevard (1924), and the Atlantic Richfield Mariposa Building at Wilshire Boulevard and Mariposa Avenue (1931). The senior Martin had a close relationship with the May Company and designed many of their stores. The May Company downtown





(1924) and Wilshire (1937) stores are considered classics in the department store genre. Martin also designed the dome for the Church of Christ Scientist at Adams and Hoover boulevards (1917).

A. C. Martin, Jr., the subject of the following oral history interview, studied architecture at the University of Southern California while working summers as a carpenter's helper on projects his father designed. He graduated with a B.A. in 1936 and went to work in his father's design department. Martin senior operated an individual practice until 1945 when he invited his two sons, A. C. Martin, Jr., and John Edward Martin, to become partners. When A. C. Martin, Jr., became a full partner, he assumed the title, director of design.

In the post-World War II years, Martin and Associates expanded rapidly. The Los Angeles Times credits the firm with the design of "more than fifty percent of all the major buildings erected in downtown Los Angeles since World War II." (November 25, 1979) Among the most prominent of Martin-designed buildings downtown are the Southern Counties Gas Company Building at Eighth and Flower streets (1958); the Department of Water and Power Building at First and Hope streets, the world's first integrated modular office building (1965); the United States Federal Office Building at 300 North Los Angeles Street (1965); Wilshire



Metropolitan Medical Center at Wilshire Boulevard and Bixel Street (1965); Union Bank Square on Flower between Third and Fourth streets (1967); the Atlantic Richfield Towers on the block bounded by Figueroa, Fifth, Flower, and Sixth streets (1973); the Security Pacific World Headquarters at Flower and Third streets (1978); the Wells Fargo Building at Flower and Fifth streets (1980); and the Manufacturers' Life Insurance Building at Fifth and Figueroa (1980).

A. C. Martin and Associates has designed commercial structures throughout the Los Angeles metropolitan area. The firm was a pioneer in shopping malls, beginning with the Lakewood Shopping Center in Long Beach (1951), the Eastland Shopping Center in West Covina (1956), and Warner Ranch in Woodland Hills (1960). It designed the 1900 Building (1969) and the Century City Theme Buildings (1975, in collaboration with Minoru Yamasaki) in Century City. Other notable projects in the Los Angeles metropolitan region include the Bethlehem Steel Building in Torrance (1958), Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena (1965), TRW Space Park in El Segundo and Redondo Beach (1966), the Sears Building in Alhambra (1970), the Sunkist Building in Sherman Oaks (1973), Cedars-Sinai Medical Center (1975), One Town Center in Costa Mesa (1979), the Prudential Insurance Headquarters building in Thousand Oaks (1984), and the Thousand Oaks Public Library (1984). Martin and





Associates has continued constructing churches, and A. C. Martin, Jr., is particularly proud of his design for St. Basil's Church on Wilshire Boulevard near Western Avenue (1969), which David Gebhard and Robert Winter describe as a "forest of narrow concrete volumes [creating] an illusion of a Medieval northern Italian town, perhaps with Sir Basil Spence's Coventry Cathedral in mind." (David Gebhard and Robert Winter, A Guide to Architecture in Los Angeles & Southern California, Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, 1977, p. 194; this work contains descriptions and analysis of many of the buildings designed by Martin and Associates.)

As of 1984, A. C. Martin and Associates had a staff of over three hundred forty architects, engineers, and support personnel in four offices located in Los Angeles, Irvine, Houston, and New York City. Martin and Associates remains a family-owned-and-operated enterprise. The third generation of Martins, A. C. Martin, Jr.'s son David (currently director of design) and John Edward Martin's son Christopher, have become full partners. Martin comments that his role in such a large organization has been more "to provide an analysis and critique of the design of others . . . I probably have a deeper feeling for making judgements and appraisals and guidance of the work of others than actually the development of my own." (pp. 263-64) He elaborates that after stepping down as the firm's



director of design in 1974, his role has primarily been "making judgements as to problem solving in human relationships and client relationships and to generally watch the movement of the firm as it handles its ever-moving problems." (p. 263)

A. C. Martin and Associates has been a pioneer in the use of computers to analyze earthquake movements and the dynamic loads earthquakes impose on structures. In the Union Bank Square Building, the firm introduced ventilated vestibule systems into high-rise construction, which permitted a dramatic increase in usable floor space in office buildings. In the Wells Fargo Building, Martin and Associates implemented new energy-saving designs through the use of stainless steel panels and double-glazed windows.

Martin has served as director (1950) and president (1958) of the Southern California chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). He chaired the committee that rewrote the parking ordinances of the city of Los Angeles. In 1969 he was director of Los Angeles Beautiful, which implemented a tree-planting program. In 1976 he was elected president of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce. Martin has been active in the city's historic preservation movement and has proposed plans to revitalize the El Pueblo district north of Civic Center as well as the Los Angeles



Central Library building. In 1978, Mayor Tom Bradley appointed Martin chairman of the Los Angeles Bicentennial Committee. During the city's bicentennial celebrations, he successfully located corporate underwriting for events which traditionally would be supported by public monies. Martin's many civic activities reflect his oft-stated opinion that the respective roles of the private and public sectors need to be realigned. He views the private sector in the United States as the most vital force upholding the interests of democracy against government bureaucracy.

The following oral history interview with A. C. Martin, Jr., is more than a life history of one prominent professional: it is the history of a Los Angeles firm and of the ideas which have reshaped the face of a major American city. In 1963, Los Angeles architect Albert Carey Martin, Jr., predicted that "the architect of tomorrow will be the master planner of total environments." Martin has fulfilled his own prophecy with the many projects his firm has done since then.





## INTERVIEW HISTORY

### INTERVIEWER:

Marlene L. Laskey, Interviewer, UCLA Oral History Program. B.A., Political Science; has researched, organized, and conducted architectural tours of Los Angeles.

### TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: Martin's office in the Union Bank Building, Los Angeles, California.

Dates: December 8, 17, 1980; January 7, February 4, March 3, 18, April 8, 22, May 5, 27, June 2, 9, 1981.

Time of day, length of sessions, and total number of recording hours: Interview sessions were conducted at various times of day and were generally forty to forty-five minutes in length. A total of approximately ten and a half hours of conversation was recorded.

Persons present during the interview: Martin and Laskey.

### CONDUCT OF THE INTERVIEW:

The interview begins with a chronological format, covering Martin's family background and the architectural accomplishments of his father. After Tape V, however, the interview format becomes topical.

### EDITING:

Editing of the tapes was done by Bernard Galm. The verbatim transcript was checked against the original tape recordings and edited for punctuation, paragraphing, spelling, and verification of proper nouns. Words and phrases inserted by the editor have been bracketed. The final manuscript remains in the same order as the taped material.

In July 1983 the edited transcript, along with a list of queries and names requiring identification, was given to Martin. The approved transcript was returned in December of the same year.

The index was compiled by Cheri Derby, assistant editor, and Teresa Barnett, editorial assistant, who also prepared



the table of contents and interview history. The introduction was written by Richard Candida Smith, principal editor.

#### SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

The original tapes and edited transcript of the interview are in the university archives and are available under the regulations governing the use of permanent, noncurrent records of the university. Interview records and research materials are on file in the office of the Oral History Program.



TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE ONE

DECEMBER 8, 1980

LASKEY: Mr. Martin, you're one of the rare breed of people known as a native Californian, native to the area, with roots that go back well over a hundred years. So I thought perhaps we could start the interview with a discussion of those roots, perhaps beginning with your mother and your remembrances of her and [then] moving into the family.

MARTIN: Yes, my remembrance of the Borchard history includes stories of the trek across the plains in 1847 by my grandfather's father, but including my grandfather as a two-year-old child; and stories of Indian attacks were always mentioned, and whether there were very many wagons lost is a question. I remember something about some losses. The Borchard family came in through one of the northern passes, and down through the Stockton area, and eventually settled in the Ventura County area, on the south bank of the Santa Clara River, which is now part of Oxnard.

LASKEY: This was when, when they actually came into Ventura County?

MARTIN: Around 1866.

LASKEY: Around 1866.

MARTIN: There were stories of the height of the mustard plants and the existence of many snakes, and the trails which wove through the mustard fields would be flanked by





mustard which was as high as the shoulders of a man on horseback. The commercial center, that is the four corners with a store on it, occurred at a place called El Rio, which has now disappeared as a four-center intersection, and of course the old general store went with it. The man that owned the general store was Simon Cohn, a Jewish merchant who was one of the early breeds of merchants that also settled in this area.

Stories of my mother include her beauty, and some of them described her as the belle of the county.

LASKEY: What was your mother's name?

MARTIN: Carolyn Elizabeth. One of the stories of her vivaciousness is the fact that she was selected as the young girl to help drive the golden spike which completed the railroad trackage across a new bridge spanning the Santa Clara River flood area. So Carolyn, my mother, grew up as a young, vivacious farm girl and sought her education after high school at St. Mary's College, which was part of the Sisters of [St. Joseph of] Carondelet, who now operate the Daniel Freeman [Memorial] Hospital.

LASKEY: And Mount St. Mary's College too, don't they?

MARTIN: Oh, yes, they have Mount St. Mary's also. But St. Mary's College was out on--I'm not sure whether it was Slauson [Avenue]. I suppose it's gone now.

LASKEY: So she had her education in Los Angeles.



MARTIN: She had her education, part of it--well, the college education in Los Angeles. I don't know about her high school education. Probably locally in the Oxnard area.

LASKEY: So your great-grandfather, when he came down into Ventura, now there was nothing but mustard fields, is that what he reclaimed into--?

MARTIN: Yes, the south bank of the basin of the Santa Clara River was very rich, I guess somewhat rough in character. And those farms along that edge of the basin, which were alluvial in nature, became outstanding farming ground, eventually. Principally for the raising of lima beans, which was the basic crop in the area, and a great deal of sugar beets, which were promoted by the American Sugar Beet Company, which had a major refinery in Oxnard.

LASKEY: But this must have happened some time after your family had settled there.

MARTIN: Oh, yes.

LASKEY: Do you have any idea about how your great-grandfather went about reclaiming the land? It had been part of a rancho, is that right?

MARTIN: I believe it was part of Rancho Colonia, but I know nothing of Rancho Colonia. There's a Colonia school district that did exist, and may still exist, in that area. It was a one-room schoolhouse, which I remember very well.

LASKEY: So your grandfather, then, proceeded to grow up



in this area and expanded on what your great-grandfather had done.

MARTIN: That's right; he had his entire growing career in this area, because he came across the plains as an infant, and his father took quite a few years to drift down to Southern California and the Ventura County area. So that meant that my grandfather, John Edward Borchard, did grow with the land and did help develop the land as a pioneer.

LASKEY: Do you remember your grandfather at all?

MARTIN: Very well, very well.

LASKEY: What was he like?

MARTIN: He was tall and rangy, 6'4" in height, a quiet man, German background, a very kind man with a large family, and [who] I would say was extremely proud of the evolution of his holdings into one of the major ranches of the area. I believe he had some thousand acres at the time of his death, that were passed on to his heirs, nine children. So I remember him as being quiet and perhaps a little gruff, but kind, probably bothered with the some twenty-five grandchildren, who assembled often for the holidays out on this wonderful ranch.

LASKEY: What was the ranch like?

MARTIN: The ranch was first of all dominated by a very beautiful Victorian home, which was painted in the same colors as the railroad stations were: a tan and ocher color. It





was elaborate with its ornate finials and decor and corbels, just as so many colonial houses were. The house was surrounded by a picket fence, which was typical of the times, a kind of olive-shaped cap to it. The house had an addition to it, which was a cool house that was built on the grade or a little bit below the grade so that the soil dampness would keep the cool house fresh, would keep the food and the butter and so forth fresh, because they made their own butter (which I remember very clearly). Also, outside of the house and to the side of the typical Victorian garden, a beautiful mixture, conglomerate mixture of precious flowers, outside of that was the typical washbasin, which was really a trough with many faucets, and all [ranch] hands that came in for food would of course do their washing away from the house and then would come in to eat.

The farm--or the ranch, as it was called--as I knew it, had some very inventive mechanized features, including a very, very large diesel water pump, because in those days they were starting to pump water from perhaps a hundred feet, which of course now is about six hundred feet.

The plan of the ranch included a forecourt that was about a hundred and fifty feet in diameter, and in that, and surrounding that, were a series of buildings. There was a blacksmith's shop. There was a carpenter and toolshop adjacent to it. Next to that was another isolated building,



which was a grain building for seed and for feed for the animals. Then next to that there was a buggy barn, and at that time there was a whole series of buggies of various kinds, two-wheelers and four-wheelers and wagons and so forth. Next to that was some kind of a small, I'd say, foreman's house, and then continuing around this circle was the pumping plant and the base of a water tower for storage. As it came on around farther, there were areas dedicated to crops for the household use, until it made a complete circle back to the original homeplace. Back of all of this, in a secondary row, were a series of houses for families which worked on the farm, like three or four additional families. And to one side there were three barns, which were large, with their adjacent corrals, and one pigpen, with its outside area. So the cluster of buildings in the homeplace was a fascinating cluster. Interspersed with orchards, oranges and apples and all fruits, and perhaps dominated by two very tall pines, which were most unusual and were brought over from Australia, I believe. I have seen the same pine around the country and in Hawaii, but that was one of the things that in the very early days came to these settlers. The homeplace was a very fascinating kind of a development.

LASKEY: It sounds like a self-contained unit, with a separate life of its own.



MARTIN: It was; it was a self-contained center which had as part of its working complex all of the kinds of buildings and equipment necessary to be uniquely separate, including the blacksmith's shop, which was necessary for the shoeing of horses and particularly necessary for the development of plows and eventually the application of hardened edges for the plows.

They also, in the days of sugar beet harvest, used to have huge wagons drawn by a span of maybe eight large work horses, and I remember they used to go to the field-- As a child, when I was sleeping there, I would hear them go to the fields, maybe at four or five in the morning. As soon as it was light they would be heading out to the fields. A very colorful place, and unfortunately all of it is lost.

LASKEY: What happened? Did it just develop as--?

MARTIN: None of the family acquired it to-- Even though many members of the family lived there subsequent to the death of my grandfather--two or three members of the family lived there--none of them ever preserved it or decided to maintain it as a heritage home, or a farm, which would be a most unusual thing if it was preserved today.

LASKEY: Oh, it would have been beautiful.

MARTIN: My brother and I returned some fifteen years ago to try to find any part of the homeplace, such as a tree or a fence, and there was not one thing we could identify.



LASKEY: What had happened? Was it still a ranch?

MARTIN: It was all subdivided into--

LASKEY: Oh, it was subdivided.

MARTIN: --into residential districts, for nice residences. We could not find one semblance of that great ranch. That's very interesting. So I always have been sorry that we didn't buy it and preserve it, not as an investment but as a matter of pride and heritage.

LASKEY: Well, it sounds--

MARTIN: Turn it into a museum. It would have been an ideal museum of a typical ranch homeplace of the age.

LASKEY: Well, most of your uncles then became ranchers, didn't they?

MARTIN: Yes.

LASKEY: It's interesting that it wouldn't have been preserved just in the nature of things, since they were living in the area.

MARTIN: Well, preservation was not as important to them as we find it in our thinking today. To them it was an old homeplace and better let it go into redevelopment. And true, they were all farmers. Some of them ended up with some related businesses, but most of them were farmers, farming the land that they inherited, plus that which they acquired. My mother inherited several pieces of land, which she had to sell to bail out "the office," which was my





father's architectural office, which had such a difficult time in the Great Depression of the thirties.

LASKEY: Well, I'm interested-- You have nine aunts and uncles. All of your uncles became ranchers or farmers; there was one other daughter, besides your mother, who married in the area. But your mother married outside of the area, essentially, and an architect. Was there anything about her that was a bit of a renegade?

MARTIN: I never visualized her as being motivated by things that were entirely different, such as a renegade might interpret.

LASKEY: That's a strong term.

MARTIN: Strong term. She, I believe, aspired to be something more than a farm girl, as evidenced by the fact that her college education was in the city of Los Angeles. She also was a good pianist and she had a good voice, and she really enjoyed the vivacity of my father, who was a brilliant young architect-engineer, and a person who was most respected in the entire community of Los Angeles because of his drive and his honesty and his loyalty to his clients. [tape recorder turned off]

My father and mother were really very close and were very much in love their entire life, and they were very proud of their family of six children. I was the oldest son, and I am certain that in their minds I was always to



be an architect, but I didn't know that. I guess subliminally it all did happen. And, as you know, I have a son that is a fine architect. So it's a very deep kind of a natural understanding that exists in our family about the evolution of planning and the requirements of people in environments, because it is a strong background, this kind of thought process.

But the Depression was hard on my mother and on my father.

LASKEY: What did it do to the Borchard family? Did they suffer, the ranch particularly suffer from it?

MARTIN: I believe that there were some hard times in the Depression, because land values were very low; I'm certain that the prices for crops were very competitive. There was an influx of farmers from the Middle West who came and became farmhands, because they were in worse condition due to the drought and the creation of the dust bowls of the Middle West, which are an important matter in history. The family was very prosperous during and following the First World War, when lima beans commanded a price of eleven cents a pound or twelve cents a pound, which is like twelve dollars a sack, and they were producing that crop for perhaps two dollars or three dollars a sack. So the Ventura County farmers were very prosperous following World War I and during the twenties. I'm sure the Depression



of the thirties hit them just as it hit everybody else.

LASKEY: But this particular period would be the period that you would have remembered the ranch.

MARTIN: Yes, it was very prosperous.

LASKEY: When you were out there, did you ever think in terms of becoming a rancher or a farmer, despite what your family may have had in mind for you?

MARTIN: No, I never had thought like that at all.

LASKEY: You didn't.

MARTIN: No. I enjoyed it because I had four first cousins, young boys, that were real close to me; and I used to stay with them in the summertime, all during my youth. So there was a strong tie, and it lasted for many years, amongst the first cousins, the boys, in my particular age category. So I used to work there later on when I was in high school, for my bachelor uncle that lived on the home-place.

LASKEY: Now, this is the one who stayed and helped your father manage the ranch? Was he one of the younger--?

MARTIN: My grandfather.

LASKEY: Your grandfather, I'm sorry.

MARTIN: I worked for Will, the oldest uncle, but others lived on the ranch. There was Andrew Borchard, who stayed on the ranch during World War I, and Matt Borchard went into the service. And Matt Borchard, being the youngest,





always felt entitled, as the German tradition would have it, to be the heir to the homeplace, that is, to continue the management of the farm. As it happened, Andrew played that role, and Matt never did get over it. Because he felt it was his: he went off to war and somebody else took his place. So that became a lifelong, unfortunate, negative factor amongst the two younger boys.

LASKEY: What happened to Matt?

MARTIN: Matt died last year, and to his deathbed-- He was always a jolly fellow, a wonderful fellow. The pet of my mother, by the way; he was the baby when my mother was a young girl. And he used to stay at our house in Los Angeles when he was going to college, St. Vincent's College. But he never got over the fact that he was not the continuing young son, [as] a member of a German family. That was a German tradition that the youngest son would stay and help with the older years and farm the land. It's kind of an interesting point, really, because it was a negative point in the relationship of several members of the family.

LASKEY: Well, who was it? Was it Andrew, then, who would make the final decision to let the homestead go, or was it the family?

MARTIN: Well, no. Andrew built his home on the homeplace, right adjacent to the original house. And Ray, Raymond, lived in the homeplace for many years and did farm some of



the land that was part of the original ranch. I believe Ray farmed land which belonged to the girls, you see, because the girls weren't there to do their own farming. And Matt farmed for the girls also; so two of the younger boys became the farmers that handled the estates of the girls of the family.

LASKEY: Now, there was your mother, and then she had a sister. And I can only find her name listed as Mrs. John Lagomarsino, so what was her--

MARTIN: It's Ida. She's still alive.

LASKEY: Is she really? Is she living up in--?

MARTIN: She lives in Ventura. Ida Lagomarsino. And she has a daughter in Los Angeles and a son-in-law.

LASKEY: How about any of the other brothers or sisters?

MARTIN: Now, well, Andrew is alive; I think he's the last survivor. Matt is dead, Ray, and Will, of course, was the oldest, then Frank, and then Henry, Ernest. So I think Andrew is still alive, but I'm not positive of that.

LASKEY: Did two of your uncles, Frank and Henry, marry sisters?

MARTIN: Yes, they did.

LASKEY: The same year?

MARTIN: I have a feeling they did. I think it might have been a double wedding, but I'm not sure. They were the McLaughlin girls, Katie and Nellie, and that created double



cousins, and they are still around. I've seen them recently. They're a very nice family.

LASKEY: Now were the McLaughlins, then, I take it, also a ranching family in the area?

MARTIN: They were, yes.

LASKEY: What about your grandmother? What do you remember about her?

MARTIN: Oh. The thing I remember the most is her dynamic posture as a mother and a grandmother of a huge tribe and her slightness of build--she was very thin; she was about 4'11" tall.

LASKEY: My goodness.

MARTIN: And really loved every child that came onto the ranch. She was a very kind person. But she was busy.

LASKEY: I bet she was.

MARTIN: She was really busy.

LASKEY: Was she a native of the area too? Do you have any idea how your grandfather met her?

MARTIN: I don't know. The Kaufman family, I think, were related to the Hartmans of Ventura, but I better be careful because it gets pretty thin there. I don't remember. I'm sure that the Kaufmans were active in the Ventura area. There are streets in there that are named after the girls, still in the downtown area. I don't really know a lot about her family. There were cousins, and how they became cousins



I don't know, but the Pettits were related. And there was Ayala, who was not a blood relation, but by marriage that part of the family was early and around Oxnard. Finally the children of John Edward Borchard and Mary Borchard married into the Daily family, and my sister is now married to one of them. He's passed on, but Mrs. Milton [F.] Daily is my sister; she's from Camarillo. So that's a whole other strain now, the Milton Daily strain. There was other Dailys who married into the Borchards on an entirely different relationship. Andrew's wife was a Daily.

LASKEY: So out of this mix, your mother came down to Los Angeles. Was it down here when she was a student that she met your father?

MARTIN: No. She met my father through a neighbor, who was Mr. Joe McGrath. And Joe went to college at St. Vincent's College, where all of these young men went. And my father's brother preceded him to Los Angeles from Illinois, who was Father Joe Martin, a Catholic Vincentian priest. He encouraged my father to come here and be a part of Los Angeles. My father had been a graduate of the University of Illinois, had been working in the steel mills to learn about steel, in Pittsburgh, and then came out here without a job, except that they made him track coach of St. Vincent's College.





LASKEY: Did he have a background for being a track coach?

MARTIN: He happened to be a low hurdler at the University of Illinois.

LASKEY: Now, what time are we talking about?

MARTIN: [About] 1904. So Joe McGrath knew young Father Joe Martin, and Joe Martin brought his younger brother, Al, to Oxnard on a visit to Joe McGrath's, and that's where young Al Martin met Carrie Borchard. Through the McGrath family. I don't know very much about the romance except that I think it went through a long period of time, and my father was a "city feller."

LASKEY: He was.

MARTIN: He was a city feller, and he was thin, and they called him "Bird Legs." But he was a very charming man and the apple of my mother's eye, I presume. So in 1907, December 1907, they were married, and they produced a large family. [laughter]



TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE TWO

DECEMBER 17, 1980

LASKEY: All right, Mr. Martin, last time we were talking about the Borchard family, and I thought perhaps this time we could start talking about the Martin family.

MARTIN: The Martin family is a family that I had less contact with than the Borchards. The Martin family first came to Los Angeles when my uncle Joe Martin, who was a Vincentian priest, came here, I believe in connection with St. Vincent's College, which I believe was the predecessor to Loyola [University], which of course is Jesuit. But I do know that so many of the early population, or the male segment of the families, did go to St. Vincent's College, and I don't know much about that except it was very, very much a part of the Catholic society.

LASKEY: I also think St. Vincent's was the first college in Los Angeles, the first and the oldest college, as I recall.

MARTIN: I think that that's right. I was reminded of that the other day, on some occasion, [something] that was sent to me by Loyola law school.

In any case, Joe Martin, Father Joe, invited my father to come to Los Angeles. Now my father had been born, I believe, and reared in La Salle, Illinois, and was educated and graduated from the University of Illinois as an



architect-engineer. And in the way of background, it might be well to remember that the University of Illinois, as a prominent learning center near Chicago, was greatly influenced by the World's Fair of 1893 in Chicago. History tells us that there were some great architectural achievements in that fair and in the city of Chicago about that time, work by architect [Henry H.] Richardson and Louis Sullivan and later on Frank Lloyd Wright. That these architects were reaching away from the pseudoclassic schools, the beaux arts and the Rome school, which was being exemplified so strongly in New York.

LASKEY: Could you identify beaux arts, that is, define it?

MARTIN: Well, the beaux arts school of design was French and was the prominent school in the world in the teaching of architecture in all of its most sophisticated aspects of planning and refinement of the design as it is found in the Renaissance and the return of classic architectural motifs borrowed from Rome and Greece and even the introduction of the Egyptian. All of these architectural styles were through the School of Beaux Arts, Ecole [des] Beaux-Arts, or something like that. All of these things were highly refined by masters of architecture in that period, in the nineteenth century, and it is that school of design that was prominent in the growth of New York and the great financial institutions, because you can think of the stock



exchange and the bank being replicas of the Roman pavilions and the classic facades. But Chicago, being in the Wild West, broke away, and you see the works of Richardson and Sullivan and other architects that I'm not aware of: the real break against the revival of the classic.

LASKEY: What was it that triggered the break, was there anything in particular?

MARTIN: I believe that the real break and the desire for new expression was part of the introduction of the use of steel in architecture, as exemplified beautifully in some of the very light steel buildings of London, where the beautiful-- What were they called, where they had the glass--?

LASKEY: The Crystal Palace?

MARTIN: The Crystal Palace. As exemplified by that, or the Eiffel Tower. You see, steel, a tensile material, a material that could work in tension, was being introduced to architecture, and that brought new dimensions in the construction of office buildings, where actually we had cast-iron fronts, in Chicago particularly, and cast-iron columns with ornamental cast column caps. Those movements were part of the transition. Not necessarily a revolution but a transition into new thinking, and as the buildings designed by Sullivan, which were really Romanesque in their feeling, more than the classics of Rome, those buildings





started finally to evolve into a freedom in design.

And at the time of the World's Fair in 1893, according to [Sigfried] Giedion, the western builders introduced something called the balloon frame, which was a system of construction not used in the West, but in the Midwest, wherein the sticks of wood, like the two-by-fours, extended from the foundation to the top of the building, instead of being cut off at the second floor, to eliminate shrinkage. And this was a new kind of a frame. Those frames were, again, an expression of the craftsmen of the Midwest, who set the pace for even the California cottages and the [Charles] Greene and [Henry] Greene houses of the West and [of] Los Angeles. All of this I speak of because that's part of the University of Illinois.

Another part, and the most important part, quoting again from my brief knowledge of history, was the fact that there were professors at the University of Illinois who were working in the field of reinforced concrete design, which was advanced by great architects of France, who were doing bridges in reinforced concrete, and as I recall, [Robert] Maillart, an architect and engineer in France, was working in reinforced concrete design. This is the combination of the cementitious materials with the new steel tensile materials, and that's what reinforced concrete is. The steel takes the tension, and the concrete takes the



the compression. That was being advanced, and one of Dad's professors was the man who wrote the book--and I'm sorry I can't remember his name--in concrete design. So my father came from a center of learning that was really on the front, the leading edge, of experimentation in new systems of construction, and that was reflected in my father's work. My father invented many systems of construction. One of them is standing on the corner of Eighth and Hill [streets], as part of the May Company downtown today.

But to get back into history, my father graduated from the University of Illinois, was acclaimed by his professors as one of the most brilliant persons ever to graduate from the university. He went to Pittsburgh to work in the steel mills to refine his understanding of steel, which he did; he worked for Jones and Laughlin Steel Company. And in 1904 he was invited to come West by his brother, Father Joe Martin. He came West without a job. He happened to be a low hurdler on the University of Illinois's track team, and he became the track coach at St. Vincent's College, after work. He also came West and became a laborer on a reinforced concrete gang, on the Pacific Electric Building at Sixth and Main [streets], which is still standing.

LASKEY: That's a beautiful building.



MARTIN: Yes. He worked a short time, I'm told, before he was made the foreman, because he understood concrete like no one else in the construction industry here. A reflection of his higher education at the university.

LASKEY: In 1904, reinforced concrete would have been very new.

MARTIN: Very new, and just how it was applied in this building I don't know. Probably in some of the floors, because I think it's a brick building. He was discovered by Carl Leonhardt, who was one of the leading contractors in the city of Los Angeles, a name long forgotten, but you may note his name, sometimes engraved in some of the paving materials around Los Angeles. Carl Leonhardt introduced him to some of the Hellman family, who were bankers, and he later built one of the Hellman buildings, as an architect.

LASKEY: There was Isaias and there was Herman Hellman, and they have banks almost across the street from each other.

MARTIN: Right. And Dad did one of those, and I forget which one at this moment. The I. W. Hellman Building and the H. W. Hellman [Building], I think it was. In any case, he was invited to become an engineer by an architect by the name of [Alfred F.] Rosenheim, who was commissioned to design the Hamburger Building, which is today the May Company downtown. Dad worked with him, and as it happened, this Mr. Rosenheim got into some trouble in his business arrangements, and he



was dismissed from the project. Dad was hired to finish out the project. This was in approximately 1907, because at that time he married Carolyn Borchard.

LASKEY: You had mentioned earlier that he developed a process while building the Hamburger Building. What was that?

MARTIN: This was a system of reinforced concrete which consisted of building a skeleton frame for the pilings and beams out of reinforcing steel, which was strong enough, by its very structural design, to suspend the forms for the pouring of concrete. In effect, he built a steel frame of the lattice-like members of reinforcing, hung the forms on them, and then poured the concrete around the fireproofing, and the reinforced concrete--I mean the concrete itself--which made a composite design, a composite type of reinforced concrete, which is the substance of the nature of the system. That allowed one to continually build out of reinforcing steel and bring on the concrete later, and this is what is done today in steel frame. So it was something like that. I don't have, I'm sorry to say, any of the detail, unless we could find it in our archives, of the nature of that system. It may be someplace around. But that was it.

He also was working in thin-shell concrete dome design, and sometime later, a few years later, he designed the dome of the Christian Science church that stands on Adams [Boulevard]. And they tell me that it was at that time the





largest thin-shelled dome that had been designed of reinforced concrete.

And as he went through life he constantly worked on imaginative engineering invention. It showed up well in the construction of [Sid] Grauman's Million Dollar Theatre at Third and Broadway. The occasion was the result of the failure to receive structural steel from the mills at the time of World War I and the requirement that they had to do something, like go to reinforced concrete, which he did, for the cantilevered balcony of that building. Which is truly an historic event in structure. But that breaks a little bit away, again, from the account, the history of the Martin family.

LASKEY: Just to go back a bit, did you ever meet your grandparents, or do you know anything about them as far as the Martins?

MARTIN: Well, I certainly did. We used to go to their house on Sundays very often.

LASKEY: They moved out here?

MARTIN: The grandparents, John Martin and Mary, moved here, established residence on Fourth Avenue, probably south, between Washington and Adams [boulevards]. And the rest of the family came West.

LASKEY: Well, now, who came first?

MARTIN: Joe Martin.



LASKEY: Joe came first. Then your father.

MARTIN: Then Dad. And then I am not certain. There was an older brother, Frank; there was a younger brother, Emmett, who was an architect; then there were the daughters, there are Mary, Stella, Virginia, and Mrs. Ganahl--my mind fails me at the moment--[Margaret]. So there was, I guess, four girls and four boys.

LASKEY: So it too was a large family, like the Borchards.

MARTIN: It was a large family, yes. And they all lived. They all moved here eventually. The girls probably came with their parents.

LASKEY: What did your grandfather do out here? Was he--?

MARTIN: I don't think he was employed. I think he came in the later years of his life, and I don't know what his source of income was. When he lived in La Salle, Illinois, he was in the hardware store business, which meant they were also the undertakers, because caskets were sold in hardware stores. My father used to drive the hearse, with its big black horses; and that was one of the things that he spoke of when I was young. That was the nature of their business, and they were very active in La Salle, Illinois.

LASKEY: How did your father come to be interested in engineering and architecture? Did he ever tell you about that?

MARTIN: No, I think that he always had this interest in invention, and he was a very brilliant person. And there



was just no question that he would be headed for the university because of his high IQ. And all through his life that was proven; in his most productive years he was very inventive, very energetic.

LASKEY: Now he also, I think in the early years, did things in Oxnard and Ventura.

MARTIN: Yes. Well, his marriage to Carolyn Borchard gave him an introduction, first of all, to the design of residences, and he designed residences for some of the early families of Ventura and Oxnard. The Henry Borchard residence was an outstanding residence. The Tom Gill residence was an important one. He also designed the Bank of A. Levy in Oxnard and the Chapel [of St. Mary Magdalene] for Adolph Camarillo in Camarillo. And then, most importantly, the Ventura County courthouse, which today is an historical monument and is the city hall of Ventura today.

LASKEY: When did he do that? Do you know when the city hall was built?

MARTIN: I would say that that was, I believe, in 1913 or '14.

LASKEY: When did he decide to go into business for himself?

MARTIN: When he was commissioned to become the architect to complete the Hamburger store. He was then recognized as being very capable, and he was launched on his own by that project. And in 1907 he married Carolyn Borchard; so he went



into business in 1906.

LASKEY: From the beginning he must have been successful.

MARTIN: Yes, he was. He was the favorite of the Jewish community and the favorite of the Catholic community, which is rather interesting.

LASKEY: How did he manage that?

MARTIN: Well, I think it was basically a matter of trust. The Jewish community, who were merchants and bankers, developed a high degree of trust with A. C. And the Catholic diocese in those days found the same thing: that he was the most capable. And he did a great many schools and churches for what is today the archdiocese. An endless list, you know, like Loyola High School, St. Vincent's Church; hospitals, like Queen of Angels Hospital, or many others, St. John's Hospital in Oxnard, Ventura County Hospital.

LASKEY: Did he ever talk about what Los Angeles, the city itself, was like in those early years, say from 1907 to 1910? What kind of a city was it?

MARTIN: Well, I don't remember direct conversations, but I have impressions. My father, who was prominent as a young architect, strove to become socially recognized in the establishment of the city of Los Angeles, which I believe was pretty sophisticated and an exclusive group of early settlers who were quite wealthy. He was really a young man that earned all of his way and was very proud of his family,





and he moved his homeplace to Seventh and Catalina [streets], which was right across the street from the Newmarks and the Hellmans and the Tatums, Donn Tatum's family--all those early families. And my father really became a part of that, to some extent. He was ambitious, and underneath it all he had a strong desire to be recognized for his ability, which he certainly had. So his life was influenced greatly by his works in helping to build the city, his association with prominent bankers or business people. His initiative brought him far into the recognition as being a substantial citizen and part of the establishment, and there certainly was an establishment.

LASKEY: He had some strong competition, too, I would think, at that time, with the Parkinsons and Morgan and Walls.

MARTIN: The Parkinsons, right. And those firms were really established earlier than he was; like John Parkinson was the dean, without a question, and Morgan, Walls, and Clements finally, and Myron Hunt, and some of the early architects were here before Dad was here. And they really were more prominent in the design of office buildings than A. C. was. He was the newcomer. In some ways they had to recognize him because of his attainments, and he was an independent person, too. Very proud to be independent.

LASKEY: This was in his nature, to be an independent thinker?

MARTIN: Yes, I would say so. The nature of the city, as



I recall it, was to a great extent, I think, very clean and very nice, from a physical point of view. And Wilshire Boulevard, in the vicinity of Vermont [Avenue], was the center of the fine residences. At the corner of Vermont and Wilshire [Boulevard] was the beautiful residence of the person who's given the museum and so forth to USC [University of Southern California], Hancock, [G.] Allan Hancock residence was on the corner. The [Oscar] Lawler [Jr.] residence was in the vicinity of Vermont and New Hampshire [avenues], on Wilshire. Many of those residences you can see in Hancock Park today, because they were all moved out. In those days they used to move them out.

LASKEY: You mean they were physically moved into Hancock Park?

MARTIN: Physically moved, yes, right. And you can find them there today. It might be hard to recognize some of them now. But I recall the city as being really quite clean, people interested in tree planting, beautiful boulevards.

LASKEY: Now, when were you born?

MARTIN: I was born in 1913.

LASKEY: In 1913, and where?

MARTIN: My home-- Well, I was born in St. Vincent's Hospital, which was on the corner of Sunset [Boulevard] and Beaudry [Avenue], on the hill, and it was later moved to where it is today. My parents' residence was at Seventh



and Catalina, which was a home located immediately adjacent to the Windsor Hotel, which is still there, and the Windsor Restaurant is there. I often go there today to talk with Mr. [Ben] Dimsdale, who bought my father's property, because we are friends, and we talk about the old times. So that is the last bit of a tie, because you can't find-- The house is gone. The garage is gone too, I believe, now.

LASKEY: That would be about where the Ambassador [Hotel] is.

MARTIN: We were there before the Ambassador and before the Windsor Hotel. As a matter of fact, where the Windsor Hotel stands today was the original site for St. Basil's Church, which my father designed. They built the original St. Basil's Church, which was an English half-timbered church, and as the saying goes, the father pastor couldn't stand the noise of the Martin kids, who were right next door. Besides, my father wouldn't sell him the house to be the parish house, so they moved the church. And my father moved it for him, out to Wilshire and Harvard [boulevards], and later on that same church burned down. And that church was expanded, which I had something to do with. Then finally we built the new St. Basil's Church, and the old one burnt down the day we moved in, almost. So that little half-timbered church had a wonderful history, but a little rough. It was the parish church for Monsignor Father [Edward] Kirk, who was a very much of a loved priest and had a great



devotion to the Virgin Mary. But that's-- Those are little remembrances.

You asked about the nature of the city, and I think the most vivid thing in my mind is the importance of streetcars and the whole system of transportation, because when we were children, in the early twenties and late teens, we went to schools that were along the Eighth Street car line, which became Eighth and Ninth. I first of all went to kindergarten at Hoover Street School, and then went to Cathedral Chapel, which later became Immaculate Conception Parish, which my father had designed. We would take the N car, a nickel a ride, and those streetcars did a magnificent job, of course. I remember the demise very clearly. The demise of the streetcars was because the automobile was coming on the scene, and the conflict between the pedestrian coming from the curb to the streetcar and the automobile was the worst kind of a conflict. And the automobile--everything finally plugged up. Downtown, you couldn't move through downtown, and they therefore abandoned the streetcars. I remember that very clearly. I used to be a paperboy selling papers at Eighth and Vermont; I remember that very clearly.

LASKEY: Now, these were the "red cars"?

MARTIN: No, these were the "yellow cars," streetcars. The red cars were a different line. LA Railway was the yellow cars, and the red cars were Pacific Electric [Railway],





which was [Henry E.] Huntington.

But the city was a clean city, and the whole nature of Los Angeles, I think, was very progressive, really a very industrious kind of people, and to some extent agricultural, because of the orange groves, which were so important, on the east side, around Pomona and Whittier and so forth.

LASKEY: Well, if you lived at Seventh and Catalina, was that pretty much the outskirts of the city at that time?

MARTIN: It was close; it was before the Ambassador Hotel was there, and that site of the Ambassador Hotel was an open field. The west edge of that site was the swamp, which was our playground, but which we had a lot to do with later in life. That is now a major storm drain that comes down Normandie [Avenue] and runs south through that whole district. It's all underground now, but in those days it was an open swamp, on the west side of that site. That swamp came all the way from Bimini Baths, which was north on Vermont, adjacent to Virgil [Avenue].

LASKEY: What were the Bimini Baths?

MARTIN: Bimini Baths was probably the most exciting and popular cluster of swimming pools for the public that you can ever imagine. There were two indoor pools and one outdoor pool. They were heated pools, and all of the populace in the area used to go there and learn to swim, or swim, and it was the center of that whole idea of recreation. It



was adjacent to the swamp, and the swamp came south to Fifth Street and turned west over to Normandie and Vermont, and then south on Normandie, running right through the Tishman project and the west side of the Ambassador. I remember as a boy very clearly that that swamp, which had oil wells pumping adjacent to it, caught on fire because of the oil, and there was a three-block fire, running from Vermont to Kenmore [avenues], all ablaze at one time. The cattails were like wicks full of oil, you know, and it was a huge fire. But that was one of the things I'll never forget. That must have been about 1920.

I probably should get back to the history of the Martin family.

LASKEY: It's all Martin.

MARTIN: As I said, the city was a very beautiful city, in my estimation. It was clean; the houses were comparatively new. John Martin and Mary Martin lived on Fourth Avenue, as I described. Virginia McNamee, whose family is active in the city today, was one of the daughters. Margaret Ganahl was one I couldn't think of, lived on St. Andrew's [Place], and C. C. Ganahl was in the lumber business, a very prominent lumberyard [Ganahl Lumber Company]. Frank Martin was a technician that worked in the testing of materials; Smith-Emery [Company], I believe, was his employer. Emmett, the young architect, was educated by



my father, my father supported him, and he came into the office, but there became a conflict. Emmett then went into business on his own and did some magnificent churches, including St. Brendan's on Third Street, west of Western [Avenue], and probably one of the finest churches in the city. Father Joe Martin was drafted into the service in World War I. He was inventive and invented an early version of the tank, which I remember he modeled up and showed us as we were children, how this tank worked, a tank with the continuous tracks. He was interested in that; I don't think he had patents, but he was always talking about it.

Family today: there are very few left except Virginia McNamee's family. John McNamee is in this city. I believe he's a banker; I'm quite sure he is. And the others, I haven't seen them for a long time. So that's about my remembrance of the Martin side. Not very many children left.

LASKEY: What about your own family? Your brothers and sisters, and your growing up, so we can--

MARTIN: Our family is--everyone is still alive and doing well. I have four sisters and my brother, Ed. Starting with Ed, he has five children, as my wife and I do, three boys and two girls, and we're partners; and of course that's very current. I have a sister, Carolyn, who is Mrs. Joe Novak, living in Pittsburgh, and Joe Novak is a very



prominent opthamologist in Pittsburgh. They have two adopted children. Then my sister Margaret, who is Mrs. Milton Dailey (he is deceased), lives in Camarillo, part of Ventura County, and is extremely active in the area, as is her offspring. She has, I think [pause] four children. I'd better not get into it--I'm embarrassed. And Evelyn is the oldest sister; she is Mrs. Frank Purcell, lives in Palm Springs. Frank Purcell, now deceased, was a very active and prominent dentist in the Palm Springs area. Lucille is living in Westlake; she is divorced, has been for many years, lives alone now, and is very active with her hobby of training horses. She loves to help train horses, and she does that as a hobby. So that is a quick rundown on our own family.

LASKEY: To go back, there's one thing I should ask you. What does the C stand for?

MARTIN: The C is Carey; it was my grandmother's maiden name.





TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE ONE

DECEMBER 17, 1980

LASKEY: Mr. Martin, you were telling me about your father's name.

MARTIN: The name Carey, which is my father's middle name and mine, was my grandmother's maiden name. Beyond that I know nothing of the Carey family, but they were from the Middle West, probably from the vicinity of La Salle. The name has been carried down by myself as junior and my oldest son, Albert Carey Martin, III.

LASKEY: It sounds Irish.

MARTIN: It is. Both sides of the Martin family are Irish, and both sides of the Borchard family are German. So we had the Borchards, which included the Kaufmans, Grandmother Borchard was a Kaufman. And my grandfather Martin was Irish and so was his wife, Mary Carey. So it is a kind of a distinct mix of German and Irish.

LASKEY: At any time when you were young, were the Borchards and the Martins ever together?

MARTIN: Yes, there were several occasions where they paid somewhat of a nice courtesy visit, where members of the Martin family would go to Oxnard. As a matter of fact, some of the Martin girls became very good friends of some of the Borchard family and some of the people in Oxnard; so there were ties, friendship ties, between the Martins and



the Borchards, and between the Martins and some of the other Oxnard people. It was a very nice kind of a relationship.

LASKEY: Did anybody ever take a head count?

MARTIN: Well, yes, quite often. Not when the Martin tribe, the family, and the Borchard clan got together. But on the Borchard side I believe I had something like twenty-five first cousins, and on the Martin side I believe I had something like fifteen first cousins. And of course later on the families developed into a big group.

LASKEY: Do you have any feelings about growing up in a big family?

MARTIN: Well, my feelings were all very pleasant. My remembrances of my immediate family, brothers and sisters, were always very pleasant. And with my first cousins it was the same way, in all cases, I would say. I was not very close to my Martin first cousins, but I was very close to the Borchard side, first cousins.

LASKEY: Were they very supportive of you?

MARTIN: What do you mean?

LASKEY: As a family unit, did you support each other in the sense of approving, you know, encouraging?

MARTIN: I would really say no. Not in a negative sense. Oxnard was a long way from Los Angeles. The Oxnard side of the family were practically all farmers. The farmers



were engaged in their thing, which was quite different than the lifestyle of the city people. And there was a distinct difference between the country people and the city people, one which probably would be enhanced by the fact that the country people had to come to the city for their education--high school and college, high school to a lesser amount.

The city people were always doing things which were a little more related to the latest advancement in automobiles, in communications. In fact there was, I believe, a certain subliminal jealousy between the country people and the city people. Now, the people of Oxnard really advanced the state of agriculture greatly in their very modern concepts of cultivation and drainage of the land and such things, the development of water. And they were on the frontier.

LASKEY: Specifically, what did they do?

MARTIN: Well, I believe the development of the drainage ditch system in the Oxnard plain area was the thing that made that into the very valuable agricultural plain that it is, because formerly it was an alkali deposit, which would even be shown as a crust on the surface of the land and would, of course, be detrimental to any crops. That drainage system was initiated by Senator [Thomas R.] Bard of Hueneme--I think I mentioned that before--and my grandfather was one of the farmers who was participating in the district and undoubtedly paying taxes to pay for the bonds and things like that. But



there was a feeling at that time between these two segments of society, which of course today is almost washed away, because those people are as much urban today as anybody. So I guess that may be a response to your question.

LASKEY: How about your own family, your immediate family, growing up and your brothers and sisters?

MARTIN: We had-- I think the most important event in my family was that my father really was ill. He was subjected to-- What is the disease where you pass out?

LASKEY: Epilipsy?

MARTIN: Epilepsy. I think the stongest influence on the children was the fear of his death, all through our lives. He used to collapse and fall on the floor, and you would think he was dying right there. And I think I lived perhaps my whole life in fear of his death. He lived to be eighty-one. [laughter]

Then later on my father, after the Depression, had some problem with drinking, and that became a very negative thing in his later life. His companionship with my mother in later life was really pretty serious. When I came into the office after I graduated in 1936 and in early 1937, things were in a very severe state of affairs. That was the end of the Depression, which in a way just wiped my father out, and between his epilepsy and drinking, it created a very difficult thing. He was still respected, but he was losing





ground very rapidly and his professional posture. He had some good clients, and he did a good job, a terrific job; especially Tom [Thomas] May and the old Ducommun family and some of the Union Hardware people, the McLaughlins, were very loyal to him, and he did a great job. When I came on the scene, the youth started to bring a certain element of reliability, and he had some employees--Tom [Thomas] Gilbert, Joe Longueville, and Norman Patten--that were very loyal, and they kept the office going really.

Then as the war came on, in 1942, the architects were in bad shape, because in the civil engineers' manual, or the army manual, there's only the word engineer, not architect. Architects were camouflage people. And that's the way it was. When they started building buildings, like temporary hospitals or aircraft manufacturing, they started to bring the architects back in. This was later on, two or three years after we were in the war. That's when we got started again as a firm. We were very low. We weren't doing schools. (My dad did a beautiful job in 1937 on Lincoln High School; I think it is one of the finest schools that he ever did.)

But in any case, this period of my father's was turbulent, and it became turbulent in the family too. My mother was, in our minds, a saint to be able to withstand it. She was a very strong woman, and she was very loyal to my father,



but it was not easy. So you asked about the relationship between the children and my parents: it always included the element of fear of death of my father, of protecting him against his habits of drinking, and [of] trying to do the most with a very difficult situation. So they were very trying years, as far as Mother was concerned. One doesn't like to recall those things, but we're talking about the truth and history, and it was very bad. My father, as he got older, even though his reaction to his epilepsy was improved because of medicine-- And he was an early trial case I remember that, the doctors were searching, searching, and searching for something to hold it back. Now between that and-- I lost my train of thought a little bit.

LASKEY: Your father's struggle and your relationship to that struggle.

MARTIN: Well, the struggle, and then with all of this, and the bringing on the family-- We were all educated at USC, and there was no money to educate us. We all worked to help get through. The Depression destroyed the assets of the family completely, with the exception of a few pieces of property--the homeplace and the Riverside ranch, which we still own. (Ed and I own it now, and it was one of my father's very interesting ventures, almost a story unto itself.) But the feeling between the girls and the boys today I would say is excellent, considering all the years



that have passed, considering opportunities for disagreement; we really don't have any strong disagreement between members of the family today. And everybody's alive, which is unusual.



TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE ONE

JANUARY 7, 1981

LASKEY: Mr. Martin, you made some references to the Riverside ranch. I thought perhaps you could tell us what that is.

MARTIN: My father came from a small town in Illinois. He landed in Los Angeles and became a very well accepted architect. He married the daughter of a farmer who was most successful in Oxnard. I believe subliminally he always wanted to have a ranch of his own, which one can probably understand as a desire on the part of a small-town midwestern youth. The Riverside area was an area that had a great many prominent settlers at the turn of the century, many English families, and today if you go through the area along the Riverside Freeway, from Newport to Riverside, you find an area which is called Victoria Avenue, which was the reference to the English backgrounds of so many people. These people developed wonderful orange orchards and avenues lined with palm trees, and today it's one of the prettiest areas in Southern California. This is in the vicinity of Van Buren [Boulevard], a cross-street to the Riverside Freeway.

Somehow, through some of my father's friends, generally of pioneering interest, he discovered a parcel of land in the back country from this Riverside area, in the Gavilan Hills. And sometime, perhaps about 1916, he purchased around 1,500 acres of land, some of it suitable for agriculture and some





of it, because of the rock coverage and lack of water, was suitable for nothing more than "rocks and rattlesnakes." That became, in the minds of the family members of the family, the Riverside ranch. We had very little to do with the ranch because it was far away. It was undeveloped, and not until I became interested in it, just because I wanted to hunt rabbits and things like that, did we ever as a family participate in the ranch. However, about 1950, I became more interested and suggested to Dad that we do something with it and that I would like to help.

Perhaps closer to 1960, I with a neighbor, Mr. Don McMillan, proceeded to develop water for the area. Since the large ditch feeding the Lake Mathews water basin or Lake Mathews water storage area, the ditch which came from the Colorado River, was about two miles from the ranch, we proceeded to develop a private water company. We put in pumping stations and pumped water up the hill, a lift of about 900 feet, into reservoirs that we constructed near the ranch. So in this way we opened up the country for the development of citrus. My companion Don McMillan was in the citrus business, and he took the initiative in getting the lines laid.

This led to an agreement between my brother Ed and myself and my father to proceed with the planting of citrus groves. Eventually we planted and have today 480 acres of citrus, equally divided between Valencias and navels. Our philosophy



was that the only way we could keep such a piece of land through time would be to improve it and get some kind of an income flow that would preserve it for future development. My father died in 1962, I guess--

LASKEY: In 1959.

MARTIN: [In] 1959, and the ranch was willed to the girls. We developed a purchase agreement with them and bought it from them and proceeded with our orange development enterprise. As you look back through time, because of the high altitude of 2,000 feet and occasional freezes, it has been a very unprofitable venture, with the exception, and perhaps it's a rationalization, that we still have the land, and it is in the process of becoming subdividable into residential tracts. There are 1,460 acres, and perhaps 1,000 of them are usable for high-quality residential. I've spent the last five years in the process of planning and developing the whole area, with neighbors, and creating the laws which will promote the development of streets and school districts and water supply, gas, and all the utilities. So I've been personally very involved in the formation of the property owners' associations and the development of the infrastructure for future development.

At this moment, after all these years, Ed and I have realized that the land is getting valuable, perhaps worth \$7 or \$8 million now, and we better get rid of it. So several years



ago, we started the process of giving it to our children and our grandchildren, which is now accomplished; we have given maybe 400 acres of it to some thirty heirs, in a partnership which we control for management purposes. Just what the future brings I don't know, but I'm in the process of actively planning the long-range future of the area, and our land particularly, at this moment. It's a great piece of land and has to be handled very carefully. It's never been profitable; as a matter of fact it's been a headache, but does have tremendous financial potential.

LASKEY: Would you see it like another Westwood or Westlake Village, that kind of development?

MARTIN: No, it's really suburban, it's way out in the country. It's beautiful country. It is in the center of population that is less affluent than the Westside of Los Angeles, by considerable. However, there is a certain element of our society that are interested in ranchos, small ranchos, that are interested in equestrian activities and just getting into the smog-free area. And we visualize now homes that would sell in the vicinity of several hundred thousand dollars.

LASKEY: But they would be like small ranches.

MARTIN: Yes.

LASKEY: Rather than a tract kind of a development.

MARTIN: Yes. The zoning is such that it discourages any small-sized lots. The fact is you can't do it under the zoning.



We are the ones that have been working with the pattern of zoning, and the consensus of all the owners in the area is that they do not want it to get down to a half-an-acre lot or anything like that. So that's satisfactory with us, and therefore our plans are made accordingly. But our plans will include some high-quality features just because of the pride that is existing in seeing this ranch of "rocks and rattlesnakes" evolve into a beautiful residential area. That's kind of a summary of the history and the existing status of the ranch. I can't go much further with projections. I know it's long-range very valuable, I know it's going to take a great deal of effort to bring it through its evolution, which is a pleasure, as far as I'm concerned.

LASKEY: Is it still being farmed?

MARTIN. Yes.

LASKEY: It still has the orchards on it.

MARTIN: Yes. Our part of Corona-College Heights [Orange and Lemon Association] packinghouse, which we are part owners of. We are partially Sunkist [Growers, Inc.] label for marketing, which we just moved out from because of some deficiencies and some disorganization, and we have helped through our influence to bring in another marketing company called Sun World, just because Sunkist has, in my mind, failed us and cost us a lot of money.

LASKEY: In what way?





MARTIN: Well, internally the Sunkist organization has been weakened due to internal politics, I believe, and a change in the ownership composition of the board of directors from a farm-owning director to a commercial type of director, meaning the commercial interests have been moving into the farming business, and that creates a great deal more attention to the marketing process, in the Asian countries especially. So Sunkist has been marketing as a cooperative type of organization with an agreement that the marketing will be controlled by Sunkist, in the Asian countries particularly, and that the procedure would include a single source of marketing. However, members of Sunkist organization have been marketing on the side, to the detriment of the loyal members of Sunkist, and the board of directors of Sunkist hasn't stopped the policy. And so we gave them the word, we just moved our whole packing operation out from under the control of Sunkist. It's a movement that is forthcoming, I believe, in many cooperatives.

LASKEY: Is Sun World a cooperative still?

MARTIN: Yes. They have a very strong marketing organization. They market vegetables also, United Fruit [Company], I believe, and they have, for example, a label for bananas called Chiquita banana, which in Europe is a very big label.

LASKEY: It is here too; I think it's probably the one identifiable label.

MARTIN: So it's a strong organization, and my goal at the



moment, my brother's also, is that we will hope to sell the packinghouse, which has a great profit in it, and we own about 12 percent of the ownership, which is valued at \$5.2 million. So we would much rather have our interest in the form of cash than in the form of a packinghouse and as a capital gain. So the future will see some resolution of that problem, but I've been somewhat instrumental on the side in seeing that this sale of the packinghouse may become part of the move to the new marketing organization, just because we don't want to be in the packinghouse business, just like originally we didn't want to be in the water company business when we built the water company.

LASKEY: What happened to the water company? Do you still own that?

MARTIN: We submitted our interest to the people by a vote, and the people voted to accept Metropolitan Water District as the water company management and ownership. We sold it back to them at our cost, just to get out from under. But we did accomplish the goal of bringing water to the Gavilan Hills, which was a major goal. It was two miles away and it's 12,000 acres in the watershed area of this plateau. It was a very constructive thing to do, because now everybody has water and before that nobody had water.

LASKEY: And the land is usable and of value, which you didn't have before.



MARTIN: Well, the day we turned on the first pump, we made the remark to each other, Mr. McMillan and myself, that we just made \$1.5 million. Because it added, actually, \$1,000 per acre to our holdings at that time, that's a long time ago. Which was true. It didn't mean anything, because we were not after it, and what we really want to do is convert it into a very beautiful long-range development and have others participate and our family to participate.

LASKEY: In the process of going through all this, when you started growing citrus up there, did you get involved in the growing of it at all?

MARTIN: Oh, I was and I am.

LASKEY: Oh, you are.

MARTIN: You see, I'm managing the groves right now as the member of our partnership between Ed and myself. We have an operating manager and an assistant resident who are on the property all the time. I'm involved in a business sense, with the responsibility of operating it now. Which is fine. When you're a farmer you worry when it gets cold.

LASKEY: Or too hot, or no rain.

MARTIN: Oh, yes. It's a lousy business, but it's kind of fun. But we have never made any real money.

LASKEY: Well, it's a very chancy business, especially citrus.

MARTIN: Yes, you can lose a couple hundred thousand [dollars], or you can make it. You lose several hundred thousand



periodically, that's about the way it is. And the reason, fundamentally, is that we're really in a marginal area.

We grow a high quality of fruit, but it's cold, and some of the places on the ranch are shallow soiled and a little more difficult to develop a producing tree. But it is quality fruit, and we have a very good operation with an outstanding manager, Mr. Chuck Johnson, who's permanently our manager.

LASKEY: Do you have a timetable, even remotely, for starting to phase out the citrus operation?

MARTIN: Well, I'm convinced that with the major change in the cost of energy because of the oil shortage and the increase in electrical rates, that any marginal operation will fail. And we, I believe, are seeing the first indications of that right now. Because our costs of water are about \$156 an acre-foot per year and we apply 2.8 acre-feet per acre per year-- And this alone, let alone the cost of chemicals (which are from oil), this alone destroys the opportunity for profit, even though the cost of fruit has increased. And there's an excess of fruit on the market because of the large plantings in the San Joaquin Valley. Then there are many areas of the emerging nations throughout the world that are producing oranges, and with new increased communications and the various markets that exist, it's tough for the California grower at this moment.

So, therefore, I really believe that a forecast of time would be that we will not replace sections of the grove which





may depreciate due to excess water, incidentally. We will continue to operate, but with an eye to the possibility of developing small ranches for people who want to have an orange grove and who want a home, ten to twenty acres. And it may be that we'll develop an operating company with Chuck Johnson heading it, which would commercially operate the orchards for the landowners. But the landlords would have the benefit of a cash flow from the citrus or a deduction of a commercial operation, which would be beneficial to them, and they could hold it for long-range appreciation of the land, through twenty years, let's say. And it will appreciate, for those. We may go that route. That's the process that we're in and the long-range planning at this moment. Many things tie in to such a thesis. The best form of land planning and community planning: we're very capable of that in our office. And I'm certain that a very exciting community will develop, with our land being part of it.

LASKEY: Well, it's that you're in the position of creating something from the very beginning, exactly the way you want it. It's a wonderful challenge.

MARTIN: Well, it doesn't really work out that way. It's an uphill battle to even attain half of your desires. The process of land development that is existing today in our various governments, particularly in Riverside, includes the dominance of certain people that, let's say, are the environmentalists'



group, or the no-growth group, that throw roadblocks against development or in front of development continually and hypothecate impossible situations, such as growth brings an undesirable element into the community, brings smog, brings all the negative factors. And those people really have a frame of mind like that because they really do want to live in the country. They got their land cheap, and they don't want anybody in the whole area to change the nature of the land. I can't blame them, except that big landowners like us have a terrible problem. We don't want to dump the land to gain money, because that's kind of a distasteful thing to me and to Ed; we really want to develop the land into something that is high-quality, and that takes governmental procedures and policies that allow for such a thing. So it's an uphill battle within elements of the society.

It's an interesting game, but we're not able to control our destiny, we can only influence it. And we try very hard to do that by spending money with consultants, as we're doing now, to show the advantages to the supervisors and the planners of certain kinds of systems, civil systems, that will allow for a proper development in a reasonably intelligent economic format. Most planners and most people, like supervisors, have no appreciation for the financial aspects of development. They have the belief that all developers are in for a fast buck and are loaded with money and they can build



the roads and they can put in all the underground utilities and come out ahead. Our pro forma has indicated that that's not the case at all, that we have a hard time finding the formula for optimizing our investment. From our point of view, we're investing for partnership of thirty kids, you see, and so it's not to make a fast buck, it's to develop a long-range, solid ownership type of thing. Of course there will be sales, but that money probably will go to the education of these children, that's what I believe.

LASKEY: It's interesting that they, the environmentalists or whatever, would challenge you or give you--when you clearly want to develop an outstanding product, that you're not there to bring chaos.

MARTIN: I think most people now in the valley, who are out there, like retired firemen, three or four of those, I think they believe that we are trying to do good. But they don't want the change, and so no matter what they believe-- And we do have a good image; Albert C. Martin and Associates has an outstanding image in the planning department and before the board of supervisors because we have done so many fine projects, recent projects, that have gone through the Riverside planning department and supervisors. But one can still see that it's the process of creating the new formats, new laws, new ordinances, that will allow for this, is pioneering of the first order. And this is nothing new for the people



that have been bringing raw land into urbanization, it's always been this way. It's just tougher these days they tell me.

LASKEY: You're finding out. I'm curious-- You mentioned the rising costs of energy. Does your new plan include any alternative energy sources?

MARTIN: We haven't really given any attention. However, it's a fine question, because all residential work, all residential projects, in the future will really have to take advantage of some of the energy conservation things. The management of energy on a communitywide basis is an important future subject. Certainly solar energy will be employed for domestic water and maybe a little bit for household heating, but there is much more in the way of energy use in a community than just residential lighting. There's street lighting, and there's water pressures and all of those utility things that require energy. Especially to move water from one level up to another. That's where it gets expensive, and I don't know what those things are yet for such a new community, but there will be something there.

One thing that may happen in the future, since we are somewhat writing for the future, is that I hope to develop this land in a manner which will preserve some of the natural landmarks. On our property is a small mountain called Gavilan Peak. It's a very unique geological landmark; it's a perfect





cone in shape. And all of our plans at this stage will include the preservation of that peak in its natural state and not endeavor to hang residences all over its sides. I am of a mind to dedicate it as an open space, permanently, along with some of the other possible parks in the area. I think that the preservation of Gavilan Peak would be a wonderful thing for the future and a wonderful thing to live in the flatlands around the peak because it will be untouched. So those are criteria things that hover around the background of the planning process. It's a very exciting kind of an endeavor. So that is just one more element in the life of Al and Ed, in their practice of architecture and engineering.

So is there anything else that occurs to you concerning the Gavilan or the Riverside ranch?

LASKEY: No, I think we've covered that.

MARTIN: Oh, several things about the Riverside ranch that may be of interest, for the record. I spoke of the English interest in the Riverside area, but that interest also was involved in the mining for gold in the area. Back at the turn of the century, there were a series of mines in the Gavilan Hills area, the most prominent of which was the Idaleona mine, and we have named our first development project Idaleona Estates. That mine was open when I first went up there, but since then it's been closed over, so there's no evidence of it except piles of rock in the area. But the



country is very loaded with gold-bearing ore, but we all know that that's a process that these days takes a lot of capital to pursue it, and conditions really aren't very logical for people to go down there and try to start in the goldmining business again. The Idaleona mine produced several million dollars for the owners in the turn of the century.

LASKEY: Do you know how it happened to become an English settlement? It seems very remote.

MARTIN: No. If you think about the other areas, such as Pasadena, and the influence of the railroads and influence of [Henry E.] Huntington, you realize that at the turn of the century there was a great deal of wealth and a great many wealthy people looking at some of the possibilities of the West, and there's no question in my mind that these people came with considerable money. The weather of course is ideal in Riverside; it's hot in the summer, but it's a beautiful place. And that's true all along the foothill of the Sierra Madre mountains. Some of those areas have blossomed and some have deteriorated, but I think that was part of that whole movement, the railroad movement or the development of these big hotels, like the Huntington Hotel, the Ambassador Hotel later on, around 1920. But the early ones were related to the railroad.

LASKEY: I think Redlands and Pasadena were actually built to resemble eastern communities, weren't they, and then



people were wooed to come out here, and so the environment would be as much like home as possible.

MARTIN: Well, it's true of Riverside, if you think of the old Riverside Mission Inn and some of those facilities out there and, as I mentioned, the residential area along the Victoria district. I think it's part of that same early turn-of-the-century Victorian period. People in this country, like 20 Mule Team Borax, which later became U.S. Borax, [was] all English-owned.

LASKEY: I didn't know that.

MARTIN: My father was the architect for 20 Mule Team Borax and built the Furnace Creek Inn in Death Valley as one of their hotels, the hotel in Death Valley, and that was his design.

LASKEY: Do you still go there?

MARTIN: We were there last year. I had once designed an addition to it when I was a young architect. We just stopped in last year, and it's changed, because the recreation vehicles have taken over Death Valley, really.

LASKEY: Death Valley must have been very remote from Los Angeles.

MARTIN: Yes, it was. There was, of course, a road, and they were mining borax out near Death Valley.

LASKEY: Did they really use twenty-mule teams?

MARTIN: Oh, yes. They were existing when my father first went there. As a matter of fact, he went there and they located a site for the hotel. They drilled tunnels into the



mountains to develop cool water. He worked with the president of Pacific Coast Borax Company, that had the 20 Mule Team label; the president was Mr. [Christian B.] Zabriskie.

LASKEY: Of Zabriskie Point.

MARTIN: Zabriskie Point. And then Frank Jennifer and Harry Gower. Harry Gower was really the son-in-law of Frank Jennifer, who was the West Coast manager of Pacific Coast Borax. And Harry Gower really had the Furnace Creek Inn under his wing, so there's a lot of history connected with Furnace Creek Inn that is very interesting. My father was very much involved.

LASKEY: Well, the Furnace Creek Inn, according to my little sheet, was done in 1927--

MARTIN: I guess that could be right.

LASKEY: --and that was a while ago, as far as the development of Death Valley. Who were they expecting-- I mean, it sounds like a very bold move to build an inn at that time.

MARTIN: Well, it was-- I believe that there were special hotels that were somewhat tied together, as far as friendship is concerned. And the one hotel operator that was very close to the Jennifers who managed the Furnace Creek Inn was Mrs. Coffman in Palm Springs. She had, I believe, the Desert Inn. I'm not sure whether it was the Desert Inn, but she was a hotel owner-operator, and there was a tie. Whether it was related to the railroads I'm not sure; it could have been.





But of course Pacific Coast Borax was a big industry, and they may have owned their own railroad in there, and I think they did. But they were tied over to Baker and some of those towns along the main railroad, starting with Victorville. It was the main route, so this was a branch road, and you went in thirty, forty miles with it. Like the existence of hotels in Pasadena, or the Mission Inn, there was I think the Desert Inn and there was the Furnace Creek Inn, all appealing to a certain group of sophisticated travelers.

LASKEY: It must have been a great adventure in the 1920's to go to Death Valley.

MARTIN: Oh, I am certain that it was. I'm certain that the spirit of adventure was there, and, which you may not suspect today, but I realize that my father participated with all those other people in the development of the water.

LASKEY: What is the water source?

MARTIN: Well, they have a spring, and they tunneled through a little hill to get to the spring. I remember his talking about it, and I've seen the tunnel, it's still there.

LASKEY: How was the design hit upon for the inn? Do you remember?

MARTIN: Well, I'm sure it was inspired by my father, and he undoubtedly had some of his architects develop it. If I had to guess, there was an architect by the name of Harry Veale that might have designed that for Dad. I don't know; you see,



I wasn't around.

LASKEY: No. I just wondered if it had to do with the area, with the heat.

MARTIN: Well, it was of the Spanish Renaissance inspiration, perhaps more mission inspiration.

LASKEY: It's a beautiful hotel.

MARTIN: It is; it's a very friendly hotel. Well, we got over into a little different branch.

LASKEY: Well, they're part of the same thing.



TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE TWO

FEBRUARY 4, 1981

LASKEY: Mr. Martin, the last time you talking about the Furnace Creek Inn, and about the same time that building was built, your father was involved with building another important building, a landmark building, City Hall. I thought we might start today by talking about City Hall.

MARTIN: I believe that the commissioning of my father, along with John Parkinson and John [C.] Austin, was probably the highlight of my father's career. The three architects were unusual in their practice, and, as a team, they were quite formidable because of the many, many contacts that the three of them had. They had competition, however, that was active in their attempts to do public work, and it was a consortium of local architects--and I can't name them--that banded together and eventually did the [Los Angeles] County Hospital, called Allied Architects [of Los Angeles]. And I'm sure they were very capable, but there were a lot of them. When the selection for the design of the City Hall took place in the early twenties, my father and the other two presented their case, particularly to the Board of Public Works [Commissioners] and someone by the name of Hugh [J.] McGuire, who I believe was the president of the board, and they prevailed with their arguments and were selected.



The unique thing about the design of the City Hall was the fact that it was the first building to be approved separately to be built higher than 150 feet, which was a limit height in the city ordinance. City Hall was designed at approximately 450 feet, twenty-eight stories, and it was designed to do the wonderful job that I think it has done through the many years of being a landmark that is seen from all parts of the city. Today it is submerged by the many high-rises that have been built since, many of them designed by our own firm. But it is unique in its position in the Civic Center Mall, it is unique in its characteristics of being a classical revival of the kinds of the various features of the Roman and Greek architecture.

City Hall was built for less than the budget, a few dollars, which was less than \$5 million. And if one attempts to appraise that today, they of course can't believe it. Because not only is the City Hall a well-built building, but it contains some very fine rooms and some very fine uses of marble and ornamental work and some very fine terrazzo and marble floors, and really it has done so well. We all know that as an office building it is inefficient; however as a central symbolic structure it's still very excellent, and that's some fifty years later. I suspect that the City Hall will be there fifty years from now, also, and maybe much longer than that, I hope.





One thing connected with this City Hall was the controversy that existed at that time in the determination of the Civic Center Mall, and the Civic Center Mall was not aligned at the time of the design of the City Hall. They tell me that there were once designs for running the Civic Center Mall north and south, down Main Street, Spring and Main Street.

LASKEY: Well, Allied Architects, I think, had a system for a grandiose, sort of a Renaissance or a beaux arts plan for the Civic Center, didn't they? Was that part of what your father was dealing with, was it a whole plan that the Allied Architects had presented or was it--?

MARTIN: I understood that there were more than one plan, and I think the Allied Architects did have a plan, now that you remind me of it. I don't know that my father ever prepared a Civic Center plan. I don't think so. But I do know that the final adoption of the east-west mall was the responsibility of the chief administrative officer of the county--I'm trying to think of his name.

LASKEY: Was it [C. Erwin] Piper, was he it?

MARTIN: Not Piper; he was the city. This was [Arthur Will], the C.A.O. [chief administrative officer], and his son [Arthur Will, Jr.], who became the C.A.O. over the county later on. But it was he that had the persuasion and the strength to settle the alignment of the Civic Center Mall in an east-west direction, and at that time the court's buildings were



constructed several blocks to the west. But this is much later than the early considerations of the City Hall. It was built in a time before there was great technical research in the construction of earthquake[-proof] buildings. Frank Lloyd Wright had designed the [Imperial] Hotel in Tokyo, I believe, which had withstood some great shocks, and at that time my father, who was the engineering-oriented person, performed many studies as to the fundamentals that should be involved in City Hall construction. One feature that is not talked about is that the central tower rests on a gigantic pad of a foundation of reinforced concrete, some eight feet thick, covering the entire area of the tower itself. And like a pendulum, that mass of concrete causes the tower to act in synchronization with the movement of the earth in an earthquake, because it's homogeneous.

LASKEY: How deep is that?

MARTIN: That's down below the level of the garage and whatever rooms are underneath that garage. There's two levels of garage there now. Furthermore, their design included a weakened plane joint at each floor line in the tower, which is in effect a compressible joint between the terra-cotta stones of the outside. That was caulked with a compressible mastic. The idea was that as the tower moved in an earthquake, like a spine, the stones would remain intact, and the movement would be taken by the joints. And one can observe that if



they look carefully. I'm not certain whether it's been concealed now with the recaulking that has taken place in recent years, but it is a feature that was there.

Other things of interest about the City Hall include a kind of a sad thing that used to happen in construction in those days, where safety features were not as important as they are today. The death of men working on the structure was often referred to as "we'll lose one man per million dollars," and that sticks in my mind, which I learned as a boy. I don't believe that the City Hall had five men killed, but it had several men killed. One of them was tragic. In the corner of the tower, there are elevator shafts, and at the top of the City Hall there's kind of a gallery. And the elevator shaft in the southeast corner was, during construction, an open shaft, and one of the workmen thought the elevator was there and took his wheelbarrow and himself and walked right into the hole and [the fall] killed him. Whereas this is a little bit of a sad note, it tells a little bit about some of the usual problems of the danger of construction, which we have today; we have people that don't quite make it through the construction process. Hopefully we are safer today than they were in those days.

There were some artists, and I wish I could recall their names, that were prominent in the decor of the City Hall, sculptors as well as painters. They're in the record. But



they were prominent, and I'm sure it should be said that the fine arts part of the design of the City Hall was complemented with the full spirit of the design of the architects and the elected officials of the day. And today it stands there as a fine demonstration of the art.

LASKEY: I assume that the lifting of the height limit was largely due to your father's proficiency or [his] being able to persuade them about the safety of the building.

MARTIN: From a safety point of view, I believe that that's true. From the standpoint of the design, I believe the other architects as well as my father were very much in agreement that it should be unique and tall. About that time there were other buildings, one of them by [Bertram] Goodhue, and I'm not sure whether this was before the Los Angeles City Hall or not, but the state capitol in Nebraska, I think it is, is a tower similar to the City Hall, but not as classic as the City Hall. So towers were part of the heritage, architectural heritage, of American cities, as they were certainly in the Renaissance period of European cities, where often there were bell towers, but there were towers that were representative of the unions and the city governments and so forth all through Europe. Certainly the classical Renaissance character of the City Hall was really returning to the cities after there was the period of revolt against the classics that was demonstrated so well in the fair of 1893 in Chicago, where the [Louis] Sullivan





and [Henry] Richardson influence was prominent. So there were many banks and neoclassic-type structures, and the City Hall was one of them.

LASKEY: How did three architects like Parkinson, Austin, and your father, who were each a force in themselves, how did they work together to create a design?

MARTIN: Well, John Parkinson was a noted designer. His son was coming along, and he was also well trained in design. That was Donald Parkinson. Also there was a gentleman by the name of [Austin] Whittlesey that I believe was very prominent in the design. My father was really proud of the design and a good contributor, and he probably covered the engineering aspects of the trio. John Austin was the president of the Chamber of Commerce and the politician, the arranger; and of course he did a beautiful job. He was a very suave, capable architect. So they were an excellent team and I believe performed the job without friction.

LASKEY: Do you remember when it was opened? Do you remember the opening of City Hall?

MARTIN: Not the ceremony. I remember the time and I remember something about the existence of sculpture and painting and I remember particularly that the granite which clads the lower floors of the City Hall was a California granite and it was from the McGilvary quarries in the lower Sierra area, inland from Fresno. And that quarry supplied this light gray granite



to many of the buildings in San Francisco.

LASKEY: When City Hall was built, was the old courthouse still standing, the old red stone courthouse?

MARTIN: I believe it was, and I believe it was torn down after City Hall was opened, but I'm not sure of that. I don't recall any of the activity in the removal of the old City Hall. It's too bad that it's gone, but that's the way it was; it was of course condemned and not usable.

LASKEY: Wasn't there a feeling at the time that City Hall was built that this was a spectacular building, that this was something that was going to become, as it has, a symbol of Los Angeles? That it was an extraordinary--

MARTIN: Most certainly. It was the tall building, it was a building that could stand alone. It became the representative of the image of the city of Los Angeles; I can recall there were many paintings, advertisements, perhaps from the Chamber of Commerce, where you would see the City Hall with a background of the snowcapped mountains and the orange trees in the foreground. And that really was very symbolic of what existed at that time, because the orange trees were not far away, in Pasadena and Monrovia and so forth, and the Whittier area. Of course the mountains are the same. So I would say, yes, it accomplished what it was intended to do: it became a symbol of Los Angeles that was used extensively by the convention bureaus and the visitors' bureau and the Chamber of Commerce



and such groups.

LASKEY: I've seen a lot of pictures of City Hall when it had the Lindbergh dome, or the Lindbergh light, at the top. When was that put on, do you remember?

MARTIN: I'd forgotten about that. Yes, I don't know what's happened with that.

LASKEY: It's not working any more, obviously, but I think it was there for-- I think it was there when I came out here, which was in the 1950s.

MARTIN: I think it was there, too, and the name of it. I'd forgotten all about that.

LASKEY: About the same time that your father was working on City Hall, he also was working on or had completed St. Vincent's Church, which was another landmark building.

MARTIN: Yes. I think St. Vincent's Church, like the City Hall, was one of the bright spots of my father's practice. A cute story connected with it--that this was Doheny's fire escape--always sticks in my mind, because Doheny, Edward Doheny, gave the money for the church, which was, I believe, \$1 million, and at that time he was having great trouble with the Teapot Dome scandal, and so the word was that this was Doheny's bailout. But that church of course was also a classic, and I personally drive by it often and observe really the beautiful techniques, balance, architectural balance of the detail. And I remember as a boy going down there and going to the sculptor's shack,



where he was modeling all the detail in clay, which was before the casting of the stone. And there was a lot of cast stone. I can almost name the sculptor, but it slips me again; he was one of the prominent sculptors in the Southland that did that work.

LASKEY: Now, [John B.] Smeraldi did the painting, right? the ceiling painting?

MARTIN: Yes.

LASKEY: We'll check on who the sculptor was; I think we can find that.

MARTIN: Yes. The sculptor, I'm sure it's in the records. But the church is certainly a beautiful thing, and it is today. It has done very well in the earthquakes, even though there has been some damage. You wouldn't know it if you look at it today. I think the quality of the materials is very well exemplified today as you observe its beautiful character--the tile in the dome and the nature of the cast stone, the tower, and so forth.

LASKEY: Did your father model it after any specific church or style?

MARTIN: Yes, it's been said that one of the Mexican churches, and I can't recall [from] what city, was the inspiration to my father and his architectural group. And I can't for sure name the person in the office that did the detail of the design; I don't think it was Harry Veale. But a great deal of inspiration





came from this one Mexican church, a great deal of similarity. I believe the execution was a beautiful job of interpreting the inspiration of the other church, and I wish I knew the name of the church.

LASKEY: One of the interesting things about St. Vincent's is the siting of it on that corner, which does a lot, I think, to show the church off.

MARTIN: Yes. The diagonal positioning of it does just that. And it really relates the church, not only to the intersection, but it relates the church to the property [Chester Place] at the back of the church so well, where there were some fine residences, including the Doheny residence. It's, I think, an outstanding piece of architecture, and it's been recognized as such.

LASKEY: Is it Spanish colonial or Spanish Renaissance? How would you characterize it?

MARTIN: Well, I really can't say or comment on the refinement to that extent. I think it's Spanish Renaissance, because the Spanish colonial was really much more local. But I really am not equipped to discuss that refinement.

LASKEY: Your father, then, really had two churches on West Adams, and it sort of embraced the whole wonderful elegant area that was West Adams at the turn of the century and the twenties, with the Christian Science church down by Hoover [Street] and then St. Vincent's up at Figueroa [Street].



MARTIN: Yes. I don't know his role in the Christian Science church. I know he designed the dome, and I just don't know that he did the entire structure. He must have been highly involved, but I just don't know. There might have been someone else associated on that Christian Science church.

LASKEY: Well, was the dome done-- The Christian Science church was built in 1908, and I see dates for the dome sometime later than that. Do you recall-- Obviously it was started before you were born, and when the dome was put on you would have been very young, but I wonder if you have any remembrance or if you know if it was done at a different time.

MARTIN: I have no remembrance of it, and the remembrance that I have was his pride in designing what was the largest single-shelled dome in the area, and maybe a broader area than local. But he was very proud of the design, and this harks back to the discussion of his interest, in his history as a brilliant engineer from the University of Illinois, in reinforced concrete. It shows up through his work there, shows up through his unique solution to Grauman's Million Dollar Theatre in the balcony, and for that matter it was part of his whole practice and his life, this really dealing with all the structural parts of a building with the same feeling as he dealt with the aesthetic parts. And I would say that dealing with the organic quality of the design is still, in this firm, one of the strong philosophies of design that



remains today, that the structure of the building is as much a part of the architecture as the superficial expressions of the exterior. It follows right on through all of our work. I've been inspired by that, and my brother, Ed, and David is very much inspired by that; and so it comes down through the firm.

LASKEY: Was it something that your father ever talked about, particularly, or was it something that was sort of taught to you?

MARTIN: No, I was-- I think that he practiced automatically as an architect with his great sympathy for the structural integrity. As I came along, I realized that, of course, but my training included a transitional period between the beaux arts school of design and the Bauhaus trends. The Bauhaus trends of course were structure and lack of ornamentation and a complete breakaway. So my training included that element of the design in a very strong way, and as I grew and observed the work in Holland and Germany--and France, for that matter--I was very sympathetic to the importance of the total composite molding of the building structure into what we may call architecture. But it was there with my father, and very strongly.

LASKEY: Well, that same feeling about structure and design and engineering that you were talking about certainly leads us right back to City Hall.



MARTIN: Very much so. The things about City Hall that we have talked about this morning include a great concern for the stability of the structure and ways it could be built to withstand earthquakes.

LASKEY: Plus, all your father's background in reinforced concrete and steel, and that whole body of experimentation and work--

MARTIN: Absolutely.

LASKEY: --that ended up being City Hall.

MARTIN: So it's a very proper reflection, I would say.

LASKEY: What was the Albert C. Martin firm like in 1920, how large was it?

MARTIN: It was about one hundred people located on the second floor of the Higgins Building, which he built in 1909 for Thomas Higgins. The building housed the Catholic diocese office; at that time I believe Bishop [John J.] Cantwell was in residence, as far as the office is concerned, at the Higgins Building. The office at that time was a composite of architects and structural engineers and specification people. It was managed by a man by the name of McArthur, who was a very capable person, perhaps given to extravagances in operations, which became a point of contention later on, as the Depression came along. I would say it was very well run, and the construction documents that were produced were excellent because there were people like Mr. Tom Gilbert, Mr. Norman





Patten, Harry Veale, Joe Longueville, finally, and others that were very talented architects and engineers.

I remember particularly working there as a young boy, running a duplicating machine which was for the purpose of duplicating specifications and forms. It was a ditto machine, with purple ink and a jelly-like roll that would hold the ink, and many an hour would be spent there with that. I also remember the sample room that was adjacent to the specification department, I use the word department a little loosely; but the sample room was excellent, and I remember the walls, like a library, were lined with shelves with samples of materials (which is common practice today). The drafting rooms were open, and they were scattered all over the second floor, really, as business would be good or bad.

There was a lot of work being done for the diocese at that time, churches and schools, including Immaculate Heart College, which I think was done in the Depression days. I'm not sure of the date of that.

LASKEY: One other thing that I see was being done at that time was the Desmond's Building, down at South Broadway, which is a little jewel.

MARTIN: Oh, yes. The Desmond Building was really ornate and represented the feeling of fashion in those days. He was a good friend of Mrs. [Daniel J.] Desmond. His brother-in-law was at that time a window decorator in the Desmond



organization; that was Bill Vaughey, who later became the men's buyer in the European circles and so forth. Desmond's was the ultimate in men's fashion. But that building was elegant.

LASKEY: It still is.

MARTIN: I worked there as a boy, a runner on the main floor during the summer, several summers. And I always remember the marble floors and the people that were merchants, a very select group. Desmond's was really an outstanding institution, and the building is still there.

LASKEY: The upper part is being used for artists' lofts, apparently very successfully. I don't know what's happened to the lower part, if any of the marble might still be under the false floors.

MARTIN: Yes, it probably is.

LASKEY: Hopefully, someday someone will restore those things or get back to them.

MARTIN: It was very ornate, which was the expression of the times.

LASKEY: It's certainly a unique building, down on South Broadway. There's none other like it.

MARTIN: It probably doesn't get the credit that it should get.

LASKEY. I think it's wonderful, one of my favorites. This is sort of apart from the discussion we're having, but it seems like a good time to bring it in. You were discussing the men that worked for your father, and I wonder how he or



you deal with aspiring architects. How do architects who design for you get credit for their design, or how do they feel about a firm getting credit for a design that they've done? I mean, I'm certain that this is a standard architectural procedure, or a problem. I just wondered how it's handled, how you deal with it.

MARTIN: It's a very important subject. Our innermost feeling, that is of myself, to start with, and my brother, Ed, and David, and now Chris [Christopher], as partners, is that our staff should be given complete recognition for their contributions. It is often the case that even when it's controversial, where I will personally give credit to those that conceived of the design-- The process of designing things, I believe, includes those that conceive of ideas and those that encourage them to develop those ideas. I think the latter is the case in our practice. Even though all of us have designed things on our own, I would say that our very best work has come from those that have very great talent in the conceptual process and our own input into the design to make it happen and to refine it or modify it or change it. That's the nature of the process.

There is, however, a strong mood that is always part of the day-to-day operations of the firm, and that is the desire on our part for the world to know that we are one organization, that we're one group, and that the process of design includes



not only the architectural conceptual work and the detailing and the refinement of it, but includes this organic quality of all the systems, but playing the role that by their very nature are part of the design. Today we have the importance of the mechanical electrical systems, always we have the importance of the structural concept, and so it is a practice which includes a rather homogeneous attack on the whole substance of the building and/or the plan. And more and more in our urban design, we introduce things of external influence, such as void space surrounding the building and the void space of the urban complex. So we desire to give credit to those that should have credit, and we do so in public declaration, but when it comes to the architect and/or engineer of record, we hold very strongly to the single entity of Albert C. Martin and Associates, Architects and Engineers and, I should say, Planners.

LASKEY: Well, do you have an expectation, then, if a brilliant architect becomes part of your firm, that he will eventually leave and go off and establish himself as an individual or as his own firm? Is this an expectation, or--?

MARTIN: Well, we realize that it can happen and does. We endeavor to control our thought processes and our relationship with our staff, to involve them. And we give them credit, with the hope that they would find a permanent practice in the organization of Albert C. Martin and Associates. The existence





of a partnership which is a family partnership can be looked upon as negative to this on the one hand, but as a strength on the other. The strength being the responsibility that is inherent in a family partnership, as compared to the responsibility that is not inherent in a collection of strange people--wrong word--of a collective group of architects and/or engineers who want to practice together. All one has to do is look at history and one will find that there have been successful partnerships of individuals but [that] they eventually have broken away and that singleness and cohesion has disappeared. We have kept Albert C. Martin and Associates together, and we are anticipating that we will stay together at least for another, let's say, forty, fifty years because of the way we have structured it.

This is not to say in any sense that top architects and engineers cannot have a very complete practice, with full recognition that they are highly professional and should have credit. For example, we introduce our top people into clubs. They are members of the California Club or the Jonathan Club or the Chamber of Commerce, and we treat them just as if they are a partner, and there will be more and more of that. So your fundamental question of a brilliant young architect coming here and then going on his own is a good question, but I believe there are some very substantial arguments for the collective practice, where this young man can design



important structures here, whereas if he goes out onto his own he cannot design important structures because he's unknown. And of course the practice today is more a collectivism than ever before, a collectivism of talents; and if you really look at it, a person like myself is an organizer of people of different skills in such a way that the end product emerges, hopefully, in an optimum way.

LASKEY: And of course the facilities that you have as an organization here, which you are able to pass on to your architects and planners, an individual is not likely to have the sorts of facilities you have.

MARTIN: Just couldn't afford them. We have a million dollars' worth of computers, you know, and extensive talents in engineering and planning. That's true, he couldn't do it. I'm not saying that he can't make it, because architects do, and more credit to them. But in today's world, which is influenced by the complicated corporate structure in the business world, today's world includes many more complications than when my father practiced, many more. I think he worried just as much, but the process is much more complicated, especially with the introduction of computer-aided design, which is big in our firm right now. This is an evolution of the modular concept of uniting units of materials into what is a kind of a building structure.



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LASKEY: So in a sense, then, architecture in itself has become so complicated today that it's to the advantage, in many cases, of an individual architect to be part of a corporate plan.

MARTIN: I believe that to be true. I know that individuals can develop a unique name as an architect, and we have some in the city. They do unique buildings, and sometimes they are great pieces of architecture; but the major planning and architectural designs emanate from the collective group of architects and sometimes architects and engineers. So, therefore, the leadership of that process becomes the principal challenge of the architect.

LASKEY: Sort of getting back to the 1920s, there was one other influence in this time in your father's career, which was the beginning of his association with the May Company.

MARTIN: My father, of course, was associated with the Hamburgers [Asher Hamburger and Sons] before the May Company, and he designed the original Hamburger Building. He was the engineer for it when he was working for [Alfred F.] Rosenheim. Later, halfway through the design, they had to disassociate Rosenheim from the job, and they awarded the completion of the job to my father. That was the start. That was probably 1906, because he was married in 1907, and I think he had



completed the design. He added units to the May Company, and Claude Beelman was given one of the units of the May Company to design.

LASKEY: Now, are we talking about the structure down on Eighth--?

MARTIN: Eighth and Hill [Streets]. So this was before the May Company purchased Hamburger's. Colonel [David] May came out with his two sons, Tom [Thomas] and Morton, and introduced them to my father and he was generally their architect for many years, even though Claude Beelman did some of the work because of the influence of the Union Bank. So the May Company building program with branch stores didn't start until about the time I came into the office, because I worked on the May Company Wilshire, and that would have been about 1940, I believe. There were always things being done in the downtown store, however, and Dad's relationship was good. Later on, that account developed into a large account because we did some, I believe, fourteen to seventeen branch shopping centers--Lakewood, Crenshaw, the [San Fernando] Valley, San Diego, one of the others out here, West Covina--

LASKEY: Eastland.

MARTIN: Eastland, yes. And I guess others. So I was greatly involved in that account, to the extent that I was involved in the design of Mr. May's home and subsequently David May's home, along with Sam [Samuel A.] Marx in the case





of Mr. Tom May, who was Tom May's brother-in-law and a very prominent Chicago architect. Extremely capable.

LASKEY: You were a fairly young boy at this time.

MARTIN: In the twenties?

LASKEY: Yes. You were probably in prep school?

MARTIN: I went to Villanova [Preparatory] School in the Ojai Valley in 1928 and spent four years there. That was about the time of the Depression, the start of the Depression.

LASKEY: You were in prep school, then, when the Depression started?

MARTIN: I was in prep school, and the financial situation was very difficult at my father's practice, extremely so, because the Depression, which was 1929, I believe, wiped him out and many of his properties, like the Fourteenth and Hill corner, like the Hohm Building at Sixth and Western [Avenue], where he was a partial owner with Harry Hitchcock, Fred O'Brien, and Mr. Healy. The office was losing money, and it was my mother's estate that saved the office. She sold her ranch to her daughter, my sister, for some \$35,000, which went in to save the office from bankruptcy. My father saved the homeplace at Seventh and Catalina, 712 [So. Catalina], and he saved the Riverside ranch, which my brother and I now own and which has such a great future.

But the Depression was very hard on the family because we had a large-- We had six children, four girls and two boys,



and we were all either in prep school or university, at USC, and the costs were heavy. Mother and Dad sacrificed, probably we'll never know how much so, and we all made it through the university.

LASKEY: All six of you?

MARTIN: All six. Even though we worked part time ourselves to help get through. But my last year of Villanova Prep School, my bachelor uncle helped pay my tuition; that is, my uncle Will Borchard, and he came through and helped in that way. My father, incidentally, was the architect for Villanova Prep School in the Ojai Valley. So back in the twenties, that was one of those projects that was related to the Catholic diocese.

I went to USC because my two sisters, who were ahead of me, Evelyn and Margaret, they were both Thetas, and one was the president of the house, and USC had a good school of architecture.

LASKEY: Was there ever any thought of the girls going into architecture, were they ever considered?

MARTIN: None that I-- I'd say no, there was no thought, no serious thought.

LASKEY: No Julia Morgans in the family.

MARTIN: No. [laughter] Evelyn was interested in literature; Margaret was interested in languages, German particularly; and Carolyn and Lucille were interested more in the arts.



Lucille was most inclined towards art and architecture.

LASKEY: You said before you had always assumed you were going to be an architect. Was this something that your father encouraged you to do?

MARTIN: I think so, subliminally.. I forget any particular incidents except that I was always involved on the fringes. The stories he would tell concerning his business affected me greatly; his pride, his extreme pride in his accomplishments, I'm sure, was a very motivating force. He was, after all, one of the prominent architects here. He was a kind of a lone architect, following John Parkinson, who was the prominent architect, I would say, and Morgan, Walls, and Clements, and some fine firms. My father was alone as A. C. Martin, and he made it and did great work and was highly trusted.

LASKEY: It's interesting that you weren't intimidated by that.

MARTIN: Never had that feeling. I never had the feeling of any submersion at all by my father's dominance. As a matter of fact, if one analyzes it, I was interested in some things that my father didn't care about. I was more interested in the architectural planning and detail, even though my father's works illustrate some very great capabilities. I know basically my father was really a builder and an engineer and had a fine sensitivity of design and was able to organize people to do the designs. Whereas I would be a little more



inclined towards the design concepts myself and did very well in the university in design.

LASKEY: Did you ever go with your father, when you were young, to sites or to locations?

MARTIN: Yes, often. My life was a little bit remote because I was at prep school, but I did work on jobs. For example, I was assistant timekeeper on Polytechnic High School, I worked for the school board. I was a timekeeper on the Cord Building at Wilshire and Mariposa [Avenue]. I was working there for Lynch-Cannon, the contractors from Salt Lake. That was a story unto itself. So I really was kind of involved in-- Oh, I also worked as a laborer on a church in Santa Monica, for Father [Nicholas] Conneally.

LASKEY: St. Monica's?

MARTIN: St. Monica's Church.

LASKEY: That's a beautiful church.

MARTIN: Yes, it is. I was a laborer there and worked in summers. So the answer is I was quite involved in the summertime, during high school when I was I guess old enough to do work like that. So my father really in a way, if you think about it, was training me.

LASKEY: Sort of.

MARTIN: Sort of. But I didn't give it-- You know, it hasn't occurred to me that I was being processed.

LASKEY: Well, you were being encouraged, certainly.





MARTIN: Being encouraged sure, and I loved it.

LASKEY: And you still do, obviously.

MARTIN: Oh yeah, sure.

SECOND PART (MARCH 3, 1981)

LASKEY: Mr. Martin, you started USC in 1931, is that correct?

MARTIN: Yes. In the school of architecture, having graduated from Villanova Prep School in the Ojai Valley and having been away from the urban area for four years. I really believe that when one is away from the city and from business, in a country-oriented prep school, that one is shielded from the real facts of life, and some ways it's a happy-go-lucky existence. My life at Villanova Prep School was one of hard work academically and a very intense participation in sports-- tennis and football and basketball. It was a small school, so you could do almost all the sports and really enjoy it.

LASKEY: Did you have a favorite?

MARTIN: Oh, I suppose the favorite was football, but we had a fine baseball team, and we played El Monte for the championship of Southern California, such things; we had a good time. Academically speaking, I believe the education was reasonably good, and I was always a student and was the valedictorian, which pattern kind of carried on through the university too. But the main thing is I was oriented to the country life when I went to USC, and going to USC, studying



architecture, I found that I was considerably behind those students that were trained in the various high schools in the city. They had classes in architecture and history and drafting that put them out way in front of me when I was a freshman. As a matter of fact, I think the first year in architecture was a struggle.

The times were difficult. The Depression was on. Architecture and engineering had come to a halt, and my father and the family were losing their assets and were really starting down the road to being very poor. My father was a person that had an illness that would cause him to faint occasionally, so he always had to have a driver, and even in the depths of Depression somebody had to drive my father. There was a time the children, including myself, became the driver, and we would take Dad to work at Second and Main, in the Higgins Building, and pick him up. The business of paying the tuition became one of the burdens, because at that time, I had a sister Margaret [and] a sister Carolyn in school also. My sister Evelyn had gone to USC and graduated, I believe, in 1928. So the Martin family was starting to be well known as a large university family.

LASKEY: Yes. [laughter]

MARTIN: And eventually it turned into something. I think that certainly like twenty to thirty of the offspring have gone to USC.



LASKEY: That must be almost a record of some sort.

MARTIN: Well, there's some big families; I know that we're one of them. And there's a great spirit that exists today, a loyalty to the university amongst most of us.

LASKEY: Did it ever occur to you in that time to go to UCLA, for example, rather than USC, because of the cost?

MARTIN: No. My sister Evelyn did go to UCLA when it was up on North Vermont, and it was in I guess the middle twenties when they started UCLA, and UCLA was not engaged in the teaching of architecture.

LASKEY: Oh, it wasn't.

MARTIN: And as a matter of fact, today there's only the University of California at Berkeley, [California Polytechnic State] University at San Luis Obispo, and USC that are accredited universities for the teaching of architecture.

LASKEY: Really.

MARTIN: Now UCLA has a fine school of architecture and fine arts, and the type of degree, I think it's slightly different than USC. But USC was always a strong school of architecture even in the early days, and that was the important matter.

We did work while we were at USC. There were government programs which would allow us to earn money by drawing various pictures of various projects and drafting and things like that; and then of course I finally ran the university parking lots as a way of helping out in the last several



years of my education. But at USC I found that I couldn't participate in sports because of the drag of time in the studies of architecture. The disadvantage that I originally had as a freshman competing with some of my peers slowly went away, and by the time I was graduated after a five-year course, I was the valedictorian again and I was president of the student body. And I guess that is something that has gone down through my whole life, is having the qualities of leadership, I suppose, which went through the American Institute of Architects, the Chamber of Commerce, and other organizations.

But I liked USC, and it was an interesting time because it was a time when there was a transition in the teaching of architecture from the beaux arts technique of teaching to include modern concepts, particularly [those] advocated by the Bauhaus school and, to some extent, the architects of Italy and France who were also moving in the area of very contemporary design.

LASKEY: Did this create a lot of dialogue, a lot of excitement in the school of architecture? Did it make it more stimulating do you think?

MARTIN: Well, without a question it was more stimulating, because the beaux arts technique of teaching included many laborious design activities, which bordered on drafting and fine penmanship and things like that. However, I look back and greatly appreciate the history of architecture and the





development of special projects which involved the classical designs and the classical planning. And that formality still is part of my appraisal of architecture; a certain balance and proportion is extremely important. I miss it in some of the contemporary work done by younger students.

I will say that in the attempts to grasp the meaning of the Bauhaus school of design and the planning activities of the modern technique, I felt it to be extremely difficult to really have a feel for the essence of architecture as we practice it today. This was the beginning of an entirely different concept of architecture. It was the beginning of the inclusion of the total environment in which the building was located. Space was as important as brick and mortar: the space around the buildings, the space that people walked through. It was truly an introduction to the whole new element in design--which today is natural in our urban design concepts--where the management of the whole design process includes the management of the space allocation and the environmental factors that occur in space, whether it's outside or contained space. So, at that time at the university there was just a glimmering of this kind of discussion, which I believe makes it an important time in the teaching of the history of architecture.

LASKEY: It was probably a social movement as much as an architectural movement, too--wasn't it?--what we call modernism.



MARTIN: I think so, but I must say that the impacts that we observed occurring within the academic world were undefined to a great extent. Even though there was a social movement, I don't think we really talked or thought in those terms. What happened at that period, people like myself graduated and entered the design world at a time when there was no work, and as soon as there were a few public things like school-building projects coming on the scene after the Depression, the entire evolution was followed by war in 1942 [1941], December the seventh, I believe. And the war years were detrimental to the interests of the architects. They were complementary to the interests of the civil engineer, because in the manual of the [U.S. Army] Corps of Engineers there was no such word as architect, and the architect found himself in the camouflage area, and there were many local architects that ended up there, just to get a job. It kind of related to painting rather than building. So the civil engineer was the only recognized entity at the beginning of World War II, and that was very bad for the [architecture] profession. Now that changed before the war was finished, because many hospitals were built and temporary encampments were being built and planning became important.

LASKEY: Now, it's been said that the Depression hit Los Angeles first and it hit it hardest but it also hit it less; that is, Los Angeles recovered from the Depression earlier than



the rest of the country. Do you feel that was true?

MARTIN: Well, I certainly do feel that was true, from several points of view. In the farming area--and there was extensive farming around Los Angeles, in Orange County and Pomona area, citrus, and the Ventura County area and even in San Fernando Valley--farming products did very well in some parts of the Depression and certainly in the war years, while the Middle West suffered tragic storms, drought. And that was the beginning of the emigration of people from the Middle West to Southern California. Those families now are native Californians of course.

In the war years, of course, Los Angeles was a center of aircraft industry. This was the beginning of a whole new electronic industry, and the idea of research and development was so big that it was a center of activity after the war. But during the war, Los Angeles did have industry, and the ship-building industry was big at San Pedro, and all the complementary manufacturing for defense projects was at hand. So in the war years Los Angeles wasn't hit that hard, and, prior to that, I can't say whether Los Angeles, compared to other cities throughout the United States that had suffered during the Depression, I can't say that Los Angeles was not hit as hard as some of the others. I suspect it was hit pretty hard.

LASKEY: It was hit very hard, especially in the beginning, but apparently the rise of the movie industry in the mid-thirties



helped to bring it out [of the Depression] a little sooner than the rest of the country.

MARTIN: Of course, now that you mention it, that was big in our whole concept of society.

LASKEY: What were you doing in this time? You graduated from USC in what, 1936?

MARTIN: Nineteen thirty-six. Well, I was married in 1937, and I was employed in my father's office, in an office that was deteriorating rapidly due to the lack of business and the drifting away of the staff, to the point where there was probably eight or ten people in the office, as compared to a hundred to a hundred and ten in the twenties. We still had several very strong staff people: Mr. Tom Gilbert, who was chief draftsman, Mr. Norman Patten, who was chief structural engineer, Jack Sparling, Joe Longueville, Mary Sresovich, who ran the office, and some others. But the lack of work was really making it a very difficult thing for survival, and this was part of the thing that really broke my father, which caused a drain on some of his outside assets, which were eventually lost, with the exception of the homeplace at 712 South Catalina Street and the Riverside ranch, which had no indebtedness and no mortgages levied against it.

So just keeping the office open was a task that was almost insurmountable. My mother sold her inheritance, which was a farm in Oxnard of a hundred and twenty acres or





so, for a very small amount. She happened to sell it to her daughter, my sister Margie Daily, for a ridiculous amount of money, I think something like \$30,000, which money went to the office to keep it open. And that \$30,000 parcel in those days would probably be worth today like \$4 million. That shows comparatively what has happened.

But, in any case, it was a case of survival, and my father's health was not good. When things were idle, a great many people in the business world would attempt to enjoy their hard times by collecting with each other for luncheon, and sometimes it involved drinking, and that was not a good influence in the whole picture. It was a pretty dim picture at times. That dim picture of the many facets of the Depression had a big effect on myself and the older daughters of the family and my mother. It just was depressing, and it involved not only the points of survival, but the points of maintaining my father's health, which was a very difficult thing. So between physical handicaps and excessive drinking, between the loss of business and-- It was a low time.

When I went to work in '37, things were picking up, and some of my father's older clients, like Union Hardware, Ducommun's, and some of the industrial group, were starting to build buildings. And so I had an opportunity in about 1938 to design those buildings, and they have been good buildings. So that was my introduction to the design world. And the



responsibility. Responsibility came quickly to me because during the war years, starting with '42, the old mainstays of the firm--Norman Patten, Joe Longueville, Tom Gilbert--left the firm and went to Alaska to work in the area of central Canada and/or Alaska in designing bridges and camps and things for Sverdrup and Parcel, who were contractors. After the war they returned, but I was left alone without technical staff, which created a very interesting thing when we started getting work for the Corps of Engineers.

LASKEY: Well, it certainly must have created a challenge for you.

MARTIN: Yes. And we built an organization--I did principally--composed of men, other architects, Herman [Charles] Light, Arthur Frolich, Gene Brokow, who were established architects that had lost their practice and had been working in Las Vegas on the [Hoover] Dam, which J. V. McNeil was building--I forget the name of the dam, right out of Las Vegas. But those fellows went up and designed the buildings, and then they were looking for work and came, and we started to have work for the Corps of Engineers. We built up a firm of maybe thirty, thirty-five people. That's when we started to survive again financially.

LASKEY: I was going to say, is that when you started to restabilize the firm?

MARTIN: I would say so. From then on, during the war



and after the war, of course the big shopping center movement came on the scene, tremendous industrial expansion came; and we were one of the leading firms in shopping centers. We designed the Lakewood Center, the first integrated shopping center, and, oh, the Crenshaw May Company. Most of this work was for May Company, and the company was one of my father's oldest clients. So, in kind of a review, the time between the early thirties clear on into the middle forties was a time of difficulty--in survival in the beginning and a difficulty in organization and rebuilding in the end.

LASKEY: It sounds like there were scars and wounds during that time, you know, and insecurities. Did it take long for them to heal?

MARTIN: Uh--

LASKEY: How about your father, did he recover fairly easily?

MARTIN: My father was getting older about the time of the war. And his influence was substantial in securing work. He was a great friend of Del [E.] Webb's, and he had some cronies in the school board; so his contacts--and since he had been one of Del's closest friends on the West Coast (as differentiated from Phoenix)--were very important in our obtaining work [from] the corps. But the Corps of Engineers was really our source. My father's ability to lead was diminishing because of his age, and although he still was not that old at



the beginning of '40-- He died in 1959 or '60, I forget, at the age of eighty-one; so in the forties he was sixty-one, which doesn't sound old to me at all.

LASKEY: [laughter] He's just beginning!

MARTIN: So than as time went on his health was not too bad. There were times when the drinking problem was serious, and that was-- I think you used the word scars. I'm sure the scars were deep, even though today most of that has vanished in my perception of my father, which is extremely respectful and high at this point in time, and with all of the family. So the so-called scars of embarrassing situations in the family pretty much have gone now, and his attributes are far above in the memory of everyone.

LASKEY: And his monuments.

MARTIN: His monuments, but principally his integrity and his honesty. He was a dedicated person to his family, dedicated (that was his most important thing), and those attributes are the survival, as far as perception is concerned. He was a very brilliant man, actually, in architectural engineering, and as honest as the day is long, and that's why he was a success.

LASKEY: That's probably why he survived too through the difficult times.

MARTIN: I think so. His word was his bond, yes.

Bankruptcy was unheard of, and there were many reasons why





he should have been bankrupt, but it was dishonorable in those days, whereas today people will go through bankruptcy just to get rid of indebtedness, without thoughts of repaying it, but not in those days.

LASKEY: I noticed, though, that during this period of time, in 1931, you did the Cord Building, your father's firm did it, which was certainly a great building.

MARTIN: Yes. The Cord Building at Wilshire and Mariposa [Avenue] was the showroom and shops and storage for the Auburn and the Cord automobiles, under the direction of E. L. Cord, who in so many ways was a person that was ruthless in the management of his funds and the entire financial aspect of the whole construction process for the building. I was the timekeeper on the building, working for Lynch-Cannon, the contractor from Salt Lake, and it was at the depth of the Depression. I'll never forget the day that E. L. Cord cut the salary of the laborers from something like thirty-seven cents an hour to around thirty-one, and we had a strike on the job, and I can swear that if Mr. Cord had walked on the job they would have killed him.

LASKEY: Really?

MARTIN: They were so desperate. Men were so desperate that they would carry sacks of cement on their backs and carry it to the mixer and would develop sores on their back (which will not heal, cement sores just don't heal),



and there was many of them who were in that condition, as I recall. So it was a very tense and difficult time, during the Depression, for a lot of laborers. The building, of course, turned out to be beautiful, and we to this day continue to remodel it.



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LASKEY: There was another natural catastrophe in this time of great catastrophes that I think influenced your work a lot, and that was the 1933 earthquake at Long Beach.

MARTIN: That was in some ways, as disastrous as it was, a blessing for not only architects and the contractors but for the industry, because it reshaped their entire engineering formulization of building construction. My father was an important part of the development of new techniques, particularly in regards to reinforced masonry construction. This was natural to my father because he was such an outstanding engineer in the management of reinforced concrete, which he learned at the University of Illinois. The reconstruction of the school system became an important part of the work that caused our office to survive. It was great damage to schools, and there ended up to be much rebuilding, but in some cases replacement. There were several school bonds that made it through for bond issues. This was really important work for the architects and engineers of Los Angeles.

So that catastrophe of the Long Beach earthquake resulted in new school work, in some cases some outstanding designs related to improve planning techniques, like lighting; never was there so much attention given to the importance of lighting and specular glare and glare from the dome of the



sky and such things as that. The California schoolhouses were formed and shaped to take advantage of daylight, with skylights and other devices on the north side and with louvers and long overhangs on the south side, with much more intensity than we have today.

As a matter of fact, there was much more attention given to the detailing of buildings in those days than we give them today. So many things today are shop-fabricated and inserted within our buildings as a completed matter. If you think for a minute: the exterior walls, the windows, the floor systems are all shop-fabricated and placed on the building. But at the time I was educated, you invented all these new forms, such as extruded aluminum frames for windows. Those were invented by people like myself--that is, the actual configuration of the section, with its matter of waterproofing and matter of assembly. So it was common for us to design special moldings of aluminum extrusions for such things as show windows, window sections. And all of those came from the architects. Today you buy them out of a catalog; there's a great difference in the approach. But today's architecture is more with the planning and the environment. In those days the architecture dealt with the detailing of buildings and the planning of buildings. It's an amazing difference.

LASKEY: How do you feel about that?

MARTIN: Well, I feel that the transition to more environmental





matters, given the whole space, is a magnificent movement. I regret the loss of sensitivity in detailing very much. And it's almost like the lost art of cabinetmakers: it's gone and our young people don't really understand it, although some of them do. I regret that, but, on the other hand, when we think of architecture today we think of the total role of environment for people, as distinguished from buildings with historic reflections in the structure and in the ornamentation of the buildings. That's almost a thing of the past. But we have such wonderful new things evolving, things such as spaces for public, rooftop parks; in the city we have two- and three-level spaces for pedestrians, for separating the people from the automobile. And this offers some very exciting choices for urban living, and that's what a city really is: it's a place of many choices for people to live in, as contrasted with suburban living, which has its merits but which are somewhat limited.

So I think the transition which has been so great during my practice, from the beaux arts clear on through to-- For the last fifty years, we have had-- We have gone from the Depression, the elimination of the beaux arts, the introduction of modern architecture, particularly from Europe, the Dutch architects in the vicinity of Hilversum, the Bauhaus, we've gone through a war, the reindustrialization, the development of the suburban shopping center, the new town



planning, the great return to the urban core, the evolution of large banking interests and all of the support facilities for banking, the evolution of large government centers, with all of their support, and at this point in time we are continuing the redevelopment of the central cities at a rapid pace and looking forward, long-range, to architecture in space, which will happen.

LASKEY: Do you really think it will?

MARTIN: Oh, I think so, a certain kind, not lots of people; but after all, next month we launch our first space vehicle, you know, a vehicle that can return to Earth and that will be just like a big truck going out in there, taking with it things that will be permanently hooked up in space.

LASKEY: Two thousand and one isn't that far away.

MARTIN: Not that far away. Where we'll have probably new forms of energy, maybe related to laser fusion and other forms of fusion that will provide power. So I think that the twentieth century will provide some of the most advanced steps in the history of man, when you think that we go from the whole evolution of travel, from the horse and buggy to travel in space, the evolution of architecture from brick and mortar and classical adaptations into environmental concerns wherein [we contain] the people and the functions with[in] comfort-creating environments rather than building buildings. It's a whole different concept when you contain



people in some kind of a form to do that function or create that comfort in the environment, as building of brick and mortar into classical forms [does]. It's a big difference, and that's happened in the twentieth century. Of course in medicine and science and computers and electronic devices--all of these things have happened this century. So what comes next is going to be a fascinating venture into the imagination. I think it's gonna be related to a new form of personal communication.

LASKEY: Well, there seems to be in architecture, at least in the sort of post-modern architecture, a reversion back to classical forms, much, much more modified, of course, but a reaction against the Miesian boxes. I think of your own building, the Security Pacific [World Headquarters], which [David] Gebhard and [Robert] Winter have described as a return to beaux arts.

MARTIN: It is. It is, and it contains some false elements that bother me, even though it's a beautiful form. The hollow columns on the outside to me represent a misuse of contemporary materials.

LASKEY: Really?

MARTIN: As compared to ARCO [Atlantic Richfield Tower], which is not that was at all. ARCO is a more honest building than Security Pacific, in my estimation.

LASKEY: Really? Now, ARCO is almost pure Bauhaus.



MARTIN: It is, but the ARCO frame, the cladding of the frame, of granite, the magnificent eight-foot-by-eight-foot window, is perhaps the most organized design that we've ever participated in. Security Pacific, as beautiful as it is as a design, with its columnar classic proportion, contains those architectural exaggerations, I believe, that were done to create a classical form rather than to have a simple building assemblage. So I really don't feel that good about the Security Pacific design, as compared to the Bauhaus or even the new Wells Fargo Building, which is pure modern stainless skin. I think the purest form of all is the Department of Water and Power [Building].

LASKEY: I was about to ask you about that building.

MARTIN: I don't think there's any building in the city that touches it for its elegance, which is the simple expression of plates, of the floor plates, and the translucent wall, and that's it. But it does a job next to its neighbors, with the classic pavilions and the theaters, does a job of creating a cohesion between all of those things.

LASKEY: How did you hit upon that design? You had, I assume, to create something that blended with the Music Center [of Los Angeles County], which I think was already built at that time.

MARTIN: Yes. It was in the process. Well, we felt strongly that we had an obligation to design a building which would not dominate the [Dorothy] Chandler Pavilion, which was





classical, like the Parthenon. Our solution of having a translucent building with a very simple horizontal expression of the floors gave a perfect complement to the classical columns of the pavilion, and as you look at them today they are companions of two different eras of design. But it was the translucency and the simplicity of the horizontal plate design, and the use of the building emanating from water was pretty nice.

LASKEY: Beautiful.

MARTIN: So I think that the Department of Water and Power is one of the best buildings that we've ever done.

LASKEY: Reyner Banham, I suppose you know, in his book [Los Angeles:] The Architecture of Four Ecologies, says it's by far and away the best building in downtown Los Angeles, the most perfect Southern California building. But how do you feel about their not using the pools?

MARTIN: Oh, I feel badly that they don't use the pools and/or the lights, because that building kind of is illuminated indirectly; it's really one of the most pleasant urban experiences that we have. The indirect lights were wasteful, but the building lights themselves were a practical way of heating the building. There is no boiler in that building at all, and we heated the building with our lighting system, which was a first time. We actually invented the lighting fixtures, which are now standard, with the return air cooling



the balance of the lighting fixtures. And we invented the partition system, which has proven to be a very flexible partition, and it's now standard. So those things, like many of the other things, many other details, emanated from the creative thrust of architects that were in our own office. A great many things have emanated from this office.

LASKEY: Getting back to the fountains again: I was wondering, in reading about the building, I had understood that the fountains actually were part of the cooling system of the building and that they were created as an energy-saving device rather than an energy-wasting device.

MARTIN: They were, and they are. They replace part of the water-cooling system for the air conditioning. It's a water-spray idea, and so the cooling effect of the fountains helps to reduce the temperature of the water. Now, we do have induced draft coolers, water towers on the roof, also. But the rationale and in fact the practical end of it, the fountains were playing a role, not only aesthetically speaking, but practically speaking.

LASKEY: Just to get back a little bit to where we started in the thirties: you were married in 1937, shortly right after you got out of school. You also took a trip to Europe. When was that?

MARTIN: Well, right after I graduated.

LASKEY: Right after.



MARTIN: A young man by the name of Marvin Summerfield, who was a college classmate, and myself went to Europe to broaden our understanding of architecture and to participate in the whole life of the Europeans, and that was a very important thing in my life. This was still the depths of the Depression. I had, through my early days of being a paperboy, had saved \$625, and that plus some more advanced by my family--and I don't know where they got the money--paid for my trip, which lasted five and a half months. Of course we were poor-boying it all along, but we had a great time.

LASKEY: You could do that in Europe, I think, at that time.

MARTIN: Yes. Even though we bought a car in England on a repurchase guarantee plan, but it didn't cost us a lot, of course. Then things had to be getting better, because when I came back across the United States I picked up a new car for my family, so things were on the rise in 1936-37. I think they had to do the work for the school board.

LASKEY: Now, had you met your wife in college?

MARTIN: I met her in my own home, because she was a sorority sister of my sisters, who were Kappa Alpha Thetas. And so when I returned from Europe I met her there, fell in love with her, and proposed to her. Immediately after that she went to Europe with the Harry [G.] Johansing family, and so when she returned we sure enough did get married. It was interesting--we look back on it today--I was making \$125 a month.



LASKEY: A month.

MARTIN: A month. And we were paying \$42 for rent, and I want you to know that we were broke all the time. [laughter] That condition remained for at least five years; we never had saved a penny. And the salaries didn't increase very much either. But we did have an automobile; we were given an automobile by my parents for our wedding anniversary. And it really wasn't until after we got work during the wartime that that condition changed, where we started-- I remember my father, the firm made \$30,000 one year profit, and I shared in that with my dad a little bit. Of course later on it changed completely. Our beginning years in married life were frugal, for many years.

LASKEY: What is your wife's name?

MARTIN: Dorothy Dolde. She was born in Orlando, Florida. Her mother [Virginia Dolde] died when Dorothy was two, and she was then reared by her grandmother [Mrs. Willie Young] in Marshall, Missouri. Her mother had gone to St. Mary-of-the-Woods [College] in Indiana, and then Dorothy did the same thing for two years before she came out to USC.

LASKEY: How did she happen to come to USC?

MARTIN: Well, her father, Chuck Dolde, was a banker with the Bank of America and operated the Wilshire-Robertson branch, which was big in those days. Then he moved to Whittier and worked in one of the local banks, after which





he formed his own small-town bank, and he formed several banks before he died. But he was a Phi Psi and knew the people from Kansas University. Kind of a spirited man, and so he knew the local Phi Psis, and his daughter had to go to USC. So as it happened--and I was a Kappa Alpha at 'SC--instead of our sons being Kappa Alphas they all became Phi Psis.

[laughter]

LASKEY: Shows you where the influence is.

MARTIN: That's right.

LASKEY: OK, suppose we stop here for now.

#### SECOND PART (MARCH 18, 1981)

LASKEY: Mr. Martin, you've said that it never occurred to you not to be an architect. Did it ever occur to you not to work for your father?

MARTIN: No, it never did occur to me to be employed by somebody else or even to be employed on my own. There was a strong attachment and great pride in not only my father but the office. The office was considered a certain individual entity in the minds of our family; everything was done for the office, so to speak. Of course the office was the livelihood of the family, and the office included the financial interest of my mother, which was mentioned before.



Also, there was an attachment on my part to somewhat of the survival of my father, not that I had anything to do with his physical survival, but there was the need for taking care of certain situations. That was felt on the part of the older children in the family also. We'd drive for my father when things were very low economically speaking. So once I got into the first challenges of the management of certain projects, I kept going into not only management but the building of the firm as far as new employees were concerned. And that happened during the war, where we had difficulty in keeping our doors open and some of our staff went to Canada and Alaska.

LASKEY: Was this because there was not an availability of materials for building during the war?

MARTIN: No, it was not so much that, even though that did exist; it was because the type of work was all war-related, such as temporary hospitals, airstrips with hangars, office buildings related to the operation of the airfields. We in effect became hospital experts, probably the most important hospital firm here, working for the Corps of Engineers. They found that our work, which was done by architects and engineers, had some advantages on the work that could be done either by independent architects or civil engineers. As I believe I've mentioned before, in the manual of the Corps of Engineers the architect was connected with camouflage



and the engineer was the dominant figure. So as the work proceeded, work of this nature proceeded, of course, the civil engineers retained the architects to help them with the contract. It was all kind of routine work, directed by the Corps of Engineers. Very little new design work. Once in a while there would be some.

But there were standards of the Corps of Engineers that would set the nature of the buildings themselves, and let's say the site planning of the whole project was a matter of initiative. At that time I was doing such things as designing engineering work, such as drainage ditches, and even drafting on electrical work, because these were standards, and they became involved in the distribution of water and drainage problems. So all of that work was done right in the office by people like myself, often with the assistance of some consultants who were around the city. Later on after the war it became very apparent to me that we expand our firm to include mechanical and electrical engineers. My father had always been a structural engineer. But we had difficulty in getting our work done well by having and using consulting engineers, and we just thought that maybe it would be better if we started the process of having our own mechanical and electrical engineers. Which we did.

LASKEY: Was that a direct outgrowth of your experiences with the war, seeing that you could do it here and found out



it worked better?

MARTIN: I think it was because we found out it worked better, at least in our minds. And it was easier to manage if we knew that we could count on our own production. We had always used consulting engineers, but we've always been happy that we're a totally integrated firm of architects and engineers.

LASKEY: I want to backtrack just a little, just to the prewar period, which would be the late thirties, which is the point at which you actually become active in the firm. Is that right, you were out of school?

MARTIN: Yes, in 1937.

LASKEY: Nineteen thirty-seven. You had mentioned, the last time we talked, about your preference for a plain or Bauhaus style or a simple form, and I was wondering-- At that time in Los Angeles, modernism was at its height, it had sort of taken root here with [Rudolph M.] Schindler, [Richard] Neutra, and their followers, and I wonder if that affected you at all, if you were impressed by what they had done.

MARTIN: Well, I was very much impressed with what Frank Lloyd Wright did. I was more aligned to the philosophy of the evolution of architecture as practiced by Frank Lloyd Wright than anybody. I recognized the work of Neutra and Schindler, and to some extent appreciated it, but it didn't have, to me,





the warmth of Frank Lloyd Wright's work. Frank Lloyd Wright was, of course, heavily influenced by [Louis] Sullivan and the Chicago school, and I believe right to this day I have a strong preference for a richer form of architecture. Not to say that Neutra's work was cold, but it didn't possess the organic quality that Frank Lloyd Wright's did, the sculptural quality. So my response came from either Frank Lloyd Wright or an architect in Hilversum, Holland by the name of [Willem] Dudok. And I was very impressed with the work that he was doing.

LASKEY: Now, did you see this when you took your trip abroad and went to Holland?

MARTIN: Yes. When we went abroad I more or less followed and looked forward to seeing the work of Dudok, who was, I believe, a Dutch architect. Again, that form of design was more related to Frank Lloyd Wright and some of those than it was with the Bauhaus, the Bauhaus being very rigid. I believe today my response is a little more in favor of the richer, more sculptural architecture. Although I believe that the ARCO project is strongly influenced by the plain, sophisticated lines of the Bauhaus school, it still is a granite building with columns from granite, quite a rich design, and quite different than the Bauhaus might produce. So there's no question in my mind that the evolution of design in this office, as perhaps influenced by me to some



extent in the beginning, was more related to the movement from the Chicago school.

LASKEY: And that would have been your father who was influenced by that.

MARTIN: My father really was influenced by that: his work, however, really didn't show very much of that. His work was classic, which was pre-World's Fair of 1893. Because that's when the revival of classicism took place: the new western architecture was emerging, and the eastern seaboard architecture, which was beaux arts, a beaux arts background, was diminishing at the change of the century. So my father's work, as exemplified by the Ventura County courthouse, even the Higgins Building at Second and Main, was more related to classic.

LASKEY: How much was he involved in the design of the Second Church of Christ Scientist? I know he did the dome, speaking of classic design.

MARTIN: Yes. I don't think he really designed all of that church. I think he designed the dome, but I'm not certain where the line was drawn. I should really investigate that, because everything that he ever said about it was related to the uniqueness of the structure of the dome, the single-shelled dome, and that design doesn't look like his work, although it's classic.

LASKEY: It is very classic.



MARTIN: So I really should find out about that, because I don't know.

LASKEY: The reason I was asking about modernism, because it brings us up to the May Company at Wilshire and Fairfax [boulevards], which was an extremely modern building, and I think one of the first that you did, or that A. C. Martin [and Associates] did.

MARTIN: Yes, but the May Company Wilshire and the May Company Crenshaw were conceived, as far as design was concerned, by Samuel A. Marx from Chicago, who was Tom May's brother-in-law.

LASKEY: Really.

MARTIN: Yes. And there was an architect by the name of Noel Flint and another one by the name of Charles Schonne, who worked for Samuel Marx in Chicago and did some very sensitive design work, I think some of the finest, including the BATTERY, a restaurant in Chicago, I believe--or New York, I'm not sure--the Ambassador East, which was the Pump Room, including the apartment of Leigh Block, who was president of Inland Steel [Company] in Chicago. Even though they did many fine interiors, including the design of furniture, Noel Flint was really the one that conceived that design of the May Company Wilshire. We really took his preliminary designs and developed the building from them.

The May Company Wilshire has something about it that you very seldom see any more, which are statuary bronze canopy facings and



the bronze light coves above the show windows. They were beautifully detailed, and they stand there today as elegant designs. I think [it is] far superior to any other buildings of that era in Los Angeles. It has become rather run-down, of course. They even do not replace the gold mosaic on the corner, which is gold-leaf flashed tile from Italy.

Beautiful design, but it has not been maintained. So May Company Wilshire, the original May Company Wilshire, was to the credit of Samuel A. Marx and Noel Flint, who was his associate.

LASKEY: I'm really surprised, because I think the modern, or that kind of modern, or the streamlined modern, as being almost indicative of this area, of having come from here; I'm surprised that it originated in Chicago.

MARTIN: Yes, it was really from the Chicago school. Now, I'm not certain where these men were trained. But it was a very modern building.

LASKEY: Very modern.

MARTIN: And it has, of course, classical proportions. There are reflections of classical cornices all the way through that building, for example. They've got a granite coping, very subtle, but it's a transition between the beaux arts and the modernism that was creeping in, as practiced by different people.

LASKEY: What was the effect of that building in 1939?





I think [that's when] it was built.

MARTIN: It was considered a very elegant building. I think it did have an effect on the architecture of Los Angeles; in fact I'm certain it did. The details and the casework and layout of the May Company Wilshire was of the finest quality. The second floor gown shop was without match in the city. It was a very flamboyant design, and I happened to detail it myself, but Noel Flint designed it. It was, I think, a very notable and impressive kind of a statement in the department store design.

LASKEY: But was there anything else around it at the time? The Miracle Mile was just being developed, wasn't it? Were there other buildings, or did it stand by itself?

MARTIN: No, it was standing alone. The Miracle Mile, some of it was developed. The Prudential [Building] wasn't there or of course Cal Fed [California Federal Savings], and none of the other high-rise buildings, the museum--none of those buildings were there at that time, and they were pretty much out in the country. Also, from an engineering point of view, we were pioneering. Because we opened up the earth for the foundation, which we had designed as spread footings, individual spread footings based upon the discovery of the soil borings, and when we saw the nature of the soil, which was mottled of different kinds of clay and different deposits because of the tar pits at La Brea, we changed the design



of the foundation to what we call an inverted flat slab, which in effect floated the building. The May Company was the first building here that floated. Subsequent to that, Prudential was built on a similar foundation, and most of the buildings in there had this matt foundation. So there was a lot of fine engineering in the May Company Wilshire, and it was designed in our office.

LASKEY: Did you actually run into any tar when you were laying the foundation?

MARTIN: We ran into some soils which had to have some relationship to shale or oil shale or something like that, but there was some white deposit in there. There was some spring, like a hot spring, which didn't amount to much. When we built the parking structure on the lot to the east of it, we actually had to install pumps to pump the seepage. Which is not unusual in building design, but it was related to the tar pits.



TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE ONE

MARCH 18, 1981

LASKEY: Now, the parking structure for the May Company that you're talking about, I believe you won an award for that structure.

MARTIN: Yes. It was a first and a most interesting solution. It's a three-level parking structure, built between two level streets, and we were desirous of eliminating the ramps, because of the ease of women patrons to drive. So we considered raising the street and making a hill out of the street: so you'd drive up the hill and turn right on into the parking structure on whatever floor you were passing as you drove up the hill. But Orange Grove Avenue was limited because of a reversionary type of provision in the lease that existed between the May Company and the Hancock estate. It was eventually owned by USC. This caused many complications if we wanted to consider closing Orange Grove. Which we thought was a very good idea: to close Orange Grove, because it was a one-block-long street. So instead of that trouble we worked the building so that in effect the building slopes instead of the street becoming a hill. We created exactly the same ease of access by having the bottom level, the lower level, approached from the end, the middle level approached from Orange Grove at one of the low points on the warped slab--warped like a boomerang in shape--and



the upper level was approached both from Orange Grove and from Ogden [Drive]. But it won a first award from the American Institute of Architects as a unique development and a unique idea. It's a very successful parking structure. So we've had a lot of history at Wilshire and Fairfax.

LASKEY: I think the history of Wilshire and Fairfax is where the first gas station in the city of Los Angeles ever existed. Is that right? Apparently the Gilmores, when they discovered that they had oil on their property rather than water for their cattle, put it in big barrels and sold it by the gallon for people who were trying to get to the beach and back, when cars first started very early on. Fascinating corner.

So that brings us back up again to the war, and at this point in about the mid-forties you become a partner with your father, as does your brother [John Edward]. Now, what had your brother been doing up to this time?

MARTIN: Well, my brother and my sister Carolyn both entered the government service. Carolyn was in the Waves--not the Waves, there was another [branch], segment of Coast Guard. Spars. And my brother became a Seabee and was stationed in Hawaii. I believe he was there at the time of the attack--well, no, that couldn't be. He went there later, and then was transferred to the Aleutians and was stationed on the island of Tanaga, where he was with a group of Seabees that





went in and established this base. I guess it has some of the most severe weather in the world. He also was stationed at [Port] Hueneme when he first enlisted near Oxnard, where he had some roots because of the family. So he returned after the war to the office, and I did one thing that has always impressed him and that is the day he walked in I said, "You're my equal partner." And we've been equal partners ever since. So that formed a bond between the two of us, which has prevailed over many differences. So it's been a long and successful partnership, really, and whenever we had differences we would agree that the partnership was more important than the difference, and that's one reason why we've stood together. Also, it's really an exemplification of the same kind of motivation that existed when I first went with my father and never had any ideas of working for anybody else; it was natural to be part of the office.

LASKEY: And just for the record, your brother's name is?

MARTIN: John Edward.

LASKEY: John Edward, and you call him Ed.

MARTIN: It's the same name as my mother's father, John Edward Borchard.

LASKEY: Now, his interest is slightly different than yours, his background, I believe; he's not an architect.

MARTIN: Yes. He started out to become an architect, went



to USC, and preferred to follow into civil engineering. And his work at USC and later on at the University of Illinois, where he graduated, as did my father, was in engineering, civil engineering. His life is more aligned to civil engineering, and he is by license a civil engineer. So again it's a continuance of the integration of engineering with architecture. I mean, that's one reason why our firm is strong in engineering.

LASKEY: Which has been one of the benefits of your firm.

MARTIN: I believe it to be a benefit, for one fundamental reason: that all of architecture and all of design is the embodiment of structure. It is not superficial, but when it becomes superficial, as is found in "façadism" or eclecticism, it loses its quality, because it's not organically honest. We've spoken somewhat of this subject, of the honesty of architecture, which is a very big and important thing in our firm today, as it always has been in my mind, through my practice.

LASKEY: Now, again in the mid-forties, when your brother came into the firm, you had been managing it for some time.

MARTIN: Yes.

LASKEY: Your father was still alive.

MARTIN: Dad was there, and he was active. He handled the contracts, he handled the field supervision work, and he was very close to our chief draftsman, Mr. Tom Gilbert, who



in effect was really the manager of the office, and perhaps, other than my father, was the most important mainstay in the office. Tom Gilbert was probably the best chief draftsman who existed. He was a lifelong employee of my father. He left the office for a few years, went to Canada and Alaska, worked on the Alcan project, which was a highway project that went up through Canada to Alaska, built during the war. He was building camps and bridges and things like that. The office grew finally and slowly through the forties. We did work for Ducommun and Union Hardware; we were very strong in industrial-type architecture.

LASKEY: This was in the late forties?

MARTIN: And into the fifties.

LASKEY: In the fifties. Now, it was in the fifties that you began your work with shopping centers, I believe.

MARTIN: Yes.

LASKEY: Lakewood was 1959.

MARTIN: Yes, and we had of course designed May Company Wilshire before the war. After the war we designed May Company Crenshaw, and it was that project which illustrated a trend into the integrated shopping centers. Because at May Company Crenshaw, which was right across the street from the Broadway [department store], there was an attempt to be close to each other as competitors and gain business from each other because of the proximity. The



Broadway store was part of a shopping center, with a tunnel for deliveries. That's on the south side of Crenshaw [Boulevard] and Santa Barbara [Avenue]. That project showed the fallacy of the thesis that two stores--major, dominant retail stores--should be across the street from each other on a corner.

After that was completed, we did the May Company Lakewood Shopping Center. And the May Company Lakewood Shopping Center was one of the first fully integrated shopping centers, with a tunnel for the distribution of goods and with a mall fifty feet wide for pedestrian access to the stores. Even though Broadway was kept out of the May Company Lakewood by Tom May, the Broadway finally did go in the vicinity of Lakewood, just to share the business. So the Lakewood [Shopping] Center had May Company in the center and dominant; it had Hiram's Market on one end and a second-rate department store on the other end, with a lot of specialty shops and a lot of shoe stores.

LASKEY: There always is. [laughter]

MARTIN: But it was May Company Crenshaw project, which demonstrated the fallacy of building across from each other on a major intersection. Everyone in the United States knew that, and we knew it very clearly that this was wrong, but it was the attitude of the merchants and not the attitude of the architects, even though some architects on the eastern seaboard--Skidmore, Owings and Merrill being one--were





starting to design the so-called integrated shopping center, the suburban shopping center.

This was before [Victor] Gruen became prominent. At that time Gruen was working here in Los Angeles, and he was doing stores, because it was Gruen and Krummeck. [Elsie] Krummeck was his wife, and they came from New York. He became a member of the Southern California chapter of the AIA; he was a very prominent storefront designer. Of course Gruen became the leading architect for retailing shopping centers in the United States and maybe the world. He did it through his own abilities and promotion. Very strong. He did some wonderful things. Now, May Company Lakewood, which was a very successful shopping center, had the consultation of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, who were working in our office on the concept. They were in the same kind of a transitional period as we were, and they had done some things on the eastern seaboard that were good. They didn't last too long on the job because they really weren't contributing that much it was felt. Not that they weren't perfectly capable of it of course. Then as they departed from the scene, we took over. We became very active in the whole retail shopping center field. The suburban shopping center movement was starting there, just as the expansion of the suburban residential districts were flourishing.

LASKEY: Did they sort of create each other; that is, did



the suburban shopping center develop because of the sudden increase in suburbia, the explosion in suburbia? Was it something that was going to happen, or was it something that had to be--I don't want to say forced, because it's a rather strong word--but had to be proven?

MARTIN: That's a very interesting question, and my thoughts would include many things. First of all, the downtown businesses were diminishing. They were losing their importance, primarily because of conflict between the automobile and the streetcars, which was one of the greater conflicts in urban design. They had to abandon all the streetcars finally to rearrange the lanes for automobiles to filter through.

Also, it was the time of the expansion and start of the freeway system, which was of course statewide and of grand proportion, really big. And that movement of the new freeways without a question was the most important factor in the whole urban development of all cities really, but of Los Angeles in particular. The freeways subdivided the land, the freeways were like the original crossroads out in the country. And with this subdivision of the land came identifiable districts, having to do even with civil government, because for the first time there was a very strong line of subdivision creating smaller units of land between the freeways. Well, all of this was related to the



prominence of the automobile and the movement, the mobility, of society. And that was related to the construction of vast housing projects, endless housing projects, following out with freeways. So it was a movement.

Now Lakewood Center, which perhaps has been the most successful shopping center for the district, was planned by the developers of the housing project. That was Ben Weingart, Lou Boyer, and some others, who built eight thousand houses in Lakewood all around the shopping center, then built the shopping center. And that was one of the most intelligent business arrangements you could imagine, because the market was there for the stores to come in and be immediately successful.

So the evolution of the suburban shopping center was really related to the automobile and the dire need for a rapid kind of movement, especially in the California area, where distances are great. It was quite a bit later that Gruen built the first interior mall, and that was in the eastern area, where the weather was bad, a very logical development. And he did a great job on it of course.

LASKEY: That's a question I would ask you, and I was going to a little later on, but we might as well talk about it here. The open or closed mall in the Southern California area. Do you have any feelings about that?

MARTIN: Well, I have strong feelings that the closed mall is the way to go.



LASKEY: It really is, even here?

MARTIN: Yes. Primarily because all of the stores that are participating collectively can have complete open storefronts, air-conditioned and clean, without the dust, and complete access by the pedestrians who are in the mall to the merchandise. So it's like a gigantic department store with all these specialty shops. There's no question in my mind that that is the best system. You might recall that at one time the open-air markets were the thing in Southern California; they were almost invented here. The food and fruit markets had great open storefronts.

LASKEY: I've seen pictures of it, and I've read about it, but by the time I got here they were gone.

MARTIN: They were starting to be closed. Well, they were closed for a very good reason: it was because of the weather. And the uncleanliness. So the same thing was true of shopping centers to some extent. But the real factor that is important with the closing of the malls was (a) the weather and (b) the ability to open up the storefronts so that the whole leased area of the tenants can be opened for the pedestrians to flow in; it's a much stronger merchandising plan.

LASKEY: What about energy, the conservation or use of energy in a mall, a closed mall?





MARTIN: Well, of course, that's all so recent that it never has been considered up to these last few years. Even now there are still malls that are air-conditioned, with the exception that a lot of outside air is being used through the ventilation cycle. Yes, it takes more energy, except I will say that the pattern of most merchants, if you have a shop on the street or a shop on the mall that is not enclosed, is to prop the door open and leave it open.

LASKEY: That's true.

MARTIN: So these early shops at Lakewood were losing all of their air-conditioned air because the merchants would prop the doors open to get the people in. So it shows you that the mall should have been closed, really, in the first place, because all that air was going out, that cool air was going out into the warm air. So it certainly was the right thing to have happened.

LASKEY: You also did Eastland Shopping Center within a couple of years of Lakewood.

MARTIN: Yes. We followed on with Eastland, and being a two-level shopping center, it was a very difficult problem, because there were very few two-level shopping centers. Most of them were one level at that time. So we designed a two-level, with the lower level being a little different type of merchandise. It was a step towards the contemporary shopping center, which is now two levels, but the whole lower



level is just a lower class of merchandise. That two-level shopping center at Eastland still used the interior truck mall; all the merchandise was delivered into a tunnel at Eastland. So on the lower level, stores were on one side only, because it was a topographical change, and so the tunnel was used for the upper stores, with elevators, and had direct access to the lower stores. So that was the days of the tunnel. Now these days, shopping centers don't build tunnels, and the reason for that is that it's too costly in handling the merchandise, like .5 percent more. A food market exists on 2, 2.5 percent of the in-gross, so it was a huge cost for transporting merchandise from the truck, across loading docks, up elevators, and things like that.

LASKEY: Do you marvel when you go out past Lakewood or Eastland, at how large they've become, the areas, the shopping areas?

MARTIN: They're huge, and they are, really, generally reasonably successful. They have good food markets, because the residential areas were built around them, or were built first, with the shopping center inserted into the paved area.

LASKEY: I'm looking at my list here, and I see kind of an interesting juxtaposition of structures that you, or your firm, did the same year, in 1957. You built a home for your sister and a men's detention facility.

MARTIN: Uh huh, yes.



LASKEY: You were very busy that year; they sound very different. Did you actually design the house for your sister yourself?

MARTIN: Oh, yes. Yes, I designed a series of houses. Before that I designed a house for J. Watson Webb and one for Higgins Sword out in the West Los Angeles area. And to this day, one of my dearest friends is J. Watson Webb. Watson is an interesting fellow, he's a bachelor, he's a direct heir of the Vanderbilts. His mother was a Havemeyer, and he is now alone with his responsibilities, which include the management of the Shelburne Museum in Vermont, probably one of the greatest collections of Americana in the United States. But our friendship exists to the point that today we're adding on to an outhouse for J. Watson Webb, and his house was built I think in '56, or something like that.

Then that experience led me into an interesting decision. Watson asked me if I was interested in expanding the residential design practice. He and his friends were building all over the world these large residences.

LASKEY: Individual residences as opposed to tract?

MARTIN: Individual residences; some of them, you know, like the Vanderbilts, built large residences.

LASKEY: Yes, they did.

MARTIN: And I made a decision that I would not, that I would stay with the commercial. But I remember very clearly



that was a decision, a purposeful decision, that I would not follow that trend.

LASKEY: Were you tempted by it?

MARTIN: I was enjoying the residential work, because I was quite good at it, I'd say. And that had to do with my training, I believe, and my desire for small-scale considerations. Then later on I did my sister's house, and then I did my own home in Whittier, which was a very successful, modern, very modern home, which we sold two and a half years ago.

LASKEY: Oh, you did.

MARTIN: And moved to the beach. It was too large; it was two acres of land and 6,000 square feet of house.

LASKEY: So you no longer live in Whittier?

MARTIN: No, I live in Long Beach, Alamitos Bay.

LASKEY: Do you miss all those years that you lived in Whittier?

MARTIN: No, no, we don't miss it. We loved it, it did its job, the people were great. We still go back to Whittier to enjoy our friends. But the family is gone, and the house and the yard were too large, just too much trouble. So I was happy to reduce the scale of our living down to 3,000 feet, and on Alamitos Bay, and the boat is right out in front in a slip, which has been a dedication in my life ever since the early fifties.





LASKEY: Well, now the boat leads us into another subject, of your interest--

MARTIN: Yes.

LASKEY: --in yachting, that you might want to talk about.

MARTIN: Well, we could talk about that any time. [laughter]

LASKEY: We'll talk about it now, since it's very important to you.

MARTIN: I became interested in sailing really through my friend Jack Axelson. Axelson was the heir of Axelson Manufacturing Company, who built landing gear during the war. They had a boat by the name of Jada, which is still around. Dorothy and I went sailing with them one time, and it was quite a thrill. So later on I bought a little eighteen-foot sailboat and started racing and sailing; that lead, eventually, to a thirty-eight-foot sailing boat, and eventually to a forty-six, and now a fifty. And I have done a lot of racing; I've raced to Honolulu nine times, and Mazatlan probably six times, Acapulco, and a lot of local racing around the islands. So I still race a bit; I did race last November and did very well in the Mazatlan race. In an old wooden boat.

LASKEY: I was going to say, how old is your boat, what's it like?

MARTIN: Twenty years old. It's well-kept, a beautiful boat.



LASKEY: They are beautiful.

MARTIN: And she's redesigned, and I've done a lot of things with the boat. It's a different sail plan, a new mast, the whole reconfiguration with lots of modern equipment. But the boat is still a very important part of my life. I enjoy it and I work on it myself, although I have some work done by the professionals.

LASKEY: Is your wife a sailor?

MARTIN: Loves to cruise, loves to be on the boat after cruising; the answer is probably no. She doesn't feel well sailing. I used to sail a lot and be gone a lot on the weekends because of sailing, which I don't think was very positive at home, but I guess that's what I wanted to do and I did it that way.

LASKEY: Did that influence where you moved, when you left Whittier, that you had to be near the water?

MARTIN: I'm sure it did, yes.

LASKEY: Closer to the boat.

MARTIN: Oh yes, it definitely did. We found a place with a slip and a very nice residential district.

LASKEY: Now, that's a large boat, fifty feet. Is it something that you can just go out for a cruise on a Saturday afternoon, or do you need a crew?

MARTIN: You really need another person that can handle sail. I can do it alone, but Dorothy wouldn't be comfortable, if



the two of us went out. As we have done that many times. I've sailed alone, and I can. But it's quite a bit of boat to bring in in case you're having trouble and have to sail it into a slip so you're pretty busy.

LASKEY: When you sail, say, down to Mazatlan, what size crew do you have?

MARTIN: A racing crew of eight people.

LASKEY: Eight people!

MARTIN: Two watches, three persons on a watch, plus a cook, and then I as captain work between the watches. It's worked quite well.

LASKEY: It sounds very important to you.

MARTIN: Oh yeah, it has been, because the thrill of these long-distance races really is pretty great.

LASKEY: How about your children? Are they sailors, some of them?

MARTIN: Well, the best sailor, I suppose, is the youngest boy, Charlie, and he enjoyed sailing. They all sailed with me, one way or the other. Charlie and David both sailed to Honolulu with me. The boys have had other interests:

David in automobile racing, and Al in being around his home (he has related to his family more), and Charlie has been always working on something like that, not aligned to sailing. Today, David has a sailboat, a Hobie Cat.

LASKEY: Fast?



MARTIN: Yes, that's right, Speed. I'm sure that one's life is influenced by such attractions, as you go in many directions.





TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE TWO

APRIL 8, 1981

LASKEY: Well, today, Mr. Martin, we'll begin to talk on the subject of the evolution of the reincarnation of downtown [Los Angeles], and I know that you have a great deal to say about that because you've been instrumental in a lot of what's happened.

MARTIN: The downtown area was dormant from the time of the Great Depression of 1929 until the early sixties, which is a period of thirty years, and the once vibrant business center of Spring Street stayed level because of a whole series of external movements that were taking place: traffic congestion, the introduction of freeways, the suburbanization. And the thesis of the FHA that every home shall have a garage with a car in it and every pot a chicken, as advocated by Franklin Delano Roosevelt, became a way of life in California. There was movement. There was a real surge of the need for cohesive arrangements of government buildings. Because Los Angeles was destined to become one of the great cities of the world, for all the reasons that everyone knows about: the weather and the access and the adjacency to the Pacific Rim.

The Civic Center emerged after long struggles of alternate Civic Center plans, the most notable of which ran north and south down Main Street, and various architectural groups



would express their ideas to the government officials of the time, including my father, who was connected with some of the explorations for how a new civic center should be developed. It wasn't until a man by the name of Arthur Will, Sr., came on the scene as the chief administrative officer of the county of Los Angeles that action towards the adoption of a civic center plan took place. It was Arthur Will, Sr., that put his shoulder to the wheel and through his abilities caused the Civic Center to be as it is today, which is running in an east-west direction. And as everything evolved, this was parallel to the Hollywood Freeway, which became the San Bernardino and Santa Ana freeways and a major artery in the whole western part of the United States. That freeway carries more traffic than any freeway in the world. The Civic Center was paralleling that as it evolved, and this in effect ran the Civic Center up the old insurmountable Bunker Hill. So Bunker Hill was not as high and mighty as it always seemed to be, because in effect the Civic Center ran right over it.

The City Hall, of course, was established early, and my father was one of the three architects--John Parkinson and John Austin and Albert C. Martin. That tall, 450-foot-high, twenty-eight-story building became the center of much of the attention of the downtown, as well as the government, area. So in effect it was the hub of the Civic Center, which



was branching out to the west.

LASKEY: At the time that City Hall was built, actually the Civic Center could have gone either way--east and west, north and south--and City Hall still would have been the center.

MARTIN: Yes, that's right, and all those plans really hinged upon the Civic Center as the hub of any kind of an expansion. And today it really is, because the Civic Center east, the east mall, and other future developments still hinge upon the City Hall as its hub.

The construction of the Civic Center Mall in the east-west direction led to some very important urban land movements. First of all, that eliminated the idea of the Civic Center running south down Main and Spring streets. Also, the Hollywood Freeway and the Civic Center Mall formed a very strong barrier on the north edge of the downtown area. The only things that would span across the freeway and the mall were the ethnic developments which were historically located there in the first place, such as Chinatown and El Pueblo, the founding place of the city of Los Angeles. So the business building development, which was always Spring Street in the last fifty years at least, or last eighty years, and was stagnant until 1960, the business building development had finally to expand because of the postwar demand for new financial institutions, and



Los Angeles became the financial center of the West, on the fringe of the great Pacific Rim, where trade was starting to flow. Therefore, with the Harbor Freeway on the west side of downtown Los Angeles, the Hollywood Freeway on the north, with the Civic Center established flanking the Hollywood Freeway, with Main Street wall-to-wall, thirteen-story office buildings, the expansion really had to go to the west. Important things happened, such as the lifting of the limit height in companion with the requirement for parking facilities for one car per 1,000 foot of building improvement. That combination created a whole new concept of buildings and open spaces. Requirements for business houses tripled, they could now go up into the air; the requirement for parking was a law. And the entire fabric of the city started to open up, as is so well exemplified in the new buildings that we have been privileged to work with on the west side of the Biltmore Hotel and the library. The Harbor Freeway on the west was pulling the expansion of the business area to the west because it was the point of access to the downtown area. Unlike the Civic Center on the north, the industrial section on the east, an industrial section of a smaller scale on the south, the west was open for expansion, and this was the direction of most of the business residences in any case.

A strange thing also happened in the evolution of the





planning of the downtown area. The new Community Redevelopment Agency [CRA] created the Bunker Hill Project. This included a huge lot of acreage just south of the Civic Center Mall, running in effect from Hill Street to the Harbor Freeway. The Bunker Hill Project stripped off many of the old historic buildings (residences that were on Bunker Hill), recontoured the land, and offered it for sale to a community that wasn't expanding at that time. As mentioned, Los Angeles was stagnant from the Depression until the sixties.

LASKEY: Now the CRA, I think, took over Bunker Hill in the fifties. They actually started around about '56, '57--

MARTIN: I think so.

LASKEY: --to flatten the land.

MARTIN: Yes. So in effect Los Angeles had at that time a great excess of land available, which at that time seemed to be in the wrong place. As time has shown, however, it was a well-conceived plan and is now in the process of final commitment, with some substantial development already in place. However, with the need for expansion of the downtown area, and the barriers to the north, the Spring Street wall-to-wall buildings on the east, the expansion started first going to the west, out Sixth Street and out Fifth Street, which was the southern boundary of the Bunker Hill area. The high-rise development came because the ordinance lifted



the limit height, and our firm was selected as an associate firm with [Wally] Harrison and [Max] Abramovitz from New York, who were the architects for Galbreath-Ruffin, New York developers. The developers were Galbreath and Ruffin, and the owner of the insurance company was Connecticut General. We together designed the first high-rise, other than the UCB [United California Bank] building which was built at Sixth and Spring in an endeavor to anchor Spring Street. It went eighteen stories or so. The Connecticut General Building, which is now Union Bank Square, was the first forty-two-story building constructed and was the first example of the use of earthquake-resistant structures resolved by the process of dynamic analysis, which was developed by our engineers in conjunction with a very outstanding San Francisco structural engineer by the name of John Bloom. It was then that Albert C. Martin and Associates learned the techniques and started a very important development: computer analysis for earthquake movements and their resolution. Undoubtedly the most advanced engineering accomplishment of the time. With the help of [George W.] Housner, [Charles F.] Richter, and some of the professors from Berkeley, this team evolved a new technique by the use of computers.

LASKEY: What does it do? Can you describe it in layman terms?



MARTIN: Yes. It analyzes the characteristics of each and every member of a frame in a building, and if you think of the frame of the building as a birdcage, with all the strength on the outside, and if you think of that frame being subjected to movements of an earthquake at the ground level, which have very erratic characteristics, strong accelerations of perhaps one to two feet in one direction and then erratic movements the other way and even lifting as much as nine inches, you then can see what a stress that places onto a frame. Now formerly the frames were designed principally for static vertical loads, and then after the earthquake of '33, Long Beach earthquake, an application of lateral movements caused by earthquakes was required for these frames. This again had the characteristic of being a static lateral movemet. The real performance, however, of earthquake forces causes dynamic responses all through the frame. The jerking--and I'll use the lay term--of the ground movements causes an array of forces to be distributed up through the columns and into the beams, which are so great that the normal static stresses in beams and columns are even reversed to where the compression end of a beam may be on the bottom flange instead of the top flange. And all of the calculations that had been assumed through the static process start to be affected. One can visualize that with a reversal of stresses in the members of the frame



that the joints where beams meet columns and the nature of the beam and column itself are considerably different.

The dynamic analysis computer program that was developed, or refined, in this office very clearly showed the condition in each and every member of the frame, as these earthquake movements were applied in the computer to the frame, and by trial and error the frame was, through the computer, redesigned until the optimum condition of size to resist shearing action or bending action was found. That of course changed the whole system of design of frames and put it into a highly sophisticated process for, not only the design, but the fabrication of the steel. If you think for a minute, that the development of the aircraft industry probably was the leader in such stresses, because airplane wings were subjected to these kinds of bending and waving actions, and the scientists and engineers of the aircraft industry developed these computer techniques that did this. That was at the time of the construction of this Connecticut General Building, now Union Bank Square, that our engineers learned from that process and advanced the state of the art into what it is today. I believe that was one of the most important design attainments that any firm had reached for a long time.

LASKEY: Did that design movement have any direct relation to the lifting of the height limits in the city of Los Angeles?





MARTIN: I don't believe so. Although there is a relationship of most all influences, such as technical advances, to all urban planning requirements. If you think of what it is that causes a configuration or a result in urban planning, you would have to include social influences, technical influences and advances, and business influences. But, in any case, this Connecticut General Building was built forty-two stories high; it was a very sophisticated design, it was at the west side of the Bunker Hill Community Redevelopment Project.

LASKEY: Well, we're sitting on the nineteenth floor of that building right now.

MARTIN: Yes.

LASKEY: What would happen if an earthquake--getting back to the point you were talking about--if an earthquake, say the magnitude of the 1971 earthquake, were to hit, would we be--?

MARTIN: I'm glad you asked, because in the Sylmar earthquake, 1971, this building contained two accelerometers, as required by law. These were to record the movement of earthquakes at that particular spot in the building. One of those was defective, but the other, wherever it is located, was not. It recorded the exact movement of this building from that quake. And a very strange thing happened.



The Sylmar earthquake, which took place in a valley in that area, was a quake that caused an alluvial deposit at the bottom of this valley to act like a bowl of jelly, and the alluvial sand and earth structure really shook like jelly and caused tremendous damage. That bowl was bounded by rock structure. Now that quake, however, had reflection that came through the whole district and strongly towards the downtown area, which has a substructure of blue clay, very thick, and all these big buildings are resting on this clay structure, which is an outstanding foundation material.

But the wave action of that particular quake, as it came south and hit this high-rise building, strangely caused a harmonic reaction between the wave periods and the building period, to the point that the resultant effect on this building from an earthquake that might have been something like 5.5 or 6.0 on the Richter scale reached a harmonic intensity of something like 7.0 or over, which is a much more severe earthquake. This building performed exactly as it was designed, and the movements of this building, as shown in computer readouts from that earthquake, matched exactly the curves that were represented on the accelerometer which is in place. This proved, in a practical sense, the validity of the design and the theory that was employed and adapted for all of these dynamic analyses techniques. The process is now in existence here in the city as a standard.



LASKEY: So when you're talking about the skeleton of a building these days, you're really talking about a skeleton almost like a human skeleton, that moves and adjusts and is no longer a thing that is static.

MARTIN: Yes, it is not static, it is not rigid, it is flexible. That's of course the secret to an airplane wing and a building and, for that matter, the granite slabs of the ARCO project and the Security Pacific project; all float separately, unto themselves, with compressible joints around the perimeter, so that they can work in their same little orbit. They can work in their own orbit in the pattern of the fabric of the whole wall as the building moves. In the Sylmar earthquake we had no cracking whatsoever in ARCO and no damage to the exterior of this building. We had plaster cracking around the interior shafts because the plaster is rigid and no provisions were made to try to put flexible joints in the plaster walls. That we believe to be a secondary kind of a result.

LASKEY: Now, all these are techniques that you worked out, not you specifically, but your office worked out.

MARTIN: These are techniques that we were leading in, the application of them, the creation of the formulas, the computer programs, and we have a proprietary computer program today that is probably better than that which is required under the law. It has been modified and, let's say, taken by former employees of ours who are now in the business of dynamic analysis,



something which you cannot possibly retain unto yourself.

LASKEY: Nor would you want to really.

MARTIN: And we don't really try to; we try to teach the whole industry, the whole profession, what our findings are.

LASKEY: So you feel very secure, then, with your high-rise buildings in an earthquake situation.

MARTIN: Yes, yes, and I'm not sure that I mentioned it, but when we did the fifty-five-story Security Pacific Building, we were retained to shake that building to the point of extending beyond the elastic limit of steel, and to find out what happens, theoretically, if you have an earthquake of such great intensity that the elastic limit of steel is exceeded and all the members start to bend instead of springing back in their original place.

So we shook the building up to the 8.0 measurement on the Richter scale, which is a most intense earthquake--this is all being done in the computer--and nothing happened. The members of the steel frame started to bend--they absorb a great amount of energy when that happens, they don't spring, they just settle in--and the whole design just settled in and didn't go anyplace. In other words, this is countered, this is a counterthought to a building falling over, which some people might imagine. So we have proven it in the computer experience on that building, which is the only time it's ever been done, to our knowledge, and of





course with that knowledge we feel secure in our ability to make very good buildings. Very advanced.

One thing that you might be interested in: when we were retained to study the ARCO, which are now twin towers, we looked at several other designs, one of them a seventy-five-story building and another one a single high-rise tower with a low bank building of six or eight stories. Our recommendation was to go to the twin identical towers. The reason for it was that we felt that the large building would be kind of a dominant insult to the rest of the fabric of the city--much as the John Hancock Building is in Chicago (it's overbearing, it is not a graceful neighbor)--and we felt that the twin identical towers, black, reflective of each other, would be very acceptable companions to the rest of the development of the urban center. Which they have proven to be, they're very acceptable. And one has to recall the psychological fact that if you have two parallel white objects like buildings, they oppose each other, and the tendency visually, psychologically, is for them to go outward, whereas two black reflective shiny companions, identical, tend to be cohesive and complement each other and reflect into each other and so forth. They become a single entity and a smaller concept, and that's what we did to the ARCO Towers.

LASKEY: What did ARCO think?



MARTIN: They accepted the resolution and the recommendation. They felt very good about it, and they do today. The ARCO Towers really have qualities that are unique because of the twin characteristics, and the reflectivity and the black, dark green essence of the stone bring them into a very, very happy type of development. Now, they are severe in design, utterly simple, highly detailed, and probably one of the best designs that is existing. I can say that about other buildings also, but since the ARCO/B of A Towers are of that nature and a little unusual--

LASKEY: Well, I think what's unusual about it, too--several things--is how you got the granite.

MARTIN: Yes. It was mined in Canada, shipped to Italy. It was cut into one-inch slabs in Italy, and that's the only place in the world that had saws that could do that, and still is, and then shipped to Los Angeles, taken to a yard which casts concrete, and we cast a sandwich of concrete on the back of those slabs, including anchors and stainless steel butterfly wire anchors into the granite. And the stones in their composite essence are well attached to the frame and do act with enough mass so that they take their own place in an earthquake. There is somewhat of a danger with thin slabs, paper-thin, so to speak; they crack like glass would crack if you had a load applied to one little part of it. So the mass of the composite stone of the ARCO Tower has worked very well.



LASKEY: And the wall, the retaining wall on Figueroa [Street], is a beautiful wall.

MARTIN: We did borrow the inspiration, as I guess most everything we do, from the Greeks and the Romans, and the rustication of that granite is of course historic in nature. It's an evolution between the rustic nature of the ground and the polished nature of the material up above the ground. And I think the rustication, with its ivy creeping over it, is really very beautiful.

LASKEY: So we will pick this up next time and start with--

MARTIN: Yeah, sure, there's a lot of things like that that are just very exciting.

LASKEY: Well, they're very exciting buildings. I think people don't look at them closely enough.

MARTIN: Well, they don't really understand, and I can understand that. The evolution-- Another example of the ARCO design was the decision to put the plaza at the Flower Street level, as counter to the plaza being at the Figueroa Street level.

LASKEY: Would it have been possible to put it at Figueroa Street?

MARTIN: Yes. If we had put it at Figueroa Street then we would have had a landscaped bank along Flower Street, like twelve, fifteen feet high, that's how much difference.



LASKEY: You would have actually built up the area there?

MARTIN: We would have built up the plaza so that there would be a bank on the west side of Flower Street. Now, that wasn't a bad scheme, because there is a small bank over at the library across the street, and you could have put a bridge across the street from that plaza going east, and that would have been a good pedestrian scheme. The decision to put the plaza at the Flower Street level was primarily influenced by the Bank of America, who wanted the pedestrians of Sixth and Flower to be able to walk right into the bank. That seems silly, but that was the motivation of the old idea that their business hinged upon people walking through their front door. That was actually expressed.

LASKEY: That's rather interesting, because Los Angeles has a history of people not walking anywhere, front doors being really more traditional, something like that.

MARTIN: Right. It's a traditional idea. But that was a strong influence. I'm not saying that the present scheme is secondary to the other, but we strongly considered putting the plaza at the Figueroa Street level, and it would have worked well in the whole urban design. But now, you see, the new Wells Fargo Plaza is at the street level too, whereas eventually the people, we hope, will be once up at the plaza level, or the raised level, like the Union Bank Building-- You see, we designed the Union Bank Building with the ground





floor at the level of the pedestrian system of the future. So [when] you walk out of the ground floor of the Union Bank Building, you walk straight across a bridge over to the hotel.

LASKEY: And then straight across the bridge over to the World Trade Center, and then over to the Bunker Hill Towers.

MARTIN: That's right.

LASKEY: Which is just wonderful.

MARTIN: And there will be a bridge straight over to Wells Fargo, and we put a bridge over to ARCO Plaza, but we had to go down to the plaza level by an escalator. That is the edge of the pedestrian system of the Bunker Hill redevelopment project, as we go down to the plaza level of the ARCO Towers. And those things are very obvious if you think about them.

LASKEY: Well, if you think about--and we can discuss next time or maybe the time after that--the bridges, I think you could talk about the bridge you wanted from the Music Center to the Civic Center Mall.

MARTIN: I think that would be one of the grandest projects the city will ever realize, and I think they will realize it. I'm still trying to have it officially adopted as part of the Civic Center master plan, and I think we'll win.

LASKEY: I hope so.

MARTIN: I think it will make it. That would be a



sensational thing, probably one of the most sensational places in the city, if we could extend the plaza at the cultural center across Grand [Avenue] and have it descend down to the level of the plaza between the courts buildings, which is a lovely plaza in there, and have a continuity of it in the east-west direction for the pedestrians traversing the mall. Right now you stop at every street, which is silly.

LASKEY: Oh, it is, it really is. It needs crossing. I think at one time they were considering making Broadway a pedestrian mall, and if that ever happened, we could walk from here to South Broadway and up South Broadway without ever crossing a street.

MARTIN: The pedestrian system will come. It's slow, but it will come. Maybe one of the most exciting parts of that [system] will be the new retail mall that is hopefully planned between Seventh and Eighth streets and the south side of Seventh Street. It will be an elevated retail mall, just like contemporary shopping centers, running from Figueroa, which will be where Bullock's is, clear on through to the other side of Robinson's, and that would be one of the greatest retail developments you can imagine, and that's at the level of the pedestrian system. And the People Mover--that's one reason I have been so strong for the People Mover is that it would be a link for pedestrians, pedestrians that want to go to the Civic Center, you know, or to



peripheral parking structures.

LASKEY: The whole area is so potentially fascinating.

MARTIN: Fabulous, it's fabulous. I don't know what is going to develop on the library. I've been reading about the library this morning, this proposal to tear the library down, you know, and we're advocating that the library stay. I'm trying to develop a scheme that would be a compromise, perhaps, but would keep the library, and some people and myself are trying to find a donor to take over the library as a museum. That would be magnificent. We have some possibilities, and to operate it through time. It would be one of the greatest things the city could have. And then to build a new library either to the east side of that site or some other place.

LASKEY: I think nobody's questioning that we need a new library.

MARTIN: Oh, no.

LASKEY: It's just a matter of saving one of our few landmark structures is the problem at hand, and that happens to be sitting on an incredibly valuable piece of property.

MARTIN: Yeah, but it's valuable not only from a commercial point of view, but it's valuable to the people as an open space, and the latter is more important than the dollars, by far. It's like getting Main Street out of the middle of El Pueblo; El Pueblo should not have that.



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LASKEY: Well, we'll continue talking about the library and your involvement and your feelings about it, your reservations.

MARTIN: OK. We have discussed the evolution of the downtown--I should say evolution and revitalization of the downtown area--and we have discussed the importance of urban plans which include large open spaces between buildings and how these have been managed. Perhaps key in the overall downtown urban plan is the large plot of land that the Central Library occupies, located between Fifth and Sixth and Flower [streets] and Grand [Avenue]. The Los Angeles Central Library has for years been obsolete from the standpoint of being a practical library. They tell me it contains some magnificent collections. It also has become obsolete in some of its physical characteristics related to fire and safety and earthquake, and it is estimated at the present time that to correct these would take some \$14 million of reconstruction.

LASKEY: But, specifically what would they have to do?

MARTIN: Well, they would have to create fire separations in some of the areas that are like open stacks. They would have to renovate the whole electrical distribution





system as well as the heating, ventilating, and air conditioning. I suspect that the structural work required to resist earthquakes would be manageable, but we have never made a detailed examination as a firm. Important to our client ARCO, which borders this site on the west side, is the restoration of the open space between the library and Flower Street.

LASKEY: Oh, where the gardens used to be and what is now a parking lot.

MARTIN: Where there was an original configuration of a fountain, a cascading fountain and gardens. And we as a firm have prepared for ARCO (at our expense, incidentally) some very interesting sketches of how it used to be; so that we now have a representation, even though there are photographs, a representation in a beautiful pencil sketch by Joe [Joseph L.] Amestoy of this garden. Today, even as of yesterday, I visited with Bob [Robert O.] Anderson, who is chairman of the board, and Rod Rood, and we discussed the garden and a new idea that ARCO is pushing, somewhat at my suggestion, although we try to stay in the background when somebody picks up an idea and wants to take the initiative, especially a client.

The idea at the present time, which is enthusing Bob Anderson and Ed [Edward W.] Carter, who has been brought in by Bob Anderson, is to ask the [J. Paul] Getty Museum,



the Getty Foundation, to take over the library and reconstruct it into the form of an early American ethnic museum and to operate it in perpetuity. The people connected with the Getty Museum, or Getty Foundation, are friendly, but most encouraging is the newly retained services of Harold [M.] Williams, formerly the secretary of the Securities and Exchange Commission under the Carter administration and formerly the dean of the school of business at UCLA. Harold is very friendly personally to these people. So, in somewhat of a cautious way we are marking time until the proposition can be made by Bob Anderson and Ed Carter that this be done. If that happens it solves one element of the problem of getting a new library.

Now to describe the overall problem of the library, it might be well to go back into recent history a little bit and discuss some of the things that have happened in the last few years. The American Institute of Architects, Southern California chapter, took a hard position, after doing a great deal of research, that the library should be preserved. Charles Luckman, who has been friendly to Gilbert [W.] Lindsay, the councilman of the great ninth district, has for years been promoting a modification to the library which would add the required space and parking and, however, would change the design and configuration of the library drastically. The American Institute of Architects



sued the city several years ago for not performing the environmental impact report properly.

LASKEY: That was the Luckman plan?

MARTIN: On a plan which was developed by Charles Luckman and Associates. And [it] delayed any action on the part of the city council. It was at that time that I personally felt so strongly about the emasculation of the original design of the library.

LASKEY: Could you discuss, could you describe, what the plan actually would have done to the building?

MARTIN: The building is approximately 250,000 square feet gross in area. The building is of a square configuration with a central tower with a pyramid-shaped tile cap to the tower. In order to gain the required space for the expansion of the library, Charles Luckman proposed the construction of a two-story large, massive building to be built on the west side between Flower and the library, with huge wings that may be three stories high flanking it on the north side of the property as well as the south side. Also, on the east park, there was a large construction proposed as well as a very deep excavation for parking. I knew that such a modification of the original configuration of the building would absolutely destroy the building; for one thing, the pedestrians couldn't even see it, could not see it at all, and another thing is that the scheme which was estimated by



Luckman to be \$30 million would actually have cost about \$60 [million]. I knew that, and it was the basis of that misrepresentation that caused me to make a political issue out of this and a debate on the council floor with my good friend Gilbert Lindsay, the councilman; I won the support of the council, even though this was his district. This was a great victory, but it left me in a very difficult position with Mr. Lindsay. All of this has since been cured, and Mr. Lindsay is one of my dear friends. I don't think Mr. Luckman [laughter] feels very good about it. Although we really are fair friends even with all these bitter experiences.

Now, several years later, in desperation, the city through the initiative of the library commission, has recommended that the city go out to the public with a request for proposal (an RFP) to provide the city with a new library on some other site in the downtown area in exchange for the land, which is one of the most important pieces of land. The city, in their RFP, which is in the draft form only today and not officially issued, suggests that there may be alternative schemes which would leave the library intact and with some other possible use of the land for the construction of offices or income-producing improvements that would allow a developer to buy the land, which is rumored to be valued at \$250 a foot, producing some \$40 million. This RFP today has been stopped by the request of people like ARCO and a





conservancy group that is working on the side, so that the conservancy-minded people and those that are against this procedure have a chance to organize and prepare for the creation of alternatives. We are currently in the process of doing that.

From the standpoint of our firm, David and myself (who are both against the destruction of the library or, more importantly, the loss of the west park as an open space) have prepared a very exciting solution which would be based upon the creation of the existing library into a museum as described, hopefully sponsored and operated by an outside private source; and the use of the easterly side, eastern part, for the construction of a very low profile library which would extend in a north-south direction from the Mayflower Hotel across the east park and across Fifth Street to connect up with the property to the north of Fifth Street.

This would be a very unusual urban plan, but what it would do, it would give an opportunity for the reorganization of all the properties on the north side of Fifth Street lying between Grand and Hope and the movement of Hope Street--which now ramps down to the corner of Fifth and Grand, with a very bad traffic situation--to the north about 300 or 400 feet, which would greatly improve the traffic and give an opportunity for the properties that lie north of Fifth Street to be collectively organized into one large site. This would



in effect be a great urban plan and would allow another major structure to be flanking this great open area which the library creates.

We have built a model of this, we have produced it on film and have presented the idea to several people as of this reading. It's a great idea, considered by Mr. Anderson as being a very exciting idea, and I'm about to present it to Ed [Edward] Helfeld, head of the CRA [Community Redevelopment Agency]. Which, hopefully, will be such a good idea that the combination of the Getty grant of the museum, which is the existing library, plus this new urban plan of the land surrounding the library site, would be so sensational that we somehow could cause it to be constructed. I don't know what the future will bring, but this is another idea in trying to remold the character of the central city.

LASKEY: The structures that would be north of Fifth Street, like there's the [Southern California] Edison [Company] Building there and there are the Engstrom Apartments and I think there are parking lots behind that, would those buildings remain or are you talking about removing the buildings and building a whole new complex in that block?

MARTIN: I'm talking about removing the Edison Building, the Engstrom Apartments, and the parking structure which lies to the west of the Engstrom. Now the ownership of these properties is in the hands of people who are our clients.



The parking structure on the west is Rockefeller [Realty Corporation], the Engstrom Apartments is John Cushman [III] and Rob [Robert] Maguire [III], who has just teamed up with John, and the Edison Company is owned by someone that has it as an investment. Now this scheme, which would move that ramped street, the terminus of Hope Street, to the north of a new building, would create a new site with a Fifth Street frontage and an address that those properties do not now have. And it would create one of the most spectacular sites for a major structure in the city.

LASKEY: There's a large retaining wall there now and a stairway. Would you remove those? Would you bring it down to sidewalk level?

MARTIN: We would bring a portion of it down to the street and create a plaza, landscaped. And then we would have a portion of it at the Hope Street level, which is up about fifty feet. So that the whole pedestrian action which we have created in the design of the Wells Fargo Building on its east side, that whole pedestrian action would now start to be organized and hooked up with the top level of the library which spans Fifth Street, which would be another park. So that the whole pedestrian movement from upper Bunker Hill to lower Fifth and lower Flower would be managed in a spectacular kind of an arrangement, with escalators and trees and parks and so forth. It would be a very beautiful scheme.



LASKEY: How would you get from across Fifth Street, how would you connect to the library?

MARTIN: Well, the library building itself would span Fifth Street, up in the air. The library design would be a series of terraces, landscaped terraces, so its very low profile--

LASKEY: Now this is the building you're suggesting putting in on the east of the--

MARTIN: Yes, that's right. I'll show you a model which we have right out here now. It's a great idea, and so we're in the process of pushing it. As I said, what the future will bring at this moment in time I don't know.

LASKEY: It certainly is one of the more reasonable proposals.

MARTIN: It would be an exciting proposal.

LASKEY: Have you talked to the [Los Angeles] Conservancy about it?

MARTIN: Well, yes. I'm kind of on the fringes of that committee and a new committee being formed to move ahead with the conservancy under John Welborne's leadership. Yes, they're tuned in to what we're doing. They will take the position that they want nothing to disturb the parks of the library site. My proposition is to preserve the west park and build the library addition floating over the east park. So that the public would still have an open space, but it





would be part of the library planning, and visually, however, you could penetrate the space which is now a park.

LASKEY: The parking, I assume, would then be in the new structure that would be--

MARTIN: The parking would be below Fifth Street and below the new structure, in a huge parking structure which would extend all the way north to the north side of those properties that I have just described. It would hold 3,500 cars. So, that's the current status of the library, which has been under consideration for so many years, and it's a choice piece of property and everybody's trying to get it.

LASKEY: We'll have to go back to that again, especially in these days of economic sort of confusion and fear. If Getty were to take over and create a new museum, would they buy the property? or would the city continue to own the property?

MARTIN: I'm certain that the city would continue to own the property. My guess would be that they would pay for the reconstruction of the library into a museum and would have a contract to operate the museum, and, of course, presumably the museum would be named after [J. Paul] Getty.

Bob Anderson, who is promoting the idea now, is thinking of early American Natives and the movement of several collections, like the one in the Southwest Museum, down to this location, which would offer a much more public participation,



and movement of several other early American museum collections on in. I suggested to him that I knew of a collection in Mexico City that is in storage, a lot of which pertains to Southern California, and so you can see the possibilities of making this an international museum with Mexico and the United States participating, which is much needed at this present moment in time. We really need to get a coalescence of the thinking, and Los Angeles is the place to coalesce Mexico and the United States.

LASKEY: How will you begin to get this program across to the people that need to--?

MARTIN: Well, we have produced so far this model and a videotape and plans, and the next thing that I'm going to do is to present that to the Community Redevelopment Agency staff, David and I will do that. Following that, we probably will present it to our clients that own much of this property, and following that, we probably would present it to the library commission and/or maybe the councilman who hates to be left out, Gilbert Lindsay. And the mayor, without a doubt, the mayor. So the process will be one of the usual strategies to inform people of a new idea, and of course if the Getty thing was hooked onto it, it would be the greatest [Los Angeles] Bicentennial gift the city could ever receive.

LASKEY: Well, with the support of Getty and ARCO, you have



some mighty allies--

MARTIN: And Ed Carter.

LASKEY: --which I think that the conservancy and preservation groups haven't really had until now.

MARTIN: Right.

LASKEY: Fighting a lone battle.

MARTIN: That's right. It would really do something. So it looks like it's strong. So that's the way it goes there.  
[laughter]

LASKEY: Well, preservation, historic preservation, is a kind of a knotty problem in any event, and I think most particularly in Los Angeles we haven't been too careful about preserving our past.

MARTIN: I quite agree, and too many of us, even like myself, have really not paid much attention to it. We participate when we become aligned with projects like Bicentennial or the El Pueblo or Grauman's Million Dollar Theatre or the Bradbury Building. We participate, but we haven't been leaders until two things have happened: one, the library issue that I have just described; and also, which I have not described, the latest plan which we in the Bicentennial have developed for the creation of a North Civic Center plan. I could describe that to you, if you wish.

LASKEY: Yes, please do.

MARTIN: Another story.



LASKEY: Good.

MARTIN: El Pueblo has for twenty or thirty years been limping along as a state historic park. The charter includes the three entities: the state, the county, and the city. The city is charged under contract with managing El Pueblo's affairs. Any improvements or modifications have to be approved by the other parties of course; it's a joint powers agreement. The Bicentennial Committee has adopted as one of its most important priorities the redevelopment of El Pueblo. We've been working for two and a half years, ever since we started with the Los Angeles 200 Committee, to try to find a way that would lead to the redevelopment of El Pueblo. As I said, it's been a fractured attempt by many participants, most of whom have had a bureaucratic alignment and none of whom has been able to bring together all of the various entities that are part of the action.

We in the Bicentennial went to Mayor Bradley early in our activity with a very simple summary letter which said to him that our conclusion of our analysis was that the only way that El Pueblo, as the city's founding place, could be made into an acceptable park would be to close Main Street and route the traffic around El Pueblo; secondly, that the management of the various properties of the various entities--state, county, and city--would have to include the agreement that the property management would be the sole





responsibility of one of the entities.

LASKEY: Yes.

MARTIN: That was almost the end of our communications with the mayor. Much work has been done by lots of good people trying to find a way to make this happen. Behind the scenes the great resistance came from two sources, the city traffic department and the RTD [Rapid Transit District], that they all in lengthy reports gave a myriad of reasons why it couldn't be done. So in the latest meeting which the mayor called, including all the affected departments and some other institutions that were part of this area, we heard the usual negative report by the traffic department, after which I made a strong appeal to the mayor (who was heading this special meeting) that what had been said by Mr. [Donald] Howery, the head of the traffic department, was true.

LASKEY: Well, what was his basis?

MARTIN: His basis was that you couldn't possibly manage the traffic if you closed Main Street, giving all sorts of figures and traffic movements and congestion times and all of that.

LASKEY: Now, where were you going to close Main Street from? from Main to the [Santa Ana] Freeway?

MARTIN: From the freeway to Sunset. So I said that there's no question that his technical input was correct and I for



one wouldn't argue not one iota of the report; but, in light of this, it's very evident to me that we need a larger plan than the plan of El Pueblo, that we needed what has now become the North Civic Center Plan, which includes Chinatown, it includes Union Station, which is becoming the property now of the city or Caltrans, and includes El Pueblo and, even possibly, may include Little Tokyo.

Now the mayor seized upon my suggestion, which hopefully would end up to be an official plan adopted as a Bicentennial attainment and adopted as the plan which all entities would follow with the improvements as they go forward through the years. Mayor [Bradley] seized upon this and gave very firm instructions to the planning department to bring to him a comprehensive list of the parties affected and to start the process of developing an agreed-upon plan which would integrate all the activities of all those entities that I just mentioned in one grand plan.

And if one thinks about it, and you think of Chinatown, which is immediately north of El Pueblo, you think of Union Station, which is the future center of transportation of the city, of the downtown area, and you think of going further, we have a well-developed Little Tokyo and we have the North Civic Center Mall. All of those areas are adjacent. They all have much in common: they're multi-ethnic, they have



commercial aspects, and they have entertainment/visitor aspects.

I'm hopeful the plan which is now emerging, and I have fortunately been able to contribute something to that, will embody a series of planned elements which will make those entities a singular, flowing plan rather than dispersed areas, unplanned, at the present time. For example, strong landscape motifs, mini-bus systems, pedestrian paths, bridges over streets, second-level kinds of commercialism--all could create this big area into one of the finest world-renowned cosmopolitan areas in existence. I honestly think that's going to happen in time, and hopefully the concept and a plan will emerge as a Bicentennial accomplishment. So there seems to me to be progress, and there's a lot of enthusiasm about it at this moment.

LASKEY: It makes such good sense.

MARTIN: It makes a lot of sense. To overcome the fractured nature of our established society is almost impossible, and without some kind of a catalyst it just can't happen. We're using the Bicentennial as the excuse and the catalyst to try to make some of this happen. [tape recorder turned off]

I haven't seen what they're doing at the city planning department. I have had several meetings with Reuben Lovret, who is a very imaginative person, and who followed up on my expressed opinion that we need some kind of a ribbon tying



this whole thing up together and has come back with many ideas that, hopefully, will get into that plan that will cause a cohesion of the various parts. It's a complex urban grouping, but that by its very nature makes it interesting.

LASKEY: Well, now they've opened up the [Merced] Theatre, essentially with "Spectrum"; that is, they're using it for space now. What's the status of Pico House at this point?

MARTIN: Pico House has been reinforced for earthquakes, has been resupplied with electrical power in their major system, and is now being submitted to private entities who hopefully may take it over as a commercial operation. So far there hasn't been any results from that request on the part of the city. For whatever reason I don't know, but I have a strong feeling that if we were ever able to close Main Street and make it into a singular, wonderful, El Pueblo park that these commercial possibilities would flourish. And that would be very good for the city of Los Angeles to have an exciting park, in addition to Olvera Street.

LASKEY: Are there any plans to refurbish Olvera Street? I had heard once that they were thinking about taking those little center booths out and opening it up the way it was originally, and I wondered if that's still--

MARTIN: I have no knowledge of them, although right at the





moment there are two bills before the [California] State Legislature to more or less legalize the idea of a group of private merchants collectively contracting with the city to further Olvera Street as a single entity rather than a series of little merchants. I don't know about the merit of that; that is a broiling kind of a situation. But that really doesn't stop the big idea of organizing the whole park into a singular entity.

LASKEY: What I was thinking or wondering is if the Pico House opened up and if the Garnier building ever gets finished that that would be even more of a reason to do what you're trying to do--

MARTIN: Oh yes.

LASKEY: --because here you have even more people down there and you have this whole complex that's sitting right there that really cries out to be made into a mall and then to be expanded.

MARTIN: Right. Yes, I agree completely. Also I think that the Merced Theatre would become a very great success, but that's an expensive project and we've only remodeled the lower floor into the "Spectrum" exhibit. So, these are all possibilities. You see if we get the big plan accomplished and adopted that someday it could happen.

LASKEY: Think how long it took to get the Civic Center itself in, how many years--



MARTIN: All the years it took and the-- And you know, it could have been so much better and we could still modify it to include the bridges across the north-south streets, and that could be so exciting.

LASKEY: Well, I think I read once you had a plan, or had proposed a plan, of taking along the Los Angeles River back behind the [Union] Station, the tracks, and putting bike paths in and green strips.

MARTIN: Yeah.

LASKEY: Which is essentially a discarded area, at this point, railroad tracks; it would be North Spring--

MARTIN: You know you could really dam up the channel and make a lake out of it, and that would be pretty good looking. That would be a wonderful thing to have, and I think it could be managed. You've got a line channel in there now. It's be a great place for a lake.

LASKEY: How different it would look.

MARTIN: Yeah. Well, there's endless ideas like that and here we are day after day attempting to find ways to accomplish them, and it's almost like a dedication.

LASKEY: With the Olympics coming in 1984 that might become a positive incentive too.

MARTIN: Positive incentive, it's a positive incentive to do many things. I'm sorry the People Mover didn't make it.

LASKEY: Well, it didn't make it this time, but I think



there's always the possibility-- Again, I think we're going through a rather difficult financial time in the country, and a lot of these plans possibly have to be put off.

MARTIN: I think the solution to the financial problem will be greatly influenced by the emergence of Los Angeles as the financial center of the West and the Pacific Rim. Like New York is the financial business center on the eastern seaboard, there's no question that Los Angeles's destiny is similar, and there's every evidence that it's happening now.

LASKEY: But don't you find--I should say, do you find, having been a lifetime Los Angeles resident, a renewed interest in downtown Los Angeles that just wasn't there before?

MARTIN: Oh, it's a very strong interest. The fact that we are constructing important residences in downtown Los Angeles is one of the most encouraging things, and Los Angeles will contain many, many blocks of fine apartments. We're already there on Bunker Hill. This is only the start of a great urban experience, I think. The main thing that I think is important is we're talking about some very important issues when we're talking about open spaces, rooftop parks and people movers and transportation.

LASKEY: Certainly transportation is an issue that has to



be discussed and thought out in depth, because what's going to happen to Los Angeles transportation wise?

MARTIN: Well, I have come a long ways in favor of the People Mover as a mode of transportation encircling the downtown area. And I firmly believe that the freeway system must be supplemented by fixed-rail subways or other kinds of arrangements. Even though the economics on the surface of it does not apparently work out. There's no question that our freeways are becoming parking lots, and as great as they are-- And we should complete the freeway system that would be the next twenty years; if we could do that it would be just wonderful. But, someday, the automobile's going to have to play another different role, and I say that as the vice-chairman of the auto club [Automobile Club of Southern California].

LASKEY: But I think it's only a sensible thing to say.

MARTIN: Oh yes. Oh yes. Economically, I believe that transportation has to be judged as an element of a collective society, the cost of which must be born by all entities and with due consideration to the share of the local commercial institutions that border transportation routes. All you have to do is enjoy the subway of Paris and realize that you couldn't get around Paris without that subway. The taxicab situation is terrible, and the subway is just great. London is the same way, and Washington, D.C. is





starting to be. So the great American cities have them,  
and they all cost a lot of money and they're always broke,  
and yet it seems to me that the economics of urban centers  
is always kind of a touch-and-go situation.



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LASKEY: Before we go on with our discussion of transportation, I would like to backtrack and clarify a couple of pieces of information, something we've been talking about. We were talking about El Pueblo, but we never clearly defined the area that we were talking about, and I think that there is a definite area that is El Pueblo.

MARTIN: I'm not certain that I can define it accurately, but El Pueblo is a state park, historic park. It is owned by the state, the county, and the city, and it is managed by the city of Los Angeles. The boundaries as I know them are: on the west I believe it is Hill Street or Broadway, which is the location of the Fort Moore monumental wall; on the south is the freeway, the Hollywood Freeway; on the east is the Union Station; and on the north is Sunset Boulevard. Now there's some slight modifications to those general perimeters. What is it, in addition to that, that you--?

LASKEY: Well, that was what I wanted to know. I simply wanted to find the boundaries. I did have one question. There have been some rumors that the original cemetery that was attached to the plaza church, the Campo Santo, as a [Los Angeles] Bicentennial project might be restored. Is



there any possibility that that would happen?

MARTIN: I don't think that there's a possibility that we can make anything happen on that specific site during the Bicentennial year. We have attempted to kindle interest in a redevelopment of that area, and at one time we proposed that that specific area be converted to a park which would be dedicated to the king of Spain, who was scheduled to be our guest but had to cancel his visit because of local problems within Spain. So as I see it now there is not the motivation at this particular time to accomplish any improvement on that site. If we can accomplish the adoption of an overall master plan agreed to by all of those institutions and departments that are involved as a Bicentennial contribution, we'll be lucky, and we are working diligently on that subject right now with the creation of a mayor's special committee called a blue ribbon committee, consisting of about six representatives of the private sector and six representatives of government, and these would be from the highest level of respect and position.

LASKEY: That would be to redo the whole area.

MARTIN: That would be to create a plan which is being formulated now in the planning department of the city, to solve the planning of the El Pueblo area, plus Chinatown to the north, the railroad station to the east, and even perhaps Little Tokyo to the south. This being a technique



for solving the traffic movement problem, which is the one thing that always stops the closure of Main Street, as it goes through the center of El Pueblo.

LASKEY: And then I had a couple of questions going back to our discussion on the library and your plans and formulations for a new site. It included--and we sort of touched on this, but I just wanted to clarify it--it included the tearing down of what they call the No. One Bunker Hill building, or the Edison Building, and the Engstrom Apartments, and I wondered if you foresaw any problem with the conservancy groups, particularly with the removal of the Engstrom Apartments?

MARTIN: I'm not sure that the conservancy group that is now working under John Welborne's leadership, is this one branch of the various conservancy groups?

LASKEY: Well, preservationists in general--

MARTIN: I have resigned from that group in good stead, because I mentioned to them that I thought that I had a conflict of interest, and the conflict of interest arises from a difference in belief between the conservancy group and myself as to what is important in the saving of spaces and the library. I have taken the position that we should save the library and convert it to a museum and that we should construct the new library on the east park, to the east of the present library, and one scheme would be to





expand that library as a low-rise, stepped, terraced building form across Fifth Street and become contiguous to the Edison Building, or the site of the Edison Building. In my thinking I wouldn't hesitate to recommend tearing down the Edison Building or the apartments or even getting rid of the old switching building of the Department of Water and Power.

LASKEY: That's across Grand is it not?

MARTIN: That is on Hope.

LASKEY: On Hope.

MARTIN: So, whether or not this can be accomplished is a big question. Right now things are very upset amongst the property owners because they each have been trying to gain a command over the other, and we have some very upset people who believe that our plan might have dulled their individual opportunity to gain. This happens to be local, but it's serious, and just how our plan will be received by planners and library commissioners and so forth I don't know. It may be well received, as it has been so far. The critiques of it have not arisen yet, but they probably will.

LASKEY: As I understand it now, and our discussion before, what the city has offered or what they are proposing, what they're searching for, is that someone will buy the library land for \$40 million--I think you said was its value--and then supply the city with a library at a new site. Now



with your plan, the city would lose that \$40 million in income and still have to pay for the library. Would that-- What does that do to the city? I mean, where does that put your stand as far as--?

MARTIN: Well, just to get it in a little bit more accurate perspective, the city is considering requesting proposals from developers wherein they would lease the land on a long-term lease to a developer and that developer would in return provide the city with a new library on some site within the downtown area. The new library as it is described in the RFP is a \$70 million proposition. And since the library site must live up to a 6:1 floor area ratio criteria--

LASKEY: What does that mean?

MARTIN: It is the amount of space that can be built on a piece of land. Six times the area of the land would be, in this case, six times 220,000 square feet of land, or 1,320,000 square feet; but that isn't enough building to pay for a \$70-million library. The economics do not work out in my estimation and in the estimation of every other developer that I have talked with. So, in weighing the several ways that might be applied to get a new library, you have that scheme just described wherein a developer tears down the existing library, builds a new building of 1,300,000 square feet, let's say, on that site, and, in return for the use of the land for fifty years, builds a new library



on some other site that costs \$70 million. So these two companion proposals which knit together are not even logical from an economic point of view.

Now what I've proposed is that we retain the existing library, seek a donor to rebuild it and convert it into a museum and operate it as a museum, and use the east park land for a new low-rise library, and sell the development rights that flow from the site to landowners so they can build bigger buildings on their land. In doing this we could create a very interesting urban space, because the library and the new museum would all be low rise. Now the economics of this proposal also show a shortfall of maybe \$40 million, but on the plus side you have a new museum operated by someone and a new library, which is in accordance with the city's needs. So on the asset side of it the city comes out very far ahead by using the land that is available on the east side of the present library.

LASKEY: You've also preserved the library building, which is a plus in itself, the preservation of that building.

MARTIN: That's right; the preservation of the building and converting it to a museum is perfectly acceptable to everyone I've ever talked to. So, on balance, it appears to me that our rationale is far superior to the other rationales. Even though there is a shortfall between the value of the development rights that flow from that site and the cost of the new



library. As I said, it's a very controversial subject and before it's ever settled there's going to be a lot of weeping and gnashing of teeth, I'm sure.

LASKEY: Well, there already has been. For how many years has this been going on? It's pitiful.

MARTIN: Right, it's been a long time.

LASKEY: Well, just one last aspect since we got into discussing preservation. A. C. Martin and Associates has done preservation work with the Subway [Terminal] Building and other buildings downtown. You are obviously concerned with the library, you've mentioned the Bradbury Building. So preservation, historical preservation, is something that you're interested in. Could you define, is there a criteria for preservation? When should a building be preserved, what are the standards, the criteria, for preservation?

MARTIN: Well, I believe that buildings that have unique qualities and are representative of a certain period of architectural development and are particularly located within the plan of the downtown area, in this case, so that they can take a very strong role in the appraisal of their value, then I believe that they should be preserved. Certainly the library and the Bradbury Building are two prime examples. The Edison Building is a very fine building; it is a modern building in lots of ways. And even though it's a very handsome building in some respects, I believe it stands in the





way of developing a magnificent urban space, especially in light of the library proposal I've described. I don't think it has to be preserved, it wouldn't be bad, but it doesn't have to be. The [Engstrom] apartments which are adjacent to it I think are not important at all. So, perhaps that description doesn't cover all the considerations, but that's the way I feel about it.

LASKEY: Now, what about-- Well, for example, Heritage Square, which is I think a private restoration project that is going on. Hale House, the criticism and sometimes of the Pico House, too, has been that perhaps it's being restored too meticulously, that to actually restore something back to exactly what it was isn't necessary, but for reuse or recycling.

MARTIN: Well, I would be inclined to attempt to restore it fairly accurately in my appraisal. An amateur can destroy the quality of architecture very easily: the quality being perhaps the unique way that materials and forms were applied to represent the thinking of the architects then, the people of that time. I would be inclined to restore fairly meticulously not only the building itself but as much of the environs of that building: for example, the relationship to street spaces or street furniture and hardware would be important. I think El Pueblo and the Pico House should be restored fairly accurately. I've said the



automobile has split El Pueblo in half and that we should restore it to an original open plaza, which of course had wagons and horses in it; that we should restore it to be closer to its original use, which was the place for the people to be. The only way to do that is to get the automobile out of it and route it around it and create it into a park (as has been done in London so many times).

LASKEY: That brings us back to our discussion of transportation and it might be a good idea to start with what is the place of the car in downtown Los Angeles? Can it be controlled, eliminated, or modified?

MARTIN: Well, the automobile is really a personal thing, and one has to have the automobile to be mobile in downtown Los Angeles today. You can walk about six blocks, but that's about it. We have a very modest form of public transportation in the bus system, and we really don't employ the use of buses in our everyday life; so at the present time we are counting on the automobile, which is, you know, an outstanding means of private transportation. I feel that the People Mover was really a very good thing because, like the Loop in Chicago or many other public transportation systems, it is something that weaves through the urban core, that gets you closer for example from here [Union Bank Building] to the City Hall, gets you closer than even, sometimes, the automobile.



So, since there's a conflict between the automobile on the street and the people on the street, which conflict we're trying to eliminate by raising the people to the upper levels, generally, and the parks on top of the garage portions are some of the improvements, and putting in pedestrian bridges, I believe it's a very good direction and as time goes on it should be enhanced considerably. When the people are elevated, the automobile is in less conflict, and since the biggest conflict, really, is that the people stop the free flowing action of the automobile, especially at the signals and right turns, people crossing the same street will stop all the traffic and create congestion. So, if we can remove the people and get them up on the upper levels, the present automobile situation could be greatly improved. For the time being, and for how many years I don't know, we can get by with that system.

There have been alternative schemes that we have thought of in past history, I say "we," Ed and myself particularly, wherein we could remove automobiles from the core of the city very easily by creating what we called "dispersal viaducts." Now if you think of the Fourth Street viaduct, which comes in off the freeways and without interruption places you right in the middle of the downtown area, that's a perfect example of the movement of automobiles right into the core without creating congestion. That thesis could be



carried on to where other streets could deliver automobiles two miles farther out towards the perimeter of the city and spread the congestion instead of having it concentrated in the downtown. You could have, let's say, a series of ten dispersal viaducts that would load or unload the city, because there would be no cross traffic; they would be viaducts above the regular street system. That is probably a lot less costly than the freeway systems as we have them now.

The freeway systems as we have them now have become highly congested, not only because of the load, which is in excess of the freeways' design, but the concentration around the downtown area is not well managed. At certain times freeways are loaded and stop. Now, of course, the freeway system has never been completed because the state government has cut it off, and whether it ever will be or not is a big question. So I think, at this point in time, that the pedestrian system as proposed by the city planning department and the Community Redevelopment Agency is really excellent; that is, headways, parks, and so forth, because it separates the people from the streets.

LASKEY: Now, that will work in the newer areas, Figueroa, Spring, and Flower.

MARTIN: Yeah, right.

LASKEY: What about the older part of downtown, say,





Seventh and Broadway, down in that area?

MARTIN: It really doesn't work. And I don't see how any redevelopment will occur that will make it work. Because the whole marketing system of the city--the shops and the office buildings and the banks and so forth--is geared to the pedestrian on the sidewalk.

LASKEY: Way back in 1969 you proposed a series of group parking structures upon main arteries and then mini-buses and walking or, you know, a people mover into the core--is that still a valid idea?

MARTIN: Well, I think it's very valid, and the people mover that's recently been proposed included peripheral parking structures and an elevated people-mover system. As elementary as that is, it's in the right direction for relieving congestion. Now that really doesn't solve the problem of people on the sidewalk having an interface with the automobiles on the streets. If you remember, the reason that the streetcars were eliminated many years ago was that there was a conflict in the downtown areas between the streetcars and the automobile and the people, and as a matter of fact, it was so bad that only one automobile line could travel and traverse around a streetcar in the congested area. It was just too many conveyances in one place; so the streetcars went out, and the automobile then had that lane. So there are just many ways in which automobiles can be encouraged to



be more remote from the congested areas. But it takes planning, it takes control, and the merchants won't let it happen. So even though it will happen someday by force and demand, these things are terribly slow.

LASKEY: Well, you said earlier that you've come a long way in your thinking about transportation and that-- I think you were referring to the People Mover, alternative systems, freeway supplements. What was your original thinking on transportation?

MARTIN: Well, I originally felt that the more separation of the automobile and people and the use of peripheral garages was the dominant thing, and I think that even today it is true. I have come a long way perhaps in the belief that rapid fixed-rail transit does have a role in the urban design; certainly the People Mover does have, as exemplified in so many places, especially the Chicago Loop. And the proposal down here was in some ways very handsome. The fixed-rail transportation, which is found in Paris and Washington, D.C., and Toronto, and is proposed for the Wilshire corridor, would--if connected up with local surface transportation at the stations--would provide a great relief for a lot of people.

The problem that I fight is the same age-old problem, [which] is that the cost of doing that is not acceptable if one measures the number of people served and the burden on



the community from a tax point of view, and therein the enthusiasm wains. I guess that it's economically impossible to justify that cost unless one spreads that cost over the entire city as a burden that the city must pay for this kind of transportation. That rationale is accepted by a lot of people; it is not accepted by the anti-fixed-rail people. And here I am the vice-chairman of the Automobile Club [of Southern California] [laughter], and it really isn't accepted by them; that is, the staff, although the Automobile Club takes the position that it encourages all forms of transportation in a balanced way.

If I have come a long ways, it is perhaps the acceptance of the thesis that a public transportation system, as expensive as it may be, is part of the cost of building a city and needs to be shared by the entire city. And even though it's not cost effective in so many ways, it is quite an asset, and everything within a city is not cost effective when measured alone. So that kind of a philosophy, or rationale if you want to call it, is extremely debatable; however, someday the cities will have many other costly elements and they may be taking the form of air transportation within the urban core of some kind. I suppose the measure is whether or not a city survives economically, and there's a lot of them in trouble today. So this whole growth and economic problem is with us today, and I suppose as it always was.



I do feel the need of better transportation, however, because the freeway systems are now clogged, and with very little hope of unclogging them unless something supplants them--either the freeway network is expanded, that would help, but that would eventually be clogged, too. So, it's a constant dilemma.

LASKEY: Well, one aspect of it that I know you have strong feelings about is the importance of the private sector working with the public sector in developing programs for the city and in transportation. What role would the private sector take on in developing a transportation system? Obviously, you have changed, you have come a long way in your thinking. Isn't it possible that the rest of the private sector will make those changes?

MARTIN: With the present administration in Washington, the private sector has taken on a great deal more importance. Principally because federalism has been slashed at by the Reagan administration and the budget has been slashed to attempt to get into a balanced, healthy economic situation as far as the United States is concerned. I truly believe that the bureaucracy which has been created by the Democratic regime and the advocacy of welfare programs of many kinds has brought us to the point where we expect more as a society than we can afford. Now, that's perhaps a natural cycle and we're now going around the curve on a different cycle.





The private sector, so-called, has come a long ways in realizing that the real strength of the development of a community must spring from the people and not their government. Government has assumed the role, however, under the federalist kind of sponsorship, wherein the members of the bureaucracy have been assigned charters, have assumed charters, have done their thing to the best of their ability expecting funding, most of it from the federal government, and have created an isolation unto themselves that has not reached out and included the private sector. Now, sure, public hearings have always been held and it's a most difficult process. But I believe that with the revolution of the people on taxes, as exemplified by Proposition 13 passed a few years ago, that now with the reduction of grant funds from Washington that the private sector is going to have to step up and be counted and be participant in public decisions. By that I'm thinking of the private--call it the business sector or power structure, those people that have an economic interest and a social interest, which would be enhanced so that there will be more of the government-private sector partnership that is talked about so often. And I think we're at the turning point now.

LASKEY: You've said, I think, that it's up to the private sector to provide the initiative and the public sector to



provide the coordination.

MARTIN: Well, I believe that, because I believe that the private sector really is more representative of the will of the people generally than the public sector. Now, I use the word bureaucracy because we've allowed ourselves to drift into bureaucracy instead of democracy, and that conflict is raging now. We must eliminate the bureaucratic viewpoint and get back to where the government employees really are the servants of the people. That's what they're supposed to be, rather than serving themselves.

LASKEY: How would this operate in downtown Los Angeles, for example, because that's the area that we're talking about now, the revitalization of downtown? How would you see the various sectors working together?

MARTIN: Well, I believe that our government as it is structured--and it's called the weak mayor system and a strong council system, along with the bureaucracy which exists in the various government departments--I believe that structure has no room for strong leadership on a citywide basis, unless the mayor can take a much stronger position and the bureaucracy of the departments is limited more than it is now. We are experimenting with that very subject when we are advancing this El Pueblo renovation and we're doing what is designated as the North Civic Center Task Force in trying to solve the problem of closing down Main Street



as it goes through El Pueblo. We have structured and presented to the mayor a format for accomplishing just that, creation of a public group and creation of a private sector group all acting as one blue-ribbon advisory committee to further the process of consolidating the opinions of the institutions that are involved as well as the plans that are involved. I think that's a very good system, and hopefully more things like that can be done in the future.

LASKEY: Wouldn't it be to the benefit--keeping now on the subject of transportation--to the private sector to eliminate the congestion in downtown, to see that parking places are provided right now? I think that now it's almost impossible to park in downtown Los Angeles. Even if you can drive down, you can't park down there.

MARTIN: Right.

LASKEY: Is there anything that you could see, any kind of coalition between the private and the public sector, in helping with the parking situation if not the traffic situation?

MARTIN: I believe it is happening when the private sector endorses a people mover, which they have done, because that included peripheral parking and includes the minimization of the use of the automobile. The answer is definitely that the private sector has to find an answer to the high cost of parking. Right now the private business sector is subsidizing



the parking of their employees with large amounts of money. And that's really a burden on the whole society that should be managed a little bit better.

LASKEY: I think along with that you have talked, too, about the quality of life, and especially again in relating to downtown and to Los Angeles that more attention has to be given to the environment, not just to the architecture but to the whole environment of living downtown or of being downtown.

MARTIN: The downtown area is now starting to get housing and the plan of the CRA and the city planning group are starting to bring in the separation of the people from the automobile and the free movement of pedestrians. I believe that all of that is conducive to a different quality of life because as those people participate in the environment of a well-planned city, they will then enjoy more human-scaled places, like small restaurants and gathering places in the sun and a little bit more of the leisure aspects that the city can provide. And that's just happening to Los Angeles now. It's just starting to happen, with some great potential.

Because if we look back, Los Angeles has been devoid of cultural things, has been devoid of even trees until we brought in and planted all those trees, as you know. And it is slowly happening that the human-scaled environment is developing all through downtown, not only in the new western





portion but even in the old portion, where the Mexican population particularly are using Broadway as their shopping area. So there's a movement, I think, that is beneficial, that has to do with the quality of life downtown, particularly if one lives downtown, as they do in most other cities.

LASKEY: Well, I'm going back a ways now; I have a quote here from you, from 1963, in which you say, "The architect of today is sought out because he deals in broad aspects of social need. The architect of tomorrow will be a master planner of total environments." You said that in 1963, and essentially I think that's what's happened, as far as certainly your relationship to the development of downtown.

MARTIN: Well, that's almost twenty years ago, and I think that the words are the same, but there has been a marked evolution of thinking that has occurred in those twenty years. The planning aspect of the total is superseding the trespasses of the individual, as it relates to using the qualities of the city to enhance his personal gain. As I've often said, one of the marked examples of private interests serving public interests is the development of all the parks on the roofs of the parking structures, which are by law open to the public but maintained by the private sector. And that is, in my mind, a torch in the brightness of the city, that this is really an elimination of the greed that is inherent in the subject of private ownership of land and



facilities, and to the exclusion of the public. And I believe a city is a place that includes all of the people, with privileges to be mobile and to participate. Otherwise the city would be a series of cells owned by individuals, with fences around them.

LASKEY: Well, maybe the difference would be if you look at Spring Street and you look at Flower Street today, the difference in the accessibility of the buildings and the spaces between the buildings.

MARTIN: That's a perfect example; it was of course caused by the demands of the city for greater amounts of space and the elimination of the limit height on the buildings and the changing of the density factors, which limited the amount of improvements that could be made upon property, from 13:1 down to 6:1 now, and that's a big change. So open space results, and less density results. Hopefully, a balance can be found that will include enough density to make civilian contacts real and fruitful and enough managed open space to create environments that somehow seem appealing.

LASKEY: Well, how is the idea of growth built into your system? I think you also talked about the mobility of people, their idea of moving and growing and expanding. In the old system, using Spring Street as an example, there was no real room for expansion or growth in that system; it was very solid.



MARTIN: Well, we had wall-to-wall buildings, as we say. The limit height was 150 feet or thirteen stories and there was no setbacks required on the buildings. So they banged up against each other wall to wall. That did not leave any open space for the pedestrian, and in effect it was a very detrimental system, and still is, although it's opening up because they're tearing down a lot of them now. But those buildings are obsolete, and they do not have good access, even from the freeway system. Spring Street has very poor access, and that's a fault of the design of the freeway system. But these things will change in time.



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MAY 5, 1981

LASKEY: The design of the freeway system was probably not good, but there's also been a tremendous change in design of buildings, designed for flexibility and for change, I would think.

MARTIN: In the buildings which are constructed in the business core and which are often high-rise, the old business of vertical transportation comes into play. The optimum is to incorporate floor areas that match the ability of the elevator systems to carry the people in and out, and that's a very refined science. So we find several factors: this vertical transportation as one factor, and then the adaptability of the interior space to almost any use adds another factor. And all of our buildings these days include flexible partitions and, hopefully, the interior stairs and elevator shafts that are convenient to this perimeter space.

If you recall, it wasn't too long ago that we had on the outside of buildings something called the fire towers, and to get to a fire tower you had to create a corridor going from the middle of the building through rentable space to an outside stairway, like a fire escape. And we were the ones who designed a new system in this Union Bank Square, which is called a ventilated vestibule system and [which] is now standard. There are no perimeter corridors going to the





outside; all the corridors are in the core, on the inside of the building, and the staircases, stair shafts, have vestibules leading into them, which have ventilation systems. They're under pressure, and any smoke that finds its way towards the stairway is blown out instead of sucked in. So, that was one little design solution that we invented and is now the standard in office building design.

LASKEY: But I would think then a series of these kinds of changes and design improvements would also leave you more space to work with because you need less space for units--air conditioning, heating, cooling. I imagine that there've been a lot of refinements in these areas.

MARTIN: Yes, the building efficiency--that is, net usable to gross square footage--has improved from a factor of maybe 75 percent in some of the older designs up to as much as 85 percent today. And that is an important point because all of that additional efficiency really returns greater profits to the owners of the building and makes them a more economically feasible improvement. The same thing is true now in the energy-efficient mechanical electrical systems that we are designing to meet the national demands because of the energy shortage. Our buildings use 50 percent of the energy today as compared to 100 percent only ten years ago.

LASKEY: What sort of specific changes, modifications, have you made?



MARTIN: Well, we have eliminated the extravagant use of electricity for lighting around the perimeter of the building. For example, the light fixtures which are located next to the outside wall are on a separate switching system that is controlled by light detectors; so they're often turned off during a good bright day, and we save all that electricity.

Then another system that we're using right now is we are putting in large water storage tanks, which are chilled at night when the temperature differential of the outside and, let's say, the demand temperature of the inside of the building is reduced, and it's easier to gain the storage of chilled water at night. And as it happens, incidentally, the electric rates are lower also. I'm not certain that this is going to last, but that's one thing that we're using.

And we are using much more refined design methods, which make certain increments of the equipment finer tuned, or more compatible, so that the wasted energy of incompatibility of equipment is eliminated. That would be in air conditioning and ventilating, and then in lighting we have many features like I mentioned. Also we have reduced the footcandle illumination down to a lower level, as applied to the overall space, and we are using more task lighting to make up the difference. This is what happens in the design of the garden-type office layouts, wherein a person has liberal task lighting, supplied usually from above the desk,



for his task, and general illumination is probably half of what it used to be.

LASKEY: That's interesting.

MARTIN: Yeah.

LASKEY: Also, what about what we generally think of as the modern skyscraper, as the curtain-wall, the glass-wall building: will there be any modification in the facades to save energy? My understanding is that they used a lot of air conditioning or heating or whatever, just the glass-windowed buildings. Will there be any change, any physical change, in the way the buildings will look?

MARTIN: Yes, well there's considerable right now, and all you have to do is look at the Wells Fargo Building, which is a stainless steel panel and a double-glazed window. Now that, as far as heat loss is concerned, is a very productive design, whereas our older buildings like ARCO have granite exterior walls and single-glass windows. So the temperature loss or the heat gain, whichever you wish to consider--

LASKEY: Whichever way you're looking at it.

MARTIN: --is just remarkably different. Now, shop fabrication of the panels on the Wells Fargo Building dictates a certain standardization that would be a little more difficult in masonry or stone buildings. So the future really includes very lightweight walls, shop fabricated and brought to the site as one unit, and that's what almost all of our buildings



are now. We also reduce the weight of the building frame when we have lighter walls, which helps in conservation of steel and especially in the seismic aspect of design. So the trend is, of course, towards conservation and shop fabrication and a different appraisal of aesthetics, which takes a generation or two to accept, such as "I love granite and I don't like shiny steel buildings." That would be one generation, whereas it's often said today that the youth would gravitate towards the more modern metallic materials and accept them as being aesthetically satisfactory. This isn't of great import to us because we understand the subject, but society is accepting a different form of aesthetics, and that means architecture.

LASKEY: Wouldn't also your idea of open spaces, of green spaces, which aesthetically I think we all find pleasing, be beneficial as far as energy conservation is concerned? Because it would seem to me that space between buildings, or grass, or trees, or whatever, would have an environmental effect that would be positive, as opposed to, like New York City, just acres of tall towers.

MARTIN: I'm not sure about the energy-saving feature of that, but I am sure that there is a new demand by those of us that may be environmentally motivated to solve the sun problem, or to share the sun, and to eliminate a situation where one building places another building in shade all day





long, or shadow. It has to do with human rights and their right to share in the warmth of the sun. That's a big thing, and when we have large open spaces we manage that problem a lot better than if the open spaces are small.

LASKEY: I've also noticed that some of the new buildings--well, particularly your Security Pacific Building, although it was there first--there's been a lot of innovative siting of buildings on the land. I don't know what the building is that's going up across from the Security Pacific at this point (I think Skidmore, Owings and Merrill is doing it), but that's an interesting siting of a building, no longer just on the street front.

MARTIN: It's a very fine example of the flexibility that the architects are employing in the design of different configurations of buildings, generally to match the importance of the shape or space between the buildings rather than comparing one building form with another solely. We have often said that this amount of space between the buildings is as important to design as the buildings themselves, and that's proven in so many cases where we've had a chance to influence the creation of great urban spaces, usually void spaces. They're found here, and the space to the east of Union Bank Square, which was created by the Connecticut General chairman, who insisted that that be open--that is, the space immediately east of this building--is reserved forever as space. No



building can be built in there, by law. Now, that was the foresight of the chairman of Connecticut General when we did this building, but if you think about it, this building, the [Bonaventure] Hotel over here, the north tower of ARCO, and the new Wells Fargo--all share that space. And that's true of the space around Security Pacific, where we protected the space around, we located the building--

LASKEY: That's a beautiful space.

MARTIN: Yes, it is a beautiful space, but that was really a planned space. The same thing is true, incidentally, with the library problem. If you retain that space as an urban space and you create high density around that space, it's I think a more pleasant urban solution than if you fill that superblock with a great big building in the middle of it, destroying the character of the space. So, yes, the design of the buildings and their material compositions and the position of the buildings within the spaces created in the urban plan--all have a tremendous amount to do with human acceptance, with the responsiveness of people, with aesthetic impacts and humanization of the scale of the city, and we're giving a tremendous amount of attention to that these days.

LASKEY: Is that where you see the role of the architect, or your role, today, is in the humanization of the cities?

MARTIN: I see the role of the architect very strongly being exemplified in that particular direction. That's also true



of city planners, who generally have an architectural background. Yes, the molding and the configurations within an urban development are becoming more and more vital to the solution of the city as such: the place of choices; the place of congregating with other city dwellers; a very exciting life, as compared to being out in the middle of a farm and enjoying nature; it's a different thing. So I know that the city developments and redevelopments are at hand constantly, because the world is filling up with people.

One observation I had the other day, which I am intrigued with, is if you think about Spaceship World in this universe, and you think that the world is the only planet in this universe with a very, very thin band of oxygen that surrounds it, comparatively paper-thin compared to the distance. It's the only place a human can live, and it's so thin that when you're at sea level you breathe comfortably, but if you're at 8,000 feet (which is a mile and a half) above sea level, you have difficulty living, maybe at 10,000 feet. And that comparatively is like a paper-thin envelope around Spaceship World, and if you go out through that oxygen, you have to have support systems that would allow you to live. You have to take the oxygen with you. And if you think about that for a minute, as we start in to penetrate that, or to go out from our protective area of oxygen, the envelope of oxygen, if you think about it for a minute, we're



so miniscule in the big sense, and all of this that we're talking about is going on within that little tiny band of air. And now we're going out through it, and we can stay out there with life-support systems and be free of gravity also. That gives one, I believe, an entirely different perspective of the role of man on Spaceship Earth. It's a very interesting perspective to even think about that for a minute: that we are really trapped in a thin layer of oxygen. And that's not bad; we're glad to have it.

LASKEY: But we certainly should take care of it.

MARTIN: And we certainly should take care of it; it's that thin, it's that thin, in the way of the whole universe. And it better hang together, otherwise we all cease. So in the big sense, if you go out in space and start thinking about this, and obviously man and animals and flowers and flora-- All relate to the existence of that oxygen, and that's unique in the solar system.

LASKEY: Something I think that probably most of us don't think about, and that probably should be thought about as we become more and more populous, something that should be thought about more and more, is conservation and protection of this ecological system.

MARTIN: Well, if one wants to start from that perspective, and I'm sure a lot of people do, one realizes what a fragile existence man has, extremely so, because even to go up in





the high mountains, you can't live. So all this goes on in this little envelope, which is a very interesting thing: how do you live within that little envelope of oxygen?

LASKEY: And how do you save it.

MARTIN: How do you save it, and presumably it's worth saving; so philosophically speaking, a lot of things can emanate from that kind of a thinking process.

LASKEY: Certainly the fragility and the importance of conservation are two things that have to come out of that. On the other hand, as an architect, do you have any great ideas in soaring out through space?

MARTIN: I've started to think about that a little bit, although not very constructively. I believe that great space developments, they're just around the corner, because it's entirely possible to do it right now.

LASKEY: With the technology.

MARTIN: And the only thing that we have to create out there is this life-supporting gas called oxygen and a few of the other things, because out there you're free of gravity, and you can move from one place to the other, seemingly very easily, in the future, because nothing stops you from moving. So yeah, I think without a question that there's going to be great developments in space, great developments.

LASKEY: Actual living in space, is that in the plans?

MARTIN: Well, I don't know what benefit there would be;



they tell me there's a lot of commercial benefits, that many processes are better done out in gravity-free spaces. That takes a lot of imagination, but I'm sure it could be.

LASKEY: It's like all the science-fiction movies that we've gone to all our lives suddenly becoming reality.

MARTIN: I think that they are real right now; I mean, the space vehicles are there. And they're working hard, photographing, going out to photograph the weather every day, and I look at that picture every day now to see where the cloud structures are. That's really exciting.

LASKEY: Fascinating. And we sort of take it for granted. That element of space we've gotten used to, and we accept it.

MARTIN: Already. In navigation right now, with a little electronic instrument you can locate the point that you're standing on within fifty feet and closer, just by turning on a dial and triangulation between space vehicles that are fixed in space. It's the earth that's turning; the vehicles may be in a fixed position, compared to the sun. Well, of course they can move, I'm sure they can do anything, but there's a great change ahead.

#### SECOND PART (MAY 27, 1981)

LASKEY: Mr. Martin, I think we should talk about your position as co-chairman of the Los Angeles Bicentennial Committee. We've referred to the Bicentennial, and you've referred to the things



your company is doing, but we haven't talked about what you're doing.

MARTIN: Just a matter of detail, Marlene, I'm the chairman, and Margo [Albert] is the vice-chairman. It is not a co-chairmanship.

LASKEY: Oh, OK.

MARTIN: It's just a slight distinction, but the record should be straight.

It was sometime about the middle of 1978 that Mayor Tom Bradley called me and asked me if I would consider being the chairman of the city of Los Angeles's Bicentennial celebration, which would be a yearlong celebration starting September 4, 1981. I asked for a day of time and then responded favorably, for the principal reason that I felt that it was a distinct honor. I knew that it would be a time-consuming assignment and that, to a great extent, it complemented a certain pride that exists in my mind because of the long history of the family and the development of the city of Los Angeles and its environs. So the acceptance of the assignment did not carry with it a program of what was intended, nor did it carry with it any funding, which caused me to attempt to describe what I thought a bicentennial celebration might include.

LASKEY: Well, when Mayor Bradley approached you on this, did he have any kind of program in mind, or did he sort of throw that in your lap as part of the acceptance?



MARTIN: Well, it was the latter. There is no existing program, or there was none, and therefore I really had to imagine what a program might be. To do that I analyzed what I thought was important about the society, with its multi-ethnic composition, with its diverseness of interests of all of the people, and I prepared a statement (which I hope is still around) that pretty much exists today as the adopted program. That statement analyzed what I thought were the interests of society, and it included matters of culture, of the various types; that is, active cultural things, such as the dance, and somewhat passive cultural things, such as painting and art and the theater. It included certainly a strong role for religious affairs, for educational affairs. It included quite an interesting role because of the interests of society in sporting events, since Los Angeles is the center of so many great athletes and the home of so many great athletes. It included thoughts related to entertainment because of Los Angeles's role in the movie industry and of course now the TV industry. There were also thoughts that we should honor the past and we should certainly respect and recognize the present and we should do as much as we can to forecast the future.

Actually, besides that broadly described program, there was a question of how would one organize it, and it was decided with the mayor. And by this time, Mrs. Jane Pisano,





who was working for the mayor at the time of my acceptance-- It was suggested that she might be an assistant to me. I quickly recognized her tremendous assets. As time went on she was designated as the executive director, and time has proven that she is one of the most outstanding people that I have ever had the pleasure of working with. The formulation of the committee--and it was suggested that the committee might include forty-four representatives of different segments of society, principally selected because of ethnic background, but also strongly influenced by myself as to their background in certain abilities; these abilities would be organizationally determined, such as finance, accounting, legal, public relations, and other standard disciplines that are found in business.

LASKEY: Was the forty-four selected because that was the number of original settlers, or was that--?

MARTIN: Yes. It was the thesis that perhaps a committee of forty-four would be in honor of the original forty-four pobladores, who incidentally were dominantly of Mexican, Indian, and black descendance. A great number of the forty-four were children, as it happened. So therefore the method of selection was [that] each councilman would select one representative, which I thought was unfortunate because they had no concept of what qualifications should be represented--

LASKEY: Oh, really. They weren't briefed, or given--?



MARTIN: It was not really well done by the council (with no reflection on anybody). Then the mayor and myself selected the twenty-nine, which included myself. In this case, the most important selection that I had to do was the selection of Margo Albert, who is a Mexican and a former star, an actress, to be the vice-chairman and to act as a bridge between the Mexican community and the entertainment and cultural community. She is just outstanding in that role. Also the selection of Olive Behrendt, who I had hoped would be the head of the cultural aspects, and, as it has worked out, she has remained head of the cultural aspects, with most of her attention being given over to music, which is her outstanding quality. We supported her strongly with staff, and it has worked quite well. Also I selected Bob [Robert R.] Dockson, who is a dear friend and also chairman of California Federal Savings and Loan and former president of the Chamber of Commerce, to be head of finance. We selected Rod [Rodney W.] Rood of ARCO, who was on the original Olympic citizens' committee, and his role was to be head of sports. Tyler Macdonald, who I thought to be an outstanding, inspirational public relations and advertising executive, proved to be just that and remains as a committee chairman. My friend Glenn Dumke, who is chancellor of the state college and university system, accepted the chairmanship of the educational committee, and later on, as it developed, he assigned



Dr. Gloria Lathrop to play the role of representing him on the committee. I cannot say enough for Gloria Lathrop, who I think is one of the strongest organizers of educational matters that I've ever come across.

So we are going further, and there was a decision to be made: the invitation as to who would head the religious committee, and this was sensitive. But since we knew that there had been a coalition of religious leaders for the 1976 U.S. Bicentennial established locally, the problem of selecting a leader was lessened, and I determined that Bishop [Manuel] Moreno of the Catholic archdiocese should be the leader. He has proven to be an outstanding religious leader, and I think that there has been a lot of good come from some of the events that they have sponsored.

With this kind of leadership on the committee and with the process of having all programs approved by an executive committee, which was composed of the heads of standing committees, we have had excellent cooperation from the executive committee of the committee of forty-four. The actual committee of forty-four, which meets quarterly, is not too active, in that it's almost impossible to have forty-four people active that are interested, and we try to keep them interested. There's been some good work done by members of the committee who I have not mentioned, but really excellent work.



The process of finance has been an interesting one. We determined early in the game that we would separate the subject of operational funds from the funding of specific projects. The thesis that we established also included the point that our committee would act as a catalyst to bring together existing corporations, foundations, and organizations which may be connected with performing arts: for example, bring people together not only to formulate programs, because most of them are formulated by professionals, but also to sponsor and to pay for the implementation of all these programs. And as of this date, since we have kept operational funds separate from the project specific funds, we have developed the following amounts: we have secured some \$560,000 for operations and have maintained a staff of about seven or eight, and we have secured something like \$7.5 million in specific projects funded by corporate groups and foundations.

LASKEY: Now, this is starting out from the basis of nothing, right? You had no funding from the city?

MARTIN: Well, I did get \$40,000 from the city council, which paid for Jane Pisano as executive director and a small staff, the establishment of an office in the Oviatt Building, and other miscellaneous expenses. Most of the work of the committee and the legal work has been volunteered, which has helped us tremendously. So the answer is that in most cases the funds have come from the private sector, and this has been a matter





of pride. It has been pride to our committee, but also pride of the citizens, because this society these days are so used to having the federal government pay for everything and local government pay for everything that this is one of the first times that the private sector has come forward for such an event and funded it completely. The \$40,000 from the city council, of course, was a small fund that allowed us to get going and for which we are grateful.

LASKEY: Eight million dollars is a lot of money.

MARTIN: Yes, and actually that's in direct grants. I am certain that the reflected multiple of this kind of funding would multiply it several times over, as far as the effect on the community is concerned, because a direct grant always generates other supporting grants. So it appears, even though at this moment in time we have struggled to keep the doors open--because we actually ran out of cash--and we've been on an additional fund drive, it appears that we'll make it through now, and finally the city government is giving us a little bit more support. When we needed it, it's been awfully slow in coming. Which has kept the pressure on the committee and particularly on myself and Jane Pisano. That's a brief history of some of the important factors of the management of the Bicentennial.

I think that the public attitude and the support of the press has been quite good. This summer we'll see the



performance of a series of nine or ten community festivals, and these are ethnically oriented to some extent, because the ethnic groups do collect in different areas of the city. That looks like it's going to be a nice, summer-long series of events. We have a major sports luncheon scheduled now for August 13, which will be one of the largest events ever held in honor of the great athletes that have come from this area. They will be collected and honored at the Biltmore Hotel with a very major luncheon. So that is now scheduled.

We also are trying-- Oh, a matter of interest, we did have a visitation scheduled for the king of Spain and had preparations made, but his problems of an internal government shakeup had caused him to cancel the visitation. We are now attempting to bring the president of the United States and the president of Mexico, [Jose] Lopez Portillo, here for the night of September 3, at which time, if we can accomplish this, we will have a major fundraising event conducted by the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, which would bring funds to our committee if it is successful; \$100,000 is our arrangement. So we're going to make it through financially.

As a side comment on the Bicentennial: to date, the one failure has been the failure of the coin and medallion program that we launched with great work and difficulty, and it may possibly succeed. But we did expect to receive from \$500,000 to \$1 million from the licensing and selling of



related objects and the coin and medallion program. This has been disappointing, I think, because our resources are spread so thin in this big city. We have a staff of eight people doing this, and even though there are 3,000 teachers forming an education committee, to undertake such a major event for a year long by such a small committee with such a small amount of money is difficult. However, everybody feels that we've been eminently successful.



TAPE NUMBER: VII, SIDE TWO

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LASKEY: What are some of the results of the Bicentennial program that you have been particularly pleased with?

MARTIN: Well, I think that we've had a wonderful recognition as to the work of the education committee. We produced a syllabus that was used by the teaching profession to teach the children about the history of Los Angeles, and that became a consistent document, giving two hundred suggestions as to how to accomplish that, for example, on the two-hundredth birthday. I believe there'd been a dissemination of good, correct historical background and knowledge into the school system by this effort, and I think that's very worthwhile.

There's also been a recognition of the importance of the entertainment industry through this opportunity created by the Bicentennial that I think has to some extent changed the image of Los Angeles, which had been often described as a city of twelve districts in search of a unanimity--

LASKEY: Sixty suburbs in search of a city?

MARTIN: Yeah, something like that. And also the image, the national image, of Los Angeles has been really elevated due to some of the national publicity that's been generated. This has recently been true of New York, with their campaign





"I Love New York," and we coattailed right onto that with an "I Love L.A." or "L.A.'s the Place."

LASKEY: "L.A.'s the Place," now, that's the Bicentennial slogan.

MARTIN: Yes.

LASKEY: How did that originate?

MARTIN: That originated through the assistance of our public relations counsel, Stone Associates. We had talked about it in the executive committee, as we had discussed many other logos. We really discouraged the use of the word "L.A." in the beginning, in favor of "Los Angeles," but as it all developed through the communication media, "L.A.'s the Place" has taken, and it is now used by the [Los Angeles] Visitors and Convention Bureau as a standard procedure, "L.A.'s the Place."

We also, as a matter of a supporting activity, early in the game we decided that we would develop posters which would be done by local artists. We selected some seventeen artists, who have produced a series that I think is very notable. We also, through my influence, selected John Follis, who is a dean of graphic artists, to coordinate the graphic work that was found throughout the whole program, and, of course, he designed our logo, a simulated angel. And that has been a great success.

So some of these things, such as having a sound base of an organizational format, with contracts carefully established



and licensing contracts-- We also had controlled very carefully the artistic representations, as well as the press representations, as to the spirit of the Bicentennial. We decided strongly against the use of pseudorepresentations of the nature of Los Angeles, such as the old symbol of a Mexican sitting in the front door with a sombrero hanging over his head. We wanted no part of that, and throughout this Bicentennial there has been none. Rather, we have used the highest form of graphic art, and we have only advocated programs which were culturally molded, with guidelines that would be of a highly respectful nature. We felt that since we have so many strong ethnic groups in this city, that it was a matter of complementing all those ethnic groups with the finest representation that could be applied to them. And I think this has been very successful. It is easy to make a circus out of an event like this, and we were conscious of this. Never have we allowed it.

LASKEY: Well, I'm thinking of the posters, the Bicentennial posters, which are uniformly good. You have very high-level, high-powered artists, like David Hockney, that you were able to get. Who did the persuading, who had the contacts with people like this?

MARTIN: Well, we had a special committee organized by John Follis, and I believe that on that committee there were professional people. I can't recall who they were, undoubtedly



leaders in the field, who extended the invitations to these artists. And we paid the artists for their work, I think something like \$1,000 or maybe \$3,000 apiece. It was a nominal sum, and the program is extremely successful. The fact is, the posters are the most successful licensing thing we have.

LASKEY: It may be that this summer, with all the festivals coming up, that the other things will take hold. As people join in things of a festive nature, they like to have remembrances of those things.

MARTIN: Also supporting that thought, we have an agreement with Ralphs grocery, who have combined with McDonald's restaurants, and they're going to spend some \$3 million in advertising for special Bicentennial events; included will be the distribution of the Bicentennial dollars at the stores, and this will be a very strong outlet. At that time, with this big advertising program, I believe the dollar sales will really start to go. I think it's going to happen, and it could very well be that we're going to end up with an extra \$100,000 or so, which will be used to clean up and to establish a proper archives to permanently tell the story of the Bicentennial.

LASKEY: That's an interesting point: is anybody archiving the material now? do you have someone?

MARTIN: We have received as a gift the collection of



photographs that was assembled by Security Pacific Bank, valued at \$1.25 million or so and including the services of a full-time archivist for two years to place this collection into a highly organized property for the people of the city. This will be kept at the library.

LASKEY: The Security Pacific collection is certainly one of the great collections of Los Angeles photography, old photography.

MARTIN: Correct. Also, Ticor has made available their collection, which I believe is being held by a separate corporation. I'm trying to think of the name of the historical society--I think it's California Historical Society--that is in charge of the Ticor [collection]. So we also have established within the new city service building a space for the city's archives. That is something new, and it's amazing that the city of Los Angeles has never had a real highly organized location for its archives, which is unbelievable, but--

LASKEY: That's amazing.

MARTIN: But there has been work done in this area, and we will have an archives established. As I see it, at this point in time (three and a half to four months from the completion) it's wrapping up extremely well. There are other programs that I didn't mention that have to do with the future, forecasts of the city of Los Angeles in the twenty-first century,





and one of the programs is called "Los Angeles 200+20," and another program is a seminar which will bring together two hundred leaders from throughout the Pacific Rim to meet and discuss the most important things of the future of Los Angeles in its Western Hemisphere position.

LASKEY: Now, will this be funded by the L.A. Bicentennial Committee, will you continue to do funding?

MARTIN: Yes, it is being funded, and we look to Armand Hammer of Occidental Oil [Occidental Petroleum Corporation] to be our major sponsor. He's promised to do that, so it looks like it's going to be a successful program.

LASKEY: How much of your time in the last three years has been spent exclusively with the Bicentennial?

MARTIN: Well, I think that it approaches 40 to 50 percent of my time. It's very interesting. I hope it hasn't been a burden on Albert C. Martin and Associates. In some ways it might have been, but in other ways of course Albert C. Martin and Associates is right out in front in the minds of the society, everybody knows of the firm these days, which was not true fifteen years ago.

LASKEY: Really?

MARTIN: Our position competitively was not nearly as strong as it is today. So I think it all adds up to position the firm pretty well. But, in any case, I think it's been worthwhile.



LASKEY: As exhausting and difficult as it's been.

MARTIN: Well, yeah, but it's been rewarding too. Everything that one does has its problems, and we all make it through, we keep saying to ourselves.

LASKEY: Well, you've done extremely well up to this point. I'm fascinated still by the idea of a committee as yourself raising such a large amount of money so successfully in such a short period of time. Was there just possibly someone waiting to be asked, in the sense of the city wanting to do something for itself, or the people--I don't know how to say this correctly--that this was a source that hadn't been tapped before, to actually go to these various corporations and ask for their help in something like this and give them a chance to participate in this?

MARTIN: Well, there have always been important financial drives for important projects, like Mrs. [Norman] Chandler drove for funds for the Music Center, that was an outstanding event. Then there have been drives for the museums and so forth. For a large civic celebration this has undoubtedly been the biggest endeavor and undoubtedly the biggest response. I think that there is an increasing spirit of the corporate responsibility, especially with the trend nationally, now, with President Reagan, to return the responsibility to the states and the counties and the cities, rather than having the federal government dominate all the thinking. The subject of corporate



responsibility has been really unfolding for the last ten or fifteen years as a national trend, such as consumer advocacy and such programs as that. I think we just touched the tip of the iceberg though. So many corporations that should have responded did not respond, and the old reliables, particularly ARCO and the Bank of America and Security Bank, the big corporate groups, have been very fine in supporting the program.

Now, we were very nervous for a while because we had nothing to submit to the press in the way of programs. The development of programs comes so slowly in an organization like this because you have to organize your committees first and you have to go to the people to evolve the programs. So when you start--and you need money for operations in the beginning--nobody has ever heard of you. Finally towards the end they start to recognize that there's a big thing going on. Therefore the fund drives are really based upon faith and somewhat on the faith of the success of the committee and its leaders. As I mentioned, we have some fine leaders on this committee.

LASKEY: Well, was most of the fundraising done by the one committee, or did each of the committees do a fair amount of their own fund raising?

MARTIN: The operation funds was done by the finance committee under Bob Dockson. Most of the fund raising for specific



projects was done through our staff, staff of the Bicentennial, the lead staff, with the help of everyone. Today I still see a good reception for helping to fund these things. The Chamber of Commerce has been slow, but the present leadership of the Chamber of Commerce in the last two years have been very supportive of having the chamber take a more important role. I had a hard time with the chamber because the leadership of the chamber three years ago did not really respect the role of the Bicentennial to the degree that I felt they should. But Bob Dockson and myself and others have kept at the chamber so strongly that now we have a big effort on their part to be successful, or to be a successful part of the Bicentennial. You would think that they would have been the first ones to step up.

LASKEY: Yeah.

MARTIN: But it wasn't that way, and I lay it to the leadership at that time.

LASKEY: Were they afraid, or didn't they have enough vision to see what this was going to be?

MARTIN: I think it was at a time when the chamber needed funds. They actually capitalized on our activities, to our detriment, which was a very bad thing, and we let them know--that is, Dockson and myself particularly--really let them know what we thought they had done. They published a book, without our endorsement, which should have been published by





us or through the chamber with our endorsement. And we should have shared in the funds, but they took all the funds. That was really a terrible thing for the leadership to do that. We finally have overcome that.

As I mentioned earlier, there's going to be, hopefully, a very major event on September 3 which will be a fundraising event to secure some funds for the Bicentennial Committee wrap-up, but a larger amount of funds [will be] for a program which is related to some of the activities of the Bicentennial; that is, working towards the future betterment of the city of Los Angeles. So there's so many stories about the Bicentennial that are missed here, but one can't cover them all.

LASKEY: Well, speaking of books, Bicentennial did put out an excellent guidebook, the LA Access.

MARTIN: Excellent. Yes, and I think the auto club did a very good job of developing a new map available to the public, showing two hundred locations of historic importance in the city. Those maps have descriptive material which illuminate the important facts about two hundred places.

LASKEY: And the Junior League put out that children's map.

MARTIN: Yes, and I really should know more about that; there's some good maps.

LASKEY: It's a wonderful map--I've seen it down at the library--and just very nicely done.



MARTIN: One interesting point, I think, that occurred earlier in our discussions, and I failed to mention our important history committee under the leadership of Dr. Doyce [B.] Nunis, [Jr.]. It was decided that there would be no way that historians could prepare a comprehensive revision of the historic background on the city of Los Angeles, that the historians could help to prepare material through the activities of the Bicentennial, which material could then be organized by future historians. I think that that was fundamentally a good thing, because when we recall history through a series of events and if that history is authentic, which is always the danger, and we watch that very carefully, then those recollections of so many events become the basis for a new collection and a new treatise on the history. And I'm sure that a lot of that has taken place.

LASKEY: Well, the opening of "Spectrum" down at the Plaza is a wonderful thing.

MARTIN: I think that's one of the finest exhibits that's ever been assembled. Incidentally, that is one exhibit that was funded partially by the federal government, the National Endowment [for] the Arts, I think it is, or National Endowment [for] the Humanities. The Bank of America picked up the other half, a total investment of maybe \$200,000. But an outstanding permanent collection. Again,



when you think of a permanent collection presented in that manner, it's an asset that the city now has forever. It takes an event like this to do it. So, again, Bicentennial activities have brought much of this to light and into being. I think the repercussions of the Bicentennial will be here for a long time.

LASKEY: What will be your repercussions? On September 4, do you just fold up and come home?

MARTIN: No, I really believe that when we close the office and turn over the cleanup work to some part of the government, I presume, or some private organization--it could be an historic organization--I believe that my activities will continue on with a knowledge of what was done and what can be done. And I firmly believe that some of the institutional things that we're establishing now will demand some of my time in the future, such as we have set up a process which hopefully will solve the problem of the planning of El Pueblo. The process is one of creating a new commission which is government-private sector. That has now met, and the entire structure of this has been created by myself and Jane Pisano as a procedural structure. And it's a very exciting, well-received process. Well received in the bureaucracy of the city of Los Angeles, who are enthusiastically trying to solve the traffic and space problems of El Pueblo and Chinatown and the Union Station. We have a committee of leaders of both



government and the private sector to try to solve, to get a handle on what the future should be to really make a cohesive park out of El Pueblo. Principally to reroute Main Street around it. A very complicated process and not well received by the bureaucracy of the city, because the bureaucracy, by its very nature, resists any cohesive or coordinated action and, by its very nature, supports diverse type of activity which is hard to bring back into a single effort.

It's very clear at this stage of society and history of Los Angeles--and, for that matter, federal government--the biggest struggle we have, I believe, is the struggle between bureaucracy and democracy. I mean, the vote of the people are not really running the government; it's the bureaucracy that is running the government. That is a big struggle, and we try to bridge over that by enlisting the support of bureaucracy through a new kind of organization, which is private sector-government [cooperation]. That's what we think could happen, and I think it's an important move towards the future.

LASKEY: What kind of support did you get from the city all during your tenure?

MARTIN: A very friendly response, but without any kind of financial support or really staff support. The government--mayor's office, particularly--and certainly the councilmen have been very cooperative with us. The only problem is that





they don't do things for us; we had to initiate everything ourselves. Which is quite related to a political approach versus a private-sector approach. The mayor couldn't be nicer and more supportive as long as he was out in front and doing the talking about "L.A.'s the Place." And that's just great. But when it comes to trying to underwrite our activities-- And I mentioned that underwriting our credit would have been a big help in the beginning because we could have borrowed from private-sector banks if the government would have guaranteed us. This was, after all, a city affair; it wasn't a private affair. It was a citywide affair. At one time we did secure \$500,000 underwriting for a while, but during the next budget that was wiped out, and so we came down to the wire several times where we didn't have enough money for the payroll. And I couldn't go to the private banks because that would have meant that I personally representing our committee would be guaranteeing the loan.

To this day the government hasn't responded to us, other than to help us go out to the private sector again and secure enough money for operations. That is probably the situation in a nutshell. The government just doesn't have the money today, blaming everything onto Proposition 13, which I doubt is really the reason. The government has not reduced its bureaucracy, and it's self-perpetuating to a great extent. So I'm not bitter, I'm just saying that's the way it is today.



LASKEY: Well, did you run into that bureaucracy when you were trying to set up events? For instance, did you have difficulty with the city in--?

MARTIN: Not at all. They were very cooperative, and we would have to beg the police department for support. The mayor's office was always helpful in asking for in-kind services from the police department, but the initiative was on our part to organize everything. And really that's probably the way it should be. Otherwise we would lose the control that comes through taking the initiative. We don't have regrets; we just feel that the government was not really the greatest partner that we could have had.

LASKEY: That's interesting.

MARTIN: I think for the record and if one is looking back at what the real facts are, it's a peculiar time in the history of government in the United States. I'm not saying it's bad, I'm just saying it's being slowly reorganized, and we will have less bureaucracy eventually, hopefully. But only if the citizens take the initiative, and that's what government's all about, always has been. It's what democracy's all about, and it's a strong form of government if citizens will do it.

LASKEY: Well, I think it sort of implies territorial imperative: once you have a position or a place, you're reluctant to give



it up, and they become entrenched over a period of time. Don't you find that happens in corporations too that you deal with sometimes?

MARTIN: Definitely. There's bureaucracy in every kind of a private corporation to some extent. And I think you've expressed it well.

LASKEY: So that puts you in a position of having to deal with all the bureaucracies, then--private, governmental. Did you feel like you were walking on a tightrope most of the time?

MARTIN: No, the private sector you can reach because you can reach the leaders, who are strong. But when you reach the leaders of government, you're talking to politicians, who are very careful of their actions, and that's not true of corporate leaders. That's the big difference. Big corporate leaders will take an initiative and take their chances, but not a politician. And politicians do not control bureaucracy. They're afraid of public exposure to--

LASKEY: Who controls it, then, basically? How does it work?

MARTIN: Well, the very nature of the bureaucracy is that the departments themselves live within their charter and their budget and their rules, and they become hard-and-fast, tight organizations. The only thing they can control in a bureaucracy is the budget. Of course the mayor and the council people control the budget, but they have an internal



struggle that's horrendous. They try very hard to do a good job, but they're still politicians, and there's a lot of patronage between the council people. They just trade off one for the other, and that doesn't make for good government. I think, however, that there's strong hope; I don't feel rebellious at all.

LASKEY: Well, it'll be interesting to see how this plan for El Pueblo develops--if you really can cut through the bureaucracy and the red tape to some extent and get something done.

MARTIN: I think that we can get something done. For twenty years it's been on dead center, and I think we've broken through, found a way to break through, and it was entirely due to Jane [Pisano] and myself.

LASKEY: Do you think that you would have developed that plan, that you would have gotten involved, if you hadn't been involved in the Bicentennial?

MARTIN: Oh, I would never have been into it. Even though we were the architects for the last layout of El Pueblo, we did what they said. And when I came along with the Bicentennial activity, I knew what was necessary was a more drastic solution than what we were doing. Now, whether that ever comes about or not, I can't tell. I think we're going to win that one, in time.

LASKEY: But it's just one more of the little waves that are





emanating from the Bicentennial.

MARTIN: Definitely. Initiative on the part of the private sector is the fundamental thing that is necessary to reshape our cities, and they really need reshaping. The process is too laborious through our city government; the greatest hope for reshaping our cities is through the Community Redevelopment Agency, and who has power of eminent domain, by the way, with the approval of the city council.

LASKEY: Are they the only agency that does?

MARTIN: I believe not, I believe that the Department of Public Works has it for matters that are related to streets and lighting and the infrastructure of the city. Then of course we know that the Harbor Department and the Department [of Airports] and the Department of Water and Power are independent agencies; they're departments of the government. They're autonomous but subject to the approval of the city council.

LASKEY: Well, now, your being selected as chairman of the Bicentennial Committee just didn't come out of nowhere. I mean, obviously you have had a lot of experience in Los Angeles, and you've had a number of other honors and occupied a number of other positions of responsibility over the years. You mentioned the Chamber of Commerce. You were president of the Chamber of Commerce in 1976, I think it was, and apparently shook them up considerably in that capacity.



MARTIN: Well, yes, I was president in '76, but I'm not so sure I shook up any of the procedures. I have been a critic of the internal immobility of the staff of the chamber for some time, and I did call for a reorganization of the chamber from a pure organization point of view; that is, the subdivision of the various disciplines that are managed within the chamber. That may have been the contribution. I think that I have represented small business, if one really digests it; that the viewpoint of an independent entrepreneur probably was expressed by my regime as the president. And that's essential, if one thinks of the board of the chamber as composed of the presidents of the major corporations. The major corporations are all large, with a few selected smaller businesses, sometimes professional--doctors, architects, and a few others. The position of being president of the Chamber of Commerce does put you out in front, involved in civic activities and political activities. That again has to do with this whole subject of the functioning of the government as we know it and the planning the city as we know it.

My brother Ed and I have always done a great deal of planning as to the evolution of the city, and I think together we have formulated ideas that are to some extent reflected today. Matter of fact, Ed was really the editor of a Chamber of Commerce treatise called "Los Angeles, Financial Center of the West." It was Ed's editorial activities that



made that a very successful document. And all through the business activities, Albert C. Martin and Associates have been in the last thirty to forty years the dominant downtown architect. There aren't any others that have stayed downtown, and so we have gravitated towards the activities downtown. pretty much. We have had work for government, like the Department of Water and Power [Building], and my father of course with John Parkinson and John Austin did the City Hall. I think the Department of Water and Power is one of the most important buildings we've ever designed. And then of course we got started with ARCO. Well, we got started with this building, the Union Bank Square, first, then ARCO, and then Security Pacific, and then Wells Fargo and Manufacturers Life; these are all major structures.

But, I guess because of community leadership positions that I have held several times, heads of appeal boards for the county and the city, and I was the head of a committee that rewrote the whole parking ordinance for the city of Los Angeles. That was an important contribution because of the direction that the building department was taking. And if one stays in the action long enough, I suppose you really help mold the nature of the laws and eventually the planning. I've always been interested in the planning of the basic city, the freeway alignments, the lack of a freeway on the eastside (which was once destined to be called the Industrial Freeway)



and the importance of the Fourth Street viaduct. At one time, years ago, we planned a transportation center to be on the site of the Union Station, and that's exactly what's happening thirty or forty years later, thirty years, I guess. So we've always been in the action one way or the other.

LASKEY: Of course what this has done, it has given you a tremendous familiarity with the bureaucracy.

MARTIN: Right.

LASKEY: Which puts you in a position of probably dealing far more effectively with the government than someone who had to start--

MARTIN: I think that's true. We're respected in the city, and we are friendly to all the leaders of the city, of government, and we work with them and such things as that.

LASKEY: Well, in 1971, you were the Man of the Year from the Chamber of Commerce.

MARTIN: Yes, and I think that had to do with my activities and being chairman of the committee that we initiated to rewrite the parking ordinance. I pulled together a whole series of organizations. It was a committee called Associated Organizations. We actually wrote the new ordinance on our own initiative and presented it to the city attorney's office, who adopted it, and it was adopted by the city. It was that initiative that made such a change in the nature of the parking ordinance today.





LASKEY: What was that change?

MARTIN: Well, we actually rewrote all the technical parts of the parking ordinance, which had such things as the dimensions of ramps and parking spaces, the widths of buildings, and all of that. We went out and got \$25,000, and we did a professional job and handed it to the city. They gave us a year to do it. The city council, who was about to pass a very untenable ordinance, gave us a year, and we asked for it, and we went out and did it. They adopted it unanimously and gave us great thanks. I think that might have been one of the reasons why I was named the Construction Man of the Year, or something like that.

LASKEY: Well, just previous to that, you had won an L.A. Beautiful award, or Daisy Award, for landscaping work that you've done. Now, we haven't discussed landscaping at all as an element of architecture.

MARTIN: Well, that is interesting. I'd forgotten about it really for the moment, but Cleve Bonner of Richfield Oil-- he was treasurer and a very dear friend of Ed's and mine and perhaps the reason why we designed the ARCO building-- Cleve and myself were members of Los Angeles Beautiful and a good friend of Valley Knudsen. I suggested to Cleve when we were remodeling the old Richfield Building (which was an historic monument, which we later tore down) that he consider planting thirteen trees around the building in the



sidewalk. Something [like] that hadn't been done in the city for years and years, even though some of the early leaders of this city were great tree planters, if you think of some of the residential districts especially. But we decided to plant trees downtown, and they were so successful, and the building improved so much from the trees, that a committee was formed under Los Angeles Beautiful; and by the time we finished, we had planted close to a thousand trees in the downtown area, by the persuasion of Mrs. Knudsen, particularly. But each of those efforts was work. Later on, because it was so successful, rather quietly, through the L.A. Beautiful-- [tape recorder turned off] Later on, through the Los Angeles Beautiful, we initiated an ordinance which caused an assessment district against the properties for tree planting in the downtown area contained within the four freeways.



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MARTIN: --and we have planted in the downtown area some 30,000 trees, which have helped to recreate the image of the downtown portion of Los Angeles. As we all know, downtown Los Angeles was once criticized as being bleak, and for that matter the entire city had been criticized for being a series of villages in search of a city. This tree-planting program that we did through Los Angeles Beautiful helped to bring cohesion to the whole area. People forget it now, but actually the nature of the downtown area, with its trees now, has changed completely.

LASKEY: You mentioned Valley Knudsen; would you tell us something about her?

MARTIN: Valley Knudsen was the leader of Los Angeles Beautiful. She was the wife of the founder of Knudsen's creamery [Thorkild R. Knudsen], and she was solicited by Mr. Earl Grover, who was the founding person of Los Angeles Beautiful, which was originally a division of the Chamber of Commerce board of directors. But Los Angeles Beautiful later became an independent entity, still working with the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce. So Valley was a very popular person, very influential with the businessmen of the city, and a person who perhaps did more than any person



in establishing a very strong program for beautification of the city by Los Angeles Beautiful. Her slogan was "Beauty Is Good Business," and that carried through to this day. So she is one of the unheralded history-makers of the city of Los Angeles.

LASKEY: When was this, approximately? I have 1969, but I have a question mark next to it. I wonder if it might have been a little earlier than that.

MARTIN: It was. It was two or three years before we removed the Richfield Building and started the excavation for the ARCO Center. It must have been back in '65 or so.

LASKEY: Did you have any problems in dealing with tearing down the old Richfield Building?

MARTIN: The problem was handled very carefully by Cleve Bonner and Mr. Bob Anderson, the chairman of the board. The old Richfield Building was considered to be an historic monument, and it was a fine building, although terribly inefficient. So ARCO commissioned an historian who was well founded in architectural work to do a complete review, photographic survey, and put together a record of the character and quality of the building, which today stands as the principal record of that building. The entire subject was delicately handled, and there was not really a public voice from any conservancy group at that time. The conservancy groups were not nearly as strong at





that time as they are today. So the answer is no. We proceeded to tear the building down and then, of course, build the magnificent ARCO project, which takes in the whole city block, and will, I'm sure, be an historic monument unto itself.

LASKEY: When we were talking about honors and your involvement with the city, and we talked about some of your past honors, you have another one coming up next week, I think, the Spirit of Los Angeles Award that's being given to you. Do you want to talk about that?

MARTIN: Yes, I do feel honored with that. I'll be the fourth recipient, I understand, and it undoubtedly is influenced by my chairmanship of the Bicentennial. But also it's because it's being given by the Los Angeles Headquarters [City] Association, and since I have had a lot to do with the planning of downtown Los Angeles and many of its facilities, this is being recognized. I'm told that the mayor will make the presentation, and it'll be a considerable honor.

LASKEY: What is the Los Angeles Headquarters City Association?

MARTIN: It is an association of building owners and property owners that are gathered together to promote downtown Los Angeles, particularly, as a headquarters location for major corporations, such as Occidental Oil,



ARCO is outstanding, Union Oil, and others of that nature. It is a promotional effect which I think is quite outstanding, and it's a well-supported group.

LASKEY: Well, you made a point about your having been involved in so much of the planning of downtown Los Angeles, which makes me wonder, how do you feel, how does it affect you, when the buildings that you've built affect the lives of millions of people, literally, as they have over the years? How does that thought affect you?

MARTIN: Well, I have a deep sense of responsibility, since we have had so much to do with the actual design and construction of many of the buildings. But I think most of all I enjoy the urban planning aspect of this work, which has changed the nature of the development of the city of Los Angeles in an urban sense. Our new work has been principally of the nature that it is because of the lifting of the limit height of thirteen stories and the maintenance of the parking requirements in the building code. The combination of those two means that the density of building forms is quite low, like from 6 to 8 percent of the floor area ratio--excuse me, the floor area ratio is 6 to 8 percent as a multiplier against the area of the land. So you have six to eight times the area of the land that you can build into a building form. But I also believe that that combination, along with the opportunities that we have had to create these



large open spaces and landscape plazas which are likened unto parks, has completed the urban composition.

If you look carefully at the way the city is now developing, you find about four major open spaces in this area other than the Civic Center Mall and the East Mall. You find the open space to the east of the Union Bank Square, which is above the auditoriums of the Bonaventure Hotel, as an open space that will always be there, by law. It is a dedication of open space that was created for Connecticut General, who was the owner at the time we built the Union Bank Building. As it has happened, we have built the north tower of ARCO, the new Wells Fargo Building, and of course [John] Portman designed the Bonaventure Hotel around this space, and it's a notable space in the urban scene today.

Another space that is hopefully to be maintained is that which is existing around the Los Angeles Public Library, and even though there is now a request for proposal to buy that land, in return for somebody to build a new library, we hope to maintain that space by our own individual actions, which involve countermoves and suggestions on our part, independent of any client, to establish some kind of an urban molding of space and buildings that will be complementary.

Another space is the space that we developed to the



south of Security Pacific Bank, and this was due principally to the rules and regulations of the Community Redevelopment Agency, but there is a huge open space that is permanently dedicated over the roof of the garages (which happen to be parks). Then, of course, Pershing Square is a permanent space.

There are new spaces evolving. One I'm very excited about is the South Park plan, which is being developed by the Community Redevelopment Agency and will bring into the southern part of the downtown area large parks, around which will be residential buildings.

LASKEY: Where is that, specifically?

MARTIN: That is, it's aligned to Hope Street, which will be vacated to the south of Ninth Street or Olympic [Boulevard], I'm not sure which. But it's in process right now, the first block is, and that's going to become another great open space. These open spaces and all of the civic activity that continually develops around such a major project become dedications of ours, so that we as private citizens do have an opinion as to how the whole thing is pulling together. In that sense, getting back to the original question, the way I feel is that we are really making strides in molding the downtown portion of the city of Los Angeles into, I believe, a very, very beautiful, well-composed business center, cultural and governmental center, I should say.





LASKEY: Do you ever have proprietary feelings about the city?

MARTIN: I do if they start to impinge upon these motives that I have had and, to some extent, Ed has had. As I mentioned some time before, Ed and I have advocated a large international section, international exhibit and trade center section, to the south end of the city, immediately to the north of this new South Park that I just described. So, yes, if we see things being done that are quite negative to this urban plan, we subliminally offer alternative suggestions to see if we can't help to see the city evolve in a decent sense.

LASKEY: This is a little off the subject we're talking about, and we'll come back to it, but there's a question I've always wondered about an architect: When you design a building for a client and then that client does things to the building once they move in that you find totally wrong, do you get angry about it? How do you deal with that, or do you just have to turn it off and say it's their building, and you don't have control over it? Is it always your building I guess is the question I'm trying to ask you.

MARTIN: Well, generally speaking, we have good luck. We really use all of our influence during the creation of the designs and the evolution of the buildings, when they're



occupied by commercial tenants, particularly. We use all of our influence to sell the idea that their improvements should be very compatible with the spirit of the design. We don't give up easy, and sometimes we're considered to be fairly rigid in our opinions, not only in aesthetic opinions but in engineering opinions. We have been criticized for being difficult to work with, but, on the other hand, that sometimes is an asset, because we have developed some very pure buildings, like ARCO, Security Pacific, and certainly the Department of Water and Power. They are very pure.

Now, there are occasions-- One of those occasions, incidentally, as a matter of interest, happened at St. Basil's Church, which we felt was a very pure expression of contemporary thinking in the creation of a church for the adoration of God and that the idea of imagery within the church should be very sensitively handled and should be an acceptable part of the design. Now, that church is homogeneous material. It's poured concrete, the aggregate of the concrete has been exposed by bushhammering, and our dear friend Monsignor [Benjamin] Hawkes, in his enthusiasm for the drama, has inserted into the areas of the church two large, grotesque statues, which are out of harmony with the design.

LASKEY: Where are these statues?

MARTIN: They're in the foyer, and then one of them is



outside, the southwest corner of the parking lot. And they're just not quite in keeping. And even though we have critiqued them and he's invited us to critique them, his determination [has] prevailed. I think that it is a shame to have those statues in there, because St. Basil's is not a church for statues or imagery. We have subordinated such things in that design. We have reflected, and we've created a receptivity for imagination, but not to impose some grotesque image of a powerful saint into this place of God. So I think that that is quite a test. We lost the battle, but it's a case at hand, at least.

LASKEY: The interior of the church has not been harmed?

MARTIN: No, the interior of the church is really quite in keeping with the way it was designed.

LASKEY: Could you describe it?

MARTIN: The inspiration for the design was a place similar to the crags of Edinburgh, with vertical cliffs, strong counterimages of different planes, with the structure of these walls being such that light was sensitively emitted into the building, and as the path of the sun traveled through the dome of the sky, during the daytime in both winter and summer seasons, the emission and introduction of light into the church has been carefully handled. Of course, the windows designed by Claire Falkenstein were created to complement the swing of the sun; in other words, they were



cool colors when the hot sun would pour in and warm colors on the east side when the sun would be at that side. These tall, sculptural, concrete forms, with their oblique positioning paralleling the sides of the nave, complemented the historic form of the usual cruciform church. Not exactly, because they're parallel and we do not have a transept as such. But the handling of the walls in the section of the altar was very sensitively composed to settle down the strong movement of the positioning of the walls as you view the whole church. I think it's an outstanding piece of sculpture, an outstanding church in every sense.

LASKEY: You have won many awards for it.

MARTIN: Well, it hasn't been submitted to very many competitions, but we have not won too many awards. There have been a lot of recognition of the church, but nothing like an outstanding American Institute of Architects national award. The publication of the church has been very subtle, to say the least, and controlled by the archdiocese. That hasn't really bothered me in any sense. I know the church is a fine design, and whether it receives the credit of many organizations, it doesn't bother me.

LASKEY: Well, you have had a long association with St. Basil's. Did you particularly enjoy doing this one? I recall from an earlier interview that you grew up near there.





MARTIN: Yes, our homeplace was at 712 South Catalina [Street], which was a key lot just inside of the corner of Seventh and Catalina. In the earliest times, probably in the early twenties, the diocese built St. Basil's Church, and my father was the architect. It was a temporary church, built out of half-wood framing, similar to an English Gothic church, and it was an outstanding church. They soon grew out of it, and the parish priest was not able to buy our homeplace for the parish house, and so they moved the church to Wilshire and Harvard [boulevards]. My father was still the architect, and an addition was put into the church at that time. I was starting to be a little active, especially when the church had a big section of it burn out and we had to rebuild the church.

Then that same church, which was the parish of Monsignor [Edward] Kirk, who was noted for his adoration of the Blessed Virgin Mary and noted throughout the city for his ability in preaching love and such things, became very famous and then, finally, just before we started the design for the new church, it burnt down again, a second time. We did have, fortunately, a new church on the way. So, yes, St. Basil's--or as my youngest son, when he was an infant, said, when he announced that St. Basil's had burned down, he said, "Mama, St. Bastard's burned down." [laughter] But anyway, yes, St. Basil's Church was very dear to my



family and myself. I was an altar boy there for many years under Monsignor Kirk.

LASKEY: Speaking of awards and the AIA sort of brings us back on track of what we were talking about, which is your involvement with the city and with architecture. You might want to talk about your involvement with the American Institute of Architects.

MARTIN: Well, I went through the chairs at the Southern California chapter of the AIA and finally became the president. It was, I believe, a very strong chapter, with an advancing membership, and I believe that it was in very good condition at that time, better than it is today. The members were of seemingly more business substance and professional substance than we find in the changing membership today, even though now, today, there is over one thousand members. The time of leadership and presidency was-- It reminds me of the time today, [because] one of the critical issues is dues and a dues structure, and I had a lot to do with the formation of formulas for dues structure at that time. That lasted clear on through and probably, even though it has been changed recently, probably will be returned to my same formulas soon. But that's beside the point.

I was therefore active in the new organization at that time, which was called the California Council of Architects.



And I became the vice-president of the California Council.

LASKEY: When was this?

MARTIN: I can't remember. In the late fifties, I guess.

And I helped to launch that organization, which fundamentally was developed for the total advancement of the profession and for particular attention to detrimental legislation that was always popping up in Sacramento. We maintained a legislative advocate for the state group of architects and established an organization that is very strong today, and so I was on the fringes of that.

LASKEY: What would you consider detrimental legislation, for example?

MARTIN: Well, the licensing of unqualified people. For example, the designers were often people that were not able to qualify for practice and pass the examination, and so they would be designing some important smaller work, and for which they may have been qualified, but certainly not to hold an architect's license. So they would continually introduce bills into the legislature which would usurp the position of the architectural profession. That would be one case, and then there are myriad of other cases related to government work, related to the building of a huge bureaucracy in the state architect's office, which incidentally has now been pretty much abandoned, but at one time it was a huge bureaucracy, practicing architecture, and that



was one of our continual fights.

LASKEY: Now you became an [AIA] fellow in 1955. What does that mean?

MARTIN: Well, I was the youngest fellow in the history of the AIA at that time. It means that the peers on a national level recognized me for the work that I have done, which includes service to the institute and for design. And it means that this is the highest honor that you can receive, other than receiving the Gold Medal, which is given annually by the American Institute of Architects. It's really an outstanding senior position. So I was very young to receive it and very happy about it.

LASKEY: Then you became chapter president about three years after that, in 1958, which would have been just about the time that the height restrictions were lifted from the city. Were you involved in that?

MARTIN: Not very much, not very much. I was in favor of lifting them, but I don't remember taking any particular leadership in that event. I was very happy it occurred, but I was not an instigator.

LASKEY: Well, the architectural milieu of Los Angeles for a long time was in its houses. Did you find that most of the architects at that time were designers of houses, as opposed to large buildings as you do?

MARTIN: With a few exceptions, most of the outstanding





architects in the early days were designers of houses, from smaller houses to large mansions. There was a very important architectural practice in the design of major homes here, and there were architects like [Myron] Hunt and [H. C.] Chambers, Gordon Kaufmann, who later designed the Times Building, [Irving] Gill, and many others that had their major practice in residential work. I believe some of the most capable architects in the country were here in Los Angeles, as exemplified by the outstanding residential design that is found in Pasadena and other places. There were some exceptions to that, such as a firm by the name of Morgan, Walls, and Clements, and Bob [Robert] Clements is the successor to that firm today.

There was Claude Beelman, which was once Curlett and Beelman. And [Aleck] Curlett was related to the young man that-- Oh, I guess it was Curlett that my father invited down to help him with the design of Grauman's Million Dollar Theatre. [It was actually William Woollett. --M.L.] He's a very imaginative designer, later became Curlett and Beelman, very important architects. Finally, Beelman did many contemporary buildings.

There was the dean of the profession, John Parkinson, who I believe had as fine a reputation as any architect in the city. He was a Scotchman that came to the city, having a background of millwork, as a cabinetmaker, and he of course



became a highly educated architect as he grew into his professional stature. He had a son, Donald, who later carried on the practice and was noted particularly for Bullock's Wilshire.

There was John Austin, another partner of Dad's in the City Hall along with Parkinson, who was really an outstanding architect in lots of ways. He was really a civic leader and was the only other architect, besides myself, to be president of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce. So he had stature and outstanding political connections and financial connections. He was a very good architect. His firm later became Austin, Field, and Fry, which still exists today.

LASKEY: When you came into architecture, you were sort of at the beginning of the model movement in Los Angeles.

MARTIN: Yes. A movement that was a challenging one, to say the least, because our training was in the school of the beaux arts and all teaching at all universities was modeled after the beaux arts system. In my second year at the university, USC started the transition under Dean [Arthur Clason] Weatherhead to branch into the so-called modern architectural teaching. The inspiration really came from the European schools principally, although Frank Lloyd Wright had a lot to do with it: but the Bauhaus, from Germany; the French school, which supplanted the



beaux arts finally under the leadership of Le Corbusier; the Rome school, that was moving in the same direction of modernism under some outstanding modern architects from Italy. (Which is always the case, incidentally.) The Italian architects were really so sensitive, and are today, really outstanding designers; and then, of course, our own western school, which was, as I mentioned before, really the evolution of the inspiration that emanated from the World's Fair of 1893, Chicago.

The Chicago school, it was called sometimes, included the influence of Louis Sullivan and [Henry Hobson] Richardson and later on Frank Lloyd Wright and others similar to him. In the local arena, the leader, I think, was [Richard] Neutra, who was a dear friend of mine--he and his wife--and my wife. We had many social contacts, and Neutra really was an inspired architect. He had a hard time locally being accepted by the established architectural firms, but his work was outstanding really. His firm still continues under his son [Dion].

LASKEY: I think Mrs. Neutra is still alive.

MARTIN: And perhaps Mrs. Neutra is still alive. They used to have concerts. I think she played the violin, as a matter of fact. [Mrs. Dione Neutra plays the cello. --M.L.]

LASKEY: She was quite a lady, or she is quite a lady.



MARTIN: Yes, yes.

LASKEY: Did you ever have any contact with Rudolph Schindler?

MARTIN: Never, never. I knew he was working, and at that time his work was not recognized for its quality that it does have. He was there, but I don't think too many people recognized him at that time.

LASKEY: Did it ever occur to you at that time to go in that direction of modern housing?

MARTIN: I think that I was always inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright and am today: the scale of his designs and his techniques of construction, which of course are completely homogeneous with the structure and the design, and his great amount of warmth through his detail. I think he must be noted as one of the most exciting, interpretive architects ever existing through time, I would say. Frank Lloyd Wright truly was a master of ornament and decoration. Probably more so than Richardson and Sullivan, who were working in the field of ornamentation in architecture, especially as exemplified in the windows of Carson Pirie Scott and Company in Chicago. But Frank Lloyd Wright, I believe, would be my principal inspiration for whatever I did, and perhaps more so in forming a judgment as to design, which I think, in self-criticism, I probably have a deeper feeling for making judgments and appraisals and guidance of the work of others than actually the development of designs of my own.





LASKEY: I think you said once--in fact, in an interview--that "my role in the firm is to provide an analysis and critique of the design of others. I try first to be a good critic."

MARTIN: I think that prevails today, although I do not engage in criticism particularly today. I think that, even as time goes on, at this age my future will include participation in a new thing that David is starting, and that is a design review committee, chaired by Karl Klokke. That is just starting up in the firm, so I feel encouraged that criticism of our designs will be an ongoing process.

LASKEY: What is your role with the firm today?

MARTIN: Well, for the past two years I've been absorbed by this Bicentennial thing, and perhaps too much: I don't know, I've debated that subject. It is a success, and the firm has received great publicity from it, through my name principally. I'd say my role today is still making judgments as to problem solving in human relationships and client relationships and to generally watch the movement of the firm as it handles its ever-moving problems. The problems are so similar from year to year, and they are the same problems that we had thirty to forty years ago, that I've been there before and I know what some of the results were.



The practice today is considerably different in that the computer is having such an impact on the development of our work, and properly so. I mean, all of our standard details today are stored in the computer, and we press a button and they appear on a drawing and that's really an advancement. But I do encourage freedom of thinking, and if there was a philosophy that's strong in the firm, and it still prevails, is that we give an opportunity to other architects to express themselves in the designs that emanate from the firm, but we very carefully manage those designs so that they are outstanding designs and exemplify our own endorsement, so to speak.

LASKEY: How is a design agreed upon?

MARTIN: The design is agreed upon by the director of design, which I used to be and David is today. It's a final say in design, and it's an important role. And we have to watch it carefully because we have so many people doing designs, solving architectural planning problems, that the role of being director of design is critical. We have outstanding people, like Michael O'Sullivan, who have an approach that is a very interesting, earthy type of a pure approach, and Mike does deserve criticism, but his designs have been very creditable, and the firm has received a lot of credit for his work.

LASKEY: Getting back for just a second to Frank Lloyd Wright



and your influence by him, were you influenced by the structures out here? Particularly because most of the houses that he built he had built in the twenties.

MARTIN: No. I was, I believe, influenced by the work that he did in Wisconsin, in the northern states. There's a job I think by the name of "Fallingwater," or something, that he did for, I believe, [Edgar J.] Kaufmann, and that design was less sculptural in its detail than some of his earlier work, which was influenced so strongly by the Indian culture of the Americas. But I would say that his Chicago work was an influence in my thinking, as was the work of Sam Marx and Noel Flint, who worked with us on May Company; I became very strongly aligned to Noel Flint's work.

LASKEY: Who was Noel Flint?

MARTIN: Noel Flint was an architect who worked for Sam Marx in Chicago designing such restaurants as the Battered in Chicago and the Ambassador East, which were at the time really magnificent design developments, down to the silverware and the cutlery and things like that. It was a beautiful influence of design. Noel Flint didn't live too long, but he really was a great architect.

LASKEY: Are there any architects who are particularly influential today that come to your mind?

MARTIN: Well, I think that there are young architects that



are doing fine work, and I don't really recognize any one of them as being an inspiration to me. I just know that the caliber of the work all through Southern California is ten steps above the caliber of the work when I was young.





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LASKEY: The West is far above what it is in the rest of the country. Why do you think that is?

MARTIN: Well, I believe that the universities have for the last twenty to thirty years been teaching a broader concept of architecture. They've been teaching concepts which involve the total area of the project, the composition of all the elements within the master plans of projects, and the relationship again between space and the building form. In other words, the accent has been very much on the importance of space and circulation and relative impacts of building forms. The accent has drawn away from the structure of the building to a great extent.

Now, that has been a very disturbing element in the educational process. As soon as the schools started moving away from the importance of the structure, the designers and architects started drifting into more dramatic expressions of architectural form, which really was kind of a revolution against the rigidity of the structure as taught and preached by the Bauhaus. The Bauhaus, as I mentioned before, was a very strong influence because it was the use of manufactured materials, like standard beams and steel, and the expression of those materials within the building. That



created great rigidity and duplication in architecture. As a revolt against that rigidity, the schools were teaching a freedom of design and a movement away from the importance of structure, and some very bad things happened.

The commercial structures-- Before that, I should say, in their search for imaginative solutions, many of the architects reached back into history and started to adapt pseudoarchitectural motifs and incorporate those false architectural forms into the architecture. Now this, I think, was a disaster, and I'm sure that there's a lot of work built in Southern California the last twenty years which is pseudo-Spanish, for example, that will go down in history as being of no consequence whatsoever. However, as usually happens, that trend towards eclecticism again borrowing from other architectural styles and "facadism" is often found in the thinking of Bill [William] Pereira, for example, who is a fine architect but engaging in facadism, the dramatic part of entertainment and the influence of the movie studios. And the movie studios did engage in a lot of facadism, because that's the nature of the business. That had a great impact on the architects in this region.

Now, again the pendulum keeps swinging, and we are moving away from, and have moved away from, the pseudo-



adaptation of architectural forms into the current work and have moved in towards something that I believe is quite homogeneous to this area. It is an architecture which well exemplifies the nature of the walls and the windows and the openings, and it includes great consideration to the importation of light into interior spaces, for the importation of exterior landscaping into interior spaces, often described in atriums, that are found in most buildings today. And generally speaking, a much more honest use of materials. The structure generally is treated with respect by the younger architects today. Not perfectly, but it is happening. So I think there is a new architectural expression that is forthcoming.

Now, how has that affected our recent work or the recent work of other architects? All you have to do is to drive through some of the outstanding industrial areas in the Irvine Ranch area and find some of the industrial corporate headquarters that are gems of architecture, with beautiful landscaping and setbacks, and yet in those things, although they're not manufacturing generally and some of them are manufacturing of a light nature, we find keen architectural interest in spaces for people; and perhaps the expression that is really emerging is [that] the architecture is becoming much more receptive for the people that are working and living within those forms. I see a very



personal architecture evolving.

Now, the names of the young architects, none of them have risen to be bright stars, but they're there. And I think the best work is yet to be done. No question in my mind that as we move away from the rigidity of the financial pro forma and enhance our buildings with more personal spaces, even the commercial buildings, we will find a different kind of architecture happening. Of course the greatest influence of all, these days, is because of the energy shortage and the high cost of materials, the use of lightweight walls, the development of new modern glasses that reflect light and heat. And so the energy shortage and the closer management of light and the abandonment of high brightness interior lighting is all changing the nature of architecture. We now really are not illuminating all of our commercial spaces with bright high-footcandle-power illumination; we are reducing it way down and using local task lighting to do our work. This saves a lot of energy. So you can see very clearly it affects architecture.

LASKEY: It also sounds like there's been a complete reversal of the theories of the Bauhaus and a new humanism regarding architecture is developing.

MARTIN: I think that that's well said, that humanism is the word. The Bauhaus, however, I must say, could be very humanistic. Much more so than the eclecticism which came





to bear on architects striving to find something that was imaginative and yet without having the ability to create or adapt even very well.

I will say one thing about the refinement of the beaux arts: that the architects who were highly trained in that particular school, about the early twenties and the 1910s, did some magnificent work in the adaptation of the forms and the spirits of the classics, and hence these beautiful classic homes that you find all over the nation, with spaces that are inspiring spaces, with elegance that is not found in some of the humanistic trends. So that is an era that is gone, but one that will go down in history as being refinement of the historic styles and so forth that was notable.

LASKEY: And that's the era your father came out of.

MARTIN: Yes, absolutely. My father came out with appreciation for the refinement of the classical beaux arts schools. He was influenced considerably, because he was from the Illinois area, by the more practical aspects, although if you look at his work he had this great sense of need for good architecture. And he saw to it that his work was fine. So it's a great heritage, especially if one really gives the time to analyze the background and influences of that heritage, because these architects, and my father and myself coming along, have been working in the field with a



very rapidly changing society. The financial system has changed considerably. The energy system has changed considerably. Material supplies and all of these things have had a rapid transition, and so we have had the privilege of working in that kind of an environment. I think it's exciting.

LASKEY: Well, Peter Blake, in the book that's an attack on modernism, called Form Follows [Fiasco], accuses architects generally of not testing some of the new materials. How does A. C. Martin and Associates deal with new materials and the use of new materials?

MARTIN: Well, we have a strong feeling for quality, and that implies--and all of our work is this way--implies quality all through our work. Now, some architects aren't privileged to deal with quality materials, and they have made do with other substitutes. I think, however, that most of the architects that have misused materials just don't know any better, that they don't have the real fiber within themselves to use materials properly. The use of materials, I guess, is one of the most sensitive talents that an architect can have, and you see many examples of a lack of understanding on the part of the architect as to what it is really going to do. Many of them. The fact is you find plaster made into wood forms and vice-versa. These transgressions are unfortunate, but that's the way it is with many professions.



Some excel and some do not. I have cited that there are young architects today that are very good, but all of them aren't very good, and that's been true through history of course. I think it comes from a real understanding of the nature of the materials and the nature of the architecture using those materials. And that is what it's all about. That I think is a sign of a talented, mature architectural practice.

LASKEY: Have you had any real surprises in designs that you've made? For instance, the way a shadow would fall, or some element that couldn't be designed or built into your design that has turned out to be especially nice?

MARTIN: Well, I've seen some structural details that were done for structural reasons that have turned out to be really beautiful things if one really looks at that detail and concentrates on it, enhances it. Yes, I'm sure that in the evolution of designs the creation of space and shadow and light always brings a thrill when it comes to pass. Also, counter to that, when you know you've made a mistake, it becomes a glaring mistake; something you've done may not have been quality. Most of the mistakes that I know of have been more [from] following the trend of doing one part of a project as an office, let's say, in one kind of an architectural development and the warehouse portion of it being of corrugated iron, and there really is no apparent



unification between the designs. I'd say that that's wrong. We've done it many times, and it's unfortunate, doesn't have to be that way. The structure of an industrial plant can be absolutely magnificent.

Matter of fact, I believe the time that a high-rise building is most exciting is when the frame is up and you can look right through it. Yeah, like that. [looking out window] That is very exciting because it's pure. You know that there it is, it's a structure, and we're going to very carefully clad it with materials to resist the weather and, hopefully, not to conceal the structure. In other words, the building should reflect organism and purity of structure, which is an old thesis but has prevailed throughout the practice of Albert C. Martin and Associates. The structure has to be clean and pure, otherwise we have conglomerate architecture, which generally is a mistake.

LASKEY: How much control do you have over the building as it goes up?

MARTIN: We have lots of control over the building as it goes up, yes. Lots of it. And there are trespasses, as we talked about a little while ago, but most owners that we deal with will not violently oppose their architect, because they hired him to be their architect. And when they venture into architecture, it's usually distasteful, actually, because they interfere. Now, that doesn't mean





that we don't become terribly inspired with our clients, because we do. It's like Bob Anderson of ARCO and Herbert Bayer, who is his counsel. Now, Herbert Bayer has been one of our greatest advocates and supporters and, at times, critics. But he's a Bauhaus man, and Anderson is too.

LASKEY: When you say Herbert Bayer is a Bauhaus man, you might want to elaborate on that a bit.

MARTIN: Well, he's the last of the masters from the Bauhaus.

LASKEY: He really is.

MARTIN: He's the last living master. And we worked with Herbert Bayer way before we met him through ARCO. We worked with him when he was with Container Corporation of America, and he developed a book for them which was like a World Book. It [World Geo-Graphic Atlas] had to do with the geography of the world and the graphic representation of all the continents and so forth, and that was done under the guidance of Herbert Bayer.

LASKEY: Well, graphics was his strong point, wasn't it?

MARTIN: Herbert Bayer was really a graphic artist, more so, I think, than an architect. But he is outstanding, and I think he is one of the last of the masters.

LASKEY: Now he did the [Double Ascension] fountain in the plaza, the ARCO Plaza.

MARTIN: Yes, yes. And that has an interesting thing. It was



really a collaboration between Herbert Bayer and myself. I visited with Herbert Bayer at his home in Aspen when I was trying to solve the problem of getting the approval of the Bank of America and ARCO for the development of the plaza. My solution was the development of a large fountain, a circular fountain, which in my mind was representative of the source, the source of power and the source of water, as being a motivator. Herbert Bayer accepted that, and he felt that one of his creations, which was Double Ascension of the stairs, could float over the pool and create an ever changing variation in color as they go around and also, therefore, a reflection of, let's say, an inspired aesthetic response. We did that together, and I think it's one of the most successful art forms in the city. Herbert Bayer was responsible for the Double Ascension sculpture, and then we actually built it for him and designed it. We have passive water and we have active water, with great force bubbling up, and that's all controlled.

LASKEY: That sheath of water that goes over the side, that almost looks like it's motionless. How did you accomplish that?

MARTIN: That's passive-- Well, it's very interesting. We made the pool deep enough and we had the source of the water distributed such that it didn't create any motion in the water, so it becomes a glassy sheet hanging over the edge of



the granite. Whereas then we changed the mode periodically to be a very vibrant, heavy evolution of water as it comes up, and I was inspired to think that that had something to do with the earth and the development of oil and things like that.

LASKEY: You know, of course, that nobody can look at that fountain without sticking their finger in it.

MARTIN: It's really a fine fountain. It's well done, and, as I said, we really were the designers of the fountain, and Herbert Bayer designed the sculpture. Not any discredit to Herbert--all the credit in the world, because I think he's a great artist and a great architect.

LASKEY: That's a great statement about the plaza.

MARTIN: Oh, it is. I think it's just as good as any.

LASKEY: Well, the only other sculpture that I can think of in the downtown area is also in a building that you did, which is the [Alexander] Calder [The Four Arches].

MARTIN: Yes.

LASKEY: How did that come about?

MARTIN: Well, that came about by the inspiration of the officers--I'm not sure which officer--of Security Pacific Bank. It might have been Fritz [Frederick G.] Larkin, [Jr.]. We had an art committee. It probably was Pat [Oscar T.] Lawler, who was at that time an executive vice-president and retired, who had some experience with Calder's father [Alexander S.



Calder], who was a craftsman that designed and built many wrought-iron gates. He knew of that history and he knew of Calder's success in mobiles and so forth. So that committee selected this Calder, and I think it's a magnificent piece of sculpture and very harmonious with the vertical lines of the building and well placed. And Karl Klokke of our office had the initiative on that.

LASKEY: Of siting it there?

MARTIN: Of siting it and approving it and things like that. It's a very good piece of sculpture.

#### SECOND PART (JUNE 9, 1981)

LASKEY: Mr. Martin, suppose an ARCO or a Security Pacific, a Department of Water and Power, in their boardrooms decide that they want a new structure built. How do you get involved in that?

MARTIN: Most of the major projects that we have designed were awarded to us after rather intensive interviews of our thoughts and credentials, and we were compared to other firms who were generally located in this city, but not always. There were many cases where firms that are called national firms are brought in and interviewed. We have been able to develop a good record, and in the case of the major buildings downtown, we have been the dominant firm in this particular period of history. There's, you know, five or six of the major structures that are credited to our office.





We sometimes find ourselves building structures for competing firms, particularly competing banks, and this is sensitive. But since our work exemplifies our understanding of what the client's needs are and what the client's philosophy may be, we find that our work is everchanging and does harmonize with the role that the client takes in the whole business society. In other words, we're not building monuments to Albert C. Martin and Associates; we really are building buildings which are reflective of the quality and desires of our clients. And I think that's been part of our success. Our work has been quite varied, but very sensitive, as it molds into the overall urban scene.

After we are selected, we spend a great deal of time programming the work in a written and sometimes illustrated format to try to understand clearly the role that that particular corporation plays in the business or society of the city. There are many important things, such as image, such as the placement of the building form within the overall space of the city, questions related to long-term expandability and flexibility; there are practical things, such as the resistance to seismic movements, the foundation conditions, the inclusion of artwork within the environment, and an endless list of matters that need a firm decision on the part of the client. Once this program is adopted by the client and approved by its board of directors usually,



we then can plan the first schematic solutions to what we believe that program is calling for. This is an exciting part of the whole process and one which the client interfaces with us on a very close basis. And of course, as the work progresses, there's estimating and there's engineering and there's a great deal of detail work related to tenants in the building and department layouts and so forth.

LASKEY: Do you have an initial design concept in mind before the firm accepts you, or does that come later?

MARTIN: We have often developed initial concepts to present to the client. That's a touchy point in that some competing architects might consider that free services, but when we talk to the board of a company we generally like to know about the nature of their work, otherwise we're not very convincing. Which leads us to do some thinking about that prospective client, and, like in the case of Security Pacific and the Department of Water and Power, we actually build small scale models of what it might be, and I think those were very convincing, and I think they were very proper to express ourselves.

LASKEY: Well, something like the Department of Water and Power, did you then have to deal with many agencies in the city, to get their OK on the building?

MARTIN: Yes, we had to deal primarily with the Civic Center Authority, which was a group of assigned professional staff



from each of the entities that participated in the Civic Center Mall, most of them aligned to the county as well as the city, and one representative of the American Institute of Architects, in those days. I don't believe that's true today. In my estimation they could stand one. [laughter] Also, the interdepartmental relationship is pretty well expressed in the form of a written program, either prepared by ourselves or other consultants that do this work specifically.

LASKEY: Is it more difficult working with the city or with a governmental agency than with a private agency?

MARTIN: I would say it's more difficult because we are working with members of a [governmental] bureaucracy rather than a private bureaucracy, and there is a difference. As I've said at other times during this discussion, the bureaucracy within the governmental agencies today is one of the biggest problems that society has, because they do not have any cohesive role with other bureaucracies leading towards the resolution of a single problem. They operate on their own, in accordance with their own rules, and that's fundamentally why it doesn't work.

LASKEY: Let's talk specifically about the Well Fargo Building, since that is one that is just about finished. How did you start with Wells Fargo?

MARTIN: We started with a very close contact with the



Community Redevelopment Agency, who had some basic requirements for circulation of people in this particular location of Fifth and Flower [streets], which is becoming a point of transition between lower Los Angeles and upper Bunker Hill. The base of this building is designed for a very strong pedestrian movement up through the building in an open colonnade, which is unlike most buildings, that are all enclosed in the ground levels. So this building has open colonnades with open escalators, strong landscape features, including an attractive waterfall, which will be in the upper plaza, up in the--let's see, Hope Street elevation. And so, being open, it's also going to be landscaped with groves of tall Riverside palms that we have purchased out in the vicinity of Van Buren [Boulevard], where the old English settlers settled into Riverside. They're beautiful specimens, so they'll be brought into the city and planted down there.

LASKEY: Now, did you have much trouble in convincing Wells Fargo of this design?

MARTIN: Well, the real control on the design of the building was with ARCO, who owned the land, and the ARCO Foundation, which supports their retirement program, owns the fee of the land, and ARCO retained control and approval of the design. Now, ARCO was very cooperative with us, and we were sensitive to their feelings. Wells Fargo is a tenant, and





so the building is really being built by Rockefeller Realty Corporation, who owns it. So our principal point of satisfaction on the design features was with Rockefeller, with secondary approval by ARCO.

We advanced the idea that the building should be stainless steel, and there's no other stainless steel building in the city. We knew that, cost being a factor, it'd be difficult for us to discover a kind of wall panel for the outside, that we could use very thin stainless steel. However, we did, and we designed a stainless steel cover over a cellular core, which is actually called a honey-comb core. And I believe as the building is emerging, it's really quite effective, even though there are small ripples that can be seen at certain times of the day. It's a very clean building, it has a great deal of depth, and it is, incidentally, the most important building that David Martin has designed. The authorship of the design is his, and the determination of all the detail and the artwork has been his responsibility. So I believe it to be a very great success, and I believe that the tenant, Wells Fargo, does appreciate the building now more than in the beginning; they were worried about the ripples. But I think they really like that building. Of course it does a wonderful job of being complementary to the whole space development in that vicinity.



LASKEY: Now, I think you mentioned before there's going to be a pedway that connects the building across Flower Street?

MARTIN: Yes. There is a connection across Flower Street to the Bonaventure Hotel, and that, incidentally, hooks up with the bridge that we have constructed between the Bonaventure Hotel and ARCO Plaza. So the pedestrian circulation links well through the area, and that, incidentally, is part of the requirement of the Community Redevelopment Agency, the master plan for Bunker Hill.

LASKEY: Well, was the idea of the landscaped plaza, was that David's too?

MARTIN: Yes, the palm trees--all those ideas have emanated from his hand, you might say, and so it's a great pleasure for the firm and for him.

LASKEY: To backtrack just a bit in the Rockefeller-ARCO-Wells Fargo triangle, that brings up the subject of financing. How is a project as large as that financed? It must be very complicated.

MARTIN: I'm not certain of all the intricate financial arrangements. I believe Rockefeller has financed it with conventional financing. Undoubtedly they have a very strong portfolio of assets, which would make financing such a building not too difficult. They will have over



\$100 million in the project eventually. I hear that they consider it to be one of the best investments of all their investments throughout the United States, and I hope that's true. But they're pleased with the building.

LASKEY: Now, what are these ripples that you have talked about? Is that on the coating on the stainless steel?

MARTIN: Yes, the stainless steel, which is the outside skin of a large prefabricated panel, is less than a sixteenth of an inch thick and it is cemented to an impregnated honeycomb core, which is similar to that which is being used in aircraft design. On the inside of the panel is a regular steel sheet, and these materials are clamped together to form a sandwich construction. That sandwich panel is then fitted into some aluminum extruded frames, which also contain the glare-reducing glass. In that case we have double glass with a vacuum on the inside, so that there's less direct transmission of heat. We have radiant heat, but convected heat is eliminated by this double pane of glass. So in the process of laying on the thin stainless-steel exterior sheet, which is highly polished, there is a lack of perfection, especially for a mirror-like material, where any kind of a distortion will cause uneven reflections. This is true in any polished building. ARCO, for example, has a great deal of unevenness if you're looking for it. Most people don't know it because they're not looking for it. But the very



nature of stones being erected one on top of the other, or the very nature of a mirror-like surface, if there's any unevenness you can discern it. So we were very sensitive to that, and we think this has come off quite well, really, and will withstand a lot of time.

LASKEY: Now, David designed the building, and your engineering department perfected the techniques. ARCO and Rockefeller accepted. How do you get it built, the actual building?

MARTIN: Well, in this case the general contractor is Tishman Construction Company, and at the time we started the building, Tishman Construction Company was owned by Rockefeller Realty, as well as Cushman and Wakefield [of California, Inc.], which is still owned by Rockefeller. So the team was kind of a family team. In the process, however, of doing the job, Tishman Construction Company was bought back by John Tishman, Abe Bolsky, and some others. So that it is now independent of Rockefeller. However, they're still the general contractor.

LASKEY: How important is the choice of a general contractor?

MARTIN: Well, I think extremely important. There's some contractors that are much easier to work with--that is, our organization with theirs--and we have always had some difficulty working with the Tishman organization through the years. They're New York-oriented and very tough and very ruthless, whereas people like Turner [Construction Company],





or [C.L.] Peck [Contractor], or in former days William Simpson [Construction] were really more reasonable in their activities, which brought in so much cohesiveness as necessary. Tishman will do a fine job, they're a fine concern, but there's a great difference between firms. So we establish our preferences, but we'll work with almost any of them that have the ability to do such a major project.

LASKEY: Is it usually your choice?

MARTIN: Very seldom is it our choice.

LASKEY: Really!

MARTIN: We recommend a list, and we sit in judgment often with the owners, and we lead the discussion in many cases of the characteristics and qualifications of the proposed contractors. And we may make a recommendation that the owner may follow, but not always, not always. There may be some other connections that will be more important in regards to that very big decision.

LASKEY: What about collaboration with other firms? Is that something you try to avoid?

MARTIN: Well, we have through the years resisted collaboration with other firms, and the resistance emanates from several points of consideration. I'd say the most important is that most architectural firms have a tremendous pride of authorship of the design, and that pride then filters through the entire organization, and hence it is with us and with the



others, the other architects or architectural engineers that we might consider collaborating with. So many cases we're the only truly integrated AE [architecture-engineering] firm, and when we tie up with another architect, the only thing he can contribute is architectural design, theoretically. So that makes a rather limited choice on our part, because we can contribute both architecture and architectural engineering and our other kinds of engineering. However, we say to prospective collaborators that we will either be a consultant to them or they will be a consultant to us. Very seldom do we advocate joint ventures, which are frowned upon by our liability insurance company because of split assets as security for the policy. So we are very selective, really, with those that we agree to consult with. Generally speaking, it's our opinion that the major work and major design process has to be undertaken by one firm or the other, and so that guides us in our discussions.



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LASKEY: Are there any collaborations that you have done that have been successful?

MARTIN: Well, in the design of the Union Bank Square, which was designed originally for Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, we were associated with Wally [Wallace K.] Harrison and Max Abramovitz of New York. They were part of the architectural team that designed the United Nations and were close to the developers of this building, Galbreath-Ruffin [Corporation]. We found that collaboration to be a great pleasure in every sense, and Max Abramovitz and his staff were the principal originators of the design of this building. We had one of our staff with them in New York during crucial times, and then we did all the working drawings and basic engineering, other than the mechanical engineering, which was done in New York. It was a fine collaboration.

Another major collaboration we had was with Charles Luckman and Associates on the Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. I would say it was a very good collaboration, even though we ended up with difficulties between the two firms because we were all sued by the owner finally, as well as the contractor, in major lawsuits.

LASKEY: Resulting from what?



MARTIN: From claimed errors and omissions, and we felt, that is, Charles Luckman and ourself felt, that the ownership of the Cedars-Sinai hospital was very unfair in their perspective. The basis of their claims were the documents that I myself prepared to enlighten them as to the extent of omissions that might have occurred, and they turned that around and sued us with our own list. In a job that size we always have errors and omissions. We go into the job warning the owner that in a building where there may be ten thousand decisions made by our staff, all related, that sometime there's going to be an error or you might omit something. So even with that kind of a background, these days you have to be careful that you're not sued on almost every job. It's just like the state of the medical profession, it's exactly the same way. It's an unfortunate condition, and we had that, and it was very bitter. But my reaction was that it was a good collaboration with Charles Luckman and his group. They're very capable, and even though we were estranged it was still a very good collaboration. We did 99 percent of the work maybe, or something like that, but that didn't mean that they didn't contribute greatly.

Other associations are of very little consequence in my mind, and we do not generally practice with this kind of a business arrangement.

LASKEY: Well, the Cedars problem brings up another question:





Clients pick you; do you ever pick your clients?

MARTIN: Oh, we still are running all the time trying to get work, I would say. It's a work ethic that's not particularly relaxing, that we try to get every major job. We miss a lot of them, but we do pretty well, too. So the spirit of competition prevails strongly in the architectural profession today. We do our share of it.

LASKEY: Have you ever turned down a client?

MARTIN: Yes, we have, and generally because the client indicates that he either doesn't understand the process, or he may possibly be a client that we know is not going to be a good client, that he may have characteristics that indicate to us that trouble is on the horizon. And so, yes, occasionally, not very often.

LASKEY: What is a good client?

MARTIN: A good client is a person that really, in all truthfulness, will join with you in an understanding way to see that the building gets done well. A client that can make a decision and stick with it and a client that pays his bills on time. So those things probably, in that order, and of course there are magnificent clients around, especially the big corporations, like ARCO, Security Pacific, they pay their bills and they pay them on time, and they do engage in the process with you in a very businesslike way. All clients aren't like that.



LASKEY: With ARCO, for example, speaking of internal politics, do you have to deal with a number of agencies within ARCO, or do you deal with just one board?

MARTIN: We deal with many of their agencies within their own organization, because, as I mentioned, we must first draft a program of needs, and those large corporations have departments that are constantly describing and summing up the required facilities. So we usually end up with a branch of the facilities development group within the corporation, and our staff works with their staff over a program. Now, some of them are very sophisticated, some of them have some very strong procedural techniques that often clash with ours, and it's a give-and-take, but most of our clients end up to be good clients.

LASKEY: You said that Wells Fargo is going to cost in the area of \$100 million.

MARTIN: Yes.

LASKEY: That's a lot of money. What size-- What I'm trying to do is to relate the size of a project like that with the size of your firm. How large is Albert C. Martin and Associates right now?

MARTIN: Albert C. Martin and Associates now has a staff of a little over three hundred people. We have offices in Los Angeles, where the headquarters is, Orange County, Houston, and New York. The New York office is an office that we acquired when we once acquired Morganelli-Heumann [and Associates],



an interiors firm, which we later sold back to them, just to get rid of it. But we kept the New York firm, which is Kenneth Pfeiffer and Fidel Miro [Associates], who are planners of department store interiors. They're one of the best interiors planning and merchandising firms in the United States. They do good work, they are barely profitable most of the time, and we like them very much. They're controlled by us completely, but we do not, because of the distance, interfere with their design approach. It is a bit of an arm's length arrangement.

Houston we do control stringently, because it is an architectural engineering office, and we have some good work there, hopefully good enough, with good enough management to make a go of it. Our thesis is really that Albert C. Martin and Associates will function in the future generally along the Houston-Los Angeles axis and that, since Houston is the gateway to the Gulf [of Mexico] and South America and Europe, and Los Angeles is the gateway to the Pacific, that the influence of business will probably flow that way, you see. It's a Sun Belt kind of an approach. And we have guided our moves to some extent based upon that thesis. I think it's sound, and I think it will, in the long-range future, show up very well.

LASKEY: How long have you had the Houston office?

MARTIN: About four years. It's a small office.



LASKEY: Was that your decision, then, to open the office?

MARTIN: Well, when we bought Morganelli-Heumann they had a Houston office. That's one of the reasons we bought them, so that we could go to Houston with an established office. That didn't work out very well, because we closed down the interiors part of Morganelli and Heumann and opened up an architectural engineering office. So it's been a struggle, but I think we're making it now. We believe it's going to be good.

LASKEY: And Orange County, is that particularly an industrial concept?

MARTIN: No, Orange County is general practice. It's strange that we should have an office in Orange County, which is so close to Los Angeles, but there's a lot of people in the Orange County area that are provincial, and Los Angeles is just a long ways from Orange County, we find. The Orange County office is really very successful today. Small, in that there's probably twenty-five people there, but we think it'll be all right. We do much of the work from Orange County in our Los Angeles offices, like engineering work.

LASKEY: Now David is your son; we were talking about David earlier.

MARTIN: Yes.

LASKEY: And David and your nephew Christopher and your brother Ed, and yourself of course, now are the four main partners in the firm.





MARTIN: Four partners, yes. And I believe that it's really a very good partnership. David and Chris get along well. They have been given authority to take initiatives and to keep things whipped into shape, and since I'm at the age of sixty-seven at the moment and Ed is coming along, we want them to be in charge as early as they can take it. Because it's a big responsibility, both professionally and financially. So I think the partnership will work well. We at one time considered taking partners in who were not members of the family, and we immediately found a contest amongst our principal staff that was very negative, and they were all striving to be the principal people, when they didn't really have to be. We finally said, "Lookit, we are going to be a family-run firm, as we always have been, and we're going to have a very fine environment for our principal staff." We set a business principle many years ago that in effect said that 40 percent of all the profits of the firm will go to the employee group in the form of profit-sharing retirement trusts and bonuses, and we have adhered to that all through these years. Sometimes it's been fruitful for those that have earned it, and sometimes it has not been all that great. However, the associate group, and there's about thirty-five or forty associates in this firm, seems to be reasonably satisfied with the compensation aspect. I think the most important thing is



the development of a strong feeling of loyalty amongst the members of the firm, the staff, so that they are happy with their pursuit of their profession. It seems to be working quite well now, although there have been some rough roads.

LASKEY: I can imagine. Was there much indignation or apprehension when David and Christopher were brought in, because of their being young?

MARTIN: David is considerably older than Chris (I think about six or seven years older), and David earned his way into the, let's see, acceptance by the senior members of the firm by being a very capable designer and a very capable person, who is able to analyze and with firmness work with all the rest of them. And I made it very clear from the very earliest times that David would become a partner; there was never any question about that, so they all knew. In other words, that was extremely important that those that were not going to be partners, under the arrangement that I spoke of, recognized that he was going to be a partner and he would be their boss someday, in effect. The same thing came along with Chris. We made it real clear. And with that kind of positiveness I think it's been well accepted.

LASKEY: You had said that you could never imagine not being an architect. Did David feel that way?

MARTIN: Oh, he always was destined to be an architect; when he was a boy he used to build and design cars, and he still



does, and races them. But he always was really a fine designer, able to create form and mechanical aspects. Chris, I don't know about that, but Chris is a very capable architect and good in settling problems on jobs, and that will be his dominant role, I'm sure.

LASKEY: Well, with yourself and your brother, your brother is more--his forte is more engineering, as I understand that.

MARTIN: Originally. He is an engineer, and as we've gone through time and our organization has changed, we finally as partners adopted a certain area of the business that each partner would be in charge of. Like I'm in charge today of client relations, which includes marketing. Ed is the operating manager today, and he has total responsibility for doing that. David is manager of professional affairs, which has to do with procedures and policies and so forth, and Chris is a project director and working on some of our most important projects. So as partners we have special assignments, and it seems to be working quite well. Now, since there's four of us, it's not quite so much an elbow-to-elbow relationship like Ed and I have had through the years, but a meeting of four partners periodically, and we do have substantial meetings.

LASKEY: You said you were sixty-seven; do you see yourself retiring at all?

MARTIN: Well, I can see when I've finished with the Bicentennial,



there'll be another look at it, and I really don't want to completely retire, that'd be ridiculous, I believe. But I certainly am going to have to take it easier, because I find myself really exhausting all of my energies with all this activity. So I suspect that in another four or five months I'll start thinking of a reduced workload, but maintaining more and more client contact where I can do the most good.

LASKEY: And then Ed would be--

MARTIN: Ed will continue with his management, and the boys are coming on a fairly well defined program of picking up some of the management operations detail, and Ed will probably gravitate more to the overall financial aspects. We have a lot of different organizations that we have, Ed and I do. And agriculture, he runs a cattle ranch--

LASKEY: Oh, he does!

MARTIN: Yeah, he has a big spread, he leases land; he used to own it. He always has about four hundred, five hundred head of cattle,

LASKEY: Really.

MARTIN: And he likes horses. So we have some property interests; the biggest one is the ranch at Riverside. That is large and very valuable, very slow and tedious type of development, which is under my wing, incidentally. But we have many properties, most of them very slow in their movement, valuable sure, you know, like property at Sunset





and Beaudry [Avenue]. There are two blocks of land, they're worth \$4 million, and people once in a while hint at paying us that; so one of these days we'll sell that.

LASKEY: Sunset and Beaudry, now your original office, or one of your offices, for a long time was on Beaudry. Is that the land?

MARTIN: Yes. Well, we really leased that to a developer, and right now it's leased, and he has an option to buy it. We had to make that move because we were so much in debt at the bank, and so we had to sell the property to bail out, really, and it did [sell]. We sold it for \$1.76 million and bailed out of the bank, got the load off, and so we had to sacrifice that very fine asset.

LASKEY: This was in 1960?

MARTIN: No, it was 1974 and '5.

LASKEY: Really! That recent.

MARTIN: We had a large office. We bought Morganelli and Heumann, and lots of things really turned wrong. So there really is a huge demand in running a firm like this for working capital, just huge. Like at least \$4 million in working capital to run this place. That is something that's always on our back; we can't get out of the bank, you know, and all the old story. My mother heard it from my father, and it's not much different. But we were not too discouraged. But it's not easy, it's a very difficult financial business to



run a shop like this. You can operate different kinds of firms and do it easier.

But when we have all the things we're doing--like computer development, we're one of the leaders in America in the development of computer sciences. As a matter of fact, the navy department is just about to buy our proprietary program that we use for drawing plans on computers for \$800,000. Then the government will own one copy that can be used by government services, and we will still own the basic proprietary set of programs. So you can see how advanced it is. And those things, the decisions on how much we expand in research and development of the new computer sciences, are decisions that are costly, are large-risk; they're fun and all of that, but we run a pretty risky shop sometimes, the way we manage things. It's not like selling some product; it's the discovery process, it's the promotional process, paying for development of programs.

LASKEY: Well, you must also develop a lot of programs or projects that never see the light of day, too.

MARTIN: Yes, some of our projects-- Do you mean programs, or are you thinking of computer now?

LASKEY: No, what I'm thinking of is that you design a building, or you design a complex, and you put all of your time and effort into it, and then it doesn't get built.

MARTIN: Oh, yes, that happens every once in a while, for one



reason or another. The corporate-financial world, I say corporate-financial, today moves so fast that many large organizations have great success and great failure, and papers are full of it every day. And we're no different. We can have wonderful luck with our buildings, and we can really have some failures. So it's the pace that has changed so considerably. And you really have to be alert and measure every decision. So it's all right, that's the nature of the thing.

LASKEY: But it keeps you living on the edge all the time.

MARTIN: You're always living on the edge. Of course I think the practice of architecture, especially, keeps you on the edge anyway, because keeping clients happy and making certain that your decisions are proper is a very difficult process. And bureaucracy creeps into your own organization: you know, people that aren't thinking and causing you damage, and you can't keep track of it all. It's too big.

LASKEY: Well, when you're caught, too, I would think, between having an established team that you can depend upon and having creative input, that you don't have a team that becomes tired.

MARTIN: Yeah. Well, the creative input, every building is kind of exciting. Sometimes the engineering systems become somewhat routine, somewhat. But the design, architectural design systems never do. That's the thing about architecture.



There's never two buildings that are alike nor two client relationships that are alike. And it really is a very interesting profession. People drift in and out of it all the time. And there're not many firms that keep the pace that Albert C. Martin and Associates keeps. Our pace has been fast for all these years.

LASKEY: Well, your father began the firm in 1906 or 1904?

MARTIN: [In] 1906. He came here to the coast in 1904, and he married my mother in 1907; but I think that was right after he obtained the position of principal designer for the Hamburger store, working for [A. E.] Rosenheim, and that led him to the account, the Hamburger, and then the May Company account, amongst others. So the firm, even though it's had its ups and downs, through the now seventy-five years, it has always been pretty active. And we've always had a good reputation. Once in a while we slip a little bit, and we really get excited and start to shape up.

LASKEY: Is there any architectural firm in the city that has a comparable history?

MARTIN: No, we're the oldest.

LASKEY: That's what I'd think.

MARTIN: Yeah. Now, the others don't really come close to us. Sure, there are some of them [which were] started after the World War II, but-- Well, there's Bob Clements, whose father was an architect, Bob's still going; but if you look





around there are very few firms today that didn't start until after the war.

LASKEY: What do you see, since you've been so involved in Los Angeles and the way it looks, as the future of the city?

MARTIN: Well, I believe that the city will densify considerably, and there will be a lot of multistory apartment complexes and condominiums in some cases. I see, hopefully, the development of a different type of village plan, little small community plans, little cells of community life, located in the various segments of the city, and they probably will be related to the centers of transportation. I think the smog situation will clear pretty well.

LASKEY: How will we do that?

MARTIN: Well, the perfection of the gasoline engine, for one, and then perhaps another form of power generation is on the horizon. There are lots of hope that there will be power generated from some process of atomic development wherein we'll have adequate power to drive various vehicles.

LASKEY: Really.

MARTIN: But that's out thirty, forty years. But I can't believe that there wouldn't be that, because the gasoline engine has been perfected through the last fifty years, sixty years, to something that's highly refined. Well, we all know that we're running out of fuel, and another form of fuel, whether solar energy or nuclear energy, is out there to have.



And I think it will be commonplace. So driving transportation vehicles, of whatever nature, I think we'll be on a much freer basis.

And I don't know whether we'll ever get free of gravity, but any development like that is going to be sensational. Obviously we're on the fringes of that in our space program, which is very exciting, to be free of gravity and drive those space vehicles without any pull. All sorts of things are happening there now, things that we don't even conceive of. There's no question in my mind that there will be space cities, bases out in space, where people will live and work for certain specialized work, because it's all so easy to do. That's really a long-range and exciting thing, and it will be designed probably by special architects.

LASKEY: I was going to say, what's the role of the architect in this future?

MARTIN: Well, I think that there is a role. He's a different person, he will be. But somebody has to design things, and I believe those that are trained in the management and design of space and form will be the ones.

In the immediate future, of course, there's Los Angeles being the financial center of the Pacific Rim and of the West, and it's there now. There's a great deal of activity and many, many jobs and pretty good weather. And it's going to densify more and more and more. We'll need more transportation



and transportation centers, whatever kind, you know, whether it's subways, fixed rail, modest type of helicopter. I think that will all happen, but it'll be different. And it'll still take firms like this to do it.

LASKEY: I think that we've pretty much covered the history of A. C. Martin.

MARTIN: OK.

LASKEY: We've talked about your father and his coming out, and the past and your growing up and the development of the firm, and the future. I wonder if you have anything that you've thought about that we haven't covered that you'd like to get on the record, that you'd like to say.

MARTIN: Well, I suppose that we'd have to gravitate away from the day-to-day happenings. As I hope I've indicated, I think there is really a fine development for men in this particular urban element and in the education of man, children and all of that. I firmly believe that there are strides being made now, especially with the integration of different ethnic groups into this West Coast. They're here, and we're conglomerate. It's not easy to bring common understanding of different issues of society, but that's what it's going to be. There will be a lot of very fine training of youth into the ways of society. This is exemplified in the Bicentennial very clearly, where we have made such an issue of the training of children and the weaving



together of certain kinds of ethnic relationships, friendliness at least. All you have to do is look at the man on the street in downtown Los Angeles today and you find that they're of some other foreign background, practically everyone. You walk into the elevator lobby of this building and you may not see a person of, let's say, Christian background at all. Or white. So it's happening very fast. So therefore I do think we have lots of changes of government, but that every country does. I hope we can conserve our natural resources and stay industrious as a nation, especially on the West Coast.

LASEKY: Well, you've lived in Los Angeles for sixty-seven years. That's a long time to live in this city particularly.

MARTIN: Yeah.

LASKEY: I just wondered if you would give some impressions off the top of your head, the things that come to your mind, the remembrances, or changes.

MARTIN: I'm always impressed at how sophisticated the people were at the change of the century in Los Angeles; that is, the business leaders and the social leaders and their society. I'm very impressed, even though the automobile was just showing up on the horizon, at the cultural things that took place, and the architecture, the development of fixed-rail streetcars, Pacific Electric--those were new developments. The wealth that was generated by some of these pioneers,





absolutely amazing, and there were people before that, like the Bannings and some of the Huntingtons and so forth, people that were really adventurers with great foresight. Great foresight. I mean, the idea of [William] Mulholland going up into the [Owens] Valley, up into the Sierras, and bringing water that distance is unbelievable, but they did it. So, all in all, I'm always amazed at how sophisticated they were in practically every aspect of social and business life. Sure, we have changed with communication, principally. I think the big change is communication, because of the TV, radio, and all of that, and now computers. And the war did so much of that. It brought forth the space program promoted by President [John F.] Kennedy. Really changed the nature of the world. So one sees all those things, and yet the substance of the mind of the individuals today is about the same, as I see it, the intelligence level, even though we have more resources to draw from. I'm always amazed at the advanced state of the society here in Los Angeles in the change of the century.

LASKEY: Well, it was a very wide open city that you grew up in, especially in the thirties, with Aimee Semple McPherson and the various political organizations, like EPIC [End Poverty in California], and a whole different world really out here than it was in the eastern, middle western part of the United States. Do you think that influenced your architecture at all?



MARTIN: I have a feeling that my period of design--where I was half-trained in the beaux arts and then gravitated toward the more contemporary design at that time, in 1936 and '7 when I graduated--that in some ways that was a weak period of design development here. Sure, we did some good work, but if you think of some of the magnificent classic things that were done before that, and I know they were borrowed and they were eclectic, but there was a lot of work done in urban buildings, like downtown Los Angeles, that were indeed advanced in their own sense. And I think we lost a lot of it. The Depression took a lot of spark out. For one thing there was no money, and the war destroyed the architectural practices that were remaining here. It wasn't until after the war when the great exodus from the city and the highway system came along and shopping centers and great residential building programs like Lakewood and those came along, there was a whole new thing developed. Architectural firms sprang up; the school architects were busy as can be because we were building so many schools, and the industrial. So in the fifties and sixties this place was quite vibrant, as it has been lately.

LASKEY: But the shopping centers and the schools, that long, low layout of the shopping centers, doesn't that reflect a California approach?



MARTIN: Oh, definitely.

LASKEY: The idea of space. And even your downtown buildings, the buildings that you have built, the open spaces.

MARTIN: Yes, I think the open spaces are handled with more delicacy than in other societies. I think we really respect the element of space in our design. Whether it was the low California bungalow and shopping-center type of spread, or even in the more densified urban design, like we have it downtown today, there's a great deal of sensitivity to space and its qualities. And, thank goodness, there were some people, you know--we talked about tree-planting the other day--some of those early developers planted miles of trees out here, street trees. Then there was a big lull, and it wasn't until Cleve Bonner and I started it all over again that we got so many trees planted.

LASKEY: There used to be great gardens, too, that I don't think exist any more, that I've read about: the [Adolphe L. and Eugene] Bernheimer Gardens or the Arthur Letts Gardens. Did you ever see any of those?

MARTIN: No, but I knew the name of Arthur Letts so well. No, I never saw the gardens. I remember the mansions on Wilshire Boulevard extremely well, the Hancock residence, which is now preserved at USC and which I had the privilege of eating lunch there every few months. There's some of those historic buildings that have been retained.



LASKEY: Wilshire Boulevard is pretty much decimated, unfortunately; that is, from the houses. There are only a couple rambling ones left.

MARTIN: Wilshire Boulevard has been up and down, every segment of it has been, and it keeps coming back, and there will be a rejuvenation in some of those areas again. But I think the most important thing about the Wilshire corridor is the amount of living space, the density of the apartments along there, from Wilshire up to First Street in some cases. That is a very, very busy kind of an urban area, and it's going to have to be rejuvenated too. But I don't know, one could go along and reminisce a bit and perhaps look out in the future; we've tried to do some of that in the Bicentennial with actual programs. We have one at USC called "Los Angeles, 200+20"; that may be a very interesting program. I mean, the study.

Well, it sure has been a pleasure, Marlene, to work with you through these many, many experiences; it's been a lot of fun.





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