REFLECTIONS ON ARCHITECTS AND ARCHITECTURE IN PRINCE GEORGE 1950-2000

An Interview of Trelle A. Morrow, B.A., B. Arch.
Retired Member of the Architectural Institute of B.C.

Compiled with photographs by
J. Kent Sedgwick
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J. Kent Sedgwick

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Trelle Morrow Oral History Transcript

A corrected transcript from a taped interview of Trelle Morrow (TM) conducted by Kent Sedgwick (KS).

Side A

KS: This recording is being made on the 14th of June, 2006. I'm interviewing Trelle Morrow, a retired architect who practised in Prince George for many years. Trelle is going to tell us a little bit about his experience here in the time of his practice, the fifties and onwards, and we'll work through and talk about some of the buildings and so forth and architects in Prince George in that time period.

So Trelle, first of all, let's just start with a little bit of your family background just to give a little context.

TM: Well, my family has been in British Columbia for quite a while. All of my grandparents migrated to British Columbia around 1900. Two of them, at least on the Morrow side, were just before 1900 and on my mother's side, which was the Smith family, immediately after 1900. My grandparents came from Ontario and Manitoba and settled in the East Kootenay and in the Okanagan. So my parents, of course then, were born in British Columbia so there's not too many people who can say that, people my age at least, can say that their parents were born in British Columbia. So, these are our roots so to speak.

KS: OK, what about your early schooling and then your architectural training.

TM: Well, my elementary training was in numerous schools around the province. My father was in the lumber industry in various phases doing various things, so we did move quite a bit. And high schools, I was in the Okanagan during my high school years, and then I went to U.B.C. in Vancouver for my first university experiences. I was always interested in building. During the summers as a high school student I would get involved a little bit as my father was usually building something, either adding on to the house or doing some

small industrial thing at the mill or whatever, and I'd be poking around and helping him out. My grandfather was a builder as well to some extent. During the depression years in the 1930s, my grandfather worked for the Department of Public Works and he was involved with bridge construction. My father would work with him, actually for a short time during the depression years, building the wooden bridges that they called kingpost and queenpost bridges. Most of those have disappeared from the landscape now but there's still one or two around.

KS: When I talked to you before, you mentioned Fernie a couple of times. What's the context there?

TM: Well, Fernie, I was born in Fernie.

KS: Oh, OK.

TM: Because my grandparents migrated to the East Kootenay. They lived in Cranbrook. My father was in that area working and my mother was born in the Okanagan and raised there but she went to teach school in the East Kootenay, so that's where my parents met, in the East Kootenay. That's why my roots are there.

KS: U.B.C. When did you actually start there and what was that experience like?

TM: Well...

KS: What was U.B.C. like for architecture?

TM: It was interesting in several respects. I started in 1947 actually, and that was a time when a lot of the veterans were coming back and being given gratuities and so on through a veteran's allowance program. I'm not sure what exactly it was called. So in my class, starting in the school of architecture in 1948, two thirds of the class would be veterans and then there were three or four of us that were just sort of fresh out of high school. The veterans were certainly an interesting bunch because they had all kinds of wild

stories from their overseas experience of course. But we did manage to get along. There was no discrimination and everyone mixed well. The classes were small. My first year class in architecture was, I think, about 30 or 31 students and over the five-year program there were only six of the originals left, myself and five others, but the graduating class in '53 was, I believe, 11 or 12 because we had picked up students that had either transferred or had taken a year or two out and then came back to school and so on. But of the original first year class, there were six of us left and one or two of them are still living in British Columbia. Two or three have passed on. One of them moved back to his home country so there's not much left of that particular class.

KS: Schools for architecture, of course, were in short supply in Canada in those days.

TM: Oh, that's right.

KS: How many were there?

TM: The total was five, there were five schools. British Columbia was sort of trying to set a pace. The established school was Manitoba; they had been involved and established for some time. The University of Toronto was well known and established as was McGill. Now those were the top four schools in Canada. The fifth one was the Beaux Arts School in Montreal; I don't know whether the Beaux Arts School is even existing now but they were teaching architecture as well. More or less a classical school. They dwelt heavily on classical design and so on. So that was right at the beginning in the 1950s and later on, I'm not sure when, perhaps by 1960, the Nova Scotia Technical School I think it was, started teaching architecture and I'm not sure just where else. There may have been one or two in Ontario. I'm not sure.

KS: Do you know when U.B.C. started their school?

TM: Well, U.B.C. would have started, I guess, in '45 and I would have been in the third graduating class. The fellows in the first graduating

class were eight. There were eight students, as I recall. One of them was Ray Toby. I don't know if he's still living or not. I believe Grant MacKinnon and the other chap, Bud Aubrey, had a practice in Kamloops for years afterwards. They both passed on though. But the second graduating class was about 20 because by then the veterans had started; in 1946, it was heavy with veterans. So the graduating class was, I would guess, almost all veterans and by the third class that I was in, there were a few of us from high school that had dribbled in.

KS: In the architecture school there, what sort of schools of design were popularly taught? What were your influences in terms of schools of design when you were there?

TM: Well, the main influence right after the War was what became known as the West Coast School or the West Coast Theme and this was heavily into wood construction. It was heavily into design standards that were set really by the Bauhaus in Germany of the 1930s, by Le Corbusier in the 1930s, Mies Van Der Rohe from Germany, Walter Gropius from the Bauhaus; and a favourite of mine did a lot of housing, a German chap again, by the name of Marcel Breuer. I have a book on Breuer's work and much of his wood housing design was similar to the west coast design that was being promoted and practiced from, say, 1945 onwards. So there were roots into the historic, if you like, early historic architectural theory and practice in Europe from say 1925 or 1930 onward. Some of these, when the Nazi regime came along, some of these architects gravitated to the United States. Mies Van Der Rohe moved to the United States; I think he went to the Chicago School of Design, and Breuer ended up in the U.S. At the same time, there was some influence from Finland and Alvar Aalto was one of the leading Finnish architects, sort of during the War and right after the War, so I guess he started in the 1930s. And again, because Finland was heavy into wood construction, Alvar Aalto had a lot of influence on the west coast design. Aalto, and I believe his son actually, was involved in designing the Toronto City Hall. That was an Aalto design I think.

KS: Was that his son?

TM: I think it was his son. I'm not sure. You know, I'd have to check the history on that.

KS: Yeah.

TM: So the family was involved there. And the TD Centre, the Toronto Dominion Centre built in the '60s in Toronto was heavily influenced by Mies Van Der Rohe. Some Canadians don't like to admit it but Mies Van Der Rohe was the primary mover there. And Frank Lloyd Wright had some influence. He was the great romantic, of course, in the '50s and '60s. And as a matter of fact, we had one of his students at U.B.C. in my class in second year and third year I guess, or maybe first and second year, a fellow by the name of John Rattenbury who was the son of the famous Rattenbury who did the parliament buildings in Victoria. John was in my classes at U.B.C. and he's still living in Arizona and he has visited British Columbia on occasion in recent years. But John went down and articled for Frank Lloyd Wright because he was inclined to go in that bent as opposed to things a little more intellectual you might say. Mies Van Der Rohe and Le Corbusier were heading up sort of the intellectual schools of things which were cut and dried and systems and all that sort of thing. And then there was the Romantic Period, which Wright was sort of the main wheel in that theme along with people like Bruce Goff who was kind of far out, but certainly Wright had an awful lot of influence, Romantic influence, in architecture.

KS: Who were some of the profs that you had at U.B.C.?

TM: Well, the head of the school was a fellow named Fred Lasserre and Fred Lasserre was a graduate of Toronto, and we had two other very good instructors in the early '50s: John Porter who was a graduate of McGill, and Keith Davidson who was a graduate of Manitoba. Davidson and Porter had a private practice and so did Fred Lasserre. Fred Lasserre designed the gymnasium at U.B.C. which would be about 1952, '50 or '51, somewhere around there. So those were the three architects. Now we did have some painters, design people. One of the fellows, a very notable B.C. artist, Bert Binning, was teaching us design principles and so on. He was there

for three or four years. I admired Binning greatly. I wish I had bought one of his paintings at the time because the prices nowadays are astronomic to have a Binning. He was a great guy and a great man with the students and always he was most attentive. It didn't matter what he was doing, he would walk through the drafting room and he'd stop and look at something and chitchat and scribble something on a paper and all this sort of thing. As a matter of fact, all of the instructors were good that way. They would come into the drafting room which the students sort of used as home base and the students would flag them down. "John, come and have a look at this", or "Keith, come and have a look at this", and they'd stop and chitchat and so on. Occasionally, they'd come in and bum a cigarette from one of the students if they happened to be out of cigarettes and this sort of thing. Keith Davidson was an excellent designer and detailer of wood construction and that's where I really got my good fundamental training in wood design and detailing metalwork which paid off when I came to Prince George actually because the people up here were, quite frankly, incapable; they didn't know anything about it. So it certainly paid off for me to have the background of these kinds of people at U.B.C.

KS: Which takes us probably to the next topic: Prince George and when did you actually come here, and more importantly probably, why did you choose Prince George?

TM: Well, I came to Prince George in 1954. I had worked with Wade & Stockdill in Victoria for a year and got a very good grounding there in designing and drawing and so on. Actually, a couple of students in the Wade & Stockdill office were U.B.C. grads of a year ahead of me. Don Dennis was one of them and there were a couple of excellent detailers there, and there was one fellow who was an ex-RCAF pilot, Ben Peterson. He was an extremely fine designer and about once or twice a day I would go and look and see what Ben was doing on his drawing board and then I'd go back and copy it because this was the way that students learned. And I have to say that there were a couple of students in my class, Jack Hanson was one that later had his own practice, an extremely fine designer and detailer, and I learned a lot from Jack; and I learned a lot from

people like Ben Peterson who were keen detailing people, and they liked to do woodwork and all this sort of thing. So there wasn't a huge amount of theory in those days. It was 90% construction and detailing but the theory came from people like, as I mentioned earlier, people like Mies Van Der Rohe and Marcel Breuer and Frank Lloyd Wright.

In 1954, we came to Prince George because there was an ad in the paper. I don't remember what paper but the architectural firm of Ralph Brownlee & Associates was advertising for architectural help in Prince George and, because I was from the interior of British Columbia, I was sort of anxious to move back to the interior if an opportunity arose. So, at that time, there were only two or three firms in the interior. There was one in Cranbrook. Oh dear...a fellow by the name of Fairbanks took over from the older gentleman and I can't think of the older gentleman's name. Fairbanks was one of the architects in Cranbrook. There was one in Penticton and again I can't remember who it was but Meikeljohn, who practised for years and years in the Okanagan, Meikeljohn took that office over, I think, and at that time in '54, Bud Aubrey and Grant MacKinnon had opened an office in Kamloops and they were U.B.C. grads. Bud Aubrey was ex-air force and I'm not sure about MacKinnon, whether he was in the air force or not. I think he was. So, I came to Prince George to work for Ralph Brownlee and Ralph was a very personable individual and got along well with everybody. He even had a business manager who hired me, George... I can't remember George's last name. George was the business manager and Ralph had three secretaries, one of whom is still living in Prince George: Dorothy Range.

KS: It'll come to you [George's last name].

TM: Yeah. And Dorothy was Jimmy Hutchinson's daughter and Jimmy was a draftsmen in Brownlee's office when I came. Dorothy Range married Ted Range. Ted is an ex-CN employee. So, I came up and I was number 15 on the payroll and this is astronomic. It was the reason for the demise of Ralph's practice because Ralph was a wheeler and dealer and we had work in Yellowknife, we had work in Whitehorse, we had school jobs in the Peace River and Burns Lake

and McBride. I can't remember what we did in Prince George, not a lot in Prince George. Vanderhoof, it was. Ralph had rounded up jobs all over the country. Ralph's home was in Edmonton actually but Ralph's problem was that he didn't have people in the office that could produce work, and because of my background and my training at U.B.C. with people like Davidson and Porter, who were practising architects, and because of the excellent experience I had in Wade & Stockdill's office, [I could produce]. John Wade, incidentally, of the firm was the aide-de-camp of the Lieutenant Governor; you can imagine what kind of thing that went on in that office. He'd come in with his naval uniform and his sword, walk down the aisles and give everybody hell if they weren't hacking the line. So that was a good background.

Getting back to Ralph's office, personable as he was and great as he liked to be, the work simply was not being done, and of course with all this office overhead, he was, perhaps of necessity, hiring people that really didn't know what they were doing when it came down to it. And the bulk of the work, as it turned out, the bulk of the work was done by myself and Jimmy Hutchinson. Jimmy was a good draftsman and he had a lot of construction experience and he knew what he was talking about. So, one by one, these people disappeared and within, what, a year or a year and a half of my arrival, Ralph had left town and declared bankruptcy in effect. That is what happened because the overhead just caught up. It's too bad because he had the work but he didn't have the people that could turn out the product. So subsequently, Jo Briggs [from Jolyon] took over Ralph's office and I can't remember the date. It was probably 1955, the beginning of 1955. Jo had been recruited by Ralph as well but Jo was just straight out from England and of course a lot of things were foreign to him when he came here. The type of wood construction being used and so on was quite new to these people that came out from Britain. So they were having difficulty coping with everything as well. So, the long and the short of it was that there was a fair turnover in Prince George in 1954-55. Then, by 1956, I had decided that I would do my own thing and started my own office and one or two other people arrived here at that time. I think Des Parker came about 1956. I'm not sure about that.

KS: That's probably about right.

TM: I think he did.

KS: Yeah.

TM: He worked for Jo Briggs for a while and his wife, Phyllis Parker, was the secretary in Jo's office. Phyllis was a Prince George girl but she had been off doing secretarial work in I think it was Calgary, and Phyllis came back to Prince George and was working in Jo's office as the secretary. By this time the 13 people, apart from Jo and I, that were in Ralph's office had gone; they were out. So Jo was almost starting over. One or two people did come back. A fellow by the name of Walter Baumann ...maybe I've got the wrong name. He was a chap who had just come over from Germany but he had some construction experience but not a great deal of drafting experience. He worked for a while with Brownlee, then he worked for Jo and then he moved to the Okanagan eventually. So those were the tumultuous days in 1954 and '55 as to what was going on.

KS: Some time back, you had some written notes informing on the various architects and so forth. Maybe just take a quick read through these and, you know, maybe mention some of the projects that specific individuals were working on.

TM: Uh huh.

KS: These are your own notes.

TM: Yes. Thank you. As I've mentioned Jim Hutchinson's name, his background actually was, I think, from wartime construction in Prince Rupert and then he gravitated to Prince George. Jim was one of these fellows that didn't like to put up with people that sort of didn't know what they were doing. I guess that may be a polite way of saying it. So he really went off on his own. He was not a registered architect of course, so if he was to be involved with doing some drawings or getting construction organized in Prince George, this did not sit well with architects that were registered

and practicing under the name of the profession. The Associate Medical Clinic [575 Quebec St, PHOTO right] down on the corner of Quebec and, what is it, 6th, the drawings were done by Jim Hutchinson and I think that may have been even before Ralph Brownlee came to town, '53, '54, somewhere around there. And Jim did some work on the Professional Centre [1705 3rd Ave, PHOTO left] which was sort of the main office building in Prince George and that's on 3rd Avenue. The name of that has been changed now.

KS: Well, it might still be called that. I think the Construction Association is there, or the Builders' Association or something.

TM: Yeah. That was built by the Schlitt brothers and the Schlitt brothers were big sawmill people.

KS: And that was one of the sort of early, real office buildings?

TM: It was the main office building, it was the singular office building in Prince George at the time in 1954, and Brownlee's office and Jo Briggs' office were in the basement. And the land surveyor's office, Doc Campbell had his office in the basement there, and there were medical offices on the main floor and Dr. Agnew and so on. So it was the building in Prince George as far as practices, apart from the medical profession. In the Associate Medical Clinic I think at the time, in '54, I believe there were only 6 doctors in Prince George; four or five of them were in the Associate Medical Clinic and Agnew was in the Professional Centre. So that's sort of the history of the

office work there.

And then there were some additions. [I did one] on the fire hall No. 1 downtown [1111 7th Ave, PHOTO right] and an addition to Central Fort George.

KS: That's the school? [Addition is today's Fort George Traditional School 2955 3rd Ave, PHOTO below; designed by Des Parker, Trelle thought]

TM: That's the school. That's long gone now I guess. [Central Fort George school 325 Harper St, built 1915, was demolished in 2004. PHOTO right].

KS: Yeah.

TM: That's all gone.

TM: So, Jim did do quite a bit of early work in the early '50s and then he associated himself with an architectural office in Vancouver, Swinburne, Kyle & Associates. Whenever Jim got a job that required architectural input and consulting services and so on, he would use the firm of Swinburne, Kyle, but this was always a sore point with the Institute [Architectural Institute of B.C.] as well, and the Institute wasn't too firm on this because, I guess, they didn't have

the resources to police all these things. But a branch office such as Swinburne, Kyle was supposed to have a registered architect in attendance, and of course Jim was not registered. So that sort of stuck in the craw, if you want to call it that, with some people too. That has been an objection around the province and in other places where [non-registered designers] have come into town, into Prince George. It's happened with firms from Edmonton as a matter of fact. A big complaint because there's no architect in the office, yet it's called an architectural office. It's always been a sore point.

Ralph Brownlee & Associates, they were doing most of their work out of town. There wasn't a great deal of work right in Prince George. Well, I shouldn't say a great deal, there was some. But the coast architects, Peter Thornton, who later became Gardener & Thornton, did several projects.

I think McCarter & Nairne did the Masonic building [480 Vancouver St, PHOTO right] on the corner of Fourth and Vancouver, which is a neat building. That would be 1954 or '55 I guess. And Gardener & Thornton were getting quite a bit of church work for the Catholic Church. They did, I think, Saint Mary's School. [1088 Gillette St, PHOTO right] I'm not sure if Gardener & Thornton also did do some hospital work early on, they may have but I don't recall it.

Anyway, Vancouver firms were working into Prince George, so when Ralph opened his office, he wasn't immediately involved with that much Prince George work because he had work all over the country and that's what was happening.

The Civic Centre as it's called in this list is really the one that's

been demolished. It was near where the Canadian Legion sits today and that Civic Centre was an old army building that was hauled down from Central and set up on 7th Avenue. One of the things that was done to that building at the time in the early '50s was a new entrance lobby and toilets were put on the front of the building to accommodate the public. [1295 7th Ave, PHOTO left] The contractor for that was Garvin Dezell, Dezell Construction. And when I came to Prince George in 1954, I think the first job I was given was to redraw some details, entrance details, and millwork details and so on, on that entrance to the Civic Centre because whoever did the drawings, the contractor objected and said, "I can't build this". Ken Range was the millwork supervisor, if you like, the millwork man that worked for Garvin Dezell. And so I had to redraw these door and window details and all that stuff right off the bat. That was my first job I think, working for Brownlee, so that the contractor could build the darn thing. And that sort of, I think, established my so-called notoriety with millwork because Prince George Sash and Door, owned by Sandy Camozzi, which was on 6th Avenue at the time just about where the old CKPG office, or building, is. Sandy Camozzi was doing a lot of millwork at that time too, and he was getting these drawings from architectural offices and they were scratching their head trying to figure out how this stuff was supposed to go together. So I guess I got in the good books of Sandy Camozzi redoing millwork drawings on the jobs that we did do. I did all the doors and windows and all that kind of stuff and counters and I did a lot of cabinet work and so on. And this impressed Sandy Camozzi who was an older gentlemen and, though letting out secrets here I may be, Sandy Camozzi was a good member of the Catholic church. So in 1958 when the job came along they were going to build a parish hall, Sandy Camozzi came into my office. He says, "I want you to do the drawings for that hall". So that's the kind of thing that went on in those days.

KS: That's the hall over on Ingledew? [1346 Ingledew St, PHOTO right]

TM: That was built in '58.

KS: OK.

TM: And they were happy enough with that, that then they gave me the job of doing the church [Sacred Heart] in 1960.

KS: Yeah.

TM: And the church job was...we're maybe wandering from the subject here.

KS: Well we can come back to the church if you want.

TM: Yeah, we'll come back to it.

KS: Come back to that if you want.

TM: Ralph Brownlee was only here a year or so, that's it. He just did not really have the people, because he had the jobs. There's no question about that. And then Jo Briggs took over, of course, and Jo had several partners in the '50s and early '60s before he relocated to the school district. I worked with him for a year or so, Lynden Fonseca did as well, Alan Greenwell did, and I believe Des Parker did for a short time, too. So by then we had moved. Jo had moved out of the Professional Centre into the Masonic Hall building which, as I mentioned, was designed by McCarter & Nairne. And Jo was involved with quite a bit of church work in the 1950s, all over the country. I had done some work. Jo did the new section of Knox Church in 1956 [1448 5th Ave, PHOTO right] and I had done a little bit of work on it. He did the new section of the Anglican Church, the new section that joins onto the

old hall there. [1505 5th Ave, PHOTO right]

KS: Is that St. Michael's?

TM: Yeah.

KS: OK.

TM: Yeah, that's a fine job. I think that was a good design. Good work in that and I don't who was associated with Jo when they did St. Michael's. It might have been Lynden Fonseca. I'm not sure though. And somewhere around 1960, he did the Simon Fraser Hotel, [600 Quebec St, PHOTO right] maybe '58, '58 to '60. And the Co-op food store, I think, on 6th Avenue there.

KS: Is that the Bingo?

TM: It used to be a Bingo place now. Yeah, a Bingo hall. [1313 6th Ave, PHOTO right]

KS: Yeah, it's a big building, yeah.

TM: I don't know what's in there. It used to be a bingo hall.

KS: Yeah, I'm not quite sure now either. [demolished 2007 for gaming centre]

TM: That was...it went though various things. [uses of the building]

KS: That's right, yeah.

TM: So Jo was doing some school work at the time too, I just don't recall exactly which school right now. But we had work, he had work in the Peace River because I did some drawings on the Grandview Elementary School in Dawson Creek. I made several trips up there. And the Grandview School is now closed. They've got new schools, and the Grandview School is sort of a cultural centre and it's used for all kinds of volunteer groups and culture groups in Dawson Creek. So it was kind of interesting to go in the school in the last few years because we've been up there to a couple of functions not related to architecture at all, but to go in this old school and start looking around going: "I think I can remember this a little bit". So some buildings were done early on with Jo.

My own work, getting down to 1956 on, or '57 on, the first job I had for the city was the police building I guess in 1957 on the corner of 7th and Quebec [1301 7th Ave, PHOTO right, demolished 2007 for gaming centre] Then, as mentioned, 1958 was Sacred Hart Parish Hall; 1960, Sacred Heart Cathedral. [887 Patricia Blvd, PHOTO right] That was an interesting building, the cathedral. It wasn't a cathedral in those days but it got dedicated later as a cathedral. But again, we were using an awful lot of timber construction in the '50s and '60s. Glued, laminated timber was very popular and I think there were six laminating plants in the province

at that time. Nowadays I'm not even sure there's one. So we were all, all the architects, were heavy into timber construction and laminated construction. And that particular structural system on the Catholic church is what's called a two-hinged arch. One of the reasons that I got involved with perhaps different structural systems is that at U.B.C., in our training, we had a very good structural engineer, a fellow by the name of Paul Wisnicki. And we analyzed and studied different structural forms and so on. Two-hinged arches, three-hinged arches and all this kind of stuff, and a lot of this, of course, I had in my mind, fresh in my mind having not been long out of U.B.C. So we went ahead with this two-hinge arch which means that at the bottom of the arch is the pin connections or the steel pin connections and the joins at the top of the arches are rigid and they're formed with steel plates and so on to provide support.

KS: So the joins at the bottom, are they flexible?

TM: Well, they could be, they could. It's bolted down but in theory it's flexible.

KS: I see.

TM: But it wouldn't move unless it was an earthquake.

KS: Yeah.

TM: That's the whole theory and the idea is that there's a horizontal stress imposed at the bottom because the arch tends to kick out, so that horizontal stress needs to be tied together with rods across in the floor system. And the same thing applies in Knox Church and in the Sacred Hart Hall; those arches are all tied at the bottom but the three-hinged arches didn't need tying. They were tied for stability. The two-hinged arches definitely had to be tied. There's nothing to counteract the horizontal stress that's imposed. All this stuff was structural and the structural engineer I had working at the time was with Swan Wooster Engineering, a fellow by the name of Stan Headrick. Stan did his engineering thesis on the

structural design of that church.

KS: Oh.

TM: So he had an office in Prince George and Swan Wooster Engineering was doing consulting at the time. He did all the calculations and all the stuff on it and then he sent it down to the head office and got it all checked through and that was his thesis to qualify as a professional engineer, with analyzing the two-hinged arch. There's a lot of that kind of stuff. I think the reflection on this, the context of this kind of approach, is that in the '50s and '60s architects were much more concerned and interested in structural design and structural innovation and so on, and it was in our training, whereas nowadays that does not occur in the training. The whole complexion of the architecture profession has changed from about 1965 onward, or 1970 onward. And there's no longer five and six year schools of architecture. They're three year schools and you need an undergraduate degree and all that sort of ramification. So consequently, the architects rely more on consultants, structural consultants, to provide all that kind of input whereas in the '50s and '60s, the architects themselves had a much keener insight into structural design because we were taught that in the schools and nowadays they're not taught that in the schools. So that's the sort of the change in the complexion of the profession. And while you might go up to U.N.B.C. today and see something innovative and so on, ideas might arise with the architects, but most architects wouldn't know how to calculate that to save their souls, so they rely on structural innovation and structural consultants. The consultants for the structural innovation to do all the calculating and all that sort of thing. So the whole complexion has changed.

KS: Yeah. How about we'll come back and talk about some of your particular projects? But when you started your practice here, can you think of who actually worked for you?

TM: Well, my first couple of years I worked by myself and then I started hiring students in the summer and I had two or three students, architectural students, a couple of local people. This is around the

1960s. One gal that was here, Marion Fox, was a Prince George girl. She's living in Calgary now. She married an architect actually. Marion was in the school of architecture and I employed her one summer. So up until about 19...oh '62 or '63, I was working by myself with students in the summer time. And another student I had early on in the late '50s was Don Burton from U.B.C., and then a fellow...oh dear, I can't even think of his name...from U.B.C., and he was working on some kind of an M.A. program actually. Then I had Brian, I can't even think of his last name, from Ontario and he subsequently went back to Ontario and he was a U.B.C. student. And in the early '60s, Stuart Ross came up and worked for me for a while. I'm sorry, I can't even think of when Stuart did that. He can tell you better than I right now. So Stu worked for me for maybe a couple of years and then he branched out on his own. And then there was, in 1965, a young fellow from U.B.C. who only graduated a couple of years before, Ray Goldsworthy from Victoria, came up and worked for me for a year, or maybe a year and a half. I guess he went back to Victoria by about 1967 or '68.

KS: Did you have all these students because it was an economical way of getting help, or did you enjoy kind of training or mentoring them?

TM: It might have been economical, although I hate to say this but the big thing with students is you don't really make any money on them because you have to spend so much time teaching them things. They're hopeless. I was doing a lot of running around. I had jobs in Dawson Creek, I had a job in Prince Rupert at the time, I was doing some school work in the Cariboo and I was doing a lot of running around and the students were sort of my home base for me. They were in the office when I was away and they could take phone calls and this sort of thing because I only had a part-time secretary. I didn't need a full-time secretary. So the students did a lot of, well, tracing and putting on title blocks and, oh, printing. We had a lot of white printing to do. I bought my own white printing machine and all this sort of thing.

KS: This was all pre-computer of course.

TM: All pre-computer, all pre-computer. So the students did a lot of chores for me. There's no doubt about that. They helped out a lot but when it came right down to production, no. I had to show them every little thing because they just weren't learning enough or didn't have enough experience and so on. I liked to have a student that had building construction, that had gone out and worked on a building site and maybe built a house or something, knew how to drive a nail, knew what a 2x4 was and all that kind of thing, but you couldn't always find students that knew what a 2x4 was. So again, it was as I say, it was mostly summer work and so on.

KS: Did you work out of your home or where was your office in those days?

TM: No, I never did work out of my home. My first office was on 4th Avenue in a building owned by a plumber by the name of Tommy Walsh and he was around for, I don't know, a few years. And then he sold after I'd been there a year or two; just tiny little buildings, long gone now. As a matter of fact it sat just about where the Hudson Bay Parkade is, the old Hudson Bay Parkade. And then I moved just across the street, Fourth Avenue, in another old building. It was an army building converted into offices and Ivor Guest owned it, from Guest's Stationary store.

Side B

TM: Right up until 1962, in first of all Tommy Walsh's little building and then secondly the Beauguest building, both of which are gone now. And the Beauguest building sat actually where the FANE building is, one lot in from the corner as I recall. Right next door to the FANE building. [401 Quebec St, PHOTO RIGHT. Trelle later explained the FANE building was named for its owners: Fonseca, Aitkin, Newby and Evans.]

But in 1962 a friend of mine, Albert Stekl, who was in the lumber business, Stekl Lumber, they had a mill down on River Road down there by the Nechako. Albert and I would chum around and so on. We decided we were going to build an office building together so we bought a lot on 7th Avenue and there was an old house on it, or I guess there was a foundation of an old house. We bought this lot in 1962 and we built the Talisman Offices, [1370 7th Ave, PHOTO left] which was a tiny little office building which is still sitting there. [Demolished 2007 for gaming centre] And so I moved in there and a well known accountant in the town of Prince George, Jerry Ranni, was our first tenant. Jerry moved in, then, oh, we had lawyers move in there and we had people selling office equipment and, oh, a whole variety of tenants over the years.

KS: Was Art Stauble ever in there?

TM: Yes, Art was in there.

KS: I think I visited him once there.

TM: Yeah, and Art shared space upstairs with Sid Clark, and Sid Clark was a private accountant doing a lot accounting work for small firms and Sid was there too from about 1965 onward, I guess. So that building was sold. We sold to one of the tenants; we sold it to Randy Walker, who has a law office, and I think Randy sold it to the City. I understand that the City owns a lot of property along there now.

KS: Oh, that may be, I don't know, I'm not sure at all.

TM: So Randy told me, a year or so past.

KS: When did you sell it?

TM: Well, when we moved home here [retired to 3747 Dezell Dr, designed by Trelle], that would have been about 1997 or '98. I'd say 1997 we sold it.

KS: For 30 years you owned it [and worked there].

TM: Oh yeah, we were there '62 to '92. We had it over 30 years. And then Albert Stekl passed on, oh I don't know, 15 years after we built it, so then I had to...eventually I bought it from the estate. I took it over from the Steckl estate and bought it outright, so we had it all in those days. So that's sort of the history of my location.

KS: I guess we should, more than touch on but, talk about some of the actual projects you were responsible for, let's put it that way, and also some of those that you're particularly pleased with, the way they turned out.

TM: Well, I was always interested in housing, but an architect, of course, never really can make a living just doing housing unless you're doing, you know, million dollar houses type of thing. But in the 1960s, this is something that Alan Greenwell and I, I think, agreed on actually.

KS: One of the few things?

TM: One of the few things that Alan and I agreed on. The best housing design of the architects in Prince George was done in the '60s and there may be a reason, all kinds of reasons for that which we don't need to go into now. It's another whole book in itself. But the Buchan house was even praised that I did in '62, '61 or '62, which is on Hammond. It's still there, [2755 Hammond Ave, PHOTO right] occupied by Cathy and Blake King now. George Lipke bought it from Buchans. But the

Buchan house is probably the best design, the cleanest design and even Alan even mentioned this to me. He said, "You know that's the cleanest design in town, that house, that Buchan house." I said, "Well it's nice of you to say that." Alan did a little house himself over on Laurier. [2299 Laurier Cres, PHOTO left] I'm not that familiar with it but you know his stuff was, the early stuff, was fairly, fairly simple and so on. But again, this gets back to probably my entrance to housing and the inputs of Marcel Breuer and people that were doing wood construction. And a lot of West Coast influence because people like Davidson and Porter were doing some pretty clean, neat housing in the '50s in the Vancouver area and out in West Point Grey. So I do like some of the early housing and I only did a few [another is at 2292 McBride Cres] because most of my work was small commercial and small industrial and quite a bit of institutional and quite a few schools and quite a few churches. I had the privilege of working for several denominations. I did a Lutheran, an interesting Lutheran church, in Dawson Creek in the late '50s or early '60s I guess it was. Again, a laminated arch type of thing. That was a three-hinged arch. And, of course, the work for the Catholic church, both the parish hall and the church, the cathedral.

And the schools, I was doing a lot of elementary schools. One of the most interesting ones, and I still get comments occasionally, was Quinson School. [251 S. Ogilvie St, PHOTO right] Dave Todd was the superintendent here at the time and he was interested in sort of innovative design. Quinson school has 5-sided classrooms; the original design,

5-sided classrooms. The outside wall poked out at a point. [PHOTO right] In that particular period in the early '60s, there was a lot of education theory around about how to teach students and how to cope in the classroom, and one of the things that they wanted was an activity area in the classroom. Dave Todd was kind of hot on this and there was research being done in the U.S. in the late '50s and '60s, early '60s. And a great deal of notoriety came from Winnetka, Illinois and the Winnetka plan was known all over the U.S. and into Canada and in British Columbia. We had, I have, a book actually on the schools designed on the Winnetka Plan and these were sort of multipurpose, flexible type of situations where classrooms could be opened up, joined together; the shapes were different. Quinson was the first sort of experimental school and I've had comments in the last few years from teachers saying they still like it. So these 5-sided classrooms were incorporated in Quinson. All wood construction again; gluelam beams and decking and all that sort of thing. That was before we got into the systems construction, which started about 1970, which is an entirely different ballgame. So I still like that idea and I think that it was a landmark for the schools in Prince George.

KS: Were there any other schools here done that way?

TM: No. Quinson was the only one. But what we did do, in Quinson we had a hexagonal activity room, [PHOTO right] and that again was done to contend with some of the educational requirements and build in flexibility instead of just having a square box for a gym to go and play a game in. We had one side of

the hexagon for service areas, for stage facilities and that kind of thing. The other side of the hexagon was storage areas, shower rooms and toilets and above that there was a mezzanine which could be used for storage and the various things. So that hexagon plan appealed to education people and that was done I believe in 1965, that was added on Quinson. And that hexagon plan was built on five or six other schools even though the classroom plan was not used; there was a shift into larger classrooms, rectangular classrooms with folding doors between classrooms so they could be opened up. That all came between '65 and '70. In Mackenzie, 1965 in Mackenzie, we built one of these hexagonal gymnasiums onto the school up there, which was a real pacesetter in those days, a real landmark, and as I mentioned recently in our geography class, it had political context running out your ears because that was done purposefully to attract people into the townsite of Mackenzie. If Mackenzie was going to prosper, they had to cater to the workers. And one of the things you did was build a decent school, so they had a state of the art school. And Highland School got one, Spruceland School got one. [3805 Rainbow Dr, PHOTO right]

KS: I think there's one at Blackburn.

TM: Blackburn school got one. Several had them, five or six in total.

KS: How do you spell that "Winnetka" so that we can get the tape recording correct when it's typed out?

TM: Winnetka, W-I-N-N-E-T-K-A. Winnetka, Illinois [near Chicago]. It's a town and they were doing a lot of pioneer planning work and the interesting thing is here that education people, and school districts in those days, seemed to have been given some latitude in design and concept and so on. And this latitude in the education system fluctuates from government to government. In the 1950s, the

government actually had standard plans. When I was working in Wade & Stockdill's office in Victoria, we adhered to the government standard plan for a classroom and for this and for that and for something else. But by 1960, this whole complexion had changed. Now, later on, the government started getting more involved; in the 1970s the classrooms were larger, then they tended to get a little bit smaller. And in the last few years, certainly from let's say '75 or '80 onward, the government again got very restrictive and very dogmatic about what you can build and what you can't build, and you have to have this exactly so many square feet and all the rest of it. So this is an interesting phenomenon, if you like. As opposed to material cultures, the phenomenon that goes with it, the nonmaterial culture of education, you can see how the phenomenon has been reflected in the material culture of the building. All this is getting a bit theoretical.

KS: I've noticed, in several places around the province, really innovative, at least exterior innovative-looking, schools are some of the native schools that are built now.

TM: Exactly. I think the federal government has been a little more liberal in this regard. I think they have.

KS: Yeah, perhaps that's part of the reason.

TM: So, it goes in cycles, and that would be an interesting thing to do for somebody, certainly not me, but someone that could do the history of education as the material culture and the nonmaterial culture of education. Of how that happened, of what has happened in the province since, well say, World War II, 1945. Anyway, onto the problem at hand here.

KS: You mentioned, I know we've talked many times about... Tell me about the [Prince George] Citizen building which you built.

TM: Well, that was an interesting building, and that was innovative too, because the chap that owned it, Milner, owned several things around: he owned the sawmill at Giscome. he owned Northern

Dairies, he owned Salmon Valley Dairies and he owned the Citizen. Ted Miller was the publisher at the time. Ted and I went around the country down into Washington, the state of Washington actually, to do some research on offset printing because the Citizen wanted to get rid of the hot lead process and get into offset printing. A cold process, speedier, more quality, not as dirty etc. etc. So Milner said, "All right, we're going to put up this building [150 Brunswick St] but I want you to use my material from the Giscome Mill", which was cutting spruce. So we wanted to use some pretty heavy timbers in there, glued laminated timbers, so we decided, well, we'll investigate the idea of using spruce, laminated spruce, and we did. We contacted some laminating people and they thought, "Well, yes, OK, we can do that". The sizes of course are going to be larger for the structural elements than if we had the use of fir because the bending stress of spruce lumber is much less than the allowable bending stress for fir. And all the glue laminated work in the province at that time had been done with fir. So we did ship spruce lumber down to a laminating plant, and they processed it, dried it I guess and dressed it, planed it. And the beams, [PHOTO right] the structural beams then were sized based on the bending stress of spruce as opposed to that of fir, which was standard practice. And consequently, all the timbers are perhaps 20-25% larger than if they had been manufactured with fir, fir lumber. But Milner wanted to make his point, and he did, and he died not long after. I'm not sure when but that building was put up in 1965 or '66 and I'm not sure. I think Milner passed away perhaps by '70. So the idea of using spruce never really materialized beyond that experiment, but it was a successful experiment. But then of course you get into quality control and the laminators were concerned about getting the quality of the lumber and all this sort of thing. So

it never really took off and consequently spruce was never really got involved in the laminating industry.

KS: That building, the Citizen building, if I recall, visible from outside are beams up above.

TM: There was a canopy on the front there.

KS: Maybe it was the canopy.

TM: Yeah. And there was an addition to the building about ten years after it was built. The building was extended and the canopy was extended three bays, and the, something happened in there on the fabrication. I just forget what now, what the problem may have been. I think the flashing wasn't installed properly. Something happened to it and there was some deterioration set into the hangers, the vertical hangers, the deterioration on the hangers now occurred on the beam that was projected out and the thing collapsed on a heavy snow load. Not the original canopy, a piece of the canopy. The original canopy stayed. It was as strong as ever but the three bays that were added on, one of the bays deteriorated right away and it was just faulty installation basically. The weather got into it and in a matter of, what, seven or eight years the thing had deteriorated enough and spruce will deteriorate readily. The thing let go and down it came. I think that was the year we had a tremendous snowfall. We had four or five feet of snow on the level here one year, when, around 1990. I just forget when it was and I think that may have been the year. I won't name the name of the contractor that built that. But I think he was a little bit sheepish because he's one of the better-known contractors in Prince George and they had done a lot of good work for me and for everybody else, but they didn't do a very good job of that one. So, I have been involved with quite a few sort of innovative designs and experiments of using different materials and different structural systems and so on. So I have to say that a lot of things I was doing were interesting, you know?

KS: Yeah. There was also at least one, I don't know whether there are

others, but that restoration project in Burns Lake.

TM: Oh, on the old hospital. Nothing really came of that. I have some copies of the report and that probably should go into the archives somewhere. The fellow that was in charge, or involved with that, was with the Heritage Branch in Victoria. George uh...

KS: Kerr

TM: Kerr, George Kerr, and George and I worked together on that. What we did was measure up the old hospital building and I still have the large rendering in my archives here in the basement. We did a large rendering and a drawing and some promotional material and took it out and we had a public meeting at Burns Lake to try and get local people interested and the Indian people were interested but the thing did not get launched. Subsequently, I believe, the Indian Band bought the building and they developed their own offices and so on in the old hospital. But it was a heritage building and it was an interesting exercise. It didn't come off exactly as George had hoped it would come off.

This whole idea of restoration and heritage and revitalization and so on is kind of a foreign element in our thinking in British Columbia whereas down in the... I hate to say this but, in the U.S. they're far more conscious of that kind of thing. And in Canada too, I think, in the eastern part of Canada and in certainly the U.S. as we've seen in Vermont and Massachusetts. Old mill buildings, old spinning mills, old factories of heaven knows what nature, 150, 200 years old, have been refurbished and reconstituted and built into residential operations. All this kind of thing, really fine projects, built into commercial premises and so on. And there's been some of that in British Columbia, I guess, in Gastown and other places. But unfortunately, in our area, in Prince George, and I'm sure in a lot of other places in the northern part of the province too, people don't seem to give a hoot about that and it has never really materialized to any extent. And unfortunately, again in Prince George, we've lost our good heritage buildings, like the old provincial building [1411 3rd Ave, PHOTO below right] and so on. And even the old legion, the

Canadian Legion [1322 5th Ave, PHOTO below left] had a fine old building on the corner and that's gone and so on. So, this is one of the sad features, architecturally, of Prince George, is that there hasn't been the recognition, there hasn't been the recognizance if you like, of the significance and value of maintaining our history and our heritage. People have been too ready to just demolish everything and build something new. And that's not necessarily the best answer in every respect. So I guess that's one of the downsides or down elements.

KS: Have a quick look through those notes. Maybe there's some other particular project that rings a bell, that you'd like to talk about it. Positively or negatively, I guess.

TM: Well, speaking of avant garde if you like, it happened in the banking industry. I was involved with the Royal Bank addition in Vanderhoof and back in the, I guess this would be in the '70s, there was a great push in banks for central tellers, and we've noticed that in Prince George. You used to go to the teller and get your cash and so on. Then there was a great push to go into a central teller thing and the clerks then, on the counter, would have to go to the central teller to get your money. The Royal Bank in Vanderhoof was one of the first ones in the area to institute this central teller feature, which has been copied by other people, other banks. It has quite a history, I guess, around the country. But here we are, 25 or 30 years later, and there are still shades of this. The central telling/teller system in the Commerce in Prince George, I think, has been discontinued. There is still a central teller in the TD Bank in Prince George and the old Bank of Montreal did not have one. So the banking industry has

changed. Here's an area where architects were sort of on the cutting edge, if you like, in changes in commerce, changes in an industry. I did quite a bit of alteration and various things too, and this was always interesting because there have been a lot of trends in office procedure and one of the big things that started, again, about 1980, '75 or '80, were so-called landscape offices where the offices were open. This changed the complexion of design, it changed the whole operational atmosphere if you like, and some of that has gone by the boards now because people realized there were disadvantages in opening up offices. They wanted more privacy, etc. etc. So the landscape office largely, in a lot of cases, has tended to disappear, certainly with small firms. I think the government still hangs in on that kind of thing. But that's another example there of shifts, if you like, or changes in the commercial climate as to how offices should operate, as going from one thing to another. And again, I was involved with dormitories and dormitories are pretty well a thing of the past in schools nowadays, but we actually built a new dormitory down in 100 Mile House, and that operated quite successfully for some years but, I'm not sure, I believe that's closed now.

KS: This is a school dorm?

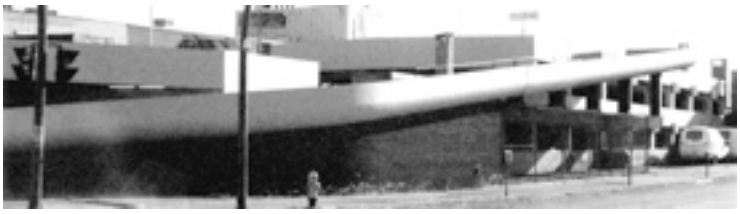
TM: Yeah, a high school dorm. And that's sort of gone by the boards. Then I was involved with some fire hall projects, [3999 5th Ave, PHOTO right] and the projects were interesting because we were using brick construction and I liked brick construction anyway. I think the fire department people thought they needed something that wasn't going to burn down. Better build it out of bricks.

KS: Bad P.R..

TM: Right, exactly. And I was involved with seniors citizens' housing in Smithers and Burns Lake. There again there were changes in government policy so architecture always was involved with the

political aspects, the economic aspects, and local government and local committees. So from that point of view it was sort of what today we would call interdisciplinary. We have to recognize and cater to all the different contexts as far as incorporating projects or putting up a building. There's a lot of context you have to deal with nowadays. It's probably getting worse. There's more and more, more and more people and that kind of thing going on.

Some of the well known consulting firms have worked with the architects in Prince George too. Read Jones Christoffersen were always avant garde structural people in Vancouver, and in the 1950s they were the avant garde firm in Vancouver. Architectural students liked to go and work with John Read and Peter Jones and Per Christoffersen because they were part of the leaders in architectural form, if you like. We have a good example of that right in Prince George, and this should be documented. I hope it is documented. It could even be written up. And that is in the parkade [north side 1300 block 4th Ave, PHOTO right] that is built behind the old Hudson Bay building, which is now the Brick retail store. That parkade was a rather innovative design, a very sculptural looking piece of work. It's got rounded forms on the automobile ramps and the exposed structure of the concrete beams, and the network in the beams and so on. The whole thing is really a piece of sculpture if you want to look at it from that point of view. John Read was very artistic and he was looking at this, and I think frankly that Prince George is perhaps fortunate to have a piece of John Read sculpture in Prince George. That should be well documented in some fashion or another. I'm not sure whether John Read is living or not; I don't think he is. Peter Jones I knew because Peter did some consulting work for me. Peter was also mayor of North Vancouver for a few years. But he is long gone; he may not even be living now. Per Christoffersen I knew latterly because they had to do some remedial work on that parkade about 25 or 30 years after it was built and Per Christoffersen came up here. The Hudson



Bay still owned it, it was just about the time that the Hudson Bay was selling the building, Per Christoffersen came up and they did some remedial work on it. There's an example of interdisciplinary work between architects and engineers and I think that's something that's sort of underrated or unknown or not very well documented or informed as far as the public is concerned.

KS: Yeah. Most people don't go looking through parkades for architectural form. I think the one on 2nd Avenue was a great, kind of monolith right across the street there.

TM: Yeah, I don't know who designed that.

KS: No.

TM: But certainly the firm of Read Jones Christoffersen were unique.

KS: Well, what about some of your colleagues, competitors, some of their work? I think the Prince George Library [887 Dominion St] comes to mind and the college and university.

TM: Yeah.

KS: Maybe others.

TM: The library was designed by, oh dear me, now I can't remember his name. A firm from Vancouver.

KS: Tudor, Graham.

TM: Graham Tudor, yes. Well, there are certainly a lot of aspects on the interior which are commendable on the library. The overall approach, I think, has not proven out. It is huge mistake, quite frankly. It has the worst entrance of any public building in Canada. [PHOTO right]

KS: Yes, this is from the parkade up the back staircase, or central staircase.

TM: There's a couple of faux pas on the thing. The stair wasn't constructed properly and a few other things. But certainly, there are some very nice features about the library and this is again where control and supervision come in and that's one of the problems.

I hate to be critical about U.N.B.C. [3333 University Way], but carrying along on this same theme, the co-ordinating architectural firm – I couldn't even tell you who it is now at U.N.B.C. – when they started out. I don't think the designs have been followed through. I think it's quite obvious and there's too much patchwork [PHOTO right] up there. And I noticed in the newspaper in the last week or so that whoever did the design for the new medical wing got some kind of an award for wood construction. Well, in my humble view, that new medical wing is the worst piece of design on the whole campus. [PHOTO left] It simply does not fit in and why they had to have two designs, one on one half and one on the other, without tying the two together, it escapes me. It's just haywire. That's just my opinion.

KS: When I worked with the city planning and the building inspectors, they used to joke and say that the university was being built by fax, because every morning a fax would come in with some change that they had to make as they were going along.

TM: Oh, absolutely.

KS: And there's, in particular, the one aisle there where one side of the aisle doesn't match up with the other side of the aisle. It is a strange conglomeration.

TM: It is a strange conglomeration and it's unfortunate. There are some good individual pieces there. The administration wing, block, internally is probably the best design. [PHOTO right] It's light and airy and spacious and the colours are good and so on. This was driven home to me in the last month or so. I was down at Simon Fraser University, visiting there, and the corridors in this office section that I was in are very narrow. They're dark, the ceilings are low, they're poorly lit, the colours are terrible. It's just like walking into tunnel. I thought to myself how fortunate we were at U.N.B.C. to at least have a decent administration building, where it's light and airy and, you know, it's a very pleasant atmosphere. There are some good features up there, but again, as I said, the real problem was co-ordinating the design and supervising it and tying the thing together to give it better unity because it does lack unity in a lot of areas.

Not to be too critical there, but looking at some of the other people's works, as I mentioned earlier, I still think that Jo Briggs work on the Anglican Church was very commendable. I think that's a really fine building. It's probably the neatest piece of design that Jo was involved with, I would guess. Some of the other architects haven't been, well... Some features in the city hall are interesting and commendable, but one of the problems with a lot of firms, and certainly it's with firms in Prince George, and in a lot of the schools, is detailing. I'm going to be very blunt about this. Most architects do not know how to design a stair. This is one of the things that I was drilled in at U.B.C. and later at Wade & Stockdill. In all buildings I've been in, and again I hate to be critical like this, it's a problem, a

severe problem out at U.N.B.C. . They'd be better off with a ship's ladder than some of those damn stairs that have been built out there. [PHOTO right]

KS: Yeah, very steep.

TM: Now that is ridiculous. That is unforgivable. Some of the schools that were done, and this includes all the architects in Prince George that were working in my time, the stairs are too steep. The stairs in city hall are too steep, the stairs in Lakewood School are too steep, most of the stairs that you [encounter as you] go around in the city. Architects have to learn how to design a public stair, and you don't use the same rise and run ratios on a public stair that you do in a private stair. And quite frankly, most housing, and this is not architecturally, an architectural condemnation, it's a contractor condemnation. Contractors don't understand stairs either. So the stairs are terrible and it is unfortunate, I think. And that's one of things where I'll go out on a limb and say at least the buildings I did had decent stairs.

KS: How do you feel about the College of New Caledonia? [3330 22nd Ave] It started off as a vocational school and then there was the large building attached in sort of behind it, which I guess was Des Parker's work. And then the library was added on with Greenwell and Bryant.

TM: I guess I could tell you some stuff, yeah.

KS: I'm just wondering what you think of that sort of integration that cluttered up the colour scheme. Is it working altogether now?

TM: I think the integration is reasonable. Quite frankly, I think its better pulled together than the campus at U.N.B.C. is. I don't have any serious objections. Again, the stairs, the main public stair is a bit steep, and so on, but you do have an elevator you know. There are

some shortcomings there but, again, that's detailing and a person shouldn't be too picky I guess. But no, the library [PHOTO right] is quite acceptable as far as I'm concerned and I've been in the CNC library. I'm not that familiar with the building but there's a couple of strange things there in the main concourse and some of the lecture halls. There's the one lecture hall that's used by the public, it hasn't been fitted out properly but that's not a really a problem with maybe the architects as it is with the people doing the appointments. On the whole, the entrance and the approach [PHOTO right] and so on is, I think it's quite acceptable design-wise and that kind of thing. The biggest problem with most architects, and this goes back to day one, and that's the problem I had with students, is that they can't finish off things. They don't know how to detail, they don't know how to execute things satisfactorily. It's something like playing hockey I guess; you've got to know how to finish around the net. Same idea.

Break for coffee

KS: Yes, go ahead. We were talking about various buildings and so forth.

TM: Yes, and maybe shortcomings and that kind of thing but there are some current trends, good and bad, and we've dwelt long enough on some of the bad trends. But we have to realize that we're in this postmodern period since, we'll say, the 1980s, 1985, and one of the features in architectural design, and in other disciplines as well, is that the postmodern period is very eclectic and we can see that out at U.N.B.C. Architecture just trying to be different. They're incorporating some themes or some detail motifs which really don't

have much bearing on the problem at hand or on the overall structure, and consequently a lot of designs lack unity and it's very difficult to pull them together. For example, in the 1950s, when Fred Lasserre was head of the school at U.B.C., he taught us that buildings must have "repose". Repose means that the building is happy in its setting and it fits in. You have to know where the door is, you have to know the way in, the way out etc., and how it fits in. And I think we can see again at U.N.B.C. there are segments of the building there which have no repose. They don't quite fit and that's a problem in integrating design, additions, and all that sort of thing. Another trend nowadays that architects face is that much work is designed, is done by the allied professions: people that are self-made people and self-made designers in the construction industry; interior design people that perhaps don't have the professional training they should have with no real architectural training as such. And of course they go out and we end up with a lot of mediocre design. Now that's not saying that a lot of architectural stuff that's been done by architects is not mediocre, but it does sort of reemphasizes that you don't have much chance of coming off with something good unless you get somebody with some architectural expertise. And I think the design/build phenomenon which has arisen, let's say since the '70s, '75, whenever that happened, the design/build phenomenon has caused problems where you get a developer who is not particularly astute and not particularly conscious of design, and he may not be retaining the right kind of professional service etc. etc. Institutions that fall victim to this can get into trouble and we see lots of it around. So the whole summation in this postmodern period is that we have these very eclectic designs. If somebody wants Greek columns in front of their building, they'll get Greek columns in front of their building. Not that there's anything wrong with Greek columns, but I think we better consider the context and what is the significance, and do the Greek columns have a bearing on the particular problem at hand, and do they have some significance with the operation and the client, and all the rest of it. Maybe they do and maybe they don't. So we get this great juxtaposition of god-knows-what thrown together. And I think, in my view, that's a bit unfortunate because it's the alternate approach to the sort of whole atmosphere that was condemned with

modernism in the '50s and '60s. After WWII, we went through this modernism period. That's the period that I was trained in, and that's the period which I think still has some merit design-wise. And the objectors who did not like this cold, cut-and-dried modernism felt that they've got to do something different. So in the postmodern period, anything goes. There's a lot of pros and cons, there are a lot of architects that still object to the postmodern approach, but there's others who say, "OK, we're going to get on the bandwagon and we're going to something different." A good example, and we'll close with this, a good example is with the skylights on certain interior corridors up at U.N.B.C. If you go on the upper deck from the outside stair in the main concourse there; go outside, go upstairs onto the upper deck and walk around. You'll see some truncated, pyramid-shaped skylights. [PHOTO left] Well OK, the architects wanted to do something different. There's nothing wrong with the pyramids, they even fit in with the design. But no, they can't leave the pyramid vertical, they have to tilt it a little bit, just to be different. Now, to me, that's an example of the extremism that's going on and it's not necessarily for good design. So that's sort of the end of my commenting about that.

KS: Do you have any good stories? That was one of the last of our topics there, nearly the last topic. I've got a couple of others I've added, but stories that you can tell, what of that one?

TM: That's a bit of a problem – stories that you can tell. I've got stories about contractors and I've got stories about other architects but they're not really related to architecture and such, so the main story I guess we told.

End of Tape

COLOUR PHOTOS OF BUILDINGS DISCUSSED

- Associate Medical Clinic
- Professional Centre
- Fire Hall #1 addition
- Central Fort George School addition
- original Central Fort George School
- Masonic Hall
- St. Mary's Catholic School
- Sacred Heart Catholic Parish Hall
- addition to Knox United Church
- addition to St. Michael's Anglican Church
- Simon Fraser Hotel
  [photo from Exploration Place]
- Co-op building
- RCMP building
- Sacred Heart Catholic Cathedral
- FANE building
- Talisman building

- Buchan house
- house by Greenwell
- Quinson School
- gym of Spruceland School
- Prince George Citizen building
- Fire Hall #2
- Hudson Bay Co. parkade
- Prince George Public Library
- University of Northern B.C.
- College of New Caledonia

Associate Medical Clinic
with recent exterior style elements

Professional Centre

Fire Hall #1 addition, west facade on Dominion St

Central Fort George school addition

original Central Fort George school before demolition in 2004

Masonic Hall, west facade on Vancouver St

Masonic Hall from northwest

St. Mary's Catholic school with attached church at right

St Mary's Catholic church

Sacred Heart hall from northeast

Sacred Heart hall, north facade

Knox church addition

St. Michael's church addition to hall at right rear

Simon Fraser hotel, now Day's Inn

Co-op building, demolished 2007

RCMP building, demolished 2007

Sacred Heart Catholic Cathedral

FANE building

Talisman building, demolished 2007

Buchan house

house by Greenwell

QUINSON SCHOOL

exterior wall of “poked out” classrooms

hexagonal activity area at right rear

5-sided classroom with windows in poked out wall

hexagonal activity area

angled walls at rear

hall intersection area with angled walls reflecting hexagonal space

note gluelam beams and wood decking

Spruceland school, exterior of hexagonal activity area

Prince George Citizen building after canopy removal

three laminated spruce beams in hallway

detail of join in spruce beam

Fire Hall #2

Hudson Bay Co. parkade

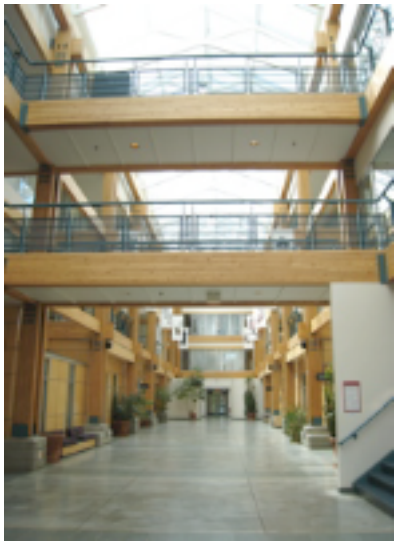
Prince George Public Library entrance: exterior, interior, stairs

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN B.C.

"patchwork" of styles

Postmodern, tilted pyramids, detail to right

Administration building, interior to right



U.N.B.C. CONTINUED

steep stair

"medical wing"
[Northern Health Sciences Centre]

COLLEGE OF NEW CALEDONIA

entrance

library

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