

The Minnesota
Women in Architecture
FAIA Legacy Project

Julia Robinson Oral History Interview

August 16, 2018

Introduction

Legacy Project

The Minnesota Women in Architecture FAIA Legacy Project, is a joint effort of the Minnesota Architectural Foundation (MAF) and the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Women in Architecture Committee. In 2018, the Legacy Project began to amplify the achievements of our female fellows by documenting the stories of the women architects in the Minnesota recognized with the AIA's highest membership honor, Fellowship (FAIA).

The project's primary goals are: 1) to increase the visibility of women architects to break down stereotypes that may be instrumental in the formation of unconscious bias about the women in the profession and 2) to increase the visibility of women architects to encourage more women to seek a career in architecture and to stay productive in the profession despite adversity.

Funding from the Minnesota Historical Society supported the first eleven interviews and oral histories; with this template, the project will continue to grow.

Julia Robinson



Elevated to Fellow in 2014, innovative teacher and scholar Julia Robinson, Ph.D., AIA, has contributed to the architectural profession in three areas: 1) social concern, 2) knowledge-based design and 3) the development of a globally-oriented profession.

Interview

Julia Robinson, Interviewee

Kimberly Long Loken, Britney Clair Pool Lindsay and Erin Kindell, Interviewers

August 16, 2018

Kimberly Long Loken: **KL**

Brittany Clair Pool Lindsay: **BL**

Erin Kindell: **EK**

Julia Robinson: **JR**

Track 1

00:00

KL Today is August 16, 2018. We are at the University of Minnesota Rapson Hall interviewing Julia Robinson. Conducting the interview are Kimberly Loken and [Masters students at the University of Minnesota] Brittany Lindsay and Erin Kindell.

KL So Julia, would you tell us when and where you were born?

JR I will. I was born in 1947 in Washington D.C.

KL So we'll just start chronologically talking through how you found architecture, how you found teaching, some influences during childhood, young adulthood that maybe brought you to this career path.

JR Okay. My father was an architect, my mother was a journalist, and my grandmother was a painter, and my aunt was a painter, and my great-aunt was a painter, so we had a lot of art in the family. So that was something everybody did as a normal thing as part your life is drawing and painting and all those things. So that was just a part of growing up. Also a lot of music in the family. All kinds of arts, really. We did writing and everything, so very focused on that. So I was exposed to architecture, but actually I didn't really think of it for myself because my father was doing it. And he would take me on—occasionally would take me to the office, would take me to some job sites and so on. So I had sort of an understanding of what it was about. But I really thought when I was—well, when I was in high school, I wanted to be an actress. And then I worked for a theater in the summer and

decided I didn't really like the people that were in that field, so then I thought I might be a musician because I played the piano and sang and did [unintelligible].

And then I realized that how that was kind of an impractical field, and then I thought, well, I'd love to be an artist, but I didn't really have the ego to do it—the confidence in my own work. You really have to have a lot of confidence to do it as a full-time thing. And I wanted very much to do something—I was raised a Swedenborgian, and one of the tenants of the Swedenborgian religion is you want to be of use in society, and so I wanted to do something that was working with people I thought would be important. So that's how I found architecture, but it was a long and circuitous route, and I didn't really realize I wanted to be an architect until after my—I guess during my freshman year in college. And so, at that point then I applied to University of Pennsylvania and went there for pre-architecture for a year. And then I fell in love and came to Minnesota (laughter) and finished my education—my professional education here at the university.

KL So where were you initially in college and what were you studying that first year?

JR The first year I was at the Swedenborgian School in Pennsylvania called the Bryn Athyn College.

KL Did you have siblings?

JR Yes. I had two older brothers.

KL And were they in the arts as well [unintelligible]?

JR My oldest brother was a mathematician. The younger brother was a filmmaker.

KL So how many years were you at Penn?

JR Just one—just one. Unfortunately, I didn't get exposed to all those wonderful faculty that were there.

KL So then what year did you come to Minnesota?

JR That was 1966 I think.

KL Were there a lot of other women in the program at that point [unintelligible]?

JR The class I was in—there were two of us in a class of 125.

KL So a few more in the adjacent years?

JR The year ahead I think there was one and the year behind I think there were two or three. And then, when we graduated, there were just two of us. But the year ahead some transfers students had come in, and so there were I think two or three in that year. Actually, I didn't graduate with my class. I graduated a year later because I had a child—took a little longer to finish.

KL So what was that dynamic like, not only being in an extreme minority of women, but then also expecting a child while juggling school is also pretty epic (laughter).

JR It was quite a challenging experience because, at that time, there were faculty members who were opposed to having women in the field, and so your grades didn't always—some of us were surprised at what you would get as a grade. And one time, one of my—we had a deadline that was—I think it was a Monday deadline and nobody met it. So they said, "Alright, we'll have the review on Wednesday." And I spent Tuesday working on a really nice drawing and I did a really good job at it. And then so when I—we had the review on Tuesday, I got a higher grade than usual because it was such a nice drawing. But one of the faculty members didn't give me a very high grade, and I asked afterwards, why not? And he said that, "Well, women can't draw that well." So I thought that was sort of telling (laughter).

KL Very telling. And with your background in music too, it makes me think about the blind audition process, and I can't remember what year that with instituted, but it would have been interesting to have had—

JR More of that.

KL —a blind review of the drawings. So, certainly, there weren't women on the faculty?

JR No.

KL At that time?

JR There were no women, but then of course it was Ralph Rapson's era. And so the faculty, a lot of them were people who worked with him, or for him, or his friends, or colleagues. And there were very few full-time faculty at that time. I think there were four and then everybody else was an adjunct faculty and a practicing professional.

KL Right. So tell us about the transition into your early career then.

JR So, let's see, I haven't thought about this history in a long time. So, when I was in school, one of the things I really was interested in was research so, when I did my final project, which then was called a thesis, even though it was an undergraduate project at that—because I got a B on it. The year before—I guess that fall—we had quarters—so the fall quarter I enrolled in a class with a faculty member named Roger Clemence who was very

interested in social issues and he was working with model cities and we were—and he also was working with the Design Center—what is it called? —the Design Center that also—

KL [unintelligible] Design Center?

JR No, it was before that—long before that—different design center—that was working with other fields other than just architecture. So there was—we had a studio, but it was a multidisciplinary studio. And one of the students was a social worker, and we were both interested in housing. So we decided what we wanted to do, and I had decided that I wanted to do housing and I thought that probably the most interesting neighborhood was the Phillips neighborhood. So we decided we would do interviews in the neighborhood. And we developed an interview format where they could manipulate, showing their ideal house, they could design it on the—using walls and so on and so forth. And so we had them design their ideal house, and we asked them about ownership and a lot of different questions. And so that was really the basis for—and so the two of us went out—she was African-American. So that was interesting and helpful because it was a mixed area, so we interviewed all of these different kinds of people, from little-old-ladies who were Scandinavian, to Hispanic people who lived there, and African-Americans. And it was a really interesting and wonderful experience to have had.

When we got through that, I learned that their housing aspirations were the same as everybody else's and, when I went to design the housing project which actually was on what is now called Little Earth Housing Project—that was the site—it was the high school site—South High, I guess—I decided that that thing should be as much like if you owned it as possible, and it should be a house rather than an apartment. So we designed row houses which were actually designed there as well. And I also closed the Cedar Avenue—so instead of having a road through the middle of the project, you had to go around which was—of course you didn't have to worry—as a thesis, you didn't have to worry about all the traffic problems that would cause (laughter).

BL I've always wanted to ask you—so since you are a transplant to Minneapolis, I wonder if the character of the houses is what turned you on to housing immediately when you were starting?

JR Not at all. Actually, when I came, I was expecting a city with row houses. And I was shocked that this was a city and it had all these houses on their single plot. Because I had grown up in Washington D.C. where you—we lived in a row house, and my grandmother lived in a row house, and everybody I knew that had a house lived in a row house, except unless you lived in the suburbs, and we didn't know that many people who lived in the suburbs at that time actually. So that was—I was expecting something quite different. And, at that time, row houses were not considered very saleable. So they could build them for poor people but, at that time, it was new to sell townhouses, as we now call them, to middle-class people. That was just beginning at that time. I was so surprised that people

didn't automatically accept that (laughter)—sort of strange. That was a good question (laughter).

KL So you finished your thesis. You had a B.Arch [Bachelors in Architecture]? Did you pursue licensure? Did you focus or did you focus academia right away?

JR Well, so at this point, in the middle of my career I got pregnant with my first child, and she was born. Let's see—how did this work? She was born in what would have been my senior year, and I was planning to go back to school because I thought that's what you did because what did I know about raising children at that point. And it turned out that she was premature and she got very ill. So I couldn't go back to school. So that year—then I skipped a year, and then the next year I came back. And then I got pregnant again so, when I had my thesis, I was pregnant. So that was something to be dealt with. And it so happened that my husband at that time was running for school board, so that in June we were doing thesis in our house. The election was I think a day before my presentation. So we had all these people from the political campaign. Fortunately, one of the people, Ed Bell, who was an architect, who is now a real estate agent, helped me with my drawings, because I didn't know how to do all the drawings. He helped a lot. In those days, you could actually have team members work on your drawings. So it was fortunate that he was there. So I got everything done and it was all fine, but so, you can imagine, with a toddler and then the election people, and pregnancy, and it was quite the time.

KL Has political involvement been a big part of your career? Was it something that was just happening at that time in your life?

JR Well, I've always been politically cognizant, but I haven't been—you know, go to caucuses, but I don't—haven't really been politically active, although I've been very socially concerned. That's sort of—my big interest in this. So after I got my bachelor of architecture, then I spent a couple years at home with my two small children. Then I began—and I was involved—it was the Southeast Cooperative Nursery School, which was—I don't know if you know what a co-op nursery school is, but it's really great because the parents get involved and they have to participate. And so what you do is you learn about child rearing from the teachers.

KL That's brilliant.

JR And so it was a really wonderful way of learning about—and then the other thing was that, as I was there, and I was observing all these kids, when I came back to work, I started seeing all my colleagues as kids with tricycles that wouldn't share. So it was a very helpful experience to looking at human beings later on, when I came back to work in the architecture office. But, anyway, I started off then when I—so when I became involved with the parent coop nursery school, suddenly I was directing it. And then I thought, wait a

minute, I shouldn't be director of the nursery school, I should be doing architecture if I'm working like this. So then I decided to go back to work.

Fortunately, at that time we moved to a neighborhood where I was part of another babysitting coop. And one of the people was the wife of an architect, Dewey Thorbeck. And I was talking to her and she said, "Oh, you know Dewey is starting a new project. I think you might be interested," because I was talking about—I was very interested in research and I'm working on human needs and so on. And so he was designing the new zoological garden in what's now Apple Valley—the zoo in Apple Valley—the Minnesota State Zoological Garden. And so he needed—he was interested in having someone that was interested in working with the user facilities. So he hired to me help with the programming.

So, I had the opportunity to work on that project, and it was very wonderful. He was working also with the Courage Center. He was working with them because he wanted to introduce handicapped access to the zoo. That was one of the first projects in the state that had handicapped access.

KL Well in advance of the ADA (American's with Disabilities Act) which was what, 1991 [1990]—ADA?

JR Well, this was '70—

KL And this would have been the early '70s?

JR 70s, yeah. And this was '71 or '72 I think—maybe '73 or '74. Anyway, I was introduced to this idea of handicapped ramps. So we designed the zoo so you can take your baby buggy or you can take your wheelchair or whatever in that wonderful interior exhibition, and that was how we laid out, how you'd laid out the ramps and all those things.

KL Like kind of in the rainforest area?

JR Yes. In the rainforest area. Then also—but also throughout the whole site. It's handicapped accessible, all the paths and everything—follow the rules that were generated by the Courage Center people. So that was really an interesting thing. And the other thing that I designed was the toilets, and we put in diapering areas that were not in the women's area. They were in a separate area so that men and women could use them. And also an area for nursing. I think it was kept in the design but I don't know. I haven't been back in years, so I don't know.

KL We're going to look that up (laughter).

JR You know, you never know. They didn't do quality engineering then, but they did sometimes lose some of the important things they had designed.

KL It's very interesting at that moment too to think about how much the energy crisis affected architecture—

JR Yes.

KL —in those years and how so much about the building as a commodity as opposed to a place for diverse human activities. So it—

JR It was interesting—I don't know if you knew John Weidt but he worked there too, and he was in charge with Dewey Thorbeck and—well actually it was Inner Design and it was Roger Martin, Dewey Thorbeck and Peter Seitz. And John Weidt was hired to do energy and he discovered that you couldn't have the—the glass roof was too hot, so we had to figure out how to have a roof that the plants would not be killed in.

KL You're designing a rainforest in Minnesota in the energy crisis—fascinating challenge (laughter).

JR So then what happened next was that there was a competition in New York City for Roosevelt Island Community Design Center—I don't remember. There was some wonderful group that was organizing this competition, and I was totally fascinated by it. And John Cuningham was involved in it and wanted to work on it, so somehow, I got involved. I don't know if I'd already started working with John. No, I think at that point—I'm not sure the chronology right now, but in any event, I started working on this competition which was really wonderful, and it got me really interested in the whole question which I'd already been interested in before, but the question of density and perceived density because, obviously, you had—in New York City you have to build more densely. But people want to have their own house, so how do you create something that gives you a sense of your own house in a large complex? So that was really the problem that we were, on this competition, very interested to explore.

And then the other question was how—I'm still exploring today—how you mix incomes and ages in a complex. And so we designed complexes which had elevators that served a—I think we had elevators that served a variety, but then the floors were—had different people—similar people living on each level. So then you stacked up these different types of units. So it was very prescient in relation to the Dutch house that I'm now doing, so that was really interesting. And so I worked with John on that, but also I was working at his firm doing research on filing systems, and I built a model that was so terrible that nobody would—. The rest—infamy because I built it in I think three hours or something, and John was saying, Julia Robinson built a model in three hours. He didn't tell them it was a terrible model (laughter).

Anyhow—so that was—so I worked with John and then there was a recession. The recession I guess was when I was with Dewey and I got laid off, and for a while I did

independent—I was doing renderings for developers selling housing. And then I felt a little guilty about it because I'd make them look really good. I wasn't sure that housing was worth as much as they looked in the renderings (laughter).

And then I got this job with John and, at that point, I heard about—and I'd really decided I really wanted to do research. I thought that was really important. So I heard about a class that Roger Clemence and Evelyn Franklin from the housing program were offering on housing. I can't remember the name of the course, but it was about designing for people's needs. And it was a class where they were inviting in all of the—there was a new field developing and that was environment behavior research. And I don't know if you're familiar with that, but it's about—it's the area where social science and design comes together to make better places at all scales. So it would be—there were also urban designers and there were interior designers and architects and urban planners and all kinds of people get together. And there was a new discipline and it was sort of starting, and there were a lot of people who were very wonderful—who were—these different disciplines were coming together to work together, and so they had Evelyn and Roger had gotten together and decided they wanted to bring these people for seminar and for a lecture series.

So they got money from the University to bring these people. So I was part of this class where every week—I think it was probably spring—the spring semester—I mean spring quarter, so it was probably seven, eight weeks long, but every week they would bring—I guess it was ten weeks. Every week they would bring a new person, and the person would—we'd have two seminars, one on Tuesday afternoon and one on Thursday, for several hours. And then on Wednesday, they would deliver a public lecture. So we got to talk to these people, these innovative researchers, people like Irwin Altwin came and Amos Rappaport and Claire Cooper Marcus—I can't remember all the people, but these really great people who were doing this wonderful work. So it was very exciting for us as students to have contact with these people, and at that point I had decided that I wanted to get a social science background. So I was looking at all these different people. Some of them were sociologists, some were geographers, some were anthropologists, some were psychologists, and so I was looking to—listening to them and thinking about what discipline should I get a degree in. And of course, those days, you could apply in the summer and get in in the fall.

KL What department was offering this course?

JR This was joint between architecture and housing—the housing program.

KL So housing in university—

JR Housing studies that time was in—

KL in like sociology or like that branch of—

JR No, it was actually in the St. Paul campus in the agricultural school. It was funny, and it was in home economics I think kind of. It was a strange—

KL They kind of make—a lot of home ec[onomics] programs have sort of a history like that [unintelligible]—

JR That's right.

KL That makes sense at that time.

JR So it was a fabulous course, and I did a very interesting research project for it where I compared two housing projects in St. Paul. Let's see if I can remember them—the Liberty Plaza and let's see, what's the other one—the Hanover Apartments—they're still both there—and studied them and comparing them. And one of the things I discovered was that there was no place for children to play that they would play anyway, and that made a mess of the one project and then the other project had a place that was very beautifully maintained. And also they didn't kick out tenants who weren't helping—who were bad. You would have a real problem because the one place didn't kick out the tenants and it was just a big mess. And the other place was very beautiful—Liberty Plaza's still today a very nice project. The other one has been renovated several times. The other problem with the other one was that it had lots of escape routes so, when criminals came, they could easily get away and you could—I think they changed that later.

But, anyway, I discovered these things studying these projects and going observing people and the children were playing and we documented where their toys were and all these interesting things, so it was a really interesting project. So I learned a lot about how to do—oh, the other person was John Zeisel was also a participant.

So, anyway, so it was just wonderful, but from these different interactions, I discovered that—I realized that the field that I thought would be the most easily aligned with architecture was anthropology, and later I realized why, and that was because anthropology was seeking hypotheses whereas psychology and sociology were testing hypotheses. In architecture we didn't yet have hypotheses to test.

KL That is well-phrased. We're going to use that again (laughter).

JR So that's when I decided to study anthropology. So that next fall, I began to study anthropology and the way I—I decided I had to pay for this because I didn't have an income, so what was I going to do? So then, when I had graduated and I was part of this—I graduated in '71 and I was part of the group in '68 that was rebellious and doing all kinds of things that—complaining about the school, and we got a lot of changes actually made in the school. And some of the things we were complaining about was that they just assigned everybody to classes and then you could get the same teacher every semester for a number

of years. And it was because they didn't pay attention to that. And it was too hard for them to pay attention to it. The students knew. So we made sure that they allowed students to choose.

So that was one of the things that we introduced back in the late '60s. And then, also, that they didn't have very good advising and we said that they really had to do better advising, so they began student advising. So one of the things, when I graduated, and I was very insulted, Ralph Rapson said, "Well, want to come back and do advising, let me know." And I thought, what? But then, when I wanted to study anthropology, I remembered that and thought, "Well, maybe I should come back and do advising." And it turns out I talked to Ralph and he said, "Yes, you know it's really good timing because a couple of our professors are on leave, and I don't have anyone to do advising for students."

So I came back as a student advisor and studying anthropology, and while I was doing this, I had some colleagues—Steve Weeks was now teaching who was—graduated with me. And then Lance Levine had graduated a couple years before—we knew each other from the past. So Lance was now teaching the first year introductory program and asked me if I might want to sit on some reviews. So I said that would be great. And what I didn't know, but Lance knew was that—now let's see now if I can remember the guys' name—I can't think of his name—wonderful man who worked for Leonard Parker was teaching, and Leonard Parker let him teach—there were three quarters—fall, winter, and spring—he let him teach fall and winter, but he didn't let him teach in the spring because he needed him to do working drawings. So I didn't know this but Lance knew that he was going to leave in the spring. So I was sitting in on the interviews and, at that time, there were no women faculty and so I was the first woman faculty. I became the first woman faculty because in the spring, when this man left, it was an open position and I had been sitting on all the reviews and I knew what was going on. So that was Lance's way of getting women in the School of Architecture.

KL Very cool.

JR So that's how I got started.

KL I was going to ask you about that. And so were you the first woman faculty within the College of Design?

JR There was no College of Design then. We were in the Institute of Technology. We were combined—well there was—I'm trying to remember—I think there was Department of Architecture and Department of Landscape. I guess we were a school already, School of Architecture and the Department of Landscape Architecture. And the Department of Landscape Architecture was split between the agricultural campus and IT Institute of Technology. So half of the faculty were here and half of the faculty were there at the time,

as I remember. And so I was the first woman ever to be—and of course I was adjunct at first. So the next fall I started as an adjunct faculty member teaching.

KL Would you say that the makeup of academia at that time between men and women was kind of the same as the makeup of the profession at the time?

JR Yes.

KL Had you worked with women previously in that early part of your career before you went back—

JR Well, when I was in school to get my B.Arch, Elizabeth Close, who was educated in Germany, was working here, and I worked for her and Winston and Close and for Close Associates as—we had to have an internship to graduate in those days. So that was where I worked. And then I worked also with Williams O'Brien—I can't think of the name of the company, but anyway, I worked also with another company with this African-American and a white guy who had a firm. I worked with them too. So I was exposed to a lot of diversity as a student that wasn't really true in the profession at that time.

KL And did you seek that out, or it was just the serendipity.

JR That was just I think because I was interested in housing, and that's actually where my friend was—my friend Ed Bell was working with this other firm, so that was how that happened—it was just serendipity. I did actually choose the Close firm because I wanted to have that experience, and it was also very close to my house (laughter), and I was living in Seward and my house was just four blocks away, so it made it perfect.

KL So when you were an employee of the university, both as an advisor and as an adjunct faculty member, did that entitle you to free or reduced tuition for the anthropology degree that you were pursuing?

JR I think it did, yes. I think it did.

KL I was inferring that was part of what made everything work.

JR But I'm not sure. I think so.

KL So then the anthropology degree.

JR So that happened when I was—let's see, how did that work? I graduated in—yeah, I guess my twins were born during that time when I was working on my degree.

KL So now you have four children at this point in your career?

JR Yes. (Laughter). But I started working—'75 when I started working at the school, and then I think '76 was when I started teaching—'75 I guess—or was it '76—I don't remember exactly, and then my twins weren't born until '78, so I had some years before I got pregnant again (laughter). But that was a challenge because I was carrying twins, and you can imagine people were just—it was bad enough to be pregnant and teaching, and being the only woman teaching (laughter).

KL It seems like an interesting pattern that at every moment, like your thesis and now early in teaching those moments when you're sort of being the first woman—you're being so visually (laughter) female.

JR This is true. This is true.

KL Do you want to talk a little bit about balancing career and family life?

JR Sure. That was obviously a big part of my—I guess I'll start with actually being in school because it was very difficult in school because I was married—a young—I got married when I was—middle of my sophomore year I got married. And I discovered that—and everybody was doing all-nighters. First of all, I discovered when I did an all-nighter and tried to present a project I would cry.

KL (Laughter).

JR So it was not was not a good thing. Secondly, that if you didn't really work all these hours at school, you weren't going to get an A, so I figured that I would just get B's so I could actually have a life at home. And it turned out that I actually got B's the first year or two and then maybe the last or last two years I got A's—a lot of A's because I figured out how to make decisions ahead of time and all those things, but I never did all-nighters—maybe one and then I regretted it. It was just a disaster, really no point to do it. So that was how I handled school.

And then balancing—so when I started working, I could hire a babysitter, but then when the recession came and I was—the babysitter was fired, I didn't have a babysitter, so then you have to think of what are you going to do. So that's when I was working on those freelance drawings at home and trying to draw when the kids were taking naps or whatever. But then also I did have one of these wonderful nursery schools and I did have wonderful child care. And, when the twins were born, I was in the middle of my—I just started as a full-time faculty member—was it—no, I guess I hadn't started as a full-time faculty member. I was about to be. It was clear that I was going to be doing that, and so I ended up not stopping work for them. I had a year where I did one-third time, half-time—because it was quarters—and then three-quarters time or something throughout the year. And then the next year I started full-time.

KL And full-time is how many classes a semester? What does a—

JR I don't remember now.

KL —day [unintelligible] like?

JR I think it was—I think we taught four classes—a design class and then another class. For sure we taught—yeah, I think the design and one other class each quarter, I think.

KL Right. So six classes a year?

JR Yeah. It was equivalent to about four classes today. And then we also had to do advising at that time. They didn't have what—today we have advisors to do advising, but at that time the faculty did advising, so we had to be in school in the mornings—Monday, Wednesday, Friday mornings we were there to advise students.

KL So when you—you're completing your anthropology degree, you've become full-time here. How did these things coalesce into applying for and getting tenured-track position?

JR Well, one of the things at that time was you really wanted to—I also got registered at that time—I don't remember the year I got registered—maybe it says here (laughter).

KL We can look that up too.

JR But in any event, I needed to get some practice experience. So I had some from before when I was at Cuningham. That was after I graduated and also at InterDesign, but then I started working for Val Michaelson to get more time. And that was—he was an architect who worked in St. Paul and did a lot of housing as well as other things. And I was—did a lot of work for him as well as working at the university. So I don't even know how I did it, and having children—don't ask me. And that was also when I first met my first research colleague through Val Michaelson—Travis Thompson was a psychologist who was selling—who also did—what do you call it—stained glass-windows. So he was selling his stained-glass windows to the firm—to Michaelson and Associates, and I was there and we started talking about research and housing and all kinds of things. And he was saying—he was talking about this new law that was being passed about developmental disabilities and housing for people with developmental disabilities and we started talking about how we should be careful because the whole question was how to create housing that wasn't institutional. So that was my first project. So I worked with—I met him through Val Michaelson at his office because of stained-glass windows, it was very bizarre.

But anyway, that was one of my first research projects was that. And another person I met through Val was Mary Vogel—Mary Vogel Heffernan at that time. Anyway, I met her and she got me one of my first—another project I got as a research project was the post-

occupancy evaluation of the Women's Advocate Shelter. So those were some of my early research projects that I did as a faculty member early in my career. So this was '82 and '84.

KL Now did this stained glass design influence the research at all, I'm wondering.

JR No (laughter).

KL Because of the results of the [unintelligible].

JR It was—he's very visually—he was a very visual person as a psychologist—Travis Thompson was, so when we worked together, he was very understanding of an architect, whereas I think most researchers at that time didn't understand what it meant to study—because we were really studying housing like a person—the psychological characteristics of housing rather than—. And so people couldn't understand that you would do that with an environment, but he understood—he was very savvy and understood that. So that was very helpful in this early research then [unintelligible].

KL Now was that research the one that was about—there was a specific disability that you looked into.

JR Developmental disabilities. He's an expert in developmental disabilities.

KL Is that where you did the—there was a research bit that—

JR It was.

KL —about color and like—

JR What we looked at—and it ended up being in my dissertation and in this book that was published about institution and home. That research started way back. I worked on that for many, many years. And it started looking at group homes and—oh, at that time, they were treating people with developmental disabilities—were either in large state institution or they were in a dormitory facility. There was a big facility in St. Paul that had 100 people in it. And there were also then two new group home ideas. One was an apartment building where you had apartments. Each person had their apartment and then there was a shared apartment in one building, and then there was also the idea of taking a single-family house and using that as a group home. So we studied those four types as a way of getting into this issue and understanding.

And then Travis, being an experimental psychologist, was so smart. He said, what we need to do comparison—what do you call that with the—study group that's—I can't think of the word of it, but anyway it was another—. So we then looked at ordinary housing compared to the housing we were looking at for people with developmental disabilities. And we only had \$5,000 to do this research for two years, so we were able to hire some

research assistants who now are teaching. One of them is—Paul Emmons teaches at Virginia Tech and then Julio Bermudez teaches at Catholic University in Washington DC—two research assistants became professors.

And so, anyway, at that time we were studying that, and that's when we developed this idea of creating—taking from John Zeisel who had done some work where he was analyzing housing for the elderly—very interesting technique. I won't go into it here, but anyway, he developed a really interesting way of looking at things. So we were taking some of his ideas. And so we developed a—which is actually in—some of it's this here [goes through papers]. It's a little different format than we actually did, but it's in here. They redid it. Where we actually had images for the different—the idea was to create a—design guidelines. After looking at this, what we realized—well, we first started out with a hypothesis that there was an opposition between institution and home. And then later on we questioned that.

But the idea was that if you could understand what the difference was between and institution and a home, people wouldn't—and you could develop some design guidelines if—people could actually take that idea and develop their own design guidelines. So sort of just instructing people about how you might think about this issue because—actually, when I was—at that time—as a designer, I realized that I was thinking—when I thought about people with developmental disabilities, I was thinking of them as institutionalized. I wasn't thinking of them as actually living in an ordinary house, and so that was obviously biasing the way I was thinking about those people. So how would I help other people to see this in a different way and help myself? So that was how we got this—the idea, then this opposition 'cause of course I was studying anthropology and there was the dialectic—the idea the dialectic, this middle space that was kind of in the middle between the two dialectic opposites.

So we used this idea then of visualizing, and then we did a lot of observations, and then figured out a checklist of elements that went with each question. And then there was—so these different images—contrasting images—and then hypotheses about what it was that made that home-like or institutional. So this then became the basis for a whole way of studying this project. Because Travis was very visually oriented, we could really do that. And then, later on, we actually compared the checklist. We did this first project—he was in the psychology pool, so we could use the images of—have the students evaluate them, and then we could do a T test to see if they were evaluated as opposites, the images. And it turned out that they were, except for plans. People couldn't read the plans.

KL You worked with him on the obsessive-compulsive.

JR No. That's later.

KL That's later? Okay.

JR That's much later.

EK Do you think that your experience as a mother and learning about childhood made you more interested in or better understand your research on housing?

JR Absolutely, yeah. I think that—and then it turns out that my own children had developmental disabilities, which I didn't know at that time. So it was very—there was kind of an interesting conversion. People talk about fate (laughter). That was really—it made a big difference in the way I thought about it, especially later. Because now I had my two twins who are high-functioning autistic—are living in the community. And there's some struggles with that. One of them is in a group home, and it's a very good place, but he's been through different places that were iffy.

KL And then one of your children—did you say one of your children is premature?

JR Yes, my daughter. She's off and running (laughter). She's a filmmaker, entrepreneur in New York.

KL So moving into—

JR So where were we?

KL Yeah—full-time teaching or like a tenure track.

JR Full-time teaching—so let me talk a little bit about that. So we were—at that time, people got tenure. There weren't that many regular faculty members, but those who were and got tenure based on practice normally because they were good architects so they got a position—track position. And we were in IT—Institute of Technology, and I wasn't doing much practice, so I wasn't going to get my position, so I realized I had to do research, so that's how I got started with these different projects—the Shelter for Battered Women first and then this project with Travis Thompson, and some other people, and also Evelyn Franklin was involved in that project with Travis. She's from the interior design—she was involved. So I realized that I needed to do research as a piece of my tenure, that that would be the way I was going to do it. So I got started—that's why I got very involved in these projects.

And I was also—Ralph—well, we were in the institute of technology and so I became part of—especially the library committee. I was on the library committee for many years, and I got to be friends with some of the IT colleagues and talk with them about tenure in their departments and the tenure process. Because, at that time, the tenure decision was not made by the architecture program. It was made by the Institute of Technology. So I had to get allies to help me figure out how I was going to do this. And they were used to these professionals—but they weren't used to research. Of course—what do they know about

social science research? But, anyway, I had to present my work. And fortunately, at that time, there was very little publication in architecture. So there's not a sense that you had to publish in a journal that was recognized. These kinds of monographs were my publications. I had several of these booklets that the department published. And then I had some articles.

KL Would you summarize these as case studies?

JR Case studies as monographs. I call them monographs—research monographs. And they were basically—some of like women's advocacy—Women's Advocate Shelter was a case study. And this one was really—. No, this is different. No, that's my programming book that was laid here. Anyway, there's another one that preceded this was in a book "Towards and Architectural Definition of Normalization,"—the study on group homes. The first one I did was in a little booklet. But it was used by the state. A lot of people used it for group homes that were built at the same time.

KL So just to provide clarity for the transcript, maybe this is comparable to a white paper as opposed to a peer-reviewed publication?

JR I don't know. It's like a report. It's a research report.

KL Yeah. Got it.

JR So that's for—if a research report isn't really—it counts, but it's not very important because you're trying to see whether peers accept it.

KL Right.

JR And so then the other thing was—no—I guess I got this after I [unintelligible]. This was part of my promotion. And then I also got involved with teaching a class with Steve Weeks for the pre-thesis class at that time. We were doing—it's architectural programming. So we were teaching the pre-thesis as a programming class. And that developed our ideas about architectural programming and teaching and a lot of different—it became really important part of my career because I began to see how I could use my anthropological interest in teaching design and thinking about—well, thinking about John Zeisel's work on hypothesis development. So this programming is really the first steps that I was interested in and what I wouldn't have known then was called evidence-based design. Developing architecture—I was always interested in developing architecture as a research-based field because I felt that we were—I have somewhere a picture of "seat of the pants designing" where the seat of the pants is patched (laughter).

KL So, at the time that you earned your tenure, you were at a mid-career point for you, give or take?

JR I think it was still early career. I've had a long career.

KL So you've been at the U for 35 years?

JR Maybe more. I started in '75.

KL Okay. So how many classes do you think you've taught like by course title, not number of sections, but like what sorts of courses?

JR Okay, this is interesting because the lecture class that I just gave up to James Wheeler. I started off as a seminar with a few students looking at—I don't remember what we called it, but it was looking at research in architecture and had the students of—each student chose a different project and I helped with them to develop a research project and then they presented at the end of the semester and we talked about research methods during the—at the course. And so that course evolved into a seminar that became larger. And then, when Lance Levine became the Director of Graduate Studies—I don't remember when that was, maybe the '80s?—he thought that we should have a course on social issues, so I then taught two classes. I guess it was two classes in—I think we were still on quarters—two classes on social issues. And then that class turned into—which I taught for ten years, I guess. That became then the class that's now taught Environmental Design in the Sociocultural Context which, when we went to semesters, became a one-semester class. And it was taught also by Craig Wilkins and Ritu Batt also shared also shared teaching with me for several years, because for a long time, we taught it two semesters, and then finally we realized that was ridiculous; we should only have it one semester. And then it started being a larger course. We had two semesters. It was still 40 or 50 students, and then I had one semester and it became 200 students sometimes.

KL So you had a—

JR One class—

KL —strong role in curriculum development, but then also nurturing other faculty and/or teaching assistants in delivering that content.

JR That's true. [unintelligible] thinking about that. Yeah. So I had many, many—. And as it got larger, we had more teaching assistants. For many years I didn't have a teaching assistant, and then, when it started being this large class, I started having teaching assistants and really enjoying working with them. And then we—it was also at that time that we became a writing-intensive class. So we had to teach writing, so we had to help the TAs teach writing; we got to learn how to teach writing, and it was kind of a—became quite the opportunity to have exchanges about teaching in the meetings we had every week with the research assistant—the teaching assistants.

KL Do you want to talk more about mentoring students and teaching and your relationship with students both as collaborators and as their—

JR I found that, when I had students as research assistants, they just always really had to do the research. So I just loved having research assistants. And so from those early years when I was working with people like Myles Graff and Paul Emmons and—why can't I think of his name—Julio Bermudez—we really were colleagues, so when we were talking about looking at these environments for understanding institution and home, we were looking at them together, and we were thinking—brainstorming together. Then I was usually doing the drawings and imagining when we did these drawings of the two opposite sides, I was the one imagining it, but then Rich Laffin was the person doing the drawings themselves. So we had this really great team that created these really interesting ways of thinking about design research because people weren't doing it very much at that time. And we kind of had to invent it as we went along.

BL That's what I was wondering too—were you one of the first to do this research and were you one of the first women to do this research on housing?

JR At that time there were several other researchers in the country doing this kind of research. I think I was the only one using visuals to communicate. So that was—following Christopher Alexander who kind of started that Pattern Language, and then John Zeisel who had this idea of hypothesis development. And so those kind of things—we combined those in this process that we developed. And another thing that using—influenced by John Zeisel with this, for example, this project I did evaluating the Women's Advocate Shelter was we—again, with my research assistants—let's see—I can't remember all the names—Jennifer Shlimgen and Razel Solow working also with Werner Shippee from CURA [Center for Urban and Regional Affairs]. We decided we wanted to do a study of these places. So I said, how are we going to study them? Because there wasn't really a good way.

So we developed an idea that we would study it by the places. So, similar to what we did in terms of the group home study where we looked at the entry, we looked at—. And then we developed a way of looking at what each person said about it. So we had—we developed—talked to the architect about why they—what the intentions had been when they developed. So that was the hypothesis—we framed that as a hypothesis. And then we talked to the staff and we talked to the residents all about these different places. So then we had comments from everybody on all the different places. And that's how we analyzed it. And so that was sort of—people hadn't been—that was literally the beginning of post-occupancy evaluation. I think this was one of the first POE post-occupancy evaluation studies. I felt it was really important to get the architect's ideas because people were evaluating it—a lot of people weren't even paying attention to what the tension was and, to me, it seemed really important for the architect to know afterwards whether they had been successful in what they were intending.

- KL** So an FAIA [Fellow of the American Institute of Architects] application is not unlike a tenure application.
- JR** No (laughter).
- KL** So as we've been speaking to this group of Minnesota women with FAIA designation, I think you and Renee Cheng were in an interesting position advantage maybe for putting together that FAIA package or thinking about things in those terms. What first made you decide to pursue FAIA or how was the idea was introduced to you?
- JR** Well, I went to school with several different women. One of them was Georgia Bizios who is now retired, I guess, from teaching at North Carolina State and has her own firm. And I also taught with Caroline Dry who became a very important researcher at the University of Illinois at Urbana. She did materials research. So these two women were part of my collective of people that I refer to, and Georgia and I, well we probably talk once or twice a year about—when we talk, we have a really interesting exchange. And she was the one who said—she had applied for it, and she said, you really ought to apply for that, and as long as you're doing that, you should apply for the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture—what is it called—ACSA Distinguished Professor.
- KL** That's a designation I'm not familiar with.
- JR** Okay—let's see. Maybe—is there a CV [Curriculum Vitae] on this thing? I don't remember (laughter). Education registration, selected awards—I hadn't gotten that yet, so it wouldn't be there.
- KL** We can fact-check that for the transcript, but maybe you could just contextually talk about the significance of that [unintelligible] designation.
- JR** Yeah, that's an award that is given to professors who were significant—who's made significant contributions. Of course, there were hardly any women, so they were eager to get women, so probably that helped me get mine, but anyway. So what they're looking for is people who made significant contributions to teaching and research as academics, so it's very similar to FAIA. And so Georgia said, you do both. So I followed her advice, but I thought it was too much to do both in one year which she did. And so it—anyway, it took me two years to get the FAIA because the first year I didn't get the signatures because I thought, if I wrote a book—I mean, I didn't have to get a signature about a book, but I guess I did (laughter).
- KL** So what does it mean to you to be part of the college of fellows?
- JR** It was very, very important for me because I've always felt myself kind of an outsider. I think everybody feels that to some extent, but there was a lot of evidence that I was

(laughter) as I was coming through the academic ranks. There was a lot of—well, particularly when Ralph Rapson was in school, there was a lot of horrible things that happened where you're presenting an idea and nobody listens, and then someone else presents it, and everybody listens, that kind of thing. And also my own colleagues that were my age also didn't really respect behavior science. They thought that I was a reductivist. So they didn't think I should be teaching design some of them. And some of them felt that it was a marginalized field.

So for me to get those things was very important because it made me feel—. And actually, the thing that preceded that was I got my Ph.D. That was really the point at which I really felt that I was not marginalized any longer—because one of the things that I had a B.Arch. [Bachelors in Architecture] and a M.A. [Master in Arts]—I didn't have the terminal degree in architecture. And so you had this feeling that you weren't really bonified or qualified to be in your position. You know, everybody's feeling that way I think, but you didn't want to be an imposter. So when I got my Ph.D. —and I did that after I was full professor; that was a big step. And then the FAIA—then that was a step for me personally, and I felt for my—but then to get the FAIA was a national recognition, so that made a very big difference in terms of my feelings about my career. I felt very—it made me feel very satisfied and excited about my career which was—it had been such a struggle.

KL Would it be fair to say—I don't want to put words in your mouth—would it be fair to say that it was also a recognition of those fields—

JR Yes!

KL —and that way of thinking—

JR Yes, exactly.

KL —in addition to your own career trajectory?

JR That's right. So it validated the importance of the things that I had been doing in the context—of course, what I was looking for—I mean what I have been trying to accomplish all these years is happening. So exciting, this idea that evidence-based design is actually happening. So it's very, very—that was a piece of that, really. But this was important work that I contributed to.

KL We need to look back to your Ph.D. (laughter), the subject of your dissertation. I'm assuming you did that here at the U [University of Minnesota]?

JR Yes. This was a long story because in 1992-93—'91, '92, '93—let's see—I did my first book—it was a sabbatical where I wrote the book. And it was accepted for publication by Van Nostrand Reinhold. I had gotten my advance, and then there was a recession, and they

told be they weren't going to be able to publish it. And, of course, it was a recession everywhere, so nobody was interested in publishing it. So this book that I had written, and it had a hundred and—two hundred pages—I don't remember—was there and it wasn't published.

KL And what year is this?

JR This is 1993. You can imagine, I was devastated. So that was really—and then several years later I got divorced, so I had a period of my life where life was not good, and so when I got divorced, and then I met this wonderful Dutchman, I had a sabbatical coming up in 2000, and so I had this book sitting on my shelf and I was thinking, gosh, I hate to just set that book aside. So I decided that what I would do was use it for the basis for a dissertation. And I talked to—at that time I was working on space syntax analysis as a method of research. And I talked with people who were doing that in England, Jullienne Hanson, and—I can't think of his name, of course—the important—Bill Hillier, Jullienne Hanson were doing that, and I talked to them and they said, we'd love to have you come.

And so we were talking about it, and then eventually Jullienne Hanson said to me, you know it's going to cost you \$20,000 a year. And, at that time, I was—I think we were still lovers—I don't remember—but with my Dutch lover—my Dutch friend, my partner—he said, well, in the Netherlands, it doesn't cost you anything to get a Ph.D. (laughter). So that rang a few bells. And so I decided to study in the Netherlands at that time, and to be together what we were doing was taking students on trips to the Netherlands because he had come for a semester to study history here because he had retired and was studying history. And he'd come for a semester, but we wanted to be together, but he was Dutch and his children were in the Netherlands, and he didn't want to spend more than half a year in the United States, and some years he only wanted to spend three months. So I had to figure out a way to spend more time together, and so I started taking students first on the quarter system—Richard Stolzenburg and I would take the students for the spring quarter to the Netherlands. We took students three times: in 1999, 2002, and 2004.

And so at that time though, before he died, we were taking students. So I decided that, while we were going to the Netherlands, I would just make a point of talking to people, and I stayed afterwards. So we had time to talk to people both at Eindhoven University where he had taught and then at Delft Technical University. And so I got offers at both places to do a Ph.D. and I decided that the one at Delft looked like it was a little more open—that the faculty member was more open to doing more things. The other person had quite a strong idea about how it should be done. And also I thought it was probably better not to be where Richard had taught. So then I went to Delft Technical University on my sabbatical in the year 2000. And that's also the—in 2001 we got married (laughter), Richard and I. And so that took—it took me four years. 2004 I graduated, and then in 2006 this book was published.

KL And the title of this book—.

JR “Institution and Home: Architecture as a Cultural Medium.” So that took a long—it was a big investment, and so—but because I had already written the book, basically I was rewriting—we revised it. I mean, it wasn’t really the chapters that had been written before but some of it was, so I rewrote it as a dissertation and then added a whole section because for the dissertation they wanted you to do theory sections, so I did a theory section.

KL So what about the experience of doing the PhD enhanced your viewpoint on your research and your teaching?

JR Well, one of the things I guess was that I felt that it was much deeper, and I felt that this was kind of the culmination of this research I’d done, and it was a very—it was helpful to be able to be asked to be doing a theoretical discussion—discussion of literature. All those things you do for Ph.D. really helped me understand I work in a wider perspective. And I basically stopped working in that field at that time. And that was when I became exposed to the housing. So that’s when I started being interested in the housing. So, after I had finished my dissertation, I jumped into the housing research on Dutch housing, so that’s when I started being interested in Dutch housing.

KL And specifically, complex housing or the totality of Dutch housing?

JR First—when I was taking students to the Netherlands and I was so fascinated with this housing even before I was working on the dissertation, and even before I was working on the dissertation, and actually I had gone to the Netherlands. The reason I had got to know Richard was because I had stayed with him when I was going to do research on participatory design, and that’s when I got to meet a lot of those architects in ’96. I had gone—’94 I was a visiting faculty member at Eindhoven Technical University and then—for five weeks—and then in ’96 I’d had a fellowship from the university to study participatory design throughout Europe. And so, at that time, then I met all these Dutch architects and then when we started taking students to the Netherlands, then I had all these contacts. Also, there was a student that was working with Richard and me after we met who was also one of our contacts. So he had contacts for all the city people because he was teaching urban history. And then I had contacts with architects. So we would go to a city and then his people would show the city and then my friends would show the building. So that was how we worked that, and then we took the students to the Netherlands. So then I made all these contacts and began to see this other housing exposed to all this different range of housing because of these wonderful contacts we had and the visits we took to these different cities over the years. So that’s how that got started.

So, when I started that research, what I was really interested in was the idea that the Europeans have that cities are made of neighborhoods and housing is part of a neighborhood. Housing isn’t a building. So that’s where what we were really promoting in

our student trips—this idea of housing as part of a neighborhood, this idea—the urban fabric; how you study the urban fabric, how you put design for the urban fabric. At one time that was called contextualism in architecture, but I don't think that's a term anymore people use. So that was what I wanted to write my book about but then, when I started to write, I realized I didn't know enough about urban history, urban design. I wasn't an urbanist, so I really had to write from an architect's point of view. So then I began to think about how could I do that. And I thought, well I had this fascination with housing—maybe I could write about the housing I'm so fascinated by and then use that as a vehicle to talk about this other thing. So that was how that came about.

And then I began to look at this housing thing and think, well, what is it about this housing I'm so interested in? And that's how the idea of complex housing came about, because I began to see that the housing—there were certain things about the housing that were so interesting to me. One was that there was not just one housing type, one was that it was mixing for purchase and for sale, one that was mixing income levels—all these different things were part of it. So then I started seeing, well, which of these housing projects I'm so fascinated by actually meet these criteria. So then I began to be selective, and then at that point, I think I had started off with nine or ten and then I had to get rid of some, and then I had to add some. So part of the research assistants that I was working with, we were looking for housing projects that were fitting this criteria too, so that was one of the—Hans Christian was one of the people helping me with that—one of my research assistants who was looking at the housing with me.

KL So that work has culminated into several recent things, a publication, there's an exhibition and you also hosted the Dutch Complex Housing Symposia in 2017. So, do you want to talk a little about the artifacts and the combination of that research.

JR Sure. The book was, of course, the thing that was all-encompassing for a long time, but then when I wanted to think of—thinking about how the ideas could be shared, and I realized, well books only go so far. So that's where I got the idea of the exhibition and the symposium because I felt that well, the symposium was because I wanted the local community to learn about it. And I thought well, what could I do, and so the year—a couple of years before the symposium, I started—I realized I needed to not just talk to architects, so I talked to developers and other people. And so we had a committee that developed this idea with me. And so that was how it got to be more than just architecture. And then, when we invited the people, I really felt that it shouldn't just be architects, and I thought it had to include developers, and then I wanted to include, as much as possible, the other people who made it happen who were living there, so that's where we invited inhabitants and politicians to participate.

KL Which was a fascinating aspect to this conversation and it really reinforced the idea of post-occupancy analysis because you had residents participating who lived in these homes for

ten or more years really talking about the experience of shaping the design and then continuing to live as part of that neighborhood.

JR Right. So it is this whole thing about how we can improve architecture. You don't just build it, but it has to be evaluated and then you have to continue to build new ideas and test them out.

KL So after that you had a recent sabbatical (laughter).

JR Well that was then—the sabbatical was basically focusing on that. And then also the exhibition I was mentioning to you is travelling. And so that's kind of the other thing I was thinking. One of the pieces of this is—the research side—the approach I—research approach I'm taking is typological, and I think the typology is really something that students should be doing on a regular basis—typological analysis, and so I also wanted to promote that. So that's also—that's why I've been giving guest lectures around the country, and then the exhibition is talking about that too. So that's part of the education of also not just—the students as well as practitioners—to the value of that.

KL So that brings us to two ideas—two topics that have a nice conclusionary tone to them—the idea of your legacy—what your research and your FAIA embodies, and then also the generations that you've educated and the advice that you want to give to them. So could you talk a little bit about advice to emerging professionals in various areas of practice?

JR Well, a couple—there's so much to be thinking about. Maybe I'll start with the idea of architecture as a cultural medium. For me, architecture is really the way we communicate our values to the next generation and to our own selves. So I think it's very important for architects to be aware that the buildings communicate these important ideas and you can't just do any old thing. And that's one of the things that I guess has troubled me for so many years and I think is—hopefully is changing—where architects innovate, and then they build these big forums that are just kind of very visually exciting and sculptural, but that really don't do anything for the people actually living in the buildings except cause them to pay more.

So I think it's very important to me that people—I'm not opposed to sculpture—I think it's fabulous—but it shouldn't go against—certainly shouldn't go against the way people live, which I think some of the buildings end up doing because they are ignoring other aspects of the design which that should be included. So, to me, architecture is fundamentally a social act, and I think we have to take that into account. So that's really—happening to anthropology and seeing architecture as a cultural medium seems to be a very interesting way to think about it because it really does seem to be a way to embody a lot of the ideas that our society holds. And we can actually criticize ourselves and improve, because if you looked at what we're saying, sometimes, it isn't very nice and we can make it better. So maybe that's sort of the thing.

Then the other piece of it is, as people are developing, if you have interest in something, you never know how it's going to come out and how it's going to influence you. So I'm thinking of the research I did—I was interested in this developed—studying these housing projects in terms of developmental disabilities. It was so fascinating, and what I ended up doing was, I think, developing some very interesting research methods. I wasn't intending to do that but, because my interest was so strong and I had a whole professional background that was different from most researchers, I could really contribute something. So I think that's what young people and anybody—what you know—you have to value—you have to learn to value what you know and to actually be willing to try new things and see how things work and how these things combine.

So right now, with this new—my exciting new adventure, jumping into the question of incarceration, I chose it because it's so closely related to my work on developmental disabilities—this whole question of institutionalization and how you want to make a place that is a house, not a prison. You don't want to make a prison for anybody if you don't have to. So how could we make places for incarceration places where people can actually have their human dignity and actually grow and maybe change their—into people who are more productive than what they had been? So I see it as very—this idea of architecture as a cultural medium as very optimistic, and very forward looking.

KL Absolutely, and very topical. Well, I think through this deep chronological dive, we've woven through a number of the major topics that we were looking to cover. So, unless there are any other things—they can be total non-sequiturs, but if there's anything else that you wanted to—

JR Well, one thing we didn't talk a lot about was teaching, and I'd like to talk a little bit about some of the things that, as a faculty member, I really value. First of all, it's a wonderful honor to be able to teach students. It's very exciting. You learn so much from your students and to be able to affect the way the future of the profession might be is very important. And you have to do it very wisely. And so, as a student, being a student was very painful. Criticism was very unkindly given. I had my model—one time Ralph Rapson didn't think my model was good—he just ripped it apart [unintelligible] presentation, which I didn't appreciate. Another time, faculty member write all over your presentation drawings that at that time they weren't reproduced, so it was your original that they were writing all over. And it was—there also—the criticism was not very generous. And so I really felt as a faculty member, I wanted to change—.

Oh, and the other thing was that the way students were admitted. We admitted lots of students, and then we only kept a few. So it was very—I thought it was very mean because a lot of students were hoping to be architects and then they were told they were no good. Well, what was the point of that? Why didn't you just admit the students that you think are going to work out? So that was one of the things that, as a group of colleagues, my generation really felt strongly about and we changed in architectural education a couple of

those things, although crits [critiques] are still difficult. And I think we haven't totally changed our business about who talks and who listens and all those things. But I—so that was one of the things that I really felt strongly about.

Another thing was that I wanted students to take control of their own education. I think that's really critical. So that's where some of the ideas that I'm—promote in my programming as design book come into play because I feel that if students—so one of the things that there is, they are asked—students are asked to make assumptions, hypotheses and design directives, at the very beginning stages of design. And so the reason is, because if you know clearly what your assumptions are and what you're trying to do, when your critic comes along, you can say, well that isn't what I'm trying to do. But often, if you don't know that, then you're being criticized and you become uncertain about what's being criticized and I think it makes students—then they lose their confidence in their ideas. So that's really one of the key things that I'm interested in is to get designers, as a whole to actually be aware of what you're doing, so you can receive criticism and can understand how to direct it and how to use it well. So that's one of the pieces that's really important. And this whole idea of hypothesis, of course, then leads to the whole idea of testing and evidence-based design.

KL So some of the things you advocated for as a student in 1968 are still—are—been present throughout your teaching career, but are still very much what you're advocating for—

JR I still feel strongly about.

KL on an individual basis as opposed to an institutional basis.

JR Right. That's right. And so then working with students—that's really the main thing is to find them what they're talented at and help them to really use that into the way that they can. And that's another piece that I think has really changed since I was a student is that we now value not just design, we value people who are good at computers. We value people who are good at drawing, who are good at thinking. And I think, in the profession, it's really benefited the whole profession by including a much broader range of student talent. And it's very exciting also to see your students practicing and teaching and all these other things.

KL Absolutely. All right. Thank you very much.

JR Thank you.

[End of Interview]

Total Interview Time: 1:21:01

Credits

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