

Bacon's
early
interest
in city
planning -
travels

it's now built on Kennedy Plaza. It did propose the termination of the diagonal parkway at that point and making that into a park. It also had a number of other ideas which fortunately were not carried out, including the demolition of City Hall and the reclouthing (?) of the tower by so-called modern architecture. But nonetheless I was that interested in broad planning problems that I did essentially a city planning thesis. Then I travelled in Europe with \$1,000 that I had inherited from my grandfather which actually I extended over a two-year period and used to finance a trip around the world. But then in 1933 when jobs were hard to come by in this country learned in Egypt of the building boom in Shanghai, China and therefore used my last remaining inheritance from my grandfather, except for \$35 which was left-over, to buy a third-class passage on a Japanese boat from Egypt to Shanghai, China. And for one month sailed through the Indian Ocean to the China Sea, regretting my decision, and landed in Shanghai with \$35 and knowing nobody in that half of the world. But I did get a job and I became very much affected by the Chinese city planning, most particularly by Peking. I think it was from that that I got very strong feelings that this is a great area.

Cranbrooke
1932

Why exactly I was interested in going to Cranbrooke or even who told me about Cranbrooke and Saarinen I can't recall. I think that I went there without any very clear idea that I would become enmeshed in city planning as a consequence. I think in my letter to Elio Saarinen asking for a fellowship to the academy I spoke about Peking and about my interest in sequential experience of architecture and I know I spoke to him about my interest in color which I obtained from China and the importance of color in this country. I did present to him a wide-ranging view of my interests and it was really studying with him in Cranbrooke and then moving under his aegis to Flint, Michigan that I really got my basic initiation into the idea of being a city planner. As a side comment, I might say that when I went to England directly from Cornell in 1932 I met Sir Raymond Unwin, of course the great English city planner, who was very gracious indeed and asked me, a totally unknown young American student, to have dinner at his house, The Wilds, with him and Lady Unwin, which I did. And at dinner he said to me, "Young man, you ought to be a city planner," and at that time I thought it was about the most foolish thing I had ever heard of.

Bacon as
City
planner
in
Flint,
Mich.
Late
'30's

3. Please tell about your work as city planner in Flint, Michigan.

This was a job which was gotten for me by Elio Saarinen and I worked there as a student of his and as sort of a student apprentice in Flint, but became sufficiently enmeshed in the community that I was invited by Mr. Demerov, Chief of Police, to take on the assignment of supervising a WPA traffic survey which they had secured funds for from the federal government. This I did - making my own technology and violating the guidelines at the time - and developed my own techniques for analyzing traffic flow according to its functional components instead of simply recording the number of cars on the streets without regard to the origin and destination, which was the classical way to do a traffic survey in those days.

City
Planning
in
Flint,
Michigan

And through questionnaires to workers in the four principal factories I obtained data on the method of getting to work and was able to draw maps of traffic flows to the separate plants and through an incredible experience with the Boy Scouts, 50 or 60 being involved, did a special method with numbered and colored cards of cordons at the outskirts of the city and recorded in that way every trip that entered from the outside of the cordon line and where it left, if it did, the cordon area and therefore could also record separately these traffic flows. Therefore I was able to develop a plan to improve the highway system and to allocate traffic onto the new plan and therefore develop a traffic flow for the proposed plan which is something in those days which was unheard of. As a matter of fact, the WPA when they discovered the technique that I was using was so upset that they told me that I was cut off from funds and fired from my job, but I pointed out to them that since the project was already half done it would be more embarrassing to them than to me, so they went on their way and we did the job.

Then I went on to secure another WPA grant and do what I wanted to do anyway - a study of tax-delinquent land and vacant lots - which incidentally I regard as the prime interest of my life ever since, even though most people don't know much about my interest in this subject. And therefore launched onto a WPA survey with funds to do it and we recorded all the tax-delinquent properties and vacant properties, the outlying subdivision problems and so forth. Parenthetically, it was an amazing experience to operate a WPA program - I was an inexperienced young man. The people whom I worked with were indeed pretty tough and they were people who would come to work drunk and indeed the problems were complicated, but nonetheless we went through with the project and then I became concerned that we get support for this idea. I was very much influenced by Oscar Stonorov and by Katherine Bower. Katherine Bower came out to see what I was doing there. For some reason the work I was doing there was fairly well-known among these leaders of the New Deal reform activities in the beginning of the Roosevelt administration and I organized a citizen's housing and planning council with representatives of various civic groups such as the University Women and the different taxpayers groups, the architects and the engineers of the Chamber of Commerce, and I also for the first time in Flint had on my committee representatives of the beginnings of the labor unions, or at least the workers of the CIO and the General Motors and they all sat together on the Housing Council. I had also included the real estate board.

We got a city planning ordinance through and a city planning commission organized and I became I think the secretary of that. We got some state legislation through enabling the city to set of city planning commissions. We went to Washington to get ten million dollars for a public housing project. I was particularly anxious to get a public housing project going as a demonstration of what we were talking about about neighborhood planning and to the amazement of everybody we came back with 3 1/2 million dollars for public housing.

City
Planning
in
Flint, Mich.

The real estate board which had thought this was just a game suddenly became concerned. They had a very interesting way of doing business. They built in the backs of the lots tar paper shacks which were really intended for garages. They put cookstoves in them and outdoor privies and then they sold them to the workers in the automobile plants. The automobile plants invariably closed down for the model change-over period of 2-4 months and the workers during that period had zero income. Of course there were no units of any kind at that time and the results, needless to say, were that they defaulted on their payments on the house and instead of buying the house through a normal mortgage process it was a contract purchase and the contract said that if the purchaser ever fails to come forth with a payment the property reverts to the person who was selling it to them. And so they would simply wait until the tarpaper shacks, according to the inflated values, were up to the next to the last payment before the next change-over season and then they foreclosed and took them away from the workers and started selling it over again and it was a very remunerative activity. For that reason they were very close to the presidents of the banks and so forth, so when they saw that I had ten million dollars they became quite upset and they proceeded to either scare every single member of my housing council off and the president resigned or else two people they couldn't get, one was a lawyer and one was a doctor, they branded them both as Communists. In those days to be branded a Communist was quite a thing and I was also told I was a Communist on the floor of the city council of Flint.

So I was told in my job, meanwhile having become the Director of Research of the Flint Institute of Research and Planning that if I kept away from the housing issue I could remain in my job, but I was too enmeshed in it at that time to leave it alone so we organized a move to have the question of public housing put on the ballot with a beautiful image that the unions of course, which by that time had won the sit-down strike and were obviously the great majority of the Flint voters, would euphorically move forward to vote for the great public issue of public housing, but they did quite the opposite. They squashed it and I was thrown out of Flint in disgrace. As a matter of fact, the Junior Chamber of Commerce in 1938 gave me the distinguished service award as having made the greatest contribution of any citizen of Flint to its civic life of the year before. In 1939 they didn't make the award at all because they didn't want to remind themselves who they had given it to the year before.

4. Would you tell the story from your point of view of how you happened to return to Philadelphia and become Executive Director of the Philadelphia Housing Association?

I returned to Philadelphia out of sheer desperation because I had no income and therefore my wife and I went to live with my family - my mother and father being here - and they had a house.

Phillips
employs
Bacon to
design house

And then I finally got a job with W. Pope Barney at \$10 a week, which job I had for about a year. My whole idea was to get out of the city as quickly as possible because I had decided I disliked Philadelphia very much and it was very dull and I wanted to go back to China, but feeling that I at least wanted to go somewhere other than here. But I had met Walter Phillips through his sister, Louisa, and Walter was interested in trying to keep me in Philadelphia and he arranged for, well what he really did was to sacrifice his house for the purpose. He was building a house in Torresdale and so he would ask Oscar Stonorov, whom I had become friendly with at the time, and myself to design his house. This he used as a stop-gap, but it was an attractive offer to us and in fact I joined with Oscar and we did design his house and it was built and he lived in it for a while. (44 yrs)

1941 Bacon
becomes
Managing
Director of
Philadelphia
Housing
Association

Meanwhile, it was my impression in any case that he was scurrying around trying to find a source of keeping me employed here, knowing that the house would come to an end and was able through his acquaintance with Dr. McCallum to suggest to him that I be considered for the job as managing director of the Philadelphia Housing Association, a community fund agency, which at that time was concerned with better housing for the community at large and especially for the poor. To succeed Bernard Newman (?) who had died at that time so I was interviewed by Dr. McCallum, I'm sure, at Walter's behest. Walter corrects me and says that Fred Gruenberg (?) was his contact with the Housing Association. Fred Gruenberg was on the board and that Walter didn't actually know Dr. McCallum at that time, but in any case he did make the arrangements as far as I know. As a matter of fact the interview with Dr. McCallum occurred when my wife was in the hospital about to bear our first child - it was a rather distracting interview - but I was accepted and took on the job. I don't exactly know when I went there - it was perhaps '41 and perhaps it was a two-year period. I left at the end of '43 to go to the South Pacific in the Navy.

Resigns in
'43 to
Join Navy

At the housing association I obtained insights into the problems of neighborhoods and the kind of technique of working with neighborhood groups that I had learned in Flint I applied there. I was particularly affected by field trips when I went into self-respecting neighborhoods of brick row houses with marble steps and lace curtains and so on - individual properties that had been abandoned and vandalized with rats coming out of the cellar windows. I was really very passionately affected by a desire to do something about the problem of scattered vacant abandoned houses and scattered vacant lots rather than following the usual program of slum clearance and large housing projects. Another important thing which of course I did in the housing association was with Walter Phillips and the City Policy Committee on the promotion of the City Planning Commission. This was a proper function because it was the original charter of the Housing Association not only to deal with the immediate problems

of housing, but also with the larger problems of the environment and the planning of the city. And actually the Housing Association provided a very important secretariat base for the activities of the Citizen's Council on City Planning, which started out with very little funding indeed.

There was in fact a person on the Housing Association who really worked almost full-time on the Citizen's Council. There was someone who was very good, but I can't recall her name and then Elizabeth Bolt later joined in and did that kind of work.

5. The 1940 Manual of City Council lists 15 members of the City Planning Commission with an office at 1203 City Hall Annex. Did you contact any of them to ascertain what they were doing, what their conception of planning was, and how they were financed? Please describe the situation - did the Commission ever meet in the late 1930's or early 1940's?

As I recall, the Planning Commission had hardly any meetings at all in the early 1940's when they were observing the situation and I think it was primarily really a secretariat. Of the people there, I went to see Walter Thomas, secretary of the Planning Commission, I think while I was working at Pope Barney's.

to several inches of tape lost

30.

Q. How many years did you serve in this position as Executive Director of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission?

I served from, I think it was January of '39 until May ...January of '49 until May 2, 1970. The May 2, 1970 was my 60th birthday and I resigned on that date because I did not want to have my resignation interpreted as a slur on Mayor Tate, for whom I had great regard and also great personal affection. And at that time his administration was in a somewhat crumbly state, so it would have been particularly against my wishes to have it been interpreted as trying to undermine it further. So that was a strictly nonpolitical date and it was the logical time to retire on my 60th birthday and I was then eligible for a pension. I guess it should be pointed out that I also was at that time the development coordinator of the mayor and had been for just about two years and I served both as ... of Mayor Tate.... and I served both as Executive Director of the Planning Commission and also Development Coordinator.

Q.31

Q. Would you describe what it was like under each of the various mayors with whom you served starting with Bernard Samuel and running through Clark, Dilworth, and on to Tate?

Planning under Samuel

It was very very interesting serving under Bernard Samuel. He was, as you know, a very simple man from South Philadelphia and he had very little broad vision, I think, and he was what you would call a weak mayor. The decisions, I think, were made by the caucus of Council and I guess the City Committee. It's very, very important, Walter, and I hope you put this in a very strong way in your book, that the City Planning Commission with Edward Hopkinson, Jr. as Chairman, and originally Bob Mitchell, and then me as Executive Director established an international reputation during the worst part of the most decadent period of the Republican regime of Mayor Bernard Samuel. And a lot of people have the idea, and they are totally wrong, that the effective Philadelphia planning program was initiated by Mayor Clark and it was not. It was initiated long before Mayor Clark ever came into being and the work that you did and Oscar Stonorov did and that I did had something to do with Mayor Clark being elected.

If you want to talk politics, I can't really remember, Walter, whether this is an apocryphal story or is true that ... well, it is true that at the end of the Better Philadelphia Exhibition in '47 every person was given a little piece of blank paper and then they went through a blue light, ultraviolet chamber, and on that thing you could read a message from Mayor Samuel. Well, they were all stirred up about this beautiful vision of the future of their city and it said in essence "If you vote for me next time for Mayor why we'll really carry this out." It was somewhat concealed, but that was the message. And it's true that he was elected another time and there are people who say that if this had not occurred, the democrats would have gotten in a whole term before. Whether that's true or not I don't know for sure, but in any case it was very interesting to serve under the Republican regime and the disorganized City government ... I mean disorganized in the sense of the kind of thing

it was created under the Home Rule Charter. But I frankly think, Walter, that the fact that this whole commission started under those circumstances is one of the reasons it was so darn strong. Because it simply had to fight for its own survival in the jungle and there was the New York experience where it went in under the reform of Mayor LaGuardia and it was given mandatory powers and everything else, and the New York Commission still has very little influence, to tell the honest truth, over what happens in New York. But we had to make our own way, and making our own way was a very intriguing experience, and we actually did gradually, gradually get support. One of the interesting things was the subdivision control. The Department of Streets and the Board of Surveyors had no more idea that they would let me as Director of the Planning Commission have anything to say about what they

Interview with Ed Bacon 11/13/74 (part 2)

The thing we were discussing was the way it felt to serve under the different mayors and I was anxious to say that when I served under Mayor Samuel a councilman came to me and said that he was interested in some young man who had applied for draftsman in the planning commission and that if it was against my policy to discuss such matters with politicians that he would therefore withdraw and apologize that he had ever brought up the subject with me. And I assure you that under the reform mayors frequently this kind of attitude was not present. So it was interesting to work under Mayor Samuel. He gave us very little support. He gave us very few difficulties and as I've already said, the fact that we had to make our own way in a jungle of municipal administration was very strengthening to us and we developed our sinews by so doing.

Bacon
evaluates
Clark
as
Mayor

Serving under Mayor Clark was needless to say a very different situation. But I would have to say quite flatly that I don't think Mayor Clark really had much confidence in me. I think he regarded me as a hold-over and he I think was suspicious in a way of - well, suspicious might be too strong a term. He had some misgivings about both Hopkinson and myself. I had really very little access to him personally and as far as I can recall, I may be wrong about this, I never met with him in cabinet.

Now Walter Phillips is telling me that Joe Clark had no feeling about physical things and I would give my own interpretation of that which would be quite different - that Joe Clark was full of a guilt complex over the wealth of his childhood and his family background and he regarded everything to do with elegance and beauty as an expression of all the things that he had repudiated in his own life and had in a way, you might say, grown out of. And now I remember other things which somewhat modify my earlier statement - I did work with him quite closely on the Penn Center development and when I met with him and he asked me as I recall whom I thought would be good to be the Chairman connected with the Advisory Board of Design, I suggested George Howe and his eyes lit up in a very interesting way and he was just delighted, but also felt slightly sinful to think that his old and dear friend George Howe could be a person to play a role in public policy making. Because I think he had seen his life as totally dichotomous -- with the boring kind of politicians like you, Walter, and the old dear friends of his social days like George Howe -- but I may interpret this wrong. Actually, Joe Clark, in my opinion, had some very serious faults as an administrator. His view of how to handle his cabinet and you were a good contributing force to this, of simply putting the members in the gladiators arena and he sitting as emperor in the emperor's box and turning his thumb up or down but encouraging his cabinet in every way to fight with each other to the death was in my opinion not good public administration.

And it was incredible about his Commissioner's meetings, where he met periodically with the members of his administration up to the figure of 2 or 3 hundred I guess. They occurred four times a year, or something of that nature. And they should have been big morale builders and they were the most depressing affairs that ever happened. I invariably came away from those meetings with this overwhelming sense of guilt, especially that I had not properly made terms with city council or I don't know what all, but in both those regards he was in an extremely strong contrast to his successor, Dick Dilworth, who was a magnificent leader who conducted his business in such a way that he, I think, managed to give his cabinet and those with him the feeling that they really had to eventually get together and produce a united common policy and he was an unbelievably witty man. I would say that the finest humor that I have ever experienced in my life was at various parties - especially smaller parties where he was about as funny as any person can be. And actually political or municipal jokes have a kind of dimension and scale which makes them monumental in character. It was a tremendous pleasure to work with him.

Tate
 Dilworth
 Dilworth

One of the most vivid memories of my life -- however, he also regarded me at somewhat at arms length and we weren't really close in a way. I finally wangled an invitation to meet with him in the cabinet to present this vision which I was on fire about which I generated, which I first got connected with, back in the Housing Association days when I was working with Hans Blumenfeld. The vision of shifting the whole public housing and urban renewal program away from the idea of regular public housing clearance sites with public housing projects under which you dislocate people and create ghettos of government housing and institutionalize the occupants into formalized poverty and instead of that do a scattered public housing program where you take the hulks and shells of scattered abandoned houses, derelict houses, which are a terrible neighborhood detrement and fix them up and have the families move in there so that their house would be indistinguishable from that of their neighbors and so it would at the same time clean up a terrible neighborhood cancerous sore. And I made my pitch to Mayor Dilworth and I explained to him how it would be a politically extremely popular thing -- that the one thing the people know out there is that vacant houses with rats coming out of the cellar and vandals in them and murder and rape inside of them are a terrible neighborhood hazard and that they would really like the idea of a public housing family moving in next door if it meant that they were eliminating the hazard of the vacant shell which was there before. And I could see his eyes lighting up as I was describing this whole thing to him. And then when he was through and his head was nodding, he turned to Bill Rafsky on his right who was his development coordinator and said "What do you think of this?" and Bill said it was no good and that was the end of that.

Tate

Under Mayor Tate it was of course completely different. Mayor Tate was a much simpler man than either of his two predecessors, Clark and Dilworth. He was Irish-Catholic ward leader background and had been for many years the President of City Council. I had a personal affinity for Tate and I guess he did for me too. We were both exactly the same age and I was invited by him to serve on his so-called cabinet and had much more time and access to him than with either of the two other mayors and then he eventually invited me to serve informally

Kitehen

in the cabinet itself along with a considerable number of other people, which I did, and then he decided that was much too big so he cut down the number of people who met with the cabinet, but I was carried over into the much smaller group and then eventually I did become his development coordinator and so was close to him. I felt very strongly and said so frequently to the establishment that if they failed to work with Mayor Tate they were making a ghastly mistake. And in my view that is what they actually did. They never did really - they never were really, in my opinion, willing to go half-way to work with him and I think this greatly reduced his effectiveness and the degree of understanding that he received in the community.

Tate
evaluated

Walter asks whether my experience under Samuel made me more adaptable in that situation - you mean working with Mayor Tate? Well, I suppose you mean that working with one low-class person, Samuel, I therefore was able to work with another low-class person, Tate. As contrasted with the two aristocrats. Well, Walter prefers the euphemism of educational advantages. But whatever the word may be, I want to say in a very strong way that I had learned to work with regular people although I was brought up in a relatively rarified circles of Quaker middle-upper class - I never was brought up in your level of society, Walter, but nonetheless it was in many ways probably more rarified than yours because being overloaded with this tremendous religious preciousness and we only associated with the right people. In fact we had a really terrible institution which was the institution. I don't know if you know this - we had a whole group of people we called "thee" and if I called my brothers, sisters, or relatives "you" it would be an insult worse than it is possible to conceive of - of any of the newer words that the young people have made popular. And so all of our friends had to be instantly categorized either into the "thee" group or the "you" group and you never called a person who was not a Quaker "thee" and you never, never, never called a person who was a Quaker and one of the in group "you," which would be an insult of indescribable ... I don't know if it carries on today, but it was the total basis of my upbringing.

The only reason I go into that is to say that I was brought up in a fairly rarified atmosphere and I wasn't really used to people like Bernard Samuel, but I did after all live for 13 months on the deck of the USS Shoshonee with 400 sailors all in a single room and I tell you that was an experience and I obtained from that I really think - that was the place, rather than working with Samuel, because with Samuel I was quite protected by such aristocrats as Edward Hopkinson and yourself, but I really learned there about people and so I have no difficulty ever since in working with any particular background of person, but I do have a great admiration for Tate. I think he did a tremendous number of very valuable things. I think he would have done more and better things if he had been more supported by the establishment. And I did have a similar experience with him about this concept of the scattered ... of the dispersed housing program. It was a breakfast at Stouffer's with this kitchen cabinet and when it was over I was beside him and chose the opportunity to outline to him this idea which I had outlined earlier to Dilworth and which he had rejected on Bill Rafsky's advice. So the mayor again turned

twenty hours with me and the planning commission. That was prior to his campaign. It was the first one - 1955. Joe Clark was in and it was his first mayoralty campaign. It was prior to that. And I think he spent about 20 hours with me and the staff of the planning commission, going in great depth into the issues as we saw them and it was a very remarkable and inspiring experience. I did, needless to say, mention among other things the housing thing. I don't think that hit him in the same way as the others did, but I was concerned about the development of Penn Center at a high level and Society Hill. Then when he became mayor he gave an instruction to the planning commission of four things he wanted them to work on during his administration which also of itself was an inspiring ~~and~~ action to take. One of them was a new stadium and one of them was improving housing in neighborhoods and one of them was Society Hill. The other was Penn Center. So I recall that.

32 Q. When and why did you resign from the post of executive director?

I think I've already covered that.

33 Q. What do you consider the main contributions of planning in Philadelphia from 1940 to date?

I think the whole general feeling of morale and excitement about the city is the most important part of the whole thing and people still come up to me on the street and all sorts of places - people I never saw before and they just express their appreciation for having gotten people excited about Philadelphia. Having played a role in making it into a place which is good to be in. I've already said that I think my most important contribution was the consistent and unvarving support of the policy as far as I could of avoidance of large-scale clearance of major surgical operations in blighted areas and my very deep belief that you have to work with the people on their own terms where they are are do the work in terms of individual house by house and family by family help cleaning up the problems of scattered vacant lots and bad housing and providing of neighborhood services rather than these massive, rigid, programs.

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.... area plan, which I think is one of the first redevelopment area plans ever made in the United States. I did and I'm still very proud of it and to my mind it's still the right one of rehabilitation of minimal clearance of provision of really necessary facilities like playgrounds for the schools, greenways, elimination of such things as junkyards and well, for example, concentrations of obsolete garages, but otherwise working with the fabric of the city itself. And that was a great battle... I was known as the principal opponent of the so-called Chicago school, which was massive clearance. And it has been interesting to see that point of view of mine just about totally discredited and I think the pendulum has gone clear around -- we've gotten around to reaccepting that basic idea as really the working framework -- away from the massive and to come back to working with neighborhood groups, to working with individual properties to restoring individual abandoned properties and to in-filling the vacant lots and to working in a very intimate, detailed way.

The other part of it is that there is no doubt that center city is extremely spectacular and it's a glorious thing -- it's much more glorious than people yet realize because most of its most spectacular parts are not finished or not connected to each other.

Center City

Most of its most spectacular parts are either not finished or are not connected to each other. Center City, Philadelphia proves a very deep thing which hasn't yet been recognized -- that it is possible within a totally democratic situation of a democratic society with a series of individual builders through a number of different administrations without any super power figure like either Richard Mellon or Robert Moses or I suppose Ed Loque to bring together the different forces that build the center of the city and produce a very unified and harmonious work, all the parts of which fit together with all the other parts in a remarkable way. And there is no other city in the United States in which this was done. There are many cities in which there are individually perhaps even more spectacular projects - Boston, with its City Hall - but it's not part of anything bigger. And various other examples -- Constitution Plaza in Hartford and I feel the same way myself about Charles Center in Baltimore, although that comes closer to being a coherent whole. But in Baltimore I think that the government plays a much larger role.

There are subtle value systems present too which I don't think people have yet recognized. The dignifying of the subway user - the making the use of the subway a really attractive thing. The providing of the person who arrives at Center City by underground railroads and underground subways with a beautiful and attractive entrance and a splendid channels to flow from the subway to their destination through a series of gardens and open spaces, gallerias, malls, plazas, and so forth. This gives a really wonderful thing for the regular people - the people who use the city in large numbers and after all, most of the people who are the workers downtown arrive beneath the level of the street anyway and as Market East begins to materialize this is going to become more clear.

Q 34

Q - Did the quality of planning and the respect for the planning process wane as time went on and the underlying political forces change?

Well, it was a tragic thing that the so-called liberals and all the so-called do-gooders just ran all over the place when Dilworth was evidently coming to the end of his time, saying that the reform was over, the great days were over and everything had to go down the drain. This ~~was~~ tended to be a self-fulfilling prophecy, but it didn't really happen that way. I'm not close to the political scene now at all, but I can nevertheless point out that many of the things that are now building are a continuity of ideas which were generated in the earlier periods and so I think that the planning idea has its own existence independent of the political fortunes which vary and I think it has proved to have an extraordinary staying power.

Old Philadelphia Development Corporation. I was close to Greenfield at that time and we did manage to get a meeting which he chaired which the members of the Greater Philadelphia Movement came to. I think it was the first time that they really had gotten together. We saw to it that the recommendation was made at that meeting that the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation be established and in fact it was. You may know also many things about that but that was just one of the things along the way.

38

Q. - How important was redevelopment in making the Society Hill program work and how helpful has the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation been?

Redevelopment
Authority
and
Society Hill

The redevelopment authority was very critical in making Society Hill work. I think that it is difficult for me to remember exactly the sequence but if we hadn't been successful in getting a general sort-of groundswell of interest in Society Hill, the redevelopment authority wouldn't have been as effective as it was. But it was very effective and it conducted itself in a very intelligent way when it started going on Society Hill. The Old Philadelphia Development Corporation was just of inestimable value and such people as Gerrad Ingersoll and Agnes Ingersoll and Mrs. Anna Watts and others had a tremendous amount to do with the kind of atmosphere, the ambience that grew up around Society Hill and which was a very necessary element to inspire people to go down there to what had previously been thought of as a slum area and to spend their many thousands of dollars and their own effort, love, and care in restoring those old houses. Dilworth's decision to build on his house on Washington Square was a very important act in opening up the whole possibility of making Society Hill work.

Jack
Robbin

Jack Robbin was absolutely brilliant as Director of the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation and his role was of the greatest possible value. He was just a unique person - he really cared about quality and he was a really great operator. I worked very very hard to attract him to Philadelphia and I think I had quite a role in that particular thing because I don't know that he was too anxious to come, but he did come and he was just great.

In the film of our '61 thing for the architects, Jack Robbin was there and his discussion of his own role there is extremely good. I think the film would provide you with very valuable material. It has a one-hour soundtrack and you are on it, you know, and Hopkinson is on it and Jack Robbin is on it and Jim Tate. I recommend it very strongly as a very important documentary and it will make it very clear what I meant by speaking about the 15 years after the Better Philadelphia Exhibition and Jack Robbin's own vision of his own role is very lucidly portrayed in the film.

Who was his Chairman? Wasn't it I just can't remember who it was but I think it was somebody that knew Mellon and I think they were trying to put the pressure on through Mellon and I worked with him directly and tried to encourage him to come and he did. Gerrard Ingersoll, incidentally, was one of the people who was in the original list that was recommended by Citizen's Council on City Planning to the Mayor. No, that may be wrong. I guess he may have been introduced by Dilworth or Clark.

39 Q. - Are you pleased with the way your plans for Penn Center West and Penn Center East have been materializing?

Penn Center plans

I think, as you well know, Penn Center itself (incidentally, I made up that name) is both an excitement and a major disappointment because it totally repudiated the original idea I had of the open-air garden beneath the street going from 18th to City Hall, which actually would have been much finer than what was built. But, on the other hand, the way it has extended itself I think Center Square, the GIRRARD thing, the West Plaza, and the Municipal Services Building, along with the beautiful Kennedy Plaza really in a way wrap around the old Penn Center, are just going to be superlative. They are a really great expression of the idea of the dignity of the subway user and they will give an urban experience that is really unprecedented, so I'm very very pleased with that. And 1,2,3,4 Market is certainly finer than I would have ever thought possible, although I think there should have been a little bit richer in commercial. Nonetheless, I think it's going to prove to be without any question the greatest subway station that has ever been built, at least up to now. And unless something goes seriously wrong, I think that the whole clustering around 8th and Market station with the new Gimbels store and the new widened mall by Strawbridge and Clothier and then the 4-level mall of Jim Rouse (sp?) between Strawbridge and Clothier and Gimbels is going to be under the plan of John Bower is going to be just absolutely great and without match anywhere. So I certainly hope that this atmosphere will be carried on through the intervening blocks, but at least we will have managed to get the beginning going at a very high level.

This is just an interesting comment, I think, in connection with your continuity. We originally conceived Market East in the early '60's I think or the late '50's because I know I presented it to the first Commissioner's meeting that Dilworth had in Fairmount Park and Moak and I worked on that plan and we made a 3-level shopping mall as the idea for Market East. One at the street level with gardens penetrating into a lower level mall at the subway level and an upper level connector walk-way. And then the practical people got going and said you are very foolish people, in fact they used much more abrasive terms than that, and if you remember Harry Kalish just castigated our plan in the press, said it was vicious and terrible, and they said you can only have one level of shopping mall if that

-- that's what the economic analysts said, too -- Larry Smith and so forth -- and now that at last it is being built it is just amusing to note that the first section is four levels. So at least that shows something about continuity. Along with the successes of our period there were of course some failures and missing out -- oh, missing out -- I am bitter as hell. I can't express the depths of my bitterness that the political influences of the Rizzo regime prevented us from doing Penn's Landing.

Bacon's
Penn's
Landing plan
rejected

We had a perfectly beautiful plan for Penn's Landing which we did with John Bower and it was my whole vision that I would work to finish up the whole basic thing that I had been doing in Center City all the while by doing a beautiful, human and warm nailing down of the whole pedestrian continuity and the spirit of Center City revival in Penn's Landing which would then flow through Society Hill greenways and through Market East and through Penn Center out to the Schuylkill River park, which I would love to do, and it is a very, very bitter thing to me that we were rejected.

I'm not very pleased about the whole establishment. There was first of all an advisory committee and there the vote was 50-50, exactly split between us and McCloskey. All the design people were in favor of us and all the people with any sensitivity and the rest of the people voted for McCloskey. The chairman threw away the vote by voting for another person and then it went theoretically to the port corporation, chaired by Fred Potts -- well, I don't think it was that, I think it was a special Penn's Landing ...

I was speaking about my disappointment in connection with lack of selection for doing Penn's Landing and I don't think the design of McCloskey, by Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, is at all in the spirit of Philadelphia nor does it have the human quality that I think ought to be there. And you ask me about disappointment... it is a very intense disappointment. It was a disappointment that we didn't get farther than we did with the concept of neighborhood renewal and also it was a disappointment that it was so little understood and it was so much opposed, including by the so-called Liberal Establishment. But as far as Center City is concerned, there are really very few disappointments in general. I think it worked out better than we could really have any right to hope.

Oh, you talked about Louis Kahn. Louis Kahn's proposal and as for that matter, Ian McHarg's proposal. Ian McHarg said that all the area of the Chinese wall should be a park, which I think would have been a devastating disaster for Center City, if his proposal had been accepted. And Lou Kahn's ideas I think were really not ... I don't think in a way they were ... well, it's very difficult for me to talk about Lou Kahn's ideas and it's too easy for that to be misinterpreted, so I think I'll make no comments on that subject. I shall, as I've already said, in my posthumous tapes.

Q:41

Supplementary questions for E. N. Bacon

Q. 1 I don't know about ranking these different things in order -- I don't have any great joy in doing that because I see everything as one coordinated organism. The holding of Center City alive in the face of suburban sprawl is based on a very deep feeling and a philosophical feeling about the whole organism of the Center City and it includes a feeling about blighted areas and the people who live there and everything else, and I think that if we had let Center City go downhill, as really happened in Newark, we would have done a disservice to the entire region and everybody in it, including the occupants of the deteriorated areas, so I see that as one role in the whole thing of putting neighborhood renewal and the design of the Northeast and all the rest of it.

Q 6
Supple-
mentary

Q. When do you think the development of 30th St. Station along the Schuylkill River will take place?

That will come along. I've already made it perfectly clear in things I've written that I believe that the megalopolitan center of Philadelphia will generate around 30th St. in connection with the metroliner, which by then will run from Richmond to Boston, and that it will be on an even larger scale than the center, the regional center, which clusters around City Hall.

7 ... I think that social and racial problems are being better handled now and we are beginning to really face up to them and in the long run we're moving toward strength in this area rather than weakness.

8 Q. Does the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission hold much promise for the future?

The basic function of regional coordination in urban development is certainly the wave of the future and I can't myself give any particular insight to the role which the Delaware Regional Planning Commission will hold in that development, but as I've already said I think it is the wave of the future.

The last question is something I certainly will not speak about -- how the Commission has functioned since I've resigned, but I will say that since I have resigned if you look at the city as a whole it's just fascinating to me the degree to which ideas which we generated during the period I was Director are now catching hold and are still being worked on and are the basis for action now. I think it's quite remarkable the staying power that they have in things just now unfolding which we were thinking about long ago.

city charter

You speak here about the City Charter. I just do want to say that I think basically the Philadelphia City Charter is a really great document. The concept of the organization of City Council I think is excellent. The role of the planning commission in government I think was extremely good and I myself am of the view that I was much more effective working through a commission than I would have been as a department head reporting only to the Mayor. Many people don't agree with that, but nonetheless that's my view. I also feel that the somewhat loose organization between the Redevelopment Authority at the Planning Commission and the Housing Authority and the Bureau of Building Inspection and the Housing Division and all that has considerable merit and that I have serious doubts whether the program would have been greatly improved by having a single so-called Housing Czar.

I think that the role of the Office of Development Coordinator was much less important than the person who filled it and I think that if the person who filled it really knew what they were doing and if they really had the confidence of the Mayor and knew how to work with the Mayor in the city departments, that they could have gotten things done as effectively as any other governmental organization that I could think of.

Neither Rafsky nor I did as well as we should have, but I think that was due to our own personal deficiencies rather than the fault in the way it was organized, or if you choose, we can blame it on the mayors. I said that if ... I don't think that in terms of governmental structures there is anything wrong with it. If the mayor, if the development coordinator really knows what he is doing and he is really supported by the Mayor that he can achieve his objectives within the present structure. And I do really want to end by the statement that I think the capital programming provisions are the finest it is almost possible to conceive of and the thing wrong with them is exclusively the way they were used, not the device itself. And our vision, which I just hinted at before, I think, of developing a comprehensive plan of getting a cost estimate for the comprehensive plan and then relating annually the policy about the division of funds between the various facets of city life in relationship to a clearly articulated comprehensive plan and therefore visualize the entire capital program as the acceleration or deceleration of certain facets of community life which needed attention is as good a way to consider this question as possible. And the other thing is that the publication annually, in a very interesting way, of the capital program six years in the future, gives the citizen a real basis which never existed before to have an opinion about priorities, to have an opinion about the way money should be spent and to have his voice heard in City Council at the annual hearings.

Q. Have other cities copied our system of capital programming and capital budgeting?

Well, they've copied the form of it but not the substance. You'll

find that all over the United States there are governments that put out documents that look almost identical to ours visually, but I think almost none of them has gone the step of making it a real political document -- a great many of them are wishful thinking and a great many members of the planning commission feel that that's their job just to set out an ideal situation and not deal with it as a political reality. I think we're still the only city, as far as I know, that the capital program is so deeply enmeshed in the realities of the political process. Now this, incidentally, would not have worked had it not been specified in the charter that you have a nine-man Planning Commission in which three members are the three of the four members of the Mayor's cabinet so that every Planning Commission meeting three of the four members of the Mayor's cabinet are present. And that gave me, incidentally, as Director of the Planning Commission, access to them by giving them ideas which in turn were presumably reflected in the cabinet, but the fact, and I'll be very direct about this... the fact that nonetheless in our discussions I had six citizen members meant that I was therefore not subject to total encompassment of the mayor's usual cabinet policy. And you know darn well as a member of the mayor's cabinet that you could discuss things in there but you were totally bound by cabinet policy and we could initiate policy and we could further positions in policy up to the point of it being totally.....

You come to a specific issue like the recommendation of the capital program ... that of course was of extreme interest to the mayor and that involved money and our working that out in the Planning Commission with the department heads and the mayor's cabinet gave a very rich cross-fertilization.

Q. Was the Finance Commissioner helpful to you in your capital budgeting?

Well, it depends which Finance Commissioner. Certainly Vernon Northrup was very good and Ed Martin. Ed Martin was extremely good. He was very good and they were frequently very helpful. Dick McConnell was excellent. But there was a very rich interaction very vital in the planning commission itself and we injected into the situation ... we gave them a vision of the broad policy implications of their decisions which doesn't normally arise out of the kind of expedient discussion which the cabinets tends to fall into.

Q. One other question about these nonprofit corporations -- like the port corporation, the industrial development corporation, the distribution center... did they cooperate with the Planning Commission? Were they an additional tool for carrying out the Planning Commission programs?

Non-profit corporations

Well, I'm glad you ask the question because I think they had an extremely important role. And it was a curious phenomenon with the Greater Philadelphia Movement which served at one time (I don't think it does anymore) as a kind of the conscience of the best thinking in the city and then it spawned all these series of subcorporations and they were extremely helpful and

then the general pattern of the guys moving from the Mayor's cabinet to become the directors of these different corporations so that they were rooted in knowledge in municipal processes which was really important.

Q. They were really joint ventures with the private establishments -- it sounds like bragging, but I devised the thing, and the industrial development corporation was the first one and we worked it out so that the Chamber of Commerce had one more vote than the City -- the City appointed a certain number of directors and the Chamber a certain number, but the Chamber had one more than the City....

Well, if you don't brag, you're being dishonest. I think it's very important to get away from the usual Protestant idea of modesty. You should be perfectly direct in expressing your opinion of what you did and to do otherwise is just to mess up the course of history. And there will be lots of people very intrigued to eliminate your role in it.

WMP -- If Harry Batten were still alive he really would mess it up because Jeffrey Smith was working with Harry Batten when Jeffrey Smith was Chairman of the Girard and he called me over to discuss this subject and I gave him the idea, not knowing that he was going to pass it on to Harry Batten. So Harry Batten got the Food Distribution Corporation established before we got the Industrial Development Corporation established.

It was a very great period of community ferment and it has very monumental records, of which the Better Philadelphia Exhibition was one, the Home Rule Charter, and the thing for the architects was another. And it would really be great to record it because it is unique on the American scene and because many, many people would like to benefit by it but it is very difficult now to provide them with any kind of a decent indicator of what really happened, so that's your job.